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AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place Construction: A Systematic Literature Review and Theoretical Framework Development in BIPA

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A B S T R A C T

The ongoing problem of "cultural aphasia" in Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) programs is reported to demand innovative pedagogical methods. Although learners had gained linguistic proficiency, most still struggled with effective intercultural communication. Therefore, the reliance on Kramsch's theory of the "intercultural third place" enabled this systematic literature review to examine the needs and opportunities of implementing artificial intelligence (AI) to create dynamic cultural settings and support identity negotiation. The qualitative, theory-based analysis of 74 publications and 12 AI-generated intercultural scenarios focused on a three-part model that included context generation, cultural comparison, and identity construction. This was achieved using AI's strengths to foster immersion in intercultural settings. The results showed that AI served as both a technological and pedagogical companion in creating a "third place" of learning that alleviated cultural aphasia. Theoretically, this study extended Kramsch's Third Place theory into the digital age by integrating it with contemporary human-machine collaborative learning frameworks. Practically, the study provided BIPA teachers with a structured roadmap for designing AI-enhanced intercultural learning experiences, and supported Indonesia's cultural diplomacy goals through a more dialogic model of cultural diffusion. It also offered critical insights into the ethical boundaries of AI application in intercultural language education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI); Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA); identity construction; intercultural communication; third place

Konstruksi Intercultural Third Place Berbasis Kecerdasan Buatan: Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis dan Pengembangan Kerangka Teoretis dalam Pembelajaran BIPA

Permasalahan cultural aphasia dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan penguasaan struktur linguistik belum tentu diikuti oleh kemampuan komunikasi lintas budaya yang memadai. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan sebuah kerangka teoretis mengenai Intercultural Third Place berbasis kecerdasan buatan (Artificial Intelligence/AI) sebagai respons konseptual terhadap tantangan tersebut melalui tinjauan literatur sistematis. Berlandaskan teori Intercultural Third Place dari Kramsch, teori identitas budaya, serta kajian mutakhir tentang pemanfaatan AI dalam pendidikan bahasa, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis konstruksi teoretis. Melalui sintesis kritis atas 74 publikasi dan 12 skenario lintas budaya hasil AI, penelitian ini mengusulkan model tripartit yang terdiri atas generasi konteks, perbandingan budaya, dan konstruksi identitas. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa AI memiliki potensi sebagai fasilitator teknologis sekaligus kolaborator pedagogis dalam menciptakan ruang pembelajaran lintas budaya yang dinamis, reflektif, dan aman bagi negosiasi identitas pembelajar. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas relevansi teori Third Place ke era digital dengan mengintegrasikannya dengan kerangka pembelajaran kolaboratif manusia-AI kontemporer. Secara praktis, penelitian ini memberikan peta jalan terstruktur bagi pendidik BIPA untuk merancang pengalaman belajar lintas budaya yang diperkuat AI, mendukung tujuan diplomasi budaya Indonesia melalui model difusi budaya yang lebih dialogis, serta menawarkan wawasan kritis tentang batas etis penerapan AI dalam pendidikan bahasa lintas budaya.

***Kata kunci**: kecerdasan buatan (artificial intelligence/ai); BIPA; intercultural third place; komunikasi antarbudaya; konstruksi identitas*

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era of globalization, where the language of intercultural communication is increasingly complex, and where an exponential rise in the capabilities of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is happening in the field of language education, an unprecedented paradigm shift is occurring in the field of language education (Warschauer, 2023; Zhao et al., 2025). Furthermore, the development of large language models (LLMs) and conversational agents from simple grammar checkers to intelligent pedagogical assistants (Chu et al., 2025; Casheekar et al., 2024) opens up new prospects for language learning and teaching. In this technological revolution, people around the world have begun to understand that knowledge of one's own language is not enough for effective cross-cultural communication. The symbolic competence on the part of the learners also had to be cultivated, which involved the capacity to be able to interpret and negotiate the meanings of culture in a variety of rich and dynamic situations (Kramsch, 2013; Byram, 2021). In the light of traditional computer-assisted language learning (CALL), traditional systems were restricted to pre-scripted dialogues and drill and practice exercises (Zhang & Aslan, 2021). In addition, the modern application of generative AI resulted in immersive learning environments with a response function, where it was possible to simulate real intercultural experiences (Nugraha et al., 2023; Dang et al., 2025).

This worldwide movement coincided with the national agenda of educational reform and cultural diplomacy in Indonesia. Digital literacy, 21st century skills, and the development of the globally oriented learner were stated as the learning outcomes of digital literacy in the Independent Curriculum policy initiated by the government (Jannah et al., 2024; Susandi et al., 2024). At the same time, the government has set an ambitious target of increasing the number of foreign learners to 1 million by 2030, and has recognized the "Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing" (BIPA) program as one of its soft power projection strategies (Mulyaningsih et al., 2026). Indonesia recently launched a national AI roadmap that prioritized integration in education to support this objective (Ikhsan et al., 2025). The whole process provided an extraordinary opportunity to change the pedagogy of BIPA. Even though AI is receiving more and more interest in Indonesian education, its implementation is not entirely uniform, because there are still some infrastructure, ethical, and pedagogical problems (Nuryadin & Marlina, 2023). BIPA classrooms had applications that targeted linguistic skills and not intercultural learning.

At the field level, BIPA pedagogy faced a persistent and deeply rooted challenge, termed cultural aphasia (Abrian & Ardiyanti, 2025). This phenomenon refers to a situation where learners achieved high levels of grammatical accuracy and vocabulary mastery but could not communicate effectively in real-world intercultural contexts. Previous studies showed that international and BIPA learners often experienced challenges in understanding cultural nuances, navigating social interactions, and showing intercultural communication competence in authentic settings (Nuryanti et al., 2020; Pinariya & Sutjipto, 2021; Asteria et al., 2026; Nuryanti et al., 2020). In addition, the problem was worsened by traditional BIPA pedagogies that prioritized linguistic mechanics over cultural learning, often reducing Indonesian culture to static representations of festivals, food, and traditional arts instead of dynamic, lived experiences (Hasanah et al., 2020). Contextualized and technology-integrated cultural materials increasingly enabled meaningful BIPA learning (Purlilaiceu et al., 2025). This static method was strengthened by the use of digital tools, which depended on pre-recorded videos as well as interactive quizzes rather than on dynamic and dialogic interactions (Ramliyana, 2016).

Considering that the potential of AI in language education has been extensively studied over the past five years, significant gaps remain in the understanding of how it can support intercultural

learning and identity construction. Existing studies have mainly focused on AI applications for improving discrete linguistic skills, such as automated writing feedback (Kwon et al., 2023), speech recognition and pronunciation training (Lu et al., 2026), including personalized vocabulary acquisition (Yang et al., 2025). The growing body of studies have also explored the role of AI in enhancing learner engagement (Hu et al., 2025; Xie et al., 2021), collaborative learning (Li et al., 2025; Liu & Tian, 2026), and mixed reality learning environments (Dang et al., 2025). Additionally, previous studies have examined the effectiveness of conversational agents in providing adaptive feedback (Pachouly & Bormane, 2025) as well as supporting goal-setting interventions (Binh et al., 2021).

Few studies have examined how generative AI and conversational agents facilitated the construction of an Intercultural Third Place. This refers to a symbolic space where learners can safely experiment with dual identities and negotiate cultural meanings (Shi et al., 2022). Considering that some recent analyses have explored related topics, such as the use of multi-agent systems to create high-presence online learning environments (Yu et al., 2024) and the role of AI in promoting viewpoint materialization in collaborative knowledge construction (Liu & Tian, 2026), these studies have not explicitly connected the respective results to Kramsch's Third Place theory. Furthermore, existing studies on AI and identity construction in language learning have been largely limited to English education in Western contexts (Nguyen, 2022; Matsui, 2024). This created a significant gap in the understanding of how these dynamics unfolded in non-Western languages and cultures.

The gap is even more pronounced in the context of BIPA pedagogy. Recent studies have documented the increasing adoption of digital tools in BIPA classrooms (Aisyah et al., 2026), but none have systematically explored how AI can be used to address the problem of cultural aphasia. Existing BIPA studies need to integrate LLMs as pedagogical companions for identity negotiation, leaving a theoretical and practical void in the understanding of how technology can transform intercultural language learning in the Indonesian context. The lack of conceptual frameworks that addressed Kramsch's Third Place theory with contemporary AI studies made it difficult for BIPA practitioners to design effective AI-enhanced intercultural learning experiences.

Following the description above, this gap urgently needs to be addressed, considering Indonesia's cultural diplomacy goals. For BIPA programs that consistently produced linguistically proficient but culturally incompetent learners, Indonesia needs to compete with other major language teaching programs. These included Confucius and Goethe Institutes, and Alliance Françaises, which have long prioritized intercultural competence as a core objective. Moreover, the failure to address cultural aphasia risks perpetuating stereotypes about Indonesian culture and hindering meaningful cross-cultural understanding among the rest of the world. As AI continues to transform education at an unprecedented pace (Wamba et al., 2023), there is a critical need to develop context-specific frameworks that guide the ethical and effective integration in BIPA intercultural pedagogy.

The state of the art in AI and intercultural language education is characterized by a fundamental shift from the view as a tool for knowledge transmission to the recognition as a partner for multimodal interaction and higher-order thinking (Zhao et al., 2025). This shift was supported by recent theoretical developments in human-machine collaborative learning, which outlined the complementary strengths of humans and AI rather than the replacement by machines (Figge et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2026). For example, Jiang et al. (2024) proposed a scenario-based framework for human-AI collaborative learning that has been widely adopted in organizational settings as well as increasingly being applied to education. Te'eni et al. (2023) further advanced this field by developing

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the theory of reciprocal human-machine learning, which posited humans and AI can learn from each other in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Several studies have started to extend Kramsch's Third Place theory into the digital age. Initially, Kramsch (1993) conceptualized the Third Place as a symbolic space between native and target cultures, where learners negotiated respective identities and developed intercultural competence. Recent studies have shown that AI has the potential to transform this abstract concept into a concrete, accessible learning space. For example, Yu et al. (2024) have shown how multi-agent systems created high-presence online learning environments that supported identity construction. Liu and Tian (2026) examined how AI facilitated viewpoint materialization in online collaborative knowledge construction. Nguyen (2022) has further shown that different designs of conversational agents influenced discussion patterns and learner identity performance. Meanwhile, Ba et al. (2021) explored how pedagogical agents with emotional cues enhanced learner engagement, including identity integration.

Several existing studies focused on English language education in Western contexts, despite the numerous promising developments. This led to the critical need for context-specific studies that explored how AI could be adapted to support intercultural learning in non-Western languages such as Indonesian. Considering that several analyses have begun to address the ethical challenges of AI in education (Baradziej, 2026; Fugener et al., 2021), there is a lack of investigation that specifically examined the ethical implications of using the tool to mediate intercultural interactions in contexts where power imbalances between cultures exist. The present study addressed these gaps by developing a theoretical framework grounded in both international scholarship and the unique realities of BIPA pedagogy.

This study had significant contributions to both theory and practice. In theory, it takes Kramsch's (1993) Third Place theory and adds to it rather than replacing it with the developments of recent years in the field of AI in the education of people and of cultural identity theory (Norton, 2013; Wang, 2021). The analysis also helped to enrich the existing research on human-machine collaborative learning (Figge et al., 2024; Te'eni et al., 2023), in that it examines the potential of using AI to facilitate higher-order learning outcomes like intercultural competence and identity construction. Besides, the bias of Western context in the current study was overcome by providing the framework that was adapted to the Indonesian context.

A roadmap was provided to BIPA practitioners to guide the integration of AI into their respective teaching with a view to developing empathy and overcoming cultural aphasia. The tripartite framework featured context generation, cultural comparison, and identity construction, offering a clear-cut, action-oriented approach to designing AI-supported intercultural learning experiences. Additionally, the results have implications for educational policy and curriculum design. It offered insights into how the Kurikulum Merdeka's focus on digital literacy and intercultural competence could be effectively implemented in BIPA programs (Liu et al., 2024; Corry, 2026). The study also contributed to Indonesian cultural diplomacy by offering a more dialogic and participatory model of cultural diffusion that empowered learners to become active agents in the global dissemination of Indonesian culture (Memon & Kwan, 2025).

METHOD

A qualitative theoretical construction method informed by a SLR following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines was adopted. In this context, the guidelines conformed to the core objective of developing a conceptual framework for AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place in BIPA pedagogy. The study focused on synthesizing interdisciplinary scholarship and illustrative pedagogical materials to

construct an explanatory theoretical model that may guide future empirical analyses, rather than conducting classroom experiments or learner-based surveys (Hou, 2025). In addition, the study was conducted between December 2024 and October 2025 at the Faculty of Language and Literature Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The three methodological principles that further guided the entire process included: (1) grounded abstraction, theoretical insights were generated from multidimensional evidence while maintaining empirical grounding; (2) analytical transparency, each formulated question was explicitly connected to a corresponding analytical pathway; and (3) critical synthesis, the study compared, contrasted, and reconciled competing perspectives in the literature rather than summarizing prior analyses. The processes are shown in the following figure 1.

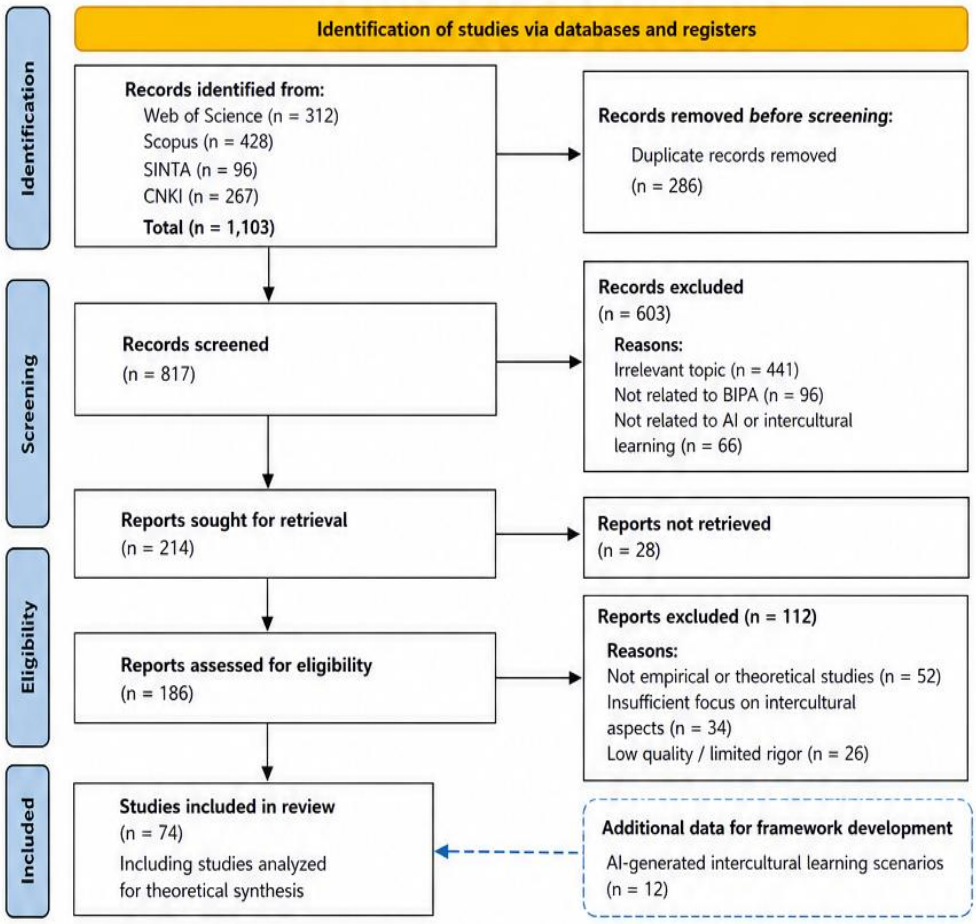


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 FLOW Diagram of the SLR

Based on this perspective, three categories of data were collected to inform the theoretical framework. Peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), SINTA, CNKI, selected conference proceedings and academic books, were included. The literature search was conducted between January and October 2025, covering publications from 2015 to 2025. Furthermore, the search strategy combined keywords using Boolean operators. The representative search strings were stated as follows

("artificial intelligence" OR "generative AI" OR "conversational agents")
AND ("intercultural communication" OR "third place" OR "cultural identity")
AND ("language education" OR "BIPA")

The initial search produced 1,103 records across four databases, including Web of Science (312), Scopus (428), SINTA (96), and CNKI (267). However, after the removal of 286 duplicate records, 817 records remained for title and abstract screening. Following the exclusion of irrelevant or low-

quality studies, 214 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Finally, 74 publications were retained for analysis. Inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and authoritative academic books, (2) direct relevance to AI in language education, intercultural communication theory, identity construction, or BIPA pedagogy, (3) explicit theoretical contribution or methodological rigor, and (4) accessible full text in English, Indonesian, or Chinese. Exclusion criteria included: (1) non-academic reports, editorials, blogs, or opinion pieces, (2) duplicate records, (3) studies focusing solely on technical AI engineering without pedagogical relevance, and (4) studies unrelated to intercultural or language education contexts. The screening process followed PRISMA guidelines, including title/abstract screening and full-text eligibility assessment.

The pedagogical affordances of generative AI in intercultural context generation were showed by creating 12 representative intercultural dialogue scenarios. These were actualized using three large language models, namely DeepSeek, GPT-4o, and Claude 3 Opus. The scenarios addressed culturally relevant themes in BIPA contexts, including: comparative cultural practices (e.g., Idul Fitri vs. Spring Festival), everyday intercultural social interactions, and culturally sensitive contemporary issues. All scenarios were generated through iterative prompting based on standardized prompts to ensure consistency across platforms. Furthermore, the scenarios were used as illustrative analytical materials rather than empirical primary data. These served to show the capabilities of AI in contextual simulation and identity negotiation. Credibility was enhanced by ensuring all generated scenarios were reviewed by three experienced BIPA teachers (minimum three years of teaching experience) for cultural appropriateness, contextual authenticity, and pedagogical relevance.

The theoretical framework was contextualized within real pedagogical practice. This was achieved by collecting 18 BIPA teaching practice reports published between 2017 and 2024 from Indonesian academic journals, conference proceedings, and institutional reports. The numerous reports were analysed to identify recurring instructional challenges, particularly: overreliance on static cultural materials, limited intercultural interaction opportunities, and insufficient support for identity negotiation.

The analysis adopted three main instruments: (1) reference management and coding software- used to organize, screen, classify, and code the 74 included publications systematically, (2) AI dialogue platforms (DeepSeek, GPT-4o, and Claude 3 Opus)- used to generate the 12 intercultural scenario samples based on standardized prompting protocols, and (3) thematic coding manual- a pre-developed coding model structured around the three core dimensions of the proposed framework, namely: context generation, cultural comparison, identity construction. The coding manual was used consistently across all three data sources.

The rigour and trustworthiness of this construction study of a theory were verified through the use of three strategies for validity: (1) data triangulation (literature, AI-generated samples, BIPA practice reports) was done to validate emerging themes and hypotheses, (2) theoretical Saturation – Literature was reviewed until no new core concepts and theoretical understandings emerged, thus ensuring thoroughness of the literature for the study domain, and (3) three experienced BIPA teachers (5+ years teaching experience) reviewed all scenarios generated by AI to ensure that they are culturally accurate, contextually appropriate, and pedagogically relevant. This helped the scenarios to represent real-life intercultural interactions in Indonesian contexts.

There was a three-stage iterative process in data analysis. Stage 1: thematic analysis. All data sources were coded using the thematic coding manual to identify recurring concepts related to AI-generated contextualization, intercultural comparison, identity reflection, and negotiation. Stage 2: critical synthesis. The competing or complementary perspectives in the literature were compared and reconciled to identify theoretical tensions, such as AI as a tool vs. a collaborator, culture transmission vs. negotiation. Stage 3: conceptual mapping. The identified themes and relationships were visually

and conceptually mapped to construct the tripartite theoretical framework. This ensured coherence with the formulated questions and theoretical foundations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

AI Capabilities for Generating Dynamic Intercultural Situations

Generative AI and conversational agents possessed three distinct capabilities that addressed the limitations of static traditional BIPA materials. These capabilities included: (1) dynamism- AI tended to generate real-time, responsive dialogues based on learner input, adapting to unexpected questions and conversational turns rather than following pre-scripted paths. These enabled simulations of authentic intercultural encounters that evolved through negotiation instead of being predetermined; (2) plasticity- AI adjusted the complexity, tone, and depth of cultural explanations to suit individual learner proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, and communicative goals. It provided surface-level descriptions for beginners as well as facilitated critical discussions of complex cultural issues for advanced learners, and (3) diversity- this digital tool integrated multiple cultural references into a single interaction, moving beyond binary "target vs. native culture" comparisons to multidimensional analyses that reflected the polycultural nature of global communication.

Mechanisms of AI-Supported Identity Reflection and Reconstruction

AI-empowered learning environments facilitated meaningful cultural identity studies through three interconnected mechanisms, namely: (1) role transformation- Interactions with AI required learners to actively describe and explain cultural phenomena, shifting respective position from passive consumers of cultural knowledge to active producers and interpreters, (2) low-stakes experimentation- AI provided a judgment-free space where learners experimented with different identity positions, communication styles, and cultural perspectives without fear of embarrassment or social punishment, and (3) contingent identity materialization- Sustained interaction with AI enabled the gradual development of fluid, context-dependent intercultural identities that transcended monocultural frameworks.

Integrated Framework of AI-Empowered Intercultural Third Place

The synthesis of the results from RQ1 and RQ2, combined with Kramsch's Third Place and cultural identity theories, led to a tripartite theoretical framework that consisted of three mutually reinforcing dimensions, namely: (1) context generation- AI created dynamic, personalized intercultural environments that served as the foundation for learning, (2) cultural comparison- AI mediates nuanced, multidimensional comparisons between cultures, showing underlying values and preventing stereotyping, and (3) identity construction- the digital tool catalysed self-transformation by providing opportunities for role experimentation and identity negotiation. The diverse dimensions operated in an organic cycle; for example, context generation enabled cultural comparison. This stimulated identity reflection, alongside evolving identities that shaped subsequent interactions, and context creation.

Table 1. Core Study Results Summary

Study Question	Core Results	Key AI Capabilities	Theoretical Association
RQ1: How can AI create dynamic intercultural situations in BIPA?	AI addresses static material limitations through dynamism, plasticity, and diversity	Real-time response generation, adaptive content adjustment, multicultural knowledge integration	Situated learning theory, human-machine collaborative learning
RQ2: How can AI support identity reflection and reconstruction?	AI facilitates identity studies through role transformation, low-stakes experimentation, and contingent identity materialization	Non-judgmental interaction, role-play simulation, sustained dialogue	Cultural identity theory (Norton, 2013; Wang, 2021)
RQ3: How to integrate Third Place theory with AI study?	A tripartite framework of context generation, cultural comparison, and identity construction form the AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place	Multimodal interaction, knowledge synthesis, scaffolded learning	Kramsch's (1993) Third Place theory

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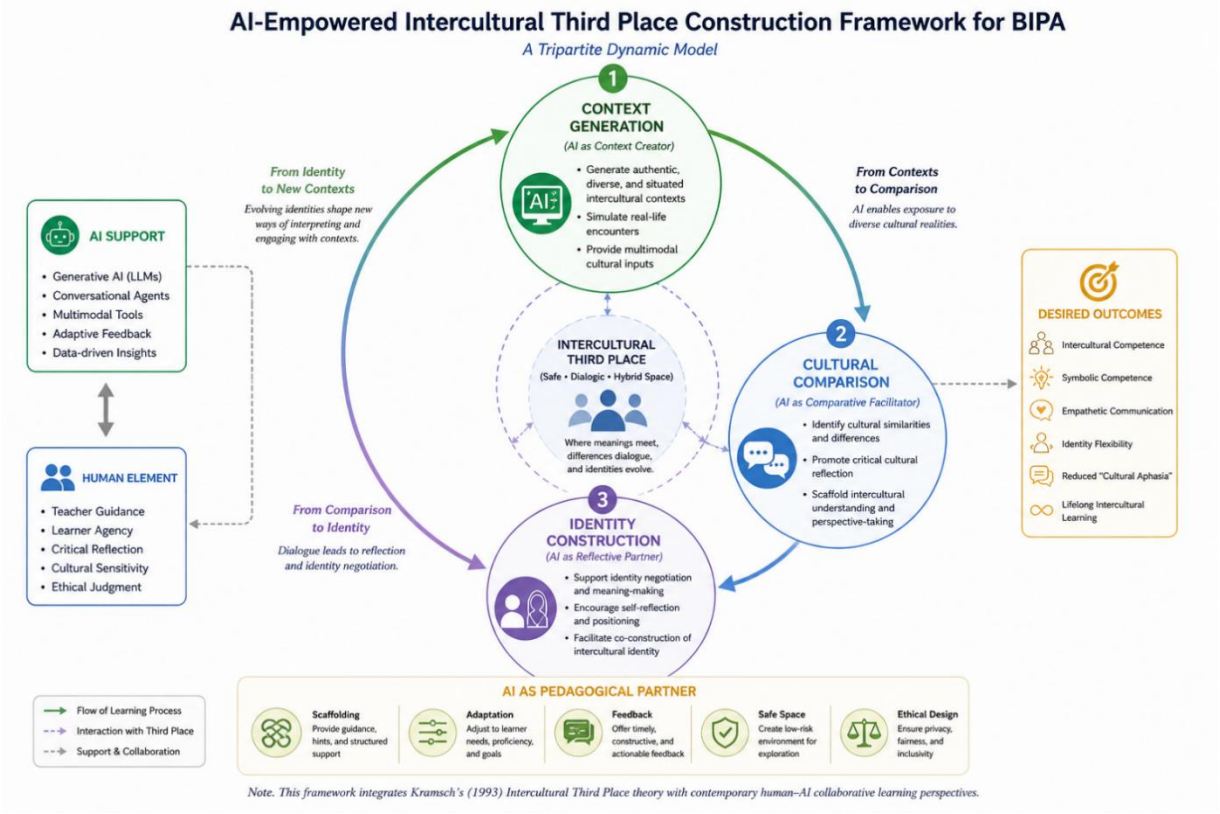


Figure 2. AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place Construction Model

In the conceptual model presented in Figure 2, the dynamic structure of an AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place in BIPA pedagogy is depicted. The model comprised three interrelated dimensions, namely context generation, cultural comparison and identity construction. The size of the dimensions created a recursive and reinforcing relationship of intercultural learning. Context generation involves generative AI's ability to generate context, situational, and adaptive intercultural scenarios at the root level. The contexts created by the AI simulated real communicative situations and, in this way, allowed learners to interact with culturally embedded meanings which were not simply represented through texts in the classroom. Developmental cultural comparison involved a guided comparison and interpretation of a number of related perspectives. Learners were motivated to move beyond binary oppositions and develop a nuanced understanding of cultural differences and underlying value systems, through AI-mediated dialogue.

Identity construction is the transformative dimension of the model and learners engage in negotiating, constructing, and enacting intercultural identities at the highest level. AI's characteristics of low-stakes experimentation, role-play simulation, and continuous interaction all contributed to the psychologically safe environment for identity exploration. The three dimensions as described above are not linear, but cyclical. Reflections on identity were stimulated by the cultural comparison brought about by context generation. These materialized identities helped to structure subsequent interactions and contextual configurations. In this context the model operationalized the Third Place theory as a dynamic learning space, which is not static or fixed but constantly in a state of becoming; and introduced AI as a technological enabler, a pedagogical collaborator, and not as a true substitute for agency.

Discussion

Digital Reconstruction of Kramsch's Third Place Theory

The most important theoretical contribution of this study is the advancement of Kramsch's theory of Third Place into the age of AI. The Third Place was initially conceived by Kramsch (1993) as an abstract and symbolic place between cultures where meaning is negotiated and identities created. The findings revealed that AI significantly enhanced the abstraction of the concept and the creation of contexts that were dynamic and responded to students' needs, as described by Kramsch as central to intercultural learning. AI was able to help this transformation due to its ability to directly overcome the challenges of the traditional classroom when it comes to the Third Place concept. The traditional classroom was limited by time, space, and teachers' resources, making it hard to carry out the sustained intercultural interactions emphasized by Kramsch (Yu et al., 2024).

However, AI tended to generate unlimited context-specific scenarios, adapt to individual learner needs, and facilitate continuous dialogue outside of class hours. This is in line with the study by Liu and Tian (2026) that multi-agent systems created high-presence online learning environments responsible for supporting collaborative knowledge construction and identity formation. The tripartite framework proposed added structural clarity to Kramsch's slightly revised amorphous concept of the Third Place. The breaking down of the Third Place into three measurable dimensions, namely context generation, cultural comparison, and identity construction, enabled the framework to provide teachers with a practical roadmap for designing intercultural learning experiences. This addressed a longstanding criticism of Third Place theory, regarding the abstract nature of guiding classroom practice (Shi et al., 2022).

Symbiotic Logic of Human-AI Collaborative Intercultural Teaching

The results confirmed that AI functioned best as a pedagogical companion rather than a replacement for human teachers. This supported the symbiotic human-AI relationship proposed in recent organizational learning studies (Figge et al., 2025). The symbiotic relationship is rooted in the complementary strengths of humans and AI. For example, AI excelled at generating dynamic contexts, providing immediate feedback, and facilitating repetitive practice. Human teachers incorporated lived cultural experiences, emotional intelligence, and ethical judgment into the learning process. The division of labour resolved the "automation-augmentation paradox" identified by Raisch and Krakowski (2021), which stated AI automated tasks or augmented human capabilities but rarely both effectively. In intercultural language education, division of labour automated the routine aspects of context generation and basic cultural explanation.

This enabled human teachers to focus on the higher-order tasks of facilitating critical discussions and mediating cultural conflicts to guide identity development. This was in line with the theory of reciprocal human-machine learning proposed by Te'eni et al. (2023), which posited that humans and AI can learn from each other in a mutually beneficial relationship. In the BIPA context, this symbiotic relationship is particularly valuable considering the shortage of qualified teachers with advanced intercultural competence (Wang et al., 2024). Interactive multimedia and digital tools improve both linguistic performance and cultural understanding in BIPA classrooms (Karuniawan & Surjono, 2025). AI further extended the reach of expert teachers by providing consistent, high-quality intercultural learning experiences to large numbers of learners. The teachers focused on aspects of intercultural education that required human connection. This also aligns with the study by Dixit et al. (2024) that AI can help meet the evolving needs of learners in training and development contexts.

Mechanisms for Resolving BIPA's Cultural Aphasia Problem

The tripartite framework was a complete solution to the problem of cultural aphasia in pedagogy of BIPA, which has been present for a long time. In addition, cultural aphasia was observed due to the fact that the traditional pedagogies of BIPA focused on the language mechanisms rather than cultural learning. This situation made the culture only static facts that were memorized but not internalized (Abrian & Ardiyanti, 2025). To solve this problem, the AI-enabled Third Place theory

proposed to involve students in hands-on, experiential cultural learning rather than passive knowledge transfer. Firstly, AI's ability to dynamically generate contexts helped learners to experience culture as an ongoing process, not as a collection of rules. This was in contrast to traditional textbooks where Indonesian culture was usually depicted as an array of exotic festivals and traditions that were not related to the present-day lifestyle (Hasanah et al., 2020; Purlilaiceu et al., 2025). AI was used in the simulation of real-world intercultural encounters, helping the learner build symbolic competence in dealing with complex cultural situations (Kramsch, 2013).

Secondly, the safe space created by AI decreased the psychological obstacles some learners faced when engaging in meaningful intercultural communication. Cao et al. (2025) discovered that many language learners felt anxious about engaging in an oral language learning environment with native speakers, and that they were afraid of making errors and being judged. With AI, anxiety was eradicated, and an environment was created for learners to experiment freely without fear of embarrassment and learn from their mistakes. This is especially true when it comes to the construction of identity, since the learners were more likely to take risks and experiment with new identity positions in a safe space than in a threatening space (Norton, 2013). Lastly, the framework's emphasis on building identity produced a personal connection to the culture of Indonesia for learners. The active involvement of the learner in interpreting and explaining the culture allowed the learners to enter into the culture in a deeper way, an emotional and intellectual way. This aligns with a recent study by Kostis et al. (2024) which found that conversational learning with generative AI led to a deeper understanding and retention of knowledge for students, compared to other learning methods.

Dialogue with Existing AI Language Education Study

The present analysis was directed at a substantial gap in the previous body of work in AI language education research focusing on discrete language learning and not on identity construction and intercultural competence. Previous research has focused on the use of AI in writing feedback (Kwon et al., 2023), pronunciation training (Lu et al., 2026), and vocabulary acquisition (Yang et al., 2025), and the cultural aspects of language learning have been less studied. The findings complemented this body of research by demonstrating that AI facilitated learning of higher order learning outcomes like intercultural competence and identity development. This contradicted the widely held belief that AI could only be used in teaching basic language skills (Casheekar et al., 2024). Furthermore, the focus on the Indonesian context addressed the Western bias in existing AI language education studies, which have been largely limited to English language teaching in Western countries (Nguyen, 2022; Matsui, 2024).

The study further contributed to the growing literature on human-machine collaborative learning in education. Considering that previous analyses have focused on collaborative learning between humans and AI in general (Figge et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2026), the present study specifically examined how the collaboration can be applied to intercultural language education. It provided empirical support for the result by Jarrahi et al. (2023) that AI and humans can form effective partnerships for knowledge management as well as learning. The results of this study are in line with the investigation on personalized learning in AI education. Wanichsan et al. (2021) and Chen (2025) have shown that AI tends to support personalized learning paths by adapting to individual learner needs. The study extended this observation by showing that personalization is equally important in intercultural education, where learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences are found in the same classroom.

Critical Reflections and Ethical Boundaries

Given the findings of this study, which revealed the great potential of AI in intercultural language teaching, the associated ethical and practical issues need to be investigated. The concerns were not unique in the current study but were reinforced in the intercultural context where the issues of cultural representation, authenticity, and power had a salient impact. First, the validity of intercultural interaction mediated by AI was still a major concern. This tool has a lack of lived cultural

subjectivity, and the understanding of culture is constrained to the information contained in the training data (Baradziej, 2026). This meant that the scenarios created by AI were convincing but lacked depth and subtlety in representing real cultural interactions. If the data used to train AI systems is culturally biased, it can reinforce stereotypes related to culture (Fugener et al., 2021). For instance, it often simplified Indonesian culture to exoticised images of batik and gamelan, while overlooking other aspects of life which were less visible but equally important.

Secondly, the lack of transparency and accountability in AI decision-making processes was raised as a concern. The lack of understanding of the underlying reasoning of the tool was a significant challenge for professionals to rely on AI recommendations (Lebovitz et al., 2022). In intercultural education, this opacity might be especially challenging because the learners did not critically examine the cultural explanations. Prentzas and Binopoulou (2025) explained this as a need of explainable AI for Education. Third, the dependence on AI yielded the downgrade of the role of human teachers and the lack of intercultural competence. Third, dependence on AI brought the downgrade of the role of human teachers and the lack of intercultural competence. If learners have only learned intercultural communication with AI, sometimes it is difficult to cultivate nonverbal communication skills and emotional intelligence to interact in the real world (Dang et al., 2025). The findings highlighted a need for a balance between AI-based learning and engaging with native speakers and human teachers in person. Last but not least, cultural sovereignty needs to be taken into account. Marginalisation of less powerful cultures in the training data (Ikhsan et al., 2025). There is a tendency that dominant cultures will be overrepresented and less powerful cultures will be underrepresented when the data set is used for training AI in cultural education. In BIPA, the process involved creating AI systems that trained on a wide spectrum of data that included diverse, representative data of Indonesian culture, not just parts deemed marketable to international learners.

Practical Implications for BIPA Pedagogy and Policy

This study has several implications for the practice of BIPA teachers, curriculum designers, and policy makers. The tripartite framework enabled teachers to have a structured approach to the integration of AI in the teaching practice. These teachers may find themselves having the potential to use AI to develop intercultural dynamic scenarios, to make cultural comparisons, and to provide opportunities for experimenting with identity. But teachers need to take an active part in checking work created through artificial intelligence, countering cultural bias, and facilitating reflection from students. In terms of the curriculum design, the study outlined that BIPA curricula need to be changed to emphasize more on intercultural competence and better on identity development. BIPA programs were found to be a major facilitator in the cultural adaptation and integration of international learners into the academic life in Indonesia (Ahmed & Aman, 2024). The culture should be part of the curriculum, not a course, was the AI-empowered theory of the Third Place. This is in accordance with the policy of intercultural competence as one of the educational outcomes in the Kurikulum Merdeka policy (Andayani & Rahmawati, 2023).

In terms of policy makers, the research endorsed ongoing investment in the education infrastructure of AI and teacher training. The country's national AI roadmap put education as a priority (Mulyaningsih et al., 2026). Furthermore, this study revealed the potential of using AI to enhance the quality and accessibility of BIPA education. Additionally, policies should be formulated to ensure the ethical implementation of AI in intercultural teaching and learning, including considerations for cultural representation, data privacy, and educators' autonomy. The results of this study have implications for Indonesian cultural diplomacy. The AI-empowered Third Place theory provided a dialogic model of cultural diffusion that empowered learners to become active agents in the global dissemination of Indonesian culture. This differed from traditional monologic models of cultural export, which often presented culture as a fixed product to be consumed by passive audiences (Memon & Kwan, 2025). The engagement of learners in meaningful intercultural dialogue enabled AI to create deeper, more sustainable connections between Indonesia and the rest of the world.

Contribution to International Scholarship

The positioning of this study within global debates enabled the AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place theory to offer insights beyond the BIPA context. On the international stage, the community of applied linguistics studies and language education has been struggling to understand how AI is changing the way of teaching and the essence of language acquisition. This study is valuable considering the ability to show identity and intercultural negotiation as opposed to efficiency or evaluation, regarded as a tradition in critical pedagogy. The three-part structure, namely, context generation, cultural comparison, and identity construction, could be adjusted to other languages and situations. A typical example is the use of AI in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) classroom to replicate the idea of multicultural negotiation among non-native speakers. Similarly, the heritage language programmes may also take advantage to mediate identity reconstruction among the diasporic learners. The tripartite theoretical framework is highly cross-contextually adaptable, considering the use to design intercultural simulations in the classroom, as well as to analyse the problem of cultural identity in the context of heritage language learners who study abroad.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study addressed the persistent challenge of cultural aphasia in Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) pedagogy by developing a comprehensive theoretical framework for an AI-empowered Intercultural Third Place theory. This was achieved through the SLR of 74 publications and analysis of 12 AI-generated intercultural scenarios. Additionally, Kramsch's seminal Third Place theory was extended into the digital age by the integration with contemporary human-machine collaborative learning analysis and cultural identity theory. The aim was to answer the three core formulated questions regarding AI's capacity to create dynamic intercultural contexts and support identity reflection and reconstruction. This included addressing theoretical and technological divides in intercultural language teaching. Meanwhile, the proposed tripartite framework, which consisted of context generation, cultural comparison, and identity construction, showed that generative AI functioned as a technological facilitator and pedagogical companion responsible for transforming abstract intercultural negotiation into concrete, accessible learning experiences. This encouraged the symbolic competence needed to overcome cultural aphasia, plus the symbiotic relationship between human teachers and AI, utilizing its complementary strengths, rather than supplanting human abilities. There are several limitations to this present theoretical construction study. It is purely conceptual, not backed up with experiments conducted in the classroom or learner performance data. Lived cultural subjectivity and training data biases were not fully captured in the AI-generated scenario samples used for illustration, which did not fully reflect the complexity of real-world intercultural interactions. This comprised the generalizability of the framework, which could be limited due to the framework being developed for the Indonesian context and limited cross-cultural testing. Hence, further research is needed to perform mixed-methods empirical research to confirm the effectiveness of the framework in a variety of BIPA learners and learning levels. This also includes developing culturally localized AI tools specifically designed for BIPA intercultural education, responsible for addressing representation biases in global LLMs. The studies should also explore the integration of multimodal AI technologies, such as mixed reality, to enhance the immersive quality of the Intercultural Third Place theory (Dang et al., 2025), and investigate the long-term impacts of AI-mediated learning on learners' intercultural identity development alongside real-world communication competence. The process further entailed establishing context-specific ethical guidelines for AI implementation in intercultural language education that protected cultural sovereignty and preserved teacher agency.

Author Contribution Statement

Huang Jianshi: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing-original draft, writing-review & editing, visualization. **Dadang Sunendar**: validation, manuscript review, academic supervision of publication procedures. **Sumiyadi**: manuscript revision feedback, bibliographic resources support. **Vismaia Damaiyanti**: critical reading of the manuscript, commentary and suggestions for theoretical framing.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that could affect the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of this study.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analysed during this systematic literature review study consist of publicly-available published academic literature, AI-generated intercultural scenario samples, and BIPA pedagogical practice reports. The literature analysed can be retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, SINTA, and CNKI databases. The AI-generated scenario materials used for theoretical illustration are not publicly shared.

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