

Exploring the Best Practices of Cultural Literacy Teaching in English Education and its Impact on Students' Values

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Abstract: Cultural literacy is defined by its emphasis on familiarity with a culture's background knowledge, prioritizes comprehension over technical precision in language use. Our study investigated best practices for teaching cultural literacy within English language education and its impact on student values. A mixed methods approach was employed, utilizing surveys with teachers and students (N=34), semi-structured interviews with teachers (n=15), and focus group discussions with students (n=10). The findings indicate that teachers integrate cultural elements into their teaching through various methods, with a preference for using authentic materials like films, music, and news articles. The survey results revealed that teachers perceive cultural literacy education to have a positive impact on student values. A significant portion of teachers reported increased student respect for other cultures, openness to new ideas, and critical thinking skills. Thematic analysis of the interviews with teachers reinforced these observations. They highlighted the development of student respect and tolerance, enhanced critical thinking skills that allow students to analyse cultural information, and increased confidence in cross-cultural communication. Students expressed a growing appreciation for cultural diversity, a shift towards greater empathy and understanding of different cultures, and a sense of empowerment to interact more effectively with people from various backgrounds. The study suggests that integrating cultural literacy into English language education can foster positive student outcomes.

Keywords: Student, Cultural Literacy, English, Student Values, Cultural Diversity

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural literacy, as defined by its emphasis on familiarity with a culture's background knowledge, prioritizes comprehension over technical precision in language use. This is evident not only in the challenges faced by learners of English as a foreign language (Amer, 2019), but also in the potential shortcomings of native speakers' cultural understanding. Hirsch and Warnock argues that a decline in cultural literacy, rather than a lack of technical skills measured by standardized tests, is the root cause of a perceived decline in national literacy (Hirsch, 1987; Warnock, 1987).

At its core, cultural literacy is fundamentally about reading comprehension, as a shared cultural background allows readers to decipher allusions, references, and implicit meaning within texts. Hirsch observed a decline in cultural literacy within American society, highlighting the

importance of understanding one's own culture for effective communication (Hirsch, 1987). This concept extends to foreign language learning, where cultural literacy becomes a valuable tool. Hirsch is credited with bringing the concept of cultural literacy to the forefront of educational discourse through his book "Cultural Literacy". He argued that true participation in society necessitates more than just basic literacy skills; it requires a foundational understanding of shared cultural knowledge. Hirsch believed that education should prioritize the transmission of this content-rich knowledge, asserting that all students have the capacity to achieve cultural literacy. To that end, his book offered a list of 5,000 terms he deemed essential for culturally literate Americans, encompassing historical figures and events, documents, figures of speech, and scientific terminology. He argued that acquiring this cultural inheritance was crucial for American children to fully engage in the intellectual and economic opportunities of a complex society. It is important to acknowledge Hirsch's pioneering role in the field of cultural literacy research. The definition of cultural literacy varies across ethnic groups (Ayu, 2020; Eguchi et al., 2021). Each group prioritizes knowledge elements deemed essential for understanding its legacy, present circumstances, and future prospects. In the context of the United States, for example, inter-ethnic conflict plays a significant historical and contemporary role, shaping the core aspects of American cultural literacy. This perspective aligns with the broader definition provided by other scholars which emphasizes familiarity with and comprehension of a dominant culture's idioms, allusions, and informal content. This encompasses everything from everyday references like street signs to historical knowledge and even contemporary slang. The concept of cultural literacy requires careful examination, as the terms "cultural literacy" and "culture" itself encompass multifaceted meanings. Comunian and England differentiate between visible and invisible aspects of culture (Comunian & England, 2020). Visible culture encompasses tangible elements like traditional clothing, cuisine, celebrations, and languages, readily perceived through the senses. Invisible culture, on the other hand, delves into the realm of values, beliefs, thoughts, and societal norms passed down through generations. Byram defines cultural competence as the ability to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural (Byram, 2012), ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds. In an intercultural competent school community, respect and appreciation for cultural diversity are translated into both theory and practice. Building on the concept of cultural diversity, Morrell emphasizes how social context shapes the process of literacy acquisition. He proposes a three-part definition of

culture: a process of human development guided by universal values, a repository of creative and intellectual practices that document human thought and experience, and a social tool that expresses shared meanings and values through art, education, institutions, and everyday behaviour. Morrell further distinguishes between two types of literacy: academic literacy, encompassing the ability to read, write, analyse, produce, and discuss widely recognized texts, and critical literacy, defined as the ability to deconstruct the socially constructed meanings embedded within texts (Morrell, 2002). Language acquisition has traditionally been recognized as a process deeply influenced by culture. Fielding emphasizes that learning a language is inherently interactive, requiring a reciprocal understanding between individuals and groups (Fielding, 2021). Consequently, studying the target language's culture is essential for learners to grasp the nuances of meaning and effectively adjust their communication accordingly. Culture, in this context, refers to the dynamic social order within a group of people, encompassing shared beliefs, worldviews, political systems, and customs passed down through generations. This close relationship between language and culture underscores the importance of understanding the target audience's cultural background to deliver messages appropriately. As Frank suggests, speakers must possess an awareness of their interlocutor's cultural context to ensure effective communication (Frank, 2013). Studies by Baker and Cakir emphasize the inseparable nature of language learning and cultural understanding (Baker, 2012; Cakir, 2006). Effective second language acquisition requires a trifecta of competencies: linguistic, communicative, and cultural. According to Abdulrahman and Ayyash, linguistic competence refers to the accurate and fluent use of a language's phonology (Abdulrahman & Ayyash, 2019), grammar, vocabulary, and semantics, alongside the four core language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Communicative competence builds upon this foundation, requiring the ability to deliver messages that are appropriate and effective within a specific context, utilizing various communication methods. Finally, cultural competence goes beyond factual knowledge; it encompasses the ability to behave appropriately within the target culture, as an educated native speaker would. In a communication scenario, linguistic competence alone is insufficient. Learners also need communicative and cultural competence to understand what is being said, to whom, when, and where it is appropriate to speak. Without cultural awareness of both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, a learner may struggle to participate appropriately, potentially appearing ignorant of broader cultural norms and principles. Cultural literacy is increasingly

recognized as a crucial element in education, fostering essential skills in students. Eaglestone emphasizes the importance of educators developing the necessary competencies to effectively integrate cultural components into the learning process (Eaglestone, 2020). These competencies include fostering student development in creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and collaboration. The outcome of cultural literacy education is the cultivation of social mobility and flexibility within students, preparing them to thrive in transcultural and transdisciplinary environments. This translates into several key capabilities, often referred to as "global competency," "cosmopolitanism," "global citizenship," or "cosmopolitan capital." Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate a more caring and informed citizenry, equipped with the cultural knowledge to navigate diverse social settings. The interconnectedness of the globalized world underscores the close relationship between cultural literacy and English language acquisition. Several scholars acknowledge that language instruction inherently involves cultural transmission (Qu & Telzer, 2017). In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), this necessitates understanding both the formal aspects of the language and its cultural conventions to ensure clear communication and avoid misunderstandings. Effective EFL instruction goes beyond vocabulary and grammar; it equips learners with critical thinking skills to infer meaning and navigate potential cultural ambiguities.

1.1 Rationale and Objective

The growing interconnectedness of the world necessitates a critical examination of how cultural literacy is integrated into English language education. This study aims to explore best practices in teaching cultural literacy within this context. By identifying effective teaching methods, we hope to gain insights into the impact of cultural literacy education on students' values, fostering a more informed and respectful citizenry prepared to navigate an increasingly diverse global landscape.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Participants

A mixed methods research design was employed for this study, conducted at Peking University. Data was collected from English course instructors (the majority of participants) and a smaller group of students. This approach allowed for a multifaceted investigation of best practices in cultural literacy teaching within English education and its impact on

student values. Quantitative data was gathered through surveys administered to both teachers and students, while qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus groups with students. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit 34 participants from Peking University. This targeted selection included instructors from both the Faculty of Cultural Sciences and the Faculty of English Language Education, ensuring a range of perspectives on cultural literacy integration. All participants were at least 18 years old. The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, with informed consent obtained from all participants prior to their voluntary participation.

2.2 Surveys

In the first phase of the study, a structured survey was administered to all 34 participants. This survey consisted of 12 questions designed to gather data on best practices for teaching cultural literacy in English education and its impact on student values. The survey employed a combination of Likert scale and multiple-choice questions, along with demographic information. Out of the distributed surveys, 31 were successfully returned, representing a response rate of approximately 91%. Prior to survey administration, an information sheet detailing the study's purpose and participant rights was provided. Informed consent was then obtained from all participants before their voluntary participation. Following survey completion, participants were debriefed on the study's objectives and offered a thank you note for their time. The survey itself took an average of 10 minutes to complete.

2.3 Interviews

The study employed semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth qualitative data. Fifteen volunteer instructors from the initial pool participated in these interviews. Each interview addressed a pre-defined set of 15 open-ended questions, designed to explore their best practices for teaching cultural literacy and their observations on student learning outcomes. The interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes and were conducted in a private setting. As with the survey, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their voluntary participation. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for thematic analysis. Focus group discussions were conducted with a smaller group of 10 students. This qualitative approach aimed to gain student perspectives on the impact of cultural literacy education on their values and intercultural understanding. The discussions followed a semi-structured format with 15 pre-determined questions as a guide. Each focus group lasted

approximately 25 minutes and was held in a comfortable and private setting. Following the same ethical protocol as the previous phases, informed consent was obtained from all student participants before their voluntary involvement in the discussions.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis commenced with pre-processing in Microsoft Excel to ensure accuracy. Quantitative data from the surveys was then exported to GraphPad Prism version 9.5.1 for statistical analysis at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Descriptive statistics were employed, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, to summarize the quantitative data. Qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups underwent a rigorous coding process, followed by thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and emergent themes within the data.

3. RESULTS

The study participants consisted of 34 individuals. Over half (52.9%, $N=18$) were from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, while the remaining participants (47.1%, $N=16$) came from the Faculty of English Language Education. In terms of age, 35.3% ($N=12$) fell into the 18–24-year-old category, followed by 41.2% ($N=14$) in the 25–34 age range, and 23.5% ($N=8$) being 35 years old or above (see Figure 1).

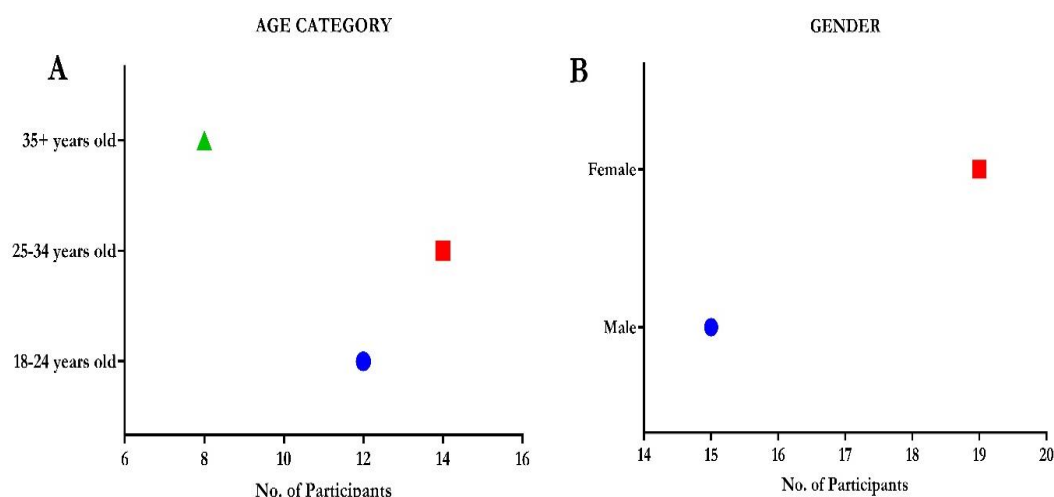


Figure 1: Scatterplots Showing the Participant Distribution Based on Age Categories (A) and Gender (B).

Gender-wise, the study was comprised of slightly more females (55.9%, $N=19$) than males (44.1%, $N=15$). The overwhelming majority (91.2%, $N=31$) were teachers, with only a small number of students (8.8%, $N=3$) participating (see Figure 2).

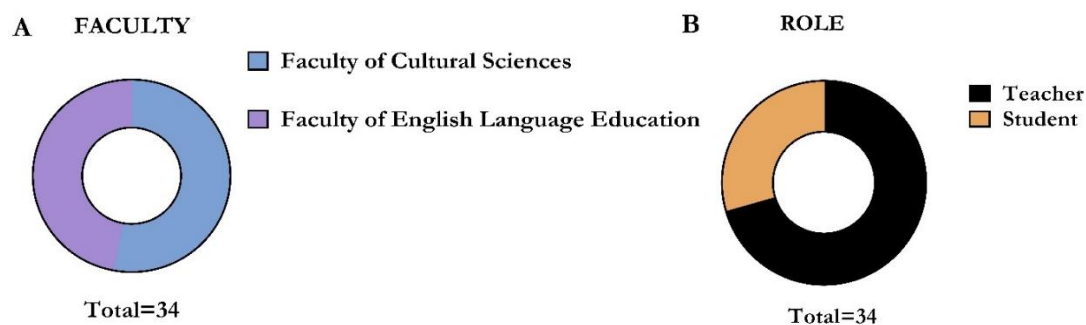


Figure 2: Pie Chart Plots of the Distribution of Participants Based on Faculty of Study and the Role (Teachers/Instructors or Students).

In Table 1, The reported integration methods for teaching cultural literacy (M = mean score, SD = standard deviation) showed a preference for utilizing authentic materials (M = 4.2, SD = 0.7, Most Frequent Response: Strongly Agree (4)) followed by discussions around cultural norms (M = 4.0, SD = 0.8, Most Frequent Response: Agree (3)). Analysing proverbs (M = 3.8, SD = 0.9, Most Frequent Response: Neutral (3)) and role-playing simulations (M = 3.5, SD = 1.1, Most Frequent Response: Somewhat Disagree (2)) received lower scores.

Table 1: Teacher Responses on Integration Methods (n=31)

Integration Method	Mean Score (1-5 scale)	Standard Deviation	Most Frequent Response
Utilizing authentic materials (e.g., pamphlets, menus)	4.2	0.7	Strongly Agree (4)
Facilitating discussions around cultural norms	4	0.8	Agree (3)
Analyzing proverbs from different cultures	3.8	0.9	Neutral (3)
Simulating real-life interactions through role-playing	3.5	1.1	Somewhat Disagree (2)

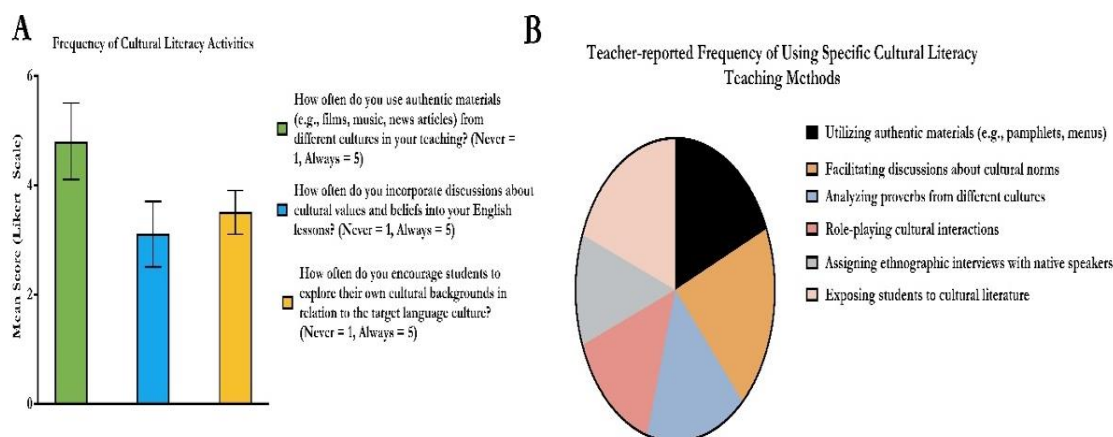


Figure 3: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Items on Frequency of Cultural Literacy Activities.

In Figure 3, the survey results indicated that teachers (N = 31) most

frequently use authentic materials (e.g., films, music, news articles) with a mean score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 0.7 (on a scale of 1: Never to 5: Always). This was followed by incorporating discussions about cultural values and beliefs ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 0.6$) and encouraging students to explore their own backgrounds ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.4$).

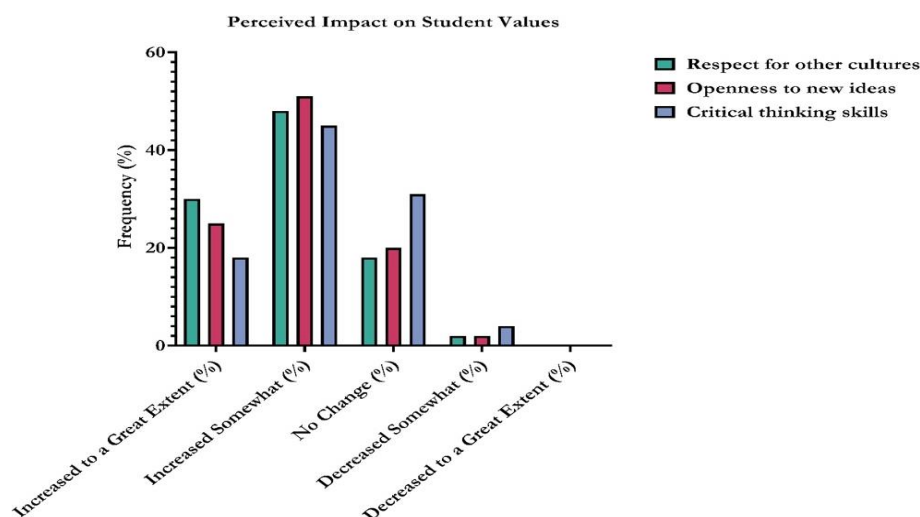


Figure 4: Survey Findings on Perceived Impact on Student Values

In Figure 4, the survey results indicated that a significant portion of teachers ($N=31$) perceived cultural literacy education to positively impact student values. Respect for other cultures showed the greatest increase, with 30.2% reporting a substantial rise and 48.7% indicating a moderate increase. Similar trends were observed for openness to new ideas (25.8% and 51.6% increase) and critical thinking skills (18.5% and 45.2% increase).

Table 2: Themes Related to Best Practices for Teaching Cultural Literacy

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Integration of Authentic Materials	Teachers emphasized using real-world materials like films, news articles, and music to expose students to different cultures.	"I find films particularly effective because they spark discussions about cultural norms and values in a relatable way."
Fostering Critical Thinking and Discussion	Teachers highlighted the importance of encouraging student analysis and debate around cultural topics.	"Critical thinking is key. I encourage students to question assumptions and see things from different perspectives."
Promoting Intercultural Awareness	Encouraging students to explore their own cultural backgrounds and compare them to the target language culture emerged as a prominent theme.	"Helping students see connections between their own culture and the target culture fosters deeper understanding."

In Table 2, three key themes emerged for best practices in cultural

literacy teaching: using authentic materials (films, articles, music) for exposure (e.g., "*films spark discussions*"), fostering critical thinking through analysis and debate (e.g., "*question assumptions*"), and promoting intercultural awareness by exploring students' own backgrounds (e.g., "*connections between cultures*").

Table 3: Themes Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Development of Respect and Tolerance	Teachers observed increased student appreciation for diverse cultures and perspectives.	"I've seen a shift towards greater empathy and understanding among my students."
Enhanced Critical Thinking Skills	Teachers reported improvements in students' ability to analyse cultural information and form independent judgments.	"They're more critical consumers of information now, questioning stereotypes and seeking evidence."
Increased Confidence in Cross-Cultural Communication	Teachers noted that cultural literacy education empowered students to communicate more effectively in multicultural settings.	"Students are more comfortable interacting with people from different backgrounds."

In Table 3, three themes captured student learning outcomes: development of respect and tolerance (increased empathy, e.g., "*greater empathy*"), enhanced critical thinking (analysing information, e.g., "*questioning stereotypes*"), and increased confidence in cross-cultural communication (comfortable interacting, e.g., "*interacting with different backgrounds*").

Table 4: Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Cultural Literacy

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Limited Time and Resources	Several teachers mentioned time constraints and limited access to cultural resources as challenges.	"Fitting cultural activities into the curriculum can be difficult with so much content to cover."
Importance of Ongoing Professional Development	Teachers expressed the need for ongoing training and support to refine their cultural literacy teaching skills.	"There's always more to learn. More professional development opportunities would be beneficial."

In Table 4, two key areas emerged regarding cultural literacy teaching: challenges and opportunities. Time constraints and limited resources were obstacles (e.g., "*fitting cultural activities*"). However, teachers emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development to enhance their skills (e.g., "*more professional development*").

Table 5: Themes Identified from Focus Group Discussions with Students

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quote
Appreciation for Cultural Diversity	Students expressed a growing appreciation for the richness and variety of cultures around the world.	"Learning about different cultures has opened my eyes to new perspectives. I feel more connected to the global community."
Development of Respect and Tolerance	Students reported feeling more respectful and tolerant of cultural differences.	"Before, I might have judged people based on stereotypes. Now, I understand that every culture has its own values and traditions."
Enhanced Confidence in Intercultural Interactions	Students described feeling more confident in interacting with people from different backgrounds.	"I feel less nervous about talking to people from other cultures. I'm more likely to ask questions and learn about their experiences."

In Figure 5, three main themes emerged from student focus groups: appreciating cultural diversity (increased appreciation, e.g., "*opened my eyes*"), developing respect and tolerance (less judgmental, e.g., "*understand traditions*"), and gaining confidence in intercultural interactions (reduced anxiety, e.g., "*less nervous*").

4. DISCUSSION

Our findings revealed several effective practices for integrating cultural literacy into English language education. Teachers emphasized using authentic materials like films, music, and news articles to expose students to diverse cultures. They also highlighted the importance of fostering critical thinking skills through discussions, analysis, and encouraging students to explore their own cultural backgrounds in relation to the target language. These practices were observed to contribute positively to student learning outcomes. Students reported a growing appreciation for cultural diversity, a development of respect and tolerance for different cultures, and increased confidence in interacting with people from various backgrounds. Yurtsever and Dilara highlights several benefits of integrating cultural literacy into EFL classrooms (Yurtsever & Dilara, 2021). Firstly, it fosters awareness that seemingly universal social interactions, such as greetings, expressions of gratitude, or requests for assistance, can vary significantly across cultures, often influenced by factors like intonation and gestures.

Secondly, cultural literacy enhances communication, interaction, and understanding. Individuals lacking cultural awareness may struggle to comprehend idioms, jokes, or even name-calling, which can hinder meaningful conversation. Finally, cultural literacy can motivate students by sparking their interest in the world around them and helping them appreciate both similarities and differences between various cultural groups. We propose that several criteria can be used to assess cultural literacy: understanding the complexities and dynamics within a culture, including its strengths, weaknesses, and potential for adaptation. Culturally literate individuals possess the ability to analyse their own cultural background and identify or even deconstruct existing stereotypes. They demonstrate a deep appreciation for cultural components, both universally shared and those specific to a particular society or way of life. Furthermore, they tend to embrace cultural relativism, acknowledging the validity of diverse cultural perspectives, rather than adhering to cultural fundamentalism. Integrating the four core components of cultural literacy into education necessitates careful consideration of several factors. These factors include: a) content integration, ensuring cultural elements are woven throughout the curriculum; b) fostering knowledge construction through student engagement and inquiry; c) adapting classroom methodologies to promote active learning and cultural exploration; d) fostering intercultural understanding to reduce prejudice; and e) strengthening the school's overall culture and structure to support these goals. However, challenges can arise in implementing such programs, particularly in university settings. These challenges may include: a) large class sizes that hinder personalized attention; b) an overreliance on theoretical instruction by lecturers; c) excessive use of indirect teaching methods that limit student participation; and d) a lack of English language use outside of designated classes, hindering practical application. Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering a successful and impactful cultural literacy program. Our survey results revealed that teachers perceive cultural literacy education to have a positive impact on student values. A significant portion of teachers reported increased student respect for other cultures, openness to new ideas, and critical thinking skills. Thematic analysis of the interviews with teachers reinforced these observations. They highlighted the development of student respect and tolerance, enhanced critical thinking skills that allow students to analyse cultural information, and increased confidence in cross-cultural communication. Shamshayooadeh and OEztemiz advocates for cultural literacy as an essential pedagogical tool (OEztemiz, 2020;

Shamshayooadeh, 2011). He argues that internalizing foundational factual and cultural knowledge empowers individuals to critically analyse various cultural, historical, and political phenomena. This aligns with Ziesing findings (Ziesing, 2001), which demonstrate a strong correlation between language fluency and cultural literacy. Ziesing suggests that enhancing cultural literacy within the context of an English-speaking country can improve not only English proficiency but also overall quality of life (Ziesing, 2001). Furthermore, Ziesing emphasizes the importance of teachers actively incorporating cultural elements into the classroom environment. He acknowledges the difficulty of acquiring cultural knowledge from afar and recommends strategies such as studying, reading, and engaging with English-language media, including internet resources. Contemporary research underscores the interconnected nature of EFL instruction and target culture learning (Aqachmar, 2023). Scholars emphasize that neglecting cultural elements renders EFL teaching inadequate and incomplete (Naqeeb, 2012). For students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language acquisition becomes a hollow exercise without understanding the people who speak it and the cultural context in which it functions. Therefore, mastering a new language extends far beyond the manipulation of grammatical structures and vocabulary. We noted that students expressed a growing appreciation for cultural diversity, a shift towards greater empathy and understanding of different cultures, and a sense of empowerment to interact more effectively with people from various backgrounds. However, some challenges were identified, including limited time and resources for incorporating cultural activities into the curriculum. Teachers emphasized the need for ongoing professional development opportunities to refine their cultural literacy teaching skills. Previous studies by Jawas and Faten emphasizes the inherent interconnectedness of language and culture, arguing that they are inextricably linked (Faten, 2020; Jawas, 2020). He asserts that effective language instruction necessitates the simultaneous teaching of culture. Furthermore, the importance of language policy reflecting both the target language's culture and the cultural backgrounds of students, teachers, and administrators is critical. This approach helps to mitigate potential cultural misunderstandings within the learning environment. We propose that there are several methods to cultivate cultural literacy in the EFL classroom. Educators can leverage real-world materials like pamphlets, menus, and travel brochures (authentic materials) to expose students to everyday cultural practices. Facilitating discussions around cultural norms using films or printed materials (focus group discussions) allows students to

explore nonverbal communication, social roles, and cultural values. Analysing proverbs from both the target language and students' native cultures (proverbs) fosters an appreciation for cultural similarities and differences, while also enriching vocabulary. Simulating real-life interactions through role-playing scenarios (role-playing) equips students with the skills to navigate communication across cultures. The experiences of immigrant students or native speakers can be harnessed as a valuable cultural resource (student as cultural resource), enriching the learning environment by providing authentic cultural insights. Engaging students in ethnographic interviews with native speakers (ethnographic studies) allows them to gather firsthand cultural information from the source. Finally, exposure to literary works (literature) fosters a deeper understanding of a culture's values, traditions, and perspectives. By employing these strategies, educators can tailor cultural literacy instruction to student potential, fostering intercultural competence and a richer understanding of the English language. This multifaceted approach equips students with the knowledge and skills to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. Akhter et al. (2020) identifies a key challenge: the lack of a communication habit among EFL learners. Effective communication hinges on overcoming this apprehension and developing the confidence to use the language regularly. This requires mental training to overcome anxieties about "disorganized" or "incorrect" word order, a common student concern. Based on our study findings, we emphasize the importance of providing opportunities for two-way communication in the classroom. This can be achieved through interactive activities that move beyond passive listening and encourage active participation from students. There are several strategies to strengthen cultural literacy in schools, including: a) creative workshops conducted in regional languages, b) residential programs fostering cultural immersion, c) initiatives promoting national identity and resilience, d) workshops led by faculty and staff, e) training in educational game design, and f) facilitated focus group discussions involving all members of the school community. By implementing these multifaceted approaches, educators can cultivate a more robust and engaging learning environment that fosters cultural literacy alongside language acquisition. The growing significance of English as a global communication tool is highlighted by Nakamura who emphasizes its role in transmitting cultural identity, political views, and societal norms across borders (Nakamura, 2002). Nakamura argues that effective communication in English does not necessitate Westernization or compromising one's cultural values. Instead, he advocates for an internationalized English that

embraces diversity. Building on this notion, Callins proposes "culturally responsive literacy instruction" as a method to bridge the gap between students' cultural backgrounds and their educational experiences (Callins, 2006). This approach seeks to align with students' cultural values while promoting academic success (Hilaski, 2020; Syakur et al., 2023). It encourages educators to adapt their instruction to cater to the diverse learning needs of their students. We suggest that Universities can integrate cultural literacy into education through various means, including: a) curriculum reconstruction to incorporate cultural elements, b) the integration of diverse learning content, c) the adoption of engaging and culturally-aware teaching methods, d) fostering intercultural understanding to reduce prejudice, and e) strengthening the overall cultural environment within the institution. Given the significance of cultural literacy, enhancing educator competence in integrating cultural components into the learning process is crucial. Individuals with cultural literacy exhibit several key characteristics: a) an understanding of cultural complexity, including strengths, weaknesses, and potential for change; b) the ability to analyse their own cultural background and deconstruct stereotypes; c) a deep appreciation for both universal and culture-specific values and lifestyles; and d) a predisposition towards cultural relativism, acknowledging the validity of diverse cultural perspectives. The synergy between cultural literacy and proficiency in English as a foreign language offers numerous benefits, fostering personal growth and contributing to the development of a more enlightened society. According to McKay culture exerts a two-fold influence on language teaching: linguistic and pedagogical (McKay, 2003, 2018). Linguistically, cultural factors impact the semantic (meaning), pragmatic (use in context), and discourse (organization of language) levels. Pedagogically, culture informs the selection of language materials. Educators must consider both the cultural content of these materials and the cultural underpinnings of chosen teaching methodologies. Van emphasizes the importance of target language literature in cultivating cultural literacy (Van, 2009). Exposure to literary works provides students with rich contexts, vivid characters, and a diverse range of vocabulary, dialogue, and prose. More importantly, it fosters cultural awareness and critical thinking skills as students engage with plots, themes, and characters. Ultimately, these activities align with the student-centered and interactive principles of communicative language teaching. As Yol and Yoon asserts, a lack of cultural literacy presents a significant challenge for English language learners (ELLs) (Yol & Yoon, 2020). Without exposure to the cultural elements of the target society, ELLs often encounter difficulties in

effectively communicating meaning to native speakers. This highlights the importance of integrating cultural learning into English language teaching (ELT) curriculums. On an individual level, cultural literacy empowers students to interact appropriately with people from different backgrounds. It strengthens cultural awareness, enhancing communication and fostering understanding of cultural similarities and differences across ethnicities, races, and religions. Educators play a pivotal role in fostering critical thinking skills that contribute to students' cultural literacy development. Some key objectives in familiarizing students with the target language culture include: 1) expanding students' knowledge of the world and diverse communities, 2) promoting respect and tolerance for others, and 3) encouraging reflection on one's own cultural background. It is important to note that the application of cultural values needs to be aligned with national education goals and should not contradict the national character. Ultimately, a strong foundation in cultural literacy empowers students to effectively communicate in English and navigate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected world.

5. CONCLUSION

Our study explored best practices for cultural literacy teaching in English language education and its impact on student values. The findings provide valuable insights into effective practices like using authentic materials and fostering critical thinking. These practices seem to contribute to student development of cultural appreciation, tolerance, and cross-cultural communication skills. However, limitations exist. The study's focus on one university limits generalizability. Additionally, self-reported data from teachers and students might introduce bias. Future research could benefit from a larger, more diverse sample to enhance generalizability. Employing classroom observations alongside surveys and interviews could offer a more nuanced understanding of cultural literacy integration in practice. Investigating the long-term impact of cultural literacy education on students' intercultural competence in real-world settings would be another valuable area for further exploration. By addressing these limitations and pursuing these avenues for future research, we can continue to strengthen the integration of cultural literacy education within English language learning and empower students to thrive in our increasingly interconnected world.

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