

STUDENTS PERCEPTION TOWARD CROSS CULTURE UNDERSTANDING THOROUH DIGITAL LITERACY ON STUDENTS ENGLISH DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITAS HKBP NOMMENSEN PEMATANGSIANTAR

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Diterima: 02 Februari 2026 Direvisi: 21 Februari 2026 Disetujui: 14 Maret 2026 Tersedia Daring: 30 April 2026 Keywords: Cross Culture Understanding; Perception; Literacy	<i>This research aims at strengthening students' character in Cross Culture Understanding thorough digital literacy at the fifth semester of Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. The methodology of this research uses mix method design: Qualitative and Quantitative one. The participant of the research is the fifth semester of English Department of Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Group P1A1 and P1A2. The researcher assumes that students who possess strong digital literacy skills are better equipped to engage with diverse perspectives and develop their characters or empathy towards others. This proposal seeks to explore these relationships further, providing insights into how educational institutions can better support their students in these areas. This instrument of this Research is Questioners, and the documentation. The researcher will analyze the data from the questioners quantitatively by using SPSS 23 and qualitatively by descriptive documentation. This Research will produce as a book Cross Culture Understanding subject.</i>
	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Pemahaman; Persepsi; dan Literasi Lintas Budaya	Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat karakter mahasiswa dalam Pemahaman Lintas Budaya melalui literasi digital pada semester lima Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Metodologi penelitian ini menggunakan desain metode campuran: Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester lima Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Kelompok P1A1 dan P1A2. Peneliti berasumsi bahwa mahasiswa yang memiliki keterampilan literasi digital yang kuat lebih siap untuk berinteraksi dengan beragam perspektif dan mengembangkan karakter atau empati mereka terhadap orang lain. Proposal ini berupaya untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan ini lebih lanjut, memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana lembaga pendidikan dapat lebih baik mendukung mahasiswanya di bidang ini. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah kuesioner dan dokumentasi. Peneliti akan menganalisis data dari kuesioner secara kuantitatif dengan menggunakan SPSS 23 dan secara kualitatif dengan dokumentasi deskriptif. Penelitian ini akan menghasilkan buku Pemahaman Lintas Budaya.

1. Introduction

The significance of character education in students cannot be overstated, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world. Character education is pivotal in shaping students into responsible, ethical individuals who can navigate the complexities of modern society (Hsu et al., 2019). According to a study by Holins Lickona (Priyono & Moin, 2020) character education fosters traits such as respect, responsibility, and empathy, which are essential for effective citizenship.

Following Stern (Sulistri et al., 2020) perception is a central part of human individuality which may encompass effective, behavioral and cognitive responses. Perception can be said as a final thought of someone about something. He further classifies perception in language learning into three types, namely:

- a. Perception towards the community and people who speak the same language.
- b. Perception towards languages and language learning in general.
- c. Perception towards the community and language learning concerned.
- d. It is the first type, i.e. perception towards the community and people who speak the same language which is relevant to this study, as culture belongs to a group of people (community) and they certainly speak the same language.

Before relating culture and language teaching, it is important to recall the idea of culture first. Following Duranti (Li & Meyer - Cirkel, 2021) culture is something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication. From an anthropologists' viewpoint, the contents of culture can be summarized as follows (Kumar et al., 2025):

- a. The ways in which people have organized their experience of the real world so as to give it structure as a phenomenal world of forms, their percepts and concepts.
- b. The whole way of life of a people or group which include all the social practices that bond a group of people together and distinguish them from others (Montgomery and Reid- Thomas, 1994)

With regard to the aforementioned concepts, it is obvious that to internalize a particular culture, one needs to develop his communicative competence in the first place. He needs to interact with other people in the community so as to inform and be informed about daily social practices and customs that occur in his social environment (Soepriyanti et al., 2022). By exploring his own culture, i.e. by discussing, the values, expectations, traditions, customs and rituals, he automatically takes part in and is ready to reflect upon the values, expectations and traditions of others (Langset et al., 2018). At the early stage of education, young learners should be given the opportunity to enjoy certain activities that are part of their own tradition, such as national sports, social festivities, rituals, music, dances, etc. before starting to explore other cultures. As a matter of fact, this is the manifestation of passing down the elements of culture to the next generation as culture is known to be something inherited and learned (Arsih et al., 2023).

Some views on the significance of culture in language learning have been proposed as follows:

- a. To help students develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours.
- b. To help students develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
- c. To help students become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture.
- d. To help students develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture.
- e. To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture, and to
- f. To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards people (Loh & Sun, 2021).

To this extent, it can be concluded that the goal of teaching culture is to increase students' awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target culture and their own so as to help them make comparisons among cultures. Furthermore, students in a foreign language learning context need to be introduced to the basic culture of the target language so that they can use it appropriately. For instance, by knowing the English culture, Indonesian learners will be able to use a proper small talk to a stranger he or she meets at the train station. He or she will not ask a taboo or personal question, such as "How old are you?", "Are you married?", "How much is your salary?". On the other hand, an American learning Indonesian for the first time will not resent a question, such as "Anda mau pergi ke mama?", "Anda dari mama?", "Mari mampir dulu." which is only meant for a small talk in order to be polite and friendly to someone you know. One of the main objectives of Cross Cultural Understanding class at the Faculty of Language and Arts is to equip students with

Cross-cultural understanding is another critical component of education today. It refers to the ability to comprehend and appreciate cultural differences, which is vital in a globalized environment. The importance of this understanding is underscored by the work of Deardorff (Fathullah et al., 2023) who suggests that cross-cultural competence is essential for effective communication and collaboration in multicultural settings. As students engage with peers from diverse backgrounds, the ability to navigate these interactions becomes increasingly important, influencing their social dynamics and academic success.

In the 21st century, digitalization has become the main driver of change in various aspects of human life, including the world of education. In modern educational management practices, digitalization has a tremendous (Agustini et al., 2020). This phenomenon is interesting to study in depth because it plays an important role in the development of information and communication technology (ICT), which is increasingly changing the way education is managed, taught and accessed. Digitalization has changed the educational landscape, especially in terms of the language used in learning. With the existence of digital learning platforms, the language of teaching can become more global

(Karam, 2018). English, as the dominant language in the digital world, is often used in online education contexts. This can affect understanding and mastery of local languages in the digital educational process. For example, many universities offer programs in English to attract international students, so local languages may be marginalized.

Based on the observations by researchers, the problem that has occurred are: 1. Dependence on Technology, The young people/students tends to rely heavily on technology, especially smartphones and social media. They tend to have difficulty separating themselves from their screens, which can have a negative impact on mental and physical health. 2. Apathy Tendency, based on my observation many students less apathy to their social in their surroundings. 3. Lack of Interpersonal Skills (Aditama et al., 2022). Communication skills and social skills developed through face-to-face interactions tend to be lacking in students in this era, because they interact more often via social media. 4. Difficult to Face Criticism Due to easy access to praise and recognition on social media, some students tend to find it difficult to accept criticism constructively. 6. Impatient. The instant culture in terms of technology and entertainment makes some students impatient in waiting or working towards long-term goals. 7. Doesn't have a high tolerance (Tri et al., 2018).

To overcome the problems, the exploration of the relationship between digital literacy and cross-cultural understanding raises several pertinent research questions. Firstly, how does digital literacy influence students' understanding of diverse cultures? This question seeks to investigate the extent to which students' skills in navigating digital platforms affect their ability to engage with and appreciate cultural differences. Previous research has shown that students with higher digital literacy are more likely to participate in online discussions about global issues, thereby enhancing their cultural awareness (Yolcu & Sari, 2018).

Secondly, what character traits are essential for effective cross-cultural interactions? Understanding the specific character traits that facilitate positive intercultural communication is crucial for developing targeted educational interventions. Traits such as empathy, open-mindedness, and adaptability are often cited as vital for successful cross-cultural interactions (Hasana et al., 2023). Identifying these traits within the context of digital interactions will provide valuable insights into how character education can be integrated with digital literacy training (Tri et al., 2018).

Understanding these perceptions will be essential for designing engaging and relevant educational experiences that resonate with students' interests and needs. The result of the research will give insight of good Cross Culture Understanding to students in this era especially for Generation Z to have a broader mindset of heterogeneity to be united in diversity (Aditama et al., 2022).

This research output is expected to be the grounding theory of the further study of students' character development as stated in the diagram below:

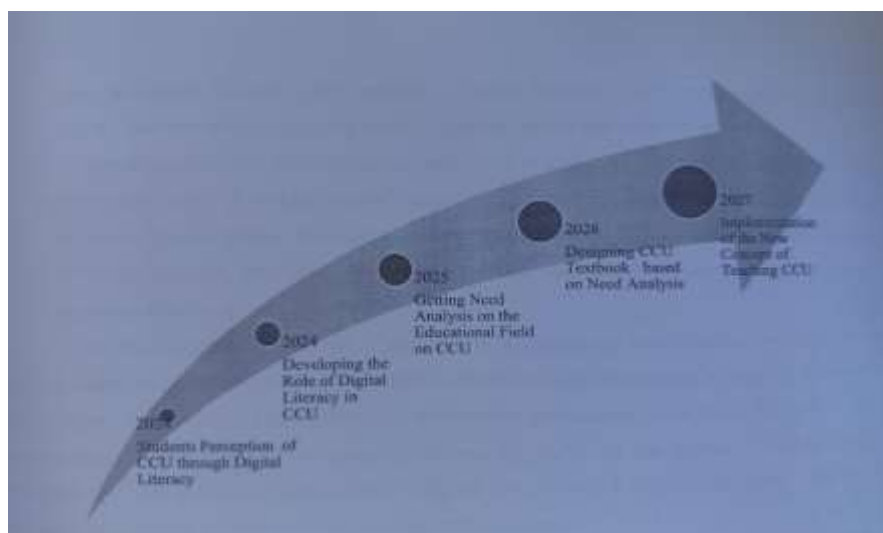


Figure 1. Research Road Map of Five Years Ahead

2. METHODS

The methodology of research will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining both *qualitative and quantitative* methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between students' character, cross-cultural understanding, and digital literacy. This design allows for the triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings, such as:

1. Qualitative

Qualitative methods are a collection of methods to analyze and understand more deeply the meaning of several individuals or groups considered as humanitarian problems or social problems Creswell (2015). This qualitative research uses exploratory research methods. Exploration is a type of initial research of a very broad nature. In exploratory research it is very important because it will produce a strong foundation for further research. Yusuf, (Muhammadiyah et al., 2022) stated method is applying survey; questionnaire is shared to the students.

2. Quantitative data will be collected through surveys and questionnaires, which will enable the measurement of students' digital literacy levels, character traits, and their understanding of cross-cultural issues. Qualitative data will be gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, providing deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions regarding these concepts.

The mixed-methods approach is particularly advantageous in educational research, as it accommodates the complexity of human behavior and the multifaceted nature of learning. Creswell (2014) argues that combining qualitative and quantitative methods can yield richer data and a more nuanced understanding of the research problem. By employing this approach, the study aims to capture not only the measurable aspects of digital literacy and character education but also the subjective experiences of students as they navigate these domains (Hayati & Susatya, 2020).

In terms of participant selection, the study will focus on the fifth semester students of English department of Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematang Siantar, with the population is 70 students which is divided in two classes. The selection criteria will

include students from diverse academic disciplines to ensure a representative sample. This diversity is vital, as different fields of study may influence students' engagement with digital tools and their understanding of cultural issues (Sasmita et al., 2018). The sample size will be determined based on statistical power analysis to ensure that the findings are generalizable to the broader student population. Data collection techniques will involve the administration of structured surveys to assess students' digital literacy and character traits, alongside semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences in more depth

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was mainly to discover students' perception on CCU through Digital Literacy course. It was explained that language and culture are two inseparable elements in language learning (Brooks, 1968) Therefore CCU is considered a vital subject to be taught at the Faculty of Language and Arts. However, up to the time this study was conducted, there was no feedback nor evaluation from the students' side. Their perception on this course was badly needed in order to review it and more importantly to improve its weaknesses as well as to maintain its strengths. The data for this study were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The following were the presentation and interpretation of the data obtained from the questionnaires after being analyzed using SPSS 24 (Mahendra et al., 2022).

Table 1. The Importance of CCU's General Instructional Objectives

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
A.1	21	3.00	4.00	3.6190	.49761
A.2	21	3.00	4.00	3.5714	.50709

The first general objective of CCU is to equip students with some knowledge about the cultures of some English-speaking countries and compare them with that of Indonesian in order to gain benefits from the positive components. From the table above, it can be seen tha the Mean score is 3.61 which indicates that the respondents "fully agree" with this objective. The Standard Deviation score is 0.49 showing a small dispersion of the answers. The Minimum and Maximum scores only range from 3 to 4 meaning the lowest choice is 3 which means 'agree'.

The second objective is to enable students to know and apply the cultures of some English speaking countries properly in the appropriate contexts. Towards this objective, the average respondents also give a favourable response as reflected by the Mean score 3.57 meaning "fully agree", the small dispersion of the Standard Deviation score 0.50 and the Minimum and Maximum scores 3 and 4.

Table 2. The Importance of Table Manner Class Given in CCU

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
C	21	3.00	4.00	3.5714	.50709

Table Manner is a session in this course which requires students to practice applying the proper etiquette in having luncheon and dinner with other people in formal situations. They were first given the theory by a tutor at a hotel before practicing the dining etiquette. Towards this particular class, they consider it 'very important' as indicated by the Mean score 3.57, the low score of Standard Deviation 0.50 and the Minimum and Maximum scores 3 and 4. Based on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that all students not only regard this session as important but they also enjoy the opportunity to learn table manner which is quite a new experience for them as well as having dinner in a four- star hote (Sakti et al., 2024)l.

Table 3. The Importance of the Materials Given in CCU

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
B	21	3.00	4.00	3.5238	.51177

Being asked the importance of the materials given in this course, the majority of the students consider them "important". This can be seen from the Mean score 3.52, the low score of Standard Deviation, 0.51 and the Minimum and Maximum scores 3 and 4 meaning the responses only range from 'agree' to 'fully agree'.

Table 4. The Importance of Table Manner Class Given in CCU

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
C	21	3.00	4.00	3.5714	.50709

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Table 4. Components of British English Which Help Respondents Learn English Better

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
H.1.a	21	2.00	4.00	3.3333	.73030
H.1.b	21	3.00	4.00	3.3333	.48305
H.1.c	21	2.00	4.00	3.2381	.53896
H.1.d	21	2.00	4.00	3.2857	.64365
H.1.e	21	3.00	4.00	3.5714	.50709
H.1.f	21	3.00	4.00	3.5238	.51177

From the above table, it can be seen that "Knowledge on how to use the language" occupies the highest Mean score, i.e. 3.57 followed by "How to socialize with British people properly" with the Mean score 3.52. Pronunciation and Vocabulary gain the same scores, 3.33 while Style comes next with 3.28. The least chosen component is Structure with the Mean score 3.23

Table 5. Components of Cross Culture Understanding Which Help Respondents enhance Students English Literacy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
H.2.a	21	2.00	4.00	3.3810	.58959
H.2.b	21	3.00	4.00	3.4286	.50709
H.2.c	21	3.00	4.00	3.3333	.48305
H.2.d	21	2.00	4.00	3.3810	.58959
H.2.e	21	3.00	4.00	3.6190	.49761
H.2.f	21	3.00	4.00	3.5238	.51177

Again, “Knowledge on how to use the language ”and “How to Socialize with American & Canadian English occupy the first and second ranks as shown by the Mean scores 3.61 and 3.52. The next component chosen is Vocabulary with the Mean score 3.42 . The next components are Pronunciation and Style which earn exactly the same scores, 3.38. Similar to the previous result, Structure gets the lowest Mean score 3.33

Table 6. Problems in Joining CCU Course

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I.1	21	2.00	4.00	2.2857	.56061
I.2	21	1.00	3.00	2.3810	.66904
I.3	21	1.00	3.00	1.9524	.80475
I.4	21	1.00	2.00	1.1429	.35857
I.5	21	1.00	3.00	1.6190	.74001
I.6	21	1.00	3.00	1.9048	.62488
I.7	21	1.00	4.00	2.4762	.98077
I.8	21	1.00	3.00	1.5714	.59761
I.9	21	1.00	4.00	1.7143	.78376

The above table shows problems faced by the respondents in taking CCU course. The first problem is Lack of social interaction with Westerners as indicated by the Mean score 2.47 followed by Lack of knowledge about Western cultures with the Mean score 2.38. The third problem is the inability to understand the English texts and module. Problem 4 is connected with the first two above, i.e. Lack of knowledge about English speaking cultures with the Mean score 1.95 (Lickona, 2013). The respondents also admitted that they were not well informed about sources related to a particular topic. This is indicated by the Mean score 1.90. Another interesting fact is the respondents' confession that they were often not serious in doing the assignments or projects in this course. This can be seen from the Mean score 1.71. Still, another confession that they made was they often felt reluctant to find sources related to the topic being studied. The Mean score is 1.61. The last problem was the lack of exposure to Western cultures in the forms of videos, slides and pictures as shown by the Mean score 1.14

Table 6. Ways To Prepare Final Projects

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
J.1	21	1.00	4.00	2.3810	1.02353
J.2	21	1.00	4.00	3.1429	.91026
J.3	21	2.00	4.00	3.0476	.86465
J.4	21	1.00	4.00	2.9048	.88909

As can be seen from the above table, the order of preparation that the respondents did to prepare their Final Projects were as follows : First, They prepared the scripts (Mean score 3.14) and then the Costumes, make up , decoration, musical background and other stuffs needed for the performances (Mean score 3.04). The next step was to practice with friends in the groups (Mean score 2.90) while the least thing they did was to find their own topic and searched for the sources from the internet. This is understandable as the topics were assigned by the lecturer and they had to draw lots in order to get one for their group.

In addition to questions asked in the questionnaires and interviews to obtain data for this study, some valuable suggestions are given by the students. They are as follows : The existing materials, activities and tasks in CCU should be kept as they are now except for Final Projects that have to be reconsidered. Table Manner class in the future should be carried out not only in one particular hotel. They even suggest that this class should be opened not only for CCU takers but also for FLA students of different batches who are interested in it (Curren et al., 2024). There should be more exposures to the related cultures taught in CCU by inviting Western guest speakers of the related countries. It would be best if students can be given a chance to interact with international students inside or outside campus (Tohri et al., 2022). As for further related research, it is recommendable to investigate whether or not to include other cultures, such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese apart from the existing Western cultures with one exception , i.e. Singaporean culture , bearing in mind that nowadays more and more interactions with those people take place in our country (Tanis, 2023). It is also a great idea to hold festivals or parades presenting different cultural aspects of the related countries as a part of CCU project, for example music and arts, food, handicrafts, etc. Such events can be carried out at the university level so that not just FLA students but other university members can learn and enjoy other cultures as well

4. CONCLUSION

The researcher assumes that students who possess strong digital literacy skills are better equipped to engage with diverse perspectives and develop their characters or empathy towards others. This proposal seeks to explore these relationships further, providing insights into how educational institutions can better support their students in these areas. This instrument of this Research is Questioners, and the documentation. The researcher will analyze the data from the questioners quantitatively by using SPSS 23 and qualitatively by descriptive documentation. This Research will produce as a book Cross Culture Understanding subject

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