Developing a Learner-Centered International Class Model for Institutional Globalization: Multi-Site Evidence from Indonesian Universities

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study addresses the persistent gap in empirically grounded, learner-centered models for international classes within Indonesian higher education, amid intensifying globalization demands. Despite policy pushes like *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM), prior research remains fragmented, overlooking integrated analyses of learning conditions, methods, and outcomes. Employing a qualitative multi-site design, we gathered data via classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document reviews from March to August 2023 across eight leading universities Airlangga, Gadjah Mada, Indonesia, and others involving 25 students, 8 lecturers, and program heads per site (total 200+ participants). Analysis followed Miles et al.'s interactive model (data reduction, display, verification) with triangulation for credibility. Findings indicate international classes foster diversity in nationality, socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicity, cultural interactions, and academic mobility, while outperforming regular classes in facilities, English proficiency, student performance, and outcomes—yet reveal inconsistencies in consistent language use (70% Bahasa Indonesia-dominant) and innovative pedagogy (65% lecture-based). Participants view these practices as feasible and aligned with institutional goals. We propose a pioneering structured model integrating conditions (e.g., objectives, constraints), methods (collaborative, reflective), and outcomes (global competence), tailored for Indonesia. This framework advances fragmented studies, offering actionable strategies for universities to enhance competitiveness via MBKM and internationalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

International class learning has been implemented to align learning conditions, instructional methods, and outcomes in response to globalization in higher education (Sulton et al., 2017; Kapfudzaruwa, 2025; Hasyim et al., 2024). However, Indonesian universities lack empirically grounded, integrated learner-centered models for international classes, a critical research gap that limits their role in institutional globalization. Studies indicate that communicative and global-oriented learning models, both traditional and innovative, have been developed to address diverse educational settings and enhance students' knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and problem-solving skills, particularly in speaking and intercultural communication (Qian et al., 2018; Yassin et al., 2019; Macaro et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2025; Aliman et al., 2019). Despite global models (e.g., Bologna Process, English-medium instruction in Malaysia), Indonesian studies remain fragmented, treating facilities, curriculum, and language separately rather than holistically.

Globally, international class initiatives emphasize learner mobility, cross-cultural interaction, and outcome-based education (Hui & Yunus, 2023; Wang et al., 2024). In Europe, the Bologna Process has standardized learning outcomes and facilitated student mobility across countries (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2021; Heitzmann et al., 2019; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). In Malaysia, English-medium instruction, strong international partnerships, and supportive national policies have strengthened internationalization efforts (Nguyen et al., 2025; Fry, 2024). These global developments underscore the importance of learner-centered approaches that connect instructional strategies with institutional profiles and global competence development, particularly within broader internationalization processes (Knight, 2003; De Wit & Altbach, 2021). These highlight the need for learner-centered approaches linking strategies to global competence.

In Indonesia, previous studies have largely focused on facilities, curriculum structures, and language instruction in international classes (Kapfudzaruwa, 2025; Hasyim et al., 2024). Learning conditions such as institutional constraints, student characteristics, and instructional objectives are often discussed separately from teaching methods and expected outcomes (Wijaya, 2015; Hăbuc, 2019; Rahman & Manaf, 2017; Deiniatur, 2019). This misalignment persists despite *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policies promoting flexibility and international exposure (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020; Yusriadi, Farida, & Misnawati, 2024). This policy framework supports international class initiatives as mechanisms for enhancing institutional competitiveness and global engagement.

Indonesian international classes face unclear objectives, inconsistent English use, and suboptimal outcomes, constraining competitiveness. Reflective, learner-centered methodologies are needed for coherent globalization (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2021). This study has two primary objectives: (1) to analyze the integration of learning conditions, teaching methods, and outcomes in international classes across eight Indonesian universities; and (2) to develop a structured learner-centered model supporting institutional globalization, with focused application at UIN Syahada Padangsidimpuan. These objectives directly inform the findings on inconsistencies and the proposed taxonomy/model, advancing fragmented literature.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using observations, interviews, and documentation across eight universities in Indonesia, namely one University (Surabaya), Islamic State University (Yogyakarta), Gadjah Mada University (Yogyakarta), Jakarta State University, Yogyakarta State University, Brawijaya University (Malang), State University of Malang, and the University of Indonesia (Depok). A qualitative multi-site design enabled in-depth exploration of international class implementation (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

The participants consisted of 200 students enrolled in international classes, with 25 students from each university, eight lecturers involved in international class programs, and eight heads of study programs. Participants were selected using purposive sampling because they were directly engaged in international class activities and were considered capable of providing relevant information related to the research focus. Data collection was conducted from March to August 2023 through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis of institutional policies and academic reports. Preliminary observations and interviews were conducted to identify learning conditions in international classes, including instructional objectives, institutional constraints, and learner characteristics.

The semi-structured interview protocol focused on learning objectives, instructional strategies, language use, student participation, and perceived learning outcomes in international classes. Classroom observations emphasized learner engagement, interaction patterns, teaching methods, and the alignment between learning activities and intended outcomes. Document analysis was used to support and contextualize findings from observations and interviews. To maintain consistency across the eight research sites, the same interview guidelines, observation indicators, and documentation criteria were applied throughout the data collection process. To provide a clearer overview of the research participants, the distribution is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participants	Number	Description
Students	200	25 from each of the eight universities
Lecturers	8	Involved in international class programs
Heads of Study Programs	8	One from each university

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Triangulation of data sources and methods was employed to enhance data credibility. Information obtained from students, lecturers, and heads of study programs was cross-checked with documentary evidence, while observational data were validated through interview findings.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided their consent prior to participation. Participant identities and institutional information were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. The study adhered to ethical standards for qualitative educational research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings
Learning Condition

Across the eight universities, students reported that learning conditions in international classes were inconsistent. Approximately 70 percent of students indicated that the use of international languages, particularly English, was not applied consistently during instruction. At Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University and Jakarta State University, most lectures were conducted primarily in Bahasa Indonesia despite the international class designation. Similar conditions were reported at Brawijaya University and the State University of Malang, where interaction with international peers was limited.

International students from Thailand, Egypt, Africa, and several European countries were present across institutions. However, classroom interaction between local and international students remained minimal. Opportunities for collaborative discussion and cross-cultural engagement were reported as infrequent.

From the institutional perspective, program heads at Airlangga University and Gadjah Mada University stated that international classes were established to strengthen institutional visibility in the global academic community. Lecturers at the University of Indonesia and Yogyakarta State University reported difficulties in maintaining consistent use of English due to limited numbers of lecturers with sufficient language proficiency. Facilities and quality assurance mechanisms were described as uneven across institutions.

Based on recurring patterns in student and institutional data, learning conditions in international classes were categorized as not optimal.

Learning Method

From the student perspective, teaching methods in international classes were reported to be largely lecture-based. Approximately 65 percent of students stated that instructional activities focused on material delivery with limited practical or interactive components. Students at Yogyakarta State University and the State University of Malang noted that classroom activities were similar to those in regular classes.

Students at Brawijaya University reported limited opportunities to present or discuss academic content in English. At Airlangga University and Gadjah Mada University, students identified access to English-language modules and international references, although these resources were not consistently integrated into classroom activities.

From the institutional perspective, lecturers and program heads at Jakarta State University and Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University reported that teaching methods remained predominantly traditional. International academic networks were not routinely utilized for collaborative learning activities. At the University of Indonesia and Brawijaya University, lecturers reported limited use of international journal articles as learning materials.

Based on observed patterns, learning methods in international classes were classified as minimally innovative.

Learning Outcome

From the student perspective, international classes were reported to produce better learning experiences than regular classes. Approximately 75 percent of students indicated improvements in facilities, language exposure, and academic motivation. Students at Gadjah Mada University and Airlangga University reported increased confidence in using foreign languages. Students at the State University of Malang and Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University reported that learning outcomes remained comparable to regular classes. Several students stated that assessment systems and academic recognition were similar to non-international programs.

From the institutional perspective, evaluations at Brawijaya University and the University of Indonesia reported higher levels of effectiveness and attractiveness in international classes compared to regular classes. Lecturers at Yogyakarta State University noted that assessment systems were not aligned with international standards. University leaders identified the need to update outcome indicators related to critical thinking, digital literacy, and interpersonal skills.

Based on these findings, student learning outcomes were classified as standard, while institutional outcomes were categorized as in need of update.

Summary of Findings

Across the eight universities, recurring patterns were identified in learning conditions, methods, and outcomes. These patterns were synthesized into a taxonomy developed inductively from qualitative data. The taxonomy categorizes international class implementation into three dimensions, learning conditions, learning methods, and learning outcomes, based on levels of implementation observed across institutions.

Table 2 summarizes the learning conditions, methods, and outcomes across the eight universities.

Table 2. Summary of Learning Conditions, Methods, and Outcomes in International Classes

University	Learning Condition	Learning Method	Learning Outcome
Airlangga University (UNAIR)	Strategic effort to strengthen profile, but facilities and standards still limited	Some improvements (English modules, international resources)	Students more confident in English; outcomes better than regular, but not global standard
Sunan Kalijaga UIN	Lectures mostly in Bahasa Indonesia, interaction limited	Mostly traditional lectures	Outcomes remain standard, not international
Gadjah Mada University (UGM)	International class aimed at global profile, still limited facilities	Some access to international resources, limited integration	Higher confidence in foreign languages, but outcomes below benchmark
Jakarta State University (UNJ)	Many lectures still in Bahasa Indonesia	Traditional, dominated by lectures	Standard outcomes
Yogyakarta State University (UNY)	Lack of trained lecturers, hard to maintain English	Conventional methods, limited activities	Motivation improved, but assessments not internationally recognized
Brawijaya University (UB)	Limited global interaction despite diverse students	Few innovative methods, some use of journal articles	Improved effectiveness, but still needs updates
State University of Malang (UM)	Minimal international engagement	Conventional, limited chances for English presentations	Outcomes standard, motivation higher
University of Indonesia (UI)	Consistency of English use still lacking	Some efforts to modernize (journal-based assignments)	Outcomes attractive, but need alignment with global benchmarks

To synthesize the recurring patterns identified across the eight universities, the findings were organized into an analytical taxonomy of the international class learning model. This taxonomy was constructed inductively from qualitative data and reflects dominant characteristics observed in learning conditions, learning methods, and learning outcomes from both learner and institutional perspectives.
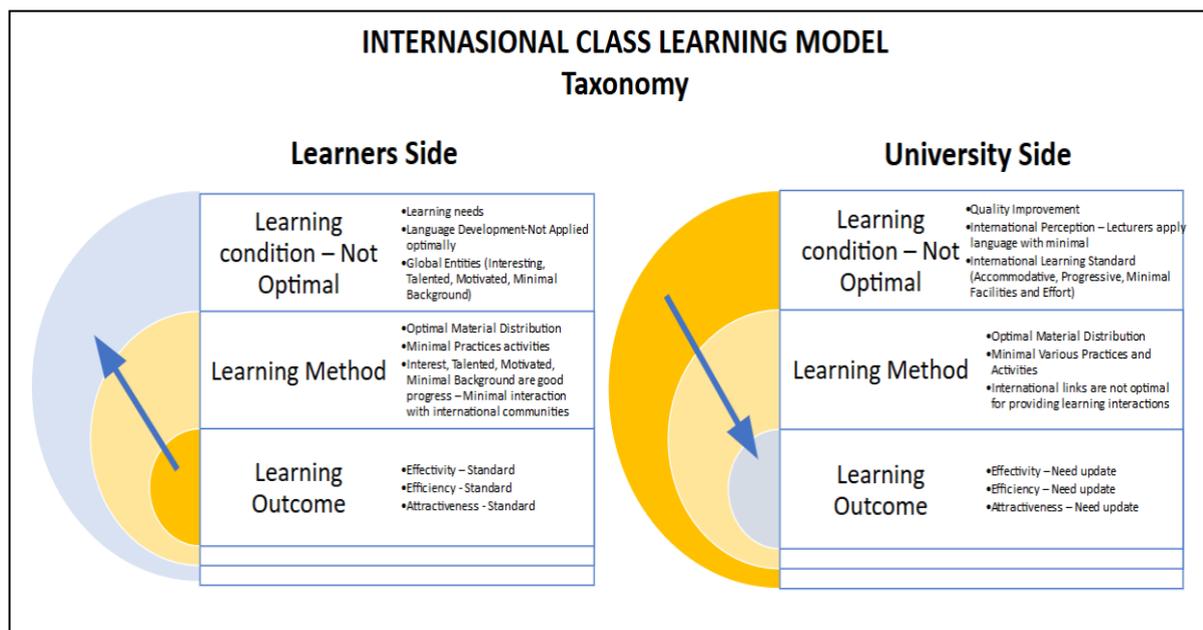
Figure 1. Taxonomy of the International Class Learning Model from Learners' and Universities' Perspectives

As illustrated in the taxonomy, the implementation of international classes is categorized into learning conditions, learning methods, and learning outcomes from both learner and university perspectives. The taxonomy provides a structured overview of similarities and differences observed across the eight institutions.

3.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that learning conditions in international classes remain uneven, particularly in the consistent use of international languages, clarity of instructional objectives, and opportunities for global interaction. Although international classes are formally established, classroom practices often continue to rely on Bahasa Indonesia. These findings suggest a misalignment between institutional aspirations for internationalization and day-to-day instructional practices. Within the context of the transition from the competency era to the capability era, which emphasizes adaptability, critical thinking, and lifelong learning (Reilly & Reeves, 2023), this misalignment points to the need for a more coherent instructional framework that integrates learning conditions, methods, and outcomes.

Regarding learning methods, the limited presence of authentic international interaction highlights the importance of learner-centered pedagogy. While students come from diverse backgrounds, opportunities for meaningful collaboration and interaction remain constrained. This finding supports previous research emphasizing that instructional design should be grounded in learners' needs rather than content delivery alone (Kerimbayev et al., 2023). Similarly, Bremner et al., (2022) stress that learning outcomes depend on the alignment between instructional goals, processes, and methods, which reflects the principle of constructive alignment in learner-centered instructional design (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In the context of international classes, this alignment requires teaching practices that actively promote interaction, collaboration, and engagement rather than passive exposure.

Learning outcomes in international classes show partial improvement, particularly in student motivation and access to learning resources. However, the findings indicate that these outcomes have not yet reached internationally recognized benchmarks, related to global competence, including intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and communication skills (Piacentini et al., 2018). This does not suggest the absence of progress, but rather indicates that current outcomes remain transitional.

Learner-centered approaches, such as task-based, problem-based, and inquiry-driven learning, offer a relevant pedagogical response (Lin et al., 2024), as they support deeper learning processes, including inference and synthesis (Dong et al., 2019). Consistent with Adeoye (2019) and Praherdhiono et al., (2019), the integration of digital literacy, critical thinking, and intercultural communication into learning outcomes remains a critical requirement for international class development.

At the national level, these findings resonate with the objectives of the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka program, which promotes learner-centered learning, academic flexibility, and international exposure. However, rather than claiming broad national generalizability, this study highlights how gaps between policy and classroom practice persist across the institutions examined. The learner-centered international class model proposed in this study offers one empirically grounded approach to translating MBKM principles into instructional practice, particularly within the context of Indonesian public and Islamic universities. Similar implementation challenges have been reported in previous Indonesian studies on internationalization in Islamic higher education (Mardhiah et al., 2024), indicating that the issues identified here are contextually relevant rather than exceptional.

Comparisons with international contexts further contextualize, rather than generalize, the findings. Malaysia's experience with English-medium instruction and regional partnerships, as well as Europe's Bologna Process, illustrate established approaches to aligning learning outcomes and mobility. However, these examples serve as reference points rather than direct benchmarks. The findings of this study suggest that Indonesian universities remain in an early stage of aligning international class practices with global standards, emphasizing the need for gradual and context-sensitive development rather than immediate equivalence with international models.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to learner-centered pedagogy and instructional design by empirically demonstrating how learning conditions, methods, and outcomes interact within international class settings. Consistent with Reigeluth's instructional design framework (1983; 1999; 2009; 2015; 2017;) and Chaudhuri et al. (2022), the findings show that fragmented implementation limits the effectiveness of international classes. Unlike previous Indonesian studies that primarily examined facilities, curriculum structure, or language policy, this study advances the literature by integrating these elements into a unified learner-centered model derived from empirical data.

Figure 2 illustrates this integration by positioning learning conditions as the foundation that shapes instructional methods, which in turn influence learning outcomes. The model reflects the empirical patterns identified across the eight universities and demonstrates how misalignment at any level constrains the realization of internationalization goals. By explicitly linking the findings to the proposed model, this study provides a practical framework that can guide instructional design and institutional planning for international classes.
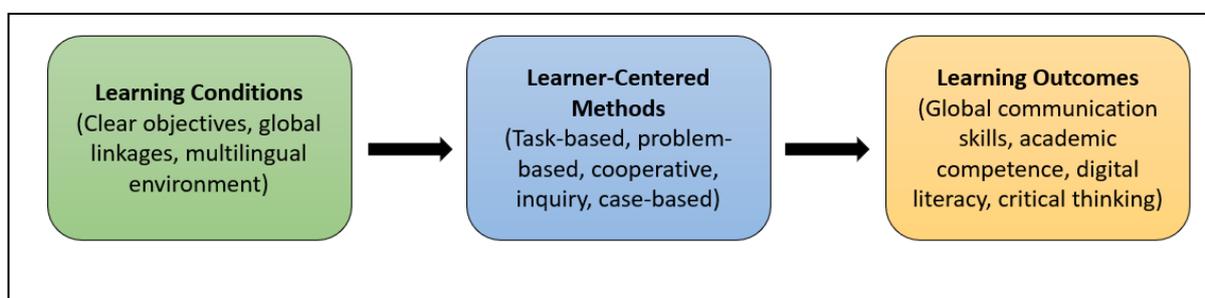

Figure 2. Proposed Learner-Centered International Class Model

Overall, the discussion underscores that the learner-centered international class model should be understood as a contextual and developmental framework rather than a universal solution. For UIN Syahada Padangsidimpuan, the model offers a structured reference for strengthening international class implementation while remaining responsive to institutional capacity and local context. By integrating learning conditions, methods, and outcomes more coherently, international classes can move beyond symbolic internationalization toward more meaningful and sustainable educational practices.

4. CONCLUSION

International classes in Indonesian universities enhance diversity, facilities, language proficiency, and outcomes compared to regular classes, yet persistent inconsistencies in English use and innovative methods limit their globalization potential. This study contributes the first empirically derived, integrated learner-centered model linking learning conditions, methods, and outcomes, derived from comparative analysis across eight universities, which offers actionable strategies for *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) implementation. Universities should adopt structured English protocols and collaborative pedagogies to meet global benchmarks, while policymakers prioritize lecturer training and cross-institutional networks through MBKM funding. Future research could test this model longitudinally or compare it with ASEAN counterparts, positioning institutions like UIN Syahada Padangsidimpuan as competitive global actors once implementation gaps are addressed.

The findings highlight that the effectiveness of international classes depends on the coherent integration of learning conditions, learning methods, and learning outcomes within a learner-centered framework. This study advances prior Indonesian research by moving beyond a focus on isolated elements such as facilities, curriculum, or language policy, and by proposing an empirically grounded learner-centered international class learning model. The model demonstrates how instructional design principles can be adapted to international class contexts in Indonesian higher education.

Practically, the findings suggest the need for systematic professional development to strengthen lecturers' capacity in international language use and learner-centered pedagogy. At the policy level, closer alignment between international class initiatives and the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* framework can enhance coherence and sustainability. For future research, quantitative and mixed-method approaches are recommended to examine the effectiveness and scalability of the proposed model across different institutional contexts. Overall, international class development should be understood as a continuous and context-sensitive process. For institutions such as UIN Syahada Padangsidimpuan, the proposed learner-centered model offers a practical reference for strengthening internationalization efforts while remaining responsive to institutional capacity and national policy priorities.

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