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Adaptation of Digital Immigrant Lecturers Social and Politics Science Faculty Tanjungpura University in Intercultural Communication during the 4.0 Era

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the adaptation of digital immigrant lecturers in intercultural communication during the 4.0 era in higher education in Indonesia. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the digitalization of education has expanded rapidly, forcing lecturers to adapt to new technologies and online platforms. The primary challenge for digital immigrant lecturers lies in effectively communicating with digital native students, especially in a multicultural and technology-based context. This study identifies the role of intercultural communication in fostering constructive relationships between lecturers and students from diverse cultural backgrounds in digital classrooms. The research adopts an exploratory qualitative approach, utilizing a case study of lecturers and students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Tanjungpura University (UNTAN), Pontianak. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis related to thesis guidance and online interactions. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns of intercultural communication. The study draws on theories of Digital Generations, Face Negotiation, High and Low Context Cultures, and Uncertainty and Trust. The findings reveal that: 1) The inability of digital immigrant lecturers to master new technologies is associated with psychological, cultural, and social dimensions; 2) Tensions in face negotiation affect perceptions of value and professional status; 3) Limited intercultural understanding causes lecturers to feel that their dignity is undermined in the presence of students; 4) Technological uncertainty creates anxiety that threatens the professional face of digital immigrant.

Keywords. Digital Immigrant Lecturers' Adaptation, Intercultural Communication in Education, Digital Immigrant Generations and Students, 4.0 Era in Higher Education

A. Introduction

Higher education in Indonesia has undergone significant changes since the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the shift from face-to-face learning models to online learning. Prior to the pandemic, higher education in Indonesia was still heavily reliant on conventional methods that depended on direct interaction between lecturers and students, which often limited access for students, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure and technology. The pandemic led over 90% of universities in Indonesia to transition to digital platforms such as Zoom, Google

Meet, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) (Cahyani & Kurniawan, 2021), marking a major transformation in the education system.

Digital immigrant lecturers those who did not grow up in the digital world face challenges in adapting to online learning. According to Prensky (2001), this generation of lecturers is accustomed to face-to-face teaching and struggles with the use of technology that demands higher digital skills. Research by Selwyn (2016) revealed that lecturers' digital competence varies, with many feeling anxious and struggling to utilize educational technology. In Indonesia, this challenge is compounded by limited internet access and a lack of formal training (Prawira & Pratama, 2021).

The shift to online learning introduced new challenges in intercultural communication. Indonesia is a country with high cultural diversity, which, in the context of online learning, can complicate interactions between lecturers and students. Ting-Toomey (1994), in her Face-Negotiation Theory, explains how individuals strive to maintain their social identity in intercultural communication. In online learning, lecturers accustomed to high-context communication (which relies on direct interaction) must adapt to students who are more familiar with low-context communication, which is more explicit and direct. This adds complexity to maintaining student engagement and teaching effectiveness.

In facing the 4.0 Era, digital immigrant lecturers need to develop technological skills and adapt their communication strategies to remain effective. Bates (2015) stated that in the 4.0 era, lecturers must understand the dynamics of digital learning, such as e-learning and online platforms. Training and mentoring are key in helping lecturers improve their digital competence so they can communicate effectively with students. Prensky (2001) also emphasized the importance of a mindset shift among lecturers towards technology in order to improve the quality of interactions in virtual classrooms.

A literature search on Google Scholar and Scopus revealed that the topic "Adaptation of Digital Immigrant Lecturers in Intercultural Communication during the 4.0 Era" has not been extensively explored in depth. While there is research on lecturers' technology adaptation or intercultural communication in higher education, there is no study that integrates all these aspects in the context of the 4.0 Era, especially in Indonesian higher education. Relevant studies include "The Impact of Digital Immigrants on Pedagogical Approaches in Higher Education" (Smith et al., 2020) and "Cultural Communication in Online Higher Education" (Johnson & Gonzalez, 2019), but these do not combine these dimensions comprehensively.

Several research gaps were identified in this topic: 1) Studies on Digital Immigrant Lecturers: Much of the research still focuses on technology adaptation without considering intercultural communication challenges in online classrooms (Prensky, 2001; Bates, 2015). 2)

Intercultural Communication in Higher Education: Research often focuses on communication between international students or students from different cultural backgrounds, while in the 4.0 era, technology-based communication has not been sufficiently addressed. 3) Impact of the 4.0 Era on Higher Education: Many studies discuss digital transformation in higher education but lack connections between lecturers' adaptation and cultural differences in online learning environments.

This study is unique in integrating three rarely discussed elements: the adaptation of digital immigrant lecturers in the 4.0 era, intercultural communication in online learning, and the impact of digital transformation on interpersonal communication in higher education in Indonesia. This approach opens up new areas for further research that can help understand the emerging dynamics in Indonesian higher education.

Four main latent issues emerge from this study: 1) Inability to Use New Technology: Lecturers struggle to adopt new digital tools. 2) Tensions in Face Negotiation: Differences in communication styles create challenges in maintaining intercultural relationships. 3) Limited Intercultural Understanding: Differences in communication methods between students and lecturers hinder effective interaction. 4) Anxiety and Uncertainty About Technology: Lecturers feel anxious and lack confidence in using digital learning technologies.

The shift to online learning in the 4.0 era has brought new challenges for digital immigrant lecturers, particularly in terms of intercultural communication and technological proficiency. This research provides valuable insights into how lecturers can adapt to these significant changes to maintain teaching and communication effectiveness in virtual classrooms.

B. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of the adaptation process of digital immigrant lecturers in intercultural communication with digital native students in higher education. The study focuses on lecturers and students from diverse cultural backgrounds at higher education institutions, such as FISIP UNTAN. The case study method is particularly appropriate as it allows the researcher to explore complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially the dynamic interactions shaped by technological advancement and intercultural diversity in the 4.0 Era.

Data collection is conducted through multiple methods, including in-depth semi-structured interviews with both lecturers and students, participatory observation in digital classrooms and thesis supervision sessions, and documentation studies analyzing materials from e-learning platforms. These diverse methods ensure triangulation, strengthening the credibility and richness of the findings. The collected data are analyzed thematically using an inductive approach, allowing patterns and themes to emerge naturally from the participants' experiences. The analysis involves identifying key themes related to technological adaptation and intercultural communication and grouping data according to similarities or differences in perceptions.

The theoretical framework guiding this study integrates four major theories: Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants (Prensky, 2001), Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (Gudykunst, 1998), Face Negotiation (Ting-Toomey, 1994), and High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication (Hall, 1976). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens to examine the communicative challenges and strategies that arise between digital immigrants and digital natives in educational settings. To ensure validity and reliability, the study employs data triangulation, member checking, and open coding techniques. Ethical considerations are also prioritized, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and providing clear explanations of research objectives to all participants.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Digital Immigrant Lecturer Profile

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Digital Immigrant Lecturers (DILs) in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tanjungpura Pontianak – 2025

No	Birth Year	Field of Study	Public Administration	Sociology
		Male	Female	Male

1	1955–1959	–	1	–
2	1960–1970	20	7	8
3	1971–1978	–	4	2
4	1980–1988	7	5	3
5	1989–1995	12	11	1
Total		44	28	14

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

The demographic profile of Digital Immigrant (DI) lecturers at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tanjungpura Pontianak, in 2025, shows that most DIs were born between 1946 and 1964, belonging to the Baby Boomer generation. This cohort tends to be more skeptical about digital technology (Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 2009). They often view technology as a domain for specialists, facing significant challenges in adopting digital systems in higher education. In contrast, Generation X (1965–1980) lecturers, who grew up with personal computing, are generally more adaptable to digital systems (Selwyn, 2016). The difficulties faced by Digital Immigrant lecturers in using platforms like SISTER or BKD reflect an epistemological rather than merely technical tension between the generations.

2. Digital Native Student Profile

Table 2. *Profile of Digital Native Students at FISIP UNTAN Pontianak, 2025*

No	Age	Study Program	Batch	Region of Origin	Ethnicity
1	20	Political Science	2023	Sekadau	Dayak Kerabat
2	21	Social Development	2022	Singkawang	Malay Singkawang
3	21	Social Development	2022	Kubu Raya	Malay Kubu Raya
4	21	Social Development	2022	Sambas	Sambas
5	20	Political Science	2023	Landak	Dayak Kanayatn
6	20	Public Administration	2023	Sambas	Malay Sambas
7	20	Public Administration	2023	Sintang	Javanese Yogyakarta
8	20	Public Administration	2023	Sanggau	Javanese Semarang
9	20	Public Administration	2023	Yogyakarta	Javanese Semarang
10	20	Archival Studies	2023	Pontianak	Malay Pontianak
11	20	Sociology	2023	Riau Islands, Natuna	Malay Natuna
12	20	Public Administration	2023	Malay	Malay
13	20	Communication Science	2023	Bali	Balinese
14	20	Communication Science	2023	Pontianak	Malay Pontianak
15	20	Communication Science	2023	Pontianak	Chinese

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

Table 2 reveals the profile of digital native students at FISIP UNTAN Pontianak in 2025. These students, born in the 2000s, are highly accustomed to technology and social media, which facilitates quick and global learning (Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 2009). They expect technology-based learning experiences, such as e-learning, although they still need to develop critical thinking and analytical skills (Bennett et al., 2008). The ethnic and regional diversity of these students does not hinder them, as they focus more on using technology as a bridge for communication.

3. Inability to Use New Technology: Focus on Digital Immigrant Lecturers

The inability of Digital Immigrant lecturers to master new technology is a major challenge in intercultural communication and academic evaluation. According to Prensky's (2001) Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory, this generational divide significantly affects technology adoption. Digital Immigrant lecturers often feel pressured by the rapid technological developments, hindering their participation in technology-based evaluation systems. Additionally, Gudykunst's (1998) Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) indicates that the anxiety experienced by lecturers in adopting new technologies creates uncertainty, which disrupts the quality of communication and collaboration. Ting-Toomey's (1994) Face Negotiation Theory further explains that this inability threatens lecturers' professional identity, as they fear being perceived as incompetent in front of students and assessors who are more familiar with technology. Table 3 below illustrates this further:

Table 3. Inability to Use New Technology

Factor	Description	Relevant Theory	Impact on Digital Immigrant Lecturers	References
Generational Differences	Digital Immigrant lecturers struggle to adapt to new technologies, as they did not grow up in a tech-driven environment like Digital Natives. The use of digital platforms in technology-based evaluation becomes a challenge.	Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	Digital Immigrants tend to feel pressured, struggle with increasingly complex systems, and lose control over technology-based evaluation processes.	Prensky, M. (2001). «Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants.» On the Horizon.
Technological Anxiety and Uncertainty	Uncertainty related to mastering new technologies creates anxiety that hinders lecturers' ability to participate in tech-based evaluations and collaborate with students.	Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst, 1998)	Lecturers feel less competent, which increases anxiety and hinders productive interaction with students or assessors.	Gudykunst, W. B. (1998). "The Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory." Yearbook 21.
Threat to Professional Identity	The inability to master technology threatens lecturers' professional status. Digital Immigrant lecturers fear their competence is judged by their technological skills, which they lack.	Face Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1994)	Inability to master technology reduces their professional status, creating intercultural tension and worsening academic relationships.	Ting-Toomey, S. (1994). "The Face Negotiation Theory." In The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication.

Limited Participation	Technological limitations prevent Digital Immigrant lecturers from actively engaging in digital academic interactions, hindering more objective and efficient learning and evaluation.	Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001); Face Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1994)	Limited participation in digital interactions reduces their contribution to academic discussions and tech-based evaluations.	Prensky, M. (2001); Ting-Toomey, S. (1994).
Value Differences Towards Technology	Digital Immigrant lecturers often view technology as a threat to their traditional teaching paradigms. They feel technology-based evaluations diminish the essence of teaching and reduce human interaction in the learning process.	Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	The inability to adapt to new values and methods of technology-based education exacerbates conflicts in academic interactions.	Prensky, M. (2001). «Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants.» On the Horizon.

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

The adoption of technology by Digital Immigrant lecturers is not just about technical skills; it involves psychological, cultural, and social dimensions. The inability to master technology leads to intercultural tension, exacerbating communication dynamics, and threatening the lecturers' professional identity. Systematic support for a more sensitive and effective adaptation process is needed to alleviate these challenges.

4. Tension in Face Negotiation

The focus of this analysis lies in understanding the tension in face negotiation that emerges during intercultural communication between digital immigrant lecturers and digital native students in higher education. This tension occurs when individuals perceive threats to their self-image or "face," which may hinder effective communication and collaboration. Within the academic context of FISIP UNTAN, the problem is intensified by generational gaps, differences in technological literacy, and cultural expectations regarding authority and professionalism. Digital immigrant lecturers, who are more accustomed to traditional pedagogical and evaluative methods, may perceive digital systems—such as online evaluations or performance analytics—as a challenge to their professional competence and identity. Conversely, digital native students and assessors view technology as an essential and objective instrument for improving academic transparency and efficiency.

The theoretical perspectives applied to this issue provide a multidimensional understanding of the communication dynamics involved. Prensky's (2001) Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory explains the generational divide in the use and perception of technology. Digital immigrant lecturers tend to adopt digital tools more reluctantly, often viewing them as foreign or disruptive to established academic norms. This gap is further illuminated by Gudykunst's (1998) Anxiety and Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory, which posits that anxiety and uncertainty arise when individuals face unfamiliar cultural or

technological contexts. In this study, such anxiety is evident when lecturers feel inadequate in mastering technological tools for assessment, leading to strained communication and potential misunderstanding with students. Complementing these theories, Ting-Toomey’s (1994) Face Negotiation Theory underscores how individuals attempt to preserve their self-image in intercultural interactions. For lecturers, their “face” is associated with expertise and authority, both of which can feel threatened when technology exposes their lack of digital fluency. Students, however, interpret the same technology as an avenue for fairness and objectivity in assessment, highlighting a fundamental difference in cultural and generational orientations toward communication and evaluation.

From a critical standpoint, the tension in face negotiation is rooted not only in technological disparities but also in deeper psychological and cultural dimensions. Digital immigrant lecturers may experience a loss of confidence and professional identity, while students’ preference for efficiency may inadvertently neglect the humanistic and relational aspects of learning. This misalignment of values results in communication breakdowns, reduced empathy, and potential conflict within academic settings. Therefore, to mitigate such tensions, higher education institutions must adopt an inclusive and dialogical approach—providing continuous digital literacy training for lecturers, promoting mutual understanding through intercultural communication workshops, and creating hybrid evaluation systems that balance technological objectivity with human judgment. Through these strategies, generational and cultural divides can be bridged, enhancing both the quality of communication and the fairness of academic evaluation (Prensky, 2001; Gudykunst, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1994).

Table 4. Tension in Face Negotiation

Aspect	Relevant Theory	Critical Analysis	Impacts	Required Solutions
Differing Views on Technology	Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	Digital immigrant lecturers perceive technology as a threat to their professional identity because they struggle to adapt to new tools and platforms. In contrast, digital natives view technology as an efficient tool that enhances the objectivity of evaluations.	Professional Identity Tension: Lecturers feel marginalized, perceiving technology as undermining their status. Students view technology as a standard for more objective and fair evaluations.	Enhanced Technology Understanding: Providing technology training for digital immigrant lecturers to help them feel more competent and less threatened by technological changes.
Anxiety and Uncertainty	Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) - Gudykunst (1998)	Uncertainty about using technology causes anxiety among digital immigrant lecturers who fear being seen as incompetent. Students and assessors, who are more familiar with technology, may not fully understand this discomfort.	Avoidance of Interaction: Lecturers may avoid using technology in evaluations, hindering more effective communication and limiting active participation in tech-based evaluations.	Open Dialogue and Empathy: Strengthening communication between lecturers and students/assessors to better understand the challenges faced, while offering a platform for sharing experiences.
Threat to Professional Face	Face Negotiation Theory	Digital immigrant lecturers feel that the use of technology threatens	Erosion of Traditional Values: Lecturers feel their	Balancing Communication Values: An inclusive

	Ting-Toomey (1994)	their professional "face," particularly in interactions that value personal, face-to-face engagement. Technology is seen as diminishing the personal dimension of academic interactions.	professional status is undermined, while students and assessors favor technology as it is seen as more efficient and objective.	approach where both lecturers and students appreciate the importance of face-to-face communication alongside the use of technology.
Generational and Technological Differences	Prensky (2001) & Gudykunst (1998)	Tension arises from the differing views on technology between older generations (lecturers) and younger generations (students/assessors). Older lecturers view technology as a challenge to their experience, while students/assessors see it as a tool to enhance efficiency and reduce bias.	Generational Frustration: Differences in technological experience exacerbate social anxiety and misunderstandings regarding the needs and preferences of each party.	Intergenerational Bridge: Encouraging cross-generational collaboration through technology mentoring and adapting pedagogy to be more responsive to the needs of both parties.
Objectivity vs. Subjectivity in Evaluation	Prensky (2001) & Ting-Toomey (1994)	Digital native students and assessors view technology as a solution to objectively assess lecturers' performance, while digital immigrant lecturers worry it diminishes evaluation based on experience and personal relationships.	Reduced Lecturer Engagement: Lecturers who feel threatened by technology may withdraw from participation in tech-based evaluations, ultimately reducing the quality of communication and transparency in evaluations.	Integrated Approach: Integrating technology in evaluations while maintaining the importance of personal interaction, so lecturers feel valued even when using technology.

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

The tension between digital immigrant lecturers and digital native students emerges from differing perceptions of technology in academic evaluations. Digital immigrant lecturers often feel that the increasing use of technology threatens their professional "face," as it challenges their traditional methods and perceived competence. This sense of insecurity may lead to reduced participation in digital evaluation processes and hinder open communication with students and assessors.

Meanwhile, digital native students and assessors tend to view technology as an efficient and objective tool for minimizing bias in evaluations. However, they may fail to recognize the discomfort and anxiety experienced by older lecturers when adapting to digital systems. This lack of understanding can create interpersonal tension and miscommunication between the two groups. As shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Analysis and Impact of Tension in Face Negotiation

Aspect	Relevant Theory	Analysis	Impacts	Required Solutions
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Digital Immigrant Lecturers' Perception of Technology	Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	Digital immigrant lecturers feel threatened by the use of technology in evaluations, perceiving it as undermining their professional status and competencies. They may experience tension in maintaining their "face" as professionals in a digital age.	Professional Engagement Decline: Tension may lead to decreased involvement in tech-based evaluations, resulting in communication barriers and hindered collaboration.	Technology Training for Lecturers: Offering tailored tech training for lecturers to help them gain competence and confidence in using technology, reducing feelings of threat and marginalization.
Digital Native Students' and Assessors' View of Technology	Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	Digital native students and assessors view technology as an efficient tool to reduce bias in evaluations. However, they may not fully comprehend the discomfort felt by older lecturers, which creates interpersonal tension.	Misunderstanding and Interpersonal Tension: The gap in understanding between digital immigrants and digital natives leads to communication barriers, with lecturers feeling misunderstood and students perceiving them as less competent.	Inclusive Evaluation Approach: Facilitating open dialogue and creating inclusive evaluation processes that bridge the generational gap, allowing both sides to value the advantages of technology and personal interaction.

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

5. Limitations in intercultural Understanding in Digital Communication: Analysis in the Context of Lecturer Performance Evaluation for Digital Immigrants at FISIP UNTAN

Limitations in cross-cultural understanding within digital communication often intensify interactions between digital immigrant lecturers and digital native students. At FISIP UNTAN, this mismatch becomes evident in lecturer performance evaluations, where differing cultural values and communication styles create tension. According to Prensky's (2001) Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory, digital immigrants—who adopt technology later—tend to see it as a threat to traditional teaching and evaluation methods, while digital natives regard it as efficient and objective. This difference can cause misunderstanding and marginalization of lecturers, which may be addressed through inclusive evaluation systems and technology training.

From the perspective of Gudykunst's (1998) Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory, lecturers' discomfort with technology produces anxiety and uncertainty in communication, limiting their participation in digital evaluations. This often leads to withdrawal and reduced communication effectiveness, while students remain confident in using technology. Encouraging empathy, open dialogue, and mentoring can help alleviate this tension and foster collaboration.

Finally, Ting-Toomey's (1994) Face Negotiation Theory explains how digital immigrant lecturers perceive technology-based evaluations as a threat to their professional "face," rooted in personal, face-to-face interactions. In contrast, students interpret technology as enhancing fairness and objectivity. These contrasting views create confusion and emotional distance. A balanced approach—combining technological efficiency with respect for lecturers'

interpersonal experience—can bridge this generational and cultural divide, improving communication and mutual understanding.

Table 6. Limitations of intercultural Understanding in Digital Communication

Theory	Critical Analysis	Implications	Impact
Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	Digital immigrant lecturers often feel threatened by the use of technology in evaluations due to unfamiliarity with digital tools and methods. In contrast, digital native students see technology as a more efficient and objective tool for evaluation. The lecturers' inability to adapt can exacerbate misperceptions between both parties.	Misalignment in understanding the value and role of technology in evaluations can deepen generational tension. Lecturers feel undervalued, while students believe technology is the better solution.	- Communication tension due to misunderstanding of technology's role. - Misperception of lecturers' competence. - Social isolation of lecturers in digital interactions.
Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) - Gudykunst (1998)	Digital immigrant lecturers experience anxiety and uncertainty about the technology used in evaluations. This uncertainty fosters social anxiety, preventing them from actively participating in technology-based evaluations. Students, more familiar with technology, may not be aware of this discomfort.	Lack of understanding regarding the lecturers' anxiety and uncertainty can result in feelings of isolation and withdrawal from interaction. Open dialogue and technology training can help reduce anxiety and foster deeper engagement.	- Communication gaps between lecturers and students. - Withdrawal from evaluations due to unfamiliarity with technology. - Increased anxiety among lecturers about their professional status and credibility.
Face Negotiation Theory - Ting-Toomey (1994)	In intercultural communication, digital immigrant lecturers feel that the use of technology threatens their professional face, as they prioritize face-to-face interactions which are seen as more personal and valuable. Digital native students view technology as a tool to reduce bias and increase objectivity.	Lecturers feel that technology undermines the value placed on their professional experience, while students see technology as a means of ensuring objectivity and efficiency. This creates a conflict of values in the approach to evaluations.	- Tension in interactions between lecturers and students. - Feelings of devaluation of lecturers' experience, built from direct interaction. - Misperception in evaluations due to differing views on the use of technology.

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

The limitations in cross-cultural understanding between digital immigrant lecturers and digital native students at FISIP UNTAN can exacerbate communication and collaboration in performance evaluations. The Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001) highlights the generational divide in technological experience, shaping differing perceptions of the evaluation process. The AUM Theory (Gudykunst, 1998) illustrates how misunderstandings regarding technology intensify anxiety and tension. Meanwhile, the Face Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1994) emphasizes how threats to lecturers' professional identity further fuel conflict in evaluations.

6. Anxiety and Uncertainty Regarding Technology in intercultural Communication in the 4.0 Era

Anxiety and uncertainty surrounding technology create significant challenges for digital immigrant lecturers as they adapt to the increasingly digitalized academic environment. Their limited understanding of technological tools and inability to fully utilize digital platforms often lead to communication tensions with digital native students, who are more adept and confident in using technology. This phenomenon can be examined through three theoretical perspectives—Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001), Anxiety and Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory (Gudykunst, 1998), and Face Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1994)—which together provide insight into the psychological, communicative, and cultural dimensions of these interactions.

According to Prensky (2001), digital immigrant lecturers often experience anxiety and inadequacy when using technology for academic evaluations, while digital native students view such tools as efficient and objective. This difference in perspective leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding, as lecturers perceive technology as a threat to their traditional teaching methods. Meanwhile, Gudykunst’s (1998) AUM Theory explains that the uncertainty experienced by lecturers amplifies their anxiety and discourages active participation in digital processes, further deepening intercultural tension. Open dialogue and empathetic engagement are therefore essential to reduce anxiety and foster mutual understanding. Ting-Toomey’s (1994) Face Negotiation Theory adds that lecturers may feel their professional “face” is threatened when technology-based evaluations appear to undervalue their interpersonal teaching experience. Conversely, students interpret technology as a neutral and fair assessment tool, unaware of the emotional strain it causes their lecturers.

In conclusion, anxiety and the lack of technological competence among digital immigrant lecturers represent a major barrier to effective intercultural communication in academic evaluations. The three theories collectively highlight how generational and cultural gaps contribute to this tension—through experience disparities, heightened uncertainty, and perceived threats to professional identity. To address these issues, institutions should promote technology training, facilitate open dialogue between lecturers and students, and adopt inclusive evaluation systems that respect lecturers’ experience while embracing the benefits of digital innovation.

Table 7. Anxiety and Uncertainty Regarding Technology in intercultural Communication in the 4.0 Era

Theory	Critical Analysis	Implications	Impact
1. Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory (Prensky, 2001)	Digital immigrant lecturers feel anxious and incompetent in using technology for evaluation. In contrast, digital native students feel more comfortable and confident with technology.	The gap in technological experience between lecturers and students exacerbates misunderstandings, hampers effective collaboration, and triggers anxiety.	Lecturers feel marginalized, and students perceive technology as more efficient, leading to avoidance of interaction and increased tension.
Solution: Technology training for lecturers, an inclusive approach in evaluations, and two-way communication.	Reduces the gap in understanding of technology, creating a more inclusive and	Students perceive evaluations as more objective, while lecturers feel more involved and	

	productive academic environment.	competent in using technology.	
2. Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) – Gudykunst (1998)	Digital immigrant lecturers experience anxiety and uncertainty regarding the use of technology in evaluations, leading to reduced active participation.	This uncertainty may worsen tension, hinder adaptation to technology, and affect the lecturers' confidence in communication.	Lecturers tend to avoid using technology, risking reduced quality of interaction and the effectiveness of technology-based evaluations.
Solution: Open dialogue and a more empathetic approach to understanding differences in technology adoption.	Reduces social anxiety, increases lecturer engagement, and improves communication between lecturers and students.	Increases lecturers' confidence, fosters more positive interactions, and reduces cross-cultural tension.	
3. Face Negotiation Theory – Ting-Toomey (1994)	Digital immigrant lecturers feel that the use of technology threatens their professional "face," potentially diminishing the recognition of their experience in face-to-face interactions.	Tension arises when lecturers feel that the acknowledgment of their experience in face-to-face teaching is overlooked by technology.	Increases anxiety and tension in communication, lecturers feel less valued, and students may perceive them as less competent.
Solution: An approach that integrates respect for lecturers' experience with the use of technology, creating a balance between both.	Fosters mutual understanding between lecturers and students, promoting more harmonious communication.	Reduces tension in technology-based evaluations, encourages fairer interactions, and improves more objective evaluation outcomes.	

Source: Author's field data (October 2025)

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that anxiety and limited understanding of technology among digital immigrant lecturers significantly hinder effective cross-cultural communication in academic settings. The analysis, grounded in Prensky's (2001) Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants Theory, Gudykunst's (1998) Anxiety and Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory, and Ting-Toomey's (1994) Face Negotiation Theory, reveals that technological adaptation is not merely a technical challenge but also a psychological, cultural, and social issue. The inability of digital immigrant lecturers to master digital tools contributes to heightened anxiety, uncertainty, and perceived threats to their professional "face," ultimately reducing their participation in technology-based evaluations and limiting effective interaction with digital native students.

The findings demonstrate that generational and cultural differences shape tensions in communication and perception within higher education. Digital immigrant lecturers tend to perceive technology as undermining their authority and professional identity, whereas digital native students regard it as an objective and efficient mechanism for evaluation. These differing perspectives lead to misunderstandings, weakened intercultural understanding, and reduced collaboration in academic environments. Addressing these issues requires more than technological intervention—it demands empathy, dialogue, and the recognition of the psychological dimensions of technological change.

Therefore, to mitigate these challenges, three primary solutions are recommended: first, the implementation of continuous technology training programs to improve lecturers' confidence and competence; second, the establishment of open and empathetic dialogue between lecturers, students, and assessors to build mutual understanding; and third, the development of an inclusive approach that harmonizes technological objectivity with traditional interpersonal values. By integrating these strategies, higher education institutions can bridge generational divides, reduce communication anxiety, and enhance the overall effectiveness of technology-based evaluation and learning processes.

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