

## ARTICLE

# Benefits from Integrating Local Culture into English Classes via Project-Based Learning in Vietnam Context

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## ABSTRACT

Local culture is generally carried by learners. Thus, involving it in the classroom for better learning engagement is practical because it is relevant to learners. The present study explores the benefits of local culture integration to the English classroom. Participants were 67 English-majored juniors from a university in Vietnam. They enrolled in an English-Vietnamese translation course for 15 weeks. Upon this learning course, two phases were conducted. The first one (lasting 10 weeks) engaged students to examine learning materials embedded with cultural knowledge in the classroom. The first phase paved the way to the second phase, which occupied the rest of the course. The second phase required students to work in teams of three or four members to produce learning projects about local culture. The final week provided spaces for teams to showcase their completed video products in the classroom. Video products are qualitative data for the present study. Data analysis reveals eight culture-related themes from 22 video products. Obtained benefits for participants cover three major dimensions: (i) diverse English language practices and communicative strategies are gained, (ii) cultural competence is cultivated, and (iii) learner autonomy and social skills are harnessed. Challenges faced by students involved during the project operation are also disclosed. Despite the challenges, all students enjoyed themselves and learned various practical things from producing their authentic projects. Further research is suggested for better outcomes and more insights into this topic in Vietnam and other countries.

**Keywords:** English; Integration; Local Culture; Mekong Delta; Project

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# 1. Introduction

Local culture is closely connected to local people and historical processes held in the local region. This is because local people live, witness, learn, and grow with this culture almost every single day of their lives. Thus, they reasonably know it well and can talk about its origins, evolutionary phases, core values, and identities. In this regard, Vietnamese-speaking learners of English are literally back-grounded by their local culture while learning the target language<sup>[1,2]</sup>.

The English learning goal of Vietnamese-speaking learners is to be able to communicate well in English within the country and beyond, especially in multicultural contexts and digital spaces globally. Most of them also understand that well-built English proficiency is advantageous to career development in the Vietnamese context<sup>[3]</sup>. On the road to that goal, they need to be exposed to the target language in as various ways as possible. Both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) must be practiced frequently on a long-term basis. When it comes to productive skills, learners have to use English to convey what they want to communicate. In that sense, for effective communications with sound self-assurance, English learners need to possess a decent base of knowledge and ideas on what they would like to share communicatively. Their acquired knowledge of local culture appears to be directly deployed at a certain level in this case. In other words, local culture knowledge potentially becomes a repertoire of input for learners to learn and communicate using the target language. This way substantially promotes meaningful practices and learning engagement among learners<sup>[1,2,4,5]</sup>.

Local culture integration matches English instruction policies set by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training<sup>[3]</sup>. Accordingly, teaching English at schools and colleges aims to assist learners to gain sufficient knowledge about this foreign language and utilize communicative skills related to it. Learners are also encouraged to use English to showcase the uniqueness of Vietnamese culture and heritage worldwide. Given that Vietnam is a nation of an age-long established culture of richness, local culture integration into English classes is meaningful and authentic. Still, explorations on this approach, especially at higher education via project-based learning in Vietnam, are underdeveloped. The present study, therefore, was conducted to address this gap.

Its goal is to seek the answer to the primary question: *What benefits are brought about by integrating local culture into English classes via project-based learning?*

# 2. Literature Review

## 2.1. Local Culture

Within language education, local culture is the culture of learners<sup>[2,6]</sup>. It should be integrated into the teaching of a target language<sup>[7]</sup>, like English to Vietnamese-speaking learners. This is because local culture is supposed to act as an identity for learners and thereby, it will enable them to make sense of the target language culture by reflecting on their own. In doing so, learners also learn more about their culture, not just focusing on that of the target language<sup>[1,2,4,5]</sup>. In that way, students will learn the target language as if they are learning something familiar and beneficial. In addition, they can communicate their local culture confidently and effectively<sup>[1,2,5]</sup>. Research has found that local cultural integration of English reading materials facilitates reading comprehension, learning engagement, and cultural awareness<sup>[2,4,7,8]</sup>. It also shows that this approach leverages learners' 21st-century skills of exploring, evaluating, comprehending, and exchanging information because knowing how to learn and utilize information from different sources, especially digital ones, is essential today<sup>[5-9]</sup>. In addition, it boosts cultural literacy, empowering individuals to navigate cultural diversity, understanding, appreciation, and inclusiveness across various social-cultural interactions<sup>[2,10]</sup>.

Local culture includes traditions, customs, mores, clothing, rituals and festivals, beliefs, methods of cooking, arts, folktales, and so on<sup>[2-7]</sup>. The Mekong Delta region, southwestern Vietnam (where the present study was conducted), has an immense abundance of local cultural characteristics<sup>[11]</sup>. For example, this region holds regular traditional rituals and festivals year-round (e.g., Independence Day, Elderly Day, Youth Day, Teacher Day, Labor Day, Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn, temple worship, and crop fairs). This region is also characterized by plenty of rivers and canals, which have fostered an age-long culture of water-rice farming. Additionally, fresh fruit such as banana, mango, coconut, plum, and longan is available year-round. The types of cakes made from rice and fruit ingredients are various in this region. Moreover, cuisine is both traditional and hybrid. There are different styles

of clothing and fashions. Forms of arts and entertainment are held regularly across different areas of the Mekong Delta. This region is pushing up its tourism industry and foreign investment from other countries in a wide range of economic sectors<sup>[11,12]</sup>. Most English-majored undergraduate students will join the working market in this region after graduation from college. Thus, local culture integration in this case means serving the learners' realistic need, which is believed to drive their learning motivation, engagement, and academic performance<sup>[2,7-9]</sup>.

## 2.2. Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is primarily characterized by groups or teams of learners working together in a collaborative way to solve a practical problem/challenge or to complete an assigned *learning task*<sup>[13-15]</sup>. PBL holds several advantages for learning.

First, PBL minimizes teacher involvement as much as possible while amplifying the participation of learners on a balanced membership basis, which manifests the learner-centered pedagogy. Since teachers no longer constantly control groups working on given learning tasks (i.e., teachers only act as a ready guide or scaffolder), learners work on their own, freeing them from total reliance on the teacher. Secondly, learners are given a space for self-initiating, self-acting, independently working, self-regulating, and being self-responsible for their learning process. This full-range repertoire of relevant learning actions is believed to pave a viable way to learner *autonomy* or *self-regulation*. In this way, learners are supposed to activate cognitive skills. These skills include analyzing problems, figuring out, considering options/alternatives, and strategies to solve problems, making final decisions, and planning action steps<sup>[16-18]</sup>. Thirdly, PBL is a catalyst for the development of *social skills*, especially interpersonal communication and teamwork skills<sup>[13,19]</sup>. By nature, a team working on a certain problem/task distinctly embedded in PBL always calls on team members to take ample time advancing the problem, expressing ideas, debating, making choices, and so on, leading to an expected consensus. Finally, PBL can create opportunities for learners to learn from one another. It likely improves cognition and performance among learners because "it is supposed to provide learners of all abilities and learning styles an equal opportunity to work, express themselves, speak out their minds in

confidence and interactively learn from others/peers in one way or another"<sup>[20]</sup>.

However, PBL contains some inherent challenges when it comes to teamwork in the classroom<sup>[20-24]</sup>. Four challenges are commonly pointed out. First, learners might not like projects because they feel no interest in the assigned projects. Thus, learners should be allowed to choose themes or topics for their projects. This will increase learners' motivation and engagement in operating projects<sup>[16-18,20,21]</sup>. Second, there may not be sufficient time for learners to complete projects in the classroom. That is why teachers should clarify the required contents of target projects and allocate enough durations. This includes what has to be done in the classroom and what should be completed outside the classroom<sup>[23,24]</sup>. Third, assessing the quality of project products made by learners is sometimes problematic<sup>[23]</sup>. Therefore, specific assessment criteria should be openly informed to learners before they do projects. Fourth, disagreements among members of large groups may occur more frequently from small ones. Thus, groups in PBL should be between three to five members only<sup>[20]</sup>. Overall, teachers should be aware of possible problems and strategic solutions related to PBL so that the expected outcomes could be optimally gained.

## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1. Research Setting

The present study, based on its goal as addressed earlier, was to explore potential benefits brought about by integrating local culture into English classes in the current Vietnam context. The study was primarily exploratory because it served as an initial step embedded in a long-term research project, which has been scheduled to be launched by the research team in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The exploratory results from the present study would help the team navigate the next phases of the target project sufficiently and productively.

Since it was impossible to apply a random sampling method, a convenience one was adopted<sup>[25,26]</sup> for this exploratory study. Accordingly, participants were all college students who enrolled in an English-Vietnamese translation course in the second term of the 2024–2025 academic year. The course was hosted by a university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. There were 67 junior students, 22 males and 45 females, all majoring in the English language. Their age

was between 20 and 21. They came from different provinces in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. One member of the research team directly taught this translation course.

### 3.2. Local Culture Integration

The translation course lasted 15 weeks with one 100-minute classroom session per week. This course is a required one for all participants in the present study. The course's objectives are to provide students with language translation knowledge and pertinent skills practices via learning about the translation theoretical framework, followed by practicing translation from English to Vietnamese and vice versa. Materials for translation practices are text-based, both printed and audio-visual. These learning materials for the entire course (approximately half written in English and the other in Vietnamese) were selectively prepared by the research team and had been approved beforehand by the Dean and the Board of Foreign Languages Faculty at this university. English material contents include topics of culture, history, economy, entertainment activities, local people, lifestyles, etc., from countries around the world. Meanwhile, Vietnamese learning materials hold information on Vietnam's social-cultural aspects represented by various events happening year-round from different areas throughout the country.

The integration was applied in two phases:

- *Phase 1*: At each weekly classroom session, learning materials offer various information about culture, culture domains, and socio-cultural features. At the beginning of each session, the teacher raised some questions related to the contents of the cultural-related issues for students to talk about (approximately 5 min). This was designed as preliminary tasks before they proceed to the learning materials. For example, at one classroom session, the teacher put such questions as "What is culture? Do you think cultures differ across countries? What represents cultural features of Vietnamese people?". Then, students listened to a short audio recording in English and then they translated it to Vietnamese, individually and collaboratively. This was followed by the class teacher checking students' translation outcomes and providing feedback based on the rubric for assessing the translation quality (see **Appendix A**). The English version was:

Today, I want to introduce you to the concept of culture. We all recognize that each country

has its own unique culture, but let's start by looking at some of the major characteristics of culture. We'll begin with what I consider the three most important characteristics, in order of importance.

First, only human beings have culture. A group of gorillas or monkeys would not be considered to have their own culture. It is something unique to humans. Secondly, culture exists in the minds of individuals. In other words, it is learned behavior. It is the thing that we, that is a group of people, consider normal. For example, the clothes that I'm wearing now are a product of my culture and what I think is normal. So, culture is unique to humans, and it exists in the mind. Third, cultures are different. No two cultures are the same. For example, England and Pakistan would be two very different cultures. People from England and Pakistan have different ideas and different behaviors even in simple things like how women dress<sup>[27]</sup>.

At another week's session, students watched a YouTube clip about Vietnamese culture and then practiced translating to English (available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SExMxLtrmnk>):

Xin chào quý vị và các bạn đang theo dõi, chương trình vấn đề và bình luận được phát sóng trên kênh truyền hình đài tiếng nói Việt Nam. Thưa quý vị trải qua gần 35 năm thực hiện đường lối đổi mới, Đảng ta đã định hướng phát triển đất nước theo hướng công nghiệp hóa hiện đại hóa và xây dựng phát triển nền văn hóa tiên tiến đậm đà bản sắc dân tộc quan điểm của Đảng về xây dựng và phát triển văn hóa có những bước vận động rất quan trọng. Văn hóa được coi là nền tảng tinh thần vững chắc của xã hội trong đó. Con người được nhìn nhận là trung tâm trong chiến lược phát triển bền vững việc nhấn mạnh đến xây dựng và phát triển văn hóa con người Việt Nam trong giai đoạn mới trong dự thảo các văn kiện Đại hội XIII của Đảng là thể hiện sự phù hợp với quan điểm tiến bộ về văn hóa trên thế giới hiện

nay. Chương trình vấn đề và bình luận ngày hôm nay chúng ta sẽ cùng bàn luận về chủ đề này với khách mời của chương trình. Xin trân trọng được giới thiệu khách mời của chương trình ...

*[Hello, ladies and gentlemen are watching, welcome to this show "Issues and Commentary," broadcast on the Voice of Vietnam Television. Dear viewers, after nearly 35 years pursuing the Renovation approach, our Party has led the entire country toward industrialization, modernization, and the development of an advanced culture rich in national identity. The Party's view on building and developing culture generated remarkable transformations. Culture is regarded as the solid spiritual foundation of society with people being recognized as the central focus of a sustainable development strategy. The emphasis on cultivating and nurturing Vietnamese cultural values in this new period, as outlined in the draft documents for the 13th National Congress of the Party, represents a progressive global cultural vision. Today's "Issues and Commentary" program will explore this topic with our distinguished guest. We are honored to introduce today's guest...]*

This first phase has two aims: (i) providing and familiarizing students with (English and Vietnamese) lexical and syntactical items related to culture in general, (ii) facilitating them to gain a sufficient understanding of the concepts on culture, cultural domains, and socio-cultural features. Accordingly, this phase is supposed to lay the necessary ground for the second phase as seen below.

- Phase 2: Team project on local culture

Approximately at week 10 of the course schedule, the Teacher announces the team projects, where students are allowed to choose their team members of 3–4 per team. Each team has to make a video clip lasting about 10–15 min. Upon the Teacher's general guideline of the product requirements, teams work on their own. The contents of the target videos should contain information on specific local cultures. These may include local festivals, gatherings, holiday activities, landmarks, craft-working places, and the like, about local

communities. Videos must include short interviews or conversations with local people, participants, or visitors. Also, both English and Vietnamese are used in the videos. In addition, each team member must be seen speaking at some points in the videos.

Students have four weeks (from week 11 to 14) to complete the project. At week 15 of the final classroom session, each team is supposed to showcase their video products. Specifically, teams present the local cultural values embedded in the video products. Then, the follow-ups of open reflections, benefits, and challenges are also addressed. Additionally, acknowledgments, feedback, and constructive comments given by the Teacher and other teams are provided.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

A total of 22 video products were collected, serving as primary qualitative data for the present study. Then, the data entered the analysis procedure done by the research team. Each video product was processed case-by-case in detail. First, all video products were viewed and transcribed verbatim. Then, a coding method for qualitative data was applied. The coding was manipulated both manually and with NVivo software assistance. It went through five typical steps<sup>[25,26,28]</sup>: (i) *Initial coding*: by breaking the data into small items and labelling/coding these identified items, summarizing their meanings in words or phrases. This step is supposed to uncover as many relevant ideas as possible by staying open to what the data will reveal. (ii) *Axial coding*: Relationships in meaning are found between labelled codes, grouping them into categories and subcategories (based on meanings conveyed). (iii) *Thematic coding*: Core categories or main themes are recognized, as such to link all other categories in line with the main ones; thus, forming a cohesive narrative or conceptual framework grounded in the target data. (iv) *Memo writing*: Reflective annotations are written about emerging ideas and interpretations based on themes/subthemes, and connections between these ideas and interpretations. (v) *Theoretical saturation*: The cutoff is established where gathering/analyzing more data does not provide any new, distinct insights or themes.

Data analysis took four weeks to be completed by the research team. Cross-check was done carefully and independently by each of the three research team members. However, when disagreements among them emerged, the research

team members discussed until sufficient agreements were achieved. Detailed results will be presented in the next sections.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Local Cultural Themes

The following **Table 1** displays the themes addressed by 22 team videos created by 67 students (as mentioned earlier) in the present study. Results show that there are eight themes across the videos (from Video 1 to 22). Each conveyed theme

is found in at least two videos. The results also indicate that each of the 22 videos was created at a different time point. Moreover, even though some of the videos share the same themes, they differ in several ways because each team had to design and execute their own working plans independently. All these culture-related themes, however, represent multiple shared senses. They include (i) local culture values and heritage, (ii) local people's identities, gratitude, and pride, (iii) dynamic ongoing activities among local people and visitors, (iv) educational guidance, and (v) meaningful pointers linking the past, present, and future.

**Table 1.** Themes captured by 22 videos.

Themes	Captured Points in Summary	Videos (N = 22)
1. Museum, Memorial	Temporal developments, regular and special activities, cultural values, exhibited artifacts, historical events, educational guidance, spiritual instruction, and visitors year-round	1, 2, 3
2. Worship place	Origins, faiths, temporal developments, regular and special ritual worship, offerings, prayers, religious commitment, cultural values, moral lessons, exhibited artifacts, architectural constructs	4, 5, 6, 7
3. Landmark	Reserved characters, local tales, traditional instructions, local contributions, communal gatherings, gratitudes, tourism attractions	8, 9, 10
4. Village market	Locations, market sizes, open hours, types of items sold (e.g., local fruit, beverages, cakes, craft souvenirs), average numbers of visitors, communal identities, cultural values, and preservation	11, 12, 13
5. Crafting village	Village locations, craft histories, local traditions, career commitments, products sold, instrument innovations, market demands, challenges faced, local values embedded, lived experiences, missions, and expectations	14, 15, 16
6. Blood donation	Donation messages, communal values, conversations with some donors making sense of their conduct, honoring donors, core missions	17, 18
7. Sports activities	Spaces, participants, moods, excitements, talkings, chantings, costumes, group uniform, communal spirits, achievement celebrations, and expectations	19, 20
8. Cooking	Types of cooking techniques and skills, specialties, traditional dishes, hybrid cooking, local ingredients, community identities, cooking values embedded, and communal bonds	21, 22

### 4.2. Component Layout of Videos and English Language Uses

All videos hold the standardized layout of content coverage. It includes three key parts: (1) the introductory greetings at gateways, starting the tour ahead, (2) approaching the insides, unfolding inherent points of interest, and highlighting features, and (3) saying goodbye, ending the tour. These three parts presented in oral English by team members are seen below, respectively.

#### 4.2.1. Introductory Greetings

Results show that the strategies used for this part are productively varied in terms of linguistic items and information sequences about the destinations.

- Locations are introduced and initial remarks are articulated with a variety of English linguistic items used:

*Dinh Yen Mat Village is located in Dinh Yen Commune, Lap Vo District, Dong Thap*

*Province, situated along the Hau River. With a traditional mat-weaving craft spanning over 100 years, the village was officially recognized as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage in the year 2013. (Video-15, Crafting village)*

*Hello everyone! Nowadays, as society grows, more shopping malls and supermarkets appear. However, some rural markets still exist as a part of traditional culture. (Video-13, Village market)*

*Kien An Cung Pagoda, recognized as a National Historical-Cultural Relic, stands as a proud symbol of the Hoa people's cultural identity and contribution to the diverse tapestry of the Mekong Delta. (Video-4, Worship place)*

- Pointers for attention using emphatic structures in the English language (Not only is it ..., not only ... but also...):

*Hello everyone! Today, we are at the Communal House of the Owners of the Cao Lanh Market, a sacred place and of great significance to the people here. Not only is it a place of worship, but this Communal House is also closely associated with the development history of the Cao Lanh market and this entire land. (Video-5, Worship place)*

*Since its construction, the temple has not only been a place of worship but also the center of cultural and religious activities of the local people. (Video-6, Worship place)*

- Addressing the rationale for capturing the destination:

*Nowadays, with the growing influence of foreign fast food such as hamburgers and hot dogs, traditional Vietnamese cakes are becoming less popular. Some types are even gradually disappearing from Vietnamese cuisine. For this reason, our team chose Tan Thuan Dong Market as the location for our video recording. (Video-11, Village market)*

*Blood – a priceless source of life, connecting hearts. Every drop of blood given is a noble act, bringing hope to those in need. Donating*

*blood is a noble act, reflecting the spirit of mutual support and a beautiful tradition of our nation, demonstrating solidarity and mutual assistance. (Video-17, Blood donation)*

- Deploying rhetorical questions to attract attention:

*Have you ever wanted to get lost in a pristine forest, where only the sound of birds singing and water gently flowing fills the air? Or perhaps you want to travel back in time, to relive the glorious past of our nation, when the hardships of war have passed, yet the historical footprints remain here? Let's explore Xẻo Quýt – where nature and history blend, creating an unforgettable experience! (Video-8, Landmark)*

#### 4.2.2. Approaching the Insides

Results also document a wide range of linguistic strategies in this part. These strategies are used effectively depending on specific themes covered by the videos.

- Unfolding motives for taking part in activities by interviewing participants:

*Donating blood is an incredibly meaningful act. I have met many women who have donated blood, each with their own story. A woman once felt anxious when donating blood for the first time, but this time she openly said that "When children see their parents like me donating blood, they will understand that helping others is not something far away but a natural part of life. One day, when they grow up, they will carry on that tradition. I believe good things will spread." (Video-17, Blood donation)*

*"How do you feel when you come here?", "I feel very happy when I come here because the atmosphere is lively, and the people are very friendly". (Video-11, Village market)*

*"Why did you decide to participate in voluntary blood donation?" "I decided to donate blood because it is a noble act that reflects the volunteer spirit of the youth towards society, the*

community, and especially towards patients in need of blood.” (Video-18, Blood donation)

- Unfolding the featured points or items of interest:

*Today, Xeo Quyt is preserved and developed into an eco-tourism area, attracting a large number of tourists. The cajuput forest is home to many rare species of flora and fauna. When coming here, visitors can: - Admire the rich flora and fauna such as birds, fish, and typical trees of the Dong Thap Muoi region. - Take a boat through small canals, enjoy the fresh air, and admire the beauty of nature.* (Video-9, Landmark)

*This ancient house was the residence of Huỳnh Thủy Lê, the first love of writer Marguerite Duras. According to historical records, Huỳnh Thủy Lê and Marguerite Duras met by chance on the Mỹ Thuận ferry in the year 1929. At that time, Duras was only 15 years old, while Huỳnh Thủy Lê was 23. Their innocent love story began from that moment.* (Video-10, Landmark)

*When the ghost market was still active, it was held every Saturday morning. Every two weeks, there was also a lotus lantern floating ceremony on the river, where the artisans would craft small figurines and place them on the floating lotus flowers. This gave rise to many whimsical and poetic stories passed down about the mysterious and charming “ghost market.”* (Video-16, Craft village)

- Highlighting the uniqueness that reflects cultural values:

*Especially, the museum displays many cultural relics from the Óc Eo civilization of the Kingdom of Phù Nam, with artifacts over 1,500 years old, showing the cultural exchanges among ethnic groups in the region. I’m sure every step inside the museum will bring us interesting and meaningful experiences.* (Video-1, Museum-Memorials)

*It’s not just about the joy of winning, but also a symbol of deep love for the country and na-*

*tional pride. It’s a time for people to show unity and a strong belief in the national team.* (Video-19, Sports activities)

*Making this pancake is not just about cooking; it is a bonding experience between generations, where mothers pass down their techniques to their children, where family stories are shared by the sizzling pan, and where traditional values are preserved through every familiar motion. Each pancake reflects care, love, and a deep connection to the fields and the flavors of our homeland.* (Video-22, Cooking)

*As a cultural value, this is not only a tourist destination but also a place for younger generations to understand and cherish the past. These values make it stand out as an ideal destination for those who love nature and history.* (Video-8, Landmark)

*Kien An Cung Pagoda is more than just an architectural marvel. It is a vibrant center of faith and culture, connecting generations and preserving precious traditions.* (Video-4, Worship place)

- Approaching on-spot visitors or participants for their responses:

*“Could you tell me what impressed you after visiting this tourist site?” “I’ve just arrived and haven’t explored the whole area yet, but from what I’ve seen while passing by, the scenery here looks very heroic and majestic. I really like it, so I plan to come back at some point and join a tour.”* (Video-9, Landmark)

*“From what I’ve seen, this park has communities like jogging groups and pet walking groups that are really fun. They usually meet in the afternoon. I find it very enjoyable, and I’m actually thinking about joining the jogging group myself.”* (Video-20, Sports activities)

#### 4.2.3. Saying Goodbye

Like the other two parts presented above, different ways of linguistic items and constructions are used in this final part. They include:



- Expressing expectations to receive positive responses to the video products:

*We hope this presentation gives you a deeper appreciation of Dong Thap – a land not only famous for its pink lotus but also for noble-hearted people like Mr. and Mrs. Do Cong Tuong. Thank you very much for your attention!* (Video-6, Worship place)

*By sharing its story, we hope to inspire a deeper appreciation for our heritage and the timeless connections between history and personal narratives. Thank you for watching!* (Video-9, Landmark)

*Through this video, we learned more about traditional Vietnamese cakes and the cultural values that this market represents. We hope that more people will appreciate and support these traditional countryside markets so they can continue to develop and be cherished by the local community.* (Video-12, Village market)

*Making this cake is not just cooking, it's preserving love, memories, and tradition. I hope that through this video, you can feel the warmth and soul of Vietnamese culture.* (Video 22, Cooking)

- Casting an inviting reminder to the destination for participation:

*If you have the opportunity to come to Dong Thap, don't forget to visit Xeo Quyt to enjoy the peaceful space and experience the interesting activities here.* (Video-8, Landmark)

*If you have the chance, please come here to visit, light an incense stick to feel the peaceful and sacred space of this place!* (Video-5, Worship place)

- Underlining the core values of charitable conduct:

*Each voluntary blood donation is not just a life-saving remedy, but also a symbol of love, sharing in times of hardship, and giving the gift of life to patients. Humanitarian blood*

*donation requires the collective effort of the community, spreading noble gestures and offering the hope of life to those in need. It is a journey that carries the love of humanity, contributing to making life more meaningful.*  
(Video-18, Blood donation)

## 5. Discussion

As seen earlier, the present study aimed to explore the benefits of integrating local culture into English classes. Given that this approach is still on its way to evolving in Vietnam's context, the present researchers launched this study as an initial step inherent in a long-term research project. Accordingly, the integration was implemented in an English-Vietnamese translation course. The course went through two phases. The first one involved providing students with learning materials with knowledge on cultural issues in Vietnam and other countries. This phase prepared the students for the second one, which was robust in the present study. The results of the second phase presented above demonstrate several benefits brought about by local culture integration into the English classroom. The following section discusses the benefits of the second phase results.

First of all, diverse English language practices and communicative strategies are gained. The local culture integration via PBL provides students with the opportunity to use the English language to communicate authentic happenings around them. Thus, it makes English learning relevant for them as documented by previous studies<sup>[1,2,4-6]</sup>. Since all assigned projects were satisfactorily completed in terms of English use and contents conveyed, it suggests that the involved students were able to practice the target language meaningfully, especially the productive skills of writing and speaking English. Moreover, the students used different linguistic strategies to fit different parts of the projects (i.e., introductory greetings, approaching the insides to unfold pointers of interest, and saying goodbye). Thus, their communicative strategies are more or less enhanced via the video layout and language use to convey the relevant contents in each part. The conveyed contents cover various cultural domains, including spiritual values, communal identities, educational guidance, and cultural heritage. For greetings, in addition to the specific language of introducing the lo-

cation (such as *Dinh Yen Mat Village is located in Dinh Yen Commune, Lap Vo District, Dong Thap Province, situated along the Hau River....*) (Video-15), rhetoric questions were deployed sufficiently (e.g., *Have you ever wanted to get lost in a pristine forest, where only the sound of birds singing and water gently flowing fills the air? Or perhaps you want to travel back in time, to relive the glorious past of our nation, when the hardships of war have passed, yet the historical footprints remain here?*) (Video-8). Regarding the insides, it is interesting to find that students succeeded to unfold featured points for attention by employing a wide variety of English linguistic items and constructions (e.g., *Especially, the museum displays many cultural relics from the Óc Eo civilization of the Kingdom of Phù Nam, with artifacts over 1,500 years old, showing the cultural exchanges among ethnic groups in the region. I'm sure every step inside the museum will bring us interesting and meaningful experiences*) (Video-1). Students also learned how to approach visitors to let them express themselves, like *"Could you tell me what impressed you after visiting this tourist site?"*, *"I've just arrived and haven't explored the whole area yet, but from what I've seen while passing by, the scenery here looks very heroic and majestic. I really like it, so I plan to come back at some point and join a tour."* (Video-9) Language use in the final part of the videos is soundly varied as well (e.g., *If you have the chance, please come here to visit, light an incense stick to feel the peaceful and sacred space of this place!*) (Video-5). These results likely show that the students can confidently disseminate their local culture to visitors not only in Vietnamese but also in English. This is significant because the Mekong Delta region is developing in various aspects, especially tourism and foreign investment<sup>[11,12]</sup>.

Secondly, cultural competence is cultivated. As seen from table one, all eight themes captured in the 22 videos are all about local phenomena related to cultural values and communal identities in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. This is significant because it aligns with the policies of the English education program set by MOET<sup>[3]</sup>. Accordingly, cultural values should be integrated where possible to cultivate learners' cultural competence, including cultural literacy. That is, students should learn deeply, understand, honor, practice, and commit themselves to cultural sustainability, enrichment, and dissemination<sup>[2,4-6]</sup>. In this way, it also facilitates nurturing learners' morals and good qualities. In this regard, all the

videos addressed the cultural values or communal spirits to some extent somewhere. Thus, it implies that the students involved in the present study appeared to immerse themselves in the local culture; for instance, *"...showing the cultural exchanges among ethnic groups in the region."* (Video-1), *"Each voluntary blood donation is not just a life-saving remedy, but also a symbol of love, sharing in times of hardship, and giving the gift of life to patients."* (Video-18); or *"People believe that the ancestors always bless smooth trading and bountiful harvests, so every year they come here to worship and express their gratitude."* (Video-6). All this suggests that students had to take time to learn about their cultural values and managed to convey them in the video projects. As one team argued, *"The filming and introduction of the Temple not only helps preserve a part of the cultural memory of the people of Cao Lanh market, but also contributes to raising public awareness in preserving folk cultural heritage. This is a practical way to connect the past with the present, preserving traditional values for future generations."* This finding matches those reported by previous research<sup>[1,2,4-6]</sup>, but the present study differs from the past ones because students had to generate the video products (using both their mother tongue and the target language) rather than just interacting with learning materials integrated with local culture for better reading comprehension<sup>[6-9]</sup>.

Thirdly, learner autonomy and social skills are harnessed. Since the video projects were conducted by teams and all completed by the 15th classroom session, as required by the course schedule. It proves that the students were able to exercise their self-regulation to come to the final stage with the learning products ready to submit. They must have collaboratively performed a full range of activities from the start to the end. These include seeking relevant ideas, selecting topics/problems for the target project, setting appropriate goals, designing the project format, assigning specific work to team members, and so on. Over the project execution, team communication, negotiations, and exchanges must have been practiced. So were critical skills and creativity. These 21st-century skills were either directly or indirectly elevated, which would contribute to students' job-skill development in the years to come. As one team shared that:

This is a wonderful opportunity to practice English through writing video scripts, presenting, and communicating with team members

and others related. It helps improve the ability to use English in real-life situations happening around. Carrying out this project task will enhance skills in using filming equipment, video-editing software, and other related tools. If working in groups, this is a great chance to coordinate, divide tasks, and create together as a working team on shared goals.

Meanwhile, another team recorded that *“Listen to others’ perspectives and analyze them together to make the best choice, while accumulating more experience in teamwork.”*

Finally, challenges are pointed out by students as well. Since students worked on team projects and, for the first time, made such learning videos via local field trips (i.e., outside the regular classroom), they inevitably faced several challenges, especially technical issues. At the 15th classroom session of this course (see Table one above), the following challenges are typical ones pinpointed by students.

- Access to the video-recording sites was unfavorable, especially in bad weather.
- Recording techniques had yet to be trained.
- Team members disagreed at some points during the project operation.
- Schedules had to be somehow changed because unexpected problems occurred.
- Strategies to interview visitors had yet to be practiced beforehand.

Fortunately, all teams managed to solve these real-life problems to meet the shared goals. In a positive sense, these challenges provided them with the opportunity to practice problem-solving skills and creativity<sup>[5,10]</sup> in unprecedented real-life scenarios. Thereby, it would enhance their repertoire of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.

## 6. Conclusions

By applying the local culture integration and PBL to a regular learning course at a university, the present study shows that this approach is applicable, authentic, and beneficial at tertiary English education in the Vietnamese context. It literally benefits learners in three key educational dimensions: (i) diverse English language practices and communicative strategies are gained, (ii) cultural competence

(cultural literacy included) is cultivated, and (iii) learner autonomy and social skills are harnessed. Challenges faced by students involved during the project operation are also disclosed. Despite the challenges, all involved students enjoyed themselves and learned various practical things from their authentic projects via the local field trips.

For better results, however, future research should provide students with ample support in a timely manner, especially technical skills, because they may find it challenging to manipulate video-recording tools appropriately for optimal filming. Data via surveys or in-depth interviews among students should also be collected to triangulate the findings. Analyzing discourses and linguistic items in English used in video projects (e.g., types and complexity of lexical items, grammatical accuracy, and speaking fluency) is another pointer for further investigations on a more comprehensive scale. These would provide more insights into the involved topic and pedagogical implications for Vietnam and other countries.

## Author Contributions

All authors worked on conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, resources, and data curation. D.M.H. taught the involved class and wrote the original draft. V.P.T.N. wrote the review and edited it. P.T.T. conducted project administration and funding acquisition. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of this manuscript.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

Taking ethical requirements into account, the researchers obtained informed consent from all participants (using the video products as primary data for the present study) and university authorities. Furthermore, participants’ confidentiality and anonymity were strictly followed, and all personal information about the participants was kept confidential. Participants also held the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative impacts on their

course grades.

## Informed Consent Statement

The researchers obtained informed consent from all participants (using the video products as primary data for the present study) and university authorities.

## Data Availability Statement

Pertinent data used by the present study is publicly unavailable due to privacy concerns. Requests for the data in specific cases, however, should be considered by all the authors and the students involved.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A

### A Translation Quality Assessment Rubric

1. **Accuracy/Meaning Transfer:** Does the translation convey the original meaning, nuances, and intent without omissions or distortions?
2. **Readability/Intelligibility:** Is the translation smooth, natural, and idiomatic in the target language? Does it read as if originally written in that language?
3. **Cultural Dimensionality/Issues:** Does the translation handle cultural references and register appropriately for the target audience?
4. **Grammar, Mechanics & Style:** Are grammar, syntax, punctuation, orthography, and stylistic flow correct and consistent?
5. **Terminology/Technical Consistency:** Is terminology correct and consistently applied?

### Scoring: 0–10 scale

- ❖ 10 – Flawless: Masterful, native-level translation
- ❖ 8 – Very High: Minor, non-distracting issues
- ❖ 6 – Satisfactory: Acceptable but visible imperfections
- ❖ 4 – Fair: Noticeable problems affecting reader comprehension
- ❖ 2 – Poor: Major issues hindering meaning or flow
- ❖ 0 – Unintelligible or fundamentally flawed

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