



Intergenerational Communication Insecurity and Ethnic Identity Negotiation in Hybrid Higher Education

Gina Dwi Fristaloka, Melly Maulin Puwaningwulan^{ID},
Desayu Eka Surya^{ID}

Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Universitas Komputer Indonesia,
Bandung, Indonesia
gina.75525003@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id

Abstract. The paper seeks to explore the issue of intergenerational communication insecurity in a hybrid higher education environment, which dissolves the boundaries between real and virtual spaces. The goal of this paper is to reveal the mechanisms of ethnic identity negotiation to mitigate intergenerational communication insecurity between students (digital natives) and lecturers (digital immigrants). The qualitative case study method of conducting this research is based on the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) to explore ethnic minority students' management of their communication anxiety. The results reveal that considerable cognitive loads lead to students becoming “cultural chameleons,” activating local values such as “shyness culture” for ethnic identity security, whereas ethnic differences in digital literacy lead to defensive silence. Ultimately, this paper contributes to providing a solution for institutions to create social presence and dialectical spaces for psychologically safe environments to ensure the sustainability of hybrid environments for inclusive learning. The theoretical contribution of this paper extends the INT framework in a trans-digital world by incorporating ethnic identity as a tool for psychosocial risk mitigation.

Keywords: Communication Insecurity, Ethnic Identity, Hybrid Learning, Identity Negotiation Theory, Intergenerational Communication.

1 Introduction

The change in the higher education system as a result of the pandemic is not just a matter of technology; it is a paradigm shift in the classroom with the hybrid learning model. In the interaction between the physical and the digital world, the line between the real and the virtual world is blurred, and the communication scenario is much more complex. The challenge has changed; it is no longer the possession of the device and the internet connectivity, but the management of the distortion of the messages that appear behind the screen. The rationale for the urgency of the research is based on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education. In the post-pandemic context, quality education is not only measured by the availability of digital infrastructure, but also by the creation of an inclusive, equita-

ble, and adaptive learning environment for all generations and ethnic groups. The transformation towards a sustainable hybrid campus requires the reduction of psychosocial and communication barriers that often marginalize students from minority backgrounds.

By mitigating communication insecurity through healthy identity negotiations, higher education institutions contribute directly to providing equal and dignified access to education. This ensures that digitization does not create new gaps in the quality of academic dialectics, but rather becomes a means to achieve social justice in education in line with the spirit of the SDGs. Differences in generational backgrounds and time periods are crucial variables that determine the success of knowledge transfer [1]. This triggers a gap in expectations between lecturers and students in the use of digital platforms, which often leads to false assumptions about communication behavior. On the one hand, lecturers tend to bring conventional formal communication standards into the digital space, while on the other hand, students as digital natives have a much more fluid rhythm and norms of interaction. This phenomenon shows that the effectiveness of hybrid learning is highly dependent on the ability of each individual to align their different perceptions resulting from this generational gap.

This demonstrates the dependency of the effectiveness of hybrid learning on the ability of the individual to reconcile different perceptions, as a result of the generation gap. In this mediated cross-generational interaction space, students are likely to experience a state of chronic communication insecurity or anxiety. This phenomenon cannot be viewed as a technical problem of word selection, but as a representation of the psychopolitical burden in the digital space. The fear of going against the norm, such as being perceived as rude, as well as not being able to encode messages as perceived by the lecturer, becomes a cognitive burden to the students. This, as emphasized by Ashari et al., 2026 Gen Z is subject to different academic challenges that compel them to be constantly flexible to the rigid norms of formality imposed by the elder generation [2]. This creates a situation of great identity negotiation in which the students have to play the game of pretending to be competent while at the same time being hierarchical. This is the point at which the emotional barrier is created that affects the originality and freedom of expression of opinion. It is at this point that the technology, instead of being the tool for the democratization of knowledge, is filled with self-censorship that affects the quality of the dialectic.

The intricacy of this communication burden can be further compounded when ethnicity plays a role in communication within university environments, even in virtual ecosystems that seem neutral in terms of geography. Students do not merely bring digital devices into hybrid classrooms but also carry baggage in terms of their ethnicity, which must be suppressed or recreated in order for social harmony to be maintained in a heterogeneous academic environment. In this regard, ethnicity for this younger generation is no longer static but a dynamic space for negotiation. Students hybridize their identities by integrating the use of local dialects and traditional values into modern discourse [3]. This phenomenon gives rise to what is known as hybrid identity, a cultural defense mechanism whereby students attempt to balance noble values with the demands of campus professionalism, which often lean toward Western or urban standards. Ethnic

identity does not disappear in the hybrid system, but rather transforms into a more subtle form of cultural performativity, where ethnic codes are used as social navigation to remain relevant while still standing on their cultural roots.

Students' efforts in navigating ethnic identity and the demands of professionalism find their theoretical basis in Identity Negotiation Theory developed by Stella Ting Toomey. This theory provides a framework that in every human interaction, individuals have a basic need to feel understood, respected, and supported. In the context of technology-mediated multicultural education, recent research confirms that the process of identity negotiation acts as a social glue that maintains the stability of interpersonal relationships amid contrasting backgrounds [4]. With the help of the lens provided by Ting Toomey, it is possible to understand the following: Identity vulnerability tends to increase considerably in situations where people are in unfamiliar and hierarchically stressful spaces, including formal digital spaces. The behavior exhibited by students in the use of the Zoom video conferencing platform, where they show overly polite behavior that can be interpreted as stiff formality, is not necessarily the result of politeness. It is a proactive behavior in the attempt to achieve identity security. The students are trying to mitigate the risk of social rejection and gain legitimacy for their position in the complex hybrid learning ecosystem through the level of politeness they show in the class.

The need for identity security brings us to the ultimate understanding that the line dividing the online and offline dimensions of the hybrid education space has merged into what is termed the trans-digital space. In the trans-digital space, the cultural identity is no longer static; rather, it is being reconstructed through dynamic discourse. Students are required to be able to navigate their identities simultaneously; moving between primordial local identities and global orientations that are prerequisites in the digital academic environment [5]. The reality of hybrid education indirectly forces students to adopt the role of cultural chameleons. They need to be capable of transforming from face-to-face interactions, which may be of a more traditional and communal nature, to screen-based interactions that require global standards of professionalism to be displayed. The ability to change their identities in a matter of seconds is now an essential skill, but at the same time, it also brings to light the performance pressure that students are under to remain relevant in the trans-digitalization of their education.

The role of cultural chameleons verifies that, notwithstanding the technology for facilitating accessibility, the disconnect between Gen Z's digital communication style and the responsiveness of senior lecturers will continue to create systemic insecurity, as evidenced by findings Cickovska, (2020) which states that despite the importance Gen Z places on personal interaction, they tend to feel alienated because of the disparity in terms of learning styles and the educational expectations that educators impose on them [6]. This disparity is proof that the digital space is not just an empty medium, but rather a space that is full of psychosocial barriers that have yet to be fully identified and mapped out. This study, therefore, aims to map out how the mechanism of ethnic identity negotiation can be maximized as a bridge to communication insecurity in the hybrid ecosystem. The objective of this research is not only to expose the anxiety that is felt by the students, but rather to construct a communication solution architecture that can be used in higher education institutions. Once the dynamics of the Gen Z population

and the digital space is fully understood, it is expected that the higher education institutions can create a hybrid space that not only has the latest technology, but is also culturally and generationally sensitive so that dialectics in the academic arena can be achieved without any emotional barriers.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Hybrid Higher Education as a New Communication Space

However, the level of higher education has now progressed beyond the phase of digitization and has reached the post-digital phase, which is the state where the role of technology is not seen as an interruption, but as something that is part of all the academic activities that take place there. In the third space that has been identified in the synchronous and asynchronous communication that has to take place with the formalities that the students have to follow, the hybrid communication spaces that have been identified are the fluid third spaces that have no boundaries between the physical and the virtual [7]. It is not defined in terms of geographical location and physical boundaries such as classrooms, but in terms of the strength of its network connections through which meaning is constructed simultaneously through synchronous and asynchronous communication. Therefore, the university is no longer a physical place but a sociomaterial ecosystem in which students are constantly required to move between the formalities of university bureaucracy and the egalitarian yet ethically dubious nature of the digital platform.

Furthermore, hybrid campuses are also creating a new site of battle in terms of communication that disrupts the hegemony of politeness. On one side, physical spaces are marked by the legacy of rigid hierarchies of colonization and tradition. On the other side, virtual spaces are marked by efficiency that frequently disrupts conventional academic protocols. This situation generates what is termed relational asymmetry, which requires that students exhibit communicative flexibility or, in other words, be able to change their identities in seconds from an obedient practitioner in the lab to a critical active participant in online discussion forums. For students from minority backgrounds, this hybrid space adds another dimension to their identity negotiations, as they need to read the constantly shifting rules in the shadow of digital surveillance and academic authorities who are still living in analog times.

2.2 Intergenerational Communication Dynamics

The intergenerational communication in contemporary academic setting is not just about intergenerational difference, but also about the encounter of value systems, memory, and performativity between Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. The study aims to apply this concept by analyzing mutual prejudices, in which students' use of digital communication is misunderstood by lecturers as a sign of decline in politeness. In the post-digital world, these intergenerational differences in social backgrounds and life experiences are likely to be expressed as barriers to effective cooperation in which each generation has its own hegemonic self-image that represents truth

in communication [8]. As a result, interactions in hybrid classes are locked in a vicious circle of mutual prejudices, in which lecturers see the style of digital communication by their students as decadence in politeness, and students, in turn, view their lecturers' style of formality as an obstacle to intellectual efficiency. If these stereotypes are not addressed by intercultural competence, dialogue will be frozen, and the academic space will be transformed into something alien to all parties involved.

Moreover, it is this asymmetry that is the main cause of the emergence of systemic communication uncertainty. The students, particularly those coming from ethnic minority groups, are confronted with the double burden of having to communicate with lecturers as academic authorities and having to navigate the complexities of communication with representatives of a generation with communication codes that are alien and difficult to fully decipher. The inability to predict the reactions of the older generation is what creates a high sense of insecurity in which students are constantly expected to engage in self-censorship or exhausting identity negotiations in order to create academic harmony. In this regard, it is evident that the generational factor is no longer just demographic data, as it is the critical factor in determining the quality of dialectics and psychological security in today's classrooms.

2.3 Communication Insecurity in Academic Contexts

In an academic environment dominated by the influence of technology, the problem of communication insecurity no longer appears as a technological problem, but as a symptom of a deep fear of social failure, as well as a fear of comparing oneself with others. In this study, the application of this theory was evident in the hyperactivity of students, as they constantly tried to check messages not to breach the norms of politeness. This problem occurs as a result of the increased standards of perfectionism on the internet, where every single activity leaves a permanent mark that can be assessed at any time [9]. The students, now in a post-digital space, are often in a dilemma of revealing their true selves and having to present themselves as academically correct in front of a diverse student body. Thus, this lack of security manifests as a significant psychological-communicative burden for the students, which often results in their voluntary withdrawal from the dialectical space of the classroom.

Besides, the lack of knowledge about the interpretation of the message by academic authorities, especially lecturers from different generations, results in hypervigilance in communication. This means that the students not only worry about the message they want to convey but also the medium and the tone used in conveying the message, since they feel they may break the rigid norms of politeness. Fear of stigmatization or negative perceptions from the lecturers results in the defensive shield that prevents the free flow of ideas. In this case, therefore, the insecurity in communication can be understood as a defensive measure of the students' identity as they try to avoid the social risks in the academic system that is unable to facilitate psychological vulnerability as a way of learning.

2.4 Ethnic Identity in Multicultural Classrooms

In the complex and increasingly multicultural classroom, ethnic identity is no longer perceived as a static construct but through the filter of dynamic intersectionality as an instrument of social navigation. Multiculturalism plays the role of a vital mediator for students from minority ethnic groups in finding the right balance between their local ethnic identity and their institutional identity within the university campus [10]. The study focuses on how local values such as a *sungkan* culture are used by students as a form of social capital in achieving identity security. The identity takes a cognitive and behavioral form that filters how messages from academics are cognitively processed and behaviorally delivered. Rather than a barrier, cultural foundations are often used as social capital and emotional bases for a sense of stability when students must cope with communication uncertainty in technology-mediated cross-generational interactions.

Strategically, ethnic values such as *sungkan* culture in Javanese society or honor in non-Javanese society are employed by students as tools to negotiate their identity in front of academic authorities. The employment of ethnic values is not simply blind obedience but a strategy to avoid the risk of communication insecurity and obtain identity security [4]. Students focus on the ethnic norms of politeness and seek to develop a safe zone that is socially acceptable to senior lecturers while at the same time maintaining their integrity as cultural subjects. In this respect, ethnic identity acts as an important tool in the hybrid battlefield where dialectics in the academia are always inclusive and do not lose the cultural identity of the students as digital natives.

2.5 Identity Negotiation Theory (INT)

In terms of intercultural communication theories, Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) by Stella Ting Toomey provides a vital framework for comprehension in terms of how individuals deal with their concept of self-image in times of uncertainty. As a means of analysis, this theory is utilized as a primary framework for dissecting student behavior in a hybrid classroom environment. As a whole, this theory posits that all human beings have a fundamental need for identity security, inclusion, and connectedness in complex academic environments where identity negotiation plays a vital role as a social “glue” for cohesive relationships in times of uncertainty in cross-cultural and cross-generational interactions [4]. However, this process is not merely a passive adaptation, but an active reconfiguration of the image of the self to meet situational demands without compromising the essentiality of the ethnic/personal identity of the student.

Practically speaking, INT acts as the primary instrument in the analysis of students’ behavior in the context of the hybrid classroom as a deliberate attempt at addressing the issue of communication insecurity. In situations where students interact with lecturers from previous generations, there is a threat to identity security as a result of the differences in the two generations’ ethical codes and digital literacy. It is in such situations that students use facework and communication style in order to attain a state of security and recognition. Cautious behavior and the use of certain ethnic values in communication are strategies in identity defense meant to attain a balance between the need for autonomy and the need for inclusion in the rigid hierarchy of the university.

While the discussion on the concept of hybrid learning and intergenerational communication has expanded at a rapid pace in recent years, the literature has shown a fragmented analysis of the two concepts. Hybrid spaces demand the sustainability of future education through collaboration that transcends geographical boundaries [7]. However, there is a gap in understanding the transformation of cultural identity under the pressure of age asymmetry in digital spaces. Most previous studies have focused solely on the technical effectiveness of hybrid learning or generational communication barriers in physical work environments. There is a huge theoretical and empirical vacuum in the understanding of the transformation of cultural identity in the face of the pressure of age asymmetry in fluid spaces [6]. This study aims at filling this vacuum by focusing on the role of communication insecurity as a catalyst for students in complex and strategic negotiations of ethnic identity.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the dimension of ethnicity into the dynamics of digital natives versus digital immigrants in the post-digital academic environment. The researcher does not merely document what happens in these interactions, but also analyzes in depth why and how the process of identity negotiation through the lens of Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) becomes a solution to the deadlock of intergenerational dialectics. By exploring the role of ethnicity as an instrument for achieving identity security, this study provides a new theoretical contribution to the sociology of communication and higher education in mitigating latent conflicts in an increasingly impersonal hybrid campus era. This research fills this gap by integrating the dimension of ethnicity into the dynamics of digital natives versus digital immigrants, where its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the ability of teachers to build social presence [11]. This study focuses on the central question: How can mechanism of ethnic identity negotiation (such as the culture of modesty) serve as tools for mitigating psychosocial risks to address intergenerational communication barriers between students and faculty in the digital space of hybrid higher education?.

3 Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the phenomenon of intergenerational communication insecurity in depth. This method was considered the most appropriate to answer the questions of how and why a complex communication process occurs in a real-life context that cannot be controlled by researchers. Research informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques to comprehensively analyze the dynamics of intergenerational communication. The criteria for informants consisted of students representing Generation Z and Millennials who came from ethnic minority backgrounds and were active in the hybrid learning system. In addition, the researcher also interviewed lecturers from the older generation to gain an understanding of the asymmetry of expectations in academic interactions. Through this case study approach, the researcher was able to capture the subjective nuances of students' experiences in managing communication anxiety and their identity negotiation strategies in the face of academic authorities from a different era. The involvement of lecturers as key informants was crucial for data triangulation, enabling researchers to

map in depth how generational differences between students (as digital natives and digital immigrants) and senior lecturers affected the quality of dialectics in hybrid classrooms. The informants used are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Research informant profiles.

No	Generation Group	Role	Selection Criteria	Components of Question
1	Generation Z	Active Student	Representing digital natives who face high communication anxiety	Cognitive load and Self censorship
2	Generation Z	Active Student	Focus on negotiating ethnic identity in hybrid classrooms.	The cultural chameleon strategy
3	Millenial Generation	Master Student	Representing a group that strives to balance local values and professionalism	Negotiating professional identity
4	Millenial Generation	Master Student	Reviewing digital literacy adaptation to Generation Z trends.	Digital cultural symbiosis
5	Millenial Generation	Master Student & Employee	Focus on mobility efficiency and trans-digital space challenges.	Efficiency vs Emotional attachment
6	Millenial Generation	Master Student	Reviewing maturity of thought and equality of analysis in the classroom.	Equality of analysis in dialectics
7	Older Generation	Lecturer	Representing digital immigrants to see the asymmetry of communication expectations	Validation and social presence

Table 1 presents data regarding the profiles of the research informants and the components of the questions used. This approach allows researchers to triangulate data to ensure the validity of findings. Data is collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation in physical and virtual classrooms, and analysis of digital communication artifacts. Next, the collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns of identity negotiation that emerge. To ensure data validity, researchers apply member checking procedures and guarantee the confidentiality of informants' identities through strict research ethics procedures. By focusing on one specific unit of analysis, this case study is able to dissect how ethnic identity becomes a crucial instrument in achieving identity security, as emphasized in Stella Ting Toomey's Identity Negotiation Theory.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Experiences and Meanings of Intergenerational Communication Insecurity in Hybrid Learning

The interview results showed that there was a fear that the words spoken would be rude or too casual, so they had to repeatedly check their words in every activity. One student stated that “I feel a afraid that what I say will be rude or too casual. So I have to check myself repeatedly before speaking”. Raes et al., (2015) highlights the cognitive burden of split attention between physical and virtual audiences, which triggers initial anxiety among students that they will miss crucial information [12]. This implies that the students are constantly required to operate in a sociomaterial ecosystem that is ethically ambiguous. Moreover, despite its flexibility and efficiency, there are considerable operational challenges associated with the implementation of hybrid lectures. From a technical point of view, hardware preparation and integration by class administrators are known to take a very long time, thus limiting the duration of learning. Additionally, network infrastructure constraints are likely to limit the depth of discussion in virtual classrooms. The technical constraints of signal interference and limited space for questions and answers are likely to distort the critical thinking abilities of students.

The distortion of messages because of digital latency makes communication insecurity a bigger problem because students feel they no longer fully own their digital impressions in front of their lecturers. Insecurity culminates in a psychological communication burden for the students since they worry about the content, media, and tone used in communication because of a fear of breaching stringent politeness norms. Zhu, (2021) and that eventually these repetitive technical impediments diminish the self-efficacy (self-confidence) of the students to actively participate in the virtual classroom [13]. The constraints in interaction may also diminish the holistic comprehension of the content, leading to knowledge asymmetry among the students. Moreover, the virtual learning environment is also likely to pose psychological barriers in the form of distractions and the need to multitask. Students, consciously or subconsciously, tend to perform other activities that are not related to the lecture content during the course of the lecture. This is likely to cause fragmentation in the focus of the students, which eventually diminishes the quality of the absorption and active engagement in the learning process.

In addition, the success of hybrid lectures is also affected by generational differences and cultural background. Regarding generational differences, it is noted that the relationship between Generation Z, who are digital natives, and lecturers and senior students, who are members of Generation X and Millennials, who are digital immigrants, is characterized by communication barriers, especially regarding differences in communication style. Specifically, members of Generation Z follow a simple and explicit (direct) communication style, whereas members of the Millennials generation prefer detailed and contextual communication. Despite the differences in communication style, it is noted that the aforementioned barriers are not permanent. Regarding the high need for instant feedback, which is typical in Gen Z, in contrast to the slower communication rhythm of senior lecturers [14].

Students see this as an unbalanced pressure to conform and constantly adapt to inflexible formalities. This generational term is often manifested as communication bias, where the students believe that they must suppress their true digital identity in order to be in harmony academically [15]. Technically, this insecurity is triggered by signal interference and limitations of digital platform features, which students perceive not merely as operational obstacles, but as threats to their academic performance and reputation in the eyes of their lecturers. Relationally, the difference in communication styles between students as digital natives and lecturers as digital immigrants creates a barrier, where students feel they must constantly self-censor and adapt their language so as not to be considered in violation of rigid traditional norms of politeness.

4.2 The process of Ethnic Identity Negotiation Occurs in Intergenerational Interactions

The interview results show that students feel shy about expressing their opinions in hybrid spaces. Students use ethnic values such as the culture of shyness as a social navigation tool to achieve identity security. By displaying polite behavior, students are actually mitigating the risk of social rejection in the hybrid ecosystem. An excerpt from an interview with a millennial student who said, "I feel uncomfortable when having a conversation in a hybrid space. Because I feel the need to get detailed explanations directly." The feeling of community in hybrid education can only be achieved if institutions are able to promote psychological vulnerability in their learning process. This use of ethnic codes is not just for compliance; it is a proactive strategy for the students to be able to stay relevant in the tide of digitalization while being able to stay rooted in their ethnicity. Student engagement is also dependent on the way the teacher is able to incorporate inclusive communication in bridging this generational divide.

Introverted students tend to use digital platforms as a shield to engage in defensive silence in order to avoid potential conflict. This phenomenon confirms that for introverts, the dominant strategy is to be passive for the sake of identity security. Without a strong social presence from lecturers in the digital space, introverted students will feel increasingly emotionally disconnected, so that the interactions that are created tend to be transactional rather than transformational. Conversely, for extroverted individuals, communication barriers are only felt as initial awkwardness that melts away with the intensity of interaction. This condition, in turn, triggers positive knowledge sharing; Millennial students tend to be adaptive to the characteristics of Generation Z while utilizing these interactions to update their digital literacy, from the use of the latest applications to understanding social media trends and slang.

The data shows that the majority of students maintain their original identity when interacting, with only 10% feeling the need to completely change their identity in order to adapt. However, for introverts, the dominant self-defense strategy is to be passive or remain silent in order to avoid potential interpersonal conflicts. This phenomenon indicates that the hybrid environment does not merely function as a space for knowledge transfer, but also as a forum for symbiotic cultural assimilation between generations. In the context of maturity of thought at the postgraduate level, the analytical thinking of senior students (Millennials) and younger students tends to be equal in the classroom.

Differences in analytical capacity are determined more by the weight of the course material than by age, as long as the material is still within the scope of understandable discussion. Nevertheless, the main challenge remains rooted in the students' personalities; minimal involvement or passive attitudes in class, especially in a hybrid format, are the main obstacles for students to mingle and integrate with their peers.

In interpreting this insecurity, students activate their ethnic identity and local cultural values, such as the culture of “*sungkan*” (modesty), as instruments of social navigation to achieve identity security. The use of these codes of politeness is not merely a form of passive compliance, but a proactive strategy to mitigate the risk of social rejection or cross-generational misunderstanding in an impersonal digital ecosystem. Students tend to choose passive attitudes or defensive silence as the safest way to maintain relational harmony, even though this often sacrifices the originality of ideas and the depth of dialectics that should occur in the learning process at universities.

4.3 The Context of Hybrid Learning Shapes The Dynamics of Intergenerational and Interethnic Communication

The interview results show that the effectiveness of the hybrid model is considered ambivalent. It is necessary for lecturers to show appreciation when students ask questions, and in return, the process of such activities is considered a form of recognition by lecturers during the activities. In addition, the hybrid space also provides opportunities to update the material provided. Quotes from the interview from the lecturer's perspective show that appreciation is important. “In a hybrid classroom setting, responses or questions from students, especially me (a Boomer lecturer), are a form of appreciation and validation. This can increase my enthusiasm for teaching”. On the one hand, students view this system as a solution to geographical and physical constraints, and the flexibility it offers allows the pedagogical process to take place without space and time limitations. However, this effectiveness is highly dependent on interaction designs that can mitigate feelings of social isolation among students [11].

For students who are also workers, the integration of offline and online methods provides high efficiency in responding to the challenges of mobility in the global era, so that spatial barriers are no longer an obstacle to career development through formal education. This digital transformation in higher education has also changed the conventional paradigm of assignment collection into a more integrated system. The implementation of a Learning Management System (LMS) in the university environment has created bureaucratic efficiency, where the assignment submission process is carried out centrally through the campus management platform.

Further observations show that there is a disconnection in the personalistic approach of the teaching staff in the digital environment. This reveals the tendency of the teaching staff to have a generalist approach to communication, which indirectly overlooks the particularities of students' cultural identities, age groups, and socio-psychological backgrounds. This approach to communication from the perspective of instructional communication diminishes the level of empathy in the knowledge transfer process so that the communication interactions become transactional rather than transformational.

This communication style gap is intensified by the great digital divide between the digital literacy levels of the teaching staff and students. As digital natives, the Generation Z students show increased resilience and flexibility in exploring the latest features of the Zoom platform and the Learning Management System (LMS).

On the other hand, the technical barriers and technological lag that some teachers from the digital immigrant generation face can be seen as the determining factor that disrupts the rhythm of the academic discourse. This is because the lack of technical preparedness is not just administrative; it is structural and affects the way the material is delivered. In this way, the hybrid classes no longer become inclusive, and the interaction that is supposed to be dynamic and participatory is broken by the operational constraints. This situation validates the fact that the success of the hybrid lectures is not just dependent on the availability of the technology, but also on the convergence of the digital and communication skills of the teachers.

The success of hybrid learning depends not only on the sophisticated technology, but also on the ability of the teacher to establish social presence and generational inclusiveness. On the basis of the findings, it is recommended that educators take a more empathetic and personalized approach to bridge the emotional gap with their students. It is also recommended that educational institutions provide a fluid and psychologically safe communication space, so that the student does not perceive the digital screen as a field of self-surveillance, but as a democratic space that values diversity in their identity and intergenerational communication.

In order to enhance student engagement, the teaching staff must incorporate a more inclusive and empathetic form of communication by developing a stronger personalistic approach in the virtual realm. It is required that the lecturers are able to motivate the students by creating a wider space for dialectics, along with sufficient time for expressing their opinions. An active form of listening and valuing their opinions is essential for the existential recognition of the students in the hybrid ecosystem. On the other hand, the active participation of the students in asking questions and providing critical feedback has a greater psychological impact on the enthusiasm of the lecturers, especially those belonging to the Baby Boomer generation.

However, in the case of this group of teachers, the responsiveness of the students is not limited to the academic sphere; it is also a matter of appreciation and validation of the continuous process of knowledge transfer. The dynamic feedback mechanism would be effective in mitigating the concerns and worries of the lecturers regarding the vacuum in the classroom atmosphere. Moreover, the effectiveness of the hybrid lectures would also be highly dependent on the preparedness and readiness of the infrastructure and the management aspects in the background. The technical support units or class operators need to be more prepared and ready in terms of the pre-class preparation before the actual class begins. The hardware and network preparedness and the digital platform preparedness need to be in the optimal state so that there are no technical problems and difficulties in the communication between the lecturers and the students.

This study concludes that communication barriers between generations in hybrid learning are not merely technical issues, but rather a manifestation of students' significant cognitive load. The findings indicate that students transform into "cultural chameleons" who activate local values, such as the culture of modesty or shame, as a social

navigation strategy to achieve identity security and avoid rejection from academic authorities (lecturers) from a different generation. In relation to Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), this phenomenon demonstrates that ethnic identity acts as a “social glue” and an active defense mechanism used by students to balance the need for inclusion amidst the pressures of impersonal trans-digital spaces. Although this strategy maintains relational harmony, the study highlights the risk of defensive silence emerging, which can hinder the depth of academic dialectics if the institution is unable to build a social presence and a psychologically safe space.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has concluded that the students experience intergenerational communication insecurity in the context of the hybrid model as a cognitive and emotional burden stemming from the technical and relational asymmetry between digital natives and digital immigrants. To cope with this insecurity, students use their ethnic identity and local cultural values such as the culture of ‘*sungkan*’ (modesty) as tools for social navigation in order to attain security in identity and avoid the risk of social rejection in the impersonal digital community. Although the use of this ‘code of politeness’ secures relational harmony in the classroom community, it also generates defensive silence that leads to the lack of originality in ideas in the dialectics of academia. The success of the hybrid model depends not only on the technical synchrony between the two models but also on the capacity of the teacher to generate social presence through an empathetic and personalistic approach, a wide space for dialectics, and the affirmation of the students’ contributions in order to create a culturally and generationally inclusive community. In order to optimize the hybrid higher education ecosystem, it is recommended for institutions and lecturers in the system to take a personalistic approach that incorporates inclusive and empathetic communication strategies in order to provide existential affirmation for students in the digital space. It is expected of lecturers in the system to be able to create a wide dialectical space with sufficient time allocation in order to encourage originality of opinion, as well as create a dynamic feedback culture where critical feedback from students will act as psychological affirmation for lecturers in the process of knowledge transfer. Finally, the success of the interactions will be ensured through the optimization of managerial elements through thorough pre-class preparation in order to create network stability and device synchronization, thereby reducing technological lag that could potentially disrupt communication flows in the system.

Acknowledgments. The author wishes to extend his sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the informants for taking their valuable time to share their valuable experiences in relation to the dynamics of hybrid lectures. The contribution, input, and suggestions provided were very useful to the author in enhancing his analysis of this research. Moreover, the author wishes to extend his gratitude to the Universitas Komputer Indonesia, particularly to the Master of Communication Studies Program, for their support in giving the author the opportunity to present his results of this research at the ICOBEST conference.

References

1. Bongco, R.T., Ama, K.A.D.: Intergenerational communication among faculty and students in higher education. *17*(1), 80–107 (2023).
2. Ashari, R.N., Novantiko, K., Zanky, M.N.: From campus to classroom: a narrative study the. *5*(1), 47–56 (2026).
3. Baihaqi, F.A., Setiawan, R.: Negotiation identity ethnicity in the midst of the current modernization: study qualitative in minority youth generation. *2*(2), 140–145 (2025).
4. Surakhmad, W.A., Ronda, M., Widowati, D., Ananda, W., Ting-Toomey, S.: Identity negotiation of expatriates (high-skilled immigrants) in the context of intercultural communication in the work environment. pp. 408–416 (2023).
5. Boumaza, D., Baker, W.: Negotiating cultural identity in the trans-digital space: a multi-scalar analysis of translanguagual ELF users' intercultural communication. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* *47*(1), 107–126 (2026).
6. Cickovska, E.: Understanding and teaching Gen Z in higher education. *Horizons International Scientific Journal Series A Social Sciences and Humanities* *6*, 275–290 (2020).
7. Pöysä-Tarhonen, J.: Geographies of collaboration in hybrid learning spaces in the postdigital era: towards sustainable futures for higher education learning. *European Journal of Higher Education* *15*(1), 103–118 (2025).
8. Indrawan, F., Toni, A.: Inter-generational organizational communication flow at Brimob Command Headquarters, Kelapa Dua, Depok. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* *5*(1), 526–538 (2025).
9. Rahmayanty, D., Lubis, M.A., Mahardika, R., Mulyani, M.R.: Factors that cause insecurity in college students when viewing TikTok content. *6*(2), 161–170 (2024).
10. Priwati, A.R.: Multiculturalism as a mediator of ethnic identity and national identity among Javanese adolescents. *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia* *25*(1), 108–115 (2021).
11. Nortvig, A., Petersen, A.K., Balle, S.H.: A literature review of the factors influencing e-learning and blended learning in relation to learning outcome, student satisfaction and engagement. *16*(1), 46–55 (2018).
12. Raes, A., Detienne, L., Windey, I., Depaepe, F.: A systematic literature review on synchronous hybrid learning: gaps identified. *Learning Environments Research* *23*(3), 269–290 (2020).
13. Zhu, M.: Enhancing MOOC learners' skills for self-directed learning. *Distance Education* *42*(3), 441–460 (2021).
14. Hampton, D., Welsh, D., Wiggins, A.T.: Learning preferences and engagement level of generation Z nursing students. *Nusa Educator* *45*(3), 160–164 (2020).
15. Rudolph, C.W., Rauvola, R.S., Costanza, D.P., Zacher, H.: Generations and generational differences: debunking myths in organizational science and practice and paving new paths forward. *Journal of Business and Psychology* *36*(6), 945–967 (2021).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

