

# Using Facebook Group as a Blended Learning Medium in Teaching Cross-Cultural Understanding in Islamic Higher Education

Nafan Tarihoran

UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Indonesia

[nafan.tarihoran@uinbanten.ac.id](mailto:nafan.tarihoran@uinbanten.ac.id)

## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate how social media, in this case, a Facebook group as Blended learning incorporated in teaching at Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia. Sixty-five EFL students participated in this study. The content of cross-cultural and responses in this closed group was analyzed to identify the patterns of interaction, and their responses to e-journaling through a Facebook group. The findings revealed that the students responded positively to this activity and promote the student's sense of the uniqueness of his own culture as a positive value and enables the students to accept the uniqueness of the other cultures. The power of sharing and learning from other students encourages understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

## Keywords:

Blended learning, Cross-cultural understanding, English Foreign Language, Facebook group, Social Media Site (SoMes)



This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC license.

## INTRODUCTION

Technology is becoming increasingly important in both our personal and professional lives, and students are using technology more and more. Dawn Wilson stated that today's students use instant messaging, texting, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Vine, and many other digital tools to consume, create, and share digital media products with family, friends, acquaintances, and sometimes even strangers (Wilson et al., 2016). This phenomenon is one of the 21st-century trends in education. Kilbane, C. R., & Milman, N. B., (2013) conveyed that the digital technologies, access to information,

globalization, equity, and accountability are five great trends are influencing education in the 21st-century. These trends influence indirectly on students, teachers, and their environment. Technology in language teaching is not new. As today's students must function in the world of tomorrow, committed 21st-century teachers should acknowledge the influence of these trends toward instruction. A teacher also needs to recognize that engaging with these shifts in the instruction context requires approaching their profession as an educator (Kilbane & Milman, 2013), and it is pointed by Smaldino (Smaldino et al., 2008), the drift for today's instructors may be a move from

conventional instructing methodologies and tools to computerized approaches that superior meet desires of 21st-century students

The internet technology that facilitates digital technologies has changed the paradigm of learning environment, from physical to virtual learning environment. The most influential of internet technology is the Social Media Site (SoMeS). Murray and Waller (2007) have recognized SoMes as virtual communities that permit individuals to put through and connected on a specific subject or to fair hang out together online. SoMes, for the most part, give clients a profile and empower them to transfer and share photographs, music, and different sorts of messages they would like to share with other individuals (Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Also, these sites give social and enthusiastic back, data assets, and ties to other individuals (Eyadat & Ababneh, 2010).

Social media users have increased in numbers each year. According to Datareportal, Global Digital Overview in 2019, there are 3.48 billion social media users in 2019, with the worldwide total growing by 288 million reached 9 percent (Kemp, 2019). It is stated that Facebook dominates the social media sphere. As quoted by Septania, Indonesia has the fourth-highest number of Facebook users in

the world (Septania, 2018). There were 130 million accounts on social media or 6 percent of the total global users. Indonesia is the most Facebook users in the Southeast Asian country. Social media is a persuasive force for 21st-century learners. The social media users in Indonesia has increased from 2015 to 2021. In 2023, it is assessed that there will be around 103 million interpersonal organization clients (users) in Indonesia, up from 74.2 million in 2016 (Statista Research Department, 2019).

In delivering materials of cross-cultural, lecturers are allowed to improvise to be more easily understood by students. However, students often have low motivation, have negative feelings in dealing with other cultures. The concept of teaching presence is that of concentration in what the learners learn rather than what is to be instructed. As the classrooms get more learner-centered, it can be expected that the state of mind and the activities from the learners' side will be more noticeable. Since an individual is molded by one's culture and neighborhood setting, it can be accepted that the significance of cross-cultural setting in dialect instructing will develop as learning gets to be more learner-centered (N Tarihoran, 2017).

It indicates that social network users will take a great place for multi-purposes in human lives. One of them is for educational

purposes. Social media enable an affordance for online interactions into a vital part of human experience. From a medium of learning, Conley, et al., (2015) pointed out that Facebook is open source also facilitates the creation of reusable digital instructional material that can be very easily updated and revised (Conley & Sabo, 2015). However, in the educational field Cross-cultural understanding in Islamic universities still needs to explore and deepen.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is a platform to manufacture interpersonal organizations or social relations among individuals who, share interests, exercises, foundations, or real-life connections (Chen, 2014). This platform empowers clients can make profiles and socialize employing a extend of social media devices counting blogs, recordings, pictures, labels, records of companions, gatherings, and messages (Keyes, 2016), an addition to Smaldino stated that A social networking service facilitates online connections and interactions of users based on shared backgrounds, interests, and experiences (Smaldino et al., 2008). Students can share ideas, messages, information, and multimedia with people in their network. From an educational perspective, Rosen

enriches the above notion that social media may support students such as rich multimedia information sources, microcontent, collaboration and community building, synchronous and asynchronous communication modes, personalized learning through repetition, social interaction, disinhibition and identity development (Rosen, 2010). Dawn Wilson (2010) points to the notion that digital tools may effectively support students' learning endeavors.

Google+, Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr are examples of social networks. They offer ways for users to join others interested in similar topics or issues through community groups. The most popular social media is Facebook, In the academic context, Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, 2009) in Junco, Reynol (2014) the affordances of Facebook, such as its emphasis on sharing, connecting, participation, and active engagement, align with the effective educational practices of active and collaborative learning—essential factors for student engagement.

Students are bombarded with digital media content from a variety of sources for outside of the classroom, They include television, the Internet, smartphones, and gaming consoles through which they access all types of programs, apps, and games. Some digital interfaces now allow students

to interact with digital media content in virtual realities, while others ask students to interact in a real-world context. Either way, students are continuously exchanging media content with countless numbers of people within their social networks (Wilson et al., 2016).

Recently, universities are changing. No longer are they limited to the existing structure or resources of the building. It is conceivable to reach beyond the traditional teaching setting to design learning opportunities with global reach to engage today's learners. Cyberlearning is the use of networked computing and communication technologies to support learning. By dynamically integrating the Internet and social media into instruction, cyberlearning is transforming learning opportunities while requiring new perspectives on teaching (Simonson et al., 2019).

Today's students could be constantly "plugged in," spending every spare moment tapping away on their smartphones, compulsively gaming, or posting updates and photos to social media. Perhaps they seem to be permanently connected because, for growing numbers of adolescents, on-screen activities occupy far more time than face-to-face interactions. Recent screen-time statistics for today's students are staggering. Children aged eight to eighteen spend an estimated seven hours per day, on

average, glaring into screens (American Academy of Pediatrics). Teenagers compose an average of 3,417 text messages per month (Bindley, 2011). And, the bedrooms of an estimated 97% of adolescents contain at least one electronic device (Wilson et al., 2016)

In learning, settings can include formal, organized learning experiences for which lecturers are responsible. On the other hand, informal learning gives students opportunities to learn from experiences outside of the classroom setting. For instance, students can explore websites on the internet and find information that may be important for their activities in-classroom study. For instance, when students study a region of the country in social studies they can access the Internet to find a website describing the region or email someone living in that area. Even students lacking an Internet connection at home may have access to internet-connected computers in school media centers and libraries. And the majority of students have access to mobile technology resources through their cell phones (Johnson et al., 2013). As the cell phone becomes more ubiquitous, even students from families with limited incomes generally have a cell phone available to them. Students learn how to informally seek information and will challenge themselves

to learn about topics that might not be part of their in-class study because they find value in that type of experience (Simonson et al., 2019).

Digital technologies can simplify teachers' and students' interaction effectively virtually. Ormrod, Jeanne Ellis (2016:342) propounded that successful understudy intelligent don't fundamentally get to be confronted to face. Through such instruments as email, talk programming, class sites and sites, electronic notice sheets, and Skype, computer innovation empowers students to communicate with their companions (either locally or around the globe), trade points of view, conceptualize and expand on each other's thoughts, and periodically maneuver specialists into the discussion. Students must understand, however, that the rules for in-class discussions apply to electronic discussions as well (Smaldino et al., 2008).

According to Reynol Junco (2014), Facebook and student engagement. It makes sense to look at the relationship between Facebook utilization and student engagement for two common reasons: (1) numerous of today's college students utilize Facebook at tall rates. (2) Facebook was developed and intended to be an engaging platform and measures its success in terms of user engagement. Subsequently, it is conceivable that understudies might be

utilizing Facebook in manners that impact or are affected by genuine commitment (Junco, 2014). As a web-based learning device, Facebook includes students effectively in learning as they are invigorated, energized, and tricked into exploring to different data destinations, posting remarks, and getting occupied with online conversations (Patrut & Patrut, 2013).

In the English language teaching process, the connection between language and culture is profoundly established, and language can be utilized as an apparatus to keep up and pass on culture and social ties. Language and culture are connected. Language is installed in culture; language expressions can't be made outside the setting of a specific culture nor be completely deciphered as isolated from this culture. (Widodo et al., 2018).

Social contrasts among Indonesia and English exist in customs and propensities as well as in convictions, esteem frameworks, method of reasoning and numerous different viewpoints which have invaded into the social part of language use in cross-cultural communication. Culture is regularly viewed as the central idea in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication concentrates regularly center around how social gatherings contrast from each other: Muslims vary from Christians; Japanese contrast from

U.S. Americans; and, men contrast from ladies (Gudykunst, 2002). The utilization of culture in encouraging English will rely upon the idea of the nearby setting. A similar framework may not apply to all communities. In other words, culture has an impact on each part of the language, for example, lexical investigation, linguistic and syntactic examination, writing and perusing, organization, and composing (Fageeh, 2011).

It may be an axiom that culture can lead to distinctive elucidations and responses to dialect. Hence, it stands to reason that students' capacity to comprehend and communicate in English ought to appositely be unequivocally subordinate on the social foundation information, and the lack of this information is most likely to render their English destitute communicatively speaking. Most human practices are language embedded and, in this manner, language is an inescapable piece of the way of life. Services, customs, tunes, stories, spells, curses, petitions, laws (also discussions, solicitations, and directions) are all discourse demonstrations or discourse occasions that comprise the very twist and woof of ethnic life (Fishman et al., 2013).

There is significant social media usage each year by the lecturer. This technology is

considered an appropriate tool to be a learning medium. The use of Blended Learning (BL) is a combination of face-to-face teaching techniques and online interactive collaboration, which allows students to pace their learning (Graham, 2006). Many institutions of higher learning have introduced BL in the classrooms, and very few have researched about its implementation in Islamic higher education.

The focus of teaching culture is what the students learn and need to learn instead of what is to be taught (Nafan Tarihoran et al., 2020). As many classrooms are more students-centered, the opinion and initiatives of students will bring a significant contribution to the learning process. Facebook was significantly related to a medium of learning that can improve academic grades (Alhazmi & Rahman, 2013). However, integrating Facebook with blended learning in Islamic higher education seems to be a feasible means for lecturers to enhance students' learning cross-cultural understanding.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research did not intend to prove hypotheses, it investigated phenomena to generate theory from data dealing with the Cross-cultural Understanding (CCU) learning process. Therefore, a qualitative approach was pursued in this study. The

study was conducted in Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin the state Islamic university of Banten, Indonesia. The subject of research were 65 undergraduate students ranging from Tadris Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris (English Education Department), Faculty of Tarbiyah, and Teacher Training. All students who agreed to participate were joined over an academic year (Feb to July 2019). Informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

In conducting the research, there were three phases. Phase 1 lecturer created and used Facebook as blended learning. A Facebook group named was CCU Collaborative Learning. It was open only to students enrolled in this CCU course and invited to join the group. The Facebook group was no public because it aimed to use the group as a medium of communication and instruction outside the class, where all students and the lecturer could come into contact and make a connection through the use of English without intimidation. Students could share and exchange their ideas and the lecturer would post weekly announcements and selected readable topics and sub-topics so that all Facebook members could see and learn from another. Phase 2 lecturer used a snowballing technique to invite those prospective students to join the Group. The students

categorized based on the topic and asked students to respond to the assignment. Lecturer taught face-to-face in the classroom according to weekly lesson plans and online interacted with the students in the Facebook group. Lecturer posted announcements and comments relevant to the class and their assignments. Phase 3 the students were interviewed and distributed questionnaires (using google form) to evaluate the impact of utilizing Facebook Group.

More details, the steps of the blended learning via Facebook followed Kilbane's model include (1) Making students' group (three or four members in a group), 2) Each group creates the Facebook group, 3) introducing the task in the Facebook group; 4) Naming, teaching, and practicing targeted social skills; 5) implementing the lesson and monitoring student interactions in the Facebook group; 6 ) summarizing learning in the form digital; 6 ) measuring group and individual accountability; and 7) Conducting assessment (Kilbane & Milman, 2013).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Data Description

The demographic profile of participants denoting age, gender, and the total number of using Facebook as presented in Table 1. Most of the students are female (89%).

**Table 1. Demographic profile of participants.**

Age (year)	Gender		Average Posting (N=16)
	Male	Female	
19	2	9	13 (81%)
20	1	18	15 (94%)
21	2	23	12 (75%)
22	2	8	11 (69%)

## 2. Instructional Context

Cross-cultural understanding (CCU) course syllabus has stated the objectives of the Experiential course include the following: at the end of the course students should be able to understand the concept of cross-cultural. By understanding the

concepts of cross-cultural in the use of English the students will be able to use English according to the sociocultural reflected in English. The classes run for two hours per week during the fifth semester of the academic year. This course has two credits consisting of five units: (1) Foundation of Cross, (2) concerns with the intercultural conflict and intercultural competence, (3) discuss gender issues, (4) life values, and (5) Discusses gender Issues in Muslim Society (Nafan; Tarihoran & Jamridafrijal, 2019). More details of CCU teaching material is seen in Table 2.

**Table 2 Contents of CCU course.**

Unit	Topics	Sub-Topics
1	Foundation of Cross-Cultural Communication	Culture, language & communication Intercultural communication Culture and Foreign Language Teaching
2	Intercultural conflict, and intercultural competence	Intercultural conflict Acculturation Culture Shock Intercultural competence
3	Gender issues in British and United States of America contexts	Gender issues in Western countries Gender issues in education
4	Life Values	Personal values Family values Work values
5	Gender Issues in Muslim Society	Gender issues in Islam Gender issues in Muslim society Practice

## 3. Using Facebook Group as a Blended Learning

Some students pointed out that they liked it when the lecturer corrected their

posting. They thought that they learned to improve their writing as well as their understanding of culture from the errors they made. Students liked it when the



lecturer posted weekly announcements and announcements helped them to review what offered their views in detail that the they learned in the classroom.

**Table 3 the Summary of the Assignments**

Interactions	Tasks	Time
Individual	Self-introduction	2nd meeting (1)
	Brief biography	3rd meeting (1)
	Giving opinion Writing Assignment	Weekly assigned (10)
Group	PowerPoint (presentation)	(2)
	Video presentation	(2)
	Writing journal	Weekly assigned (5)

#### 4. Challenges of Using Facebook

To get more explicit opinions from the students, students were asked to write down their views on FBG to the following statements: (1) Students view about the use of the Facebook group (2) Students express of feelings on the use of the Facebook group, and their understanding about cross-cultural (3) students comments, for

example: why do they only write ‘don’t know’, or why don't they participate in making comments and clicking ‘Like’? The result of a student's opinion of using Facebook in the teaching-learning process can be seen in Table 4, and improving students' understanding of Cross-cultural in Table 5 for the individual.

**Table 4. The evaluation result from the students. Total (N=65) (%)**

No	The Statement	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Students become more interested in cross-cultural issues.	60 (92.3)	1 (1.5)	4 (6.1)
2	Students have become more aware of their own culture.	59 (90.8)	2 (3.0)	4 (6.1)
3	Students have become more aware of other cultures.	56 (86.2)	1 (1.5)	8 (12.3)
4	Students have become more aware of cross-cultural sensitivity.	54 (83.0)	2(3.))	9 (13.8)

Students have developed their positive attitudes towards cultural knowledge and improve their cultural competence.

Facebook was a practical and beneficial teaching and learning tool for them. They possessed a positive view perhaps because

they have become more aware of their Facebook as a social networking site used culture as well as other culture with among them.

**Table 5. The evaluation result from the students. Total (N=65).**

No	Statements	Age (year)			
		19	20	21	22
1	Cross-cultural understanding has improved through Facebook learning.	10	12	18	25
2	Students have developed cross-cultural knowledge	9	16	19	21
3	Cross-cultural communicative competence will be helpful and important in your future life.	10	15	18	22

5. Appropriate social interaction with a friend  
 Most students regularly used Facebook and they obtained positive values on the Facebook group usage in that it helped motivate them to learn virtually. Even students who encountered Facebook group apprehension felt unconfident at the beginning of course, but they had positive views on the Facebook group usage for learning (30%). The average time spending on Facebook was 142 minutes.

**Table 6. Characteristics of the student's interaction.**

Characteristic	Categories	Total (N=65) %
Purpose of using Facebook	Searching	14 (21.5)
	Learning	20 (30.8)
	Chatting	21 (32.3)
	Others	10 (15.4)
Time of using Facebook and internet per day (hours)	Male (140')	10.7%
	Female (144')	89.20%

## CONCLUSION

Most students regularly used Facebook and they obtained a positive view on Facebook group usage in that it helped them in learning and improved their understanding of cross-cultural because it was a practical, trendy, and beneficial teaching and learning tool for them.

Students have developed their positive attitudes towards cultural knowledge and improve their cultural competence. Facebook was a practical and beneficial teaching and learning tool for them. They possessed a positive view perhaps because they have become more aware of their culture as well as other culture with

Facebook as a social networking site used among them.

In this manner, rules for utilizing Facebook must be set. It very well may be valuable whenever utilized in the correct atmosphere, since most students are as of now occupied with utilizing it. Further research should be directed. This can incorporate directing class tasks and composing journal reviews. Moreover, the understudies can rehearse different abilities, for example, perusing and composing with different students on Facebook.

Although the study had a limitation due to its subjective nature of the research method, it offers an insightful implication that power relations in the learning-teaching process between lecturers and students exist in the present context. Further research can deal with doing a quantitative study, constructing a questionnaire based on key findings.

In conclusion, the wise lecturer should be creative educators to make students always keep engaging in their learning. It has been shown that Facebook application is very critical and practical for students as it can be used as a communication and education tool.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author thanks the head and deputy English education department for their

valuable and smart comment. He is also grateful for input from students of the cross-cultural understanding course.

#### REFERENCES

- Alhazmi, A. K., & Rahman, A. A. (2013). Facebook in Higher Education: Social and Academic Purposes. *International Journal of Computers & Technology*, 12(3), 3300–3305.
- Chen, T. F. (2014). Developing a New Revenue Business Model in Social Network: A Case Study of Facebook. In *Handbook of Research on Demand-Driven Web Services: Theory, Technologies, and Applications* (pp. 197–221). IGI Global.
- Conley, Q., & Sabo, K. E. (2015). The social media instructional design model: a new tool for designing instruction using social media. *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*.
- Eyadat, W. M., & Ababneh, Z. W. M. (2010). World Journal on Educational Technology. *Technology*, 2(2), 87–99.
- Fageeh, A. A. (2011). At crossroads of EFL learning and culture: How to enhance cross-cultural awareness in EFL college students. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 7(1), 62–72.
- Fishman, J. A., Gertner, M. H., Lowy, E. G., & Milán, W. G. (2013). The rise

- and fall of the ethnic revival: Perspectives on language and ethnicity (Vol. 37). Walter de Gruyter.
- Graham, C. R. (2006). Blended learning systems. *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*, 3–21.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2002). Issues in cross-cultural communication research. *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*, 2, 165–178.
- Junco, R. (2014). *Engaging students through social media: Evidence-based practices for use in student affairs*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Kemp, S. (2019). *Digital 2019: Global Digital Overview*. Digital Global Overview Report.
- Keyes, J. (2016). Social software engineering: Development and collaboration with social networking. In *Social Software Engineering: Development and Collaboration with Social Networking*.
- Kilbane, C. R., & Milman, N. B. (2013). *Teaching models: Designing instruction for 21st-century learners*. Pearson Higher Ed.
- Patrut, M., & Patrut, B. (2013). *Social media in higher education: Teaching in Web 2.0*. IGI Global.
- Rosen, L. D. (2010). *Rewired: Understanding the iGeneration and the way they learn*. St. Martin's Press.
- Septania, R. C. (2018). Indonesia, Pengguna Facebook Terbanyak ke-4 di Dunia. Kompas. <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2018/03/02/08181617/indonesia-pengguna-facebook-terbanyak-ke-4-di-dunia>
- Simonson, M., Zvacek, S. M., & Smaldino, S. (2019). *Teaching and Learning at a Distance: Foundations of Distance Education 7th Edition*. IAP.
- Smaldino, S. E., Lowther, D. L., Russell, J. D., & Mims, C. (2008). *Instructional technology and media for learning*. Statista Research Department. (2019). *Indonesia: number of social network users 2017-2023*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/247938/number-of-social-network-users-in-indonesia/>
- Tarihoran, N. (2017). *English Curriculum Development*. FTK Banten Press. <http://repository.uinbanten.ac.id/1418/>
- Tarihoran, Nafan, & Jamridafrijal. (2019). *Cross-Cultural Understanding for Islamic Higher Education*.
- Tarihoran, Nafan, Syafuri, B., & Rahmania Elbarusi, A. (2020). *The Role of Positive Psychology in English Foreign Language Classroom*.

- <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200120.060>
- Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1999). The network basis of social support: A network is more than the sum of its ties. *Networks in the Global Village: Life in Contemporary Communities*, 83–118.
- Widodo, H. P., Perfecto, M. R., & Buripakdi, A. (2018). Incorporating cultural and moral values into ELT materials in the context of Southeast Asia (SEA). In *Situating Moral and Cultural Values in ELT Materials* (pp. 1–14). Springer.
- Wilson, D., Alaniz, K., & Sikora, J. (2016). *Digital media in today's classrooms: The potential for meaningful teaching, learning, and assessment*. Rowman & Littlefield.