
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFL Teachers' Attitudes toward the Integration of Cultural Elements into English Classes

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| ABSTRACT

English language education in Vietnamese universities has increasingly emphasized developing students' intercultural competence alongside linguistic skills. However, limited research has examined teachers' perspectives on cultural integration at the tertiary level. This mixed-methods study explored EFL teachers' attitudes towards integrating cultural elements into English classes at a Vietnamese public university. Data was collected from 42 teachers through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that the teachers agreed on the importance of cultural elements for communication and intercultural awareness, but faced contextual obstacles such as time constraints and limited resources. They felt motivated to share cultural experiences but had moderate satisfaction with current methods. The study highlights the need for curricular flexibility, teacher training, and resource accessibility to foster equitable cultural integration and intercultural competence in Vietnamese university EFL education.

| KEYWORDS

Cultural integration, EFL teachers, attitudes, intercultural communicative competence, Vietnamese context.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 August 2025

PUBLISHED: 30 August 2025

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2025.8.9.9

1. Introduction

Language and culture are deeply interconnected, with language serving as a primary vehicle for cultural expression and transmission. Our use of language reflects our cultural identity, and culture, in turn, shapes our behaviors and perspectives. As Kramsch (1998) highlights, language facilitates the transfer of values and beliefs, demonstrating that language and culture have co-evolved throughout human history. Languages embed cultural concepts and are the means through which culture is articulated. This profound relationship has significant implications for language education. Brown (2007) argues that separating language and culture diminishes both. Learning a new language, therefore, involves not just mastering grammar and vocabulary, but also understanding its associated culture. Tomalin (2008) even suggests cultural knowledge is a "fifth component" of language competence, alongside listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Integrating cultural elements into language teaching is crucial for effective acquisition and cross-cultural communication. Scholars like Byram (2009), Risager (2007), and Kramsch (1993) emphasize that teaching language without culture is incomplete and ineffective. Ultimately, developing cultural understanding is as vital a goal in language learning as achieving linguistic proficiency.

In Vietnam, national English language education policies explicitly prioritize cultural knowledge, aligning with global perspectives. Nguyen (2015) notes that Vietnamese policies emphasize incorporating cultural values into EFL teaching and learning. A notable example is the 2008-2020 National Foreign Languages Project, a significant initiative aimed at reforming English language education across all grade levels using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR guidelines highlight cultural objectives, including improving students' ability to confidently use English in diverse multicultural contexts and raising awareness of cultural differences. In Vietnamese higher education, universities are increasingly focusing on developing students' intercultural competence alongside linguistic skills. However, limited access to authentic and diverse cultural materials poses barriers for teachers aiming to integrate culture (Pham, 2007). EFL instructors frequently require

assistance in identifying culturally appropriate resources for their lessons. Insufficient exposure to realistic representations of diverse cultures may restrict educators' capacity to integrate culture meaningfully (Nguyen et al., 2021). Furthermore, while innovative pedagogies can enhance cultural integration, assessing students' intercultural competence presents challenges. Open-ended, holistic assessments such as reflective journals or group projects are more effective in evaluating cultural understanding than discrete tests (Pham & Vo, 2023). However, reforming evaluation practices requires substantial effort.

Due to the globalization of ideas and information, the incorporation of multiple cultural components in educational institutions is becoming increasingly important. English language lessons facilitate communication and embrace ethnic diversity. However, teachers encounter tremendous hurdles when incorporating other cultures into English language education. English language classes must incorporate diverse cultures to develop global citizens (Nieto & Zoller, 2010). However, instructors globally, including those in Vietnam, encounter obstacles regarding cultural familiarity, rigid curricular, access to materials, and assessment methods. Despite these recognized challenges, scholarly research specifically addressing cultural integration within institutional contexts, particularly in Vietnam, remains limited.

The institution where this study was conducted exemplifies the aforementioned trends. As a prominent public university in southern Vietnam specializing in finance, marketing, and business, this university is committed to preparing graduates for a globalized professional landscape where robust intercultural communication skills are indispensable. The Faculty of Foreign Languages at this institution serves a heterogeneous student population, comprising approximately 600 business English majors alongside students from 16 other departments. This inherent diversity presents both significant opportunities and complex challenges for the comprehensive integration of cultural elements into English language teaching. This institution's pedagogical approach to English language education emphasizes not only linguistic proficiency but also the crucial ability to navigate varied cultural contexts. This dual focus reflects a clear recognition that Vietnamese graduates require both advanced language skills and refined cultural awareness to thrive in international academic and professional environments. Given the critical importance of cultural integration in language pedagogy and this institution's unique institutional setting, this study investigates EFL lecturers' attitudes towards incorporating cultural elements into their English classes. By exploring these teachers' perspectives, this research aims to contribute meaningfully to the development of culturally responsive language education within Vietnamese universities. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of educators' perspectives, targeted efforts can be implemented to enhance both pedagogical approaches and curriculum design, thereby promoting more effective cultural inclusion. To the end, the study sought the answer to the research question: *What are the EFL teachers' cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes towards the integration of cultural elements into English classes at the chosen Vietnamese public university?*

2. Literature review

The current study follows the ABC Model of Attitudes that distinguishes cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

2.1 Cognitive aspect of integrating culture in language teaching

The cognitive dimension encompasses the beliefs, perceptions, and thought processes that teachers hold regarding the integration of cultural content in EFL instructional environment. As Eagly and Chaiken (1993) explain, teacher cognition powerfully shapes the priorities and approaches applied in classroom practices. Thus, evaluating cognitive factors provides crucial insights when examining implementation of cultural education. The following analysis details key cognitive considerations regarding culture's role in communication, student development, and overall value perceptions that influence pedagogical choices.

2.1.1 Importance of culture in communication

A seminal framework by Byram (2009) underlines that intercultural communicative competence, alongside linguistic competence, enables effective cross-cultural interactions and understanding. This model emphasizes that cultural familiarity is equally as essential as language skills for successful communication between diverse communities in today's globalized societies. As Byram (1994) states, "linguistic competence alone is not enough" (p. 71). Thus, he advocates that language educators must recognize culture's inextricable role in social communication exchanges and develop student competencies accordingly via explicit culture-rich instruction. The degree to which teachers internalize culture's core importance in communication significantly guides integration commitments in praxis. Research shows that perceived relevance strongly shapes instructional priorities and decisions (Basturkmen, 2012; Rohmani & Andriyanti, 2022). Furthermore, Pham (2007)'s study found that culture-focused communicative teaching techniques developed critical thinking skills largely absent from conventional grammar translation approaches still common in Vietnam, suggesting that integrating local culture can enhance students' classroom interaction and engagement.

2.1.2 Providing cultural awareness and inclusivity

Likewise, influencing integration, Ghaffari and Aslrasouli (2022) highlight beliefs about the role of culture learning in fostering inclusive, ethical orientations that value diversity. As societies grow increasingly diverse amid globalization, educators require cultural adaptability and multiperspectivity skills when participating in multicultural environments professionally and publicly (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Thus, Baker (2012) argues that a key cognitive rationale for cultural integration includes nurturing students' intercultural sensitivity and minimizing ethnocentric worldviews through exposure to diverse beliefs and lifestyles. Constructing inclusive classrooms requires teachers to facilitate mutual cultural understanding spanning student backgrounds as well (Gay, 2002). Therefore, cultural insight could help eliminate stereotypes (Pham, 2007) and enable cooperation as well as community building (Kahraman, 2016).

2.1.3 Developing critical thinking abilities

As a subject inherently steeped in perspectives, interpretations and products carrying embedded ideologies, assumptions, and values of societies over time, Lázár (2005) characterizes cultural materials as rich conduits for building students' higher-order thinking abilities related to critical analysis, evaluation, and creativity. Purposefully integrating cultural elements filled with contrasts, implicit meanings, and symbolism provides meaningful subject matter to strengthen intellectual skills (Pham, 2007). Moreover, structured analytical tasks prompt unpacking cultural references, trends, and dimensions represented across varied sources and communities to deduce intentions, question framing, examine omissions, and investigate power issues (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Kahraman, 2016). Such activities boost transferable discernment capacities that aid interpreting implicit sociocultural dynamics encountered in academic studies and daily life. Thus, leveraging cultural content elevates cognition.

2.2 Affective aspect of integrating culture in language teaching

The affective dimension of cultural integration in language teaching encompasses the emotional responses, interests, and levels of satisfaction experienced by educators, which significantly influence their willingness and capacity to incorporate diverse cultural elements into their pedagogy. Teachers' intrinsic motivation and positive emotional orientations towards cultural relevance are pivotal for driving proactive and sustained culturally embodied instruction (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Kramsch & Hua, 2016). This section explores the role of teachers' interest and passion for sharing culture, and their satisfaction with current integration methods, instructional materials, and activities, in shaping culturally responsive language education.

2.2.1 Interest and passion for sharing culture

Kramsch and Hua (2016) establishes that teachers displaying intrinsic disinterest, doubts or apathy towards cultural relevance proved reluctant to implement transformative integration, thus thwarting intercultural advancement institutionally. Sustained enactment remains unlikely when diverse cultures are viewed mainly as an extra burden rather than an urgent priority. Thus, cultivating genuine curiosity and positive orientations among teams is pivotal for driving proactive, culturally embodied pedagogy (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Likewise, Cooper et al. (2016) and Young and Sachdev (2011) highlight that displaying sincere passion and proudly sharing personal cultural stories, traditions and visions in classroom spaces profoundly nurtures teacher-student connections that resist injustice. However, constantly reinventing such vulnerable exchanges demands immense emotional labor, which is unsustainable individually long term. Therefore, establishing caring school communities that collectively uplift cultural diversity and knowledge exchange is instrumental for spreading passionate intercultural leadership capacities and resisting reductionist pressures. Thus, passion fuels progress (Almohawes, 2020).

2.2.2 Satisfaction with current integration

Kramsch and Hua (2016) states "assessing collective satisfaction levels regarding the extent and efficacy of cultural embodiment in existing curricular environments proves crucial because confidence often breeds complacency whereas frustrations may inspire positive change" (p.250). Thus, evaluating teacher satisfaction across three key domains offers insights:

- *Teaching Methods:* Cooper et al. (2016) explains "cultural responsiveness requires balancing priorities and emotional support" (p.8). Evaluating sentiments regarding common techniques used to integrate culture, such as discussion facilitation, role-plays, and inquiries, spotlights potential gaps that spur innovation versus maintaining sufficiency perpetuating status quo.
- *Instructional Materials:* Young and Sachdev (2011) advocate surveys gauging teacher "confidence and frustrations with cultural relevance and representativeness of core textbooks, readings and media used across levels may highlight upgrade areas" (p.90) needed to "avoid superficial treatments failing diverse students" (p.95). Materials embodiment is pivotal.
- *Integration Activities:* Probing sentiments around supplementary activities regarding heritage events, guest talks, and cultural projects reveals potential enhancements to boost "relevance and satisfaction perpetually" (Genç & Bada, 2005, p.81). Activity relevance connects culture to community relationships and wellbeing. Therefore, it is necessary for

teachers to integrate cultural elements into their classes with ease to facilitate more culture-related activities (Almohawes, 2020).

2.3 Behavioral aspects of integrating culture in language teaching

The behavioral facet encompasses teachers' practices and actions facilitating cultural embodiment throughout instruction. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) characterize exhibited behaviors as tangible indicators of priorities enacted from beliefs across learning environments. Therefore, patterns within key domains like resource provisions, academic tasks, and co-curricular activities reveal integration commitments in praxis influencing student intercultural gains. The following overview examines research on pivotal teacher behaviors cultivating cultural responsiveness.

2.3.1 Facilitating cultural comparisons

Foundational scholarship by Buttjes and Byram (1991) advocates for structured analytical tasks that require students to identify and articulate cultural patterns across various societies using English as meaningful intercultural training. Comparison activities that direct students to find sociocultural similarities and differences assist interpreting behaviors, values, and norms between one's home culture and diverse communities globally (Allen, 2004; Almohawes, 2020). Purposeful scaffolding enables students to deduce cultural assumptions, intended meanings, omissions, and representations shaping the materials presented when making reasoned cross-cultural parallels (Cooper et al., 2016). Such constructive comparison skills nurture cognitive flexibility, cultural metacognition, and multiperspective analysis abilities that transfer widely when navigating today's diverse multicultural settings in both school and career context (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Thus, prioritizing integration of thoughtful intercultural tasks elevates behavioral responsiveness, equipping graduates to thrive in a globalized world.

2.3.2 Providing cultural resources

Furthermore, emphasizing resource provision, McKay (2000) advocates for supplementing conventional linguistic materials to purposefully accentuate cultural visibility within learning environments through films, podcasts, brochures, posters, books, cuisine, décor, and music that convey behaviors, ideas, and styles of international communities using English. Resource variety assists in multilayered cultural exposure (Allen, 2004). Moreover, Porto (2010) emphasizes the use of analysis guides to sharpen observations and deepen understanding when interpreting embedded cultural dimensions and collaboratively discussing insights. Resources should prompt connections with existing cultural knowledge. Careful selections counters stereotypes through fair representations. Such resources enhance responsiveness.

2.3.3 Promoting openness to unfamiliar cultures

Young and Sachdev (2011) advocate that cultural programming holistically promotes acquiring an ethical "open mindset embracing diversity" (p.183). Purposeful activities suspend judgement by exploring global artifacts, issues and histories counteracting xenophobia stemming from insular assumptions (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Almohawes, 2020). Educators model transparency by voicing past narrow assumptions transformed by cultural awakening stories (Doppen & An, 2014). Gradual perspective shifts thereby nurture orientation building given limited intercultural contact opportunities abroad initially. Over time, sustained engagement fosters natural openness through cultural exchanges that bring communities together rather than divide them (Almohawes, 2020).

2.3.4 Planning cultural activities

Almohawes (2020) advocates recurrently "designing intercultural projects that have students applying learned sociolinguistic skills to co-organize events with community partners, enhancing programmatic cultural relevance through pragmatic collaborations and exchanges" (p. 71). Similarly, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) directly assess a department program where teachers and students coordinate "the entire logistics process of preparing traditional luncheons showcasing the diversity of student food talents for families and faculty, allowing articulation of cultural knowledge through ingredients, teamwork coordination, and assistance navigating visitor interactions culturally" (p. 206). Thereby, beyond classroom confines, systematically "crafting participatory cultural workshops, exhibits, and celebrations" engenders openness through embodied engagement, "bringing languages to life between societal groups" (Lee & Greene, 2004, p. 156). Such planning mobilizes cultures observably while necessitating the application of discernment skills (Almohawes, 2020).

2.3.5 Conceptual framework

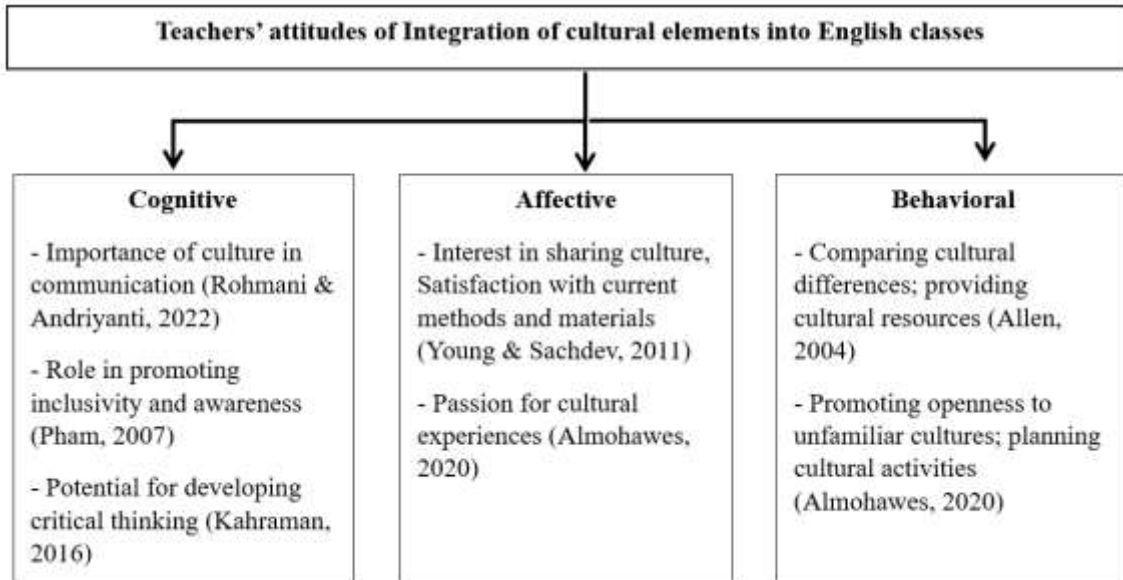


Fig 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

The present study employed a descriptive mixed-methods research approach, specifically utilizing a mixed methods design to examine tertiary EFL teachers' self-reported attitudes regarding the integration of culture into their English classes. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately, and then the results were compared and integrated for interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data were collected through a survey questionnaire, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Both types of data were collected within a similar timeframe.

3.1.1 Research Participants

Using a convenience sampling technique based on participants' availability and willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016), the researcher recruited 42 male and female EFL tertiary teachers currently employed at the setting who were teaching general English for non-majored students.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Background information		Frequency (N=42)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	23.80
	Female	32	76.20
Age	22 - 30	3	7.10
	31 - 40	21	50.00
	41 - 50	15	35.70
	Over 50	3	7.10
Qualification	BA (Bachelor of Art)	0	0
	MA (Master of Arts)	40	95.20
	Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy)	2	4.80
English teaching experience	1- 5 years	6	14.30
	6 - 10 years	9	21.40
	11-15 years	12	28.60
	16 - 20 years	8	19.00
	over 20 years	7	16.70
Number of general English classes to teach in each semester	1 - 4	23	54.80
	5 - 8	18	42.90
	9 - 12	1	2.40
	Over 12	0	0
Cultural experiences	traveled abroad for leisure or professional development	28	66.70
	spent time in English-speaking countries (two weeks)	15	33.70
	had participated in intercultural training or workshops	22	52.4

In terms of gender distribution, a majority of the participants were female (76.20%), while 23.80% were male. Regarding age, half of the participants (50%) were in the 31-40 age group, followed by 35.70% in the 41-50 age group. The age groups 22-30 and over 50 each accounted for 7.10% of the participants. The data on educational qualifications reveal that most participants held a Master of Arts degree (95.20%), while 4.80% had a Doctor of Philosophy degree. None of the participants had a Bachelor of Arts degree. In terms of English teaching experience, the largest group (28.60%) had 11-15 years of experience, followed by 21.40% with 6-10 years, 19% with 16-20 years, 16.70% with over 20 years, and 14.30% with 1-5 years of experience. Finally, the table shows the number of general English classes taught by the participants in each semester. The majority (54.80%) taught 1-4 classes, 42.90% taught 5-8 classes, and 2.40% taught 9-12 classes. None of the participants taught more than 12 classes per semester. Regarding the participants' cultural experiences, 28 teachers (66.7%) reported having traveled abroad for leisure or professional development. Among these, 15 teachers (35.7%) had spent time in English-speaking countries for periods ranging from two weeks to one year. Furthermore, 22 participants (52.4%) indicated that they had participated in intercultural training or workshops within the past five years. These experiences likely contributed to the teachers' perspectives on cultural integration in their English language classrooms.

3.2 Research Instruments

Grounded by the mixed-methods research design, two instruments were employed to address the research question in depth and breadth. Firstly, the questionnaire consisted of two main sections, in which the first section gathered demographic information about the participants, including gender, age, qualifications, teaching experience, and teaching load. Meanwhile, the second section explored teachers' attitudes towards incorporating cultural elements into their English classes based on the ABC model of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Specifically, this part included 21 items categorized into cognitive (9 items), affective (6 items), and behavioral (6 items) components. These items were adapted from studies by Rohmani and Andriyanti (2022), Pham (2007), Kahraman (2016), and Young and Sachdev (2011). Responses were collected using a 4-point Likert scale of agreement, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). To facilitate ease of access and maximize participation, the questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms, a method increasingly favored in contemporary research for its efficiency and convenience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Besides, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data that could provide more in-depth insights into teachers' practices about the integration of cultural elements into their English classes. The semi-structured format was chosen because it allows for open-ended questions that encourage participants to elaborate on their responses, while maintaining

consistency across interviews (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview protocol consisted of three main questions, which were developed based on the research aim and themes identified in the literature review:

- (1) *What do you think about integrating cultural elements in your EFL classes? Is it good for students? Why?*
- (2) *How do you feel about integrating cultural information in your EFL classes? Is it easy or difficult? Why? How are you satisfied with what you have done in your classes?*
- (3) *What improvements would you like to make to enhance the teaching of culture in your EFL classes? Do you plan to incorporate more activities, seminars, events, etc., for teaching culture in your classes?*

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Before administering the questionnaire, all participants were informed about the study's objectives and the importance of their contribution. The researcher provided brief instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and emphasized the need for honest responses. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms, which allowed for easy distribution and access via smartphones, laptops, or desktop computers. A link to the questionnaire was sent to the 42 EFL teachers, along with a brief introduction to the study and instructions for completion. Participants were given a week to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted with five teachers to ensure that the questionnaire items were clear, relevant, and easy to understand. Based on the feedback received during the piloting phase, minor adjustments were made to improve the clarity and coherence of the questions.

Following the questionnaire data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of six teachers who were purposively selected to represent a diverse range of ages, genders, and years of teaching experience, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the themes that emerged from the questionnaire data. The interviews were scheduled at times and locations convenient for each participant. Before beginning the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and assured participants that their responses would be kept confidential. Permission was sought to audio-record the interviews for later transcription and analysis. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure that participants could fully and comfortably express themselves, without language barriers hindering their responses. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and followed the predetermined set of questions.

After collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, the researcher carried out analyzing them. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using the SPSS software with descriptive statistics including the mean (M) and standard deviation (S.D.). The interpretation of the mean concerning teachers' attitudes toward integrating cultural elements into the classroom was as follows: $M = 1.00-1.75$: *Strongly disagree*; $M = 1.76-2.5$: *Disagree*; $M = 2.51-3.25$: *Agree*; $M = 3.26-4.00$: *Strongly agree*. Whereas, the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the content analysis method, following the guidelines of Creswell and Creswell (2018). The analysis process involved four main steps:

- *Transcribing*: The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and sent to participants for member checking, allowing them to confirm or clarify their responses.
- *Data Familiarizing*: The researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading the transcripts multiple times to identify emerging patterns.
- *Coding*: A combination of deductive and inductive coding was applied. Participants were labeled T1-T6, and questions as Q1-Q3.
- *Organizing and Reporting*: Coded data were then organized into themes using a thematic matrix, which enabled systematic comparison and identification of similarities and differences across participants' responses.

4. Results and discussion

Table 2.
Teachers' Cognitive Attitudes towards Incorporating Cultural Elements into EFL Classes

Item	Cognitive Attitudes	N = 42	
		M	S.D.
1	I believe culture is important in establishing appropriate communication.	3.52	0.55
2	I believe it is important to provide cultural elements when teaching English to my students.	3.48	0.55
3	I perceive that using diverse cultural sources creates an inclusive learning environment.	3.45	0.55
4	I think it is important to increase students' understanding and awareness of different cultures.	3.55	0.50
5	I think the integration of culture in EFL classes improves students' classroom interaction.	3.31	0.60
6	I believe intercultural training prepares students for success in diverse workplaces.	3.50	0.55
7	I think that cultural integration is important at all proficiency levels.	3.43	0.70
8	I believe that students can enhance their critical thinking skills by exploring diverse cultural perspectives.	3.36	0.76
9	I believe that having students compare different cultures can help get rid of stereotypes.	3.52	0.51

As shown in Table 2, teachers strongly supported integrating culture into English language instruction, with all nine items receiving mean scores above 3.26 and standard deviations ranging from 0.50 to 0.76, indicating consistent agreement. The highest-rated items emphasized the importance of raising students' cultural awareness (Item 4, M=3.55), enhancing communication through culture (Item 1, M=3.52), and reducing stereotypes by comparing cultures (Item 9, M=3.52). Teachers also strongly agreed on the value of providing cultural elements in lessons (Item 2, M=3.48), creating inclusive environments with diverse sources (Item 3, M=3.45), and preparing students for multicultural workplaces (Item 6, M=3.50). They supported integrating culture at all proficiency levels (Item 7, M=3.43). Slightly lower, though still strong, agreement was found for enhancing classroom interaction (Item 5, M=3.31) and promoting critical thinking through cultural perspectives (Item 8, M=3.36).

The questionnaire results showed teachers almost unanimously agreed on the importance of integrating cultural elements across a range of rationale dimensions. To further explore subtle nuances within these cognitive perspectives, interviews were conducted with six teachers. To understand the cognitive aspect of integrating cultural elements, the fourth interview question, "What do you think about integrating cultural elements in your EFL classes? Is it good for students? Why?" was posed. Most teachers (T2, T3, T4, and T6) found integrating cultural elements beneficial for students' communicative competence, global citizenship, and preparation for multicultural environments. T2 stated that:

Learning about culture is indispensable for students to communicate appropriately and become global citizens. (T2-Q1)

T3 also shared a similar view, saying

I believe that integrating cultural elements is essential for students' language learning and personal growth. By understanding different cultures, students can develop empathy, tolerance, and a broader worldview. It also helps them communicate more effectively in diverse contexts. (T3-Q1)

T4 added that

Introducing diverse cultural sources makes class more engaging for students and prepares them for multicultural workplaces. (T4-Q1)

However, T1 noted that textbooks do not always portray local culture accurately or extensively:

The textbooks don't always portray local culture accurately or extensively. So supplementary materials are needed to balance representation of Vietnamese culture alongside Western and other societies. (T1-Q1)

T5 believed that more training is needed for teachers to integrate cultural content effectively:

While cultural elements are very important in theory, more training is needed for teachers to integrate this content effectively across proficiency levels. (T5-Q1)

It is clear that the teachers largely agreed on the importance of integrating cultural elements across various rationale dimensions. This finding aligns with the shared belief among EFL teachers in diverse international contexts, such as Turkey (Civelek & Toplu, 2021) and Iran (Rohmami & Andriyanti, 2022), about the significance of providing students with a diverse range of cultural experiences. It also resonates with the results of studies in the Vietnamese context, such as Tran and Seepho (2016), which found that students' intercultural competence significantly improved when an intercultural stance was adopted in English speaking lessons. The interviews highlighted potential gaps between positive attitudes and practical application capabilities, suggesting that while cultural inclusion was almost unanimously valued conceptually, translational aspects pose ongoing challenges influencing enactment. This observation is consistent with the findings of studies in Yemen (Ahmed et al., 2019), Turkey (Tanis & Baltaci, 2018), Algeria (Dabou et al., 2021), and Saudi Arabia (Al-Amir, 2017), as well as in the Vietnamese context (Tran & Dang, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2016; Vo, 2017; Chau, 2020). The strong cognitive attitudes towards cultural integration reflect teachers' awareness of the interconnectedness of language and culture, as well as the importance of intercultural competence in today's globalized world. However, the gap between these positive attitudes and practical application can be explained by several factors. Firstly, teachers may lack the pedagogical knowledge and skills necessary to effectively translate their beliefs into classroom practices. Secondly, institutional constraints such as curriculum requirements and time limitations may hinder teachers' ability to implement their beliefs fully. Thirdly, the absence of clear guidelines or models for integrating culture into language teaching may leave teachers uncertain about how to operate their positive attitudes.

Table 3.
Teachers' Affective Attitudes towards Incorporating Cultural Elements into EFL Classes

Item	Cognitive Attitudes	N = 42	
		M	S.D.
10	I feel interested in integrating cultural elements in my English classes.	3.38	0.54
11	I am satisfied with my current teaching methods by integrating cultural elements in my English classes.	3.02	0.64
12	I am satisfied with my current teaching materials for integrating cultural elements in English classes.	3.02	0.72
13	I feel passionate to share cultural experiences with my students.	3.38	0.62
14	I feel interested in assisting my students in appreciating cultural diversity.	3.57	0.50
15	I find it easy to integrate cultural elements into my English classes.	3.00	0.66

As shown in Table 3, teachers expressed generally positive affective attitudes toward integrating cultural elements into their EFL classes, with mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.57 and standard deviations from 0.50 to 0.72, indicating moderate consistency. The strongest agreement was for helping students appreciate cultural diversity (Item 14, M=3.57), followed by interest in integrating cultural content (Item 10, M=3.38) and passion for sharing cultural experiences (Item 13, M=3.38). These results reflect a strong emotional commitment to promoting intercultural understanding. Moderate agreement was noted for satisfaction with current teaching methods (Item 11, M=3.02) and materials (Item 12, M=3.02), with higher standard deviations suggesting varied experiences. The lowest score, for perceived ease of cultural integration (Item 15, M=3.00), indicates that while teachers generally find integration manageable, some may face challenges. Overall, the data suggest a strong affective inclination toward cultural integration, tempered by practical considerations in implementation.

The questionnaire results showed teachers felt intrinsically rewarded by cultivating cultural diversity and sharing personal intercultural insights. However, satisfaction and self-efficacy around practical application capabilities appeared lower or more inconsistent. The fifth interview question, *"How do you feel about integrating cultural information in your EFL classes? Is it easy or difficult? Why? How are you satisfied with what you have done in your classes?"* focused on the emotional aspect of integrating cultural elements. T1 found it rewarding to see students' perspectives expand when integrating cultural elements, stating that

I really enjoy when students gain deeper cultural understanding - seeing their perspectives expand is very rewarding. (T1-Q2)

However, T2, T4, and T6 mentioned that it can be challenging due to time constraints and curriculum requirements. T4 said,

The textbooks and standardized tests don't prioritize culture enough. So, my existing materials and mandated assessments limit what's possible regarding cultural inclusion. (T4-Q2)

T6 also noted the difficulty, stating:

Making culture a consistent focus can be difficult with so many other demands. (T6-Q2)

In addition, T3 and T5 expressed that teachers do not always feel fully confident in integrating cultural elements across proficiency levels. For example, T3 revealed

While culturally responsive teaching is important, I don't always feel fully confident in integrating these elements effectively across proficiency levels. (T3-Q2)

T5 elaborated further, saying

Integrating cultural information can be both rewarding and challenging. It's satisfying to see students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for different cultures. However, finding the right balance between language skills and cultural content can be difficult, especially with time constraints and curriculum requirements. I'm relatively satisfied with my efforts so far, but I know there's always room for improvement. (T5-Q2)

Based on the results, the teachers felt intrinsically rewarded by cultivating cultural diversity and sharing personal intercultural insights. This finding is consistent with studies in Iran (Ghaffari et al., 2022) and Turkey (Civelek & Toplu, 2021), where teachers acknowledged the importance of promoting intercultural competence among students. It also aligns with the findings of Ho (2011) and Rostami (2016), revealing that both Vietnamese teachers and students perceive culture learning as beneficial for language acquisition. However, satisfaction and self-efficacy around practical application capabilities appeared lower or more inconsistent. The interviews validated the questionnaire findings concerning strong intrinsic motivation but also underscored external and internal challenges influencing practical application, such as standardized requirements and evaluative instruments that underemphasize culture, which may lower satisfaction, and teacher training gaps that could restrict self-assurance in implementing cultural responsiveness. These challenges were also reported in studies conducted in Yemen (Ahmed et al., 2019), Turkey (Tanis & Baltaci, 2018), Algeria (Dabou et al., 2021), and Saudi Arabia (Al-Amir, 2017), as well as in the Vietnamese context (Nguyen et al., 2016; Tran & Dang, 2014; Vo, 2017). Inferentially, the positive affective attitudes towards cultural integration can be attributed to teachers' recognition of the importance of cultural competence in an increasingly globalized world. However, the lower satisfaction and self-efficacy in practical application may be explained by several factors. Firstly, the disconnect between teachers' intrinsic motivation and the external constraints they face in implementing cultural integration can lead to frustration and reduced satisfaction. Secondly, the lack of specific training in cultural integration techniques may contribute to lower self-efficacy, as teachers may feel unprepared to effectively incorporate cultural elements into their lessons. Thirdly, the absence of clear guidelines or assessment criteria for cultural integration may leave teachers uncertain about the effectiveness of their efforts, further impacting their sense of satisfaction and self-efficacy.

Table 4.
Teachers' Behavioral Attitudes towards Incorporating Cultural Elements into EFL Classes

Item	Cognitive Attitudes	N = 42	
		M	S.D.
16	I spend more time integrating cultural elements into my English classes.	2.74	0.67
17	I intend to provide the comparison in different cultural aspects.	2.90	0.62
18	I try to complement the cultural content in my textbook with additional authentic resources.	3.02	0.60
19	I plan to invite guest speakers to discuss cultural aspects in my English classes.	2.48	0.89
20	I try to promote the acquisition of an open mind towards unfamiliar cultures.	3.31	0.52
21	I try to design cultural activities for my students to participate in.	3.14	0.75

Table 4 illustrates a varied pattern in teachers' behavioral attitudes toward cultural integration in EFL instruction, with mean scores ranging from 2.48 to 3.31 and standard deviations between 0.52 and 0.89. Most responses fell within the "agree" range, with one item in "strongly agree" and one in "disagree." Teachers showed the strongest agreement in promoting open-mindedness toward unfamiliar cultures (Item 20, M=3.31, S.D.=0.52), reflecting consistent commitment to fostering cultural openness. Moderate agreement was found for designing cultural activities (Item 21, M=3.14), using authentic cultural resources (Item 18, M=3.02), offering cultural comparisons (Item 17, M=2.90), and spending more time on cultural content (Item 16, M=2.74). However, inviting guest speakers (Item 19, M=2.48, S.D.=0.89) received the lowest score, indicating low and variable engagement with this practice. Overall, while teachers generally engage in behaviors that support cultural integration, their actions vary in intensity and consistency depending on classroom practices and contextual factors. The questionnaire results showed that while most teachers agreed they make efforts to integrate extra cultural content, practical investments of time, capabilities, and opportunities fluctuated individually. Interviews with six teachers expanded on potential barriers influencing applied behaviors.

The final interview question, "What would you like to do to enhance teaching culture in your EFL classes? Do you plan to incorporate more activities, seminars, events, etc., for teaching culture in your classes?" investigated the behavioral aspect of integrating cultural elements. T1 expressed a desire for more collaboration on developing shared cultural teaching resources that:

I'd like to collaborate more with colleagues on developing a shared bank of cultural teaching resources we could all draw from. (T1-Q3)

T2 was interested in organizing cultural events or festivals for students to showcase knowledge, stating

I would love to organize cultural events or festivals where students can showcase their knowledge and engage in hands-on activities related to different cultures. This could include food tastings, traditional dances, or cultural presentations. I think it would be a great way to make the cultural learning experience more immersive and memorable for students. (T2-Q3)

T3 wanted to connect students with English learners in other countries for cultural exchange:

I'd like to connect my students with English learners in other countries for cultural exchange. (T3-Q3)

T4 and T6 noted that finding quality authentic resources on less familiar cultures takes time. Evidently, they uttered that

Locating quality authentic resources on less familiar cultures takes time. And tight schedules make it hard to design engaging activities as often as I'd like. (T4-Q3)
I compile articles, videos, and discussion prompts about various cultural practices quite easily thanks to the internet. Though finding artifacts can be trickier compared to online content. (T6-Q3)

T5 thought about inviting guest speakers from diverse backgrounds but acknowledged that scheduling can be a challenge:

I want to invite guest speakers from diverse backgrounds. But most people I know work full-time jobs during school hours unfortunately. (T5-Q3)

In sum, while most teachers agreed they made efforts to integrate extra cultural content, the practical investments of time, capabilities, and opportunities fluctuated individually. The interviews expanded on potential barriers influencing applied behaviors, such as resource accessibility, competing priorities, and networking barriers that can restrict consistent behavioral enactment. These findings are in line with the challenges reported in studies conducted in Iran (Rohmami & Andriyanti, 2022) and Indonesia (Adzima et al., 2023), where teachers faced obstacles in dedicating more time to culture instruction due to limited knowledge of other cultures and students' low language proficiency. Similarly, in the Vietnamese context, Nguyen et al. (2016), and Tran and Dang (2014) highlighted that time constraints, limited knowledge of other cultures, and students' low language proficiency were cited as obstacles to dedicating more time to culture instruction. The fluctuation in behavioral attitudes towards cultural integration can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, individual differences in teachers' cultural knowledge, pedagogical skills, and personal experiences with intercultural communication may influence their confidence and ability to integrate cultural elements consistently. Secondly, the varying availability of resources and support for cultural integration across different educational contexts may lead to inconsistent implementation. Thirdly, competing demands on teachers' time and attention, such as covering linguistic content and preparing students for exams, may result in cultural integration being deprioritized in practice, despite positive intentions.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the EFL teachers at the Vietnamese public university demonstrated positive attitudes towards the integration of cultural elements into their English classes, recognizing the importance of culture teaching for language learning and intercultural communicative competence development. This finding is consistent with the general trend observed in studies conducted in diverse international contexts (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2019; Tanis & Baltaci, 2018; Rohmami & Andriyanti, 2022; Al-Amir, 2017; Dabou et al., 2021; Adzima et al., 2023), and aligns with the results of studies in the Vietnamese context (Nguyen et al., 2016; Tran & Dang, 2014; Vo, 2017). However, challenges related to external factors, such as curriculum constraints, standardized assessments, and resource limitations, as well as internal factors, including teacher training and self-efficacy, influenced the translation of positive attitudes into consistent practices. These findings align with the observations of previous studies in both Vietnamese and international contexts (Nguyen et al., 2016; Tran & Dang, 2014; Vo, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2019; Tanis & Baltaci, 2018; Dabou et al., 2021; Rohmami & Andriyanti, 2022; Kahraman, 2016), emphasizing the need for appropriate support, professional

development opportunities, and clear guidelines to help EFL teachers bridge the gap between their attitudes and practices in fostering a more interculturally inclusive language learning environment. The variations in the objectives of culture teaching among Vietnamese EFL teachers, as reported by Chau (2020), further underscore the importance of providing clearer guidelines and support in designing and implementing culture teaching practices in the Vietnamese context.

While this study offers valuable insights into EFL teachers' attitudes regarding cultural integration at the chosen university-level setting, several limitations must be acknowledged. Conducted within a single institution, the findings may not be generalizable to other educational contexts. The sample size, though informative, may not represent the full diversity of teacher perspectives, and the use of convenience sampling may have introduced self-selection bias. Relying on self-reported data also poses risks of social desirability bias and inaccurate recall. The absence of triangulation such as classroom observations or student feedback limits the depth of understanding regarding actual practices. Additionally, the cross-sectional design captures attitudes at a single point in time, without accounting for possible changes over time. Interpretation bias in qualitative analysis is another concern; strategies like multiple coding, member checking, or peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) could have strengthened the study's trustworthiness. Despite these limitations, the research contributes meaningfully to the literature on cultural integration in EFL, offering a foundation for future inquiry.

Funding: This research is funded by University of Finance - Marketing

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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