Developing the Cross-Cultural Understanding Course Materials for the English Major Students

Nurprihatina Hasan[1], Andriani[2], Bakhtiar Majid[3], Sutaryo Sutaryo[4]
[1,2,3] English Letters Study Program, FIB, Universitas Khairun, Indonesia
[4]English Language Education Study Program, FKIP, Universitas Khairun, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) is one of the compulsory courses required of all six-semester students at the English Literature Study Program of Universitas Khairun. This course provides the students with an awareness of cross-cultural concepts. The problem is that the teaching and learning process of the CCU course in the English Literature Study Program has not been optimal in recent years. One of the reasons is a lack of teaching material to meet learning objectives. This research aims to create a technology-based CCU textbook that contains appropriate teaching materials for students. It is intended that the contents in the CCU textbook to be developed align with the curriculum and Semester Learning Plan (SLP) of the CCU course. Preliminary research as part of three phases of development research design was carried out. A need analysis was conducted to identify students' needs for teaching materials, learning methods, and assessment. A need analysis was conducted with questionnaires via Google form to collect data, involving 43 six-semester students at the English Literature Study Program of Universitas Khairun. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. It was found that more than 97% of 43 students involved in the study strongly agreed and agreed that a technology-based textbook for the CCU course should be made available. In addition, the textbook of the CCU course should contain materials from online articles, YouTube videos, and links to online English newspapers as well as Indonesian online publications. It was also found that the learning activities reflected in the CCU course should include a discussion, a lecturer explanation, group presentations, individual assignment activities, and group assignment activities. Students' proficiency in the CCU course can be assessed using a variety of methods, including paper writing, projects, and exams.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural awareness, learning objectives, questionnaire, students' needs, technology-based textbook.

I. INTRODUCTION

As one of the job skills courses (JSC), the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course is required of all sixth-semester students at the English Literature Study Program (ELSP) of Universitas Khairun's Faculty of Cultural Sciences (FCS). This course is designed to provide the students with an awareness of cross-cultural concepts, including what culture is, cultural conflict and adjustment, gender issues, life values, and social interactions (Prodi Sastra Inggris FIB Universitas Khairun, 2023). The learning objectives, learning process, and evaluation of this course are specified in the Semester Learning Plan as prescribed by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2020 (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). Article 12 paragraph (1) of the mandate of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020) stipulates that learning process planning is produced for each course and provided in the Semester Learning Plan (SLP). Furthermore, paragraph (2) specifies that SLP) is produced in the Study Program by lecturers working independently or collaboratively in expertise groups in the field of science and technology. What is important to emphasize in Article 12 is paragraph (3), which states that the SLP contains the learning outcomes of graduates assigned to courses, as well as final skills intended at each learning stage to satisfy graduate learning outcomes and study materials related to the abilities to be acquired. In this context, textbook development is a mandate that a lecturer must complete to promote the availability of study materials that agree with the course's learning outcomes.

The CCU course discusses cultural differences in the form of foreign cultures in everyday life or researching customs between countries to develop an awareness of cultural variations and habits from two or more countries. The issue is that the teaching and learning process of the CCU course at the English Literature Study Program of the FCS Universitas Khairun has not been optimal in recent years. This is owing to some problems such as a shortage of facilities and locations for CCU course practice and a lack of instruments to provide material to meet learning objectives. It is also challenging for lecturers to discover texts that fit the English Literature Study Program curriculum for the CCU course. As a result, the lecturers very often merely created PowerPoint

slides as a learning material handout. So yet, no textbooks have been prepared by CCU course lecturers at the FCS Universitas Khairun's English Literature Study Program.

Given the factors stated above, the purpose of this research is to create a technology-based CCU textbook that is appropriate for students. It is intended that the contents in the CCU textbook that are developed align with the curriculum and SLP of the CCU course. Aside from that, the CCU textbook to be developed is simple and engaging to read through to meet learning objectives as effectively as possible. Therefore, research on the textbook development for the CCU course is crucial to meet students' needs for learning resources to support their learning of the course.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) Course Materials

The four skills of English—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—as well as life skills that support efficient communication are all necessary for becoming proficient in the language as a second or foreign language. Given the interdependence of language and culture, teaching and learning a language will involve the cultures of its speakers. Teachers of languages must learn how to communicate with people from other cultures, that is, Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) (Sunardi Y, 2019). Sunardi (2019) refers to CCU as the fundamental capacity to identify, comprehend, and respond to individuals and circumstances that are susceptible to misinterpretation because of cultural differences. In addition, Ratnasari (2019) defines CCU as the ability to detect cultural differences, interpret them correctly, and respond appropriately while communicating with people from different societies. Shock, irritation, and tension can result from cultural differences. Therefore, students must understand CCU to lessen or completely eradicate such problems.

Cross-cultural understanding may cover themes such as Eastern and Western cultures (Kolly-Shamne & Patapas, 2022; Lowe & Rod, 2020), as well as stereotypes about gender, age, economic status, race, ethnicity, and religion (Fiske, 2017). Nirwana & Darmadali (2021) discovered that teaching religious moderation values through a CCU course enhanced students' awareness, comprehension, and values. Meanwhile, the internet, YouTube videos, digital storytelling, and social media are rich sources of materials that can be used for the teaching and learning of the CCU course. The Internet is a highly effective learning tool for fostering cross-cultural understanding (Eliawati, 2019). The utilization of YouTube can foster cross-cultural understanding and exchange by creating video-pal relationships with students from other cultural backgrounds. Through digital exchanges, teachers and students can interact with colleagues elsewhere and cultivate an international perspective (Bloom & Johnston, 2022). Digital storytelling can be used effectively in classroom settings to educate cross-cultural understanding for example, by asking each group of students to create digital stories with its theme, such as American Values, Stereotypes, Male and Female Relationships, Nonverbal Communication, and Culture Shock (Istiqomah, 2017). Applying social media to the process of learning foreign languages has the potential to improve students' motivation and confidence in their ability to study, as well as their language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding. Notwithstanding the advantages of this social media, there are still barriers to its successful implementation, primarily associated with the issue of learners' differing ability levels, the use of incompatible mobile devices, and inappropriate information on social media platforms (Athariq, Fitri, & Darmawangsa, 2023).

2.2 Teaching and Learning Methods of the CCU Course

Several methods have been used in teaching and learning the CCU course, including project-based learning. The use of project-based learning promoted cooperation, questioning, reflecting, and presenting—all of which were effective in the classroom and students enjoyed and benefited greatly from the class (Rokhayati, 2019). Project-based learning encourages students' creativity and independence in learning (Istikharoh & Nurhayati, 2023). Project-based learning is an active learning methodology that allows students to promote their engagement, improve learning outcomes attainment, and boost course success (Morais, Ferreira, & Veloso, 2021). This could be because active learning practices encourage student participation and critical thinking, leading to more effective classroom management (Pratama, 2017).

2.3. Assessment of the CCU Course

Some techniques of assessment can be used in the CCU course. These include the use of paper writing, a portfolio, oral presentation, group discussion, projects, conferences, peer-and tests. In her study, Garcia (2014) requested her students to finish the task by writing two short papers, one explaining an outsider situation and the second observing a newcomer to a group where that person is an insider. The study of the publications shows how the Outsider/Insider assignment might increase learning across various dimensions. In addition, a portfolio can be used as one of the CCU assessments because a portfolio allows a teacher to do a thorough assessment of each student (Rokhayati, 2020). Other assessment techniques are used to evaluate students' cross-cultural competency. By putting suggested assessment techniques (written assignments, oral presentations, group discussions, cultural projects. teacher-student conferences, peer feedback, and self-reflection) into practice and establishing explicit assessment criteria, teachers can improve the standard of EFL teaching and learning and better equip students to communicate effectively in a variety

of cultural contexts (Rahmawati, 2023). Iftanti (2018) has demonstrated that the use of two assessment models—the teacher-made test and the student-self test—helps students become more autonomous learners and enhances their cross-cultural competency.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A development research design was employed in this study. It was adapted from Plomp (2013) and consists of three phases, as follows: 1). Phase of preliminary analysis (preliminary research); 2). Phase of development or prototyping; and 3). Phase of assessment. The main goal of this development research design was to create a textbook for the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course, for which there had previously been no university-issued teaching resources or handbooks. This textbook is intended to address current issues in the course.

This article focuses on the first phase of the development research design which is preliminary research. Several tasks can be completed during this preliminary research phase, including examining needs and conditions, reading literature, and building a conceptual or theoretical framework for the study (Plomp, 2013). This article particularly presents the results of a need analysis to identify students' needs for teaching materials, learning methods, and assessment. A survey with nine-item questionnaires via Google form was used to collect data, involving forty-three students in the sixth semester at the English Literature Study Program of Universitas Khairun. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

41. Students Need of Technology Integrated Teaching Materials

Questionnaire data from sixth-semester English Literature Study Program students who took CCU courses revealed that of the 43 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 16 respondents (37.21%) strongly agreed, and 26 respondents (60.47%) agreed that CCU courses are made into technology-based textbooks. Only one respondent (2.33%) said there was no need to create new technology-based textbooks.
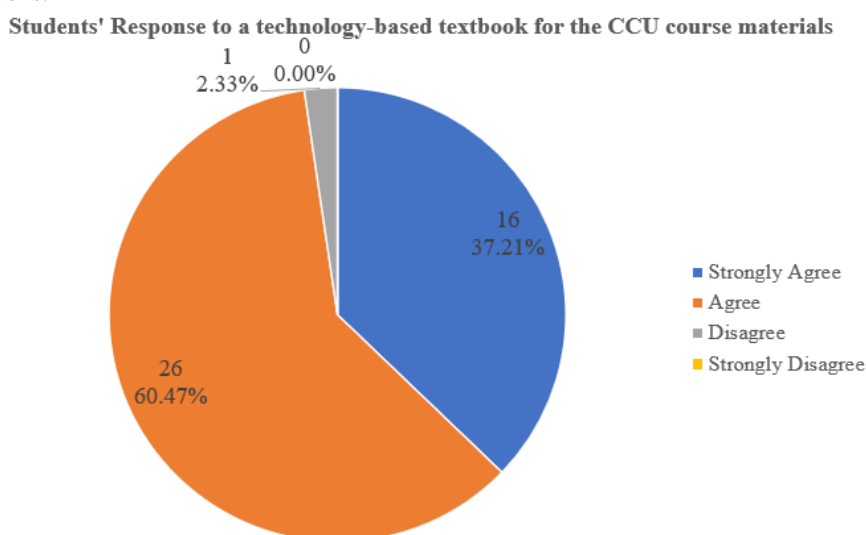

Chart 1. Students' response to a technology-based textbook for the CCU course material

This result corroborates the findings of Demir and Tavil (2021) and Nopiyanti, Asib, and Tarjana (2019). Demir et.al (2021) reported that the majority of respondents were motivated to use technology-based resources in the classroom and favored them over textbook-based materials. Similarly, Nopiyanti et al (2019) discovered that most students and teachers had a positive opinion of using technology-based textbooks such as e-textbooks. They maintained, however, that e-textbook technology will not replace traditional paper textbooks in the future, but rather serve as a great complement to them.

The respondents who agreed that a technology-based textbook for the CCU course materials was necessary also said that, in addition to written text, they would prefer it if the materials came from online articles (30 respondents or 69.77%), YouTube videos (22 respondents or 51.16%), and links to online newspapers in English (nine respondents or 20.93%). Only three respondents (6.98%) preferred content that included links to Indonesian online publications, while one respondent (2.33%) preferred content from other sources, such as movies. The inclusion of YouTube in the CCU course relates to
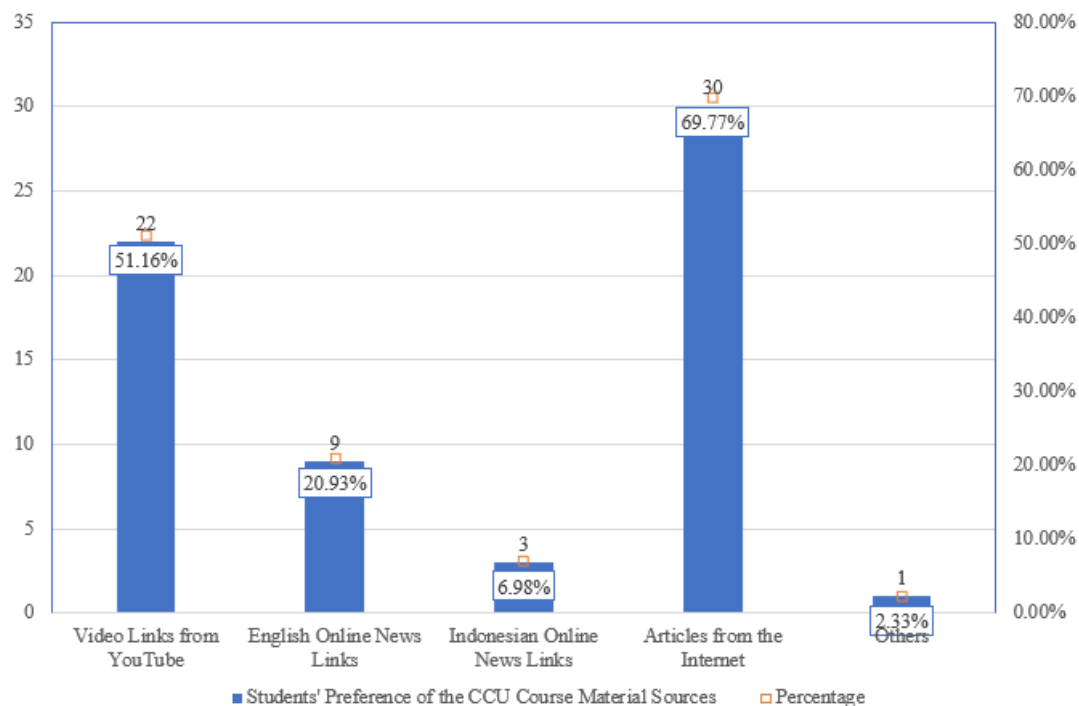
Chart 2. Students' Preference of the CCU Course Material Sources

The participants also reached a consensus regarding the topics covered in the semester learning plan for the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course. The topics covered include the definition of culture, culture from different perspectives, culture, and its elements, the relationship between language and culture, cultural diversity and communication, high and low cultural context, proxemics, chronemics, forms and types of stereotyping and its examples, friendship and table manners, cultural conflicts, and cultural shocks. These topics to a great extent in line with Fiske's (2017) and Kolly-Shamne & Patapas' (2022) thoughts. In addition to the CCU course materials outlined in the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), the respondents requested more content on topics including Islamic culture, distinct national cultures, cultural advancement, and lifestyle. The necessity to incorporate Islamic culture in the CCU course is consistent with the findings of Nirwana & Darmadali (2021), who demonstrated that teaching religious moderation principles—including Islamic culture—through a CCU course improved students' values, awareness, and comprehension.

4.2 Students' Needs of Using Student-Centred Learning Methods

In response to a survey asking what kinds of learning activities they would like to see included in technology-based textbooks for the CCU course, the following responses were given: 23 respondents (53.49%) desired a discussion; 21 respondents (48.84%) desired a lecturer explanation; 19 (44.19%) desired group presentations; and 14 (32.56%) required individual assignment activities. In the meantime, only seven respondents (16.28%) and two respondents (4.65%) wished to participate in group assignment activities and other activities. The 'other' activities in question include fieldwork and the use of quizzes to break up the repetitive lectures given by lecturers at every meeting. Discussions, group presentations, and group assignments are common activities in project-based learning and active learning, and they align with the following findings: Rokhayati (2019) to encourage collaboration, questioning, reflection, and presentation; Istikharoh & Nurhayati (2023) to encourage students' creativity and independence in learning, Morais et al. (2021) to increase student engagement, improve learning outcomes attainment, and boost course success; and Pratama (2017) to increase students' participation and critical thinking.
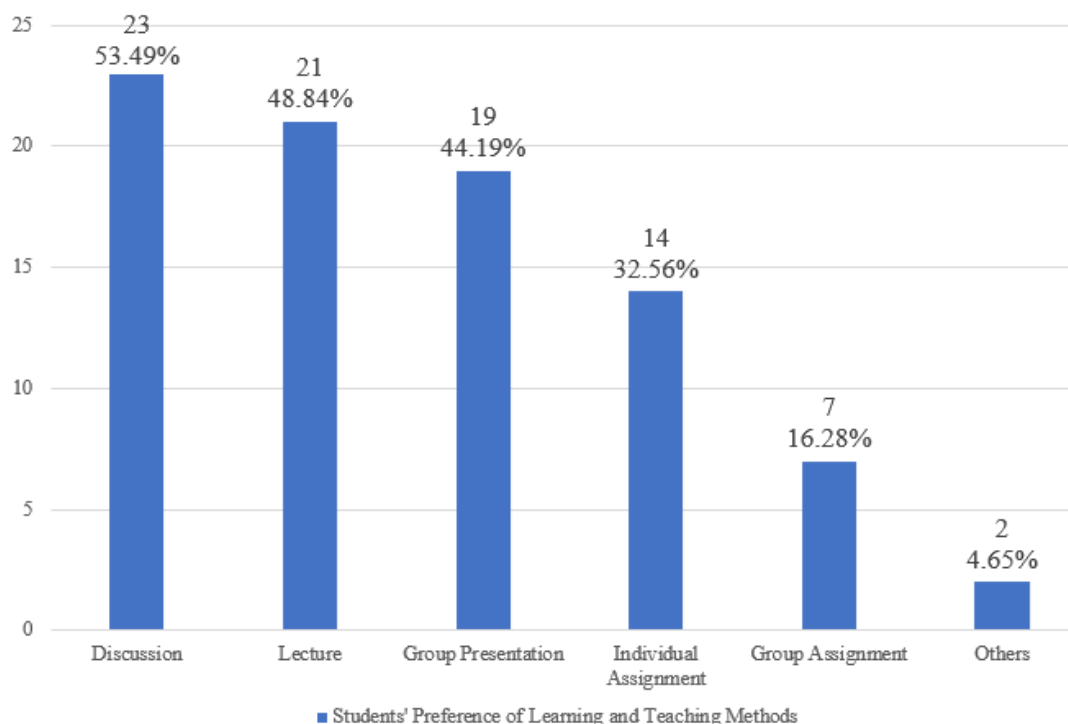
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Chart 3. Students' Preference of Learning and Teaching Methods

4.3 Needs of a Variety of Assessment Methods

Concerning the administration of the Mid-Semester and Final Semester Exams, participants indicated that they preferred alternative forms of exams to the written one, which is still preferred by 24 respondents (58.5). These forms of the exams included creating projects (such as videos on subjects that appeal to 21 respondents (51.2%), writing papers on subjects (13 respondents or 31.7%), and oral exams, which were also favored by five respondents (12.2%).
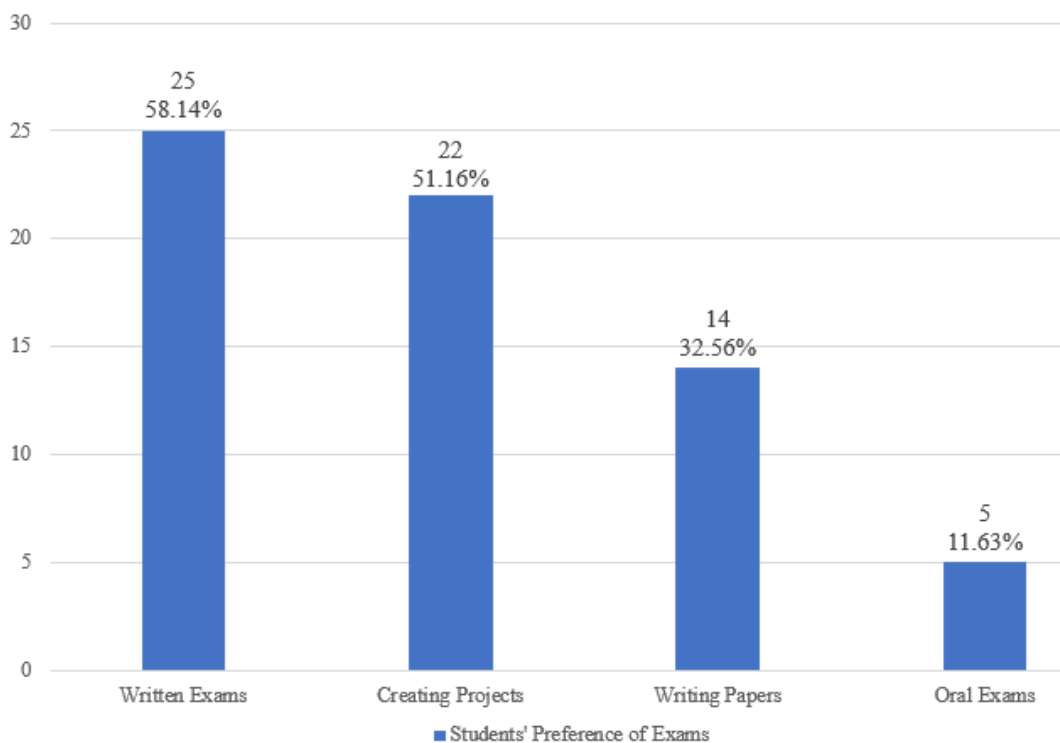

Chart 4. Students' Preference of Exams

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These results are consistent with those reported by Rahmawati (2023) and Iftanti (2018). Written assignments, including writing papers, and oral exams, such as oral presentations, and projects, have been shown to increase the quality of EFL teaching and learning and better prepare students to communicate successfully in diverse cultural contexts (Rahmawati, 2023). Written exams (both teacher-created tests and student-created tests) assist students become more autonomous learners and improve their cross-cultural competency (Iftanti, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) is one of the obligatory courses required of all six-semester students at the English Literature Study Program of Khairun University. This course is designed to provide the students with an awareness of cross-cultural concepts. The problem is that the teaching and learning process of the CCU course in the English Literature Study Program has not been optimal in recent years. One of the reasons is a lack of teaching material to meet learning objectives. This research aims to create technology-based CCU teaching materials that are appropriate for students. It is intended that the contents in the CCU textbook or module that are developed will align with the curriculum and Semester Learning Plan (SLP) of the CCU course. Need analysis to identify students' needs for teaching materials, learning methods, and assessment. Preliminary research as part of three phases of development research design was carried out. A need analysis with questionnaires via Google form was used to collect data, involving forty-three students in the sixth semester at the English Literature Study Program of Universitas Khairun. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. It was found that more than 97% of 43 students strongly agreed and agreed that a technology-based textbook for the CCU course should made available. In addition to written text, the textbook of the CUU course should contain materials from online articles, YouTube videos, links to online newspapers in English, and links to Indonesian online publications. It was also found that the learning activities reflected in the CCU course should include a discussion, a lecturer explanation, group presentations, individual assignment activities, and group assignment activities.

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