

EXPLORING THE CURRENT STATE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION LITERATURE IN ASEAN: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The current state of intercultural communication literature in the ASEAN region through a bibliometric review. The aim is to identify key trends, emerging themes, and future research directions, with a focus on promoting mutual understanding and collaboration among culturally diverse communities in ASEAN countries. Methodology: A quantitative bibliometric approach was used, reviewing 340 articles indexed in Scopus from 2000 to 2025. The analysis examines publication patterns, key themes, international collaborations, and the development of research networks in intercultural communication across ASEAN. Results: The findings show a significant increase in intercultural communication research, particularly in intercultural competence, digital media, and e-learning. Countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore lead in research production. However, the literature remains fragmented, with few integrative studies addressing intercultural communication in the ASEAN context. Discussion: Despite the growing interest in digital tools for intercultural learning, a gap remains in connecting theory and practice, particularly in educational settings and international workplace environments. Conclusion: The study highlights the need for more collaborative, interdisciplinary research linking intercultural communication with education, technology, and social development.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Bibliometric Review, Cross-Cultural Communication, ASEAN, Cultural Competence

I. INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication has become one of the most prominent issues in today's interconnected and hyperconnected global society [1], [2], [3], [4]. Rapid advances in digital technology, migration, and international collaboration have created complex and dynamic spaces, where individuals and communities from diverse cultural backgrounds interact on a daily basis [5], [6], [7]. These interactions, whether in the fields of education, business, health services, and social media, often present challenges in negotiating cultural meanings, managing stereotypes, and fostering mutual understanding (Bakhov et al., 2024). The increasing frequency of intercultural encounters has sparked public debates about identity, inclusivity, and communication ethics, especially in the post-pandemic era when virtual communication has become the main means of intercultural contact [9], [10]. Thus, the effectiveness of intercultural communication is an important determining factor for cooperation and coexistence in a multicultural society [11], [12], [13].

In recent years, global interest in intercultural communication has increased significantly, both in the academic realm and in public discourse [14], [15]. International organizations and governments emphasize intercultural dialogue as a key strategy to achieve social cohesion and peace (UNESCO, 2021). Social media platforms, cross-border education, and the global workplace are increasingly expanding spaces where cultural values, norms, and communication styles meet sometimes harmoniously, but often also fraught with tension [16], [17], [18]. As intercultural misunderstandings continue to fuel online conflicts, xenophobia, or disinformation, researchers and practitioners are encouraged to deepen their understanding of how culture shapes communication behavior (Cabauatan, 2024; Hossain, 2024). Therefore, the scientific study of intercultural communication is not only a theoretical effort, but also a social necessity to foster empathy, resilience, and sustainable global relationships.

Research in the field of intercultural communication has undergone a remarkable evolution over the past three decades. Bibliometric data taken from the Scopus database ($n = 340$ documents, 2025) show that the field has grown significantly, with major contributions from authors affiliated with universities in Asia (e.g. PETRONAS University of Technology, National University, Meiji Gakuin University) and Europe. The most frequently cited keywords include intercultural competence, language and identity, interlanguage pragmatics, multilingualism, and awareness, which show a strong focus on competence development and prag-

matic adaptation in intercultural contexts. These findings are in line with previous studies that have highlighted the shift in intercultural communication research from traditional comparative models to a more dynamic, interactional, and critical approach (Szkudlarek et al., 2020; Tamam, 2010). In addition, recent research has also integrated digital and media communication perspectives, revealing how the online environment is reshaping intercultural sensitivity and learning (Chan et al., 2025).

Although there have been significant advances in intercultural communication research, particularly in the areas of second and foreign language education and technology-enabled cross-cultural communication, there are some gaps that still need to be filled. Previous bibliometric studies have generally only examined specific subfields, such as intercultural competence in language education, technology-enabled cross-cultural learning (Shadiev et al., 2024), or intercultural conflict resolution (Guo, 2025), but very few have provided a comprehensive mapping of these entire fields. In addition, research examining the application of practice-based models in intercultural communication, as proposed by (Giustini, 2025), has also not been widely explored. Although some previous bibliometric efforts have analyzed trends within specific regions or journals, a global synthesis that includes theme development, author collaboration networks, and citation dynamics is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by systematically reviewing the literature on intercultural communication based on publications indexed in Scopus, with special emphasis on the ASEAN context, to identify publication patterns, thematic clusters, and future research directions that can enrich the development of theory and cross-disciplinary integration, as well as provide a more in-depth picture of current developments and positions in the field of communication intercultural in the ASEAN region.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research presents a quantitative approach using bibliometric analysis from the Scopus database. Bibliometrics is the optimal technique for examining the conceptual structure of a research domain and identifying potential future research directions (Bakhov et al., 2024; Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013). For a more comprehensive bibliometric analysis, this study combines bibliometric and content analysis [28], [29], [30] to synthesise research streams from various journals in the Scopus database from 1979 to 2024. The main reason for selecting the Scopus database is that a study on Intercultural Communication utilising the Web of Science (WoS) database has already been conducted by [31]. Additionally, the WoS database is relatively limited and often overlaps with the Scopus database or includes journals indexed by both [32]. Furthermore, the Scopus database grants access to a comprehensive database [33] and offers more comprehensive citation coverage than the WoS database [34].

In our data search strategy, we adapted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model as adopted by [35]. Figure 1 presents a detailed flowchart of the PRISMA protocol employed in our search strategy. Data were collected on May 24, 2024, and updated on October 1, 2025, from the Scopus database using the search query (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Intercultural" and "Communication" and "Intercultural Communication")). To guarantee the inclusiveness of our bibliometric review and content analysis, we follow the bibliometric study by [36]. Hence, after screening literature relevant to the topic, we evaluate the document based on eligibility criteria, including full-text search and cross-verification by their citation and relevance to the subject, which is not included in the data search query. The initial records screened in the Scopus database ($n = 7.040$) were based on article titles, abstracts, and keywords from journals, proceedings, book chapters, and reviews. Three search criteria were used to ensure article quality and review validity: article universality, publication quality, and relevance. The universality of articles is represented by articles from journals written in English only. Therefore, we continued to extract using LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar"), LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j"), and LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"). Subsequently, we excluded documents that did not meet the inclusion criteria (i.e., money donations did not meet cash waqf specifically, non-article document type, non-journal source type, non-English, and non ASEAN) ($n = 6.700$). The remaining records deemed eligible ($n = 340$) were included for further descriptive, bibliometric, and content analyses.

Various tools were utilised to conduct this study. For frequency analysis and chart generation tasks, R-Biblioshiny [37] and Excel were employed for calculations and visualisation. VOSviewer [38] was employed to construct and visualise bibliometric networks, examine abstract keywords and authorship, and explore relationships and collaborations across authors, countries, and publications. Harzing's Publish or Perish software [39] was utilised to compute citation metrics and identify highly cited documents. This research employed a comprehensive methodology to explore the domain of cash waqf research, combining bibliometric analysis with content and network analysis. This approach aims to uncover insights into various field facets, including publication years, contributing countries and institutions, prominent journals, influential authors, keyword associations among authors, document citations, author citations and co-citations, international collaborations, and research streams.

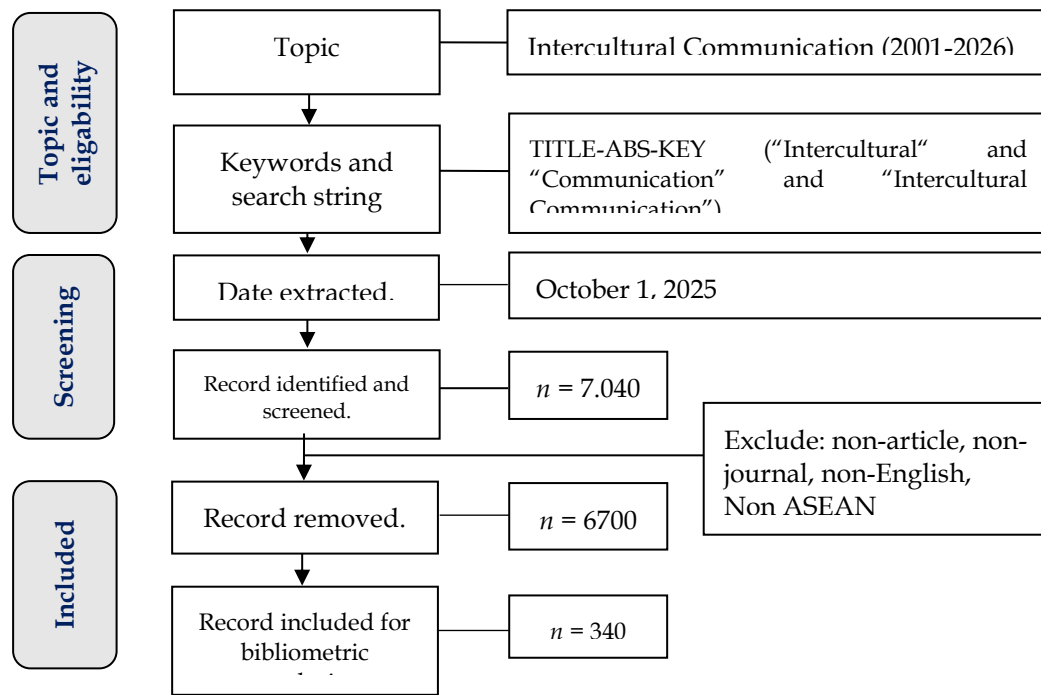


Figure 1. Data processing and search strategy

IV. FINDINGS RESEARCH

3.1. Descriptive analysis

In this study, the authors used publications released between 2001 and 2026, with a particular focus on journal articles. This dataset consists of 340 documents, with a total of 2,618 citations, spread over 24 years (2001–2026). The analysis shows an average of 109.08 citations per year and 7.7 citations per article. The h-index is 29, which means that 29 articles have been cited at least 29 times, while the g-index is 42, which indicates that the top 42 articles have received significant attention. With 1,164 author keywords, the publication covers a wide range of topics, written by 591 different authors, 47 of whom are single authors. These articles were published in 942 different sources, and 24.12% of them involved international cooperation, reflecting global collaboration. The total number of citations cited was 2,764, and on average each article had 5.4 co-authors, demonstrating the collaborative nature and impact of citations in the field under study (Table.1).

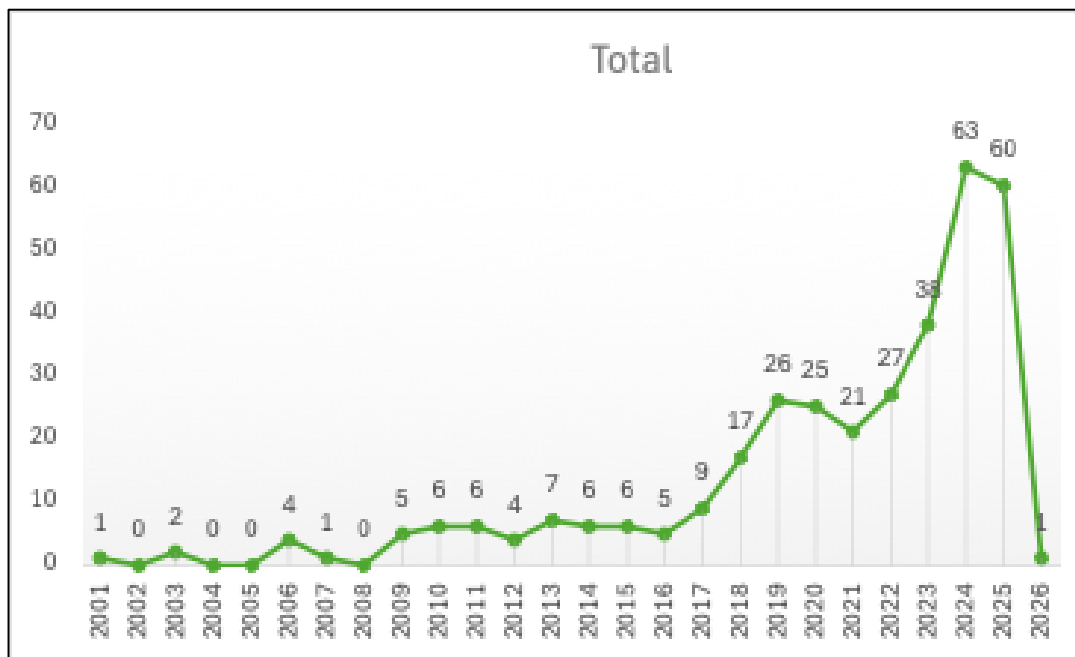
Table 1. Main information about the dataset

Description (metrics)	Result (data)
Publication years (period)	2001 – 2026
Total documents	340
Number of citations	2618
Citation Years	24 (2001 – 2025)
Citations per Year	109.08
Average citation per Paper	7.7
h_index	29
g_index	42
Author keyword	1164
Author	591
Sources	942
Authors of single-authored docs	47
International co-authorship	24.12
References	2764
Co-author pe doc	5.4

Figure 2 shows the annual publication trend from 2001 to 2026. The analysis shows a consistent increase in the number of publications throughout those years. However, there were fewer publications between 2001 and 2010. For example, before 2010, the number of publications remained minimal, with only a few articles published each year. On the contrary, starting in 2019, there was a significant increase in the number of publications, reaching 26 articles that year. This upward trend continues, peaking in 2024 with 63 publications, followed by a slight decline in 2025 to 60 publications. This suggests that the focus on this topic has increasingly become a popular area of research in recent years, with a huge surge in publications around

2024, reflecting the growing academic interest.

Figure 2. Number of publications per year



3.2. Research trend analysis

Table 2 indicates that the fields of study relevant to this topic include publications in social sciences, arts and humanities, business, management and accounting, psychology, economics, econometrics and finance, computer science, and multidisciplinary studies. The subject area of Social Sciences holds the top position with 88.24% of publications, followed by Arts and Humanities with 38.53%. Business, Management and Accounting contributes 13.24%, while Psychology accounts for 6.76%. The subject areas of Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Computer Science, and Multidisciplinary studies contribute smaller percentages, with 4.41%, 2.65%, and 2.06%, respectively. This highlights the prominence of social sciences in the body of literature being analyzed, with other disciplines contributing to a lesser extent.

Table 2. Subject area

Subject Area	Total Publications (TP)	Percentage (%)
Social Sciences	300	88,24%
Arts and Humanities	131	38,53%
Business, Management and Accounting	45	13,24%
Psychology	23	6,76%
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	15	4,41%
Computer Science	9	2,65%
Multidisciplinary	7	2,06%

Meanwhile, Table 3 shows that of the 10 most popular journals related to intercultural communication issues based on total publications (TP), the Journal of Intercultural Communication (Q1) published by Immigrant Institutet was the most popular, with 19 TP (7.59%), followed by the Journal of Intercultural Communication Research (Q1) by Routledge with 16 TP (5.06%). The third position is held by Jurnal Komunikasi Malaysian Journal of Communication (Q3), published by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, with 9 TP (5.06%). Other notable journals include Language and Intercultural Communication (Q1) with 9 TP (3.80%) and Learn Journal Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (Q2) with 9 TP (3.38%). This indicates that publications related to intercultural communication are most frequently published in top-tier journals such as the Journal of Intercultural Communication and the Journal of Intercultural Communication Research.

Table 3. Top 10 journal sources title

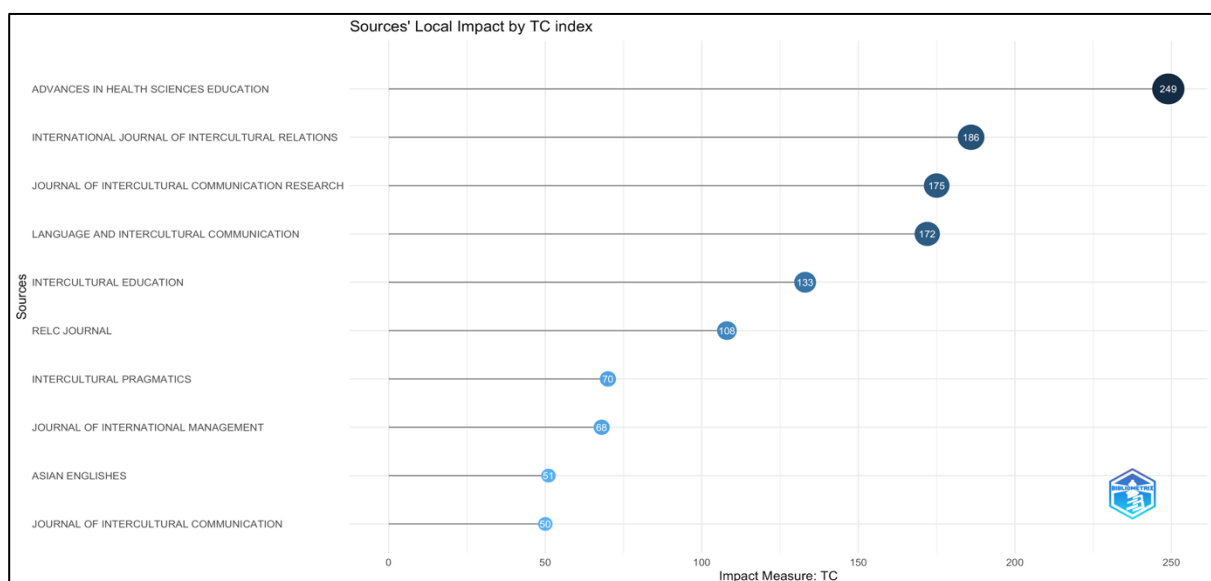
No.	Source Title and Scopus Rank	Publisher	TP	%	TC	C/P	h	g
1	Journal of Intercultural Communication (Q1)	Immigrant Institutet	19	7.59	342	18,00	12	17
2	Journal of Intercultural Communication Research (Q1)	Routledge	16	5.06	305	19,06	9	17
3	Jurnal Komunikasi Malaysian Journal of Communication	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press	9	5.06	557	61,89	13	15

	(Q3)							
4	Language and Intercultural Communication (Q1)	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	9	3.80	94	10,44	5	9
5	Learn Journal Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (Q2)	Language Institute of Thammasat University	9	3.38	122	13,56	6	9
6	International Journal of Intercultural Relations (Q1)	Elsevier Ltd	8	3.38	242	30,25	7	7
7	Cogent Arts and Humanities (Q2)	Cogent OA	7	2.11	93	13,29	4	6
8	Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (Q2)	Indonesia University of Education	6	2.11	118	19,67	4	5
9	Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (Q2)	Universiti Putra Malaysia	6	1.69	168	28,00	4	5
10	Gema Online Journal of Language Studies (Q1)	Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	5	1.69	123	24,60	3	5

Note(s): TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; and h=h-index; g=g-index;

However, based on the source's local impact, *Advances in Health Sciences Education* has the highest local impact with a total of 249 citations (TC) related to the topic, followed by *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* with 186 TC, *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* with 175 TC, and *Language and Intercultural Communication* with 172 TC. Other journals, such as *Intercultural Education* and *RELC Journal*, have fewer than 100 TC. The top journals based on local impact (TC) are presented in Figure 3, showing a clear trend of these leading journals contributing significantly to the citation count in the field of intercultural communication.

Figure 3. Journal local impact related to the topic



3.3. Most influential countries, affiliates, and productive author

Table 4 presents an analysis of the top ten countries out of 21 countries related to intercultural communication research output, with Malaysia occupying the top position with 124 publications, followed by Indonesia with 85 publications. Thailand came in third place with 74 publications, while Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines contributed 27, 26, and 12 publications, respectively. Interestingly, despite its smaller contribution, Brunei Darussalam shows significant research output related to its population, with 5 publications. Cambodia and East Timor, despite contributing fewer publications (1 each), still show participation in this field. This data shows that countries in Southeast Asia, particularly those in ASEAN, play an important role in intercultural communication research. This trend is also reflected in the high citation-per-publication rates for countries such as the Philippines (15.50) and Singapore (8.46), which emphasize their impact in the academic community.

Table 4. Top 10 Countries contributed to the publications

Country	TP	%	TC	C/P	Continent
Malaysia	124	38.40	595	4,80	ASEAN
Indonesia	85	29.11	94	1,11	ASEAN

Thailand	74	8.44	390	5,27	ASEAN
Viet Nam	27	5.49	54	2,00	ASEAN
Singapore	26	4.22	220	8,46	ASEAN
Philippines	12	3.80	186	15,50	ASEAN
Brunei Darussalam	5	3.38	12	2,40	ASEAN
Cambodia	1	2.53	7	7,00	ASEAN
Timor-Leste	1	2.11	66	6,00	ASEAN

Table 5 shows the leading institutions that have made significant contributions to intercultural communication research globally. Universiti Utara Malaysia and Universiti Malaya lead the list with 23 publications (6.76%) each. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia followed with 19 publications (5.59%). Nanyang Technological University in Singapore contributed 12 publications (3.53%), followed by Thammasat University with 10 publications (2.94%). Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi MARA, and Multimedia University each contributed 8 to 9 publications. The National University of Singapore and Gadjah Mada University of Indonesia contributed with 8 and 7 publications, respectively. This data shows the dominance of institutions in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore in intercultural communication research.

Table 5. The top 10 institutions contributed to the publications.

Institution	TP	%	Country
Universiti Utara Malaysia	23	6,76%	Malaysia
Universiti Malaya	23	6,76%	Indonesia
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	19	5,59%	Malaysia
Nanyang Technological University	12	3,53%	Singapore
Thammasat University	10	2,94%	Thailand
Universiti Sains Malaysia	9	2,65%	Malaysia
Universiti Teknologi MARA	8	2,35%	Malaysia
Multimedia University	8	2,35%	Malaysia
National University of Singapore	8	2,35%	Singapore
Universitas Gadjah Mada	7	2,06%	Indonesia

Table 6 shows the 10 most prolific authors in intercultural communication research, with significant contributions from Malaysia and Indonesia. The most prolific author is Dalib, S., from Universiti Utara Malaysia, with 8 publications (2.35%) and an average of 99 citations per publication. Yusof, N., also from Universiti Utara Malaysia, followed with 7 publications (2.06%) and an average of 61 citations per publication. Claramita, M., from Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, has 6 publications (1.76%) with the highest average citation per publication (56.83 C/P). Other notable authors include Balakrishnan, K., from Multimedia University, Malaysia, Ahmad, M.K., from the International Islamic University Malaysia, and Boonsuk, Y., from Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. Significant contributions also came from Krish, P., from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Harun, M., from Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Table 6. Most Productive Authors

Author Name	TP	%	TC	C/P	h	g	Affiliation	Country
Dalib, S.	8	2,35%	208	99	12,38	8	Universiti Utara Malaysia	Malaysia
Yusof, N.	7	2,06%	188	61	8,71	7	Universiti Utara Malaysia	Malaysia
Claramita, M.	6	1,76%	96	341	56,83	6	Universitas Gadjah Mada	Indonesia
Balakrishnan, K.	5	1,47%	113	24	4,80	4	Multimedia University	Malaysia
Ahmad, M.K.	4	1,18%	310	26	6,50	5	International Islamic University of Malaysia	Malaysia
Boonsuk, Y.	4	1,18%	142	43	10,75	4	Prince of Songkla University	Thailand
Krish, P.	4	1,18%	218	19	4,75	4	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia
Mohamad, B.	4	1,18%	92	11	2,75	3	Universiti Utara Malaysia	Malaysia
Nadeem, M.U.	4	1,18%	69	76	19,00	4	National University of Sciences and Technology	Malaysia
Harun, M.	3	0,88%	47	23	7,67	3	Universiti Utara Malaysia	Malaysia

Note(s): TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; and h=h-index; g=g-index

3.4. Citation analysis

Based on Table 7, it is clear that many studies on intercultural communication have enriched the literature in this area. The study by Claramita (2013) on doctor-patient communication in Southeast Asia is the most cited, with 157 citations, reflecting the long-standing academic interest in this topic. The second citation is related to a study by Setyono (2019) on the representation of multicultural values in EFL textbooks authorized by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, which obtained 112 citations.

Furthermore, Claramita's (2011) work on doctor-patient communication in Southeast Asia also received attention with 92 citations. Other notable studies include Nguyen's (2011) research on the role of textbooks in developing intercultural pragmatic competence with 78 citations, and Baker's (2019) research on transcultural communication through English as a lingua franca in social networking communities, which obtained 74 citations. These studies, together with the work of Zakaria (2017), Hendrickson (2018), and Nguyen (2021), demonstrate the breadth and diversity of intercultural communication research, providing valuable insights into communication practices in multicultural and global contexts.

Table 7. The top ten most cited documents

Author(s)	Title	TC	C/Y	Source	Publisher
(Claramita et al., 2013)	Doctor–patient communication in Southeast Asia: a different culture?	157	12,08	Advances in Health Sciences Education	Springer Science and Business Media B.V.
(Setyono & Widodo, 2019)	The representation of multicultural values in the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture-Endorsed EFL textbook: a critical discourse analysis	112	16,00	Intercultural Education	Routledge
(Claramita et al., 2011)	Doctor–patient communication in a Southeast Asian setting: the conflict between ideal and reality	92	6,13	Advances in Health Sciences Education	Springer Science and Business Media B.V.
(T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011)	Learning to Communicate in a Globalized World: To What Extent Do School Textbooks Facilitate the Development of Intercultural Pragmatic Competence?	78	5,20	RELC Journal	SAGE Publications Ltd
(Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019)	Transcultural communication: language, communication and culture through English as a lingua franca in a social network community	74	10,57	Language and Intercultural Communication	Taylor and Francis Ltd.
(N. Zakaria, 2017)	Emergent Patterns of Switching Behaviors and Intercultural Communication Styles of Global Virtual Teams During Distributed Decision Making	68	7,56	International Journal of Information Management	Elsevier Ltd
(Hendrickson, 2018)	Intercultural connectors: Explaining the influence of extra-curricular activities and tutor programs on international student friendship network development	59	7,38	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	Elsevier Ltd
(T. T. M. Nguyen et al., 2021)	How well do ELT textbooks prepare students to use English in global contexts? An evaluation of the Vietnamese English textbooks from an English as an international language (EIL) perspective	51	10,20	Asian Englishes	Taylor and Francis Ltd.
(Eko & Pu-tranto, 2019)	The Role of Intercultural Competence and Local Wisdom in Building Intercultural and Inter-religious Tolerance	47	6,71	Journal of Intercultural Communication Research	Taylor and Francis Ltd.
(Boonsathorn, 2007)	Understanding conflict management styles of Thais and Americans in multinational corporations in Thailand	4	2,42	International Journal of Conflict Management	Emerald Insight

Note(s): TC=total citations; C/Y=average citations per years

3.5. Keyword analysis

Table 8 shows the frequency of keywords related to intercultural communication in the Scopus database, with "Intercultural Communication" as the most frequently appearing keyword, found in 154 articles (45.29%). Other important keywords included "Intercultural Competence" (27 articles, 7.94%), "Intercultural Communication Competence" (25 articles, 7.35%), and "Communication" (19 articles, 5.59%). Keywords such as "People," "Culture," "Malaysia," and "Intercultural Communication Competency" also appear frequently, providing a deeper understanding of intercultural communication research. In addition, the distribution of keywords by country shows that Malaysia and Indonesia are the main contributors in this field, with significant contributions from keywords such as "Indonesia" (10 articles, 2.94%) and "Malaysia" (14 articles,

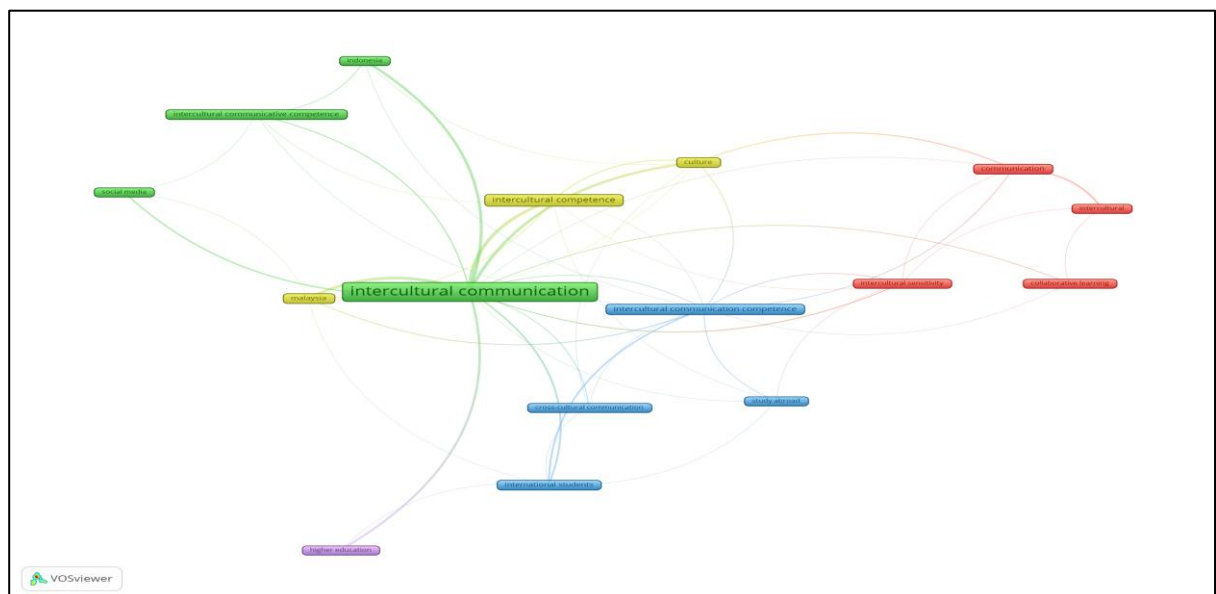
4.12%). This is in line with the findings of Ninglasari (2021) and Medias et al. (2021), which show that these two countries are at the forefront of the research and development of intercultural communication, reflecting their dominant role in shaping this field.

Table 8. 20 Top Keywords

Keywords	TP	%	Keywords	TP	%
Intercultural Communication	154	45,29%	Indonesia	10	2,94%
Intercultural Competence	27	7,94%	Interpersonal Communication	9	2,65%
Intercultural Communication Competence	25	7,35%	Male	9	2,65%
Communication	19	5,59%	Social Media	9	2,65%
Human	15	4,41%	Adult	8	2,35%
Culture	14	4,12%	Female	8	2,35%
Malaysia	14	4,12%	Cross-cultural Communication	7	2,06%
Intercultural Communicative Competence	11	3,24%	Higher Education	7	2,06%
International Students	11	3,24%	Humans	7	2,06%
Article	10	2,94%	Intercultural Sensitivity	7	2,06%

Additional insights into research trends can be gained through the VOSviewer visualization, which identifies 16 keywords that meet the minimum appearance threshold as many as 6 out of 1164 keywords analyzed. These keywords are divided into four different categories, as shown in Figure 4. This image provides a thematic map of the conceptual structure of keywords in the literature on intercultural communication, offering a deeper understanding of the key themes being explored in this field.

Figure 4. VOSviewer visualisation of a keyword co-occurrence



Note(s): Unit of analysis = Authors keywords; Counting method: Full counting; co-occurrences of a keyword = 6; meet the threshold = 16

V. DISCUSSION

To address the topic of intercultural communication, we conducted a content analysis supported by co-citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, and keyword co-occurrences (Figures 4 to 7 and Table 9). We classified the research into five main clusters, revealing the key areas of study within the field of intercultural communication.

4.1 Collaborative Learning and Intercultural Communication

Collaborative learning in the context of intercultural communication is essential for building effective communication skills in a multicultural environment. In settings that involve people from diverse cultural backgrounds, studies show that collaboration in groups can increase intercultural sensitivity and help individuals to better appreciate cultural differences (Tan et al., 2026). This is in line with the results of research showing that direct interaction in a collaborative learning setting can accelerate the development of intercultural communication competence. For example, in the context of higher education, the use of technology, such as virtual reality, can facilitate intercultural communication competencies by providing interactive learning experiences (DeWitt et al., 2022). The importance of intercultural communication in collaborative settings is

also seen in broader research, such as in language learning and in international interactions that take place in universities. This study shows that the development of intercultural communication competencies does not only occur in the classroom, but also in extracurricular activities that facilitate cross-cultural dialogue (Ghani et al., 2022). Through more frequent interactions with a variety of cultural backgrounds, students can develop better skills in navigating effective communication in an increasingly globalized world. Therefore, higher education should focus on creating an environment that supports collaborative learning to facilitate growth kemampuan komunikasi antarbudaya di kalangan siswa dari berbagai budaya.

4.2. Social Media and Intercultural Communication in Indonesia

The influence of social media on intercultural communication in Indonesia has become an increasingly relevant topic, especially with the increasing use of digital platforms for cultural exchange. Research shows that social media allows individuals from different cultural backgrounds to exchange perspectives, opinions, and information, which is important in the context of intercultural communication (Mahaputri et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, social media acts as a bridge of communication between various cultural communities, especially among the younger generation, who are more open to cross-cultural interactions. However, while social media can increase cultural awareness, research also warns about the potential misunderstandings that arise due to existing cultural differences (C. D. Nguyen & Ton-Nu, 2024). A relevant example in the Indonesian context is the use of Instagram as a tool for intercultural learning. In Indonesia, this platform is not only used to share photos and videos, but also to share cultural knowledge that enriches intercultural understanding among students and the younger generation. Research shows that the use of social media in Indonesia can facilitate a deeper understanding of culture, but it also brings its own challenges in overcoming potential cultural conflicts (Lumban Batu et al., 2025). Therefore, it is important for educators and practitioners to understand how social media can be effectively leveraged to promote better intercultural communication, while addressing the challenges that may arise from intercultural misunderstandings.

4.3. Intercultural Communication among International Students

Intercultural communication among international students often faces unique challenges, especially in terms of adapting to new cultures, language differences, and navigating social differences. Studies show that the study abroad experience can enrich the intercultural communication competence of international students, allowing them to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and improving their ability to communicate on a global level (Sipe et al., 2025). Research on international students also highlights how the experience contributes to their improved ability to recognize cultural differences and communicate effectively, which is critical in this increasingly connected world. International students' experience in communicating between cultures also provides valuable insights into the adaptation challenges they face, especially in terms of language and culture. For example, research conducted on international students in Malaysia shows that their intercultural communication challenges often involve difficulties in understanding the nuances of the local language as well as adapting to different social ways (Risda et al., 2025). It is therefore important to provide appropriate support for international students so that they can develop effective communication skills in a global context, through well-designed cross-cultural orientation and interaction programs.

4.4 Culture and Intercultural Competence in Malaysia

Malaysia, as a country with a multicultural society, has unique challenges and opportunities in the development of intercultural communication competencies. Research shows that interactions between different ethnic groups in Malaysia rely heavily on a deep understanding of cultural differences and how to communicate appropriately to maintain social harmony (Balakrishnan, 2022). Intercultural communication competencies in Malaysia are indispensable to facilitate effective interaction between various ethnic groups that coexist, such as Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Research also shows that the development of these skills at the higher education level is essential to creating a harmonious and inclusive society. In the context of higher education in Malaysia, the development of intercultural communication competencies can be carried out through various academic and extracurricular activities involving students from different cultural backgrounds. These programs not only help improve intercultural understanding, but also strengthen students' ability to communicate in a variety of social and professional situations (Wang & Nam, 2025). Therefore, universities in Malaysia play a key role in preparing students to become global citizens who are able to communicate well in a diverse society, by providing training and hands-on experience in intercultural interactions.

4.5 Higher Education and Intercultural Communication

Higher education plays an important role in developing intercultural communication skills among students from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds. The university provides a space for students to engage in cross-cultural interactions that can enhance their competence in communicating effectively in a global world (Higgins, 2024). Research shows that international exchange programs, language training, and culturally-based extracurricular activities are effective means of facilitating the development of intercultural communication skills, which are important for students in preparing for global careers. The development of intercultural communication skills in higher education also involves increasing cultural awareness and developing international identity among students. Research shows that through project-based learning and collaborative activities with students from different countries, students can improve their communication competence and prepare themselves to become more open and inclusive citizens of the world (Yanu et al., 2025). Therefore, higher education must continue to focus on developing intercultural communication skills through an in-depth curriculum and experience, to support students in facing increasingly complex global challenges.

Table 10. Future research directions

No.	Details for future research	References
1	Analyze more deeply how collaborative learning can increase intercultural awareness and sensitivity in a variety of educational and professional contexts.	(Mahaputri et al., 2025)
2	Examine the influence of collaborative learning on the development of intercultural communication skills in a multicultural work environment.	(Boonmatun & Huttayavilaiphan, 2025; Risda et al., 2025)
3	Investigate the impact of the use of social media in building cultural awareness among Indonesia's young generation, as well as identify challenges that arise in intercultural communication on digital platforms	(Novianti et al., 2025; Yanu et al., 2025)
4	Exploring the role of social media as a means to bring together different cultures, with a focus on issues of intercultural communication in Indonesia.	(Feng et al., 2025) Authors suggestion
5	Deepen understanding of international students' experiences in adapting to new cultures and the role of intercultural communication in facilitating the adaptation process	Authors suggestion
6	Examine the influence of student exchange programs in improving intercultural competence, taking into account differences in the way international students communicate with friends from other cultures.	(Wang & Nam, 2025)
7	Examine the relationship between intercultural competence and social development in a multicultural society such as Malaysia.	(Nattheeraphong et al., 2025) Authors suggestion
8	Examine the relationship between intercultural competence and social development in a multicultural society such as Malaysia.	(Risda et al., 2025)
9	Examine the influence of higher education curricula in raising the cultural awareness of students around the world and preparing them to face communication challenges in the multinational workplace	((Drajati et al., 2024; Janenoppakarn & Rajprasit, 2025)

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the research and analysis presented in the study, it is clear that the global field of intercultural communication has grown substantially over the last few decades. The study successfully met its objectives, analyzing trends, patterns, and emerging research topics in the context of intercultural communication, particularly focusing on cultural competence, communication strategies, and their applications in a globalized world. The first objective of evaluating the global trends and research contributions to intercultural communication was achieved, with a clear identification of the leading countries, institutions, and authors contributing to this growing field. A significant contribution from Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand has been observed, indicating the region's active participation in the development of intercultural communication research.

The second objective, examining the methodologies and research directions, was accomplished by analyzing major themes in intercultural communication, such as collaborative learning, the role of social media, communication among international students, and the importance of intercultural competence in diverse educational and organizational settings. The study also highlighted the increasing use of digital platforms for promoting intercultural understanding. The third objective, exploring the social implications of intercultural communication, revealed the importance of fostering intercultural competence through education and training. The research suggests that universities and educational institutions play a crucial role in preparing students for global interactions, promoting cultural awareness, and reducing communication barriers across different cultural backgrounds.

The final objective, focusing on future research directions, was successfully met, with recommendations for further studies on the integration of digital tools in intercultural communication, the challenges posed by virtual interactions, and the evolving role of social media in shaping intercultural dynamics. The study underscores the need for continued research on intercultural competence, especially in non-traditional settings, to foster better communication and cooperation across cultures. Overall, this research significantly contributes to the body of knowledge on intercultural communication and provides insights that can help improve global collaboration, especially in educational and professional contexts. The findings encourage further exploration of new models, theories, and practices that can facilitate better intercultural understanding and effective communication across diverse cultural settings.

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