



TEACHING CULTURE IN THE FL CLASSROOM: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

S.Ipek Kuru Gonen

Department of English Language Teaching, Anadolu University, Turkey
ipekkuru@anadolu.edu.tr

Sercan Saglam

School of Foreign Languages, Anadolu University, Turkey
sercansaglam@anadolu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

It has long been assumed that language and culture are strongly linked to each other and an important aspect of learning a foreign language is learning its culture. However, teachers in different classrooms in different parts of the world still ignore the importance of teaching culture as a part of language study. Regarding the need to investigate culture and culture teaching in different context of foreign language teaching, this study proposes an original attempt in a Turkish EFL context by comparing 60 teachers of different educational backgrounds rather than cultural backgrounds in terms of what they think about various aspects of culture and integrating it into their classes. Whether significant differences exist between teachers from different educational backgrounds is also an issue of investigation. The results gathered through a comprehensive questionnaire and interviews have yielded that although there are some differences between teachers of different backgrounds about which aspects of the target culture to give priority, they are generally aware of the importance of teaching and integrating culture in the foreign language classroom. It is also revealed that all teachers have knowledge about the aspects of the target culture to some extent, but how they deal with the target culture is affected highly by the curricular considerations and limitations. Based on the results, several implications are derived from the study for the integration of culture in the foreign language class and suggestions are made for future studies.

Keywords: culture and language learning, teacher perceptions, foreign language teaching, integration of culture in foreign language study

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, mobility has become a part of every student's life. Most students have now a chance to visit other countries for educational purposes and learn more about other cultures. Therefore, learning foreign languages has become the norm in the globalized world. It is inevitable that students need a certain level of intercultural knowledge and competence to be able to survive in new cultures and educational contexts. In this respect, one's understanding of the new cultures, as well as his/her own culture, has a crucial role to become a globalized citizen. Learning a language without culture is a recipe for becoming what Bennett (1993) calls a "fluent fool". A fluent fool is someone who speaks a foreign language well, but does not understand the social and philosophical content of that language. Hence, the role of foreign language teachers has gained importance since they serve as a medium to teach both the language and the culture of the foreign language.

There have been different definitions of culture in the literature. In one definition, it is the shared knowledge and schemes created by set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to social realities around them (Lederach, 1995). In another definition, culture includes a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors and artifacts that members of a society use to interact with their world and one another (Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tate, Duran and Riley, 2005). In its simplest sense, culture is the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings.

In the past, culture was viewed as a static entity without reference to variation. Thus, it was believed that culture was made up of classified and observable facts, which can be taught and learned directly. This view of culture did not recognize the variability of behavior within different layers of the culture,



and interaction of language and culture in the making of meaning (Moore, 1991). Recently, there has been a shift in the perception of culture and it is viewed as dynamic and variable. Culture is not seen as providing factual information but as a process which shapes human behavior and interaction (Furstenberg, 2010). In other words, culture is continuously changing and there is variation among the members with reference to behavior. This shift has led to a view where culture is not specific but rather general; hence, vital in intercultural communication. In this respect, cultural stereotypes are perceived as culture generalizations and cultural absolutes as cultural variations within and across cultures (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby, 2000). All these perceptual changes also led to see language as both a medium for and shaper of culture.

Language reflects culture and is influenced and shaped by it. Language is the symbolic representation of people because it entails cultural and historical background as well as these people's approach to life and their ways of living and thinking (Brown, 1999). Therefore, language and culture are so interwoven that separating one from the other would lose the significance of another. Without culture, language would be dead and without language, culture would have no shape (Jiang, 2000). Considering the inseparable interface of culture and language, it is difficult to imagine teaching a foreign language without dealing with its culture.

Interaction between Culture and Foreign Language Learning/Teaching

It has long been assumed that culture and language learning are strongly linked to each other (Dai, 2011; Zhao, 2011); however, why and to what extent we should teach culture while teaching a foreign language has been an issue of debate.

Rivers (1981) claims that culture instruction should have at least seven goals. These include making students aware of the way people act; the effects of social variables such as age, sex, and social class on the way they speak; how people in the target culture conventionally act under different circumstances; culture in the most commonly used words and phrases; being critical about the target language culture; developing skills necessary for locating and organizing materials about the target culture; and developing intellectual curiosity about the target culture and empathy towards its people. Although these goals have been recognized by different researchers, whether culture can be taught in the language classroom is still a controversial issue.

Krashen (1982) argues that the classroom setting is not an appropriate place to acquire either language or culture. In his view, classroom is only appropriate to teach language rules. Damen (1987), in support of Krashen, pinpoints that classroom based learning relies too much on rule ordered pedagogy, and teaching culture in this view can only reflect and integrate cultural facts rather than the dynamic view of culture. Robinson and Nocon (1996) highlight the importance of living in the target culture and propose that culture learning in the classroom is only "cognitive boundary crossing" which leaves learners' previous experiences unexamined and unchallenged. In other words, because the foreign language classroom underestimates what the learners already knows and believes, it cannot become a suitable place for teaching culture. Nonetheless, there are also views in support of teaching culture in the language classroom (Bada, 2000; Pulverness, 2003; McDevitt, 2004; Byram, 2008; Nieto, 2009; Dai, 2011).

Byram (1988) and Byram and Kramersch (2008) assert that language is functionless without its proper cultural context. The proper cultural context in Byram's terms includes the language patterns particular people use when they come together in different social situations at a particular time and place. In this sense, the place of culture teaching in language classroom is straightforward. Teachers should find ways to implement the elements of context which influence language use. Parallel to this



view, Bada (2000) emphasizes the importance of teaching culture in foreign language classrooms. He states that when language learners are not exposed to cultural elements of the target society, they seem to have problems in communicating meaning with the speakers of that society. Bada (2000) further proposes that through studying language in context, it is possible to highlight how native speakers of the target culture use language under certain circumstances.

With regard to recent views of culture teaching in the foreign language classroom, culture does not need to be dealt independently of language because studying language directly brings about awareness of the target culture and people's behavior in that target culture. Pulverness (2003) underlines the need to study culture by claiming that for foreign language learners, language seems senseless if they know nothing about the people who speak the target language and the country in which the language is spoken. McDevitt (2004) further proposes that since learning a foreign language is a challenge to figure out the nature of other people, it is not possible to imagine language learning independent of culture. As language reflects human nature, studying language inherently exposes learners to target culture. It is then the teacher's role to relate what students bring to the classroom to what they, as teachers, bring in order to familiarize students with the culture of target language.

From a broader perspective, this interaction of what students and teachers bring to the language classroom influences the way foreign language culture is taught. Moreover, the classroom itself has its own cultures, and the teacher should pay close attention to cultural variation within the language classroom. Hence, culturally responsive teachers are those who arrive at an all-encompassing understanding of cultural diversity within the classroom and within the foreign language. Such an understanding requires teachers to emphasize cultural differences in the classroom as a starting point to lead students to develop cross-cultural awareness. Once such awareness is created, then the teacher can further elaborate on foreign language culture, and the similarities and differences between students' own culture and the target culture.

In order for teachers to be culturally responsive, they need to reflect on their own definitions of culture, and how culture influences student and teacher behavior. What is more, such teachers need to question whether they are aware of the cultural diversity within the classroom and whether they should consider this diversity or ignore it. More importantly, they should seek ways to make use of cultural diversity. From this perspective, culturally responsive classrooms recognize culturally diverse students and enlighten the way for these students to make necessary connections among themselves and the target language culture (Montgomery, 2001). Although preparing culturally responsive teachers is seen as a part of foreign language teacher training, teachers have their own reasons that block them from implementing the teaching of culture in foreign language classrooms.

Problems in Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom

Many teachers fail to recognize the interface between language and culture. The literature shows that teachers experience certain problems while teaching, which results in either not dealing extensively with culture or ignoring it completely (cf. Sercu, 2005).

One of the problems that teachers may face is the overcrowded curriculum. The study of culture requires time; therefore, many teachers feel they cannot spare time for teaching foreign language culture in an already overcrowded curriculum. They think that students will be exposed to cultural material later after they have mastered the basic grammar and vocabulary of the target language. However, this 'later' never seems to come for most students. Another problem is that teachers may fear of not having sufficient knowledge on the target culture. That is, teachers are afraid to teach culture because they think that they do not know enough about it, and that their role is limited to



expose students to facts only. A third problem is students' negative attitudes. Students often assume target culture phenomena consisting of new patterns of behavior; thus, they try to understand the target culture within only their own framework of native culture. Işık (2003, 2004) pinpoints a similar concern for foreign language teaching as students may put barriers between their own culture and the target culture by rejecting all the values associated with the target culture. When cultural phenomena differ from what students expect, they may react negatively, characterizing the target culture as "strange". The fourth problem is the lack of adequate training on behalf of teachers. Teachers may not have been adequately trained in the teaching of culture and do not have suitable strategies and clear goals that would help them to create a framework for organizing instructions around cultural themes. As it is also proposed in the literature, the development of such framework depends on teachers' own definitions of culture from which much of the difficulty arises. Another problem is that teachers may not know how to measure cross cultural competence and changes in students' attitudes as a result of culture teaching. Byram and Kramsch (2008) also state that teachers who teach language as culture often fear of the stereotypes related to the target culture, and they have concerns related to students' ability to deduce meanings from what they read and how they interact.

Consequently, how teachers approach to teaching culture in the foreign language classroom, and whether they have sufficient awareness on how to integrate culture in language teaching have an important role in determining how and to what extent foreign language culture should be integrated into language teaching.

Statement of the Problem

There have been studies focusing on the role of teacher in culture teaching (Robinson, 1981; Copper, 1985; Byram et al., 1991; Wolf and Riordan, 1991; Davis and Markham, 1991); teachers' perspectives on culture and cultural subject matters (Knox, 1984; Pajeres, 1992; Stodolosky and Grossman, 1994; Calderhead, 1996; Borg, 2003; Willems, 2000; Sercu, 2000; Brown, 2009); cultural conflict between teachers and students (Dirksen, 1990; Pajeres, 1992; Gougeon, 1993); and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices (Byram, 1991; Hall and Ramirez, 1993; Ryan, 1994; Cook, 1996; Fang, 1996; Kitao, 2000; Alptekin, 2002; Zhao, 2011). All these studies highlight the importance of teaching culture as a part of foreign language teaching and the role teachers in this process.

Devoting as much time to the teaching of culture as to the teaching of language and being knowledgeable about the culture of the target language are valued both by the teachers and students (Brown, 2009). However, teachers in different classrooms in different parts of the world still ignore the importance of teaching culture as a part of language study. In order to overcome this problem, the first step of integrating culture into language learning should be to identify what teachers already think, believe and do in the classroom, namely what they already bring to the language classroom. Identifying what teachers bring to classroom in terms of culture is important to find out what kind of training, awareness raising and in-service programs are needed to equip further teachers to raise culturally sensitive, responsive, and inter-culturally competent learners. Although there is a bunch of literature focusing on culture and foreign language teaching, the results of these studies indicate a certain level of contextual differences about how teachers define culture and implement it in their foreign language classrooms (cf. Sercu, 2005). Thus, conducting studies about these issues may provide invaluable insight into designing and implementing teacher training programs.

One of the most comprehensive studies on culture and foreign language teaching is that of Sercu's (2005), in which foreign language teachers from a variety of countries have been investigated. Various teachers from Mexico to Greece and from Sweden to Poland were investigated to shed more light on



culture and foreign language teaching; however, there has been a gap in the recent literature on the perceptions and beliefs of foreign language teachers in Turkish EFL context. Genç and Bada (2005) also emphasize the need for studies on the beliefs of teachers in Turkish EFL context regarding the interface of foreign language teaching and culture.

In Turkish EFL context, the situation is rather complex because not only English language Teaching (ELT) graduates but also non-ELT graduates, who have graduated from programs related to English language, such as English Language and Literature, Linguistics, and Translation and Interpretation, are employed to teach English. Although all these groups of teachers have a certain extent of training on foreign language culture, there may be differences among these teachers in terms of what they already bring to the classroom about culture and how they integrate culture into foreign language teaching.

In the context of the study, course books the teachers use in teaching English include cultural elements; and to deal with these the teachers are expected to possess a certain level of cultural awareness and knowledge related to the foreign language. Teachers are expected to follow an intensive syllabus in a due time. Hence, how to teach the course and use the course materials are up to teachers and they decide what to include and what to exclude. As stated in the literature, the teachers in this context may experience some difficulties regarding what, how and to what extent they should teach and integrate target culture into foreign language teaching.

As a result, it is crucial to examine how teachers from different backgrounds perceive, think and practice various aspects of foreign language culture. Regarding the need to investigate culture and culture teaching in different context of foreign language teaching, this study proposes an original attempt by comparing teachers of different educational backgrounds rather than cultural backgrounds to answer the following research questions:

1. What do foreign language teachers in a Turkish EFL context think about:
 - a) The role of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language
 - b) Culture teaching objectives
 - c) The kinds of culture teaching activities they practice
 - d) Their familiarity with the foreign language culture
 - e) Cultural aspects they deal in foreign language classroom
2. Are there any significant differences between ELT and non-ELT graduates about their perceptions, thoughts, and practices regarding culture and culture teaching?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of the study were 60 teachers teaching English as a foreign language to adult students enrolled at the university context. They come from various educational fields related to English. For the purposes of the study, the participants were divided as ELT graduates and non-ELT graduates. 30 non-ELT and 30 ELT graduates participated in the study. These participants may have pursuit MAs or Ph.Ds. However, in their classification only their BA degrees were taken into account. Participants have varying years of teaching experience ranging from two to seventeen years.

Instruments

In order to elicit teachers' perceptions and thoughts about the role of culture in teaching and learning a foreign language, a questionnaire was designed and follow-up interviews were carried out.



The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the study was adapted from Sercu (2005). It consists of five parts, each focusing on different aspects of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. Part A consists of statements in which participants were asked to state their ideas on the role of culture in the learning and teaching a foreign language. Part B consists of statements exploring the importance teachers assign to possible objectives of culture teaching. Part C consists of statements which ask teachers to self-report how often they practiced different activities related to target language culture during their teaching time. Part D and E focus on teachers' familiarity and the extent to which they deal with different cultural aspects in the foreign language classroom.

The initial version of the questionnaire was first given to the experts in the field for its content validity and its applicability to the context of the study. Then, 15 teachers who did not take part in the actual study were consulted for the clarity of the items. After this piloting, necessary changes were made on the questionnaire. In order to assess the reliability of the questionnaire used in the context of the study, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated and found as .85. An additional questionnaire seeking demographic information about the participants such as their years of experience and their educational background was used.

The Interviews

In order to shed more light on teachers' perceptions, thoughts and beliefs about teaching and integrating culture in the foreign language classroom, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix) were held with total of 10 participants following the completion of the questionnaire. Five of the participants in the interviews were ELT graduates and five were non-ELT graduates.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data were collected and analyzed by following a two-step procedure:

1. The questionnaire was administered to both ELT and non-ELT graduates in order to answer the first research question. The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively by calculating the means and the percentages. To address the second research question, *t*-tests were carried out for each part of the questionnaire to compare the ELT and non-ELT graduate teachers' responses on the items of the questionnaire.
2. Following the completion of the questionnaire, the interviews were carried out with five ELT and five non-ELT graduates. Qualitative data gathered through interviews were transcribed, translated and included in the study to further clarify the issue being investigated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Opinions on the Role of Culture in Learning and Teaching FL

To investigate what teachers think about the role of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language, 15 questions were asked to both ELT and non-ELT graduate teachers. Descriptive results and *t*-values gained as a result of *t*-test are presented in Table 1 below.



Table 1. Results Related to Teachers' Opinions about the Role of Culture in Teaching FL

Items of the Questionnaire		ELT		NON-ELT		t-value
		N	%	N	%	
Q1. In a FL classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the FL.	Agree	23	77	28	93	1.973
	Undecided	5	17	2	7	
	Disagree	2	7	-	-	
Q2. It is impossible to teach the foreign language and the foreign culture in an integrated way.	Agree	5	17	8	27	0.462
	Undecided	5	17	2	7	
	Disagree	20	67	20	67	
Q3. The more students know about the foreign culture, the more tolerant they are.	Agree	22	73	26	87	1.034
	Undecided	7	23	3	10	
	Disagree	1	3	1	3	
Q4. When speakers of different languages meet, misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic as from cultural differences.	Agree	24	80	23	77	0.000
	Undecided	4	13	6	20	
	Disagree	2	7	1	3	
Q5. Foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.	Agree	18	60	24	80	1.424
	Undecided	9	30	4	13	
	Disagree	3	10	2	7	
Q6. The cultural dimension in foreign language classes should be expanded.	Agree	19	63	23	77	1.852
	Undecided	6	20	7	23	
	Disagree	5	17	-	-	
Q7. European and global identities of the student/ citizen should be fostered in foreign language/ culture classes.	Agree	15	50	14	47	-0.227
	Undecided	14	47	15	50	
	Disagree	1	3	1	3	
Q8. All the English-speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an English syllabus.	Agree	12	40	8	27	-0.341
	Undecided	10	33	16	53	
	Disagree	8	27	6	20	
Q9. The study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy.	Agree	3	10	2	7	-0.597
	Undecided	8	27	7	23	
	Disagree	19	63	21	70	
Q10. Learning about a foreign culture can change the student's attitude towards her/ his own culture.	Agree	14	47	21	70	1.798
	Undecided	8	27	5	17	
	Disagree	8	27	4	13	
Q11. An emphasis on the study of foreign cultures can contribute to the student's loss of cultural identity.	Agree	8	27	5	17	-0.948
	Undecided	7	23	7	23	
	Disagree	15	50	18	60	
Q12. The most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is to develop a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures.	Agree	15	50	20	67	2.273*
	Undecided	4	13	8	27	
	Disagree	11	37	2	7	
Q13. The development of cultural awareness should be kept only for the most advanced levels.	Agree	6	20	4	13	0.000
	Undecided	3	10	7	23	
	Disagree	21	70	19	63	
Q14. Teaching culture motivates students.	Agree	20	67	21	70	0.234
	Undecided	9	30	8	27	
	Disagree	1	3	1	3	
Q15. Combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills.	Agree	23	77	22	73	-0.532
	Undecided	7	23	7	23	
	Disagree	-	-	1	3	

*: significant at the 0.05 level of significance

As can be seen Table 1, there is generally no statistically significant differences between the ELT and non-ELT graduate teachers in terms of their opinions about the role of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language. A closer examination of Table 1 shows that 77% of the ELT graduates and 93% of the non-ELT graduates think the role of the culture is as important as teaching the foreign language. Similarly, both groups agree (73% for ELT graduates, 87% for non-ELT graduates) with the idea that



the more students know about the foreign culture, the more tolerant they are. However, both groups disagree (67% for both ELT and non-ELT graduates), with the idea that it is impossible to teach the foreign language and the foreign culture in an integrated way. Hence, most of the teachers think a foreign language and its culture can be taught together in a foreign language classroom.

This finding is in contrast with what Krashen (1982) claims about the integration of culture into language classroom. He proposes that culture cannot be learned in the classroom, but should be acquired in its natural context. Accordingly, whatever teachers do, the classroom cannot reflect the characteristics of the natural context. Nonetheless, most of the teachers in the present study believe that culture is a part of foreign language teaching that can be taught in the classroom. The findings of this study conform to Byram (1988), Bada (2000) and Byram and Kramsch (2008), who are in support of integrating culture into the language classroom.

A high percentage of the participants agrees (80% for ELT graduates, 77% for non-ELT graduates) that misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic and from cultural differences. Furthermore, 60% of the ELT graduates and 80% of the non-ELT graduates think that foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity. This brings forward the idea of culturally responsive teacher who takes the cultural identities of the students in the classroom into account. The idea of expanding cultural dimension in foreign language classes has received agreement from both groups with high percentage (63% for ELT graduates, 77% for non-ELT graduates). Both groups of participants generally stayed undecided (47% for ELT graduates, 50% for non-ELT graduates) about fostering European and global identities of students in foreign language classes. One reason for this could be that most of the graduate teachers have only worked in a Turkish EFL context and thus, they may not be aware of the importance of developing global identities in the language classroom. Forty percent of the ELT graduates think that all the English speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an English syllabus. Fifty three of non-ELT graduates are undecided about such representation of the cultures of all English speaking countries. All groups of participants disagree (63% for ELT graduates, 70% for non-ELT graduates) with the idea that the study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy. That is, for both ELT and non-ELT graduates, culture is not a barrier for progress in language.

As for the influence of culture over changing students' attitudes towards his/her own culture, 70% of the non-ELT graduates agree with this idea whereas agreement is only 47% for ELT graduates. One possible explanation of this difference may be attributed to the educational and pedagogical variation between the ELT and non-ELT graduates since their beliefs may highly be affected by the training they received during their undergraduate studies. Both groups generally disagree (50% for ELT graduates, 60% for non-ELT graduates) with the idea that emphasizing the study of foreign language culture may cause students lose their cultural identity. What is more, 50% of the ELT graduates and 67% of the non-ELT graduates think that the most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is to develop a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures. When the t-values in Table 1 are taken into account, the only statistically significant difference between the ELT and non-ELT graduates is on defining the most important goal in learning about a culture for the development of critical awareness. A possible explanation of this difference may be the differences in the educational backgrounds of the two groups of teachers as non-ELT graduate teachers took more courses which required critical thinking and awareness compared to the ELT graduate teachers. Since they are used to approach topics more critically, they may think the most important goal while learning about a foreign culture is to develop critical awareness.

A high percentage of the participants (70% for ELT graduates, 63% for non-ELT graduates) disagrees with the idea that the development of cultural awareness should be kept only for the most advanced



levels. This does not conform to the general idea expressed by various teachers in the literature. Accordingly, teachers may have a tendency to integrate culture in advanced courses since they think that these learners may handle cultural themes and topics with more ease due to their proficiency in the target language. However, the teachers in this study think that culture teaching is not only reserved for advanced levels, but students from other proficiency levels should also be given opportunities to be exposed to culture.

The motivational strength of culture is accepted by both groups of participants (67% for ELT graduates, 70% for non-ELT graduates) and both groups of participants think combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills (77% for ELT graduates, 73% for non-ELT graduates). The following teacher excerpts illustrate what teachers from both groups generally think about the role of culture in foreign language classroom.

ELT graduate 5

“I think you cannot separate culture from the language. In order for students to understand the contexts and how they can communicate with the people in those contexts, they should be familiar with the culture of the target language.”

Non-ELT graduate 2

“One of the reason why I studied American Culture in my under graduate years is that a language teacher should be familiar with different aspects of the target culture and how these are revealed in the language people speak. In my classes, I illustrate my students how culture influences the language to make them aware of the target culture and think about their own culture.”

Teachers’ Ranking of Culture Teaching Objectives

Part B of the questionnaire asked participants to rank nine possible culture-teaching objectives in order of importance. The nine objectives in the questionnaire addressed the knowledge dimension, the attitudinal dimension or the skills dimension of intercultural competence. Figure 1 shows what each objective addresses with reference to the three dimensions of intercultural competence.

Knowledge Dimension
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide information about the history, geography and political conditions of the foreign culture(s). 2. Provide information about daily life and routines. 3. Provide information about shared values and beliefs. 4. Provide experiences with a rich variety of cultural expressions (literature, music, theatre, film, etc.).
Attitudinal Dimension
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other peoples and cultures.
Skills dimension
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Promote reflection on cultural differences. 7. Promote increased understanding of students' own culture. 8. Promote the ability to empathize with people living in other cultures. 9. Promote the ability to handle intercultural contact situations.

Figure 1. The description of culture-teaching objectives

Figure 2 presents the most important objectives of the both groups of teachers regarding culture teaching. The objectives in the following figure are presented in the order of Figure 1.

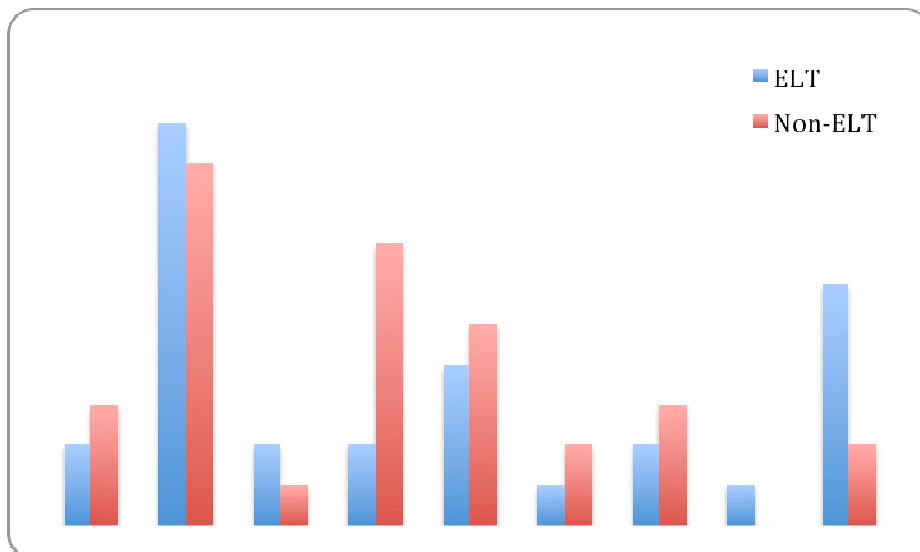


Figure 2. The comparison of ELT and Non-ELT graduates rankings

Teachers' responses show that the majority of the ELT and non-ELT graduates consider providing information about daily life and routines as the most important objective of culture teaching. This means that the teachers see culture teaching as a way to increase learners' familiarity with aspects of daily life of the people who speak the target language. Second most important objective of culture teaching appears to be different for the ELT and non-ELT graduates. ELT graduates want to promote their students' ability to handle intercultural contact situations whereas non-ELT graduates give importance to teaching a variety of cultural expressions. Participants' other responses on the objectives are similar. The third most important objective of culture teaching is to develop an understanding and tolerance of the target culture, while exploring the depths of their native culture. The teachers see understanding of one's own culture as a prerequisite to develop intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

The findings of this study are parallel to that of Sercu's (2005). In that study, the teachers from various backgrounds prefer dealing with the knowledge dimension of intercultural communication most. The primary goal of the teachers in this study is also to increase learners' familiarity with aspects of daily life and promote openness and tolerance in pupil's attitudes. Moreover, the second most important ranking for ELT graduates is promoting the ability to handle intercultural contact situations, and for non-ELT graduates, it is providing experience with a rich variety of cultural expressions. The fourth most important objective of teaching culture is to develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures.

As a result, the findings show that the participants try to touch upon all three dimensions of intercultural competence, prioritizing the promotion of knowledge dimension more than attitudinal and skills dimensions. Teachers from both groups expressed their ideas about culture teaching objectives in the foreign language classroom as:

ELT graduate 2

"The students foremost need knowledge about the foreign culture, especially about the daily life. If they know how different people communicate, they will be more flexible in their communicative relations and this will pave the way to develop a more open attitude and tolerance to the target culture."

Non-ELT graduate 4



“I think culture is reflected in the expressions people use when talking to each other. If we want our students to be successful in handling international contact situations, we should first teach these expressions. For me, the objective of teaching culture is to understand different cultural expressions as it is revealed in the literary works, movies, music and art.”

Teachers’ Practices Regarding Culture-Teaching

To find out about teachers’ culture teaching activities, the participants were asked to indicate how often they practiced these activities in their classrooms. These activities correspond well with the dimensions of culture teaching objectives discussed above, namely the knowledge dimension, attitudinal dimension and skills dimension. Teachers’ self-reports regarding how often they practiced each activity type is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Results Related to the Culture Teaching Activities Teachers Practice

Items on the questionnaire		ELT		Non-ELT		t-value	Mean
		N	%	N	%		
Q1. I ask my students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country.	Often	6	20	13	43	1.163	2,17
	Once in a while	20	67	12	40		
	Never	4	13	5	17		
Q2. I tell my students what I heard (or read) about the foreign country or culture.	Often	21	70	24	80	0.532	2,73
	Once in a while	9	30	5	17		
	Never	-	-	1	3		
Q3. I tell my students why I find something fascinating or strange about the foreign culture(s).	Often	19	63	23	77	1.220	2,70
	Once in a while	11	37	7	23		
	Never	-	-	-	-		
Q4. I ask my students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture.	Often	5	17	7	23	1.219	2,00
	Once in a while	17	57	19	63		
	Never	8	27	4	13		
Q5. I use videos, CD-ROMs or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign culture.	Often	4	13	3	10	0.211	1,85
	Once in a while	17	57	20	67		
	Never	9	30	7	23		
Q6. I ask my students to think about what it would be like to live in the foreign culture.	Often	13	43	11	37	-1.121	2,35
	Once in a while	17	57	19	63		
	Never	-	-	3	10		
Q7. I talk to my students about my own experiences in the foreign country.	Often	7	23	9	30	-0.501	1,95
	Once in a while	16	53	9	30		
	Never	7	23	12	40		
Q8. If I have the chance, I invite a person originating from the foreign country to my classroom.	Often	7	23	6	20	-0.163	1,78
	Once in a while	10	33	11	37		
	Never	13	43	13	43		
Q9. I ask my pupils to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language.	Often	18	60	16	53	-0.551	2,45
	Once in a while	9	30	10	33		
	Never	3	10	4	13		
Q10. I bring objects originating from the foreign culture to my classroom.	Often	4	13	4	13	-0.188	1,75
	Once in a while	15	50	14	47		
	Never	11	37	12	40		



Q11. I decorate my classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture.	Often	2	7	-	-	0.459	1,4
	Once in a while	7	23	13	43		
	Never	21	70	17	57		
Q12. I comment on the way in which the foreign culture is represented in the classroom materials.	Often	9	30	11	37	1.685	2,07
	Once in a while	9	30	15	50		
	Never	12	40	4	13		
Q13. I ask my students to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture.	Often	17	57	22	73	1.475	2,58
	Once in a while	10	33	7	23		
	Never	3	10	1	3		
Q14. I touch upon an aspect of the foreign culture regarding which I feel negatively disposed.	Often	5	17	10	33	1.489	2,12
	Once in a while	20	67	17	57		
	Never	5	7	3	10		
Q15. I talk with my students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries.	Often	12	40	15	50	0.584	2,35
	Once in a while	15	50	12	40		
	Never	3	10	3	10		

The table shows that both ELT and non-ELT teachers try to implement these activities from time to time in their classrooms. There is no statistically significant difference between the ELT and non-ELT graduate teachers in terms of how often they practiced the possible culture-teaching activities in their classrooms. The findings indicate that the teachers do not devote extra time to teach culture and cultural elements, but successfully implement relevant aspects of the target culture to ease students' target language learning process. The findings in this study are parallel to those in Sercu's (2005) study, who found that the teachers implement culture-teaching activities occasionally in their classroom practices.

The interviews shed further light into what kind of classroom activities teachers practice in their classrooms. When the participants were asked to elaborate on their approach to teaching culture and the kinds of activities they practiced in the classroom, they generally stated that they did not devote extra teaching time to teach culture, because of the tight syllabus they have to follow.

ELT graduate 4

"I do not have the luxury to deal with the target culture on its own. I deal with culture to the extent they appear in the textbooks. I am following a tight syllabus and every time I deviate from the syllabus, I fall behind and this causes problems. I have to sacrifice the cultural content in sake of the language content."

Non-ELT graduate 3

"I try to deal with the culture as much as I can. I do not have extra time to teach the target culture, so I try to implement the important aspects of the foreign culture as much as the course content allows me. I would like to deal with culture on its own; however, the need to catch up with other classes and the need to stick to the syllabus sets some constraints on my willingness to teach culture as a separate skill."

Furthermore, they have indicated that they touch upon the relevant aspects of the culture when they appear in the textbooks or when they feel the need to provide information regarding the target culture.

ELT graduate 5

"It is not possible to teach the target language without referring to its culture. The books that we use in our courses mainly deal with global issues and intercultural sensitivity. When the books touch upon similarities and differences between different cultures, I encourage students to explore their culture and the target culture. It is important I think."

Non-ELT graduate 2



“The textbooks contain cultural references. In order for students to understand these references, I initiate discussions. These discussions help my students to understand the cultural elements.”

The participants experience the problem of overcrowded curriculum. Although many teachers are aware that culture teaching requires extra time, they do not have the extra time to teach culture. They are also limited to deal with the aspects of culture that are covered in the textbooks or course materials. These findings suggest that teaching culture is not the aim, but rather a tool to make language-learning process easier for students.

For most of the activities, the teachers have self-reported that they used the culture-teaching activities once in a while. A closer examination of Table 2 shows that both groups of teachers practice Q2, Q3, Q9, Q13, and Q15 more often than other culture-teaching activities in their classrooms. Q2, Q3, and Q15 are cognitive, teacher-centered activities, where the teachers define the cultural contents. Q9, Q13, and Q15 are more pupil-centered activities, where the teacher takes the initiative to engage students in some kind of culture comparison to show them that both their native culture and the target culture have values, beliefs, and traditions that influence their way of life. Such activities may help students to develop positive attitudes towards the target culture, or at least pave the way to intercultural understanding. In the interview, one participant (ELT graduate 1) has stated that cross-cultural comparisons are valuable resources for teachers to develop intercultural sensitivity. Q13 is the only activity teachers' use frequently that deals with skills dimension of culture teaching. In such activities, the teachers ask the students to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture. The activities help students develop a better understanding of their own culture, and develop empathy towards the target culture by analyzing the similarities and differences between their own culture and the target culture. The teachers in the study can be said to possess some characteristics of culturally responsive teacher, where the teachers try to seek ways to implement activities to expose students with the target culture, as well as realizing the characteristics of their own culture and the diversity within their own cultures. In this way, as Ekşi (2009) mentions learner may be lead to critically examine the target language cultures and should not consider their own cultural norms as the only natural and correct modes of behavior.

As for the activities that teachers practice the least frequently, most teachers (70% for ELT graduates, 57% for non-ELT graduates) never decorate the classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture. One reason that the participants have stated in their interviews is that they do not have such authentic material to use in the classroom and the sources in the Internet may sometimes be misleading. Moreover, most of the teachers never invite a person originating from the target country to their classroom (43% for ELT graduates, 43% for non-ELT graduates). One reason for this is the difficulty of finding native speakers in their immediate contexts, and their concerns regarding how students would react to a stranger in the classroom setting.

The teachers try to make use of different sources of information when dealing with the target culture. Most of the participants (80% for ELT graduates, 83% for non-ELT graduates) ask their students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign culture often or occasionally. Furthermore, the participants also use videos, CD-ROMS or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign culture (70% for ELT graduates, 77% for non-ELT graduates). The teachers are sensitive towards stereotypes regarding particular cultures (90% for ELT graduates, 90% for non-ELT graduates), where they try to alter students' stereotypic views of the target culture and people, and develop more realistic views regarding these people. The following excerpts shed further light onto the findings of the study.



ELT graduate 2

“What the students see on Hollywood movies does not truly represent the real life of the people living in the USA and the UK. Students need to develop a critical view of the foreign culture, so I use all the sources of news article, videos, the Internet or so on to show different aspects of the target culture. I believe this helps my students to be more critical about the stereotypes.”

Non-ELT graduate 1

“The kind of information available on the textbooks is not sufficient to teach the culture. I make use of movies, news articles, pictures and the Internet to introduce my students with the foreign culture. All these resources are indispensable for teachers who are sensitive to teaching culture along with the culture.”

The actual classroom practices imply that the teachers make use of different sources of information to expose their students to the foreign cultures. All these tendencies show that the teachers try to develop a critical view towards the foreign culture. All the different sources of information are used by the teachers to foster an understanding of the target culture and its people.

A common feature of the activities practiced most often in the classroom is that they address the cognitive domain and are teacher-centered. In other words, teachers' foremost aim is to share with their students different aspects of the target culture that may help their target language learning process. This finding is in accordance with the interview data. Below are some excerpts from the interviews.

ELT graduate 5

“I am not an expert on the target culture; however, I know enough to help my students capture the key aspects of the target culture. Whenever there is need for explanation and elaboration on the target culture, I provide the necessary information.”

Non-ELT graduate 2

“Culture is embedded in the language. Students need to be aware of that. When I teach English, I do not deal only with the linguistic aspects, but also the speakers of that language, their culture, their literature.”

The interviews show that teachers supplement the course materials with information and activities related to target culture. In these activities, the teacher initiates some kind of cultural awareness, probably because they feel that they are the ones that know most about the foreign culture. In the interviews, they mentioned that if the content of the course material requires some kind of cultural awareness, they explicitly teach those to their students. In this respect, Brown (2009) asserts that providing materials and sources to integrate culture is valued both by the teachers and the students and found effective.

Teachers' Familiarity with the Target Culture

Part D of the questionnaire asks teachers to report their familiarity with various aspects of the target culture. Table 3 below shows their responses regarding their familiarity with the target culture.



Table 3: Results Related to Teachers' Familiarity with the Target Culture

Items from the questionnaire		ELT		Non-ELT		t-value
		N	%	N	%	
Q1. History, geography, political system	Very Familiar	2	7	10	33	2.089*
	Sufficiently Familiar	18	60	13	43	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	10	33	7	23	
Q2. Different ethnic and social groups	Very Familiar	1	3	6	20	1.366
	Sufficiently Familiar	16	53	13	43	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	13	43	11	37	
Q3. Daily life and routines, living conditions, food and drink etc.	Very Familiar	7	23	7	23	0.219
	Sufficiently Familiar	20	67	19	63	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	3	10	4	13	
Q4. Youth culture	Very Familiar	1	3	7	23	3.104*
	Sufficiently Familiar	17	56	19	63	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	12	40	14	46	
Q5. Education, professional life	Very Familiar	3	10	3	10	1.516
	Sufficiently Familiar	19	63	25	83	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	8	27	2	7	
Q6. Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions	Very Familiar	3	10	2	7	0.659
	Sufficiently Familiar	16	53	21	70	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	11	37	7	23	
Q7. Literature	Very Familiar	6	20	11	37	1.832
	Sufficiently Familiar	11	37	12	40	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	13	43	7	23	
Q8. Other cultural expressions (music, drama, art)	Very Familiar	4	13	7	23	0.205
	Sufficiently Familiar	21	70	16	53	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	5	17	7	23	
Q9. Values and beliefs	Very Familiar	3	10	7	23	1.227
	Sufficiently Familiar	19	63	17	57	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	8	27	6	20	
Q10. International relations, with students' own country and other countries	Very Familiar	4	13	3	10	1.308
	Sufficiently Familiar	15	50	23	77	
	Not sufficiently Familiar	11	37	4	13	

*: significant at the 0.05 level of significance

When we analyze Table 3 for both the ELT and non-ELT graduate teachers' familiarity with the target culture, it is obvious that non-ELT graduates' familiarity is higher compared to the ELT graduates. One possible explanation of this may be that non-ELT graduates took more courses related to culture in their undergraduate years and analyzed different aspects of the target language culture. One of the non-ELT graduates expressed his familiarity with the target culture as:

Non-ELT graduate 1

"We had some courses related to the target culture. Not only literature, but also about how the people in the target culture live, behave and talk... I remember analyzing their life styles and traditions. That's why I feel like I'm familiar to English culture in many ways".

A detailed examination of Table 3 shows that non-ELT graduates were more familiar (33%) with the history, geography and political system of the English culture compared to the ELT graduates (7%). However, most of the ELT graduates (60%) stated that they were sufficiently familiar with these



aspects of the target culture. As for different social and ethnic groups within the target culture, most of the teachers in both groups admitted that they were sufficiently familiar to the ethnic and social diversity (53% for ELT graduates, 43% for non-ELT graduates). Likewise, both groups of teachers mostly stated that they were sufficiently familiar with various aspects of target language culture such as daily life, routines, living conditions, food and drink (67% for ELT graduates, 63% for non-ELT graduates); education and professional life (63% for ELT graduates and 83% for non-ELT graduates); traditions, folklore and tourist attractions (53% for ELT graduates, 70% for non-ELT graduates); literature (37% for ELT graduates and 40% for non-ELT graduates); other cultural expressions such as music, drama, art (70% for ELT graduates and 53% for non-ELT graduates); values and beliefs (63% for ELT graduates and 57% for non-ELT graduates); and international relations of the target culture with students' own country and other countries (50% for ELT graduates and 70% for non-ELT graduates). As for the youth culture, although both groups of teachers mostly expressed sufficient levels of familiarity (57% for ELT graduates, 63% for non-ELT graduates) with this, the number of the non-ELT graduates was higher (23%) compared to the ELT graduates (3%) in terms of being very familiar to it. Being very familiar to various aspects of culture differs between the two groups, but this difference is not statistically significant except for history, geography and political system, and the youth culture when we examine the *t*-values in Table 3. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate what both groups of teachers generally think about their familiarity with the target language culture.

ELT graduate 1

"I think I'm pretty much familiar with the daily life and living conditions of the people in the target culture. I read a lot about the target culture I've learned many aspects related to the daily life of the target culture people".

Non-ELT graduate 3

"I don't know much about education and professional life in the target culture, but I think I am very familiar with the art and the literature of the target culture. I like reading literature and by reading it you learn many things about the culture....you know in literature you can find history, traces of daily life style, political system etc..."

As can be seen from the excerpts above, ELT graduate teachers generally attribute their familiarity with the target culture to their reading a lot, visits to the target culture, and the course books they are using for teaching English. Since most of the current course materials include instances from the target culture, the teachers acknowledge that these materials are very helpful to make them feel familiar with different aspects of the target culture. As for non-ELT graduate teachers, they generally attribute their familiarity to their literary background. As a consequence, although there are teachers who expressed unfamiliarity with some aspects of the target culture, most of the teachers in the study, regardless of their educational background, expressed certain levels of familiarity with various aspects of the target culture. Such familiarity may be helpful to increase intercultural awareness on behalf of students as well. According to Göbel and Hemke (2010), when teachers have intercultural experiences, it affects the students' intercultural awareness. That is, intercultural experiences of the teachers have positive impacts on the quality of intercultural lessons and intercultural learning outcomes. The next section deals with how teachers integrate and deal with the different aspects of the target language culture.

The Extent to which Teachers Deal with the Target Culture

Teachers may be familiar with the target culture, but it is of crucial importance to explore to what extent teachers refer to it in the foreign language classroom. Table 4 shows results related to teachers' activities about the target culture in the foreign language classroom.



Table 4: Results Related to Cultural Aspects Teachers Deal in the FL Classroom

Items from the questionnaire		ELT		Non-ELT		t-value
		N	%	N	%	
Q1. History, geography, political system	I deal with it extensively	1	3	2	7	1.433
	I touch upon it once in a while	22	73	25	83	
	I never touch upon it	7	23	3	10	
Q2. Different ethnic and social groups	I deal with it extensively	2	7	5	17	1.837
	I touch upon it once in a while	19	63	21	70	
	I never touch upon it	9	30	4	13	
Q3. Daily life and routines, living conditions, food and drink etc.	I deal with it extensively	18	60	17	57	-0.430
	I touch upon it once in a while	11	37	11	37	
	I never touch upon it	1	3	2	7	
Q4. Youth culture	I deal with it extensively	7	23	8	27	0.499
	I touch upon it once in a while	21	70	21	70	
	I never touch upon it	2	7	1	3	
Q5. Education, professional life	I deal with it extensively	10	33	4	13	1.677
	I touch upon it once in a while	18	60	23	77	
	I never touch upon it	2	7	3	10	
Q6. Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions	I deal with it extensively	7	23	8	27	0.239
	I touch upon it once in a while	21	70	20	67	
	I never touch upon it	2	7	2	7	
Q7. Literature	I deal with it extensively	2	7	10	33	1.538
	I touch upon it once in a while	24	80	15	50	
	I never touch upon it	4	13	5	17	
Q8. Other cultural expressions (music, drama, art)	I deal with it extensively	9	30	9	30	-0.237
	I touch upon it once in a while	20	67	19	63	
	I never touch upon it	1	3	2	7	
Q9. Values and beliefs	I deal with it extensively	7	23	11	37	1.871
	I touch upon it once in a while	19	63	19	63	
	I never touch upon it	4	13	-	-	
Q10. International relations, with students' own country and other countries	I deal with it extensively	2	7	5	17	0.865
	I touch upon it once in a while	20	67	18	60	
	I never touch upon it	8	27	7	23	

Table 4 displays that both groups of teachers generally deal ‘once in a while’ with many aspects of the target culture such as history, geography, and political system (73% for ELT graduates, 83% for non-ELT graduates); different ethnic and social groups within the target culture (63% for ELT graduates, 70% for non-ELT graduates); youth culture (70% for -ELT graduates, 70% for non-ELT graduates); education and professional life (60% for ELT graduates, 77% for non-ELT graduates); traditions, folklore, tourist attractions (70% for ELT graduates, 67% for non-ELT graduates); literature (80% for ELT graduates, 50% for non-ELT graduates); other cultural expressions such as music, drama and art (67% for ELT graduates, 63% for non-ELT graduates); values and beliefs (63% for ELT graduates, 63% for non-ELT graduates); and international relations (67% for ELT graduates, 60% for non-ELT graduates). Although both ELT graduates and non-ELT graduates generally stated that they dealt with various aspects of the target culture ‘once in a while’, the number of the non-ELT graduates who expressed dealing with these aspects ‘extensively’ are higher compared to ELT graduate teachers. The only exception for this is daily life, routines, living conditions, food and drink of the target culture.



The number of ELT graduate teachers who stated that they dealt with this aspect was higher compared to non-ELT graduate teachers.

When t-values are examined, it is clear that there are no statistically significant differences between ELT graduate teachers and non-ELT graduate teachers in terms of the cultural aspects dealt in the classroom. One possible explanation of this finding would be the strict curricula all the teachers had to follow. In the educational context of the study, the university preparatory school, all teachers follow the same course book reserved for different proficiency levels. Moreover, the students in the context of the study take the same final exit exam. Thus, the teachers and the school administration pay specific attention for the consistency among the teachers in terms of the topics covered and materials used. This may reflect Zhao's (2011) assertion in the sense that due to exam oriented learning in some cultures, teaching of the target language culture is often ignored. What is more, the course books touch upon cultural aspects once in a while. The following excerpts illustrate how ELT graduate teachers and non-ELT graduate teachers deal with the target culture in the foreign language classroom.

ELT graduate 4

"I try to include some cultural elements in my language class.... But you know, we have to follow the syllabus, the units in the course book, and materials pack. There are cultural themes in those materials and they are very useful to touch upon some cultural issues."

Non-ELT graduate 2

"I sometimes want to deal more with the history, literature and art of the target culture, but the topics in the course books are generally limited to daily life and values of the target culture. Since I have to follow the syllabus, I don't want to deal extensively with different aspects of culture other than the cultural themes in the course materials."

The excerpts above are in collaboration with the findings gathered through the questionnaire as the teachers' experiences with the culture in the language classroom are generally limited to the course materials. However, it is also obvious that there are individual variations among the teachers to decide how and to what extent to integrate culture in the foreign language classroom.

CONCLUSION

This study tried to shed light on how teachers from different educational backgrounds, the ones graduated from ELT department and the ones graduated from non-ELT department, in a Turkish EFL context deal with various aspects of the target culture and what values they attribute to the target culture as part of the foreign language study.

The findings of the study have indicated that both groups of teachers are generally aware of the importance of teaching and integrating culture in the foreign language classroom. Although there are some differences between teachers about which aspects of the target culture to give priority, they generally stated that culture is an indispensable part of foreign language, and the language classroom should always welcome cultural elements for student success. This finding highlights the importance of teachers' attitude towards teaching culture as a part of foreign language teaching regardless of the teachers' educational background. Teachers' foremost objective to teach culture is to develop an openness and tolerance towards the target culture. They believe that familiarizing students with the daily lives of the target culture may pave the way to an understanding of the target culture and its traditions, values and norms. Such an understanding is also seen as a way to allow students to explore the varieties of their own culture and the diversity within their culture. This attitude is in accordance



with what culturally responsive teachers do in the classroom. They use the culture as a tool to highlight the differences and similarities among different cultures and the speakers of these cultures.

All teachers have knowledge about the aspects of the target culture to some extent, but how they deal with the target culture is affected highly by the curricular considerations and limitations. One implication that can be derived from this finding is that teachers should be given more opportunities to deal with the target culture extensively in their own classes. If they are more flexible in integrating culture, the students may benefit more in terms of the exposure to the target culture.

It is obvious that teacher has a crucial role to lead the students learn and understand how people in the target culture act, behave, and communicate. Specific attention should be paid to how to teach culture (Schulz and Ganz, 2010). In this respect, providing various materials related to the target culture would be very helpful for them to become more successful learners who communicate with the people from the target culture uninhibitedly. Various activities and tasks can be designed to introduce students to the target culture and existing course books can be enriched with more cultural and cross-cultural themes (Dai, 2011). What is more, the findings of the study pinpoints that culture should not be treated as a separate entity on its own, but as part of language learning experience. If students do not know and be exposed to the target culture, they may have difficulties in their relations with people from other cultures, and as Ekşi (2009) puts forward they may not develop a critical attitude towards their own and other cultures. According to Heuser (2012), students' comprehension of other cultures can be expanded as well as their awareness of their own culture by using specific techniques such as ethnographic interviews. Hence, inclusion of different tasks and techniques into the in-class and out-of-the-class lives of the students can be helpful to foster awareness on culture.

As a consequence, in today's developing and globalized world, students need to become more competent in building relations with people from other cultures. As Fyrstenberg (2010) pinpoints, our goal as teachers is to help building intercultural competence along with the linguistic and communicative competence as well. Hence, the language class can become the cradle of teaching culture and intercultural communicative competence our students need. The teachers in this study are aware of the changes and challenges of the contemporary language classrooms and do their best to prepare their students to become globalized citizens. One question that needs to be asked at this point is whether we should insist on teaching standard idealized British/American culture by ignoring the cultural diversity where the target language is spoken around the globe. That is, teachers should also consider taking local and multicultural identities into account while considering the place of culture in language teaching (Alptekin and Tatar, 2011). In order to shed more light on the issues, further studies are required to explore the actual cultural teaching activities foreign language teachers practice in their classrooms through observations. Besides, students' perceptions need to be taken into account to better understand what they think about culture in foreign language learning, how prepared they feel for the growing challenges of the globalized world and their understanding of intercultural communication. Studies that focus on comparing the teachers' and students' perceptions on culture would also provide valuable insights into how culture and culture teaching should be handled in the foreign language classroom to foster the most benefit for the students.

REFERENCES

- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence. *ELT Journal*, 56 (1), 57- 64.
- Alptekin, C. and Tatar, S. (2011). Research on foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey (2005-2009). *Language Teaching*, 44, 328-353.
- Bada, E. (2000). Culture in ELT. *Cukurova University Journal of Social Sciences*, 6, 100-110.
- Bennett, J. M. (1993). Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 109-135). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.



- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.
- Brown, D. H. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs: New Jersey.
- Brown, A.V. (2009). Students' and teachers' perceptions of effective foreign language teaching: A comparison of ideals. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93 (1), 46-60.
- Byram, M. (1988). Foreign language education and cultural studies. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 1 (1), 15-31.
- Byram, M., Esarte-Sarries, Taylor, and Allatt. (1991). Young people's perception of other cultures. In D. Buttjes & M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating languages and cultures* (pp. 103-119). Clevedon, Avon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, K. and Kramsch, C. (2008). Why is it difficult to teach language as culture? *The German Quarterly*, 81 (1), 20-34.
- Calderhead, J. (1996). Teachers: Beliefs and knowledge. In D. Berliner & R. Calife (Eds.). *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp.709-725). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillian.
- Cook, S. (1996). *College students' perspectives on culture learning in a required French course*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.
- Cooper, T. C. (1985). A survey of teacher concerns. *Foreign Language Annals*, 18 (1), 21-24.
- Dai, L. (2011). Practical techniques for culture-based language teaching in the EFL Classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2 (5), 1031-1036.
- Damen, L. (1987). *Culture Learning: the fifth dimension in the language classroom*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Davis, J. J. and Markham, P. L. (1991). Student attitudes towards foreign language study at historically and predominantly black institutions. *Foreign Language Annals*, 24 (3), 227-236.
- Dirksen, C. (1990). Learning styles of mainland Chinese students of English. *IDEAL*, 5, 29-38.
- Eksi, G. (2009). English language activities for cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Paper presented at the English as an International Language Conference, Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, October, 2009.
- Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research*, 38 (1), 47-65.
- Furstenberg, G. (2010). Making culture the core of the class: Can it be done? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94 (2), 329-332.
- Genç, B. and Bada, E. (2005). Culture in language learning and teaching. *The Reading Matrix*, 5, 73-84.
- Gougeon, T. D. (1993). Urban schools and immigrant families. *The Urban Review*, 25 (4), 251-287.
- Göbel, K. and Helmke, A. (2010). Intercultural learning in English as foreign language instruction: The importance of teachers' intercultural experience and the usefulness of precise instructional directives. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26 (8), 1571-1582.
- Hall, J. K., and Ramírez, A. (1993). How a group of high school learners of Spanish perceives the cultural identities of speakers, English speakers, and themselves. *Hispania*, 76, 613-620.
- Heuser, L. (2012). Ethnographic conversations: A pedagogical strategy to promote language, content, and intercultural learning among Japanese and American university students. *Asian EFL Journal*, 57, 4-23.
- Işık, A. (2003). Linguistic imperialism and its reflection in foreign/second language teaching. *FLED 308 Lecture Notes*. Istanbul: Boğaziçi University.
- Işık, A. (2004). *Linguistic imperialism and foreign language teaching*. Unpublished paper.
- Jiang, W. (2000). The relationship between culture and language. *ELT Journal*, 54 (4), 328-334.
- Kitao, K. (2000). Teaching Culture in Foreign Language Instruction in the United States. Retrieved on May 2008 from [<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/article/culture.htm>]
- Klingner, J., Artiles, A. J., Kozleski, E., Harry, B., Zion, S., Tate, W., Duran, G.Z. and Riley, D. (2005). Addressing the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education through culturally responsive educational systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13, 1-43. Retrieved on May, 2008 from [<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n38/>]
- Knox, E. (1984). Report of the teaching of French civilization. *French Review*, 56 (3), 369-378.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Lederach, J.P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- McDevitt, B. (2004). Negotiating the Syllabus: A win-win Syllabus. *ELT Journal* 58 (1), 3-9.
- Montgomery, W. (2001). Creating culturally responsive, inclusive classrooms. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33 (4), 4-9.
- Moore, J. (1991). *An analysis of the cultural content of post-secondary textbooks for Spanish: Evidence of information processing strategies and types of learning in reading selections and post-reading adjunct questions*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Nieto, S. (2009). *Language, culture and teaching: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Paige, R. M., Jorstal, H., Siaya, L., Klein, F. and Colby, J. (2000). *Culture learning in language education: A review of the literature*. St. Paul, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, the University of Minnesota.



- Pajares, F. M. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62 (3), 307-322.
- Pulverness, A. (2003). *Distinctions & Dichotomies: Culture-free, Culture-bound*. Retrieved on June 2010 from [http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/forum/distanddich.htm]
- Rivers, W. M. (1981). *Teaching foreign language skills*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Robinson, G. L. (1981). *Issues in second language and cross-cultural education: The forest through the trees*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Robinson-Stuart, G. and Nocon, H. (1996). Second culture acquisition: Ethnography in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal* 80 (4), 431-449.
- Ryan, P. M. (1994). *Foreign language teachers' perceptions of culture and the classroom: A case study*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
- Schulz, R. A. and Ganz, A. (2010). Developing professional consensus on the teaching of culture: Report on a survey of secondary and postsecondary German teachers. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, 43 (2), 175-193.
- Sercu, L. (2000). *Acquiring intercultural communicative competence from textbooks*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Sercu, L. (2005). *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation*. Clevedon: Cromwell Press.
- Stodolsky, S. S. and Grossman, P. L. (1994). The impact of subject matter on curricular activity: An analysis of five academic subjects. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, (2), 227-249.
- Willems, G. (2000). Teacher education. In M. Byram (Ed.). *Routledge encyclopedia of language teaching and learning* (pp. 603-608). London: Routledge.
- Wolf, W. C. and Riordan, K. M. (1991). Foreign language teachers' demographic characteristics, in-service training needs, and attitudes towards teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, 24 (6), 471-478.
- Zhao, B. (2011). How to enhance culture teaching in English language classes. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1 (7), 847-850.

Appendix Interview Questions

1. What do you think about the role of culture in teaching and learning a foreign language?
Do you think it is important? If yes, in what ways is it important?
2. What do you understand by "culture teaching" in a foreign language teaching context?
What may be the objectives in teaching culture?
3. What kind(s) of culture teaching activities do you practice during classroom teaching time?
4. How familiar are you with the country, culture, people primarily associated with the foreign language you are teaching?
5. In the language classroom, how extensively do you deal with particular cultural aspects?