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Primary School English Teachers Self-Reported Competence, Practical Barriers, and Professional Development Needs in Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into English Teaching Survey Evidence from the Pearl River Delta

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Abstract

The compulsory education English curriculum emphasises cultural awareness and expressing traditional Chinese culture. This study surveyed 214 primary school English teachers from six cities in the Pearl River Delta using a cross-sectional questionnaire. It examined self-reported competence in cultural knowledge, English expression, classroom integration, and regional culture integration, alongside barriers and professional development needs. Three experts reviewed 20 core items, with all item-level content validity indices reaching 1.00. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .921 to .935 across dimensions. Teachers generally rated their competence positively (M = 3.80, SD = 0.85). Regional culture integration scored highest (M = 4.14), while English expression scored lowest (M = 3.61). Group differences by teaching experience and training frequency were not statistically significant. Major barriers included curriculum integration, insufficient resources, and difficulties expressing Chinese culture in English. Teachers prioritised support for activity design, English expression, and teaching materials and digital resources. These findings suggest a possible pedagogical transformation gap between textbook cultural content and classroom activities. Professional development should connect cultural knowledge with English expression, curriculum alignment, activity design, and classroom application.

Keywords: Fine Traditional Chinese Culture, Primary School English Teachers, Teacher Competence, Curriculum Integration, Professional Development

Introduction

Language education contributes to cultural meaning, identity, and values alongside vocabulary and grammar learning. As Kramsch (1993) argued, language learning always takes place in a cultural context. In Byram's (1997) account of intercultural communicative competence, knowledge is connected with skills of interpreting and relating, interaction, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. For Chinese learners of English, communicating across cultures involves understanding English-speaking cultures and introducing their own

culture in English. Through comparison and dialogue, learners can also develop cultural agency. Because language habits, cultural awareness, and identity begin to develop during primary school, English classrooms need to support both language learning and cultural education.

Cultural awareness is identified as an important core competency in the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition). Students are expected to understand fine Chinese and foreign cultures, strengthen their love for the country and cultural confidence, and gradually communicate and share Chinese culture through the language they study (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Translating these requirements into practice requires teachers to do several things. Teachers need to understand festivals, historical figures, values, folk customs, and arts before selecting cultural content for their lessons. For classroom use, this content must be expressed in accurate, clear English suited to primary school students and connected with vocabulary, texts, language activities, and assessment. Without support for English expression and teaching design, cultural knowledge may lead only to the introduction of symbols or explanations in Chinese. A focus on language forms alone leaves little room for cultural meaning and makes cultural awareness difficult to develop.

In response to the 2022 curriculum plan and standards, People's Education Press revised its primary school English (PEP) textbooks. Introduced from the starting grades in the autumn semester of 2024, the new textbooks include Chinese and international cultural content through thematic units, authentic tasks, and project activities. Chinese fables, historical stories, cultural traditions, and well-known places in China and other countries are among the examples. By using English, students are encouraged to understand and express culture (People's Education Press, 2024). The practical question therefore extends beyond the presence of Chinese culture in textbooks: can teachers turn this material into age-appropriate English, clear language objectives, and workable classroom tasks?

The Pearl River Delta has rich and diverse cultural resources, including Cantonese, Hakka, and Chaoshan traditions. Lion dance, dragon boat racing, Cantonese opera, morning tea, traditional architecture, and folk crafts are closely connected with students' lives. These resources give primary school English classes useful materials for moving from familiar experience to intercultural expression. Regional culture can make cultural understanding less abstract and create authentic contexts for introducing one's hometown, comparing festivals, retelling stories, and completing projects. However, whether local resources can become teaching resources still depends on teachers' ability to select cultural content, rewrite it in English, and design classroom activities.

The Pearl River Delta is therefore relevant to the analytical problem, as well as being the survey location. It provides a context for examining how teachers connect traditional Chinese culture, local cultural experiences, and English curriculum requirements. Local cultural resources may offer accessible starting points, but their availability does not itself establish teachers' ability to explain cultural meanings in English or design suitable learning tasks. Examining these areas together can help identify whether teachers' self-ratings show a similar or different pattern across cultural understanding, language expression, and teaching. The

study does not compare regions or claim that these relationships are unique to the Pearl River Delta.

Existing studies provide important evidence on intercultural teaching, but a more task-specific account is needed for teaching traditional Chinese culture in primary school English. Wang et al. (2023) examined teachers' preparedness, constraints, and support needs, while Wang et al. (2024) investigated teachers' beliefs about culture, intercultural competence, and teaching practices. These studies help explain the conditions and beliefs surrounding intercultural teaching. The present study builds on this work by distinguishing teachers' perceived ability to understand cultural content, explain its meaning in English, and turn it into classroom learning tasks. Treating these abilities separately may identify support needs that a broad judgement of preparedness does not make explicit. A further question is how teachers perceive their ability to use local cultural resources within these teaching demands. The gap addressed here therefore concerns the task-specific organisation of self-reported competence and its connection with barriers and development needs, rather than the absence of intercultural research in primary schools.

To examine these issues in the Pearl River Delta, we developed a four-dimensional analytical framework around primary school English teachers' self-reported competence. The framework applies insights from intercultural language education to specific teacher tasks and makes the use of regional resources an explicit area of analysis. Its intended contribution is a context-sensitive organisation of competence for needs diagnosis, rather than a replacement for existing intercultural competence theories. Three research questions guided our research: What is the overall level of competence across the four dimensions? Are there significant differences by years of teaching experience and relevant training experience? What difficulties do teachers face, and what professional development support do they expect? We interpret self-reported scores as teachers' perceptions of their abilities, rather than as measures of actual classroom performance. Nor can causal relationships be inferred from the cross-sectional data. Our goal is to use this regional evidence to guide teacher training, resource development, and later scale validation.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Culture and Teachers' Competence

Language teaching involves cultural meaning as well as words and grammar (Kramsch, 1993). Byram (1997) connects cultural knowledge with interpretation, interaction, and critical awareness. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) similarly link language learning with noticing, comparing, reflecting, and communicating. These perspectives suggest that teaching Chinese culture in English requires more than introducing cultural facts. Teachers need to explain meanings, connect cultures, and help children communicate their own experiences.

These perspectives inform the framework without mapping directly onto its four dimensions. Byram's (1997) model includes attitudes and critical cultural awareness as well as knowledge and skills. The present questionnaire focuses on selected teaching demands associated with integrating traditional Chinese culture; it does not measure every component of intercultural communicative competence. Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) account of the relationship between language, culture, and learning supports considering how cultural meanings are expressed and developed through teaching. The four dimensions are thus a contextual

adaptation for the present research purpose, not four components claimed to originate unchanged from either theory.

Research in Chinese EFL education has grown, but much of it concerns higher education (Zhou et al., 2024). In primary schools, some teachers view culture mainly as background information (Wang et al., 2024). Textbooks, assessment, limited training, and time can also restrict cultural teaching (Wang et al., 2023). These findings suggest a need to examine teachers' perceived abilities alongside the practical support they need to turn cultural content into lessons.

A further distinction concerns knowing content and making it understandable to learners. Shulman (1986) distinguishes content knowledge from pedagogical content knowledge, including ways of representing subject matter for learners. This distinction strengthens the rationale for examining cultural understanding separately from classroom integration. It also helps explain why the ability to present a cultural explanation does not, by itself, establish the ability to organise an activity around a learning objective. We use this perspective to clarify the framework's conceptual rationale, rather than to claim that the questionnaire is a comprehensive measure of pedagogical content knowledge.

The present study uses four dimensions to organise these abilities. Cultural knowledge concerns understanding traditions, their meanings, and Chinese–Western cultural differences. English expression concerns explaining culture in clear English suited to children. It focuses on the language used to communicate cultural meaning, rather than general English proficiency. Classroom integration concerns linking cultural content with language objectives, activities, and assessment. Its focus is the organisation of learning, which extends beyond giving an understandable explanation. Regional culture integration concerns using Pearl River Delta traditions and local experiences in English lessons. It makes the use of local cultural resources visible within the broader task of cultural teaching. These distinctions allow a teacher to report confidence in one area while identifying difficulties in another; they do not assume that strength in one area automatically produces strength in the others.

The dimensions are distinct in analytical focus but related in classroom use. The first three distinguish cultural understanding, language expression, and pedagogical integration, whereas the fourth foregrounds their application to local resources and experiences. Regional culture integration therefore overlaps with cultural knowledge and classroom integration; it is retained to examine this contextual emphasis explicitly, not because regional culture is unrelated to wider Chinese culture. For example, understanding a local tradition, explaining it in simple English, and designing a task about it involve connected but different demands. Their relationship is not assumed to be a fixed sequence or a causal pathway. The questionnaire provides an initial descriptive organisation of these areas, and their statistical structure and discriminant validity still require testing.

English Expression and Regional Culture

Cultural knowledge does not automatically become clear English or a suitable classroom task. Pedagogical translanguaging offers one way to support this process. Cenoz and Gorter (2022) describe planned use of learners' language resources for language and content learning. For example, a picture and a short Chinese discussion could establish a festival's meaning before

children practise key English words and sentences. This is a possible teaching approach; the survey did not measure teachers' translanguaging practices.

Local culture can provide familiar contexts for communication. Lion dance, morning tea, festivals, and local buildings may help children connect English with family and community life. Culturally sustaining pedagogy values such experiences as resources for learning (Ladson-Billings et al., 2024). However, knowing local customs is different from explaining their meanings or designing effective lessons. This distinction helps interpret regional self-ratings. The study did not assess pupils' cultural identities or the continuation of community traditions.

Teaching Conditions and Professional Development

Teachers also need opportunities to use their knowledge. The ecological view of teacher agency considers how experience, goals, and working conditions shape action (Priestley et al., 2015). Collaboration and school organisation can support or restrict teachers' choices (Emans et al., 2025). Research in South China also links primary EFL teachers' agency with their working environment (Chen, 2023). Resources, planning time, and school support may therefore help explain practical difficulties, although the questionnaire did not directly measure teacher agency.

Professional development needs to connect learning with classroom use. Desimone (2009) highlights content, active learning, coherence, duration, and collaboration. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also emphasise modelling, practice, feedback, and continued support. For cultural teaching, teachers could check cultural information, prepare simple English, design a task, and revise it after a lesson. These ideas support examining training content and opportunities for practice, alongside attendance frequency.

Together, these perspectives guide the interpretation of the four competence dimensions, reported barriers, and training needs. Intercultural language education informs the focus on cultural meaning and communication; the distinction between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge clarifies the need to examine classroom integration; and attention to local experiences makes regional resource use explicit. Teacher agency and professional development perspectives help interpret the conditions for classroom use and possible support. These perspectives have different roles in the analysis and are not all constructs measured by the questionnaire. Because the evidence comes from a cross-sectional self-report survey, it cannot establish actual teaching quality, causal relationships, or the effectiveness of the proposed support.

Method

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, collecting self-reported data from teachers in August of this year. Participants were required to be teaching English in the Pearl River Delta region—specifically in cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Foshan, Dongguan, Zhongshan, and Zhuhai—at the time of the survey. Recruitment was conducted using non-probability convenience sampling, with teachers forwarding the questionnaire to their respective school WeChat groups. Participation was fully voluntary. As recruitment was not randomized, the findings reflect only the characteristics of the respondents and cannot

be considered a representative estimate of the entire population of primary school English teachers in the region.

All 214 responses contained complete answers to the required background, Likert-scale, and multiple-choice questions, with values within the allowed ranges. Completion times ranged from 97 to 577 seconds; the median was 254.5 seconds. No response was completed in less than 90 seconds, and no two response vectors were completely identical. Although 17 teachers gave the same score to all 20 core competence items, we retained these responses. There was no failed attention check or other clear evidence of invalidity, and the remaining answers were not completely identical. The analytical sample therefore included all 214 teachers. In terms of textbooks, 65 used PEP (30.4%), 60 used Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (28.0%), 55 used Guangdong Education Press (25.7%), and 34 used other versions (15.9%). PEP accounted for the largest single group, although no version was used by more than one third of the sample.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	57	26.6%
Gender	Female	157	73.4%
Teaching experience	≤5 years	13	6.1%
Teaching experience	6–10 years	152	71.0%
Teaching experience	≥11 years	49	22.9%
Highest qualification	College diploma	58	27.1%
Highest qualification	Bachelor's degree	118	55.1%
Highest qualification	Master's degree or above	38	17.8%

Table 2
Relevant Training Experience During the Past Three Years

Training frequency	n	%
Never	72	33.6%
Once	42	19.6%
2–3 times	40	18.7%
4 times or more	60	28.0%

Instrument
We organised the questionnaire into six parts. The first part of the survey questionnaire investigates the background information of teachers, including gender, teaching experience, highest education level, professional title, teaching grade, textbook version, and relevant training situation in the past three years. The second part contains 20 core questions, which are evenly distributed across four dimensions: cultural knowledge, English expression,

classroom integration, and regional cultural integration. The third and fourth parts investigate teachers' textbook resources, school support, and attitudes towards cultural integration. The fifth part explores the difficulties and professional development needs faced by teachers through multiple topic selection. And the sixth part sets up open comments for teachers to voluntarily fill in. The second, third, and fourth parts were scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree); The score for each literacy dimension is calculated based on the average score of the five indicators it contains.

Before conducting the formal survey, the questionnaire was sent to three experts for independent review. Two of the experts hold doctoral degrees in education, and one is an expert in teaching research. To protect their identity, they are referred to as Expert 1, Expert 2, and Expert 3. The relevance and clarity of the items in this questionnaire are rated on a four-point scale. The Item Level Content Validity Index (I-CVI) is obtained by dividing the number of relevance scores of 3 or 4 by the total number of experts. Then, we averaged the I-CVI values of the 20 core projects to obtain S-CVI/Ave. The ratings from three experts indicate that the survey questions in the questionnaire cover the research content of this study, providing preliminary evidence of content validity for this research.

Data Analysis

We analysed the data in IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Frequencies and percentages described the background variables, while means and standard deviations summarised item and dimension scores. Measurement checks included the I-CVI, S-CVI/Ave, and Cronbach's alpha for each of the four dimensions. To examine group differences, we conducted separate one-way analyses of variance for each dimension by years of teaching experience and by frequency of relevant training during the past three years. Applying a Bonferroni correction to the eight overall comparisons gave a significance level of .05/8 = .00625. We reported F values, p values, and η^2 alongside the comparisons. For the multiple-choice questions on difficulties and training needs, percentages were calculated using all 214 participants as the denominator. Because participants could select several options, the percentages could total more than 100%.

Research Ethics

On the opening page of the questionnaire, the research purpose and the conditions of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were explained. No information identifying teachers or schools was collected. We stored expert review materials separately from teacher questionnaire data, and experts' names, institutions, and identifiable quotations were not disclosed without clear permission. No student questionnaires, interviews, or achievement data were collected. Classroom cases were also excluded as separate qualitative evidence.

Results

Content Validity and Internal Consistency

All 20 core items had an I-CVI of 1.00, and the S-CVI/Ave was 1.00. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .921 to .935 across the four dimensions (Table 3). These findings supported initial content validity and internal consistency in this sample. They did not confirm the proposed four-factor structure (Taber, 2018).

Table 3
Content Validity and Reliability of the Four Competence Dimensions

Index or dimension	Number or range of items	Result
I-CVI	20 core items	All 1.00
S-CVI/Ave	Core scale	1.00
Cultural knowledge	5 items	α = .921
English expression	5 items	α = .935
Classroom integration	5 items	α = .924
Regional culture integration	5 items	α = .922

Overall Levels of Teachers' Self-Reported Competence

The overall descriptive mean was 3.80 (SD = 0.85). Regional culture integration ranked highest (M = 4.14), followed by classroom integration (3.82), cultural knowledge (3.63), and English expression (3.61; Table 4). Q23, concerning the integration of Pearl River Delta culture, had the highest item mean (4.17). Q10, on Chinese–Western cultural differences, and Q14, on explaining festivals and customs in simple English, shared the lowest mean (3.57).

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for the Four Competence Dimensions

Competence dimension	M	SD	Rank
Regional culture integration	4.14	0.89	1
Classroom integration	3.82	0.95	2
Cultural knowledge	3.63	1.01	3
English expression	3.61	1.04	4

Competence Differences by Years of Teaching Experience

Levene's tests supported equal variances (p = .231–.938). None of the four teaching-experience comparisons was significant at either .05 or the Bonferroni-adjusted threshold of .00625 (Table 5). Effect sizes were small (η^2 = .002–.012), and no post hoc tests were conducted.

Table 5
Comparison of Competence by Years of Teaching Experience

Dimension	≤5 years M (SD)	6–10 years M (SD)	≥11 years M (SD)	F	p	η^2
Cultural knowledge	3.46 (1.24)	3.65 (1.01)	3.59 (0.97)	0.25	.780	.002
English expression	3.52 (1.13)	3.58 (1.03)	3.70 (1.04)	0.29	.747	.003
Classroom integration	3.63 (1.11)	3.83 (0.95)	3.84 (0.91)	0.28	.757	.003
Regional culture integration	3.78 (1.16)	4.18 (0.86)	4.10 (0.90)	1.24	.293	.012

Competence Differences by Training Experience
Levene's tests also supported equal variances across training groups (p = .061–.770). None of the four training-frequency comparisons was significant (p = .120–.536; η^2 = .010–.027; Table 6). The means did not rise steadily with attendance frequency.

Table 6
Comparison of Competence by Training Frequency

Competence	Never M (SD)	Once M (SD)	2–3 times M (SD)	≥4 times M (SD)	F	p	η^2
Cultural knowledge	3.71 (1.05)	3.79 (0.82)	3.34 (1.03)	3.60 (1.06)	1.64	.182	.023
English expression	3.74 (1.04)	3.80 (0.88)	3.39 (1.06)	3.45 (1.09)	1.96	.120	.027
Classroom integration	3.86 (0.92)	3.97 (0.89)	3.68 (1.02)	3.77 (0.98)	0.73	.536	.010
Regional culture integration	4.27 (0.85)	4.28 (0.81)	3.98 (0.91)	3.98 (0.95)	1.91	.130	.027

Textbook Resources, School Support, and Practical Barriers
Textbook-resource means ranged from 2.82 to 3.14, while school-support means ranged from 3.14 to 3.70. School guidance for cultural lesson design received the highest support rating (M = 3.70). The importance rating for cultural integration was near the scale midpoint (Q37, M = 3.07, SD = 1.24). These items were reported separately because they addressed different issues.

The leading barriers were curriculum integration (78.5%), insufficient teaching materials (77.6%), and English expression (72.9%). Teachers also reported difficulties with activity design (58.4%) and access to relevant training (57.0%; Table 7).

Table 7
Main Difficulties Reported by Teachers

Difficulty	n	%
Difficulty integrating cultural content into the existing curriculum	168	78.5%
Lack of suitable teaching materials and resources	166	77.6%
Limited ability to express Chinese culture in English	156	72.9%
Difficulty designing suitable classroom activities	125	58.4%
Lack of relevant professional training	122	57.0%
Other difficulties	65	30.4%
Limited classroom time	47	22.0%
Limited school support	38	17.8%

Professional Development Needs

The most selected training areas were cultural activity design (84.1%) and English expression (83.2%). Materials and digital resources (76.6%) and cultural knowledge (75.7%) followed. Only 14.5% selected Lingnan or local cultural resources. "Other" was selected by 149 respondents (69.6%), but none specified the training needed. These additional needs could not be classified or interpreted further (Table 8).

Table 8
Professional Development Areas Expected by Teachers

Professional development area	n	%
Design of cultural teaching activities	180	84.1%
English expression of traditional Chinese culture	178	83.2%
Development of teaching materials and digital resources	164	76.6%
Knowledge of fine traditional Chinese culture	162	75.7%
Other professional development	149	69.6%
Classroom teaching design	133	62.1%
Assessment of students' intercultural learning	108	50.5%
Development and use of Lingnan or local cultural resources	31	14.5%

Discussion

Local Culture and English Expression

Regional culture integration had the highest self-rating (M = 4.14), yet only 14.5% selected local-resource training and 77.6% reported material shortages. These findings can coexist. Teachers may know local festivals, food, and customs while still lacking materials suited to English lessons. The shortage question concerned cultural teaching generally, so it does not establish a specific lack of Lingnan materials. The overall results also do not show whether the

teachers with high regional ratings were the same people who reported shortages or did not select local-resource training.

Several explanations are possible. Familiar customs may give teachers confidence without showing how deeply they teach cultural meanings. Q23's broad wording may also allow different standards of self-assessment. Some teachers may give answers they feel are expected (Podsakoff et al., 2003). None of these explanations was tested. Byram (1997) and Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) connect cultural knowledge with interpretation and communication. The regional finding therefore offers a starting point for support: schools could build on familiar topics and help teachers turn them into meaningful English tasks. A low selection rate for local training does not establish that such support is unnecessary.

English expression provides a clearer priority. It had the lowest dimension mean (3.61), and 83.2% selected it as a training need. Q14 also received a relatively low mean (3.57) for explaining festivals and customs in simple English. Together, these results suggest that teachers want help choosing language children can understand. For example, explaining family reunion requires both cultural understanding and suitable English. Planned use of pictures, Chinese discussion, and short English expressions could support this process (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). The survey did not test this approach, but it identifies a practical focus for lesson preparation.

The contrast between regional culture integration and English expression illustrates the descriptive value of the framework. These are dimension means, not evidence that the dimensions are statistically independent or that their difference is statistically significant. Nevertheless, reporting them separately makes it possible to discuss local cultural teaching confidence and English-expression needs without treating them as the same judgement. In this sense, the Pearl River Delta evidence draws attention to a broader curriculum question: how can familiar local resources be connected with the language and teaching demands of cultural education? The present data identify priorities for exploring this question, rather than establish that local familiarity causes either stronger integration or weaker English expression.

Teaching Experience and Training Frequency

Neither teaching experience nor training frequency showed significant group differences, and effect sizes were small. Teachers reporting no training had higher means than those attending two or three sessions; for English expression, the means were 3.74 and 3.39. These descriptive differences do not show that untrained teachers were more competent or that training reduced competence. They also do not prove that the groups were equivalent. Unequal group sizes limit interpretation, especially the group of only 13 teachers with five years or less of experience.

Attendance counts do not describe training content, practice, or follow-up support. Teachers attending the same number of sessions may have had different learning opportunities. Less confident teachers may also have sought more training, or training may have encouraged more critical self-assessment. These possibilities were not measured. Desimone (2009) emphasises content, active learning, and collaboration, while Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlight practice and continued support. Providers could therefore review what teachers learn and use in lessons, alongside attendance. Teaching samples collected before and after

a programme, with a comparison group where feasible, could provide better evidence of change.

Difficulties in Turning Cultural Content into Lessons

The reported barriers suggest a possible gap between cultural content and its use in lessons. Wang et al. (2023) also identified resource and training constraints in Chinese primary schools. The present study adds a clear pattern of requested support: activity design, English expression, and materials development. From the ecological view of teacher agency, teachers' actions depend partly on their working conditions (Priestley et al., 2015). Positive self-ratings can therefore coexist with practical difficulties. A teacher may feel able to teach a cultural topic but still need a suitable text, planning time, or feedback. This interpretation is plausible, but the survey did not directly assess classroom performance or establish causes.

Q37's mean of 3.07, near the scale midpoint, does not mean teachers considered cultural integration unimportant or that everyone was neutral. Meanwhile, 84.1% wanted activity-design training. These measures address different issues: a general importance judgement and a specific support need. Teachers may need help turning curriculum requirements into manageable lessons even when they do not strongly endorse the importance statement. Extra preparation could be one reason, but workload was not measured. The practical implication is to show teachers where to begin and how cultural aims can fit existing language objectives.

For example, a food unit could use Cantonese morning tea to practise ordering and explain the custom of sharing dishes. This links familiar culture with language use and cultural meaning. Schools could provide adaptable materials and shared planning time, allowing teachers to try one task and review pupils' responses. The questionnaire could guide an initial discussion of needs, while lesson plans and pupil work could help check classroom use. It should not serve alone as a teacher appraisal tool. These are proposed uses of the findings; their effectiveness still needs classroom testing.

Contributions of the Study

In response to the gaps identified in the literature review, this study offers three contributions. Conceptually, it adapts insights from intercultural language education into an analytical framework focused on primary school teachers' cultural understanding, English expression, classroom integration, and use of regional cultural resources. Its value lies in making these teaching demands separately visible for needs diagnosis, while acknowledging their overlap. This adds a task-specific and contextual emphasis to broader accounts of intercultural competence and teacher preparedness; it does not establish a new general theory of teacher competence. The Pearl River Delta evidence illustrates why local cultural teaching confidence should be considered alongside language-expression and activity-design needs. The framework may guide questions in other settings, but its suitability there requires contextual adaptation and further research.

Methodologically, the study developed a questionnaire with preliminary evidence of content validity and internal consistency. It offers an initial descriptive tool for this context. Its four-dimensional structure and relationship with classroom performance still require further validation.

Practically, the study identifies teachers' reported barriers and training priorities. These findings provide a basis for discussing support needs and planning teacher development. The proposed pathways connect these priorities with possible support and evidence for future evaluation; their effects have not been established.

Practical Recommendations

Training for English Expression and Activity Design

The high demand for activity design training (84.1%) and English expression training (83.2%) provides a clear starting point. A session could ask teachers to prepare a short lesson on the Dragon Boat Festival or lion dance. They would check the cultural facts, choose English that children can understand, and design a speaking or reading task. After trying the lesson, teachers could discuss students' responses with colleagues and revise it. Lesson plans, worksheets, and student work would help show how the training was used. Attendance alone would not provide this evidence.

Build a Bilingual Resource Bank Linked to Textbook Units

A bilingual resource bank could help address the resource shortage reported by 77.6% of teachers. Schools and local teaching research departments could organise materials by textbook topic, grade, and language difficulty. Each resource should give its source, a short English text, useful words and sentence patterns, and an activity that teachers can adapt. For example, materials about Cantonese morning tea could support a food unit and a simple ordering task. Teachers could try the materials and share changes based on their students' needs. These are proposed forms of support, not approaches tested in this study.

Embed Cultural Content in Existing Language Objectives

Cultural content can often be connected with the vocabulary, grammar, texts, and communication tasks already taught in primary school English. A separate culture course is not always necessary. When learning the simple future or the be going to structure, for example, students could make a Mid-Autumn Festival plan. Questions and responses might include "What are you going to do for the Mid-Autumn Festival?" and "We are going to eat mooncakes and enjoy the full moon." By planning these activities, students practise the target language and learn to express ideas about mooncakes, moon viewing, and family reunion. Table 9 illustrates further ways to link cultural content with common language objectives.

Table 9

Examples of Linking Language Objectives with Chinese Cultural Content

Language objective	Cultural content	Classroom task or student output	Core English expressions
be going to (future)	Mid-Autumn Festival plans	Create a group festival plan and give a short oral report.	What are you going to do for the Mid-Autumn Festival? We are going to eat mooncakes and enjoy the full moon.
Simple present and adverbs of frequency	Spring Festival customs	Conduct a class survey and report family customs.	We usually put up Spring Festival couplets. We always have a family dinner.

Language objective	Cultural content	Classroom task or student output	Core English expressions
Imperatives and sequencing words	Making zongzi or tangyuan	Put picture cards in order and explain the steps.	First, prepare the ingredients. Next, ... Finally, ...
There is/are and place prepositions	Foshan Ancestral Temple and Lingnan architecture	Use a map or picture to act as a young tour guide.	There is a ... in the temple. You can see ... beside ...
Can/can't for abilities	Cantonese lion dance and Cantonese opera	Identify performers' skills and introduce a performance.	Performers can jump and balance. They can work together to move the lion.
Food words, quantities, and preferences	Cantonese morning tea and dim sum	Design a simple menu and role-play ordering and sharing food.	I'd like some ... Would you like ...? We usually share dim sum with our family.

Note. These activities are examples we developed to show possible links between language objectives and cultural content. They are not presented as evidence from classroom observations.

Support Ongoing Cultural Teaching Through School-Based Collaboration

Schools could give teachers regular time to plan and review cultural lessons together. A group could select a topic, check the English expressions, and discuss student work after the lesson. This would help teachers revise tasks that were too difficult or unclear. Local teaching research departments could also share lesson materials across schools. The materials would still need changes to suit different textbooks and grades.

Assessment and Improvement Pathways

Figure 1 links the four competence dimensions with needs to explore, possible support, and evidence for review. Before planning training, schools could use the questionnaire alongside teaching samples to identify priorities. After support, teachers could review lesson plans, observations, and pupil work collected before and after the activities. These proposed pathways guide planning and future testing; the arrows do not show proven causal effects. The questionnaire should support needs diagnosis and professional discussion, rather than ranking teachers or determining performance ratings.

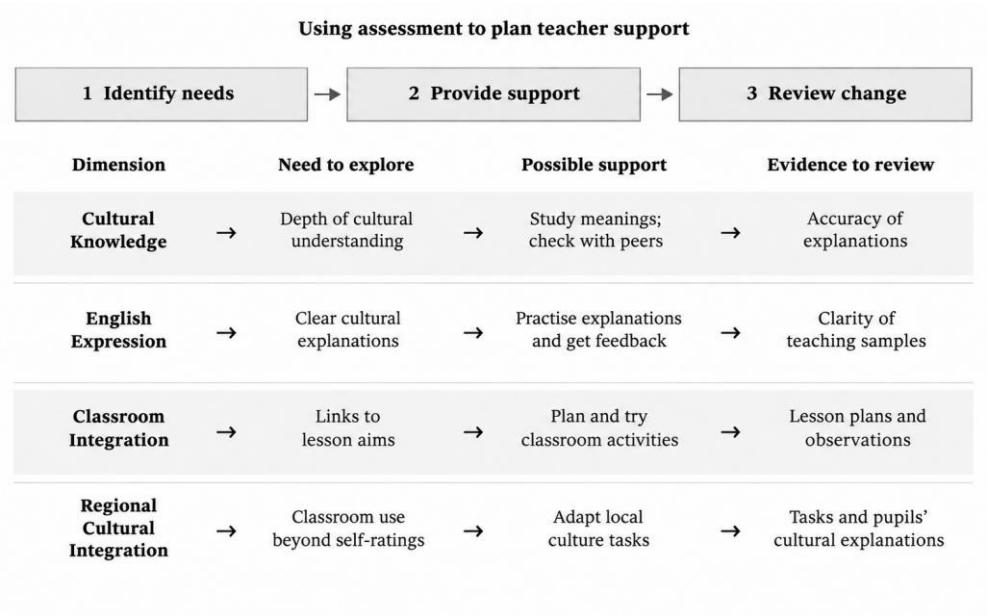


Figure 1. Proposed assessment and improvement pathways

Note. These pathways were not tested in this study. The arrows represent proposed links for planning and evaluation, not established effects.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered. The convenience sample covered only cities in the Pearl River Delta. The findings cannot be generalised to all primary school English teachers in this region, other regions, or China as a whole. Teaching-experience groups were uneven: 152 teachers (71.0%) had 6–10 years of experience, while only 13 had five years or less. This imbalance limited the precision of group comparisons, especially for less experienced teachers.

Only three experts reviewed the questionnaire, limiting the range of expert viewpoints. The content-validity findings therefore remain preliminary. No independent pilot study or factor analysis was conducted, so the proposed four-dimensional structure still requires further testing. In particular, regional culture integration overlaps conceptually with cultural knowledge and classroom integration. Expert agreement and internal consistency do not establish that these dimensions are empirically distinct. Future validation should examine whether regional culture integration is supported as a separate dimension or is better represented as a contextual aspect of the other dimensions.

Self-reports may reflect confidence or a wish to present oneself positively. Using one questionnaire for all measures may also affect the results (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Training was measured only by attendance frequency. The cross-sectional design cannot show whether training or school conditions caused changes in competence.

Future research should first check the questionnaire structure and the link between self-ratings and classroom performance. Interviews could identify unclear Chinese or English items before the questionnaire is tested with a new sample. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses could then examine the four dimensions. Classroom observations, lesson plans, and

tasks in which teachers explain culture in English would allow researchers to compare self-ratings with actual work. Longer studies could also examine how teachers use training over time.

Conclusion

This survey of 214 primary school English teachers in the Pearl River Delta found generally positive self-ratings of cultural integration competence (M = 3.80). Regional culture integration received the highest mean, while English expression received the lowest. Group differences by teaching experience and training frequency were not statistically significant. Teachers mainly reported difficulties with curriculum integration, resources, and English expression. Activity design was their most frequently selected training need.

These findings suggest a possible "pedagogical transformation gap" between cultural content in textbooks and its use in classroom activities. They point to a need for support in choosing suitable English and developing tasks linked to textbook units. Training that includes lesson preparation and classroom practice could address these needs. However, this conclusion is based on teachers' own reports. Classroom evidence is needed to check their teaching performance and whether the proposed support is effective.

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