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Indonesian and Australian Students' Multimodal Perceptions on Master's English Curriculum for Global Competition: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT
The Master's English curriculum in postgraduate English language education programs is essential for developing the linguistic competence, academic expertise, and professional skills required in today's globalized era. This research compares the curricula at Indonesian Islamic Higher Education institutions and Australian universities to identify similarities, differences, and their implications for producing competitive graduates. The study aims to align English education with global standards while integrating Islamic values. Key objectives include analyzing program structures, specializations, and content; identifying strengths and gaps; exploring innovative curricular practices; and proposing recommendations to enhance English curricula that promote both international relevance and Islamic identity. Employing a

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qualitative-comparative approach, this study utilized literature reviews, curriculum document analysis, stakeholder interviews, students and faculty surveys, classroom observations, and focus group discussions to gather diverse perspectives and practices. Findings reveal significant differences in pedagogical strategies, curriculum design, and philosophical orientations between the two contexts. A key area of divergence lies in how global academic standards are incorporated and balanced with Islamic educational principles. While both systems aim to prepare students for international competitiveness, Indonesian Islamic institutions focus on maintaining religious values, whereas Australian universities prioritize global benchmarks, highlighting a complex interplay between cultural identity and global educational demands. Drawing on these results, the study proposes strategic directions for curriculum development in Indonesian Islamic higher education, emphasizing the need to enhance graduates' global competence while preserving religious and cultural integrity. The research provides valuable insights for policy formulation, curriculum innovation, and discussions on the internationalization of Islamic education.

Keywords: *Master's English Curriculum, Islamic Higher Education, Global Competitiveness*

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency extends beyond mere communication; it shapes academic success, career advancement, and global opportunities. In the context of higher education, English proficiency facilitates access to prestigious universities, scholarships opportunities, and research collaborations. In professional fields, it influences employment prospects and promotional pathway. Additionally, it fosters cross-cultural interaction, networking, and international collaboration.

Despite the critical importance of English proficiency, several barriers hinder its acquisition and mastery. These include limited access to quality education, inadequate exposure to authentic language use, a lack of motivation, and outdated teaching practices (Khumalo *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, socio-economic disparities, cultural and linguistic diversity, and the unequal distribution of resources complicate the efforts to develop proficiency (Mok, 2009). Addressing these challenges requires

systemic reforms that prioritize inclusivity, contextual relevance, and learner-centered methodologies.

Higher education institutions hold a pivotal role in enhancing English language competence. To align with international standards while accommodating diverse learner needs, curricula should incorporate communicative and task-based approaches, leverage digital tools, and promote intercultural awareness (España-Chavarría, 2010). Extending learning opportunities beyond the classrooms—through immersion programs, media engagement, and community initiatives—can also reinforce language acquisition and learner autonomy (Khumalo et al., 2023).

However, a significant gap persists in the literature on English instruction at the postgraduate level, particularly in Master's programs (Anderson, 2020; Fitria, 2023). Most studies focus on general or undergraduate English education, with limited exploration of postgraduate curricula. Comparative research between countries with differing educational systems—such as Indonesia and Australia—is also scarce. This gap is particularly urgent given the increasing demand for graduates who are not only proficient in English but also competitive on a global scale.

This study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of master's English program curricula in Indonesian Islamic higher education and Australian universities. It draws on Global Competence Theory (OECD, 2018), which emphasizes effective cross-cultural communication, and the English as an International Language (EIL) Framework (Matsuda, 2012), which highlights the need to prepare learners for diverse global contexts. Curriculum Theory (Tyler, 1949; Taba, 1962) is also used to evaluate intended learning outcomes, content selection, and instructional strategies. The study is novel in three areas: (1) it focuses on postgraduate education; (2) it has international comparative scope; and (3) it explores multimodal perceptions incorporating both Indonesian and Australian students' viewpoints. By identifying strengths and weaknesses in both countries' programs, this research provides evidence-based recommendations for curriculum development aimed at enhancing graduate readiness for the global workforce.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilised a case study design to examine and compare the curriculum design of master's programs in English education at selected Indonesian Islamic Higher Education institutions and Australian universities. By positioning the research as a case study, the study facilitate an in-depth exploration of each institution within its real-life context, as recommended by Yin (2018). This approach foster a nuanced understanding of how local needs, institutional priorities, and broader socio-cultural factors influence curriculum development. The analysis is informed by Curriculum Development Theory (Tyler, 1949; Taba, 1962), which emphasizes the alignment of learning objectives, content selection, teaching methods, and assessment practices, and by Global Competence Theory (OECD, 2018), which highlights the skills and dispositions required for graduates to thrive in international academic and professional arenas. The integration of these theoretical frameworks supports a comprehensive exploration of how curriculum structures, pedagogical approaches, and assessment practices in each case either contribute to or limit global competitiveness in English language education. This theoretical foundation ensures that the study not only documents curriculum features but also interprets them in relation to established principles of curriculum design and the demands of a globalized educational landscape.

This study employed purposive sampling to select two institutions as the focus of the case study: the State Islamic University (UIN) of North Sumatra, Indonesia, and Western Sydney University (WSU), Australia. These universities were chosen for three main reasons. First, they represent contrasting higher education contexts—UIN of North Sumatra, as a leading Islamic institution that integrates religious and cultural values, namely *Wahdatul Ulum,* into English language education. In contrast, WSU is a globally recognized Australian university renowned for its innovative approaches in applied linguistics and TESOL programs. Second, both institutions offer Master's programs in English education, which allows for a direct comparison regarding academic levels, curriculum scope, and intended graduate outcomes. Third, the cultural, policy, and pedagogical differences between Indonesia and Australia provide a rich context to explore how curriculum design responds to local

and global demands, thereby addressing the study's focus on graduate preparedness for global competition in globalized environment. This purposive selection ensures that the case studies provide meaningful insights into the interplay between curriculum development, institutional mission, and the pursuit of global competitiveness in English language education.

The study involved 24 master's students in English education, comprising 15 from the State Islamic University of North Sumatra and 9 from Western Sydney University. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to capture diverse demographics, providing firsthand perspectives on curriculum impact, learning experiences, skill development, and preparation for global competitiveness.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Variable	Category	Number of Participants (n=24)	Universities Origin
Gender	Male	10	4 of UINSU and 5 of WSU
	Female	14	11 of UINSU and 4 of WSU
Age Group	21–25 years	16	7 of UINSU and 9 of WSU
	26–30 years	6	6 of UINSU
	31 years and above	2	2 of UINSU
Occupation	Full-time student	22	13 of UINSU and 9 of WSU
	Part-time working professional	2	2 of UINSU
Educational Background	Bachelor's in English Education	24	15 of UINSU and 9 of WSU
	Bachelor's in other disciplines	-	-

The demographic characteristics of the participants (see Table 1) serve as an important lens for interpreting the data. Variations in gender allowed the study to examine whether male and female students perceived curriculum content, teaching strategies, and global preparedness differently. Age groups offered insights into how different

life stages and prior learning experiences influenced academic engagement and career expectations. For example, participants aged 31 and above often brought professional experience into classroom discussions, which shaped their evaluation of curriculum relevance.

Notable differences also emerged between full-time students and part-time professionals, as work commitments shaping views on workload, flexibility, and relevance of the curriculum. Educational background also mattered: English Education graduates assessed curriculum alignment with ELT theories, while students from other disciplines emphasized practical skill development and applicability across varied professional and global contexts.

The data collected in this study were primarily qualitative in nature (Silverman, 2018). This included an analysis of curriculum documents such as course syllabi, program descriptions, and graduate profiles, which were reviewed and analyzed to identify the ways in which each program structured its learning outcomes, content, and assessment criteria. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into participants' perceptions and experiences. These interviews allowed for open-ended responses, encouraging participants to elaborate on their views and reflect critically on the strengths and limitations of the current curriculum design.
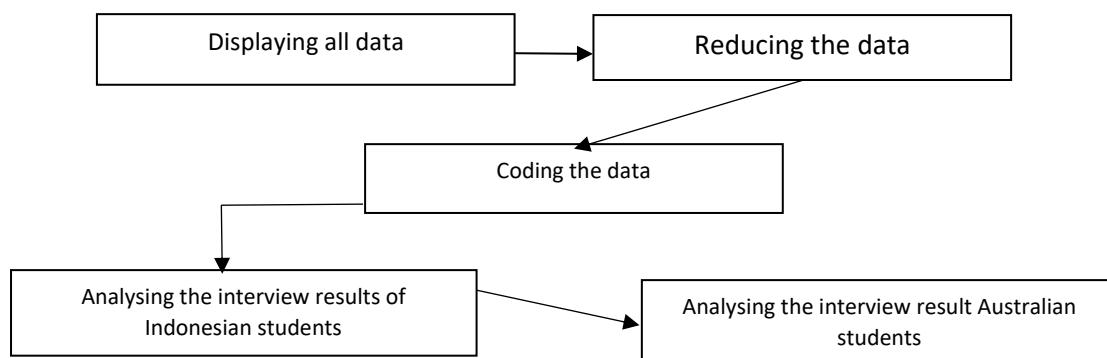

Figure 1. *Analytical procedure (Adopted from David Silverman's model, 2018)*

The main sources of data came from two universities: the Master's Program in English Education at the Faculty of Tarbiyah Science and

Teacher Training, State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU), Indonesia; and the School of Education at the Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Western Sydney University, Australia. While UINSU and Western Sydney University do not represent the entirety of postgraduate English education in their respective countries, they were purposefully selected due to their relevance, accessibility, and academic standing. UINSU reflects broader trends within Indonesia's Islamic higher education system, particularly in integrating English language instruction with Islamic values. Western Sydney University, operating under the Australian Qualifications Framework, offers a curriculum and pedagogical model typical of major Australian universities. Although these institution are not statistically representative, they provide meaningful insights into national approaches and allow for analytical generalization regarding curriculum development and global competitiveness in English language education.

Data were gathered through document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Program documents offered insights into institutional aims, curriculum design, course content, and assessment methods, while the interviews generated detailed narratives reflecting participants' experiences and expectations, enabling a deeper understanding of how curricula function in practice within different educational contexts.

The data were analyzed using qualitative, inductive techniques. The initial phase involved data familiarization, in which the researcher repeatedly read the transcripts and documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of their content. This was followed by initial coding, in which key ideas and patterns were identified and labeled. The next stage involved the development of themes by grouping similar codes together, allowing for a thematic representation of the findings. Finally, the researcher interpreted the themes in relation to the study's objectives, focusing on how the curriculum responded to the demands of global competition in English education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Indonesian Students' Perceptions of the Master's English Curriculum Relevance of the Curriculum to Real-World Applications

Indonesian students appreciated the master's programs for its solid theoretical grounding in linguistics and literature but voiced concerns about its limited relevance to professional contexts. Although the curriculum is academically rigorous, it often perceived as lacking practical orientations, leaving graduates less prepared to apply knowledge and skills in diverse, non-academic career paths. This issue is articulated clearly by Student A, who noted:

> *"I feel that the curriculum provides a strong foundation in theoretical concepts, but when it comes to applying these theories in real-world situations, I find there is a bit of a disconnect. For example, we study a lot about linguistic theories and literary analysis, which are interesting, but I'm not sure how these will help me in a practical work environment, like in teaching or content creation."*

Student A's reflection encapsulates a key theme: although the academic content is intellectually stimulating, students often struggle to translate this knowledge into concrete skills applicable in fields such as education, content development, or corporate communication. This sentiment is reinforced by Student B, who commented:

> *"I agree with [Student A]. The courses are quite academic, which is good for those pursuing a career in research or academia, but for someone like me who wants to work in a more applied field, like language teaching or media, I wish there were more opportunities to practice these skills in real settings. I think incorporating internships or more project-based learning would make a big difference."*

Student B highlights the need for applied learning experiences—such as internships and project-based assignments—that can support the development of professional competencies beyond the classroom environment. Further expanding on this idea, Student C shared:

"I appreciate the depth of knowledge we get from the curriculum, but sometimes it feels like we're missing out on the 'how' part. Like, how do I translate this knowledge and use it in a classroom or in a corporate environment? I would love to see more case studies or workshops that simulate real-world tasks we might encounter in our careers."

Student C points to the absence of practice-oriented components such as case studies or simulations that replicate real-world scenarios. This observation reinforces a broader concern that the curriculum inadequate focus on the application of knowledge in diverse professional contexts.

Collectively, these insights reveal a perceived misalignment between the academic orientation of the curriculum and the practical needs of students preparing for careers in teaching, media, and industry-based language roles. While the theoretical content remains valuable, students advocate for the inclusion of experiential learning elements—including internships, practicum courses, project-based modules, and industry-linked workshops—to enhance their professional readiness.

These findings underscore a clear demand for curricular innovation that not only preserves academic rigor but also equips graduates with the necessary skills and experiences for success in both academic and applied fields.

Cultural and Contextual Relevance

Participants also expressed concerns regarding the limited integration of Indonesian cultural, linguistic, and social contexts within the curriculum. Although the international orientation and engagement with global theories were appreciated, many students felt the program leaned too heavily on Western perspectives, offering insufficient attention to local realities and indigenous educational frameworks.

Student A observes:

"In my opinion, the curriculum feels quite Westernized. We study a lot of English literature and theories from Western perspectives, but there's very little focus on how these apply to our own culture and society. It would be more engaging if we had more materials that connect these ideas to Indonesian contexts."

This comment points to the perceived disconnection between academic content and the lived experiences of Indonesian students. The emphasis on Western literary canons and linguistic frameworks may limit the relevance and relatability of the material, potentially alienating students from their own cultural identities in the learning process.

Similarly, Student B reflects on the curriculum's lack of linguistic contextualization:

"I've noticed the same thing. For example, when we discuss linguistic theories, it's usually in the context of English as it's spoken in Western countries. There's not much discussion about how English is used in Indonesia or how our local languages interact with English. It sometimes feels like our own cultural and linguistic experiences are sidelined."

This highlights a critical gap in the curriculum's approach to English as a global and localized language. Given the multilingual and multicultural nature of Indonesia, the exclusion of local language dynamics from the curriculum limits students' ability to analyze and apply linguistic knowledge to the Indonesian context. Student C echoes these concerns while acknowledging the value of global exposure:

"I appreciate the global perspective we're getting, but at the same time, it feels a bit disconnected from what we see and experience here in Indonesia. I think it would be really beneficial to include more case studies or examples that are relevant to our own cultural context. It would make the content more relatable and useful for us."

Collectively, these insights indicate the need for a more balanced and contextually grounded curriculum—one that maintains its global academic rigor while simultaneously engaging with the local realities of Indonesian students. The current orientation, while academically enriching, appears to marginalize local cultural narratives and language practices, resulting in a form of educational disengagement.

To address this, curriculum developers are encouraged to implement a more culturally responsive approach by integrating:

- Comparative studies that juxtapose Western theories with Indonesian examples,
- Local literary texts and linguistic data,

- Case studies grounded in Indonesian social, educational, or media settings, and
- Pedagogical strategies that validate and incorporate students' lived experiences and cultural knowledge.

Integrating local perspectives would increase curriculum relevance and inclusivity while enabling students to critically engage with global discourses from their cultural standpoint. These methods prepare graduates with the cultural competence and contextual awareness necessary to navigate both international and national professional environments effectively and with greater confidence.

Australian Students' Perceptions of the Master's English Curriculum

Relevance of the Curriculum to Real-World Applications

Australian students express a common concern regarding the practical applicability of the Master's English curriculum. While they value theoretical foundation of the curriculum, there is a clear desire for more opportunities to apply this knowledge in real-world contexts. Students suggest that integrating practical elements such as internships, case studies, or project-based learning could bridge the gap between theory and practice, thereby enhancing the curriculum's relevance to their future careers.

The qualitative feedback from Australian students underscores a critical observation: while the Master's English curriculum is praised for its theoretical depth, there is a perceived lack of practical application. Student A highlights the imbalance between conceptual learning and real-world implementation, expressing concern about readiness for professional engagement due to limited experiential learning.

> *"The curriculum is definitely strong in theoretical content, and I've gained a deep understanding of various concepts. However, I sometimes worry that we aren't getting enough practical experience. For instance, we don't have much opportunity to apply what we learn in real-world settings, which makes me wonder how prepared I'll be when I start working."*

Similarly, Student B critiques the disconnection between academic rigor and job market requirements, advocating for more career-oriented components such as internships and simulated projects.

"I share the same concern. The program is academically rigorous, but I feel it's somewhat disconnected from the practical demands of the job market. It would be helpful to have more courses that focus on how to use this knowledge in professional contexts—like through internships or hands-on projects that simulate what we might face in our careers."

Student C reinforces this perspective, emphasizing the importance of applying theoretical frameworks in real-world contexts through methods like case studies and practical assignments.

"I think the curriculum could do a better job of linking theory to practice. We spend a lot of time on theoretical frameworks, which are important, but there's not enough emphasis on how to apply these ideas in everyday work situations. It would be beneficial to incorporate more real-world tasks or case studies that show how these theories can be used in practice."

Collectively, these reflections reveal a significant theme—the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The students recognize the value of theoretical knowledge but simultaneously call for a curriculum that incorporates practical, career-relevant experiences. This suggests that while the current curriculum fosters critical thinking and conceptual mastery, it may fall short in preparing students for the dynamic demands of the professional world.

The findings suggest the need for curriculum developers to embed experiential learning to strengthen career readiness among students. Approaches like project-based tasks, fieldwork, industry collaboration, and reflective practice could bridge theory and practice, aligning academic outcomes with labor market demands while enhancing student engagement, confidence, and post-graduation employability.

The feedback from Australian students indicates that while the curriculum excels in delivering robust theoretical knowledge, it may not fully meet the practical needs of students preparing to enter the workforce. This suggests a need for curriculum adjustments to include more experiential learning opportunities.

Such changes could make the program more aligned with the expectations and demands of the job market, ultimately improving students' career readiness and satisfaction with the program.

Cultural and Contextual Relevance

Responses from Australian students reveal a shared concern regarding the local contextualization of the Master's English curriculum. While the curriculum is acknowledged for its global comprehensiveness, the students collectively identify a noticeable underrepresentation of content specific to Australia's linguistic and cultural landscape. Student A appreciates the breadth of the curriculum but critiques its tendency to overemphasize international perspectives at the expense of local relevance.

> *"I think the curriculum is very comprehensive, but it sometimes appears like it's trying to cover too much from a global perspective without focusing enough on what's relevant here in Australia. For example, we study a lot of international literature and theories, but there's not as much emphasis on Australian authors or linguistic issues that are specific to our context."*

The student notes a lack of focus on Australian authors and the linguistic issues that are pertinent to the Australian context. This observation underscores the importance of situating global knowledge within a national framework that reflects the lived realities of students.

Student B echoes this sentiment, highlighting the need for the curriculum to better represent Australia's rich cultural and linguistic diversity. They remark:

> *"Yes, I've noticed that too. While it's great to get a broad understanding of English studies from around the world, I feel like the curriculum doesn't fully address the unique cultural and linguistic landscape of Australia. There's a lot of diversity here that could be better reflected in our studies, especially with regard to Indigenous perspectives and the role of English in different communities."*

The student points specifically to the marginal inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and the unique sociolinguistic makeup of Australian communities. This reflects a broader call for decolonizing and localizing education by integrating Indigenous knowledges, languages, and communicative practices into mainstream academic content.

Student C furthers develop the critique by emphasizing the necessity of engaging with how English functions in various sectors of Australian society, such as media, politics, and education. The students articulated:

> *"I would appreciate more content that relates directly to Australian society. For instance, how English is used in our media, politics, and education system, or how it interacts with Indigenous languages. This would not only make the curriculum more relevant but also help us understand our own place within the global English-speaking community."*

The student also calls for attention to the interaction between English and Indigenous languages, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive understanding of multilingualism and linguistic justice within the nation.

These responses illustrate how the study actively accounts for sociocultural and linguistic diversity within the student population. Instead of assuming a uniform student experience, the research foregrounds individual voices that reflect diverse linguistic identities, educational needs, and cultural affiliations. By using interviews and focus groups as primary data sources, the study captures the depth of students' lived realities and perceptions—particularly those concerned with cultural underrepresentation and linguistic marginality. This enables a nuanced evaluation of curriculum effectiveness that respects both national diversity and global pedagogical aims.

Australian students acknowledged the Master's English curriculum as comprehensive yet noted its limited reflection of national cultural and linguistic realities. While valuing its global orientation, they emphasized the need for stronger integration of

Australian literature, Indigenous perspectives, and the distinctive role of English within the country's sociocultural context. While the analysis highlights gaps in the curriculum's connection to local sociocultural realities, the study also finds that both programs incorporate global competencies such as intercultural communication, digital literacy, and critical thinking—though with varying degrees of depth and emphasis.

At Western Sydney University, intercultural communication is embedded through course content that draws on global English literatures, cross-cultural discourse analysis, and classroom diversity. However, student feedback suggests that this global focus often comes at the expense of critical engagement with Australia's own multicultural and Indigenous contexts. Digital literacy is addressed through research-based assignments, online learning platforms, and critical media analysis, while critical thinking is fostered via peer discussions, theoretical critiques, and academic writing tasks. Yet, the assessment of these competencies tends to be implicit, with limited direct evaluation tools specifically targeting these skills.

At UINSU, global competencies are framed by Islamic educational values. Intercultural communication is taught through comparative linguistic and pedagogical practices within Islamic and Southeast Asian contexts. Digital literacy emerges through online tools and supervision platforms, while critical thinking is fostered in debates and reflections, though assessment measures remain limited.

In both institutional contexts, mechanisms for incorporating student and industry feedback into curriculum revision exist, though they vary in formality, responsiveness, and effectiveness.

At Western Sydney University, curriculum development is guided by a structured system of quality assurance involving periodic program reviews, student evaluation surveys (such as Student Feedback on Teaching and Units), and external advisory boards that include academic, industry, and community stakeholders. While these structures aim to reflect the evolving professional and societal needs, students involved in this study perceive a gap between feedback collection and visible curricular change—particularly in addressing local linguistic realities, Indigenous perspectives, and representations of Australian identity. This

suggests that while mechanisms are present, their impact on content revisions may be constrained by institutional inertia or broader systemic priorities.

At UINSU, student feedback is gathered through end-of-semester evaluations, academic advisory sessions, and informal lecturer-student dialogue. While these channels are active, their influence on curriculum reform remains largely internal and often depends on leadership responsiveness rather than formal policy. Engagement with industry input is still limited, typically occurring through partnerships or guest lectures rather than being integrated into a continuous review process.

The study reveals that both universities have basic feedback mechanisms in place, but their ability to meaningfully shape curriculum development—especially in culturally responsive and context-specific ways—remains uneven. Strengthening the feedback loop between students, industry, and curriculum committees would enhance the relevance, responsiveness, and long-term quality of the programs in both settings.

Discussion

Students' perceptions of the Master's English curriculum play a pivotal role in shaping their educational experiences and learning outcomes. The current findings, which examine student perceptions in Indonesia and Australia, both confirm and expand upon previous research by highlighting differences and similarities in areas such as curriculum relevance, cultural context, practical application, and student engagement.

Table 2. Comparative Findings on Master's English Curriculum Perceptions

Students' Perception Focus	Indonesian Students	Australian Students
1. Curriculum Relevance	• Strong theoretical foundation in linguistics and literature. • Lacks clear application in professional settings (e.g., teaching, media, content creation).	• Curriculum is academically rigorous and conceptually deep. • Limited opportunities for real-world practice. • Students call for internships, simulated projects, and hands-on assignments.

Students' Perception Focus	Indonesian Students	Australian Students
	• Students advocate for internships, project-based learning, and case studies. • Need for practical skill development.	• Desire to be better prepared for professional demands.
2. Cultural and Contextual Relevance	• Curriculum perceived as overly Western-centric. • Insufficient inclusion of Indonesian linguistic, literary, and cultural content. • Students suggest incorporating local case studies, comparative theory application, and culturally responsive pedagogy.	• Curriculum viewed as globally broad but locally shallow. • Minimal focus on Australian authors, Indigenous perspectives, and sociolinguistic diversity. • Students suggest embedding national identity, local discourse, and Indigenous voices.
3. Implications	• Curriculum should include local cultural elements, Indonesian language practices, and localized literature to enhance relevance and engagement.	• Curriculum needs to reflect Australian sociocultural realities, including Indigenous knowledge systems and national linguistic issues, to deepen student connection and critical awareness.

Curriculum Relevance

Indonesian students have expressed concerns about the limited real-world relevance of their curriculum, criticizing its strong emphasize on theoretical knowledge. This perspective aligns with the finding of Susanti (2020), who noted the weak connections between postgraduate language education and the labor market needs. Additionally, Hasanah and Sari (2021) noted the insufficient workplace-based learning that restricts professional knowledge transfer.

In contrast, Australian students reported a more positive perceptions of curriculum relevance. They appreciated opportunities for practical engagement, flexible course options, and career-oriented content. These findings are consistent with Barron and Zeegers (2006), who emphasized the Australian higher education sector's commitment to employability and graduate capabilities. Moreover, Tran (2016) highlighted the importance of

outcome-based education models adopted in Australia that promote the alignment of curriculum goals with professional competencies.

Cultural Context and Representation

Cultural relevance is another critical factor shaping student perceptions. Indonesian students indicated a need for greater representation of their local cultural contexts within the curriculum. While some integration exists—such as in the inclusion of Indonesian literature or social themes—students perceived this effort as minimal and insufficient. This supports the findings of Wijayanti and Nurhadi (2018), who reported that English language programs in Indonesian universities tend to prioritize Western texts and frameworks, often at the expense of local knowledge systems.

Australian students characterized their curriculum as responsive and culturally inclusive, valuing its balance of local and global perspectives that fostered critical thinking and intercultural competence. Consistent with Arkoudis et al. (2013) and McClenaghan (2001), such integration of multicultural content and inclusive pedagogy promotes belonging among diverse learners while strengthening global citizenship skills.

Implications

The findings of this study reveal a significant divergence in the experiences of Indonesian and Australian students enrolled in Master's English programs. Both groups value the acquisition of English proficiency; however, Indonesian students seek improvements in curriculum relevance, cultural integration, and experiential learning opportunities. In contrast, Australian students appear to benefit from a more holistic approach that combines theoretical rigor with practical and culturally responsive elements.

These insights underscore the importance of curriculum reform, particularly within the Indonesian context. Drawing on the strengths of the Australian model—such as flexible pathways, applied learning, and multicultural representation—Indonesian institutions can develop programs that are more responsive and

competitive on a global scale. As recommended by OECD (2018), enhancing higher education outcomes requires aligning curriculum design with labor market needs, cultural identity, and student expectations. By addressing these dimensions, Master's English programs in Indonesia can better prepare graduates for both local and international professional environments.

A recurring theme across Indonesian student responses was the desire for more experiential learning, such as internships, industry projects, and applied language tasks. The absence of these components was viewed as a barrier to skill development and employment readiness. These concerns align with prior research by Subekti (2019), which found that Indonesian postgraduate students often lack opportunities for workplace simulation and practical engagement within language programs. Furthermore, Astuti and Lestari (2022) argue that the limited experiential components reduce student motivation and hinder their preparedness for the real-world.

In contrast, students in Australian universities reported higher levels of engagement, largely attributed to the integration of industry partnerships, project-based learning, and collaborative group work. These pedagogical strategies are consistent with those advocated by Biggs and Tang (2011), who emphasize constructive alignment and student-centered learning as foundational to effective curriculum design. Moreover, Krause et al. (2010) found that Australian postgraduate students benefit from interactive, task-based approaches that bridge academic theory with practical application.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis of Master's English curricula in Indonesia and Australia provides valuable insights into how each nation addresses the challenge of global competitiveness in postgraduate English education. The results highlight both differences and similarities in curricular structure, pedagogical approaches, and the incorporation of global competencies to prepare students for international demands.

The differences in national educational policies between Indonesia and Australia significantly influence the design, content, and pedagogical orientation of their respective Master's English curricula. In Indonesia, the curriculum is shaped by directives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. These policies emphasize the integration of national identity, religious values (especially within Islamic higher education), and moral education alongside global competencies. As a result, the curriculum at institutions such as UINSU tends to prioritize pedagogical content knowledge, moral instruction, and the Islamic worldview, while also gradually adapting to meet global academic standards.

In contrast, Australia's curriculum development is influenced by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which promotes outcome-based education, specific graduate attributes (including critical thinking, intercultural awareness, and digital literacy), and alignment with international benchmarks. Curriculum design is further influenced by institutional autonomy and external quality assurance agencies like TEQSA, resulting in a strong emphasis on research, employability, and global engagement.

These policy differences manifest in the scope and focus of the curricula: Indonesian programs tend to be more centralized and value-laden, while Australian programs exhibit greater flexibility, internationalization, and responsiveness to industry needs. This study highlights that understanding these policy contexts is essential to interpreting curricular practices and outcomes in each country.

Indonesian curricula emphasize theoretical and philosophical foundations, offering courses such as Philosophy of Science, Second Language Learning Theory, and religiously contextualized modules such as *Tafsir Tematik Pendidikan* [thematic exegesis of education]. Conversely, Australian programs adopt a more forward-looking orientation, prioritizing digital literacy, educational technology, and research-focused subjects that prepare graduates for contemporary, technology-driven, and globally relevant classrooms.

Regarding pedagogical orientation, Indonesian curricula emphasize teacher preparation within local contexts, focusing on pedagogical knowledge and professional development through courses

including *English Teacher Professional Development* and *Research Methodology in English Education*. However, there is a relative underrepresentation of digital pedagogies and empirical research skills, indicating a necessary area for development. Australian programs, by contrast, adopt a more research-intensive approach. The integration of *Thesis Proposal Development* and *Milestone Seminars* reflects a strong commitment to producing original research. Additionally, the emphasis on multiculturalism and pragmatics supports the development of educators capable of navigating diverse educational environments.

Both Indonesian and Australian curricula aim to equip graduates for international success. Indonesia emphasizes cultural and contextual relevance, addressing national needs but requiring stronger integration of digital skills and research capacity. In contrast, Australian programs closely align with global standards, positioning graduates to excel across diverse academic and professional settings.

The comparative analysis underscores the importance of striking a balance between local relevance and global orientation in curriculum development. Indonesian programs should strategically integrate digital technologies, research training, and multicultural perspectives to enhance their global standing. Simultaneously, Australia's approach may serve as a reference point for embedding global competencies while ensuring contextual adaptability.

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