UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

Public Interest Centre of Excellence

International Teaching Aid Competition 2023

Reconnoitering Innovative Ideas in Postnormal Times

iTAC 2023

iTAC 2023
INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AID COMPETITION
E-PROCEEDINGS

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PREFACE

iTAC or International Teaching Aid Competition 2023 was a venue for academicians, researchers, industries, junior and young inventors to showcase their innovative ideas not only in the teaching and learning sphere but also in other numerous disciplines of study. This competition was organised by the Special Interest Group, Public Interest Centre of Excellence (SIG PICE) UiTM Kedah Branch, Malaysia. Its main aim was to promote the production of innovative ideas among academicians, students and also the public at large.

In accordance with the theme "Reconnoitering Innovative Ideas in Post-normal Times", the development of novel ideas from the perspectives of interdisciplinary innovations is more compelling today, especially in the post-covid 19 times. Post-pandemic initiatives are the most relevant in the current world to adapt to new ways of doing things and all these surely require networking and collaboration. Rising to the occasion, iTAC 2023 has managed to attract more than 267 participations for all categories. The staggering number of submissions has proven the relevance of this competition to the academic world and beyond in urging the culture of innovating ideas.

iTAC 2023 committee would like to thank all creative participants for showcasing their innovative ideas with us. As expected in any competition, there will be those who win and those who lose. Congratulations to all the award recipients (Diamond, Gold, Silver and Bronze) for their winning entries. Those who did not make the cut this year can always improve and join us again later.

It is hoped that iTAC 2023 has been a worthy platform for all participating innovators who have shown ingenious efforts in their products and ideas. This compilation of extended abstracts published as iTAC 2023 E-Proceedings contains insights into what current researchers, both experienced and novice, find important and relevant in the post-normal times.

Best regards,

iTAC 2023 Committee
Special Interest Group, Public Interest Centre of Excellence (SIG PICE)
UiTM Kedah Branch
Malaysia

ENRICHING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES, KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS VIA AN ONLINE INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMME (OIP)

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ABSTRACT
In the globalised world today, international communication has been made easily accessible to students from various parts of the world. Using the internet, students at all levels from different parts of the globe can connect and get to know one another. Based on this premise, an online intercultural programme between two higher learning institutions in Malaysia and India was conducted with the main objective to expose the students to international and intercultural communication. Students were asked to record their feedback on the programme as journal entries. The journal entries were then analysed using ATLAS.ti to explore the emerging themes which indicate what the students have gained the most from the programme. Analysis of the journal entries has shown that students who joined the programme have managed to gain new experiences, new knowledge and also communication skills. These three antecedents are significant variables in students' learning since they open new and refreshing vistas in the students' learning experiences. Hence, the online intercultural programme as the one in this study is a highly viable option to be conducted not only by institutions of higher learning but can also be organised by any other institutions at the lower and secondary levels, if there is internet connectivity and suitable devices.

Keywords: online intercultural programme, new experiences, new knowledge, communication skills, international communication

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential for effective communication (Mermoul & Trichinon, 2020). Given this, language can be a highly effective medium for fostering intercultural communication skills. Byram (1997), one of the foremost proponents of intercultural research, defines intercultural communicative competence as a collection of factors that enable a person to communicate effectively with people of various cultural backgrounds. International collaboration is one of the most effective methods to promote intercultural sensitivity. Previously, tangible travel was required to initiate an international collaboration. Thanks to the pandemic, which has enhanced global communication, we can now collaborate globally online for free, requiring only our time and effort. This online intercultural programme (OIP) which was named Window to the Borderless World (WBW) was a language initiative that was administered by UiTM Kedah Branch and K.J. Somaiya College of Arts, Maharashtra, India, from November 2021 to February 2022. It aimed to promote international cooperation while assisting students in the development of their English communication skills and intercultural sensitivity.

This WBW initiative was composed of five phases. The first phase involved finding an international partner institution is the first step. An announcement was posted to a Facebook teaching group in search of potential companions. After identifying a suitable companion, the second phase consisted of two Google meetings to get to know one another and plan the topics and schedule. The third phase involves preparing the students by instructing them and requesting that they form groups. The fourth phase included the task of executing 20 positions of Google Meet presentations in groups according to the prepared schedule. In the fifth phase. students composed reflections on Google Classroom and Facebook groups.

NOVELTY

This initiative was unique because it facilitated international collaboration at no cost other than time and effort. In addition to initiating an academic bond between two institutions of higher education, this initiative also established a cultural bond that united two countries that are wealthy in cultural diversity and national identity. Even though this endeavour was conducted virtually, it afforded the students numerous opportunities to speak English with confidence, meet new people, and discuss a variety of intriguing topics.

This project's originality stemmed from the lecturers' efforts in planning and initiating the project, as well as identifying the topics that students had to present throughout the course. Students were required to share new insights regarding cultural topics such as weddings, cuisine, festivals, attire, superstitions, music, dance, and films in Malaysia and India. All of these provided the students with new perspectives on their voyage. Since we are inundated with new information on multiple social media platforms every day, such exchanges are more important now than ever before. Consequently, the meetings and discussions modelled by this programme would be extremely beneficial for fostering intercultural understanding.

COMMERCIALISATION POTENTIAL

This project is applicable and replicable by any group of lecturers or students who wish to engage in international collaboration to increase student's intercultural awareness and oral communication confidence. The concerned party need only adhere to the measures taken to organise this OIP project. This undertaking is also highly applicable because it can be tailored to the background and number of students as well as the background and number of lecturers.

FINDINGS

This initiative had a significant impact on 25 diploma students whose journal entries were analysed. These students were required to create a Facebook group, form small groups, prepare presentations based on the assigned topics, present the topics during the Google Meet sessions, update the Facebook group with their opinions and updates, and compose their reflections in Google Classroom. For this report, the students' reflective writings on Google classroom were analysed to find out the emerging themes from their write-ups.

The students' reflective writings were run through ATLAS.ti to identify the themes. There are 74 codes retrieved from the responses. After theme analysis, 3 themes were identified; New Knowledge, New Experiences and Communication Skills.

Table 1. Data analysis showing the results of reflective writings

List of current quotations (73). Quotation-Filter: All
1:1 taught me plenty interesting t.. (2:2)
1:2 new experience (2:2)
1:3 learnt (2:2)
1:4 explore more about their cultu.. (2:2)
1:5 open up their view (2:2)
1:6 enjoyed every knowledge (5:5)
1:7 learning about interesting pla.. (5:5)
1:8 earned about interesting place.. (5:5)
1:10 enjoy everything (5:5)
1:11 new experience and new feels (9:9)
1:13 learn new more new things (9:9)
1:14 opportunity (12:12)
1:15 exchange knowledge (12:12)
1:16 other cultural can clearly und.. (12:12)
1:17 learned that there are many pl.. (12:12)
1:18 expand my knowledge (12:12)
1:19 it interesting to learn (12:12)
1:20 can learn more (12:12)
1:21 gain knowledge and experience .. (12:12)
1:22 learning more (15:15)
1:25 creative minded person and eas.. (15:15)
1:26 excited (18:18)
1:28 learnt so many things (18:18)
1:29 learn a lot about a different .. (18:18)
1:30 gain more knowledge (22:22)
1:31 learned about India’s culture (22:22)
1:32 excited (22:22)
1:33 gain a lot of knowledge (22:22)
1:34 impressed (25:25)
1:35 fun and interesting (28:28)
1:36 learnt interesting places (28:28)
1:37 communicate (12:12)
2:1 exchange information (2:2)
2:2 great chance (2:2)
2:3 opportunity (2:2)
2:4 new experiences (5:5)
2:5 explore (5:5)
2:6 learnt to become more independ.. (5:5)
2:8 share their knowledge (5:5)

2:9 gain a lot of information (5:5)
2:10 exchange to learn the language.. (5:5)
2:11 a lot of experience and new kn.. (8:8)
2:12 beneficial for all of the stud.. (8:8)
2:13 enjoyed (11:11)
2:14 information that we all share (11:11)
2:15 know about the beautiful place.. (11:11)
2:16 getting to know individuals fr.. (15:15)
2:17 learning a lot about their cul.. (15:15)
2:18 unforgettable experiences (15:15)
2:19 share more interesting knowled.. (15:15)
2:20 improved my understanding (18:18)
2:21 many new knowledge (18:18)
2:22 wonderful experience (18:18)
2:23 enjoy listening (22:22)
2:25 I can learn with a good inform.. (25:25)
2:26 can get more knowledge (25:25)
2:27 great joy (28:28)
2:28 learnt a lot about India (28:28)
2:29 knowledge (28:28)
2:30 excited (32:32)
2:31 learnt about their culture (32:32)
2:32 learnt (35:35)
2:33 gain more knowledge (35:35)
2:34 new knowledge (38:38)
2:35 learned a lot (41:41)
2:36 gained more knowledge (41:41)
2:37 new knowledge (44:44)
2:38 gained new ways of thinking (47:47)
2:39 unique experience (47:47)
2:40 new knowledge (47:47)
2:41 better understanding (47:47)
2:42 speaking and dealing (47:47)
2:43 more talk sessions (22:22)
1:25 creative minded person and eas.. (15:15)
1:24 opportunity to make new acquai.. (15:15)
1:27 Sharing the knowledge (18:18)

1:26 excited (18:18)
1:23 opportunity to share my experi.. (15:15)
1:20 can learn more (12:12)
1:19 it interesting to learn (12:12)
1:22 learning more (15:15)
1:21 gain knowledge and experience .. (12:12)
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1:13 learn new more new things (9:9)
1:12 learn new knowledge (9:9)

Hence, the online international communication project benefited the students most in terms of enabling them to acquire new knowledge, allowing them to gain new experiences and promoting them to glean better communication skills.

CONCLUSION

Intercultural awareness and competence entail considerably more than mere cultural knowledge. It entails understanding that people's thoughts and actions are largely governed by their cultural composition and possessing strategies for acting and reacting successfully in intercultural contexts. This has been addressed by this OIP initiative. According to Sinagatullin (2019), intercultural awareness includes preparing students to live, work, and cooperate with people from diverse socio-cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and racial backgrounds; developing a creative and reflective personality that can make responsible decisions in a variety of multicultural settings; and fostering students' global competence so that they can successfully function in the global community. This OIP initiative is innovative and significant because it has prepared students to become global citizens even when they are happily spending time at home.

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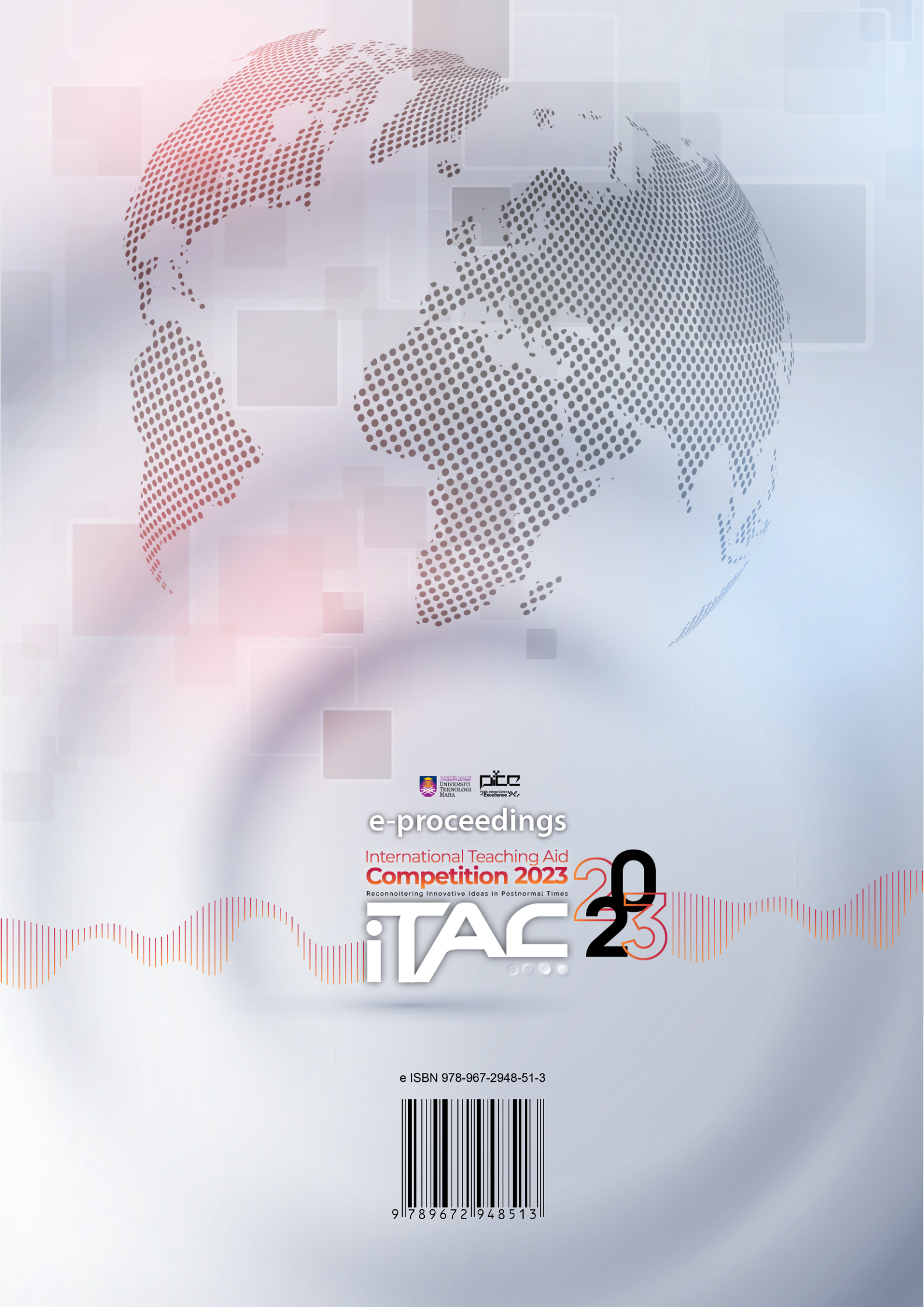

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