

EMBEDDING MORAL VALUES INTO LESSONS: EFL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Received: 04/02/2025</p> <p>Revised: 10/04/2025</p> <p>Published: 13/04/2025</p> | <p>Within the increasingly complex dynamics of globalization, the significance of moral guidance has grown profoundly essential. Educational standards are on the rise, emphasizing the development of both learners' competencies and moral qualities. In Vietnamese high schools, along with an increase in reported moral degradation, the implementation of the new English curriculum mandates teachers not only to teach language but also to integrate moral values into lessons. This study used questionnaires containing both closed and open-ended questions to examine the perceptions and teaching practices of moral values among 30 English teachers in three provinces of the Mekong Delta. Then, data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings indicated teachers' positive perceptions of integrating moral values into EFL lessons and their self-reported frequent classroom practices. These findings were qualitatively supported, leading to discernible pedagogical implications.</p> |
| <p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>EFL teachers</p> <p>Perceptions</p> <p>Classroom practices</p> <p>Moral values</p> <p>Influential factors</p> | |

LỒNG GHÉP GIÁ TRỊ ĐẠO ĐỨC VÀO BÀI DẠY: NHẬN THỨC VÀ THỰC TIỄN GIẢNG DẠY CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG

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| THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO | TÓM TẮT |
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| <p>Ngày nhận bài: 04/02/2025</p> <p>Ngày hoàn thiện: 10/04/2025</p> <p>Ngày đăng: 13/04/2025</p> | <p>Trong bối cảnh toàn cầu hóa phức tạp hiện nay, sự hướng dẫn đạo đức ngày càng trở nên quan trọng. Các tiêu chuẩn giáo dục đang ngày càng nâng cao, nhấn mạnh vào việc phát triển cả năng lực và phẩm chất đạo đức của người học. Ở bối cảnh các trường trung học phổ thông tại Việt Nam, cùng với sự gia tăng của tình trạng suy thoái đạo đức được báo cáo, việc thực hiện chương trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh mới đòi hỏi giáo viên không chỉ dạy ngôn ngữ mà còn phải lồng ghép các giá trị đạo đức vào bài dạy. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát nhận thức và thực tiễn giảng dạy giá trị đạo đức của 30 giáo viên tiếng Anh tại ba tỉnh Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long. Dữ liệu từ bảng câu hỏi đóng và mở được phân tích định lượng và định tính, cho thấy giáo viên có nhận thức tích cực và thường xuyên tích hợp giá trị đạo đức vào bài dạy. Những kết quả này được hỗ trợ bởi các dữ liệu định tính, mang lại một số ý nghĩa sư phạm.</p> |
| <p>TỪ KHÓA</p> <p>Giáo viên tiếng Anh</p> <p>Nhận thức</p> <p>Thực tế giảng dạy</p> <p>Giá trị đạo đức</p> <p>Các yếu tố ảnh hưởng</p> | |

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1. Introduction

Education must undergo significant transformation to achieve its objective of helping individuals develop into better people, citizens, and professionals [1]. More specifically, education has evolved to focus on developing learners' skills, values, and attitudes to prepare them to become global citizens [2]. Consequently, the primary goal of current education is to impart not only knowledge and skills but also values, aiming to nurture learners' qualities alongside essential competencies to prepare them for future social life. In this sense, moral education plays a crucial role in general education, including English language teaching and learning. Recognizing the necessity for innovation in response to globalization, Vietnam has prioritized education as a key strategy for national development. In alignment with international standards, Vietnam implemented a new general educational curriculum in 2022, aiming to develop specific key competencies and qualities in learners by the completion of secondary education [3].

The concept of moral education has been a long-standing and essential component of educational systems [4]. However, contemporary education often prioritizes academic achievement over the inculcation of moral values [5]. This emphasis highlights the need for comprehensive educational strategies that address both academic success and moral development. As a result, the lack of adequate moral education has contributed to a diminished emphasis on value creation in younger generations. The absence of moral values in education has led to an increase in negative behaviors among students [6]-[8].

In Vietnam, concerns about moral degradation among high school students have been reported [9]. The Prime Minister highlighted the remaining issues of moral misbehavior, including school violence, social crimes, and violations of law, as a matter of significant concern. He emphasized the need for increased attention from schools, families, and society to address these issues. Evidence of student misbehavior, particularly school violence, was reported by [10], which described school violence as a pressing issue among Vietnamese secondary students. Current education and training programs often overlook the moral education of students. He pointed out that middle and high schools primarily rely on Civic Education to teach moral values, but the allotted time for this subject is insufficient [10]. Therefore, it is imperative to enhance moral education in Vietnamese high schools by integrating moral values into the curriculum, particularly within English language teaching.

In the Vietnamese context, very little research has examined how EFL teachers perceive and practice embedding moral values into lessons. In particular, Phan and Phan [11] conducted a qualitative study with seven Vietnamese English teachers who had studied TESOL in Australia. The research used interviews, focus groups, and reflective writing to gather data. The teachers saw their role as moral guides as integral to their teaching, often prioritizing it over being merely knowledge facilitators. They incorporated moral education into English lessons, using examples and stories to teach values. They believed this approach fulfilled their duties as teachers and helped students develop moral character.

In terms of teaching materials which contain moral values, Le [12] analyzed Vietnamese-produced EFL textbooks for upper secondary schools to identify embedded moral values. The study examined three textbooks: Tieng Anh [English] 10, 11, and 12. It found that while the textbooks included some universal moral values like honesty and cultural tolerance, they primarily reflected Vietnamese values. The content and activities were insufficient for developing students' moral identity and global citizenship. In Vietnam, where textbooks are seen as authoritative, this lack of critical awareness may lead students to passively accept societal roles [13]. The study questions how English teachers can meet curriculum goals to foster moral identity and global citizenship when the textbooks are lacking.

Despite the crucial role that teachers play in cultivating moral values among students through classroom practices [6], [14] and the acknowledged importance of moral education in teaching

[6], [14], [15], there is a significant gap in the existing literature examining how EFL teachers perceive and integrate moral values into their lessons, particularly within both foreign and Vietnamese contexts. Furthermore, research in this area has predominantly relied on methods such as interviews, observations, and reflective journals, without utilizing questionnaires that include both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Therefore, it is essential to specifically investigate EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of embedding moral values and the factors affecting these perceptions and practices in Vietnamese high schools, where these values are explicitly presented into the English language curriculum. Employing quantitative and qualitative approaches is necessary for this investigation.

Meanwhile, the important role of teachers in implementing the curriculum is undeniable [6], [14]. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of studies that examine EFL teachers' perceptions and classroom practices of embedding moral values into lessons, particularly within foreign or Vietnamese contexts [11], [12], [14], [16] and explored the factors influencing these perceptions and practices. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap in literature and answers the question: What are EFL high school teachers' perceptions and classroom practices of embedding moral values into lessons?

2. Research methods

This study adopted a postpositivist perspective to thoroughly address the research problem [17]. To explore how EFL teachers perceive and practice embedding moral values into lessons in several high schools of the Mekong Delta, questionnaires combined closed-ended and open-ended questions for a nuanced understanding.

2.1. Setting and participants

The study involved 30 Vietnamese high school teachers (5 male, 25 female) from An Giang, Hau Giang, and Dong Thap provinces, selected through snowball sampling. Most of the teachers had a Bachelor's degree in English teaching and over 10 years of experience. The research took place in public schools where English is a core subject, using Global Success and I-learn Smart World textbooks, approved by [18]. Table 1 summarizes their profiles.

Table 1. Questionnaire participants' demographic information

| Criteria | Questionnaire respondents | n (%) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Gender of participants | Male | 5 (16.7%) |
| | Female | 25 (83.3%) |
| Level of English language education | Bachelor | 22 (73.3%) |
| | Master | 8 (26.7%) |
| Years of teaching experience | 5-9 years | 2 (6.7%) |
| | 10-14 years | 10 (33.3%) |
| | 15-20 years | 8 (26.7%) |
| | Over 20 years | 10 (33.3%) |
| Location of high schools | 2 high schools, An Giang province | 7 (23.3%) |
| | 1 high school, Dong Thap province | 9 (30%) |
| | 2 high schools, Hau Giang province | 14 (46.7%) |
| English textbooks used at the schools | Global success | 18 (60%) |
| | I-learn Smart world | 12 (40%) |

2.2. Data collection and analysis

This study employed a survey method using a Likert 7-point scale questionnaire. The questionnaire included six background questions, 76 closed-ended questions to examine how EFL high school teachers perceive and practice embedding moral values into lessons, and three open-ended questions to gather additional insights. Data were collected from 30 EFL teachers in

five high schools across three provinces in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam via Express Mail and Zalo over three weeks. A reliability analysis showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.818, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire. Closed-ended responses were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 27, while open-ended responses followed qualitative analysis steps [18]. Coding responses (e.g., T1 for Teacher 1) revealed three themes: perceptions, practices, and influential factors.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

The study found that EFL teachers generally had positive perceptions and practices regarding embedding moral values in their teaching, with mean scores above 5. Teachers with less experience had higher perception scores, while those with over 20 years of experience reported highest practice scores but lowest perception scores. Overall, perception scores decreased with experience, while practice scores remained high for teachers with over 20 years of teaching (Figure 1).

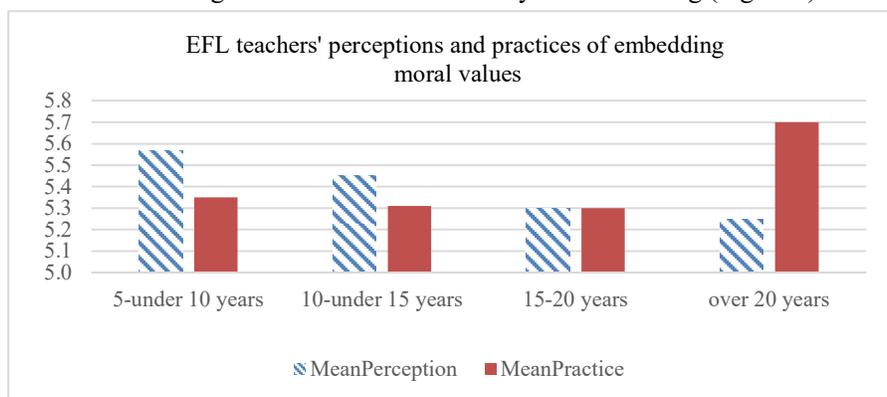


Figure 1. Summary of participants' perceptions and practices of embedding moral values

Additionally, open-ended responses from 12 participants indicated the necessity of embedding moral values into lessons, and 15 out of 30 teachers reported that they frequently incorporated these values into their classroom practices. From the responses of the participants, the factors influencing their perceptions and practices such as the teacher-related factors and external factors (e.g. the social context, the school context, family background, students) were indicated. The components of each term are elaborated in subsequent sections.

3.1.1. Perceptions of embedding moral values into EFL lessons

The results derived from calculations in Microsoft Excel, along with open responses from the teachers, indicated that EFL teachers demonstrated a relatively high perception of embedding moral values into EFL lessons. Table 2 summarizes the results, with further details presented in the following domains.

Table 2. Summary of participants' perceptions of embedding moral values

| Domains | N | Min. | Max. | M | SD |
|---------------------------------|----|------|------|------|------|
| Stimulating thinking (Item 1-4) | 30 | 5.50 | 7.00 | 6.31 | 0.50 |
| Knowledge (Item 5-17) | 30 | 4.54 | 6.31 | 5.63 | 0.49 |
| Interpretations (Item 18-26) | 30 | 4.78 | 6.33 | 5.71 | 0.40 |
| Response (Item 27-32) | 30 | 2.67 | 6.00 | 3.57 | 0.72 |

Results from Table 2 indicate that stimulating received the highest mean score ($M = 6.31$, $SD = 0.50$), while response ranked the lowest ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.72$). This suggests that although participants were highly engaged in thinking about moral situations, they were less receptive to

embedding moral values into lessons.

Domain 1: Stimulating thinking

Table 3 provides a detailed overview of participants' agreement with the moral situations.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of Stimulating thinking*

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. When I see a student who cheats during the test, I don't ignore it. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 2. When I encounter a reading text containing social issues (e.g. bullying, drug addiction), I bring it into the lesson. | 80% | 16.67% | 3.33% |
| 3. When hearing students say bad words, I stop him to teach him a moral lesson about good manners. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 4. When seeing students littering, I cannot stand it and teach them to put the trash into the dustbin to keep the campus clean. | 100% | 0% | 0% |

Table 3 showed that all of the participants reported that they would not ignore students' cheating during the tests, students saying bad words, and wanted their students not to litter to keep the environment clean. However, only 80% reported they brought reading text containing social issues into lessons. In this regard, when being stimulated to think about moral values, responses from four participants (T3, T13, T16, T25) revealed that students' moral misbehaviour at school is a serious concern. Additionally, T5 and T27 pointed out that the influences of social networks and media in the 4.0 era contribute to the decline in students' moral behavior. They said:

"Embedding moral values within various subjects helps diminish moral decay among students in the Industry 4.0 era and assists schools in promoting a more holistic education." (T25)

"The lifestyle of today's youth is increasingly shaped by various influences from social media and the media, leading to a more Westernized and Europeanized way of living. As a result, they are increasingly disregarding the traditional moral values of Vietnamese culture. Alarmingly, their behavior is showing signs of decline; they lack respect and proper manners towards teachers, disregard school rules, focus solely on their own interests..." (T3)

Domain 2: Knowledge about embedding moral values

Table 4 provides a detailed overview of participants' knowledge of embedding moral values from items with prominent data of this domain.

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 2 – knowledge about embedding moral values*

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 5. Teaching moral values to students is one of the main goals of each lesson in the English language curriculum. | 96.66% | 0% | 3.34% |
| 9. Students' moral misbehavior at school is alarming. | 86.66% | 3.34% | 10% |
| 10. Teaching moral values is difficult for language teachers. | 50% | 0% | 50% |
| 12. I know how to integrate moral values into the English language lessons. | 93.32% | 3.34% | 3.34% |
| 17. Teachers are moral models. | 100% | 0% | 0% |

The result from SPSS analysis showed that the teachers had much knowledge of embedding moral values. However, the group with least years of teaching experience had the highest mean

score of knowing ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 0.05$) whilst teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience had the least mean score of knowing ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 0.43$). Particularly, 100% participants know that teachers are moral models. About 97% agreed that integrating moral values into EFL lessons is one of the main goals of the English language curriculum. However, they (about 87%) also revealed that students' moral misbehavior at school is alarming. Notably, 50% thought that teaching moral values is difficult for language teacher. Furthermore, more than 90% knew how to integrate moral values into English language lessons.

Domain 3: Interpretations of embedding moral values

The participants interpreted embedding moral values in various ways. The detailed results of some items with high percentage of agreement are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 3 – Interpretations of embedding moral values

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|--|---|----------------------------|--|
| 19. Teaching moral values is the EFL teachers' responsibility. | 90% | 3.34% | 6.66% |
| 22. Teaching moral values helps EFL students preserve Vietnamese traditional values. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 23. It is necessary to teach moral values in the EFL class. | 86.66% | 13.34% | 0% |

Based on the teachers' knowledge, 100% perceived the role of teaching moral values in helping EFL students preserve Vietnamese traditional values. 90% agreed that teaching moral values is the EFL teachers' responsibility, and about 87% reported that it is necessary to teach moral values in the EFL class. Open responses of 15 participants highlighted that it is necessary to embed moral values into lessons. T20 and T25 emphasized:

"I think integrating moral values into lessons is critically important in the modern educational context. It is advisable that English teachers be encouraged to integrate moral values into their teaching to support the moral development of students." (T20)

"Moral education is an essential component for teachers, contributing significantly to the quality of moral instruction and the development of students' character, thereby establishing a strong foundation for other educational dimensions." (T25)

Domain 4: Response to embedding moral values

A detailed overview of the participants' responses to embedding moral values is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 4 – Response to embedding moral values

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|--|---|----------------------------|--|
| 27. I have brought moral values into EFL lessons. | 93.33% | 6.67% | 0% |
| 28. I try to be a moral model for my EFL students. | 100% | 0% | 0% |

At the end of perceptual process, the teachers reported their response to embedding moral values into lessons. 100% ($n = 30$) reported that they try to be moral models for their EFL students, of which more than 68% showed their strong agreement. Also, over 93% reported that they have brought moral values into EFL lessons. This finding was supported from open responses. Typically, T26 expressed: "In addition to educating on theoretical or knowledge aspects in cultural or natural subjects, personally, I always prioritize moral education starting from school or more specifically in all lessons."

T3 thought that moral values can be embedded in each unit. The teacher said: "From my own experience, in each unit it is possible to incorporate certain moral values."

3.1.2. Practices of embedding moral values into EFL lessons

The EFL teachers self-reported their implementation of embedding moral values into lessons, particularly their lesson planning and preparing, instruction, classroom management and student assessment. Table 7 summarizes the results, with more details provided in the following domains.

Table 7. Summary of participants' classroom practices of embedding moral values

| Domains | N | Min. | Max. | M | SD |
|--|----|------|------|------|------|
| Lesson planning and preparing (Item 33-39) | 30 | 3.14 | 6.57 | 4.40 | 0.63 |
| Instruction (Item 40-63) | 30 | 4.58 | 6.21 | 5.62 | 0.38 |
| Classroom management (Item 64-72) | 30 | 4.00 | 6.00 | 5.46 | 0.44 |
| Student assessment (Item 73-76) | 30 | 3.00 | 6.00 | 4.96 | 0.78 |

Results from Table 7 showed that instruction and classroom management had the highest mean scores ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 0.38$; $M = 5.46$, $SD = 0.44$, respectively), while lesson planning and preparation had the lowest ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.63$). This indicates that participants primarily embedded moral values through instruction and classroom management.

Domain 1: Lesson planning and preparing

Table 8 presents a detailed overview of how participants planned and prepared lessons with embedded moral values.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 1 – Lesson planning and preparing

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| 33. When planning a lesson, I often include the goal of the lesson regarding moral values. | 83.33% | 13.33% | 3.34% |
| 36. I often incorporate moral values into EFL lessons based on the content of the EFL textbooks only. | 30% | 20% | 50% |
| 39. I often find relevant authentic materials besides EFL textbooks to teach moral values. | 90% | 10% | 0% |

When planning lessons, over 80% of the teachers frequently included specific goals related to moral values, and approximately 90% often sought out relevant authentic materials, in addition to EFL textbooks, to teach these values. However, half of them disagreed that they incorporated moral values into EFL lessons based on the content of the EFL textbooks only. From open responses, the teachers emphasized the selection of appropriate moral values into lessons. T23 stressed: "Select relevant moral values. Integrate them appropriately depending on the lesson content." In addition, T25 pointed out the steps in lesson planning. The teacher said: "Prepare. Select relevant values for the lesson. Predict possible scenarios."

Domain 2: Instruction

Table 9 presents a detailed overview of how the participants delivered instruction related to moral education. Twenty-six out of 30 teachers disagreed with the notion that they only teach English in their lessons. All teachers reported regularly incorporating the five moral values outlined in the curriculum - patriotism, compassion, diligence, honesty, and responsibility - by embedding them through reading texts and real-life situations. Additionally, over 90% of the teachers frequently integrated moral values they understood, implied these values in teaching activities, told stories to illustrate these values, and used moral exemplars and pictures as teaching tools. Furthermore, participants' open responses suggested additional activities for integrating moral values, such as using games (T26), presentations and writing reflections (T19). From open responses, the teachers reported their classroom practices of embedding moral values. They said:

"I emphasize the step of reviewing the lesson to summarize the content of the lesson

(especially in Reading lessons) or when providing examples to start teaching Grammar (examples related to students' moral values) to integrate moral values into English lessons." (T13)

"...Connect real-life moral values to the lesson. For example, when teaching about gender equality, I will share some stories with students. Then I will ask some students to stand up and answer questions." (T28)

"It involves moving away from strictly adhering to the textbook structure by incorporating games, images, or interactive question-and-answer sessions to make theoretical concepts more engaging." (T26)

Table 9. Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 2 – Instruction

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| 43. I often teach my students to be honest. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 44. I often teach moral values that I understand their meaning. | 96.66% | 3.34% | 0% |
| 45. I often use moral exemplars to teach moral values. | 96.66% | 3.34% | 0% |
| 47. I often teach my EFL students study and work hard. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 49. I often teach my EFL students to care for others. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 50. I often teach my EFL students to love the country. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 53. I often teach my EFL students to be responsible. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 54. I often imply moral values in teaching activities. | 93.32% | 3.34% | 3.34% |
| 56. I often use reading texts to teach moral values. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 58. I often use real-life situations to teach moral values. | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| 59. I often use pictures to teach moral values. | 90% | 6.66% | 3.34% |
| 60. I often tell stories to illustrate moral values. | 90% | 10% | 0% |

Domain 3: Classroom management

Table 10 provides a detailed overview of how participants manage EFL classes to foster moral education.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 3 – Classroom management

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| 65. I often create a learning environment where EFL students feel respected. | 93.33% | 6.67% | |
| 66. I often create a learning environment where EFL students feel encouraged to engage in learning. | 100% | 0% | |
| 68. I am often flexible in solving incidents during class. | 93.33% | 6.67% | |
| 69. I often put EFL students into pairs or groups to stimulate their interaction. | 96.66% | 0% | |

All 30 teachers consistently created a learning environment that encourages EFL students to engage actively in learning, and they reported effective time management in their classes. Furthermore, over 90% of the teachers regularly fostered a respectful classroom atmosphere, demonstrated flexibility in handling incidents during class, and arranged students into pairs or groups to promote interaction. This finding was complemented by T25. The teacher emphasized the need to create a comfortable atmosphere for students while solving the problem.

Domain 4: Student assessment

Table 11 details how participants assess students' moral learning in EFL classes. Nearly 90% of the teachers agreed that students' moral learning is frequently assessed through their expressions during class, and over 95% reported that they often assessed students' moral learning based on students' actions both during and after class. From open responses, T27 mentioned that

the teacher appreciated assessing the whole process of students' learning and considered it as a form of assessment regarding moral education.

Table 11. *Descriptive statistics of top prominent data of Domain 3 – Student assessment*

| Items | Strongly agree, Agree to Slightly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree, Disagree to Slightly disagree |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| 74. I often assess EFL students' moral learning through their expressions during the class. | 86.66% | 6.67% | 6.67% |
| 75. I often assess EFL students' moral learning through their actions during and after the class. | 96.66% | 0% | 3.34% |

When being asked about the factors influencing their perceptions and practices of embedding moral values into lessons, a number of teachers identified several key influences: the teacher's family (T2, T19, T26), the school environment, the teacher self (T26), the living/social environment (T2, T30), the teacher's relationships (T30), and students (T1).

Participants' open responses also provided recommendations for effectively embedding moral values into EFL lessons. First, teachers need to thoroughly understand the lesson content and carefully select appropriate moral values to integrate (T1, T3, T10, T23, T24, T25, T27, T28). Second, teachers should be creative and flexible in their teaching methods to actively engage students in learning moral values. Additionally, collaboration among stakeholders such as subject teachers, homeroom teachers, the Youth Union, and school leaders is essential for achieving the goals of moral education (T16, T26). Finally, participants emphasized that the education sector should place greater emphasis on embedding moral values into EFL lessons (T3).

3.2. Discussion

The findings revealed that EFL teachers generally held positive perceptions of integrating moral values into their teaching, with self-reported practices aligning with these perceptions. Additionally, open-ended responses from participants emphasized the importance of embedding moral values, with half of the teachers reporting frequent incorporation of these values in their classroom practices. These findings contribute significantly to the existing literature on the feasibility of integrating moral values into English language education, emphasizing its potential to enhance students' moral development and the overall quality of education in high schools.

Regarding perceptions of embedding moral values into their teaching, the participants demonstrated a strong inclination towards this integration. Notably, approximately 97% agreed that incorporating moral values into EFL lessons is a primary objective of the English language curriculum. This finding contrasts with [14], which revealed a misunderstanding of values education among teachers, leading to ineffective integration. Furthermore, this study found that all participants (100%) recognized the role of teachers as moral exemplars, corroborating the findings of [11], who reported that EFL teachers perceive themselves as moral guides in their teaching. In addition, with the belief that teaching materials facilitate teachers' planning and classroom practices, Le [12] conducted an analysis of moral values within English textbooks. Le's study found that while these textbooks included some universal moral values, predominantly reflecting Vietnamese values, the content and activities were insufficient for fostering students' moral identity and global citizenship. This limitation identified in [12] was addressed by the current study, where most participants reported sourcing additional authentic materials beyond the textbooks to teach moral values effectively. On the other hand, participants also expressed concern over the increasing instances of students' moral misbehavior at school. This finding aligns with broader concerns about moral degradation among high school students in the Vietnamese context [9]. Consequently, the need for moral education remains a critical priority for teachers, schools, families, and society as a whole.

In terms of classroom practices, data from the questionnaire indicated that EFL teachers reported integrating moral values into their teaching through a variety of activities, including questioning, storytelling, using pictures, facilitating discussions, establishing social activist groups, reading texts, presenting moral exemplars, creating real-life situations, organizing games, conducting presentations, and assigning reflective writing. These activities allowed teachers to convey moral values either explicitly or implicitly. This finding aligns with the results of [11] and [16]. Phan et al. [11] found that EFL teachers incorporated moral education into their lessons by using examples and stories to teach values. Similarly, Qoyyimah [16] noted that EFL teachers employed both explicit and implicit pedagogical approaches to embed values into their teaching. These findings suggest the need for further exploration into EFL teachers' classroom practices of embedding moral values to gain deeper insights into this research area. In the current study, EFL teachers' practices were examined across several stages, including planning, preparation, instruction, classroom management, and assessment. This comprehensive framework may contribute significantly to the field by providing a structured approach for researchers to observe and analyze EFL teachers' classroom practices related to the integration of moral values, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the pedagogical strategies employed.

The study identified several factors influencing how EFL teachers perceive and practice embedding moral values, including family background, school environment, personal beliefs, social influences, interpersonal relationships, and students. These factors align with previous research, such as [14] and [16], who highlighted personal values and school demands as key influences. Interestingly, more experienced teachers reported higher classroom practices but lower perceptions, suggesting that external factors, like the school context and student needs, may be more influential than perceptions. The study also found that teaching experience negatively correlated with teachers' perceptions but positively correlated with classroom practices. This complex relationship calls for further investigation to better understand how experience, perceptions, and contextual factors interact in embedding moral values into EFL teaching. Further research could offer insights into improving moral education practices in the EFL context.

4. Conclusion

This study examined how EFL teachers in Vietnamese high schools in the Mekong Delta perceive and practice embedding moral values into their lessons. The findings showed positive attitudes, with most teachers incorporating these values through various teaching activities, both implicitly and explicitly. This practice supports English language education by contributing to students' language proficiency and moral development. However, the study also identified factors that may prevent teachers from fully integrating moral values into their lessons. The study's small sample size limits its generalizability, and the findings should be interpreted within the specific cultural and educational context. To improve integration, moral values should align with lesson content, and teachers should use diverse, engaging strategies. Professional development programs are needed to help teachers overcome challenges. Future research could expand the sample size, use qualitative methods, and explore factors influencing perceptions and practices in different cultural contexts. These studies would provide deeper insights into embedding moral values in EFL teaching and inform better strategies for integration.

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