INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL VALUES IN ENGLISH TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY LEVELS: CONTINUING THE PAST, STRENGTHENING THE PRESENT, AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

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Abstract: *A society is well-developed when it is built on the harmonious combination of traditional and modern traits. Sustained traditions are experiences that are cultivated by our ancestors and they are still proven right. Modernity is an exploration adapted to add values to the existing ones. Therefore, if the teaching of traditions is conducted methodologically, the outcome can bear sweet fruits. This article offers an insight about the basic principle when incorporating traditions into the teaching programs to create a stable foundation for individuals in a society to thrive sustainably. Though they seem to be simple but they shed lights and serve as cushion to move forward on both academic and professional paths, eventually creating multi-faceted stability and social advancements.*

Keywords: *Teaching, traditional values, security, society …*

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I. INTRODUCTION

English has become a major language of international communication, higher education, mobility, science, business, and digital exchange. Its global role, however, does not require learners to abandon their own cultural frames or to reproduce a single "native-speaker" cultural model. Scholarship on English as an International Language and Global Englishes has instead emphasized that English is used among speakers from many linguistic and cultural backgrounds and should be taught in ways that prepare learners for diverse intercultural encounters (McKay, 2002; Rose & Galloway, 2019). This shift has direct implications for university English education in Vietnam: students need the linguistic resources to communicate globally while also being able to explain, interpret, and critically reflect on their own cultural traditions.

Language and culture are inseparable in communication because meanings are shaped by social histories, values, identities, and expectations (Kramsch, 1993). Consequently, effective language learning extends beyond grammar and vocabulary toward intercultural communicative competence—the ability to interact appropriately and critically across cultural differences (Byram, 1997). Deardorff (2006) similarly conceptualizes intercultural competence as involving attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal as well as external outcomes. From this perspective, traditional values are relevant to English teaching not because they should be protected from all change, but because they provide culturally meaningful material through which students can practice interpretation, perspective-taking, comparison, and communication.

Research increasingly supports the pedagogical value of integrating local culture into English language teaching. Sukarno (2012) argues that local moral values and wisdom can make EFL content more meaningful and contribute to character development. A systematic review of 25 studies in Southeast Asia also found that local-culture integration was associated with constructive learner attitudes, motivation, and engagement, while noting the need for more diverse classroom practices (Ratri et al., 2024). In Vietnam, Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) found that supplementing English lessons with local cultural content supported students' intercultural communication competence. More recent university-level evidence also points in this direction. Do et al. (2025) reported that project-based work on local culture among English-major students supported language practice, cultural competence, learner autonomy, and social skills. Ngan et al. (2026), studying 511 students at four public universities in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, further highlighted the importance of curriculum- and facility-related conditions in students' perceptions of local-culture integration. These findings are consistent with culturally responsive pedagogy, which connects academic learning to students' cultural experiences and existing knowledge (Gay, 2018).

At the same time, integrating traditional values requires caution. "Tradition" should not be treated as a fixed package, and long-standing practices should not be assumed to be educationally

desirable merely because they are old. Some cultural forms may need preservation, some may require reinterpretation, and others may need critical reconsideration when they conflict with dignity, equality, evidence, or contemporary social needs. This distinction is central to the present article. Building on prior work on local culture in English language teaching (Nguyen, 2026), the discussion proposes three connected principles—Embrace the past, Consolidate the present, and Pre-chart the future—as a framework for integrating traditional values into university English teaching in a selective, reflective, and forward-looking manner.

II. STRATEGIC APPROACHES IN CURRENT TREND

2.1. Embrace the past

Integrating traditions into the school curriculum is a move that serves dual purposes. On the one hand, it can excite students with contents that might go beyond their expectations and imagination. On the other hand, it will teach students values that can pass on generations. Why with traditions we should embrace the past? Embracing the past means traditions should be selective weighing the pros and cons of each tradition to see its impacts on each perspective. For example, incorporating traditions of festivals into English lessons can generate multi-benefits facilitating their integration process. They have a better understanding about national myths so that they can introduce to their foreign friends to extend their knowledge and minimize their awkwardness in their communication whether it is direct or indirect. Thanks to these minor support, they can exchange views more efficiently. They can learn from one another and give prompt consultancy from which Vietnamese students can have a broader views and a sharpened mindset to disseminate worthwhile traditional values to their friends and families knowing what should be upheld and what should be wiped off. Values can firmly sustain when it is adapted, preserved, and adjusted to create mixed versions which can be widely accepted and welcome by different minor or majority groups. Well-accepted and well-welcomed traditions will be a subtle proof for a nation to prides on itself and acts as a base to move faster and more vigorously to achieve successes in other fields.

2.2. Consolidate the present

The first step for a developmental process is to embrace the past with the above-mentioned reasoning, Then the second step is to consolidate the present. It is not difficult to make inference to fully understand its overall meaning. A tradition is evolved through the process of preservation, adaptation and adjustment to reproduce a tradition with renovations. From the renovated changes, something should be done to consolidate it together with the rhythm of the world and social changes Students at the age ranging from 18-24 are normally immature at heart. Their immaturity can be revealed from their daily thinking, their daily expressions, their daily behaviors, and their actions. Therefore, whenever an abrupt event, an uprising news, or an abnormal figures appears, their thinking fluctuates due to the wrong inferences absorbing from social media. Hence, the teachers' role is to train, educate students to be aligned with the right perceptions. Consolidating the present is like the chain to connect the past to the future. This activity can be effective if the teachers are well-aware of both the advantages as well as the challenges of the technological advancements and social transformation. English is a tool for assimilating students into a particular culture shaping their ways of thinking and influencing their behaviors and actions. The present traditional values can be influenced from the on-going integration process, the level adaptability of individuals and ethnic groups, the hesitation between the internal or external choices that have certain impacts on their lives. The integration process is an inevitable phenomenon along with the social progress. This trend can be consolidated and best achieved when good decisions are made. Human adaptability tends to be obtained with back and forth experiences and a growth mindset. The more they experience, the more lessons they gain and the more open their mindset is, the more they are easy to adopt changes. When a tradition invades a country, as individuals – they can have their choices after considering both internal and external factors with a wish for better adaptations. It is rather difficult to define which is good - any choice can bring about positivity if moderation between is inserted and subsequent changes might occur circumstances require. When the teachers comprehend these traits, they will necessitate them to fulfil their responsibilities for their present positions.

2.3. Pre-chart the future

English is a good channel for promoting and spreading traditional values to both ethnic minorities and majorities. They have a reciprocal influence on each other – English can beautify the traditional identity and traditions have the potentials to enrich English sources of inspiration which is beneficial for both students and teachers. The rich and diverse cultural traditions empower people from different classes in the society to add creativity to their daily life from which each minor creativeness can colorize the painting so that it can generate plentiful meanings to capture precious moments with interpretation suitable for each specific situation. Sometimes each interpretation can be an intangible motivation to survive and move forward despite interrupted obstacles. The richness and versatility or English make learners proud of the identity of English speaking countries leaving pleasant impressions. These are considered as the foundation for other developments in terms of either private or public matters.

Time is the proof for struggles we surpassed – Time is also a motivation for us to apply lessons into real life leveraging diverse factors for a better present – Time will be able to make predictions for the things to come even in terms of traditional values. With the development of artificial intelligence, the discovery of aliens from other planets, the structural changes in the global society, the breakthrough in human genes will create a future with potential risks – Risks of traditional values being internally eroded or they can be fading as a result of invasion from the external. Things will get more and more complicated, but if everything is considered – preparation and measures are pre-charted risks can be alleviated to a minimum creating feelings of security for the whole society. Lessons regarding traditions and related imaginative scenarios can served as training techniques to see which ideas and which solutions turn out to be effective and strong enough to cope with fears. Therefore, preparatory steps include the renovations of curricula, the training of creative teaching methods, the adaptation of flexible and dynamic mindset to be closer to optimal outcomes.

III. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

From an educational perspective, the three principles—Embrace the past, Consolidate the present, and Pre-chart the future—suggest that traditional values should not be taught merely as historical knowledge but should be transformed into practical educational experiences. Universities and teachers need to create learning activities that enable students to understand the origins and meanings of traditional values, critically evaluate their relevance to contemporary life, and apply them appropriately in new social and professional contexts. In English language education, this can be achieved through culturally responsive materials, comparative cultural discussions, project-based learning, presentations, and communication tasks in which students introduce Vietnamese traditions while exploring those of English-speaking countries. Such approaches can simultaneously strengthen language competence, intercultural awareness, critical thinking, cultural identity, and respect for diversity. More importantly, education should help students distinguish between values that need to be preserved, practices that require adaptation, and outdated elements that should be reconsidered. In this way, traditional values become a dynamic educational resource rather than a static legacy, helping young people develop a balanced mindset that respects the past, responds responsibly to the present, and prepares confidently for future changes. This educational orientation can contribute to forming individuals who are culturally grounded, socially responsible, adaptable, and capable of participating constructively in an increasingly interconnected world.

IV. CONCLUSION

Incorporating traditions into school programs are based on three principles – Embrace the past – Consolidate the present - Pre-chart the future. If each principle is implemented with due attention from the schools, teachers, and authorities, the results can usher with full of positivity – it can be an affirmation for any society to be on the move with its traditional pride. The ripple effects from schools can lift individuals up to a level that is secure and suitable for them. It will be like a psychological pillar from which they can continue their developmental paths making contributions to pushing up the human race up to a level that fulfil human aspirations across various sectors paving the ways for future generations to innovate and thrive sustainably.

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