



Effects of learning culture on English language learning by EFL students at HCMC College of Economics

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ABSTRACT: The concept of culture encompasses the way people live, including their customs, attitudes, lifestyles, traditions, beliefs, norms, and values within their society (Brown, 2007). Members of a group are aware of the rules of proper and impolite behavior and understand how to use language in various social situations based on a shared set of values, beliefs, and norms. Consequently, languages are used differently depending on the culture. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at HCMC College of Economics on how integrating cultural learning into their English language education influences their learning experience. The research seeks to provide valuable insights into the role of cultural integration in English language education for Vietnamese students. To achieve this, the paper employed quantitative research methods to assess students' perceptions regarding the importance of incorporating cultural aspects of the English language into their learning process. Additionally, the study examined how the integration of cultural learning impacts the English language proficiency of EFL students. Furthermore, to analyze and interpret the results, the paper recommends employing a qualitative approach, utilizing concepts or findings from previous research to support the data. Based on a population size of 168 students who are third-year English major at Ho Chi Minh City College of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City. The analysis results indicate that students positively value the importance of culture learning in English learning. Also, there is a strong correlation between students' perceptions for cultural learning, their cultural knowledge, and their English learning progress.

KEYWORDS: English language learning, EFL students, HCMC College of Economics, Learning culture

INTRODUCTION

To teach languages effectively, cultural integration is essential (Liddicoat, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2013; Kramersch, 1998; Byram, 2012). It is not necessarily the case that teaching a language without integrating culture will result in a competent learner (Krasner, 1999). A language is learned not only by constructing sentences, paragraphs, and texts correctly but also by understanding the deeper meaning behind each word, utterance, and gesture (Kramersch, 2014). As Liddicoat (2005) emphasizes, learning a foreign language (FL) involves not just conversing in that language but also engaging with the cultures that shape its use. For language to be used appropriately, it must align with the behavioral expectations of a given cultural perspective (Choudhury, 2013).

Kramersch (2013), in her book, emphasizes that communication with speakers of a different language is inherently a cultural act. Consequently, learning a language is fundamentally learning a culture. Without understanding the culture tied to a language, we are merely acquiring meaningless symbols, which can lead to significant misunderstandings. For example, many Vietnamese learners of English may possess a solid command of the language but still face difficulties in communicating effectively with native speakers due to cultural misunderstandings.

For instance, some Vietnamese learners of English may unintentionally ask about topics such as age, occupation, salary, religion, or political affiliation. These subjects often considered taboo in Western communication etiquette. Such questions might be perceived as intrusive, leading to the impression that Vietnamese people are impolite. In these situations, the problem lies not in language proficiency but in a lack of intercultural communicative competence. Conversely, Western learners of Vietnamese may feel frustrated by cultural norms where greetings are less common, yet questions about age and family are frequent. These differences highlight the importance of cultural understanding in effective communication.

Furthermore, cultural awareness can bridge the gap between language systems and promote mutual respect. For example, language learners who are immersed in a target culture through literature, art, music, and traditions tend to develop deeper emotional connections to the language. This connection not only promotes better language acquisition but also a greater appreciation of cultural diversity. This engagement builds empathy and enables learners to more effectively navigate cross-cultural situations. For example,



understanding why a specific indirect expression or gesture is used in a certain culture can reduce misunderstandings and promote smoother interactions.

Additionally, mastering a language without cultural awareness may limit learners' development in professional settings. For example, misunderstandings about cultural norms, workplace hierarchies, or social etiquette in business negotiations can lead to negative outcomes. By developing their cultural competence, learners can respond to these situations with greater confidence and sensitivity, thereby promoting successful interactions in a globalized context. This is particularly important in areas such as tourism, international trade and education, where cultural understanding is as important as linguistic accuracy.

In Vietnam, English is often considered a tool for economic and social progress. However, the emphasis on grammar and vocabulary in many traditional classrooms can overshadow the importance of cultural learning. This imbalance can cause learners to struggle to engage in authentic conversations or misinterpret subtle cultural cues. By integrating cultural aspects into English teaching, educators can provide learners with the skills they need to interact confidently and appropriately in diverse contexts. Additionally, increased awareness of global and local cultural norms can help learners adapt their communication styles and avoid possible conflicts or misunderstandings.

Teachers also play a key role in developing students' cultural understanding. By incorporating culturally relevant material and creating opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue, teachers can make language learning more engaging and meaningful. Activities such as analyzing cultural case studies, discussing idioms, or exploring cultural traditions through multimedia can help students connect language learning to real-world applications. This approach not only deepens students' knowledge of the target language, but also improves their ability to understand different perspectives.

Therefore, it is crucial to explore the impact of learning culture in the context of English learning at the Ho Chi Minh City School of Economics. Understanding how cultural integration affects language acquisition can provide valuable information for developing effective teaching strategies to prepare students for real-world communication. By building cultural competency, educators not only help students acquire language skills but also prepare them to become global citizens who can navigate cultural differences with confidence and respect. Furthermore, exploring the interplay between language and culture can contribute to broader discussions on educational reform, highlighting the need for programs that prioritize language and intercultural skills. These initiatives enable students to succeed not only academically, but also in their personal and professional lives, allowing them to become whole individuals in an interconnected world.

When it comes to learning English, students' proficiency levels have become a significant concern in education. This issue spans a variety of areas, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Additionally, students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English play a crucial role in shaping their overall proficiency.

Despite numerous initiatives and resources aimed at enhancing English education, many students continue to struggle to attain satisfactory proficiency. This challenge can result in several negative outcomes, such as lower academic performance, restricted opportunities for further education, and diminished career prospects.

Additionally, the teaching methodologies used by educators are critical to students' language acquisition. Challenges such as the use of ineffective teaching methods and teachers relying on Vietnamese while teaching English can hinder learning. Furthermore, many English teachers lack opportunities to practice or engage with native speakers, which limits their understanding of English culture in daily life and their ability to fully impart this cultural knowledge to their students.

Traditional teaching methods often prioritize grammar and repetitive grammar exercises, which may fall short in fostering practical language skills. To address this, innovative and interactive teaching strategies are essential to engage students and improve their proficiency. Classroom interactions frequently lack sufficient communicative practice, both in using the language and incorporating cultural elements from textbooks. Thus, it becomes evident that using English actively during lessons is vital for enhancing proficiency. However, the absence of meaningful communicative opportunities in classrooms remains a significant obstacle, as students often have limited chances to practice speaking and listening in real-world contexts. Furthermore, integrating discussions of cultural elements found in textbooks can deepen students' understanding of the language within its cultural framework. Unfortunately, this crucial aspect is often overlooked, further limiting students' ability to connect language learning with its cultural significance.

Students' attitudes and motivations play a pivotal role in shaping their learning outcomes. A lack of interest or negative perceptions toward learning English can significantly impede their progress. Therefore, fostering a positive attitude and emphasizing



the practical benefits of English proficiency are key to motivating students. Many learners also struggle with a fear of making mistakes, especially when engaging with cultural aspects of the language. This fear often discourages active participation in language activities, ultimately hindering their progress. To address this, it is essential to create a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment that alleviates anxiety and encourages students to participate more confidently. Integrating cultural content into the curriculum and textbooks is vital for providing context, enriching the learning experience, and making it more engaging. However, cultural elements are often insufficiently represented or poorly incorporated, limiting their potential to enhance students' understanding of the language within its cultural framework.

Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that includes improving teaching strategies, creating more immersive and interactive learning environments, and providing students with ample opportunities to practice their English skills. Additionally, understanding the unique challenges faced by different groups of students is essential for designing tailored interventions that effectively meet their needs. This statement emphasizes the importance of addressing this issue and underscores the urgent need for targeted solutions to enhance students' English proficiency.

Additionally, the digital age has introduced new language learning tools and platforms, but the integration of these resources often does not pay attention to cultural aspects. Although technology can provide interactive and immersive experiences, many programs and applications prioritize linguistic accuracy over cultural competence. Such supervision may limit students' ability to use their language skills in culturally appropriate ways, thereby highlighting gaps that need to be addressed.

Another problem is the gap between urban and rural educational environments. Students in rural areas often have limited access to qualified teachers, resources and exposure to English-speaking environments, further exacerbating the skills gap. Tailored solutions that address these disparities are critical to ensuring equitable learning opportunities across diverse backgrounds.

Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that includes improving teaching strategies, creating more immersive and interactive learning environments, and providing students with ample opportunities to practice their English skills. Additionally, understanding the unique challenges faced by diverse student populations is critical to designing customized interventions that effectively meet their needs. Emphasizing cultural integration alongside language development helps students develop well-rounded skills that prepare them for real-world communication and cross-cultural interactions.

This study aimed to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at HCMC College of Economics on how integrating cultural learning into their English language education influences their learning experience. The research seeks to provide valuable insights into the role of cultural integration in English language education for Vietnamese students.

The study focuses on addressing the following research questions:

1. To what extent do EFL students perceive the importance of integrating cultural aspects of the English language into their English learning process?
2. How does the integration of cultural learning impact the English language proficiency of EFL students?

METHODOLOGY

Research setting

Ho Chi Minh City College of Economics aims to become a leading and prestigious multidisciplinary vocational institution in Southeast Asia. The college fosters a comprehensive learning environment that allows each student to develop their personal values, strengthen their professional knowledge, master essential skills, and prepare for lifelong learning, integration, and career success.

With over 8,000 students, a dedicated board of directors, and 230 staff members, the college is designed to seven faculties: the Faculty of Business Administration, the Department of Accounting and Auditing, the Department of Foreign Languages, the Department of Banking and Finance, the Faculty of Information Technology, the Faculty of Social Sciences - Hotel and Tourism, and the Faculty of Basic Sciences.

Research sample

The study employed a sampling method to select participants for the questionnaire survey. The researcher utilized Slovin's formula, developed in 1960 (Tejada & Punzalan, 2012), to determine the appropriate sample size for the survey. This formula is widely recognized for its effectiveness in ensuring a representative sample while maintaining statistical reliability.



Based on a population size of 168 students who are third-year English major at City College of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City, the sample is briefly described:

Table 1: The sampling of the paper

No.	Genders	Numbers	Percentages
1	Male	56	33,3%
2	Female	112	66,7%

Research Corpus

Professional English in Use: "Marketing" by Cate Farrall and Marianne Lindsley provides a comprehensive guide to marketing terminology and practices in English, particularly within professional contexts. While the primary focus is on enhancing marketing vocabulary and language skills, the book also integrates essential cultural elements that are key to effective communication in international marketing. Below are some of the cultural factors discussed in the book:

Global Marketing Strategies:

1. Understanding the impact of cultural differences on marketing strategies across various regions.
2. Adapting marketing messages to align with local cultures and consumer behaviors.

Consumer Behavior

1. Insights into how cultural values influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions.
2. The importance of cultural sensitivity when targeting different market segments.

Communication Styles

1. Recognizing the differences in communication styles across cultures and their implications for marketing.
2. Adjusting communication methods to fit the cultural context of the target audience.

Branding and Cultural Identity

1. Exploring how cultural identity and values influence brand perception and loyalty.
2. Developing strategies for building brands that resonate with diverse cultural groups.

Advertising and Cultural Norms

1. Understanding how cultural norms and values shape advertising content and messaging.
2. Examples of successful marketing campaigns tailored to different cultural contexts.

Negotiation and Business Practices

1. Exploring cultural differences in business negotiation styles and practices.
2. Providing tips for effective cross-cultural negotiations and building strong business relationships.

Ethical Considerations

1. Highlighting the importance of ethical behavior and corporate social responsibility in international marketing.
2. Recognizing and respecting cultural norms and legal requirements in different markets.

Linguistic and Cultural Nuances

1. Examining the impact of language on marketing communication and the necessity for accurate, culturally appropriate translations.
2. Avoiding cultural misunderstandings through careful use of language, imagery, and symbolism.

These cultural factors underscore the significance of cultural awareness and adaptability in marketing. By incorporating these elements, the book equips marketing professionals with the skills required to succeed in a globalized marketplace.

Research instruments

To collect data for this research, a survey questionnaire was utilized as the primary instrument. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the influence of cultural learning on the English language acquisition of EFL students enrolled at Ho Chi Minh City College of Economics. Participants were asked to express their level of agreement with various statements using a five-point Likert scale (1-5), ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

Based on the research questions, the paper utilized a 24-item questionnaire, divided into five dimensions. The first dimension focuses on the objectives of learning culture, comprising 5 items. The second dimension addresses the objectives of



English language learning, with 3 items. The third dimension pertains to skill development, with 4 items. The fourth dimension emphasizes knowledge enhancement, also with 4 items. The final dimension generally explores students' perceptions, consisting of 8 items.

Data collection and data analysis

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher to align with the paper's objectives. Both the questionnaire and detailed instructions were provided to students, allowing them to complete it at home. Students were encouraged to read the instructions thoroughly to ensure they provided accurate and thoughtful responses. After one week, the researcher collected the completed questionnaires, carefully reviewed the responses, and selected the most relevant ones. These responses were then compiled for the data processing.

The collected data was entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and SmartPLS 4. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for each statement in the questionnaire. The results highlighted the importance of cultural factors in English language learning. This analysis provided valuable insights and informed conclusions relevant to the research objectives.

RESULTS

The analysis of Cronbach's alpha was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of the survey questionnaire. As explained by Hair et al. (2010), Cronbach's alpha is a measure of the internal reliability of items within a scale. The coefficient values range from 0 to 1 and are classified as follows:

- $0.9 \leq \alpha \leq 1$: Excellent
- $0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$: Good
- $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$: Acceptable
- $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$: Questionable
- $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$: Poor
- $\alpha < 0.5$: Unacceptable

Internal consistency refers to the degree to which observed variables within a scale are positively correlated and explain the same concept. A higher positive correlation between observed variables results in a higher Cronbach's alpha value, indicating greater consistency.

According to Hair et al. (2010), Cronbach's alpha is a vital tool for assessing the reliability of scales in the questionnaire and guiding researchers in making necessary improvements.

Criteria for retention or removal of items:

- Items with a Cronbach's alpha value ≥ 0.6 are deemed reliable and retained in the analysis.
- Items with a Cronbach's alpha value < 0.6 may be subject to review or removal based on their contribution to the overall reliability of the scale.

Based on these criteria, the analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha value of ≥ 0.6 , ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Answer question 1: *To what extent do EFL students perceive the importance of integrating cultural aspects of the English language into their English learning process?*

In the cultural aspects, the primary objective of the study is to determine how students recognize the importance of culture in their lives and learning. Among the questions in Table 2, the paper addresses five critical dimensions: familiarity with culture (Q1), understanding the culture (Q2), deep comprehension (Q3), appeal to learn (Q4), and fostering global-mindedness (Q5). The results indicate that all these factors achieved a high level of agreement, with a Mean = 3.6. Notably, students expressed the highest expectations in achieving a “*deeper understanding of their own identity and cultural heritage*” and developing “*awareness, fostering openness, and a willingness to embrace global cultures.*”



Table 2. Mean of the objectives in learning culture

Item	QUESTIONNAIRE	N = 168	
	Objectives in learning culture	Mean	Standard deviation
Q1	It promotes my familiarity with the culture and civilization of the countries where the target language is spoken.	3.5	0.81
Q2	It enhances my awareness, fostering openness and a willingness to embrace global cultures.	3.7	0.83
Q3	It helps me gain a deeper understanding of their own identity and cultural heritage.	3.8	0.90
Q4	It enhances the appeal and motivation of language learning.	3.6	0.92
Q5	It broadens my perspectives on the world.	3.6	0.87
Total		3.6	0.86

To explore whether there is a positive relationship between cultural learning and English learning, the table 3 focuses on three aspects: “equips me with English language proficiency” in Q6, “build self-confidence in mastering English” in Q7, and “promote a strong sense of collaboration” in Q8. The results show that students agree there is a positive correlation between cultural learning and English learning, with Mean = 3.2. Among these, they highly agree that “culture learning helps them build self-confidence in mastering English.”

Table 3. Mean of the objectives in English language learning

Item	QUESTIONNAIRE	N = 168	
	Objectives in English language learning	Mean	Standard deviation
Q6	It equips me with English language proficiency that enables them to fulfill their future academic, professional, and personal needs.	3.0	0.83
Q7	It fosters my long-lasting enthusiasm for learning, cultivate good study habits, and build self-confidence in mastering English.	3.5	0.82
Q8	It allows my to experience the learning process, acquire scientific research methods, and promote a strong sense of collaboration	3.2	0.79
Total		3.2	0.81

Cultural understanding can help students develop the ability to evaluate cultural differences and adapt in cross-cultural communication, thereby enhancing their English communication skills. Among the four skill-development factors measured, the ability to evaluate cultural differences received the highest level of agreement, with a Mean = 3.8 and a Total Mean = 3.7 (see table 4).



Table 4. Mean of the skill development

Item	QUESTIONNAIRE	N = 168	
	Skill development	Mean	Standard deviation
Q9	It encourages a deeper understanding my own culture.	3.6	0.83
Q10	It enhances me the ability to navigate and manage cross-cultural interactions.	3.7	0.84
Q11	It fosters my ability to assess and appreciate cultural differences with sensitivity.	3.8	0.89
Q12	It enhances my awareness of the similarities and differences between English speaking countries.	3.5	0.85
Total		3.7	0.85

The ability to develop cultural knowledge, transform it into personal experience, and apply it proficiently in life is a key focus. The results in Table 5, with a Mean = 3.8, demonstrate significant interest in developing cultural knowledge during the process of learning English. Among the four factors of knowledge development, the aspect of “the daily life and routines in the target culture” (Q14) garnered the most attention, with a Mean = 3.9.

Table 5. Mean of the knowledge development

Item	QUESTIONNAIRE	N = 168	
	Knowledge development	Mean	Standard deviation
Q13	1. It provides me with information about the marketing systems of the foreign culture.	3.8	0.91
Q14	2. It provides me with information about the daily life and routines in the target culture.	3.9	0.90
Q15	3. It provides me with information about the shared values and beliefs of the target culture.	3.7	0.87
Q16	4. It provides me with experiences that include a rich variety of cultural expressions, such as literature, music, theatre, film... to deepen their understanding of the target culture.	3.8	0.89
Total		3.8	0.89

Answer question 2: How does the integration of cultural learning impact the English language proficiency of EFL students?

The results in Table 6 indicate that students highly agree on the impact of cultural learning on their English proficiency (Mean = 3.7). Among the eight items surveyed, the highest-rated agreements are Q22 “Cultural content can also make English language learning feel more meaningful and connected to real-world experiences” and Q24 “I understand how English is used in various professional and social settings, whether it's business etiquette, media consumption, casual conversations...”. Conversely, the lowest level of agreement was observed for Q18: “The cultural contents of the textbook meet my expectations”.



Table 6. Mean of the students' affection

Item	QUESTIONNAIRE	N = 168	
	Students' affection	Mean	Standard deviation
Q17	It provides me more time to learn culture in English class	3.9	0.93
Q18	The cultural contents of the textbook meet my expectation.	3.4	0.85
Q19	I understand cultural context in which words, phrases, and idioms are used in the textbook.	3.6	0.95
Q20	Cultural learning fosters better communication by exposing me to diverse communication styles, etiquette, and social norms.	3.7	0.97
Q21	I am often more motivated to learn when I see the practical applications of the language skills in various cultural contexts.	3.8	0.90
Q22	Cultural content can also make English language learning feel more meaningful and connected to real-world experiences.	3.9	0.87
Q23	Cultural knowledge often brings with it a richer understanding of the language's nuances.	3.7	0.88
Q24	I understand how English is used in various professional and social settings, whether it's business etiquette, media consumption, casual conversations...	3.9	0.89
Total		3.7	0.90

The results in Fig. 1 reveal that students' perceptions of the importance of cultural learning have a significant impact on four factors: *objectives in learning culture*, *objectives in English language learning*, *skill development*, and *knowledge development*. Specifically, it influences *objectives in learning culture* by 71.6%, *objectives in English language learning* by 71.4%, *knowledge development* by 52.1%, and *skill development* by 49.5%. The reliability or Cronbach's Alpha for all four factors is greater than 0.8.

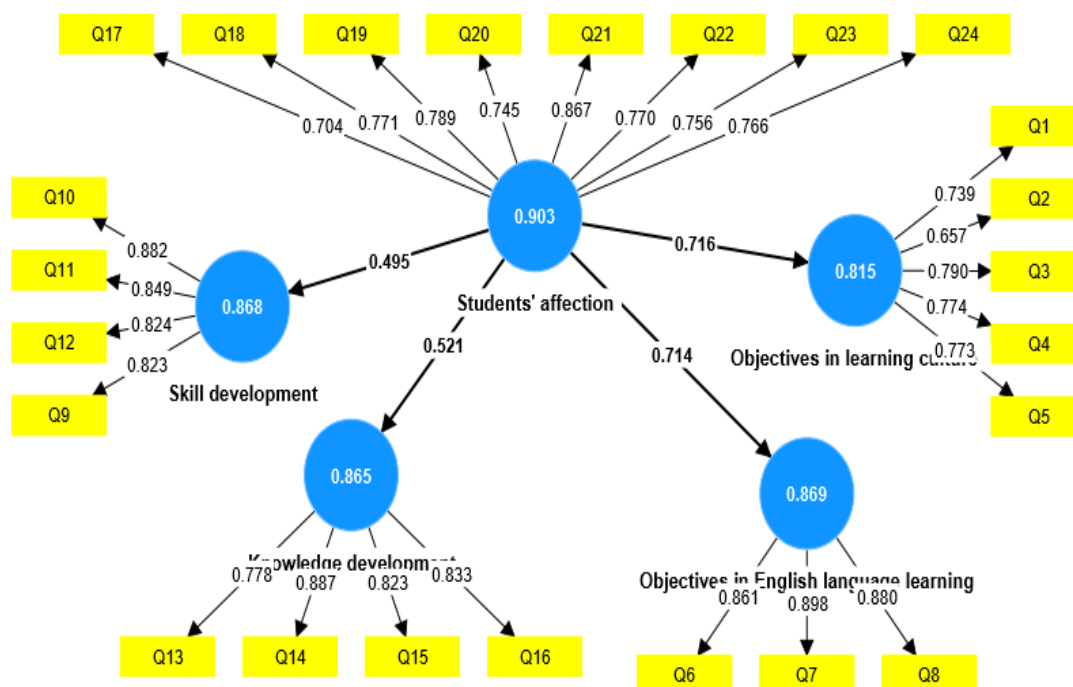


Fig. 1. Correlations between students' affection and other factors



DISCUSSION

The analysis results in 4.2 indicate that students positively value the importance of culture learning in English learning. Specifically, their evaluations are as follows: Objectives in learning culture with Mean = 3.6; Objectives in English language learning with Mean = 3.2; Skill development with Mean = 3.7; Knowledge development with Mean = 3.8; and Students' affection towards cultural learning and English learning proficiency with Mean = 3.7. Also, there is a strong correlation between students' perceptions for cultural learning, their cultural knowledge, and their English learning progress.

Take a look at literature review, the paper considers Kramsch (1998), in her work "Language and Culture", she emphasized that cultural knowledge is integral to learning and effectively using a language. She argued that language is not just a means of communication but also a carrier of cultural meanings. She highlights three primary aspects of the relationship between language and culture: Language learners must understand the cultural norms and values embedded in the language to communicate appropriately and avoid misunderstandings. Effective communication involves not just linguistic proficiency but also the ability to navigate and mediate between different cultural perspectives. And language learning is inherently tied to the social and cultural practices of its speakers, making cultural knowledge crucial for learners. Her work underscored the idea that learning English as a global language requires integrating cultural components into language learning to help students develop both English and cultural fluency.

The paper further discusses several issues that received high agreement from students, as followings:

The idea that there is a relationship between a deeper understanding of one's own identity, cultural heritage, and English learning is notably discussed by Byram (1997), particularly in his work on intercultural communicative competence. He emphasized that students of a foreign language, including English, a deeper understanding of their own cultural identity and heritage is vital. He said this self-awareness enables students to effectively engage with and appreciate other cultures. For instance, understanding one's own cultural framework allows students to critically reflect on their values, beliefs, and assumptions, making them better equipped to approach other cultures with openness and respect. A solid grasp of their own identity helps students mediate between their cultural perspective and that of the target language, facilitating meaningful communication. Byram's work is foundational in the field of intercultural education, linking cultural self-awareness with effective language learning and intercultural competence. This perspective has influenced language education policies worldwide.

Also, culture learning helps students build self-confidence in mastering English is closely associated with scholars in the field of intercultural education and language pedagogy. Daska, A. (2000) in her work, "Identity, Agency, and Second Language Acquisition" emphasized that engaging with cultural knowledge and practices empowers language learners by giving them context and relevance to their language use. She noted that when students understand the cultural context behind the language, they feel more confident using it appropriately in real-life situations. Exposure to cultural elements of English-speaking societies can motivate learners, as they see the practical and social benefits of mastering the language. Although Duff doesn't explicitly use the phrase "self-confidence," her work highlights the psychological benefits of integrating culture into language learning. Similar ideas are echoed by Kramsch and Byram, who also underline the transformative power of cultural learning in building learners' competence and confidence.

In addition, the concept that having the ability to evaluate cultural differences will help students achieve their language proficiency is strongly associated with Byram in his work on intercultural communicative competence. Byram (1997) introduced that intercultural competence involves the ability to critically evaluate cultural differences, which is essential for language learners to communicate effectively. Byram identifies "critical cultural awareness" as one of the key components of intercultural competence, which involves: students learn to critically analyze their own culture and the target culture, recognizing differences and similarities without bias. This ability to navigate and understand cultural nuances enhances learners' capacity to use the language appropriately in diverse contexts. Byram's work highlights how evaluating and understanding cultural differences is not just a supplementary skill but a fundamental part of achieving true language proficiency. This perspective has influenced language education practices, emphasizing the integration of culture and language in teaching.

Last but not least, the importance of understanding daily life and routines in the target culture for acquiring English as a foreign language is a theme prominently discussed by Brown (2000). Brown emphasized the role of cultural context in effective language acquisition. Learning about the daily life, routines, and social practices of the target culture provides learners with authentic contexts for using the language. Understanding everyday practices helps learners relate linguistic forms to their functions in real-



life scenarios, making learning more meaningful and effective. Familiarity with cultural norms and routines reduces misunderstandings and improves learners' ability to communicate naturally in the target language. Brown said the interplay between cultural knowledge and linguistic competence, advocating for incorporating real-life cultural elements into language instruction to enhance learner engagement and proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The analysis results reveal that students have a positive perception of the importance of integrating cultural learning into English learning. Specifically, their evaluations highly agree as follows:

- Objectives in cultural learning: Mean = 3.6
- Objectives in English language learning: Mean = 3.2
- Skill development: Mean = 3.7
- Knowledge development: Mean = 3.8
- Students' attitudes toward cultural learning and English learning proficiency: Mean = 3.7

These results show a strong correlation between students' perceptions of cultural learning, their cultural knowledge, and their progress in English learning.

Furthermore, The results indicate that students' perceptions of the importance of cultural learning significantly impact four key factors: objectives in cultural learning, objectives in English language learning, skill development, and knowledge development. Specifically:

- Objectives in cultural learning: 71.6% influence
- Objectives in English language learning: 71.4% influence
- Knowledge development: 52.1% influence
- Skill development: 49.5% influence

These findings highlight the central role that cultural learning plays in shaping students' goals and outcomes in English teaching. Notably, students' emphasis on developing knowledge and skills highlights the practical value of cultural awareness in their academic and professional growth. For example, understanding cultural nuances can improve their ability to communicate effectively in English, as language use is often influenced by cultural contexts. This aligns with global trends in language teaching, where integrating cultural elements has been proven to promote both language proficiency and intercultural communication skills.

Additionally, the data reveals that students present a balanced perspective on the dual purposes of learning English, both for cultural enrichment and linguistic proficiency. The close average scores for the cultural learning (3.6) and skills development (3.7) objectives suggest that students place as much importance on cultural understanding as on language mastery. This reflects a broader recognition that English, as a global language, is deeply linked to cultural dynamics. By experiencing different cultures, students are better equipped to navigate diverse social and professional contexts where English is the medium of communication.

The significant percentage effect further validates the interdependence of cultural learning and English acquisition. For example, 71.6% of the impact of cultural learning objectives means that students consider cultural understanding as the main objective to increase their enthusiasm and participation in language learning activities. Similarly, the 71.4% impact on English learning goals indicates that cultural studies provides a meaningful framework for students to set and achieve their language learning goals.

In addition, the impact on knowledge development (52.1%) and skill development (49.5%) was relatively high, indicating that cultural learning extends beyond theoretical understanding to practical application. Knowledge development involves the acquisition of cultural knowledge to enrich students' understanding of language use in the real world, while skill development focuses on applying this knowledge to improve speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. These results suggest that cultural learning acts as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical language skills, thereby promoting a more complete learning experience.

Another remarkable aspect of the results is the positive attitude shown by the students towards the integration of cultural studies in the teaching of English. With an average score of 3.7, the students demonstrated a clear desire to integrate cultural elements as a fundamental element of their language learning journey. This positive attitude not only strengthens their motivation, but also



helps improve their overall English proficiency. Students open to cultural learning are likely to develop a deeper appreciation of the diversity and richness of the English-speaking world, thereby improving their linguistic and intercultural skills.

The findings also highlight the wider benefits of integrating cultural studies into English-taught courses. By exposing students to the cultural dimensions of language, educators can develop critical thinking, empathy, and adaptability—essential skills for navigating a globalized world. Additionally, cultural studies encourage students to become more aware of their own cultural identities, allowing them to interact cross-culturally with confidence and respect. The dual advantages of language and cultural competence highlight the holistic nature of the effective English teaching framework.

Furthermore, cultural learning can serve as a motivational tool to make English learning more engaging and relevant. By connecting language courses to real-world cultural scenarios, teachers can create more immersive and meaningful learning experiences. This approach not only increases students' interest in English, but also helps them retain knowledge more effectively because the cultural background provides a practical context for using the language. As a result, students are better able to apply their English skills in a variety of situations, from academic discussions to professional communications.

The results of this study also highlight the importance of adapting English teaching methods to meet students' cultural learning needs. For example, integrating culturally relevant materials, such as literature, media, and case studies from English-speaking countries, can enrich course content and provide students with valuable information about cultural norms and practices. Collaborative activities such as group discussions and role-playing exercises can further improve students' intercultural communication skills by simulating real-life interactions in English.

Furthermore, integrating cultural studies into English teaching meets the growing global demand for capable graduates. In today's interconnected world, fluency in English is not only a linguistic asset but also a cultural asset. By developing students' language skills and cultural awareness, educational institutions can help prepare them to succeed in international environments, whether in higher education, the workplace, or social settings.

The results of this study highlight the important role of cultural learning in English teaching at the Ho Chi Minh City School of Economics. The results highlight the strong correlation between students' perceptions of cultural learning, knowledge acquisition and skill development, providing valuable information to educators and policy makers. Integrating cultural elements into English teaching programs can significantly improve students' learning outcomes and prepare them to meet the challenges of globalization. Future research could explore specific strategies and activities that effectively combine culture and language learning to further optimize English teaching. In doing so, educators can ensure that students not only become proficient in English, but also become culturally competent global citizens.

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