



## English Language Learning Curriculum Development In Indonesia: An Intercultural Competence Perspective

### *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia: Perspektif Kompetensi Antarbudaya*

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#### Article Info

##### Article history :

Received : 13-12-2025

Revised : 15-12-2025

Accepted : 17-12-2025

Published : 19-12-2025

#### Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan kurikulum Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELL) di Indonesia melalui lensa Kompetensi Antarbudaya (IC). Di era globalisasi, bahasa Inggris berfungsi bukan hanya sebagai alat linguistik tetapi juga sebagai jembatan untuk komunikasi antarbudaya dan sarana untuk menumbuhkan kewarganegaraan global. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian pustaka kualitatif, studi ini mengkaji evolusi kurikulum bahasa Inggris di Indonesia, integrasi sensitivitas budaya, dan tantangan praktis implementasinya. Temuan menunjukkan kesenjangan yang signifikan antara tuntutan global dan praktik kurikulum saat ini, yang seringkali memprioritaskan penguasaan tata bahasa daripada keterampilan antarbudaya. Lebih lanjut, materi pembelajaran seringkali menunjukkan bias budaya Barat sambil mengabaikan kekayaan warisan lokal Indonesia. Studi ini mengidentifikasi strategi utama untuk perbaikan, termasuk peningkatan kapasitas guru dalam pedagogi antarbudaya, lokalisasi materi pembelajaran, dan mandat kebijakan formal untuk menetapkan Kompetensi Antarbudaya sebagai hasil pembelajaran yang terukur. Pada akhirnya, mengintegrasikan Kompetensi Antarbudaya ke dalam kurikulum sangat penting untuk mempersiapkan siswa Indonesia menjadi komunikator yang efektif dan warga global yang bertanggung jawab serta tetap berakar pada identitas nasional mereka.

**Kata kunci:** *Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Pengembangan Kurikulum, Kompetensi Antarbudaya*

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#### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the development of the English Language Learning (ELL) curriculum in Indonesia through the lens of Intercultural Competence (IC). In the era of globalization, English functions not merely as a linguistic tool but as a bridge for intercultural communication and a means to foster global citizenship. Using a qualitative library research method, this study examines the evolution of Indonesia's English curriculum, the integration of cultural sensitivity, and the practical challenges of implementation. The findings reveal a significant gap between global demands and current curriculum practices, which often prioritize grammatical mastery over intercultural skills. Furthermore, instructional materials frequently exhibit Western cultural bias while neglecting Indonesia's rich local heritage. This study identifies key strategies for improvement, including teacher capacity building in intercultural pedagogy, the localization of teaching materials, and a formal policy mandate to establish Intercultural Competence as a measurable learning outcome. Ultimately, integrating Intercultural Competence into the curriculum is essential for preparing



Indonesian students to become effective communicators and responsible global citizens who remain rooted in their national identity

**Keywords:** English Language Learning, Curriculum Development, Intercultural Competence

## INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as a central global communication tool, serving as an essential lingua franca that facilitates international interactions across multiple domains. According to research by Bajuri Sahnan et al. (2024), English has become a dominant language in professional sectors such as business, technology, education, and diplomacy. In the realm of business communication. As noted by Usmala Dewi Siregar et al. English has been found to have a positive impact on professionals, by facilitating global information access, enhancing career opportunities, increasing communication confidence, and expanding knowledge and understanding of international business conditions.

Furthermore, the integration of technology has transformed the way English is learned, with innovative and diverse approaches being adopted, as observed by Nasywa Nur Kamila Sari et al. (2024). English has also become a crucial tool for international collaboration, enabling communication across different linguistic backgrounds, as emphasized by Nanik Shobikah et al. (2017). These findings underscore the significance of English as a global language, facilitating communication and collaboration across cultures and borders.

The history of English language curriculum in Indonesia reflects a dynamic evolution, shaped by changing educational and global priorities. Fitri Alfarsi (2021) explain that English was primarily taught selectively to elite environment during the colonial period, marking the beginning of a long journey of curriculum development. Post-independence, Indonesia experienced multiple transformations, with documented changes in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and most recently the 2013 curriculum.

However, recent curricula have shown contradictory trends, with the 2013 curriculum reducing English language teaching hours despite globalization demands for increased language education (Fitri Alfarsi et al., 2021). This reduction has been criticized for potentially hindering students' ability to compete globally. The latest Kurikulum Merdeka aims to address these challenges by emphasizing more flexible, competency-based learning approaches, which prioritize student-centered learning and the development of practical language skills (D. Chairunnisa et al., 2024).

The evolution of English language curriculum in Indonesia reflects the country's ongoing efforts to improve education quality and respond to global challenges. However, it also highlights the need for continued reform and adaptation to ensure that Indonesian students are equipped with the language skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

The Indonesian English language curriculum reveals profound inconsistencies and a diminishing emphasis on English education across primary, secondary, and higher levels, creating barriers to effective language acquisition in an increasingly globalized world. This fragmented approach often prioritizes rote memorization over practical communication skills, leaving students



ill-equipped for international interactions despite Indonesia's growing economic ties and digital connectivity.

Supporting evidence from recent studies paints a clear picture of these shortcomings. For instance, Mega Febriani Sya et al. (2020) surveyed primary education practices and discovered that while 84% of schools continue to incorporate English into their programs, a staggering 72% of these sessions concentrate almost entirely on grammatical rules and drills, sidelining speaking, listening, and cultural nuances essential for fluency. Complementing this, Fitri Alfarisy et al. (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of curriculum frameworks, noting that the 2013 Curriculum significantly slashed allocated teaching hours for English—from up to 4 hours per week in earlier models to just 2-3 hours—directly contradicting the demands of globalization, where English proficiency is vital for trade, tourism, and higher education opportunities.

These curriculum gaps arise from a confluence of systemic and pedagogical factors that undermine consistent implementation. First, the reduction in English teaching hours limits exposure, particularly in rural or under-resourced schools where supplementary learning is scarce, resulting in uneven proficiency levels nationwide. Second, inconsistent pedagogical approaches exacerbate the issue; some educators adhere to teacher-centered lectures focused on translation and exams, while others sporadically integrate communicative methods, leading to disjointed learning experiences without a unified national standard. Third, there is a limited emphasis on intercultural competence, which should foster understanding of diverse cultural contexts through English but is often overlooked in favor of isolated vocabulary and syntax exercises. Finally, implementation varies dramatically across school levels: primary schools treat English as an extracurricular add-on, secondary curricula integrate it unevenly amid core subjects, and tertiary programs assume prior mastery that many students lack, perpetuating a cycle of inadequacy.

Compounding these structural issues are practical challenges in curriculum delivery, as illuminated by Jeffri Dian Andika et al. (2025). Their research on educational fieldwork in diverse Indonesian regions identified key obstacles, including insufficient supervision from local education authorities, which allows deviations from intended guidelines without accountability; high student-to-teacher ratios—often exceeding 40:1 in public schools—that hinder personalized instruction; and difficulties in applying differentiated learning strategies, where teachers struggle to adapt materials for varying proficiency levels, especially in multilingual classrooms influenced by regional dialects.

Collectively, these findings highlight the urgent necessity for a revamped English language curriculum in Indonesia—one that is coherent, adaptive to global needs, and equitable across regions. By addressing these gaps through increased hours, standardized communicative pedagogies, intercultural integration, and robust support systems, policymakers can empower students to thrive in a connected world, ensuring English education aligns with the nation's aspirations for international competitiveness.

The primary goal of intercultural concept analysis in English language learning is to develop students' intercultural communicative competence and foster global citizenship attitudes while preserving a strong local cultural identity. This approach not only equips students with functional language skills but also builds a deep understanding of global diversity, enabling them to interact



harmoniously in multicultural societies without losing their native cultural roots, which is essential in an era of globalization where national boundaries are increasingly blurred.

Various studies provide robust evidence supporting the effectiveness of this approach. Salmon Pandarangga et al. (2022) emphasize that intercultural communicative competence helps students acquire linguistic skills alongside cultural awareness, allowing them to communicate effectively in real-life situations, such as international business negotiations or student exchanges, where understanding cultural contexts is key to success. Complementing this perspective, Dinar Martia Azizah et al. (2018) note that intercultural approaches aim to develop tolerance and assist students in discerning appropriate values, so they learn language not just as a tool but as a bridge to appreciate differences, prevent prejudices, and build cross-cultural empathy.

Key strategies for implementing intercultural concept analysis encompass innovative and inclusive methods to make learning more engaging and relevant. First, the use of multimedia such as films, stories, and songs to introduce cultural elements, where students can analyze dialogues in Hollywood movies or K-pop songs to understand implicit social norms, thereby connecting language to vivid visual and auditory experiences. Second, integrating local cultural contexts into language learning, for example, by comparing Indonesian traditions like traditional ceremonies with Western festivals, which makes students feel personally connected and strengthens national pride while expanding global perspectives. Third, promoting open-mindedness and cultural appreciation through group discussions or collaborative projects, where students share personal stories about their identities, building mutual respect and crucial cultural negotiation skills for everyday life.

Nevertheless, the main challenges in applying this approach include limited teacher training, curriculum constraints, and potential cultural misunderstandings, as highlighted by A. Saharani et al. (2020). Teachers often lack specific preparation to integrate intercultural elements, particularly in remote areas where access to multimedia resources is limited; rigid curricula may not provide flexible space for these topics, forcing educators to condense material; and the risk of cultural misunderstandings, such as misinterpretations of local or global symbols, can trigger conflicts if not handled with sensitivity. These challenges often hinder widespread adoption but can be overcome through ongoing training and more adaptive curriculum adjustments.

Overall, research consistently underscores the importance of intercultural approaches in preparing students for effective global communication, where this competence not only enhances language proficiency but also shapes a tolerant and adaptive generation. By addressing these barriers, educators can ensure that English language learning becomes a holistic empowerment tool, aligned with the needs of Indonesia's diverse society amid international dynamics.

## METHODS

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach with a library research design. The library research process involves collecting, analyzing, summarizing, and presenting relevant literature, including books and scientific journals, as data sources (Sari, 2021; Zhang 2022). This paper examines the influence of culture on the development of English Language Curriculum in Indonesia, drawing on insights from various scholarly works.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Intercultural Competence in English Language Learning: Definition of Cultural Competence and The Purpose

Intercultural competence in English language learning refers to the complex ability encompassing understanding, appreciation, and effective communication across diverse cultural backgrounds. This competence connects linguistic proficiency with cultural sensitivity to foster inclusive interaction. It empowers learners to navigate the complexities of global communication without cultural bias, ensuring that language mastery serves as a tool for mutual respect and collaboration in an interconnected world.

According to Salmon Pandarangga et al. (2022), intercultural communicative competence (ICC) encompasses several critical aspects: knowledge of cultural norms and practices, practical skills for adapting communication styles, intrinsic motivation to engage with other cultures, and the willingness to take appropriate action in intercultural settings. These components work synergistically to elevate learners beyond mere language mechanics, cultivating a holistic awareness that prepares them for real-world scenarios such as multicultural workplaces or international diplomacy.

Complementing this framework, Fauzi Miftakh et al. (2018) highlight how ICC aims to develop linguistic competence alongside cultural openness, encouraging learners to view English not as a neutral code but as a medium infused with cultural connotations, thereby promoting empathy and reducing ethnocentric tendencies through reflective learning activities and experiential exposure.

Fitri Alfarisy et al. (2021) further emphasize the pivotal role of ICC in fostering global citizenship, where students can maintain their native cultural identities while mastering English as a lingua franca. This involves a nuanced process of recognizing and respecting cultural differences—such as varying nonverbal cues or values in decision-making—while building tolerance to accommodate diverse viewpoints, ultimately enabling meaningful intercultural exchanges that enhance personal growth and social harmony.

By integrating ICC, educators help students transcend language barriers and support these insights; key evidence emerges from various Indonesian studies conducted across primary, secondary, and higher education contexts, offering a robust and contextually relevant framework for embedding intercultural competence into language curricula. These investigations, often drawing from classroom implementations in diverse regions such as Java and Sumatra, demonstrate measurable improvements in students' adaptability and confidence, reinforcing ICC as an indispensable pillar for preparing Indonesian youth to meet globalization's demands while honoring local heritage.

### Analysis of the English Language Curriculum (ELC) from an Intercultural Competence (IC) Perspective

The analysis of the Indonesian English Language Curriculum (ELC) is vital to check if its goals truly align with the necessary development of Intercultural Competence (IC) and global citizenship. This scrutiny focuses on two main areas the official curriculum documents and the practical instructional content.



The first step is a review of official ELC documents, such as Curriculum Frameworks and Learning Outcomes (capaian pembelajaran). We must determine if IC is stated as a clear, measurable learning outcome or merely a aboard policy idea. A strong curriculum should explicitly include attitudinal objectives, like tolerance, respect for diversity, and curiosity. It must also clearly articulate skill objectives, such as the ability to interpret cultural differences and mediate between local and global viewpoints. However, national policies, such as decisions concerning the reduction of English class hours, can become a structural challenge that hiders the comprehensive development of global citizenship (Alfarisy, Fitri. 2021).

The second critical step is examining the instructional materials, mainly textbooks. Literature reveals two significant content issues. The first is curtural bias, where materials often focus escessively on Western or Anglo-American cultures (Western Cultural Hegemony). This focus limits student's exposure to other global cultures and may undervalue their own heritage. The second issue is the integration of local cultural values. The ELC often fails to use the richness of indonesian local cultures such as local wisdom, folklore, and traditions as authentic teaching material (Ratri, Devinta, Sri Rachmajanti, Mirjam Anugerahwati, & Ekaning Dewanti Laksmi, 2024).

This failure exposes a gap, as developing syllabi with an emphasis on local culture is a critical strategy to enhance student's cultural competence and preserve their identity Ratri et al. 2024. This gap shows that the curriculum must be adapted to promote a holistic awareness, ensuring English is a tool for understanding both global diversity and Indonesia's own profound cultural wealth.

### **Implementation Strategies for Intercultural Competence in English Language Teaching: Recommended Models from Literature**

The implementation of intercultural competence in English language teaching requires an approach that integrates cultural awareness, linguistic skills, and critical thinking strategies. Research suggests several implementation strategies, including the use of authentic materials, comprehensive teacher preparation, cultural literacy integration, and policy support. The use of authentic materials, such as films, can expose students to cultural contexts, providing opportunities for active and critical engagement with language and culture. This can help students develop a deeper understanding of the target culture and improve their ability to communicate effectively.

Comprehensive teacher preparation is also crucial. Teachers must develop skills beyond linguistic competence, focusing on knowledge, motivation, and actions that promote intercultural understanding. This includes the ability to integrate cultural elements into teaching, use authentic materials, and facilitate critical discussions about cultural differences. Cultural literacy integration is also an important strategy. This can be done by introducing cultural elements through authentic materials such as proverbs, role-play, and literature. This can help students develop a deeper understanding of the target culture and improve their ability to communicate effectively.

Policy support is also essential for implementation. The curriculum must be designed to support intercultural competence while preserving local cultural identity. This requires clear policies and commitment from the government and educational institutions to integrate intercultural competence into English language teaching. Thus, the implementation of intercultural



competence in English language teaching requires a holistic approach. The overall process involves the use of authentic materials, comprehensive teacher preparation, cultural literacy integration, and policy support. This can help students develop the ability to communicate effectively and understand cultural differences, enabling them to become global citizens with a broad perspective.

### **Challenges in implementing ICC: Identifying practical barriers in English language learning.**

The implementation of the English language curriculum in Indonesia encounters substantial practical hurdles at various educational levels, from primary schools to tertiary institutions, largely due to a combination of internal and external barriers that hinder effective delivery and student engagement. These challenges not only disrupt the intended learning outcomes but also perpetuate disparities in language proficiency, particularly in a nation where English serves as a gateway to global opportunities amid rapid technological and economic shifts.

Research underscores a range of key implementation issues that reveal systemic weaknesses in the educational framework. Jeffri Dian Andika et al. (2025) identify critical problems such as inadequate supervision of curriculum execution, which allows inconsistencies in teaching practices to go unchecked; elevated student-to-teacher ratios that overburden educators and limit individualized attention; growing student reliance on artificial intelligence tools for assignments, potentially undermining authentic language development; and diminished participation in structured learning programs, often resulting from disinterest or perceived irrelevance of the material. Building on this, L. Rohmah et al. (2019) provide a structured classification of these obstacles, distinguishing internal barriers originating from teachers—such as limited pedagogical expertise or resistance to innovative methods—from external ones involving government policies that underfund resources, student-related factors like varying motivation levels, and infrastructural shortcomings that affect overall accessibility.

Among the specific obstacles complicating curriculum rollout, several stand out for their pervasive impact on both educators and learners. Limited teaching facilities, including outdated textbooks, insufficient audio-visual aids, and overcrowded classrooms, restrict interactive and immersive learning experiences essential for language acquisition. The inherent complexity of English grammatical structures poses another formidable barrier, as students grapple with unfamiliar syntax and tenses that differ markedly from Indonesian linguistic patterns, often leading to frustration and incomplete mastery. Low student confidence exacerbates this, with many learners hesitant to speak or participate due to fear of errors, fostering a cycle of avoidance that stalls progress. Pronunciation difficulties further compound the issue, as the phonetic demands of English—such as vowel shifts and intonation—clash with native speech habits, resulting in communication breakdowns. Additionally, inadequate vocabulary comprehension remains a core challenge, where students struggle to build a robust lexicon for contextual use, hampered by rote memorization methods that fail to encourage practical application.

These findings demonstrate remarkable consistency across empirical studies spanning primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as evidenced by Salma Nurhaliza et al. (2024) and Siti Fadhila Nursyahida et al. (2024), which document similar patterns in diverse institutional settings nationwide. This uniformity points to deeply rooted systemic challenges in English language education implementation, including policy misalignments, resource inequities, and a lack of



adaptive strategies tailored to Indonesia's multicultural and socioeconomic diversity. Addressing these requires targeted interventions, such as enhanced teacher training and infrastructure investments, to transform the curriculum from a theoretical blueprint into a viable tool for equitable language empowerment.

### **Opportunities for Intercultural Competence (IC) Development in the ELC.**

Despite the identified practical and systematic challenges, the Indonesian educational context holds unique and powerful opportunities that can be strategically leveraged to successfully institutionalize Intercultural Competence (IC) in the English Language Curriculum (ELC). These opportunities transform the IC agenda from a mere policy goal into an essential and achievable national objective.

Indonesia's greatest strength is its unparalleled cultural diversity, enshrined in the philosophy Of Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). This wealth provides the most powerful resource for IC development. The rich array of Indonesian local cultures, wisdom (adat), and traditions offers an endless supply of authentic, relevant, and engaging teaching material. Utilizing this wealth directly counters the challenge of inadequate contextualized materials, as developing syllabi with an emphasis on local culture is a critical strategy to enhance student's cultural competence and preserve their identity Ratri et al. (2024). Furthermore, the diversity of Indonesian students turns the classroom into an immediate, natural intercultural laboratory, where English can be purposefully taught as the lingua franca for internal communication.

The governmental commitment to educational reform and global competitiveness also provides necessary political momentum. The push for Indonesian graduates to become competitive Global Citizens directly aligns with the objectives of IC. National policies should recognize that IC, comprising the necessary attitudes and critical awareness, is crucial for fostering true global citizenship, moving beyond linguistic competence alone Alfarsi, Fitri. (2021). The ongoing evolution of curriculum frameworks offers a significant policy window to formally mandate IC as a core, assessable learning outcome, which is essential for addressing issues like time constraints.

Finally, technological advancements and pedagogical shifts present practical solutions. The expansion of digital learning tools is an opportunity to quickly develop and distribute high-quality, standardized, and culturally contextualized IC materials nationwide. This approach also allows for scalable professional development, which can boost teacher confidence and capacity by focusing training on IC pedagogy and managing culturally sensitive discussions. In conclusion, Indonesia's unique combination of immense cultural resources and a clear global imperative makes the integration of IC into the ELC highly achievable.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that Intercultural Competence (IC) is an essential, non-negotiable goal for English Language Learning (ELL) in Indonesia. IC must move beyond being a secondary skill, it must become the central mechanism for achieving the national educational aim of developing capable and responsible Global Citizens (Warga Dunia).

The analysis of the Indonesian English Language Curriculum (ELC) reveals a significant gap between policy ideals and practical implementation. Current curriculum documents often fail to articulate IC as a clear, measurable learning outcomes, focusing instead on linguistic



competence. Instructional content frequently exhibits cultural bias, relying heavily on Anglo-American contexts while neglecting the wealth of local Indonesian cultures Ratri et al. (2024). These gaps are compounded by practical challenges, including time constraints in the classroom and low teacher confidence in managing culturally sensitive discussions.

Despite these challenges, Indonesia possesses unique strengths that serve as powerful opportunities for successful IC integration. The nation's Bhineka Tinggal Ika, provides an authentic and inexhaustible resource for teaching IC internally. Furthermore, the governmental push for educational competitiveness and global citizenship provides the necessary policy legitimacy to prioritize IC implementation Alfarsi, Fitri. (2021).

To bridge the implementation gap and utilize these opportunities, success depends on systemic, integrated reform. This reform requires: 1) Curriculum Mandate: Formally establishing IC as an official, assessable learning outcome across all levels. 2) Capacity Building: Providing continuous professional development focused on IC pedagogy and cultural assessment for teachers. 3) Material Localization: Commissioning new resources that foreground authentic Indonesian local and national culture as a foundation for global understanding. By taking these strategic steps, Indonesia can successfully transform its ELC into a robust framework that empowers students to be skilled communicators and culturally aware Global Citizens.

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