
Profiling global diversity competence of Indonesian senior high students through the intercultural *ukhuwah*-based English instructional model

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A B S T R A C T

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This study aimed to examine how global diversity competence was developed through an intercultural *ukhuwah*-based English instructional model and how students perceived its role in shaping their global competence in an Indonesian senior high school context. The concept of *ukhuwah* was positioned as an ethical perspective emphasizing relational solidarity, empathy, and social responsibility in intercultural learning. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 25 eleventh-grade students across five learning stages: early introduction, *ta'aruf*, *tafahum*, *ta'awun*, and *takaful*. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with five students, and document analysis, and were analyzed using a thematic approach. The findings indicated that indicators of global diversity competence emerged differently across stages. Awareness of cultural differences and initial intercultural communication appeared in the early introduction and *ta'aruf* stages, while deeper understanding and reflection on diversity were observed during *tafahum*. Collaborative engagement and empathetic interaction became more visible in *ta'awun*, and elements of social responsibility began to appear in *takaful*. Students also reported generally positive perceptions of the model, particularly in terms of increased confidence and intercultural awareness. The findings suggest that the model may support the early development of intercultural competence, although deeper competencies require more sustained and critical engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is marked by rapid digital transformation and intensified global interconnectedness, which reshape how individuals encounter cultural diversity (Prasetya, 2021). While such conditions open opportunities for intercultural collaboration, they also increase the risk of misunderstanding, identity tension, and social fragmentation. In this context, education plays a crucial role in preparing learners not only with linguistic competence but also with the capacity to engage ethically and empathetically across cultures. English language education, in particular, has been widely recognized as a strategic site for fostering global competence, as it mediates communication across diverse cultural contexts (Adelliya et al., 2025; Guillén-Yparrea & Ramírez-Montoya, 2023; Huang, 2021). However, the effectiveness of this role is strongly influenced by how culture is represented in English learning materials, especially textbooks used in classrooms. Since content presented in them also may shape students' intercultural

understanding and global awareness. Previous studies have shown that cultural content in English textbooks often reflects an imbalanced representation between local and foreign cultures (Hakim & Wahyuni, 2024).

In Indonesia, the emphasis on global competence is reflected in the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022), which promotes six key dimensions of student character. Among these, *berkebhinekaan global* emphasizes the ability to appreciate cultural diversity, communicate across cultures, and act responsibly within a global society. Several recent studies illustrate growing academic attention to this issue. Kholidah et al. (2023) argue that English learning can serve as a medium for fostering students' openness and cross-cultural awareness. This suggests that language learning may provide opportunities for students to engage with diverse perspectives. However, empirical evidence indicates that its implementation, particularly in English language classrooms, remains suboptimal (Fani et al., 2025; Nafisah et al., 2024; Utami et al., 2025). Although the curriculum highlights the importance of intercultural and multicultural competence, classroom practices still tend to prioritize linguistic accuracy and communicative skills over deeper intercultural and ethical engagement. This suggests that global competence is often treated as an abstract curricular goal rather than a pedagogically operationalized construct.

Theoretically, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) provides a strong foundation for integrating language and culture. Contemporary research emphasizes that ICC is a multidimensional construct involving attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness, extending beyond linguistic proficiency toward ethical and social engagement (Nava, 2024; Xu et al., 2025). More recent discussions also highlight the importance of reflective practice, empathy, and action-oriented learning as key components of meaningful intercultural engagement (Fitriana, 2023; Santamaría-Cárdaba et al., 2024). Despite these advances, much of the existing literature remains grounded in secular or Western epistemological frameworks, with limited exploration of how local philosophical or religious values can enrich intercultural pedagogy.

Within this gap, the concept of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood and relational solidarity) offers a distinctive perspective. Rooted in Islamic epistemology, *ukhuwah* emphasizes interconnectedness, mutual care, and ethical responsibility across human relations. Unlike general notions of tolerance in intercultural theory, *ukhuwah* extends toward a deeper moral commitment that integrates spiritual, social, and humanitarian dimensions. It encompasses not only religious brotherhood (*ukhuwah islamiyah*) but also national (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*) and universal human solidarity (*ukhuwah insaniyah*). Conceptually, this aligns with recent perspectives in global citizenship education that emphasize empathy, ethical responsibility, and social action as core competencies (Sustiwi, 2025; UNESCO, 2013). Thus, *ukhuwah* can be positioned not merely as a cultural value but as an ethical-epistemological extension of intercultural competence.

However, the integration of such value-based frameworks into English language pedagogy remains underexplored. Existing studies in the Indonesian context tend to focus on students' perceptions or curriculum discourse, without examining how intercultural values are enacted through structured instructional processes. Furthermore, research highlights a persistent gap between teachers' awareness of intercultural competence and their actual classroom practices (Nafisah et al., 2024). This indicates a lack of pedagogical models that systematically translate intercultural and ethical values into classroom interaction.

To address this conceptual and empirical gap, this study adopts the Intercultural *Ukhuwah*-Based English Instructional Model (IUB-EIM) (Nurwati, 2022), which integrates stages of intercultural learning with the ethical principles of *ukhuwah*. The model consists of four

progressive stages, *ta'aruf* (knowing), *tafahum* (understanding), *ta'awun* (collaborating), and *takaful* (caring), which reflect both intercultural learning processes and moral development. This staged approach is consistent with recent findings that intercultural competence develops progressively through interaction, reflection, and action-based learning experiences (Xu et al., 2025).

Thus, this study seeks to contribute to the field in two ways. First, it offers a conceptual contribution by positioning *ukhuwah* as an ethical-epistemological extension of intercultural competence theory, addressing the lack of culturally grounded frameworks in current literature. Second, it provides empirical insight into how such a framework can be operationalized in classroom practice to support the development of global diversity competence among students. Specifically, this study investigates: (1) how the stages of IUB-EIM facilitate the development of *berkebhinekaan global* in English learning, and (2) how students perceive the role of this model in shaping their global competence.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore how global diversity competence is developed through the Intercultural *Ukhuwah*-Based English Instructional Model (IUB-EIM). A qualitative case study was selected because the research aims to understand processes, meanings, and contextual dynamics rather than to measure outcomes quantitatively. This design allows an in-depth examination of how intercultural and value-based learning unfolds in a real classroom setting.

Methodologically, this study is grounded in interpretivist inquiry, which assumes that intercultural competence and values such as *ukhuwah* are socially constructed through interaction and reflection. This approach aligns with contemporary perspectives in intercultural education that emphasize the importance of context-sensitive and process-oriented investigation (Deardorff, 2020). In this sense, language learning is understood not only as a communicative process but also as a means of fostering social engagement and intercultural citizenship (Porto, 2019). The case was bounded to one instructional setting to allow detailed tracing of students' development across the four stages of IUB-EIM (*ta'aruf*, *tafahum*, *ta'awun*, and *takaful*).

2.2. Research Site

The study was conducted at MAN 2 Gorontalo Regency, Indonesia, where the IUB-EIM model had been systematically implemented in English language instruction. The site was selected purposively based on several considerations, including the explicit integration of *ukhuwah* values in classroom practice, its alignment with the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, particularly the *berkebhinekaan global* dimension and its accessibility and feasibility for sustained observation throughout the research process. This purposive case selection is aligned with qualitative research principles that prioritize information-rich cases to generate deep insights rather than statistical generalization.

2.3. Participants and Data Sources

The participants consisted of 25 eleventh-grade students involved in five consecutive learning units implementing the IUB-EIM model. From these participants, five students were selected purposively for in-depth interviews to represent diverse levels of classroom participation (high,

moderate, and low engagement). This variation aimed to capture a range of perspectives on intercultural learning experiences.

Data sources in this study were categorized into primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, which provided direct insights into the implementation of the IUB-EIM model and students' intercultural learning experiences. Meanwhile, the secondary data included instructional documents such as lesson plans, student tasks, and reflective outputs, which were used to support and triangulate the findings from the primary data. The sample size is considered adequate for qualitative case study research, which prioritizes depth of understanding over breadth (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.4. Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through three main techniques:

a. Classroom Observation

Observation was conducted across five learning units using a structured observation checklist developed based on intercultural competence indicators (Byram, 2021; Deardorff, 2020). The checklist was designed to capture four key dimensions, namely students' understanding of cultural differences, their intercultural communication skills, their ability to reflect on diversity, and their sense of social responsibility within intercultural interactions.

b. Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured protocol to explore students' perceptions of the IUB-EIM model. Questions focused on students' experiences in each learning stage and their perceived development of intercultural awareness, empathy, and communication skills. The interviews allowed flexibility to probe deeper into students' responses while maintaining alignment with the research objectives.

c. Document Analysis

Supporting documents such as lesson plans, student assignments, and reflective journals were analyzed to triangulate observational and interview data. These documents provided additional evidence of how intercultural and *ukhuwah* values were integrated into instructional practice.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an interactive and iterative process adapted from (Miles et al., 2014) which involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the first stage, relevant data related to global diversity competence and the stages of IUB-EIM were selected and coded. The data were then organized into matrices, tables, and thematic categories to identify patterns across learning stages. Finally, the patterns were interpreted and linked to theoretical frameworks of intercultural competence (Byram, 2021; Deardorff, 2020) and global citizenship education. The analysis was guided by a theory-driven thematic approach, where categories were derived from both the IUB-EIM framework and intercultural competence theory, ensuring a clear connection between the conceptual framework and the analytical procedure.

2.6. Trustworthiness and Validity Strategies

To ensure the credibility and rigor of the study, several strategies were applied, including triangulation through the combination of observation, interviews, and document analysis; member checking to confirm interview interpretations with participants; prolonged engagement through sustained observation across multiple learning sessions; and the use of an audit trail to maintain

detailed records of data collection and analysis. These strategies enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and help reduce potential researcher bias.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed. Participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Anonymity was ensured through the use of pseudonyms, and all data were used solely for research purposes. Participation was voluntary, and students had the right to withdraw at any stage.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result of Class Observation

Table 1. Class Observation

Stages of IUB-EIM	Key Characteristics of Activities	The Dominant Dimension of Global Diversity	Pattern of Appearance
<i>Ta'aruf</i> (Mutual Knowing)	Initial interaction, getting to know each other, discussion of basic cultural values	<i>Understanding & Appreciating Culture and Intercultural Communication</i>	Strong at the beginning (Units 1–2), weakening in the final units
<i>Tafahum</i> (Mutual Understanding)	In-depth discussions of similarities and differences, reflection on values	<i>Intercultural Communication and Reflection on Diversity</i>	Stable in Units 2–4, decreasing in Unit 5
<i>Ta'awun</i> (Mutual Assisting)	Collaboration, empathy simulation, mutual assistance activities	<i>Reflection on Diversity and Social Justice</i>	Significant increase in Units 3–5
<i>Takaful</i> (Mutual Bearing)	Real action, social projects, digital campaigns, creative collaborations	<i>Social Justice</i> and real empathetic action	Peak in Units 4–5

As presented in Table 1, the implementation of the IUB-EIM model shows a general progression from awareness to action, but this pattern should not be interpreted as linear or uniformly achieved. While early stages (*Ta'aruf*) demonstrate strong engagement in recognizing cultural differences, the decline observed in later units particularly in the *tafahum* stage suggests that intercultural understanding is not consistently sustained across learning cycles. This fluctuation indicates that intercultural competence develops unevenly and requires continuous reinforcement, as highlighted by Deardorff (2020) who argues that intercultural learning is a recursive rather than linear process.

The increase in collaborative and empathetic behaviors during the *ta'awun* and *takaful* stages suggests that action-oriented tasks play a significant role in facilitating intercultural engagement. This aligns with recent studies (Huang, 2021; Santamaría-Cárdaba et al., 2024), which emphasize experiential learning; however, unlike those studies, the current findings indicate that such engagement remains highly dependent on structured classroom tasks.

Moreover, the prominence of social action in the *takaful* stage should be interpreted cautiously. While students participated in projects and campaigns, the data do not provide sufficient evidence of long-term behavioral change. This supports findings from Hang and Zhang

(2023)who note that intercultural learning often remains at the level of situational performance rather than sustained transformation.

3.2. Result of In-depth Interview

Table 2. In-depth Interview Result

The Dimension of Global Diversity	Focus Questions	of	Theme of Answers that Appear	Frequency of Occurrence (from 5 students)	IUB-EIM Dominant Phase
Understanding & Appreciating Culture	Differences in cultural expression	in	Awareness of differences in communication styles and values of politeness between cultures	5 Students (100%)	<i>Ta'aruf</i>
	Use of cross-cultural expressions		Ability to distinguish between local and global expressions (I agree vs. I concur)	5 Students (100%)	<i>Tafahum</i>
Intercultural Communication	Use of polite communication expressions		Ability to distinguish between local and global expressions (I agree" vs. "I concur)	5 Students (100%)	<i>Ta'awun</i>
	Ease of communication practice	of	Self-confidence increased after role-play exercises	4 Students (80%)	<i>Ta'awun</i>
Reflection on Diversity	Change of perspective	of	The awareness that every culture has an equal and appropriate way of communicating	4 Students (80%)	<i>Takaful</i>
	Personal habit evaluation	habit	Awareness of communication behaviors that need improvement (being too quiet, afraid to refuse, etc.)	5 Students (100%)	<i>Takaful</i>
Social Justice	Using polite expressions to avoid conflict		Positive perceptions of peaceful and inclusive communication	5 Students (100%)	<i>Takaful</i>
	Equal opportunity to speak		Awareness of the need for support for shy students	3 Students (60%)	<i>Takaful</i>

Table 2 indicates that students generally reported positive perceptions of their intercultural learning experiences, particularly in terms of awareness and communication skills. The consistently high responses (80–100%) suggest that the model appears to support the cognitive and affective dimensions of intercultural competence. However, the uniformity of responses especially the 100% agreement across several items should be interpreted critically, as it may reflect socially desirable responses rather than deeply internalized competencies (Nava, 2024)

While students reported increased confidence and awareness, fewer demonstrated critical intercultural reflection, such as questioning assumptions or recognizing power dynamics in communication. This suggests that the development of critical cultural awareness considered a key component of intercultural competence remains limited (Byram, 2021). The findings therefore highlight a common issue in intercultural education, where learners develop surface-level awareness without engaging in deeper critical analysis.

Additionally, the lower percentage (60%) related to supporting less confident peers indicates that social responsibility is unevenly distributed among students. This reinforces the

idea that empathy and inclusive behavior require sustained practice and cannot be fully developed within short-term instructional interventions.

3.3. Discussion

Integrating the findings from observation and interviews reveals that the IUB-EIM model facilitates three interconnected dimensions of development: intercultural awareness, communicative competence, and emerging empathy. However, these developments occur at different levels and are not equally internalized by all students.

First, the findings confirm that intercultural awareness is the most consistently developed dimension, as students were able to recognize cultural differences and adapt communication styles. This supports previous research indicating that awareness is often the initial and most accessible stage of intercultural competence (Guillén-Yparrea & Ramírez-Montoya, 2023). Second, the development of intercultural communication skills appears to be strongly influenced by task design, particularly role-play and collaborative activities. While these activities enhance participation, their impact may remain context-dependent, as students' performance is closely tied to structured learning environments. Third, the emergence of empathetic and socially responsible behavior in the *takaful* stage suggests the potential contribution of *ukhuwah*-based values in promoting relational and ethical dimensions of learning. However, this should not be interpreted as a fully achieved outcome. Instead, it reflects an initial stage of value internalization that requires longer-term reinforcement.

Importantly, the integration of *ukhuwah* introduces both opportunities and tensions within intercultural pedagogy. On the one hand, it strengthens empathy and social harmony; on the other hand, it may limit critical engagement if not balanced with reflective inquiry. This finding contributes to ongoing debates in intercultural education regarding the need to combine ethical empathy with critical awareness (Santamaría-Cárdaba et al., 2024).

3.4. Limitation of the study

While the findings suggest that the IUB-EIM model supports aspects of intercultural learning, claims regarding its effectiveness should be made cautiously. The study is limited by its qualitative design, small sample size, and short duration. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as context-specific insights rather than generalizable evidence.

Furthermore, the reliance on observational and self-reported data may not fully capture the complexity of intercultural competence development. As noted by Deardorff (2020) such competence requires long-term, multi-contextual engagement. Consequently, the findings of this study are better understood as indicating the potential contribution of the IUB-EIM model rather than confirming its definitive impact.

4. CONCLUSION

However, these findings need to be interpreted cautiously. The results indicate that students' development was more evident at the level of awareness and classroom-based interaction, while deeper dimensions such as critical intercultural reflection and sustained social action were less consistently demonstrated. This suggests that intercultural competence is a gradual and ongoing process that requires extended exposure, varied contexts, and more critical engagement beyond structured classroom activities.

The study also highlights an important conceptual consideration: while *ukhuwah* strengthens empathy and social harmony, its pedagogical implementation needs to be balanced

with critical intercultural perspectives to avoid limiting learning to surface-level agreement or harmony. In this sense, the contribution of this study lies not only in proposing a culturally grounded instructional model but also in emphasizing the need to integrate ethical values with critical awareness in intercultural pedagogy.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the limited number of participants, and the relatively short duration of implementation, the findings cannot be generalized broadly. Instead, they should be understood as context-specific insights into how value-based approaches may support intercultural learning in a particular educational setting.

In terms of implications, the findings suggest that teachers may benefit from incorporating more reflective and critical activities, such as analyzing cultural dilemmas or engaging with multiple perspectives to deepen students' intercultural understanding. At the institutional level, sustained programs such as collaborative projects or intercultural exchanges may provide more authentic opportunities for students to practice intercultural competence beyond the classroom. Additionally, teacher development initiatives should aim to integrate intercultural competence with reflective and critical pedagogies to ensure a more balanced approach. Future research is recommended to adopt longitudinal and mixed-method designs involving more diverse contexts in order to better understand the long-term development of intercultural competence and the role of value-based instructional models.

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