DEVELOPING CCU INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS INTEGRATED WITH LOCAL CULTURES IN IMPROVING EFL LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: December 2024 Revised: February 2025 Published: April 2025 **Keywords** Cross cultural understanding; Materials development; Local cultures; Communicative competences; English language teaching;	Cross-cultural understanding (CCU) is increasingly recognized as a crucial element in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also equips learners with the ability to navigate cultural nuances and social contexts. In response to this need, the current study developed instructional materials that integrate local cultural elements into CCU courses, aiming to improve EFL learners' communicative competences. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) approach, the study followed three stages: define, design, and develop. The resulting product was a prototype of instructional materials tailored to teach CCU effectively. The materials underwent rigorous quality assessments through expert validation and field testing in English classes. The findings revealed that the instructional materials are valid and appropriate for teaching CCU, demonstrating a significant positive impact on learners' communicative competences. Specifically, the integration of local cultural contexts fostered a deeper understanding of both target language use and cross-cultural interaction, bridging gaps between learners' cultural frameworks and English-communication contexts. The implication of this study underscores the importance of incorporating local cultural elements in CCU courses, highlighting that such integration not only contextualizes language learning but also enhances learners' engagement and adaptability in real-world communication. By promoting culturally responsive teaching, these materials provide a model for developing context-sensitive EFL curricula that address global communication demands while preserving local cultural identity.

INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are intricately linked, with the study of one inevitably leading to insights about the other. Language learning is not just about acquiring linguistic structures; it is also about understanding the cultural contexts in which a language operates (Bua & Saputra, 2023). Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU), therefore, becomes an essential component of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). By enabling learners to grasp cultural differences and navigate diverse social contexts, CCU helps prevent miscommunication, a common challenge among students unfamiliar with foreign cultural norms. CCU involves identifying cultural differences, analyzing information appropriately, and responding effectively in intercultural interactions (Ratnasari, 2019), making it a key skill for global communication.

Developing CCU materials that integrate local cultural contexts is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a means of preserving local wisdom. Localized CCU materials provide students with the dual ability to appreciate their own cultural heritage while effectively engaging with global cultures. This approach makes learning more meaningful and culturally relevant (Saphira, 2022). Integrating local wisdom also deepens students' understanding of their cultural roots, fostering a sense of pride and identity while enhancing their intercultural competence (Ummah, 2019). Evidence from studies, such as the integration of local culture in teaching reading comprehension through picture series, has shown significant improvements in student outcomes (Pebriantika & Aristia, 2021). These findings highlight the efficacy of incorporating local culture into EFL instruction and its potential to address gaps in communicative competence.

In the specific context of CCU, comparing local and Western cultural norms offers a practical way to foster cultural awareness and reduce stereotypes. Presenting side-by-side comparisons helps students understand key differences, emphasizing both respect and adaptability. This method ensures learners maintain a balanced perspective, avoiding biases or misconceptions about either culture (Pratiwi, 2022). For instance, local customs such as Javanese politeness strategies can be contrasted with Western conversational norms, helping students recognize cultural variations while maintaining respect for both. Such comparisons not only enhance intercultural communication skills but also contribute to preserving cultural identity.

Despite its importance, the availability of CCU materials tailored to local cultures remains limited. Existing studies highlight efforts such as using cultural approaches to prepare students for international communication (Kustati et al., 2023), comparing English cultural values with Islamic values (Nafa et al., 2023; Irawan & Haerazi, 2021), and analyzing CCU needs for tourism students. However, these efforts often lack a specific focus on local culture, leaving a gap in instructional resources that address students' immediate cultural and linguistic contexts. At Cordova University, for instance, CCU is a required course, yet students often face difficulties in applying cultural knowledge during English conversations. They tend to unconsciously adhere to local cultural habits that may conflict with the norms of other cultures, leading to unintended breaches of etiquette. This challenge stems largely from the absence of localized CCU materials that address these specific needs.

The scarcity of locally adapted CCU materials at Cordova University reflects a broader issue in EFL instruction. Most available resources emphasize Western cultural norms, which, while valuable, do not address the diverse backgrounds and needs of Indonesian students. Preliminary findings reveal that existing CCU textbooks often fail to engage learners or connect with their lived experiences. Moreover, no significant updates to the CCU curriculum have been made at Cordova University in the past five years, further compounding the relevance gap. This situation underscores the urgency of developing teaching materials that align with students' cultural contexts and learning goals. Addressing this gap could enhance students' ability to apply cross-cultural understanding in practical scenarios, such as workplace interactions, academic exchanges, or travel.

The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on developing CCU instructional materials that are explicitly grounded in local cultural contexts. Unlike existing resources, these materials integrate elements of Indonesian culture, providing students with culturally relevant content that bridges the gap between local traditions and global communication demands. By adopting a Research and Development (R&D) approach, the study systematically defines, designs, and develops instructional materials tailored to the needs of EFL learners at Cordova University. The materials are validated through expert review and field-tested in classroom settings, ensuring their effectiveness and practical applicability. The integration of local culture not only enriches the learning experience but also fosters a

balanced cultural perspective, equipping students to navigate intercultural interactions with confidence and respect.

The study's findings highlight the positive impact of localized CCU materials on students' communicative competence. Incorporating local cultural elements into the curriculum enables students to engage with English not merely as a foreign language but as a tool for meaningful interaction in diverse contexts. For example, materials that explore traditional Indonesian values, such as collectivism and respect for elders, alongside Western norms of individualism and direct communication, prepare learners for a wide range of social situations. The field-testing phase revealed that these materials enhanced students' ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, reducing instances of miscommunication and fostering a more nuanced approach to intercultural interactions.

The implications of this study are significant for both EFL pedagogy and curriculum design. By demonstrating the value of integrating local culture into CCU instruction, the research provides a framework for developing context-sensitive materials that address learners' specific needs. This approach not only improves communicative competence but also promotes cultural preservation, aligning with broader educational goals of fostering global citizenship while maintaining local identity. The findings also call for greater collaboration among educators, researchers, and policymakers to ensure that CCU curricula are regularly updated to reflect evolving cultural and linguistic contexts. Expanding this localized approach to other institutions could transform EFL teaching, making it more inclusive, effective, and relevant to diverse learner populations.

Cross-cultural understanding is essential for developing EFL learners' communicative competence in an increasingly interconnected world. By addressing the gap in localized instructional materials, this study offers a novel approach to CCU instruction, blending local cultural elements with global communication demands. The development of these materials not only enhances students' intercultural competence but also contributes to their overall linguistic and social development. As EFL instruction continues to evolve, the integration of local wisdom into teaching practices will remain a cornerstone of effective, culturally responsive education. This study underscores the potential of such innovations to transform the landscape of EFL learning, paving the way for a more inclusive and impactful approach to language education.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

The present study utilizes a Research and Development (R&D) design, structured around the three stages of material development proposed by Lawhon (1976): Define, Design, and Develop. This approach ensures a systematic and iterative process of creating instructional materials, integrating theoretical insights with practical applications. In the Define stage, comprehensive activities were conducted to establish a strong foundation for material development. This included an extensive review of relevant literature to understand existing frameworks and best practices in cross-cultural understanding (CCU) education. The curriculum and syllabus for the CCU course were carefully analyzed to identify their alignment with learners' needs and the overarching objectives of enhancing communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Furthermore, an in-depth exploration of learners' characteristics, learning preferences, and specific difficulties encountered in cross-cultural courses was undertaken. These insights were crucial for identifying the gaps in current instructional resources and establishing the necessity for materials that address these challenges effectively.

The Design stage focused on the creation of a structured framework for the instructional materials. This involved developing a prototype draft that served as the initial

model for the teaching resources. The prototype was meticulously crafted to incorporate local cultural elements, ensuring relevance to learners' contexts while maintaining the principles of effective cross-cultural communication. Additionally, validity and evaluation sheets were designed to gather feedback from learners and experts, providing a mechanism for assessing the content's accuracy, usability, and impact. These tools facilitated a thorough review of the draft materials, enabling iterative refinements based on input from stakeholders.

In the Develop stage, the initial product was finalized through a rigorous process of validation and field testing. Expert validation was a key component of this phase, involving subject matter experts who assessed the content for its alignment with CCU objectives, cultural appropriateness, and pedagogical soundness. Their feedback informed modifications to ensure that the materials met high standards of quality and effectiveness. The field testing phase further evaluated the instructional materials in real classroom settings, employing an experimental approach with a pre-experimental design. This design enabled the researchers to measure the impact of the materials on learners' cross-cultural understanding and communicative competence before and after their implementation. By observing learners' interactions and collecting data through pre-tests and post-tests, the study gained valuable insights into the materials' effectiveness in addressing learners' needs and improving their skills.

The combination of these three stages—Define, Design, and Develop—provided a holistic approach to material development. Each stage was interconnected, ensuring that the final product was rooted in both theoretical rigor and practical relevance. The R&D methodology also allowed for adaptability, with feedback loops incorporated at each phase to refine and optimize the instructional materials. This systematic process resulted in a set of teaching resources that were not only validated by experts but also proven effective in field testing, offering a model for integrating local cultural elements into CCU instruction. The study's approach highlights the importance of a structured development process in creating instructional materials that are culturally relevant, pedagogically sound, and capable of addressing specific learner needs in EFL education.

Research Participants

The study involved 25 learners from the English Study Program at Cordova University and two validity experts from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. The learners were selected through random sampling to ensure a representative mix of participants. These learners, aged between 18 and 20 years, were in their fourth semester of study and possessed comparable levels of English competence, as determined by their academic records and proficiency tests conducted by the program. This homogeneity in language skills ensured that the study's outcomes were not influenced by varying proficiency levels, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the developed instructional materials.

The validity experts were chosen based on their specialized expertise to provide comprehensive feedback on the instructional materials. One expert specialized in EFL material development, offering insights into the structure, content, and relevance of the materials. The other expert, proficient in English language teaching, evaluated the pedagogical aspects of the resources, including their applicability in classroom settings and their alignment with effective teaching practices. These experts were drawn from different universities to ensure a diverse perspective and avoid potential bias that might arise from a single institutional viewpoint.

Inclusion criteria for participants required them to be actively enrolled in the English Study Program and have completed prerequisite courses in language and culture. Exclusion criteria ruled out students with advanced proficiency or prior experience abroad, as these factors could skew results. The study's sample size and demographic composition were

carefully designed to ensure reliability and validity, with special attention given to the diverse expertise of the evaluators.

Research Instruments

Data collection for this study involved the use of both questionnaires and speaking tests, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the learners' needs and communicative competences. The questionnaires, designed with a combination of open and closed-ended questions, were used to gather detailed insights into the learners' characteristics, their difficulties in understanding cross-cultural concepts, and their specific learning needs related to local cultures. The open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions, providing qualitative data, while the closed-ended questions facilitated the collection of measurable, quantitative data. This dual approach ensured a robust analysis of the factors influencing learners' engagement with cross-cultural understanding courses.

The speaking test was conducted to evaluate the communicative competences of the EFL learners. It assessed their ability to navigate cross-cultural contexts, focusing on fluency, appropriateness, and adaptability in English communication. The test scenarios were designed to simulate real-life situations that required the application of cross-cultural understanding, providing a practical measure of the learners' skills. Ethical considerations were central to the research process. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, methods, and potential uses of the findings before participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they fully understood their rights and the voluntary nature of their involvement. To maintain confidentiality, participant data was anonymized during analysis and reporting, with identifiers replaced by codes. Secure storage of data was implemented to prevent unauthorized access, and all procedures adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, ensuring the integrity of the research process.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative components, offering a comprehensive understanding of the instructional materials' impact and the learners' experiences. The qualitative data were derived from questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The questionnaires captured learners' perceptions of the instructional materials that integrated local cultural elements, while the interviews provided deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives. These qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, involving the systematic selection, organization, and interpretation of patterns and themes within the data. This approach ensured that the learners' voices were adequately represented and that nuanced insights were extracted.

For the quantitative data, the results of the questionnaires and the speaking tests were subjected to statistical analysis. The scores from these instruments were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a widely recognized software tool for managing and analyzing quantitative data. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the data, while inferential statistics were employed to determine the significance of the observed effects. To assess whether the instructional materials had a significant impact on the EFL learners' communicative competence, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. This test compared the pre-test and post-test scores to identify meaningful differences that could be attributed to the intervention. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$, a standard threshold in educational research, ensuring that any observed effects were not due to random chance. This combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provided a rigorous evaluation of the instructional materials and their effectiveness in meeting the learners' needs.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings
The teaching material is completed by the examples of both local culture and western culture becaming the reader more easly to understand the different of both culture as well it is consist of the form of the questioner sheet before going to the topic help student to be more focus and create the student more creatif in thinking, the quetioner sheet after reading the material also help the student to know to what extend their understanding toward the course material. These two forms of tradition are still preserved which are the embodiment and reflection of the Sumbawa community so that the presentation of local culture helps Cordova University students to more easily understand and be more aware of the importance of a local culture to be preserved. There are two kinds of local culture of west sumbawa regency as the example chosen within this teaching material namely bekelewang and barodak tradition.

Figure 1. Caption of Instructional Materials Integrated with Local Culture

In the development stage, the initial product of the developed teaching material for CCU course is produced based on the designed draft consisting of cover page, contents, and the last part. This prototype is then validated by an expert of product design who is experience in producing EFL teaching materials. Then, the aspects of material contents and language are validated by an expert with knowledge background and experiences at English study program. The result of validation is presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1
Material Contents Validation Result

No	Aspects Of Validation	Score	Score Percentage	Category
1	Conformity of CPL/CPMK with the title of teaching materials.	5	100%	Very good
2	Suitability of learning objectives with CPL/CPMK.	5	100%	Very good
3	Determination of the selection of material substances based on CPL,	5	100%	Very good
4	CPMK, and learning objectives. The material is presented complete and in-depth history	5	80%	good
5	Availability and suitability Selection of types of student worksheets with materials Learning objectives	4	80%	good
6	Materials/learning support references are available	4	80%	good
	The average score		86,6%	

Based on the presented data in Table 1, it can be described that the average score is 86,60%.with the most fesible chatagories to be used in the proces of teaching and learning activity. Based on the result there are three aspect having very good aspect they are the eligibility of cpl/cpmk with the title of the course material, the eligibility of intructional goal with cpl /cpmk and the eligibilty in chosing material subtantion based on CPL, CPMK, and intructional goal . based on the result above, there are sugestion from the validator namely masih kurangnya contoh budaya lokal yang dituangkan, materi mater yang dituangkan di bagain sub jdul masih kurang lengkap, so that the writer refair that modul based on the suggestion given by the validator after that it can be concluded that the usng of the teaching material based on the local culture can be applied as a guidlines in CCU course.

Tabel 2
Language Aspect Validation Result

No	Aspects Of Validation	Score	Score Percentage	Category
1	The aligibility of chosing word and sentence with the students character	5	100%	Very good
2	The clearly langague which is used	5	100%	Very good
3	The fisibility of the massage delivered, the clearly langague which is used	4	80%	Good
4	The effectivity of sentences	4	80%	Good
5	The ability of informativ sentence	4	80%	Good
6	The fecybility of language use with the reader understanding	5	80%	Good
	average score		86,67%	

Language valiidation result from the validator is 86,67% with the chatagories is very adequate to be used . based on the result above there are four aspects get the higes score and two aspect with score 4 with a good chatagories. The aspect having the high score are the aligibility of chosing word and sentence with the students character, the fisibility of the massage delivered, the clearly langague which is used .based on the validation result there are refitions given by the validator namely still used same word in each sentences, still more mistyping word. After conducting the revition so that became a fisibel material learning than the next step is conducting small scaletry out in order to look the effectivness and the eligibility of the develovment product as The last activity in the development stage is sharing questionnaire to 10 students of the fourth semester in which CCU course is programmed.

Discussion

The integration of local cultural contexts into Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) instructional materials presents a promising approach to enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' communicative competence. By embedding elements of local culture into language learning, students can better connect foreign language use with their sociocultural realities, fostering both linguistic and pragmatic abilities. This approach also aligns with contemporary pedagogical strategies that emphasize relevance and authenticity in language education. Local cultural integration makes language instruction more relatable, encouraging learners to see the foreign language as a tool to express their own identities and understand others' (Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011; Ghavamnia, 2020). By doing so, they not only acquire language skills but also develop a holistic understanding of its cultural implications. As learners engage with familiar topics, they build confidence in their ability to articulate thoughts in English while appreciating the shared humanity underlying different cultural expressions.

In the present study, learners were tasked with exploring their local cultural practices and engaging in discussions with their peers about these findings. This activity not only

deepened their understanding of their cultural heritage but also exposed them to diverse perspectives as they learned about their classmates' cultural backgrounds (Haerazi, Irawan, & Sotlikova, 2023; Reformana et al., 2024). The discussions were notably effective, with most learners expressing enjoyment and active participation in the English dialogue. These findings resonate with the work of Haerazi and Irawan (2020), who highlighted that integrating local cultures into language instruction makes content more relatable and easier for students to internalize. Such activities create an environment where learners feel more comfortable and motivated, thus enhancing the overall learning experience. By discussing topics close to their personal experiences, learners can focus on practicing language skills rather than grappling with unfamiliar subject matter, leading to more confident and meaningful communication.

One of the critical outcomes of integrating local culture into CCU materials is the development of a balanced understanding of both the learners' own culture and the target language culture. This dual exposure promotes intercultural sensitivity and helps mitigate potential cultural misunderstandings (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020; Piatkowska, 2015). For example, through discussions on local traditions, learners not only practice their speaking skills but also become more adept at identifying cultural nuances, a vital aspect of effective communication. Additionally, the introduction of diverse cultural topics in speaking classes equips learners with pragmatic skills. Safitri and Sugirin (2019) observed that culturally integrated materials help learners understand appropriate language use in various social contexts, a crucial component of communicative competence. By comparing their cultural practices with others, learners gain insights into the complexities of communication, appreciating the importance of context and tone in delivering effective messages.

Engagement and motivation were prominent outcomes observed in the study. Learners actively participated in speaking activities that revolved around local cultural themes. The familiarity with these cultural elements enhanced their engagement, as they found the content meaningful and enjoyable. Hamidi et al (2022) and Muhsinin et al. (2025) emphasized that learners' motivation is significantly sustained when instructional materials reflect aspects of their own lives and environments. This intrinsic connection to the material encourages learners to invest more effort in their language learning process, resulting in improved outcomes. When learners feel a personal connection to the content, they are more likely to engage deeply with it, enhancing both their interest in language learning and their ability to retain knowledge over time (Karya et al., 2022; Salim, Jumadil, & Suryati, 2023). Meaningful engagement transforms the classroom into a dynamic space where students actively collaborate and exchange ideas.

Furthermore, the inclusion of cultural aspects in CCU instruction fosters critical thinking and reflective abilities among learners. By examining cultural similarities and differences, students develop a deeper appreciation of global interconnectedness. For instance, a discussion about local festivals may lead to insights about how similar practices manifest in other cultures, thereby broadening learners' perspectives. According to Syafitri (2023) and Yuen (2011), such reflective practices enhance learners' ability to think critically about cultural and linguistic contexts, which is essential for effective communication in a globalized world. This process not only enhances their understanding of cultural diversity but also equips them with analytical skills to approach intercultural interactions with sensitivity and awareness. By contextualizing language learning within cultural frameworks, learners develop an ability to view the world through multiple lenses.

The integration of local cultures into CCU instructional materials not only bridges the gap between learners' cultural identities and the global language landscape but also makes language learning both practical and enriching. This approach emphasizes that language is not merely a tool for communication but also a medium for cultural expression and understanding (Mostafaei & Parsazadeh, 2021; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). By connecting language learning

with cultural identity, learners are better equipped to navigate intercultural interactions with confidence and competence. Such an approach ensures that learners are not only proficient in the mechanics of the language but also skilled in conveying meaning with cultural appropriateness. The integration fosters a sense of belonging in the global community while affirming the importance of their unique cultural identity.

The efficacy of using local cultures as English materials in improving speaking skills is particularly evident in the development of pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, comprehension, and vocabulary mastery. Haerazi (2024) noted that culturally relevant content enhances engagement, which in turn facilitates the acquisition of these critical language skills. For pronunciation, local culture-based materials provide a familiar and comfortable context for practice. Learners are more likely to focus on phonetic accuracy when the content relates to familiar cultural topics. For example, practicing dialogues about local traditions enables learners to refine their pronunciation in a way that feels natural and engaging. This practice reduces anxiety and builds learners' confidence in their ability to produce accurate sounds in the target language.

Fluency is another area where local culture-based materials demonstrate significant benefits. Discussing familiar cultural themes encourages learners to express themselves more freely and confidently. Storytelling, role-plays, and discussions about festivals or daily life not only provide ample opportunities for verbal practice but also help learners achieve smoother and more natural speech delivery. Hidayatullah and Haerazi (2022) found that such activities promote fluency by reducing the cognitive load associated with unfamiliar topics, allowing learners to focus on language production. Familiarity with content enhances learners' ability to retrieve and articulate ideas quickly, creating a foundation for natural and sustained conversations.

In terms of accuracy, local culture-based materials highlight culturally specific terms and expressions while emphasizing correct grammar and syntax. For instance, learners might describe local culinary practices or traditional ceremonies using structured sentences, which helps them internalize accurate language use. This approach ensures that learners are not only communicating effectively but also adhering to the linguistic norms of the target language (Kenza-Tacarraoucht, Zano, & Zamorano, 2022; Jupri et al., 2022). By practicing within a meaningful and relatable context, learners develop a deeper understanding of grammatical structures and their practical applications in real-life situations.

Comprehension skills are also enhanced through the use of culturally relevant materials. When learners engage with content that aligns with their background knowledge, they are better able to understand and respond to the material. This alignment facilitates contextual understanding, enabling learners to grasp both explicit and implicit meanings in conversations. According to Hargreaves and Elhawary (2021), culturally integrated materials serve as a bridge between learners' existing knowledge and new linguistic concepts, thereby improving overall comprehension. Contextualized learning makes complex ideas more accessible and enhances learners' ability to decode meaning in diverse communicative settings.

Vocabulary mastery is another critical area where local culture-based English materials have a positive impact. By focusing on topics related to traditions, geography, cuisine, or social practices, learners are introduced to new vocabulary that is both meaningful and relevant. This not only expands their lexical repertoire but also equips them with the language skills needed to articulate their cultural identity in English (Hargreaves & Elhawary, 2021; Canale, 2016). For example, describing a traditional dance or local festival in English requires learners to learn and use specific terms, enriching their vocabulary and enhancing their ability to communicate effectively. This expansion of vocabulary is not just mechanical but deeply tied to meaningful contexts that resonate with learners' experiences.

The use of local cultures as instructional materials not only improves technical speaking skills but also empowers learners to connect language learning with their cultural identities. This approach creates a dynamic, learner-centered environment that supports holistic speaking development (Irawan & Haerazi, 2021; Aprianoto & Haerazi, 2019). By integrating local cultural elements, learners gain a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool for cultural expression and intercultural communication. This understanding is essential for developing communicative competence, as it prepares learners to navigate real-world interactions with ease and confidence. Integrating local culture ensures that language learning is not isolated from the broader social and cultural context in which it operates.

The integration of local cultures into CCU instructional materials is a highly effective strategy for improving EFL learners' communicative skills. By providing a familiar and meaningful context for language learning, this approach fosters engagement, motivation, and critical thinking while developing essential speaking skills such as pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, comprehension, and vocabulary mastery. The findings of this study, supported by Irawan and Haerazi's (2021) research, underscore the importance of culturally relevant materials in creating an enriching and practical language learning experience. Through this approach, learners not only become proficient in English but also develop the intercultural competence needed to thrive in a globalized world.

CONCLUSION

The integration of local cultural contexts into Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) instructional materials represents a transformative approach to enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' communicative competence. This method bridges the gap between language and learners' sociocultural realities, providing a meaningful and relatable context for language acquisition. By embedding elements of local culture into language learning, learners can better connect foreign language use to their identities, fostering both linguistic and pragmatic skills. This strategy aligns with contemporary pedagogical trends emphasizing authenticity and relevance, making the learning experience more engaging and reflective of real-life communication needs. For instance, when learners explore cultural themes such as traditional festivals or culinary practices, they not only practice language skills but also develop an appreciation for cultural diversity. As a result, learners become adept at using the language for self-expression and understanding others, which is critical in a globalized world. The inclusion of cultural elements also fosters confidence, enabling students to articulate ideas with ease and competence in English, while appreciating the cultural nuances underlying different forms of expression.

The dual exposure to both local and target cultures through culturally integrated materials promotes intercultural sensitivity and mitigates potential misunderstandings. Engaging with familiar topics allows learners to practice language skills in a context that feels natural, reducing anxiety and enhancing their willingness to participate in discussions. For example, learners tasked with comparing local traditions with those of other cultures develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of global interconnectedness. These reflective practices are instrumental in cultivating an intercultural mindset, preparing learners to navigate diverse social settings with linguistic and cultural competence. Moreover, culturally relevant materials encourage collaboration, as learners exchange insights about their cultural practices, leading to more dynamic classroom interactions. The shared exploration of local and global themes enriches the learning experience, ensuring that learners are not only proficient in the mechanics of language but also skilled in its meaningful application. This holistic approach to language learning underscores the role of culture in shaping communication, making it an essential component of effective language education.

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