

Journal of English Language and Education

ISSN 2597-6850 (Online), 2502-4132 (Print)

Journal Homepage: https://jele.or.id/index.php/jele/index



The Impact of Interculture-Based Language Learning on English Paragraph Writing Skill in Higher Education: A Systematic Review



https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1294

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ABSTRACT

This study is a systematic literature review aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of Intercultural Learning (IBL) in improving English paragraph writing skills in higher education. IBL is recognized as a pedagogical approach that integrates linguistic, cognitive, and social aspects, supporting students in understanding cultural contexts when writing. This review analyzed 25 studies published between 2016 and 2025, focusing on the application of IBL in improving writing skills for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The analysis employed a qualitative synthesis approach, including thematic coding and comparative evaluation, to identify recurring patterns and variations across the selected studies. Research findings indicate that IBL significantly improves students' writing quality, particularly in terms of text structure, cohesion, and coherence. Additionally, this approach helps students develop higher cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills. The studies were selected based on predefined inclusion criteria, such as relevance to IBL in EFL writing, empirical or conceptual grounding, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. However, the main challenges faced in implementing IBL include time constraints, teacher readiness, and skill gaps among students. This study emphasizes the importance of institutional support and adaptive learning strategies to maximize the effectiveness of IBL. The findings further imply that curriculum developers and educators should integrate intercultural components more systematically into writing instruction to enhance both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Thus, IBL can be implemented sustainably to optimize the development of students' writing skills in the context of an increasingly global higher education system.

Keywords: Interculture-Based Learning, English Foreign Language, Paragraph Writing Skill, Higher Education, Systematic Review

Article History:

Received 27th July 2025 Accepted 29th November 2025 Published 01st December 2025



INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized academic and professional landscape, intercultural competence has become a fundamental element in effective English writing for EFL learners. Writing in English is not only a linguistic activity but also a culturally situated practice that requires awareness of diverse perspectives, communication norms, and cultural values. Therefore, the ability to write well-structured English paragraphs plays a crucial role in enabling college students to convey ideas clearly within multicultural contexts and participate in global knowledge exchange (Ilham, 2022; Zalli & Moisiu, 2024).

However, many students face challenges in writing coherent and cohesive English paragraphs, mainly due to limitations in vocabulary and proper sentence structure (Ilham, 2024; Ilham et al., 2020). Another difficulty arises from a lack of understanding of the cultural context inherent in English. Language is not only a tool for communication, but also reflects the culture and mindset of its speakers. Students' ignorance of these cultural aspects can lead to misunderstandings in the communication of ideas. Therefore, a learning approach is needed that not only focuses on linguistic aspects, but also includes cultural elements, so that students can write more meaningful and communicative paragraphs (Siregar, 2025).





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The relationship between intercultural language learning and English writing skills is very important, as understanding diverse cultural perspectives can enhance students' cognitive and expressive abilities. This learning helps students develop intercultural pragmatic skills, enabling them to adapt their writing to various social contexts (Li, 2022). Additionally, frameworks such as TBSIR can foster critical thinking in writing (Chason et al., 2017). Meanwhile, reforms in writing instruction within a cross-cultural framework have been shown to improve writing skills (Su, 2022). Overall, integrating cross-cultural perspectives into writing instruction enriches students' abilities and prepares them for effective communication in the global world (Díaz, 2016; Nomnian, 2022).

Writing skills, particularly paragraph writing, support students in their academic assignments and the writing of various scientific documents. Effective writing enables students to articulate complex ideas, perform critical analysis, and synthesize information (Chauhan, 2022; Ilham, 2022, 2023; Ilham et al., 2025; Yundayani, 2018). The recursive writing process, including drafting and revising, helps students understand content organization and capture audience attention, which improves their academic performance. Writing centers also support students with resources and guidance, and promote a structured approach that aligns with institutional goals (Drennan, 2017). Strong writing skills are closely linked to academic achievement, enabling students to effectively express their knowledge and meet the demands of higher education (Wheeler, 2021).

Previous research has shown the significant impact of intercultural learning on English writing skills. Chengchieh (2020) emphasizes the importance of building intercultural communicative competence through writing strategies that can reduce communication errors. Zhu (2022) found that ESL students, especially those who speak Mandarin, often experience difficulties in writing due to cultural influences. Haerazi & Irawan (2020) showed that the Intercultural Language Learning (ILL) model improves writing skills better than conventional methods. Banat et al. (2022) propose a course model that pairs international and domestic students to enhance intercultural competence and writing outcomes through collaborative learning. Overall, these studies indicate that integrating intercultural elements into writing education can improve students' writing skills (Sarsenbaeva, 2021).

Based on the previous research above, there are still shortcomings in deeply examining the relationship between cultural understanding and paragraph writing skills in the context of higher education. Previous studies have primarily focused on general theories and approaches without investigating the specific impact of intercultural learning on the development of writing skills in practical and contextual aspects. Additionally, although intercultural-based learning has been implemented in some institutions, the lack of research integrating cultural elements into structured paragraph writing instruction in higher education represents a gap that needs to be addressed in this study.

Based on a review of research on the impact of Intercultural Learning (IBL) on English paragraph writing skills, there is a gap that needs to be addressed. This study aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review that integrates previous findings, identifies trends, and uncovers possible hidden relationships. With this approach, it is hoped that deeper insights into the effectiveness of IBL in improving writing skills can be gained, along with evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers. This research is expected to fill the gap and make a significant contribution to the development of theory and practice in English language teaching from a cross-cultural perspective.

MFTHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines published by Page et al. (2021) to ensure a structured, transparent, and replicable process. The use of PRISMA is widely recognized in literature synthesis to enhance replication and reduce bias in review studies (Moher et al., 2009). This review aims to synthesize empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Intercultural Learning (IBL) in improving English paragraph writing skills in higher education, identify effective





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The literature was collected from major academic databases such as Scopus, DOAJ, and Google Scholar, focusing on publications published between 2017 and 2024. This time period was chosen to explore recent developments in language pedagogy and intercultural approaches to English language teaching. The selection of these databases aligns with best practices to ensure comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed research (Papaioannou et al., 2016). The keywords used in the search include "Intercultural-Based Learning," "Paragraph Writing Skills," and "English as a Foreign Language," combined with Boolean operators to capture relevant studies across interconnected domains, as suggested by (Higgins & Green, 2011).

Inclusion criteria included articles published in academic journals that specifically discussed the application of IBL to improve paragraph writing skills among higher education students. Exclusion criteria included studies that did not directly discuss IBL or writing skills, as well as non-research publications such as editorials, opinions, and letters to the editor, to ensure the reliability of the synthesized evidence (Pope et al., 2007). The article selection process was conducted in several stages, beginning with the removal of duplicates to avoid redundancy (Page et al., 2021). Screening based on titles and abstracts assessed initial relevance, followed by a review of the full text to ensure compliance with inclusion criteria. Data extraction captured key details of the studies, including authors, year of publication, research design, main findings, and implications for IBL-based writing instruction, following the framework recommended by (Tranfield et al., 2003).

The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify the impact of IBL on students' paragraph writing skills in the context of higher education, focusing on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, coherence, and paragraph structure. Thematic analysis facilitates the identification of patterns and themes emerging from qualitative data, providing a deep understanding of instructional outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of IBL while also highlighting future challenges and opportunities. Additionally, this study evaluates indicators of IBL success such as student engagement, collaborative learning, and improvements in academic writing quality, which align with the evaluation criteria in project-based methodologies discussed in previous research (Thomas, 2000).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the impact of Intercultural Learning (IBL) on English paragraph writing skills in higher education. The results of the literature review indicate that IBL improves students' writing skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and coherence, as well as enriching their cultural understanding. These improvements are consistent with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the importance of audience awareness and sociocultural norms in EFL writing. By engaging with diverse cultural schemata, students develop the ability to anticipate readers' expectations and adjust their writing to ensure clarity and appropriateness. Approaches such as online and offline learning, process writing, and intercultural rhetoric also contribute to broader perspectives and enhanced writing performance. Furthermore, intercultural interaction promotes self-reflection and cultural awareness, which are central to intercultural pedagogy since they enable students to examine their assumptions and construct more coherent and audience-sensitive texts. Although challenges remain in adapting materials and preparing teachers, the overall findings support IBL as an effective strategy for improving writing skills and providing evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers. Table 1 below summarizes the key areas of focus, relevant studies, and research variables that demonstrate the application of Intercultural Learning in enhancing English paragraph writing skills.

Table 1. Application of Intercultural Learning in Improving English Paragraph Writing Skills



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No	Focus	Authors	Research Variables
1	The Application of IBL in Writing English Paragraphs	(Hei et al., 2020), (Lee, 2023), (Aryadoust, 2016), (Wang, 2017), (Park, 2022)	IBL improves writing skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and motivation.
2	Culturally Responsive Learning	(Sutrisno et al., 2024), (Kremer & Pinto, 2025), (Chengchieh, 2020), (Ping, 2023)	Culturally responsive instruction increases engagement, writing skills, and critical thinking.
3	Cultural Identity Reflection Strategies in Writing	(Tajeddin et al., 2023), (Cuccurullo, 2019), (Almalki, 2023), (Hasanah et al., 2025)	Reflection on cultural identity and intercultural interaction enriches argumentative writing skills.
4	Online and Offline Learning in Writing Instruction	(Xu, 2024), (Abed, 2023), (Yunus et al., 2024), (Wornyo & Klu, 2018)	Online and offline learning with an emphasis on intercultural competence enriches writing content.
5	Intercultural Interaction in EFL Writing Instruction	(Hsieh et al., 2016), (Du & Liu, 2024), (Ahmed, 2024)	Cross-cultural online interaction increases self-reflection, writing skills, and cultural awareness.

Table 1 shows that the main focus of this study is the application of Intercultural Learning (IBL) in improving English paragraph writing skills. IBL is effective in improving writing skills, such as grammar, coherence, and vocabulary, while enriching students' cultural awareness. Engagement with intercultural content helps activate and expand students' cultural schemata, which shape how ideas are organized in written texts. When students compare their cultural frameworks with those of target-language communities, they gain greater ability to structure paragraphs logically and communicate in ways that align with English academic conventions. However, challenges in implementing IBL include differences in cultural awareness and language proficiency among students, which require teacher support to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Another focus of this study is the integration of technology, the role of facilitators, and curriculum design in the implementation of IBL. IBL enhances student motivation and engagement by providing real-world applications in writing and encouraging active participation in discussions. The use of technology supports writing skills and develops critical thinking, collaboration, and intercultural competencies. Technology supports the development of writing skills by enhancing critical thinking, collaboration, and intercultural competence. Technology-enabled interactions also expose students to real audiences, which sharpens their audience awareness and strengthens their ability to produce contextually appropriate paragraphs. Despite these advantages, challenges such as inclusivity, material adaptation, and limited teacher training remain central issues in ensuring the successful implementation of IBL.

The Effect of Intercultural Based Learning (IBL) on English Paragraph Writing Skills in Higher Education

Research shows that Intercultural Learning (IBL) significantly improves English paragraph writing skills in higher education through various mechanisms. The collaborative learning environment created by IBL fosters intercultural competence, which in turn increases student engagement and contribution, resulting in better writing outcomes (Hei et al., 2020). A meta-analysis of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs found that students, particularly those with lower proficiency levels, experienced a significant improvement in writing skills with an effect size of 0.45, indicating a moderate effect (Lee, 2023). Additionally, the development of paragraph writing skills is closely related to linguistic features such as cohesion and coherence, suggesting that IBL can enhance both aspects through focused practice (Aryadoust, 2016). Curriculum factors, such as classroom engagement and teaching methods, are also crucial in fostering intercultural competence, which in turn supports effective writing in diverse contexts (Wang, 2017). These findings can be explained through intercultural learning theory, which argues that understanding cultural norms and communication expectations strengthens students' ability to produce writing that aligns with audience needs and academic discourse conventions. Exposure to multiple cultural contexts refines students' skills in organizing ideas logically and selecting appropriate tone and





The Impact of Interculture-Based Language Learning on English Paragraph Writing Skill in Higher Education: A Systematic Review register. Overall, IBL not only promotes writing skills but also prepares students for global communication challenges (Park, 2022).

Along with these findings, various approaches have also been tested to improve English writing skills in higher education, with promising results. The Intercultural Language Learning (ILL) model has been shown to significantly improve writing performance compared to conventional methods (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020). Incorporating intercultural competencies into English language materials for writing classes can facilitate more linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate communication (Haerazi et al., 2018). Additionally, integrating Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) into English language instruction helps students acquire linguistic and intercultural skills, which directly enhance their ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations (Pandarangga & Kapoe, 2022). Viewed through the framework of intercultural rhetoric theory, these outcomes illustrate students' growing ability to balance their own cultural writing conventions with those of English-speaking academic communities. This balance, achieved through critical cultural reflection, is crucial for producing writing that is coherent, sensitive to the audience, and appropriate to diverse cultural contexts.

The above findings highlight the importance of Intercultural Learning (IBL) in improving English writing skills in higher education, which develops linguistic and intercultural competencies simultaneously. IBL has been proven to increase student engagement, improve cohesion and coherence, and prepare students for global communication. Approaches such as the Intercultural Language Learning (ILL) Model and Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) are also effective in improving writing skills, as they combine language instruction with cultural understanding. Although the results are promising, challenges in integrating cultural elements into teaching remain. Overall, this research supports the importance of a more holistic approach to developing writing skills that are not only linguistic but also sensitive to the global cultural context.

Trends and Patterns Emerging from the Application of Intercultural Learning in the Teaching of English Writing in Higher Education

The application of Interculturally Based Learning (IBL) in teaching English writing in higher education shows a significant trend, including the integration of culturally responsive teaching methods. Research shows that culturally responsive instruction improves students' writing skills, grammar, critical thinking, vocabulary, as well as motivation and personal connections (Sutrisno et al., 2024). The relationship between English Intermediate Instruction (EMI) and intercultural competence (IC) is increasingly recognized, with EMI serving as a means to develop IC (Kremer & Pinto, 2025). Fostering intercultural competence through focused writing strategies is also important, with attention to teacher training and curriculum support to address the challenges of intercultural communication in writing (Chengchieh, 2020; Ping, 2023). Overall, IBL has great potential to improve writing skills and promote inclusivity and cultural appreciation in higher education.

Trends in the application of Interculture-Based Language Learning (IBL) in writing instruction increasingly indicate the use of strategies that emphasize reflection on cultural identity and intercultural interaction, such as multicultural text analysis, cross-cultural narrative writing tasks, and critical dialogue on value differences (Tajeddin et al., 2023). These strategies are designed to build cultural awareness and improve argumentative and descriptive writing skills (Cuccurullo, 2019). Success comes when students reflect on their cultural values and compare them to the target culture through structured tasks and authentic materials (Almalki, 2023). Creative writing linked to cultural contexts can promote motivation and self-reflection (Hasanah et al., 2025), with curriculum design aligning linguistic and intercultural goals and technological support tailored to strengthen the reflection process in writing (Chen & Gong, 2025; Mei et al., 2025).

The above results show that the implementation of Intercultural Based Learning (IBL) in learning English writing has a significant positive impact on students' writing skills, especially in linguistic aspects and cultural awareness. Culturally responsive teaching methods not only improve writing skills, but also students' engagement in learning. However, challenges such



The Impact of Interculture-Based Language Learning on English Paragraph Writing Skill in Higher Education: A Systematic Review as cultural understanding gaps and limited teacher training remain. Therefore, it is important to design curricula that align linguistic and intercultural goals, and strengthen cultural reflection through authentic materials and technology. Overall, despite these challenges, IBL has great potential in preparing students for increasingly diverse global communication.

Integration of Intercultural Approaches in English Writing Learning Implications and Teaching Strategies

This literature review shows that the application of intercultural approaches in English language teaching, particularly for paragraph writing skills, enhances educational effectiveness. Combining online and offline learning with an emphasis on intercultural competence proved effective in building student interest and enriching writing content (Xu, 2024). The process writing approach also enhances writing skills and enables cultural reflection that conforms to academic norms (Abed, 2023). In addition, Global English Textbooks enrich cross-cultural understanding, although they require adaptation to the complexities of language and context (Yunus et al., 2024). The intercultural rhetoric approach helps students adapt writing styles and build intercultural communication competence (Wornyo & Klu, 2018).

In addition, enhancing EFL students' intercultural sensitivity in writing learning can be done through cross-border writing instruction that involves online interaction with partners from different cultures (Hsieh et al., 2016). This strategy not only facilitates the exchange of cultural perspectives, but also motivates students to be more engaged in the academic writing process (Du & Liu, 2024). Research shows that interaction with foreign peers in the context of a writing task promotes keener observation of cultural differences and enhances reflection skills and self-awareness (Ahmed, 2024). This approach has been shown to strengthen writing ability while building intercultural competence that is much needed in today's global communication.

The findings of literature above show that the implementation of intercultural approaches in English language teaching, particularly writing skills, significantly improves students' engagement and writing skills. The use of strategies that combine online and offline learning, along with process writing and intercultural rhetoric, enrich students' cultural understanding and improve writing skills in academic contexts. Online interactions with different cultural partners also improved students' cultural awareness and reflection skills. Although challenges in material adaptation remain, these approaches have great potential to prepare students for global communication. Therefore, it is important for educators to integrate methods that support linguistic skills and cultural competence.

Research on the application of Interculture-Based Language Learning (IBL) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction has shown considerable progress over time. This approach has proven to be effective in improving students' writing skills through activities that emphasize cultural awareness, critical thinking, and collaboration. Over the years, research on IBL has expanded from focusing on basic writing competencies such as grammar and coherence to including the integration of intercultural communication, the use of digital tools, and the development of soft skills such as reflective thinking and cultural sensitivity. The following mind map illustrates the major developments of research variables related to the application of IBL in EFL writing instruction from 2016 to 2025.



Figure 1. Development of Intercultural Based Learning Variables (2016–2025)





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Figure 1 shows that the development of research variables on Intercultural Learning (IBL) in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing has developed systematically over time. In the 2016-2017 period, research focused on improving basic writing skills, developing cultural awareness, and implementing learning that connects theory and practice. In 2018-2019, the focus shifted to strengthening intercultural communication competence, developing cross-cultural narrative writing skills, and improving understanding of cultural values reflected in writing. In 2020-2021, research expanded to include the use of technology in writing instruction, strengthening cultural reflection, and utilizing authentic materials to support more effective writing processes. More recently, in 2022-2023, research highlighted challenges in the implementation of IBL, such as the gap in students' cultural understanding, limitations in teacher training, and adaptation of teaching materials to suit diverse cultural contexts. This growing focus suggests that the application of IBL in English writing instruction is increasingly paying attention to the balance between cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and contextual factors, and identifying areas for improvement to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on a systematic synthesis of existing literature, this study shows that Intercultural Learning (IBL) has a significant positive impact on the paragraph writing performance of EFL students, particularly in terms of structure, coherence, and content substance. This approach creates an active, collaborative, and contextual learning environment, enabling students to engage emotionally and cognitively in the writing process. In addition to strengthening technical skills such as grammar and writing organization, IBL also enhances higher-order thinking skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving. However, the success of CBL is greatly influenced by several factors, including institutional readiness, the active role of teachers as facilitators, as well as the availability of time, technology, and appropriate assessment methods. These findings also highlight key challenges in implementing IBL, such as time constraints, differences in student abilities, and the need for professional training for teachers. The implications of these findings indicate that higher education institutions must not only adopt IBL-based pedagogical practices but also create structural support systems that sustain intercultural learning, such as ongoing teacher professional development, curriculum integration, and equitable technological access. To maximize the effectiveness of IBL, it is recommended that educational institutions provide focused professional training for lecturers, ensure access to the necessary technology, and align assessment methods with IBL objectives to optimize learning outcomes. Further research is recommended to explore the role of digital technology in supporting the implementation of IBL, particularly in contexts with limited access to technology in some educational institutions.

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