

Problem-based learning analysis in strengthening college students' interpersonal communication skill

Sabina Ndiung¹, Sebastianus Menggo²

¹Department of Primary Education, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia

²Department of English Education, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 24, 2023

Revised Feb 10, 2024

Accepted Mar 7, 2024

Keywords:

College students

English courses

Interpersonal communication skills

Logical thinking

Problem-based learning

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to analyse the incorporation of problem-based learning (PBL) in strengthening students' interpersonal communication skills, as well as the level of proficiency of students' interpersonal communication skills and the obstacles they face in acquiring them. This study was a cross-sectional survey conducted in May 2023 with 315 college students enrolled in six English Study Programs at six universities in three Indonesian provinces. The questionnaires and interviews were used for recording data, which was then analysed using Jeffreys's amazing statistics program (JASP). Based on the data collected, it can be shown that the interpersonal communication profiles of 315 participants can be classified as falling within the medium category (average score=3.26). The primary challenge encountered by participants in developing their interpersonal communication skills is attributed to difficulties arising from the accent of their conversation partner, as indicated by a mean score of 4.6. The result mandates that educators provide an appropriate and effective learning method. PBL is an effective alternative as its principles, syntax, implementation stages, orientation, and benefits are capable of helping students overcome interpersonal communication challenges. PBL model is intended to provide students with the skills needed for problem-solving, increasing logical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Sebastianus Menggo

English Education Study Program, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng

Street Ahmad Yani No. 10, Ruteng, Flores, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia

Email: sebastian.pradana@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental means of engaging individuals and societies in their day-to-day endeavours. The communication process significantly impacts several dimensions of human existence, encompassing various activities. It is noteworthy that a substantial adequate, precisely 70%, of the time someone spends goes into engaging in communicative endeavours [1], [2]. Humans possess an inherent sociability, signifying their innate tendency towards collaboration and persistent interpersonal communication. The notion of humanization within an educational interaction space setting encompasses individuals' or peers' engagement at work. The acquisition of interpersonal communication competency holds significant importance in human existence. It directly influences how people act, particularly in educational settings where students necessitate a clear and comprehensible communication channel between professors and themselves. Interpersonal communication refers to the dynamic exchange of information, ideas, and self-expression using verbal means, such as spoken words, and non-verbal means, such as symbols, body language, and pictures. The primary objective of interpersonal communication is to establish a shared

understanding and mutual objectives between the speaker and the listener [3]-[5]. In the context of interpersonal communication, it is crucial for both the sender and receiver to possess a comprehensive understanding of the various elements comprising communication ability. This ensures that the intended meaning of the message remains unambiguous during their interactions. The selection of words or phrases employed by a speaker or writer can significantly aid the recipient of the communication in comprehending the many intentions and objectives that the speaker or writer intends to convey.

The necessity of possessing interpersonal communication abilities is a motivating factor for undergraduates in Indonesia and worldwide to develop proficiency in interpersonal communication to prevent the freezing of interactions. A strong underpinning in interpersonal ability may positively affect university students' self-esteem, linguistic competency, and capacity to engage in meaningful conversations. Hence, using grammatical competence (linguistic performance) in many communicative contexts is crucial for developing interpersonal interaction proficiency [4], [6], [7].

The guidance refers to the enhancement of English proficiency among undergraduates by the utilization of problem-based learning (PBL) principles. Communicative proficiency in both oral and written forms is seen as essential for success in higher education. Understanding the communicative ability's micro and macro aspects is essential for successful interaction. These two components are the backbone of a person's interpersonal communication abilities. The ability to comprehend and apply knowledge of grammar, syntax, semantics, and phonology to a variety of texts is what Chomsky as cited by Sun [8], said that labels "discourse competence." The speaker must include the appropriate connection to establish logical coherence within the argument. Macro-level elements encompass two key aspects: sociolinguistic proficiency and strategy competence. Sociolinguistic ability relates to the understanding and acknowledgment of the social circumstances surrounding communication, such as the relationships between participants, the conveyed information, and the intended purpose of the communication. On the other hand, strategy ability enables speakers to skilfully navigate interactions by identifying and employing the most efficient methods to initiate, sustain, troubleshoot, and expand upon communicative exchanges [4], [9]-[11].

The micro and macro aspects play a role in helping to facilitate simultaneous conversations as signals are sent to the listener. The established superiority in performance (referred to as the "macro" aspect) is undeniably supported by a significant linguistic capacity (referred to as the "micro" component). Both of them are practical ways through which university students might create effective forms of English communication. Furthermore, the interactions between micro and macro dimensions of fluency in English interpersonal communication provide reciprocal advantages. The communicators' microelement encompasses their understanding of phonology, syntax, accuracy, correctness, discourse, and lexicon. On the other hand, the communicators' macro element comprises their knowledge of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and communication tactics [12]-[14].

The requirement to address both micro and macro components immediately leads to implications for interpersonal communication skills. Effective communication in the English language necessitates the capacity to express one's thoughts clearly and persuasively to the conversational counterpart [1], [15]. Therefore, it is anticipated that college students will be able to integrate both micro and macro elements into their interpersonal communication, whatever the setting, whether it is with classmates or instructors. College students are strongly encouraged to fulfill the criteria for both micro and macro components, which encompass the skills and competencies expected of competent interpersonal communicators in diverse formal and informal speaking settings as mandated by their courses. Interpersonal communication in the English language facilitates the acquisition of suitable recognition and a more advantageous professional path in areas of English public communication for an undergraduate. Furthermore, the concept of communicative competence can be interpreted from multiple perspectives, encompassing the attainment of interpersonal communication abilities in English as previously described. Proficiency in language and communication skills fulfills the necessities of English courses [16].

Numerous prior research has demonstrated the vitality of English interpersonal communication abilities for engaging in interactions beyond public domains [17], [18]. They asserted that understanding interpersonal communication skills is necessary in public settings to foster favourable interaction between the individual transmitting the message and the individual receiving it. Proficiency in interpersonal communication skills is necessary for undergraduates to efficiently fulfil their responsibilities, as it directly influences the rate at which they develop English communication competencies. Moreover, the researchers above have asserted that a lack of English interpersonal communication skills can lead to reduced interaction efficiency, mainly when an English speaker cannot effectively and accurately convey their thoughts, ideas, or opinions to the addressee. Interpersonal communication is a crucial component in English courses due to its ability to navigate contextual variations effectively, employ diverse linguistic codes utilized by conversational partners, and respond to spontaneous events, significantly impacting speech partners. Interpersonal communication facilitates flexible and dynamic interaction between the speaker and interlocutor, enabling a two-way interaction [19], [20]. Enhancing interpersonal communication in English

courses necessitates fostering a sense of communicative competence and utilizing effective teaching strategies. These factors serve as crucial elements in developing humans who possess the qualifications to be proficient English communicators.

There currently needs to be more study about student competency profiles in interpersonal communication skills, the obstacles encountered in acquiring these skills, and the potential integration of PBL principles to facilitate interpersonal communication skills inside English courses in Indonesia. Findings from earlier studies [21]–[23] primarily addresses the fundamental aspects of interpersonal communication skills in public settings, neglecting to explore the strong connection between interpersonal communication skills and English courses, the obstacles faced by English students in acquiring interpersonal communication skills, and the potential incorporation of PBL principles to speed up the development of interpersonal communication skills. Thus, further analysis is necessary to enhance and broaden the existing body of understanding regarding the identified gap. The researchers must examine the incorporation of PBL in facilitating students' interpersonal communication skills in English courses in Indonesia. This is necessary since there exists a significant correlation between the requirements of English courses and the indicators of interpersonal communication skills. Consequently, it is crucial to identify and utilize appropriate instructional components when teaching English [8], [17].

This study explores PBL as a means to facilitate students' interpersonal communication skills in English courses in the Indonesia context. This study's motives support a logical argument for, why PBL is a bridge to facilitate students' interpersonal communication skill challenges. The interpersonal communication issues of Indonesian students majoring in English education could be resolved through a variety of strategies. However, various components of the PBL method, such as principles, syntax, implementation stages, orientation, and advantages, could assist students in overcoming interpersonal communication issues. PBL model is intended to provide students with the knowledge they need to be skilled in problem-solving, developing thinking skills, acquiring a deeper understanding, constructing their perspectives, increasing logical thinking, collaboration, communication, and being innovative [24], [25].

This study aimed to analyse the principles of PBL, college students' interpersonal communication skills, and the problems they face in gaining interpersonal communication skills in English classes. For this reason, the researchers examined what came next matter: to what extent are PBL elements used as an alternative to strengthen students' interpersonal communication skills?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research utilized a cross-sectional design. The study was carried out in May 2023 in six English Study Programs affiliated with six universities in three provinces in Indonesia. These provinces include Bali, where the study was conducted at Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha Singaraja and Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, West Nusa Tenggara, where the study took place at Universitas Hamzanwadi and Universitas Bumigora Mataram, and East Nusa Tenggara, where the study was conducted at Universitas Nusa Cendana Kupang and Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. The main aim of this concept is to evaluate the educational service needs of the local area concerning programs, courses, educational infrastructure improvements, engagement of parents and students, and integrated community development [26]. This design was chosen for this study since it relates to educational services, and research samples have been gathered from various levels and classes in six English education study programs at six institutions.

The research population comprised 3,558 undergraduates from English departments at six universities in three eastern Indonesian provinces. By using a multistage cluster random sampling technique, samples of 315 students from six universities were selected. Active students majoring in English education, familiar with English communication, accustomed to discussing English communication issues, willing to fill out questionnaires using digital media, willing to fill out questionnaires and answer interviews truthfully, willing to be interviewed for triangulation of questionnaire data review results, and having sufficient internet data packages were among the requirements for this research sample. The number of participants for the research study consisted of 315 students, as presented in Table 1.

Data was collected through questionnaires administered using a Google Form, and interviews were conducted using a recording form in each research location. The survey employed a 5-point Likert scale consisting of eleven items that were highly similar in nature. Scores closer to five predict a more robust connection, with the scale ranging from one (representing significant disagreement) to five (representing strong agreement). Participants are required to utilize a mandatory Google Form tool in order to respond to each inquiry. The questions in this survey are consistent with the concepts proposed by [27] about indicators of interpersonal communication. At the same time, virtual interviews were conducted with participants from each university to learn more about the challenges they encountered in strengthening their interpersonal

communication skills and the methods of instruction required for their English language studies. The research sample consisted of 60 participants, with an equal representation of ten students from each university.

Table 1. The sample's demographics

	Demographic	Number of samples	Percentage
Gender	Male	102	32.38
	Female	213	67.62
Age	17-18 years old	86	27.29
	19-20 years old	202	64.11
	21 years old and over	27	8.6
Grade	First grade	114	36.20
	Second Grade	172	54.60
	Third Grade	29	9.20
Education Background	Vocational School	123	39
	Senior High School	192	61
Marital Status	Single	307	97.46
	Married	8	2.54
	Divorced	-	-

The data collection process in this study consisted of four steps. Indicators assessing interpersonal communication skills were initially distributed to six university lecturers. Subsequently, respondents were requested to complete a Google Form to provide relevant information. The collected data was analysed using The jeffreys' amazing statistics program (JASP). Finally, the findings were presented in the form of a narrative. The findings from a Google survey were presented using percentages. The analysis of college students' interpersonal skills was conducted based on the data obtained from the survey. Each response was assigned a score, and afterward, a score table was utilized for the analysis. The participant's capacity to get involved in interpersonal communication was also classified. The four levels encompassed in this categorization are classified as high, moderate, low, and very low. Table 2 displays the potential range of ratings for every category.

Table 2. Score category table

Score	Category
1.1–2.1	Very low
2.2–3.1	Low
3.2–4.1	Moderate
4.2–5.0	High

3. RESULTS

This section primarily emphasizes explaining the findings obtained by college students on interpersonal communication abilities and the obstacles they provide. Each component of the variable under investigation is measured with the chart data series tool within the Microsoft Excel software. Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the interpersonal communication skills possessed by college students.

Table 3. The college students of interpersonal communication skill

No	Item	Mean	Category
1	I take pleasure in sharing my thoughts and knowledge with my peers	4.3	High
2	I am ready to generate messages in precise English due to my understanding of language symbols	3.3	Medium
3	I can figure out the English symbols generated by my speech companion	3.27	Low
4	I am qualified to communicate effectively with others in English	3.4	Medium
5	I understand my speech partner's message with clear	3.3	Medium
6	I am competent to quickly react to my interlocutor's message	3.2	Medium
7	If there is stagnation in my speech companions' interpretation regarding my meaning, I may simplify my speech's content	2.7	Medium
8	I have been able to adapt with the aid of interactive media	3.33	Medium
9	I can figure out the conversational content of my partner by considering the context	2.87	Low
10	I speak in accordance with the time allotted for my turn to speak, and the subject matter and focus of the discussion at hand	3.3	Medium
11	I comprehend the social and cultural context of my interlocutor if the meaning perception stagnates	2.87	Low
	Average	3.26	Medium

The present study examines the interpersonal communication profiles of 315 participants from six universities located in three provinces of Indonesia: Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, and East Nusa Tenggara provinces. The data pertaining to this analysis found in items 1 to 11 in Table 3 provided above. From the analysis of the collected data, it can be stated that the level of interpersonal communication skills among the 315 participants is classified as medium, as evidenced by an average total score of 3.26. Analysing the data presented in Table 3, it can be inferred that the interpersonal communication skills of 315 college students from six distinct universities across three provinces (East Nusa Tenggara Province, West Nusa Tenggara Province, and Bali Province) could be classified as medium, with an average score of 3.26.

The present research additionally discovered various obstacles that influenced the participants' proficiency in interpersonal communication skills in the context of learning English. These hindering issues encompassed scepticism regarding the speaker's credibility, limited comprehension of the speaker's social and cultural context, challenges in comprehending the speaker's verbal expressions, difficulties in adapting to the speaker's chosen medium of communication, differences in language accents between the speaker and the participants, as well as variations in the interpretation of the communicated message. Despite other barriers hindering college students' competence in studying English, this study concentrates explicitly on the six outlined prerequisites. The Guttman scale was employed by the researchers, restricting participants to choosing either "yes" or "no" for each of the six categories [26]. In order to maintain simplicity, a "yes" response will be assigned a value of one, representing a positive outcome, while a "no" response will be assigned a value of zero, indicating a negative outcome. Figure 1 also demonstrates the average proportion of queries that pertain to each of the six limiting variables.

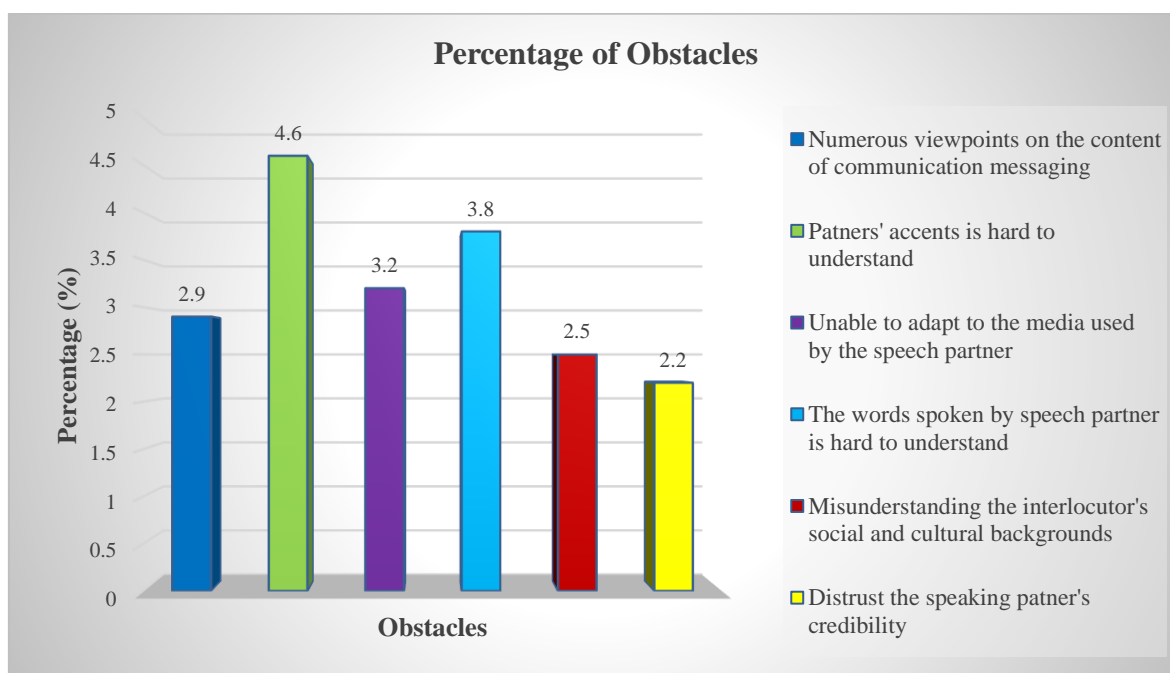


Figure 1. Obstacles percentage of interpersonal communication

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the incorporation of PBL in strengthening students' interpersonal communication skills in an English course in Indonesia, as well as the level of proficiency of students' interpersonal communication skills and the obstacles they face in acquiring them. Detailed explanations of the findings of interpersonal communication skills in English courses are provided as follows.

4.1. The notion of interpersonal communication

The development of interpersonal communication skills is crucial for the establishment of relationships with other people. This form of interpersonal communication illustrates the communication principle, wherein favourable results are based on the abilities of both speakers and listeners. Effective communication is possible when both parties feel involved and committed. Additionally, the involvement of

at least one party is necessary for communication to occur. In the context of the desired communication activity, both speakers and their speech counterparts must understand the significance conveyed by their verbal expressions. Competencies in interpersonal communication are given as a means to address and resolve challenges arising from their Role in facilitating interactions between speakers throughout distinct interaction circumstances [28], [29]. The researchers argue that the stress encountered during interpersonal communication significantly impacts how people interact. This stress highlights the importance of speakers' and speech participants' sufficient verbal and nonverbal communication abilities. These competencies rely on adequate cognitive linguistics skills. The cognitive linguistic emphasis aligns with the core principle of interpersonal communication, which involves conveying a speaker's diverse intentions to their speech counterparts.

Interpersonal communication encompasses understanding and utilizing verbal and nonverbal messages that are sent and received [19], [30]. In the context of interpersonal communication, it is fundamental for speakers and conversation counterparts to acknowledge and consider the affective components that are inherent in the process. The utilization of affective aspects by the speaker might enhance their comprehension of the speech partner, hence promoting the facilitation of effective communication [31], [32]. A different perspective on the core concept of interpersonal communication skills is presented by [33], who assert or claim that interpersonal communication skills encompass a person's aptitude to effectively engage in verbal and nonverbal communication within an interpersonal context. Furthermore, [33] point out that the attainment of good interpersonal communication necessitates speakers to exhibit sensitivity towards the emotions and cognitions of their conversational counterparts. To fulfil this criterion, speakers need to show their comprehension of nonverbal and verbal cues, encompassing touch and closeness, adeptness in adapting to the context-dependent setting, showing regard for the person who extended the invitation to speak, managing voice volume, employing effective communication tactics, and being tuned to the cues conveyed through the body language of the interlocutor. Interpersonal communication abilities are mandatory for both direct and indirect types of communication. Indirect interpersonal communication encompasses various media outlets, including written correspondence, telecommunications, and online platforms. In contemporary society, the prevalence of indirect interpersonal contact through online platforms has surged, particularly among undergraduates. This trend can be connected to adhering to communication ethics and using mindful language in direct (face-to-face) communication. Nevertheless, within the scope of this research, the focus is on the specific kind of direct interpersonal interaction that is examined due to the requirements for proficiency in English courses offered by the six higher education institutions mentioned.

Numerous concerns arise from how humans engage in interpersonal communication, whether directly or indirectly. Hence, it is expected that people who engage in interpersonal communication will be able to understand and interpret the cues and signals presented in the interaction. Understanding such signals functions as an umbrella for people as they fulfil their obligations as proficient interpersonal speakers. The researchers modified interpersonal communication indicators derived from multiple investigations conducted by [34]-[36], as shown in this Table 4.

Table 4 provides a comprehensive compilation of various indicators that pertain to the area of interpersonal communication skills. These indicators serve as a fundamental framework for the implementation of language tasks. Based on the results obtained from the analysis presented in Table 3, it is evident that the highest mean score obtained is 4.3. This result signifies that a substantial percentage of the respondents, specifically 315 individuals, express a desire to share feelings or information with their peers. Additionally, these respondents are willing to communicate their thoughts and ideas to others. This finding aligns with the core concept of interpersonal communication skills [32], [33]. The two researchers have substantiated that interpersonal communication did not occur for an individual speaker. Interpersonal communication is a form of interaction between a number of people, typically involving group settings or at least two speakers. The capacity to simplify texts has the lowest mean (2.7).

A total of 315 participants were unable to facilitate the simplification of the conversation's content in instances where the engagement became stagnant or when the other participant required a better understanding of the message. Since most respondents are college students, this mean (2.7) is a profound reflection for them. In actuality, however, the average capacity to simplify communication messages must be improved further. The below-average score indicates that participants should improve their skill at paraphrasing the content of messages. In the context of English courses, the practice of rephrasing holds substantial significance considering the routine nature of human interactions on an everyday basis [37], [38]. Paraphrasing necessitates the speaker to reduce the linguistic level's complexity while maintaining the message's core. In the present context, it is necessary to possess micro linguistic skills, encompassing a wide vocabulary, grammatical proficiency, accurate pronunciation, and a comprehensive understanding of semantics.

Table 4. Interpersonal communication indicators and descriptor

Interpersonal communication indicators	Descriptor
Want to communicate	The speaker intends to convey their feelings and useful views to another effectively.
Encoding communicator	The capacity of a person sending a message (known as the encoder) to generate predetermined communication messages utilizing the codes, symbols, or signs of a particular language
Decoding communicator	The capacity of the message recipient (decoder) to comprehend and interpret the codes, symbols, and signs embedded in the language applied by the message sender
Message sending	The speaker possesses the ability to successfully convey messages to the recipient.
Message receiving	The recipients have the ability to comprehend the information included within the message as conveyed by the sender.
Responsive	Persons who are listening to a speaker can comprehend and react to the information conveyed in the communication.
Message simplification	The capacity of those engaged in communication to simplify the substance of communications in the case of a lack of improvements in the interpretation of meaning throughout a conversation
Communication media	The ability of speakers and speech partners to adjust and conform to the media adopted during an interpersonal interaction
Context	The sender and hearer have a mutual understanding of the context-related variables that determine their interactions.
Communication ethics	Both the sender and hearer possess knowledge regarding the designated time allocation, the order of conversing, as well as the extent and emphasis of the forthcoming communication
Intercultural sensitivity	The sender and the recipient can share mutual comprehension of social and cultural contexts.

In order to improve the implementation of all the indicators of interpersonal communication skills indicated in Table 4, it is recommended that speakers (both senders and receivers) show the guiding principles of interpersonal communication skills [39], [40], such as i) the phenomenon of human communication in its pure form. Humans are naturally social creatures who possess an innate need for language to communicate in interpersonal interactions. The cultural background of the people involved can determine the implementation of communication patterns. As mentioned earlier, context influences how intentions are communicated, encompassing verbal and non-verbal forms of expression. Communication is a fundamental necessity for human beings, with an important amount of their time (about 70%) allocated to participating in various forms of communication [41], [42]. Based on the available facts, it can be concluded that humans, primarily social creatures, cannot avoid the necessity of participating in communication; ii) interpersonal communication is deemed an essential requirement for human beings. Interpersonal communication is a fundamental aspect of human existence that is regularly represented. This form of communication is continuous and lacks the ability to be deleted or altered. Due to this characteristic, people who participate in public speaking are anticipated to effectively communicate suitable and socially acceptable messages. The speaker's communication does not result in any misinterpretation, affront, or provocation of the speech recipient. Hence, ethics plays a crucial role in interpersonal communication.

The ethical considerations regarding communication have the potential to cultivate a sense of mutual respect and create a harmonious balance of empathy among people participating in communication; iii) interpersonal communication is a phenomenon that can be attributed to the activity of human beings. During every stage of interpersonal communication, people take part in the construction of meaning, a process that is contingent upon the subjective interpretation of the communicated message. In the context of interpersonal communication, people will inevitably be involved in interpreting others' verbal expressions. The recipient's understanding of a communication message undergoes continuous transformation based on the contextual factors and circumstances in which it is received; iv) the effectiveness of interpersonal communication can be determined by meta-communication. Meta-communication refers to a person's understanding and interpretation of the information their conversational counterpart conveys during a spoken interaction. Interpersonal communication serves as a means to convey information through both spoken and nonverbal modes. Nonverbal elements play a crucial role in communication by conveying subtle meanings beyond verbal expressions and boosting the importance of spoken messages.

Communication is a universal phenomenon that covers various aspects of human existence. During the process of communication, it is often necessary for speakers to acquire knowledge or take into account their level of competence. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is based upon the sender's accurate reception and interpretation of the intended message, following voluntary action taken by the recipient, the potential enhancement of connections between people, and the absence of any challenges that impede the attainment of such goals. Therefore, effective communication can be defined as the fulfilment of three primary criteria: initially, the recipient of the message accurately perceives and understands the intended meaning conveyed by the sender. Furthermore, the act of communicating is frequently followed by deliberate behaviours. Thirdly, it is imperative to enhance interpersonal connections with others.

4.2. Interpersonal communication challenges on English course in Indonesia

Implementing interpersonal communication skills presents many kinds of challenges for speakers, encompassing factors such as variations in pronunciation, gaps in the interpretation of message content, limited adaptability in utilizing communication media, the sociocultural background of the listener, and numerous other obstacles. However, based on the data from the findings (as shown in Figure 1), it can be observed that the greatest obstacle, as indicated by a mean score of 4.6, among the 315 respondents is the need for clarification on their partner's dialect. The mean value of the respondents' reported issues regarding the comprehensibility of the speaking partner's words is slightly different, with an average score of 3.8. The outcome served as a source of motivation for college students to further enhance their speaking ability. Accurate pronunciation plays a vital role in comprehending the intended meaning conveyed by the speaker's words. Pronunciation is the term used to describe how words are articulated or spoken. It encompasses the act of uttering speech. In alternative phrasing, it articulates a concept, specifically in a way deemed acceptable or widely comprehensible [43], [44].

Every college student must dedicate effort to enhancing their pronunciation skills, fostering self-awareness regarding areas necessitating development. The domains mentioned above encompass several aspects of spoken language, such as intonation patterns (including falling, rising, and fall-rise intonation) exhibited by individual words and stress patterns (ranging from word-level to phrase-level, clause-level, and sentence-level stress). Additionally, the domains encompass rhythm, related speech and accent, correctness in pronunciation, and the appropriate rendering of weak sounds and connecting words [45] to eliminate any potential uncertainty in interpreting messages during interpersonal communication activities. Speakers are also urged to possess a comprehensive understanding of the notion of English communication competency in order to enhance their interpersonal communication performance to the best extent possible [16], [46]. English communication competency facilitates interpersonal communicators in demonstrating a range of markers of interpersonal communication abilities (Table 4).

The term "communicative competence" is a linguistic concept that refers to a person's understanding of a language and their capacity to apply it accurately and effectively within various social contexts. The objective of fostering communicative competence is to facilitate the acquisition of language skills applicable in practical contexts by providing real, appropriate, and interactive language-learning exchanges for learners [22], [47]. In the 21st century, the ideal outcome of higher education can communicate in English, collaborate, think critically, and be innovative and creative [48], [49]. The above-described concept of communicative competence functions as an agreed-upon basis for students to demonstrate communicative competence, which leads to the achievement of interpersonal communication in English courses in Indonesia. Indeed, English courses are mandatory for every program in Indonesian higher education institutions [50]. The learning objectives of this English course encompass the ability to communicate effectively in the English language. This premise posits a rational argument that a comprehensive comprehension of communicative competence can effectively address students' challenges in interpersonal communication.

4.3. Problem-based learning facilitates interpersonal communication skills

According to the survey findings, it was revealed that a total of 315 participants possessed a moderate level of communication skills, with a mean score of 3.26. Surpassing our initial expectations, the main obstacle (mean=4.6) encountered in developing these interpersonal communication abilities was the respondents' limited capacity to understand the dialect or pronunciation of the interlocutor during interactions. The attainment of clarity in the conveyed message depends upon the speaker's ability to apprehend their interlocutor's words.

Educational professionals, including professors, are actively responding to the findings of this poll. The professors have effectively implemented strategies to facilitate interpersonal communication skills to an optimal level and address the most major obstacles associated with this competence. PBL is a pedagogical approach that serves as a viable solution, characterized by its adaptability and preventive nature. PBL is an active learning model that requires learners constantly consider critically and be skilled at solving a real-world problem they experience [51], [52]. Furthermore, the researchers emphasized that the success rate of

this method depended on the student's engagement and the difficulty of the given problems. The more actively pupils use their cognitive abilities, the greater chances that problems will be solved. By applying this concept as a foundation, PBL aims to improve students' critical thinking skills, teach them how to solve problems systematically, help them comprehend their role in the real world, and encourage them to become communicative, collaborative persons, autonomous, and responsible.

Moreover, educators should gain a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of PBL, its syntax, and the necessary processes for its implementation. Scholars have employed diverse sources as the foundation for this conceptual framework. In the present study, the researchers made adjustments to the characteristics, syntax, and stages of applying the English course for college students in the Indonesian setting. The characteristics of PBL [53], [54], the educational approach focuses on student-centered learning, where the curriculum is designed around real-life situations that students encounter. The emphasis is on individual learning, allowing students to take ownership of their studies. The topics covered in the course are derived from students' real-life experiences, ensuring relevance and applicability. The learning activities are designed to promote interdisciplinary problem-solving skills. The ultimate goal is to reach learning targets, emphasizing group work to foster collaborative learning.

The aforementioned attributes serve as encouragement for educators or lecturers to incorporate PBL into the diverse educational settings in which they teach. In the case of such a scenario, educators are recommended to familiarize themselves with the syntax of PBL, such as i) educating students on problem orientation. At this stage, the educator will explain the learning objectives and procedures to motivate students to learn, ii) organize the learning of students. Educators organize tasks to be assigned to students at this stage, determining topics, procedures for assignment completion, and types of assessments, iii) provide students and groups with direction. Educators' direct students to appropriate sources or references for assigned problems, iv) constructing and presenting student work. Educators will assist students in preparing the results to be reported, such as reports, documentation, recordings, and other supporting theories, and v) analyze and evaluate the process of problem-solving. Educators require students to reflect on and evaluate the outcomes in both process and method [55], [56].

The accurate execution of this syntax can be attained by carefully and suitably adhering to the five stages of its application [57], [58], such as i) providing students with an explanation of the problem orientation. The instructor displays images of water contamination in intensely populated areas. Then, students are instructed to observe the image and provide easy-to-understand and appropriate comments. Students are then asked to formulate queries based on pollution images, such as "How does population density affect water pollution?"; ii) organizing the learning of students. At this stage, students must search for sources and references about the impact of population density on the quality of pure water or pollution; iii) provide instruction to students and their groups. Students are provided with worksheets on water contamination data from year to year and population growth; iv) developing and presenting student work. Students document the results of their investigation into the posed queries. Then, the records are processed to generate a report; and v) the problem-solving procedure is analysed and evaluated. Teachers guide students' analyses of the effect of density on water contamination. The results are then presented and assessed.

Every way of learning possesses both advantages and negative aspects. Nevertheless, the researchers have identified several advantages of PBL by analysing its characteristics, syntax, and execution stages commonly employed in English courses, such as students are always trained to think critically and be great at problem-solving, can increase student activity in the classroom, students are accustomed to learning from relevant sources, and learning activities operate more smoothly because students are required to be active. In addition, the disadvantages are that not all learning materials can apply this model, the time required to complete learning materials is longer, students who are not accustomed to analysing a problem are typically unwilling to work on it, and if there are too many students in a class, educators will find it difficult to condition the assignment.

Educators seeking to adopt PBL must possess a comprehensive understanding of the components above and demonstrate familiarity with the PBL framework. The researchers conclude that integrating many components in PBL is crucial for acquiring interpersonal communication skills in English courses in Indonesia. This conclusion is based on the researchers' assessment of excellence, which is determined by characteristics, practical application stages, and learning syntax.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it could be done to identify three key points that can be concluded, i) the study examines the interpersonal communication profiles of 315 participants from six universities across three provinces in Indonesia, namely Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, and East Nusa Tenggara. The findings indicate that the respondents' interpersonal communication profiles are categorized as medium,

with an average score of 3.26; ii) among the challenges faced by the 315 participants in developing their interpersonal communication skills within the English course, the most prominent obstacle, as indicated by a mean score of 4.6, is the difficulty in understanding their partner's accent; iii) additionally, the study explores the extent to which college students comprehend the PBL component to strengthen their interpersonal communication skills. This conclusion affirms that English language learners must understand interpersonal communication skills, encompassing indicators, types, and principles, to prevent stagnation in their daily interactions or fulfil the expectations of English course goals. Enhancing interpersonal communication skills among college students by incorporating PBL principles may contribute to a more empathetic, dynamic, engaging, practical, and applicable educational atmosphere.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the Rector of Universitas Katolik Indonesia, Santu Paulus Ruteng, who endorsed and facilitated this research. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Rector of Universitas Katolik Indonesia, Santu Paulus Ruteng, who supported and made this research possible. (Grand ID Number from Universitas Katolik Indonesia, Santu Paulus Ruteng: 19/USP/L02//KPT/11/2023).

REFERENCES




- [1] H. Elsa, "Communication games: their contribution to developing speaking skills," *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 643–658, 2021, doi: 10.29333/iji.2021.14437a.
- [2] J. Light, "'Communication is the essence of human life': reflections on communicative competence," *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 61–70, 2009, doi: 10.1080/07434619712331277848.
- [3] S. Ramaraju, "Psychological perspectives on interpersonal communication," *Journal of Arts, Science, and Commerce*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 66–73, 2012.
- [4] K. Nath, "Learner strategies and communicative acquisition: learner's autonomy from the indian perspective," *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 1142–1146, 2019, doi: 10.18510/HSSR.2019.76163.
- [5] A. Petrovici and T. Dobrescu, "The role of emotional intelligence in building interpersonal communication skills," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 116, pp. 1405–1410, 2014, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.406.
- [6] B. Daniluk, "Pragmatic aspects of verbal communication in elderly people: a study of polish seniors.," *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 493–505, 2020, doi: 10.1111/1460-6984.12532.
- [7] C. Koopmans, "Functional communication abilities in youth with cerebral palsy: association with impairment profiles and school-based therapy goals," *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 88–103, 2022, doi: 10.1044/2021_LSHSS-21-00064.
- [8] D. Sun, "From communicative competence to interactional competence: a new outlook to the teaching of spoken English," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, vol. 5, no. 5, pp. 1062–1070, 2014, doi: 10.4304/jltr.5.5.1062-1070.
- [9] V. A. Fromkin, *Linguistics: an introduction to linguistic theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003.
- [10] F. U. Kanaza, "A language function: the analysis of conative function in Meghan Markle's speech," *Etmological*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 54–73, 2020, doi: 10.20473/etmo.v4i1.20347.
- [11] R. A. Al-Shamiry, "Communicative competence of the saudi learners of English at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 446–461, 2020, doi: 10.17507/jltr.1103.13.
- [12] R. Pishghadam, "Introducing language decoration: a novel approach beyond communicative competence," *Language Related Research*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1–27, 2022, doi: 10.52547/LRR.13.1.1.
- [13] S. Piazzalunga, "The communicative participation in pre-school children estimated by the focus questionnaire: a functional communicative outcome measure," *Hearing, Balance and Communication*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 294–302, 2021, doi: 10.1080/21695717.2022.2028489.
- [14] D. Susanto, "The pragmatic meanings of address terms *sampeyan* and *anda*," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 140–155, 2014, doi: 10.17509/ijal.v4i1.606.
- [15] A. Burns, "Concepts for teaching speaking in the English language classroom 1," *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 1–11, 2019.
- [16] V. M. Campos, "Evolution of communicative competence through pragmatic intervention in language delay: case study," *Revista de Investigacion en Logopedia*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 1–9, 2021, doi: 10.5209/rlog.70831.
- [17] A. F. Cherepynska, H. A. Bevzo, and V. D. Zhuravlov, "Verbal aspects of interpersonal communication in English," *Mižnarodnij Filologičnij Časopis*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 92–100, 2022, doi: 10.31548/philolog13(4_2).2022.010.
- [18] J. Kondo, R. Tomizawa, T. Jibu, and K. Kamide, "Developing an interpersonal communication skill scale targeting female nursing students," *BMC Research Notes*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1–6, 2020, doi: 10.1186/s13104-020-4896-6.
- [19] C. Kwiatkowski, "Effective team leader and interpersonal communication skills," *Sustainable Leadership for Entrepreneurs and Academics*, pp. 121–130, 2019, doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-15495-0_13.
- [20] A. M. Breen and C. G. Giacalone, "Teaching interpersonal communication skills in athletic training professional programs: a mixed methods study," *Hispania*, vol. 102, no. 2, pp. 165–168, 2019, doi: 10.1353/hpn.2019.0038.
- [21] D. J. Sujaya and A. Yudianto, "Meta analysis study of interpersonal communication and speech delay in early childhood," *Journal of Family Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 86–108, 2023, doi: 10.29244/jfs.v8i1.44122.
- [22] A. Nameni, "A study of the level of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity of Iranian medical students based on ethnicity," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 21–34, 2019, doi: 10.1080/17475759.2018.1549586.
- [23] R. B. Rubin, P. Palmgreen, and H. E. Sypher, "Interpersonal communication satisfaction inventory," *Communication Research Measures*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 217–222, 2020, doi: 10.4324/9781003064343-33.
- [24] Ú. Beagon, D. Niall, and E. Ní Fhloinn, "Problem-based learning: student perceptions of its value in developing professional skills for engineering practice," *European Journal of Engineering Education*, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 850–865, 2019, doi:

- 10.1080/03043797.2018.1536114.
- [25] S. S. Ali, "Problem based learning: a student-centered approach," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 12, no. 5, p. 73, 2019, doi: 10.5539/elt.v12n5p73.
- [26] J. W. Creswell, *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*, Third. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008.
- [27] O. Hargie, *Skilled interpersonal communication: research theory and practice*, Sixth edit. London: Routledge, 2016.
- [28] U. Mahmudah and S. Fatimah, "Bootstrap approach for analyzing the influence of interpersonal communication skills on science performances," *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 137–148, 2021, doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v8i1p137.
- [29] A. Fawri and Y. Syukur, "The effectiveness of content mastery services with jigsaw type cooperative learning models to improve students' interpersonal communication skills," *International Journal of Applied Counseling and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 22–30, 2022, doi: 10.24036/005505ijaccs.
- [30] E. Purnomo *et al.*, "Profile: interpersonal communication skills for future coaches," *International Journal of Human Movement and Sports Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 964–972, 2021, doi: 10.13189/saj.2021.090518.
- [31] J. Ma and B. Lin, "The impact of college students' social anxiety on interpersonal communication skills: a moderated mediation model," *Scientific and Social Research*, vol. 4, no. 6, pp. 101–108, 2022, doi: 10.26689/ssr.v4i6.3993.
- [32] A. F. Bosede, "Assessment of interpersonal communication skills for provision of reference services in Academic Libraries, Kogi State, Nigeria: a study of eight tertiary institutions in Kogi State," *Scientific and Social Research*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 10–23, 2023, doi: 10.37745/ijliss.15/vol9n31023.
- [33] A. Moodley, A. van Aswegen, and L. Smit, "Are interpersonal communication skills adequately taught at postgraduate specialist level in south africa? the neurology experience," *South African Family Practice*, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 1–9, 2021, doi: 10.4102/safp.v63i1.5275.
- [34] S. A. S. Prasanna, H. T. C. S. Abeysena, and M. A. A. P. Alagiyawanna, "Development and validation of the interpersonal communication assessment tool for assessing the interpersonal communication skills of public health midwives," *BMC Health Services Research*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 1–9, 2023, doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-09511-7.
- [35] M. A. Tadesse, "Factors that affect students interpersonal communication skills in English Language and literature regular students at Kabridahar University," *Indian Journal of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 34–42, 2021, doi: 10.34256/ijll2114.
- [36] N. H. Abdurrahman, "The effect of interpersonal communication skills and work motivation on performance of marketing employee," *International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 190–195, 2018, doi: 10.14419/ijet.v7i2.29.13314.
- [37] E. F. Mahmud, F. Ampera, and B. Bayusena, "Paraphrase strategy in translating Indonesian novel into English," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 113–118, 2021, doi: 10.47191/ijsshr/v4-i1-17.
- [38] B. Nicula, M. Dascau, N. N. Newton, E. Orcutt, and D. S. Mcnamara, "Automated paraphrase quality assessment using language models and transfer learning," *Computers*, vol. 10, no. 166, pp. 1–16, 2021, doi: 10.3390/computers10120166.
- [39] N. Hasanah, M. Muhazir, S. W. Simarmata, A. Batubara, and R. Dina, "Effect of interpersonal communication skills of teachers in teaching teacher motivation during the pandemic COVID-19," *Journal Research of Social, Science, Economics, and Management*, vol. 1, no. 6, pp. 603–609, 2021, doi: 10.36418/jrssem.v1i6.82.
- [40] P. Pečiuliauskienė, "The structure of interpersonal communication skills of the new generation senior school students: the case of generations x and z," *Pedagogika*, vol. 130, no. 2, pp. 116–130, 2018, doi: 10.15823/p.2018.26.
- [41] H. U. Şakiroğlu, "Oral corrective feedback preferences of university students in English communication classes," *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 172–178, 2020.
- [42] A. C. Tankovic, J. Kapeš, and D. Benazić, "Measuring the importance of communication skills in tourism," *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istrazivanja*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 460–479, 2023, doi: 10.1080/1331677X.2022.2077790.
- [43] A. P. Gilakjani, "English pronunciation instruction: a literature review," *International Journal of Research in English Education*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–8, 2016.
- [44] W. Syafitri, "Improving students' speaking ability through video making," *MELT Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 48–58, 2017.
- [45] K. Saito, "Communicative focus on second language phonetic form: teaching japanese learners to perceive and produce English /ɱ/ without explicit instruction," *Applied Psycholinguistics*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 377–409, 2015, doi: 10.1017/S0142716413000271.
- [46] T. A. Martynova *et al.*, "Interdisciplinary communicative competence: from conceptualising to operationalising," *Education and Science*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 12–36, 2023, doi: 10.17853/1994-5639-2023-4-12-36.
- [47] E. Ivashkevych and L. Prymachok, "Psycholinguistic peculiarities of the development of communicative competence of teachers of secondary schools," *Psycholinguistics*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 95–121, 2020, doi: 10.31470/2309-1797-2020-27-1-95-121.
- [48] S. Menggo, I. M. Suastra, M. Budiarsa, and N. N. Padmadewi, "Needs analysis of academic-english speaking material in promoting 21st century skills," *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 739–754, 2019, doi: 10.29333/iji.2019.12247a.
- [49] S. Ndiung, Sariyasa, E. Jehadus, and R. A. Apsari, "The effect of treffinger creative learning model with the use rme principles on creative thinking skill and mathematics learning outcome," *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 873–888, 2021, doi: 10.29333/iji.2021.14249a.
- [50] J. N. Iman, "Debate instruction in efl classroom: impacts on the critical thinking and speaking skill," *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 87–108, 2017, doi: 10.12973/iji.2017.1046a.
- [51] C. M. Amerstorfer and C. F. V. Münster-Kistner, "Student perceptions of academic engagement and student-teacher relationships in problem-based learning," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, no. October, pp. 1–18, 2021, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057.
- [52] N. Othman and M. I. A. Shah, "Problem-based learning in the english language classroom," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 125–134, 2013, doi: 10.5539/elt.v6n3p125.
- [53] E. D. Graff and A. Kolmos, "A critical review of problem based learning in architectural education," *International Journal English Education*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 182–189, 2003, doi: 10.52842/conf.ecaade.2006.182.
- [54] T. Itatani, K. Nagata, K. Yanagihara, and N. Tabuchi, "Content analysis of student essays after attending a problem-based learning course: facilitating the development of critical thinking and communication skills in japanese nursing students," *Healthcare*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 1–14, 2017, doi: 10.3390/healthcare5030047.
- [55] B. Ptasznik, "Single-clause when-defining models in english monolingual pedagogical dictionaries," *International Journal of Lexicography*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 112–134, 2021, doi: 10.1093/ijl/eca021.
- [56] M. Fedosyuk, "A taboo on personal names and on the pronoun ty as a component of Russian speech etiquette," *Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 417–425, 2020, doi: 10.31648/PW.5999.




- [57] I. J. P. Saldo and A. M. P. Walag, A, "Utilizing problem-based and project-based learning in developing students' communication and collaboration skills in physics," *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 232–237, 2020, doi: 10.12691/education-8-5-1.
- [58] S. Khodijah, S. Suharno, and T. Tryanto, "Strategy for increasing the students' interpersonal communication skills through problem-based learning," *International Journal of Educational Research Review*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 150–158, 2018, doi: 10.24331/ijere.457979.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



Sabina Ndiung    is an Associate Professor in Department of Primary and Secretary to the Vice Rector of Student Affairs at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus, Ruteng, Indonesia. Her research interests include a wide range of topics related Mathematics learning of primary, education, and cultural studies. She can be contacted at email: punyaku79@gmail.com.



Sebastianus Menggo    is a Professor in the Department of English and Head of Quality Assurance, Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus, Ruteng, Indonesia. Received a Dr degree in Applied Linguistics from the Universitas Udayana, Indonesia. His research interests encompass extensive issues connected to English language instruction, applied linguistics, ICT used in language teaching, and cultural studies. He can be contacted at email: sebastian.pradana@gmail.com.