

The Attitudes of EFL Teachers Towards Teaching Culture and Their Classroom Practices

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Abstract: This study mainly aimed to describe the attitudes of language teachers at Turkish universities towards teaching culture. The attitude was determined in terms of content and learner levels that are addressed, amount of cultural information and the materials and strategies implemented in language classes in teaching about culture. Furthermore, the study investigated the effects of teacher-related variables such as being a native English speaking teacher or non-native English speaking teacher, working at a state or private university, participation in professional development activities on their perceptions of culture teaching. The data was gathered via survey method. A questionnaire was administered to 155 ELT instructors working at language preparatory schools of 17 universities in Turkey. The results revealed that there is no significant difference between native and non-native English speaking teachers and between the teachers working at a state or private universities in terms of overall attitude towards teaching culture. On the other hand, the higher participation rate in 'training courses on teaching culture' and 'professional development activities' lead to a more positive attitude towards the integration of culture.

Key Words: culture; culture teaching; language teaching; intercultural competence

1. Introduction

Culture plays a noticeable role in teaching and learning of a language. The reason why culture has become so popular in foreign language teaching (FLT) is obviously related to the dynamic nature of economical, socio-political and also cultural developments, and the growing intercultural interactions in this global world. Researchers highlight the importance of culture as a component feature to be integrated into language teaching practice. With reference to culture, various definitions have been made by several scholars. In spite of the evolving nature of these definitions, the place of culture in English as a foreign language (EFL) has always been constant. What matters in EFL in general is to accept language and culture as two entities which are mutually linked to each other and that there is a reciprocal impact in both ways. This relationship is the reason why culture teaching has an important role in language teaching. In other words, it should be dealt with care, given a specific place in the EFL educational program along with particular methods and techniques to be implemented in the classroom. While this is not a new discussion, the idea of teaching culture in foreign language classes seems to come to the foreground in the last 20 years. This issue is crucial in terms of determining the place of culture in the curriculum, what is taught in terms of culture, and observing the methods and strategies used in teaching culture in English language teaching (ELT) classes.

As a result of the shift in focus from the linguistic aspect towards the communicative aspect of language in the field of ELT, intercultural communication theory which was mainly developed by Byram in the 1990s was found to be important and a list of educational aims were listed bearing the factor of culture in mind as (a) to encourage tolerance to unfamiliar, (b) to promote positive attitudes towards others, (c) to reduce cultural biases (Prodromou, 1992).

The increasing demand for including more cultural elements in foreign language teaching practice stems from the current economical, social, political and cultural developments. The standard definition of culture is a wide one which has relatively fallen short regarding these stated changing atmosphere in the world, thus, what aspects of culture and to what extent it should be studied in conjunction with the foreign language education seem to be the current debate in today's world. However, not much is known about the extent to which foreign language teachers address culture in their classes. More data is needed in terms of the topics and student levels that are being addressed, the amount of information given, and the materials and strategies implemented in classes in teaching about culture. This study mainly seeks to describe the attitudes of teachers towards teaching culture, and to determine the effects of teacher-related variables on their perceptions and implementations of culture teaching.

2. Literature review

2.1. Language and culture

Nababan (1974) states that the word culture is derived from the Latin word *cultura* (being cultivated) and Taylor was the first to introduce this word to English in his book *Researches* in 1865. Since then the word 'culture' has been used in slightly different meanings and in some places interchangeably with 'civilization' or 'society'. Culture can be defined in two different ways. Big cultures or large C culture refer to large, essentialized, abstract groupings of people, such as nations and the significant products which a society or distinguished individuals in that society brings out in general such as the literature, music, and intellectual products. On the other hand, small cultures or small c culture refer to any cohesive social grouping, such as an extended family or a professional organization and the lifestyles of these people. (Halliday, 1999, cited in Menard –Warwick, 2009; Chastain, 1976, Steele 1987, cited in Harumi, 2002).

One other important classification is from Adaskou, Britten and Fashi (1990). They outline four meanings of culture in terms of the aesthetic sense which includes music, literature, cinema and the media; the sociological sense which includes the organization and nature of family, interpersonal relations, work and leisure, customs, and so forth; the semantic sense which covers all the perception and thought processes; and finally the pragmatic or the sociolinguistic sense which covers the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills and language.

More recently, Clayton (2003) describes culture as a pervasive, shared, learned, and dynamic entity which is the root of our identity. Similarly, Nieto (2010) identifies culture as an entity which is dynamic, multifaceted, embedded in context, influenced by social, economic, and political factors, created and socially constructed, learned, and dialectical. This definition suggests that culture and behaviour are related to each other. Knowledge of culture governs behaviour of people in a society.

For ages, disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and more recently FLT has concerned with the relationship between language and culture. Today, although there are various items and several conflicts among scholars, the thing that all scholars agreed on is the definite interrelationship between them. Without doubt, language and culture are part of a whole and they are firmly connected to each other. One cannot exist without the other.

According to Bolton (1980) language should be understood by every single person in a society in order to understand the mankind because it is the ineluctable component that is a signal of being human. Notable at this level is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which basically makes the claim that our understanding of the world is determined by the language that is used. The more recent version of the hypothesis claims that the reason why speakers of different languages do not understand each other is because they have different perceptions and interpretations of events, they do not agree on neither the surface nor the underlying meaning and the value of concepts (Kramsch, 1998).

Needless to say, there exists an undeniable bond between culture and language. According to Nababan (1974) it is very difficult to learn about the culture well without learning the language that the culture takes place because the various world views, beliefs, self images etc. of people are involved in the language. In other words, it can be claimed that the development of culture has only been realized by the existence of the language. It can be concluded that having cultural insight and skills are so important that without their existence even fluent speakers can seriously misinterpret the messages they hear or read (Pesola, cited in Tsou, 2005).

2.2. The place of culture in foreign language teaching

Throughout years, from the 1960s to 2000s, discussion of the role of culture in FLT has been a recurring topic among scholars and FL educators. Though the focus of this discussion has changed over time, the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of teaching culture within the FL curriculum still remain as important issues. Along with the development of sociolinguistics and audio-lingual method in the 1960s, then with the introduction of communicative competence in the early 1970s, cultural dimension of language teaching came into the forefront. In broad terms, cultural goals in teaching language include the recognition or interpretation of major geographical characteristics of the target country, major historical events related to the target country; major masterpieces of architecture, literature and the arts; active and passive everyday cultural activities like greeting, shopping or marriage customs, education, politics etc., manners, proper common gestures, the validity of generalizations about foreign cultures, skills needed to research on culture, the culture of all countries that speak the target language (Lafayette, 1975).

In the 1980s, as a result of a big metamorphosis in politics, economics and socio-cultural life which affected society in general, bringing up individuals who could adapt to new situations, tolerate cultural differences and learn to live in a multicultural world became the primary aims of education. Since 1980s, an assumption about the existence of a close link between language and culture has often been made by scholars within language and culture teaching. This assumption has provided a basis for the view that "language teaching must inevitably be accompanied by teaching about cultural phenomena." (Risager, 2006, p.9). Zarate (1986), as one of the most important scholars of that period, stated the aim of culture teaching as developing cultural competence. This includes "using various sources of information, identifying stereotypes and other representations, contextualizing information, explaining one's own culture to foreigners and establishing personal contacts with foreigners and preparing trips to a target language country" (cited in Risager, 2007, p. 86). In his model of foreign language education Byram (1989) emphasizes the significant place of culture in the general education system. His main aim is to develop 'an integrated discipline of teaching language and culture' (p. 23). To sum up, the 1980s were the decade when culture teaching was generally accepted as an academic discipline on its own or at least as an extension of the language teaching system which was mostly based on linguistics.

In the 1990s, as a result of the prominence of cultural factors integrated into the language teaching process, there was a change in the priority from form to content. Risager (2007) draws attention to the fact that the cultural aspect of language teaching became more and more popular as a result of the increase in study travels within the exchange programmes and the development of information communication technology (ICT) such as the Internet. This resulted in having greater opportunities of getting into contact with other cultures either via student exchanges and school trips or e-mail. At the beginning of the 1990s, scholars Byram and Zarate (1994) developed the concept of the 'intercultural speaker' whose starting point is the concept of socio-cultural competence. Thus, gaining a general awareness of cultural differences i.e. intercultural competence became important. With the help of this approach a language learner develops a positive attitude to other cultures and believes that the existence of another culture is not a threat but something to be appreciated, accepted and tolerated. It is also essential to note that although the idea of including culture in the FL study has remained on the agenda for some time, the current educational

environment has indicated a new motivation for such inclusion. However, there are ongoing debates about whether the focus should be on 'Big C' culture which is generally formed by the study of history, literary products, and fine arts or small 'c' culture which is about the features of daily life such as food, transportation, clothing, and patterns of behaviour etc. Hence, it can be stated that 1990s were the years when the idea of intercultural learning became broadly known, and teaching cultural differences and using the target language worldwide became more important.

In the early 2000s, the impact of Byram's model of the intercultural communication theory on the development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which serves as the basis for FL education today is non-negligible. Here, the general aim is to create intercultural speakers who have "the ability to see how different cultures relate to each other in terms of similarities and differences and to look at themselves from an 'external' perspective when interacting with representatives of other cultures" (Larzén-Östermark, 2008, p.528). In the 2000s, Roberts et al. (cited in Risager, 2007) saw the relationship between language teaching and culture teaching as "a question of coming into contact with other ways of living, other ways of thinking" (p.149). Crozet and Liddicoat (2000; cited in Risager, 2007) set the aim of teaching as intercultural communicative competence which actually has a little bit different connotation than Byram and Zarate's. They aimed to make learners culture sensitive while communicating with others and use situations to predict cultural differences and they emphasized the use of language in culturally appropriate ways.

In short, as a result of a wider change within the education system and society in general, there has been a shift of perspective towards postmodernism combining the old and the new in especially culture teaching area. With the help of this shift, learning processes and strategies, diversity in qualifications and experience of an individual, attitudes and emotions, and dealing with 'the other' have been emphasized. In other words, rather than the cognitive aspect, the affective aspect has become more important. Overall, it can be stated that FL teaching today aims to promote learners' familiarity with the culture, as well as enhancing learners' empathy, openmindedness and respect for otherness. In order to accomplish such an aim, samples of stereotypes and prejudiced views of other cultures can serve as means to be used in education. (Larzén-Östermark, 2009; Byram 2009).

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research questions:

1. What is the attitude of EFL teachers towards teaching culture regarding:
 - a) content /topic ?
 - b) skills/attitude outcomes and reasons?
 - c) strategies?
 - d) materials?
 - e) proficiency levels preferred to spend time to teach culture?
 - f) amount/frequency of culture teaching?
 - g) reasons for ignoring culture teaching?
2. What are the effects of teacher-related factor(s) that affect EFL teachers' attitude towards teaching culture?
 - a) being a NEST or non-NEST
 - b) working at a state or private university
 - c) training courses on teaching culture received
 - d) the frequency of participation in professional development activities

3.2. Participants

Total number of 155 English language instructors from 17 different universities (7 state- 10 private) in 4 different cities of Turkey were the subjects of the study. Among those teachers, 32 of them were Native speaker of English teachers (NESTs - including American, British, Canadian, Irish and Australian and New Zealander) and 123 of them were non-NESTs (all Turkish).

Among 155 participant foreign language teachers 54 (34.8%) of them assumed that preparatory school students are not culturally diverse at all, 78 (50.4%) assumed they are somewhat culturally diverse, and 23 (14.8%) instructors assumed that the students are very diverse in terms of culture.

In order to have a clear idea about the size of schools where the data was gathered from, teachers were asked the number of students who were currently enrolled in preparatory schools. Out of 155, 16 (10.3%) instructors reported the number of students as below 500, 52 (33.6%) instructors reported between 500 and 1000, and 87 (56.1%) instructors reported more than 1000 students are enrolled in the preparatory schools they have been working at.

All the instructors have the minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree, with 36 (23.2%) holding a diploma in literature, 92 (59.4%) holding a diploma in ELT, and 27 (17.4%) holding a diploma in other fields such as translation and interpreting studies, linguistics, modern languages and European studies etc. Among those 155 participants, 40 (25.8%) have an ELT certificate of some sort, 64 (41.3%) have a master's degree, and 4 (2.6%) hold a doctorate of philosophy.

In terms of experience of living in a foreign country, 21 (21%) instructors stated they spent between 1 and 15 days in a foreign country, 19 (19%) stated between 15 and 30 days, and 43 (43%) of them stated (including all the NEST) they spent more than 6 months in a foreign country. 55 (38.2% of the Non-NESTs) instructors stated they had never been to a foreign country.

Table 1. Distribution of Instructors according to Teaching Experience and Being Native or Non-Native Speaker of English

Experience	NEST		Non-NEST		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1-5 years	10	31.2	44	35.8	54	34.8
5-10 years	7	21.9	52	42.2	59	38.1
More than 10 years	15	46.9	27	22	42	27.1
Total	32		123		155	

As seen in Table 1, the instructors had a variety of language teaching experience which ranges from 1 year to more than 10 years. Hereunder, 54 (34.8%) instructors had teaching experience between 1 and 5 years, 59 (38.1%) of them had between 5 and 10, and 42 (27.1%) instructors had teaching experience of more than 10 years.

3.3. Instrument

A survey called 'Survey of Teaching Culture in EFL Classes' was adapted from a study carried out by Social Science Education Consortium (1999). Most of the items taken from the study as they are and some are with slight changes. The main difference is the addition of 4-point rating scale; (1) never, (2) sometimes, (3) usually (4) always. The survey was administered to 155 preparatory school ELT instructors via print-out or e-mail.

The data collected through survey were recorded in the computer software SPSS version 15.0. Besides the frequency counts, means and percentages, independent samples t-test was also conducted to explore the possible differences in terms of teaching culture in foreign language classes.

The survey includes 2 sections; the first section consists of some questions in checklist format to provide data about the general profile of instructors who participated in the study. After the questions concerning the name and the type of institution they teach, participants were required to state the level(s) of English they taught. They stated their total year of teaching experience and whether English is their native language or not. The questions in this section were posed mainly for the purpose of classifying teachers according to independent variables such as whether they had any in service training and the frequency of professional development activities (such as conferences of professional organizations, in-services offered by the institution, university courses, travel/study abroad and study tours that they organized for students) they participated in.

Second section consists of 8 questions and aims to reflect the participants' teaching philosophy and practice related to culture teaching in detail. For the first 5 questions, a set of subsequent items were provided and the participants were required to respond to each item by using a 4- point scale, ranging from 'never' to 'always'. Questions 1- 5 were mainly designed to determine the topics that instructors address in teaching about culture (7 items), the skills and attitude outcomes for culture learning (7 items), the reasons for including culture teaching in the foreign language classroom (3 items). Moreover, instructors were asked to state how often they use various strategies (11 items) and the materials (16 items) to teach about culture. For these five main questions with 44 items in total, the item total correlations were calculated and found to be high enough (ranging from .255 to .570) to treat them as a measure of overall attitude scale. Internal consistency reliability of this scale, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was .91. Therefore, the total score of these 5 questions were used as a separate measure of overall attitude of teachers towards teaching culture which is used for the research question 2.

For questions 6-8, checklist format was designed to elicit information about the proficiency levels that EFL teachers prefer to teach about culture, the frequency of teaching culture and the reasons for not including any culture teaching in their EFL classes.

4. Results

4.1 Results about the attitude of EFL teachers towards teaching culture

4.1.1 Topic/content

Table 2. Content that Teachers Address in Teaching about Culture

How often do you apply the following topics in teaching culture in your classes?	Mean	Rank (in terms of mean)
a. Geography and environment	2.21	6
b. History	2.12	7
c. Tangible products of the culture (e.g., foods, dress, types of dwelling, toys)	2.66	1
d. Expressive products of culture (e.g., literature, art, music, dance)	2.54	2
e. Cultural practices or patterns of social interaction (e.g., manners, use of space, rituals)	2.53	3
f. Cultural perspectives-the philosophies, attitudes, and values of the target culture (e.g., respect for older people, belief in a social hierarchy, religion)	2.39	4
g. Relationships among cultural perspectives, practices, and products	2.27	5

According to the findings presented in Table 2, the topic that is mainly given priority in teaching about culture is tangible products of culture such as foods, dress, types of dwelling and toys (mean score 2.66; 1st in the ranking). Teachers are also concerned with topics related to expressive products of culture such as literature, art, music, and dance (mean score 2.54; 2nd in the ranking), cultural practices or patterns of social interaction such as manners, use of space and rituals (mean score 2.53; 3rd in the ranking), cultural perspectives- the philosophies, attitudes, and values of the target culture such as respect for older people, belief in a social hierarchy and religion (mean score 2.39; 4th in the ranking), relationships among cultural perspectives, practices and products (mean score 2.27; 5th in the ranking), geography and environment (mean score 2.21; 6th in the ranking), and history (2.12; 7th in the ranking) respectively.

4.1.2 Skills and attitude outcomes for culture learning:

Table 3. Skills/Attitude Outcomes for Culture Learning

To what extent are the following skills/attitude outcomes important in your language classes?	Mean	Ranks (in terms of mean)
a. Reflect on own culture through study of the target culture	2.49	4
b. Recognize the values of Turkish culture, how they are different from other cultures and the role they play in shaping attitude towards other cultures	2.66	2
c. Appreciate similarities and differences between their own culture and target culture	2.80	1
d. Recognize and can analyze how language reflects culture	2.52	3
e. Adopt alternative ways of seeing and operating in the world	2.47	5
f. Adopt ideas and practices that help understand culture in general	2.45	6
g. Develop and use the skills needed to solve cross-cultural dilemmas/problems	2.17	7
To what extent do the following statements reflect your reasons for including culture in your language classes?		
a. Knowledge of culture is an important preliminary step in reading and appreciating the literature of the target language/country.	2.92	3
b. Knowledge of culture is important in a communication and avoiding cultural misunderstandings.	3.36	1
c. Studying culture engages students and motivates them to study the language and retain what they learn.	2.95	2

Table 3 shows skills/attitude outcomes and reasons for culture learning. The statement 'appreciate similarities and differences between their own culture and target culture' is most strongly supported outcome by ELT teachers (mean score 2.80; 1st in the ranking), the statement ranked second is 'recognize the values of Turkish culture, how they are different from other cultures and the role they play in shaping attitude towards other cultures' with a mean score of 2.66). The statements 'recognize and can analyze how language reflects culture' (mean score 2.52, 3rd in the ranking) and 'reflect on own culture through study of the target culture' (mean score 2.49; 4th in the ranking) are deemed less important than the first two. Moreover, the statements 'adopt alternative ways of seeing and operating in the world' (mean score 2.47) and 'adopt ideas and practices that help understand culture in general' (mean score 2.45) are ranked as the 5th and 6th in terms of the skills and attitude outcomes for culture learning. Finally, the statement ranked last is 'develop and use the skills needed to solve cross-cultural dilemmas/problems' (mean score 2.17; 7th in the ranking).

As Table 3 shows, most strongly supported reason for including culture in FL classroom is 'studying culture engages students and motivates them to study the language and retain what they learn' (mean score 3.36). The second most strongly supported reason is 'studying culture engages students and motivates them

to study the language and retain what they learn' (mean score 2.95), and the least importance is attached to the reason 'knowledge of culture is an important preliminary step in reading and appreciating the literature of the target language/country' (mean score 2.92; 3rd in the ranking).

4.1.3 Strategies used to teach about culture

Table 4. Strategies Used to Teach Culture

How often do you use the following strategies to teach culture in your language classes?	Mean	Ranks (in terms of mean)
a. Role plays /simulations	2.37	4
b. Dialogues	2.71	2
c. Cultural problem-solving/cross-cultural scenarios	2.05	6
d. Using authentic materials written by or for native speakers	2.62	3
e. Participation in festivals	1.27	10
f. Guest presenters who are native speakers	1.30	9
g. Interviews with native speakers	1.44	8
h. Encouraging students to attend international exchange programs, such as Erasmus	2.72	1
i. Internet/e-mail exchanges	2.30	5
j. Sister schools/pen pal exchanges	1.54	7
k. Study tours to target culture	1.30	9

As displayed in Table 4, the most common strategy ELT teachers use is 'encouraging students to attend international exchange programs, such as Erasmus' (mean score 2.72). The second most common strategy is stated as 'dialogues' (mean score 2.71). Using authentic materials written by or for native speakers is deemed less important than the first two (mean score 2.62; 3rd in the ranking). The strategy 'interviews with native speakers' is the 8th in the ranking with a mean score of 1.44. The strategies which share the 9th place in the ranking are 'guest presenters who are native speakers' and 'study tours to target culture'. The least frequently used strategy is stated as participation in 'festivals' which has a mean score of 1.27 (10th in the ranking).

4.1.4 Materials used to teach about culture

Table 5. Materials Used to Teach About Culture

How often do you use the following materials to teach culture in your language classes?	Mean	Rank (in terms of mean)
a. Textbooks and accompanying ancillaries	3.26	1
b. Supplementary instructional materials	2.75	2
c. Materials you have developed	2.38	6
d. Authentic materials	2.51	3
e. Realia-artifacts	2.11	9
f. Posters	1.92	10

g. Slides, videos, films, laser discs	2.41	5
h. Computer programs, CD-Roms	2.29	7
i. Classical or traditional recorded music	2.23	8
j. Examples of recorded music popular today	2.43	4
k. Classic literary works	1.67	13
l. Popular contemporary literature	1.64	14
m. Comics	1.83	11
n. Newspapers, magazines	2.23	8
o. Maps, atlases	1.72	12
p. Encyclopedias, other reference books	1.54	15

As Table 5 reveals, textbooks and accompanying ancillaries are always preferred by the respondent teachers as the main material to be used to teach about culture (mean score 3.26; 1st in the ranking). Supplementary instructional materials are reported to be usually used (mean score 2.75; 2nd in the ranking) and authentic materials are preferred as the third most preferred materials by the ELT teachers who participated in the study (mean score 2.51). Classic literary works (mean score 1.67; 13th in the ranking) and popular contemporary literature (mean score 1.64; 14th in the ranking) are the materials which are hardly ever preferred by EFL instructors. Encyclopedias and other reference books are ranked as the material which is never used by the instructors to teach about culture (mean score 1.54; 15th in the ranking).

4.1.5 Proficiency levels preferred to spend time to teach culture

36.1% of the participant instructors stated that they give equal treatment to culture in all their classes, 31.6% of the participants stated that they spend time to culture teaching at intermediate level courses, 14.2% of the participants prefer to spend time to culture teaching in beginner/elementary level courses, 14.2% of the participants stated that they spend more time to teach culture in advanced level courses. 3.9 % of the participants did not respond to this question.

4.1.6 The amount of culture teaching

47.7% of the participant instructors stated that they teach culture as much as included in the textbook and accompanying ancillaries, 17.4% of the participants stated that they incorporate culture-based lessons periodically when time is available, 9.7% of the participants stated that they do not necessarily teach culture, 9.0% of them stated that they integrate culture learning with language acquisition lessons at least once per week, 7.1% of them stated that they integrate culture learning with language acquisition every lesson, 6.5% of the participants stated that they teach two or three units that integrate culture learning with language acquisition each semester, and 1.9% of the instructors stated that they never teach culture in their language classes. 0.6% of the participants did not respond to this question.

4.1.7 Reasons for ignoring culture teaching

Lack of time in the curriculum is stated as the most favoured reason for ignoring culture in FL teaching by 52.6% instructors. Respectively, 35.1% of them state students' low level of English as their reason, 28.9% of the instructors explain the reason for their ignorance of culture as not being a priority in the foreign language teaching curriculum of the university, 15.5% of the instructors state that culture is not a priority for them, 8.2% of them state their reason as the insufficient knowledge of culture, and 7.2% of the respondents

indicate their reason as their insufficient knowledge of appropriate methodology. 37% of the instructors did not respond to this question.

4.2 Findings about the factors that affect EFL teachers' overall attitude towards teaching culture

A set of independent samples t-test was applied to the total scores of the questions 1-5 in the Survey to examine whether participants' attitudes towards culture differ with respect to the four factors namely; being a NEST or non-NEST, teaching at a state or private university, training courses on teaching culture received and professional development activities attended.

The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between NESTs and non-NESTs with respect to the attitude towards teaching culture. Similarly, the results indicate that there is no significant difference in terms of the attitude towards culture between two groups in terms of whether they teach at a state or private university.

Table 6. Independent Samples T-test for EFL Teachers with and without a Training in Teaching Culture with Respect to Overall Attitude towards Teaching Culture

	Instructors	N	\bar{x}	sd	t-Test		
					t	df	p
Training courses on teaching culture	With training	80	104.1	16.6	-3.26	133	0.001
	Without training	55	94.9	15.2			

Note. $p \leq 0.01$

Table 6 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers with and without the experience of attending training courses on teaching culture with respect to the attitude they express towards teaching culture in their EFL class ($p=0.001$). The difference seems to be in favour of the teachers who attended training courses that furthered their knowledge of teaching culture in an EFL classroom. In other words, it can be concluded that instructors who received training in teaching culture tend to have more varied teaching purposes and anticipated outcomes, exploit more topics, strategies and materials to teach about culture.

Some instructors did not participate or participated only once in professional development activities in EFL over the past two years, while some others attended more than once. The difference between the two groups with respect to their attitude towards teaching about culture was analyzed using independent samples t-test.

Table 7. Independent Samples t-test for EFL Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Culture According to Frequency of Participation in Professional Development Activities

	N	M	SD	t-value	df	P [Sig.(2-tailed)]
Professional Development Activities	None/once	22	93.09	-2.27	136	0.026
	More than once	116	101.7			

Note. $p \leq 0.05$

Table 7 shows that the mean score of EFL teachers who did not participate in professional development activities related to FLT or participated only once over the past two years is significantly different from the ones who participated more than once ($p= 0.026$). The teachers who attended professional development

activities related to foreign language teaching more than once in the past two years use more varied topics, strategies and materials, and they have more varied reasons to teach culture which means they have a more positive attitude towards teaching culture.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The most commonly taught topics in teaching culture are *tangible products of culture such as foods and dress* then *expressive products of culture such as literature, art, music and dance*. The reason might be instructors' lack of knowledge on some more sophisticated topics and learners' familiarity with this content. This result is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by the Social Science Education Consortium (1999).

The most strongly supported skill and outcome of culture teaching by ELT teachers is *appreciating similarities and differences between their own culture and the target culture*. The most strongly supported reason to teach culture is coming from teachers' belief that *knowledge of culture is important in communication* and they intend to make learners *avoid cultural misunderstandings*.

Language teachers make use of a wide selection of strategies to integrate culture teaching into their language classes. While the most common strategy is *encouraging students to attend international exchange programs, such as Erasmus, using authentic materials written by or for native speakers* is another common strategy applied. Using *dialogues, role-plays and simulations* is also preferred by language teachers to teach about culture. The reason might be to supplement grammar based language lessons and to close the gap in their cultural knowledge through both written materials and oral activities.

A variety of teaching materials is used to promote intercultural communication. Among these *textbooks and accompanying ancillaries* are always preferred by the respondent teachers as the main material to be used to teach about culture. In this regard, the results of Richards, Tung and Ng's (1992) study which suggests that the primary teaching resources of language teachers are mainly the textbook, supplementary materials and audio tapes, confirm the results of the present study. When the related result of the current study is discussed in detail, this privileged preference for the use of textbook can be explained with its structured, integrated and user-friendly nature. That is, when the type of culture teaching material is considered it is possible to claim that language instruction in Turkey mostly relies on the use of textbooks. Despite drawing attention to the recent major attempts to incorporate communicative language teaching into the curriculum, Kirkgöz (2005) describes the teaching of English in Turkey as traditionally teacher-centered and the primary method employed as grammar translation where the main focus is on grammar and vocabulary rather than communication. It can be suggested that in addition to the textbook and accompanying ancillaries, to supplement their grammar based language lessons and to close the gap in their cultural knowledge Turkish EFL instructors must be using a wider range of materials more often, with supplementary instructional materials and popular music records among the most popular.

Another central issue concerns with the proficiency levels of learners, the majority of participant instructors in their responses to the survey study indicated that they deal with culture equally in all their classes without taking learners' proficiency levels into account in particular. It might be interpreted as a positive attitude because in this way the development of cultural competence can start at an early stage of language learning. Moreover, the study also investigated the frequency of culture teaching in FL classes, and the results designated that most of the participants teach culture as much as included in the textbook and the accompanying ancillaries. The most common reason reported for not teaching about culture is lack of time in the curriculum. These results are consistent with a number of studies (e.g. Social Science Education Consortium, 1999; Casto, Sercu & Garcia, 2004; Larzén-Östermark, 2008) which have also found out that in general FL teachers devote minimum amount of time to culture teaching. That is to say, from the analysis of the research data, it can be concluded that although all of the participants are aware of the importance of teaching culture and using a variety of strategies and materials to teach culture, they claim that they have

very limited time to deal with cultural issues in class, thus they prefer to stick to the textbook and the activities in the textbook which require no preparation beforehand, thus they save more time to deal with grammar teaching rather than culture teaching. As a result, it may be possible to conclude that in most cases FL instructors feel constrained by the requirements of the syllabi. However, in order to reveal a satisfactory language learning and/or teaching practice, there should be a balance between the linguistic and the cultural component in syllabi. Revealing the similar fact in his study, Çakır (2010) asserts that without emphasizing cultural aspects of the language, learners would have problems in understanding the language in context.

The study conducted by Ryan (1995) investigated the amount of cultural information introduced in FL classes. He concludes that very limited amount of cultural information was exploited compared to the linguistic aspects of the language because teachers refrain from conveying their cultural knowledge which is formed by their past experiences. Learners' negative attitude towards other cultures might be another reason for not teaching cultural information freely in class. Reason for not teaching culture is reported as *lack of time* since the teachers have a fixed pacing in the schedule. It can be suggested that more flexibility in the syllabus and material will make teachers more stress-free in terms of integrating culture into language teaching.

It can be concluded that mostly the instructors have positive attitude towards the integration of culture in FL classes. Being native or non-native speaker of English does not change the instructors' attitude towards culture teaching. Similarly, working at a state or private institution does not change the instructors' attitude towards culture teaching.

The research has also highlighted the changes in EFL instructors' attitude towards teaching culture according to different variables such as being a NEST or a non-NEST, the type of institution they teach, the training courses on teaching culture they have taken, and the professional development activities they have participated in. The data obtained from the survey revealed no significant difference between NEST and non-NESTs, and the respondents who work at state and private universities regarding the attitude towards teaching culture.

However, the results revealed significant effect of the training courses on teaching culture that EFL teachers have taken and the professional development activities they have participated in. With regard to the training courses, the difference seems to be in favour of the teachers who attend training courses that furthered their knowledge of teaching culture in a FL classroom. When the participation rates in professional development activities are taken into account, it can be seen that the mean score of instructors who attended professional development activities related to foreign language teaching (conferences, in-services, university courses and so forth) more than once in the past two years is higher than the ones who attended at no time or only once. Thus, it is possible to conclude that higher participation rate in training courses and professional development activities leads EFL instructors to a more positive attitude towards the integration of culture in their classes. This result is supported by Richards, Tung and Ng's (1992) study which arrived at the conclusion that language teachers mostly benefit from lesson preparation, material development activities and attending seminars and best teachers are believed to be the ones who attend professional training on a regular basis. However, the related result of the current study is inconsistent with Deveney's (2007) study which revealed that language teachers can also become competent without any specific teacher training and added that a teacher who is curious, reflective, flexible, caring, optimistic and genuinely interested in other cultures might also be successful in culturally diverse classes without any training.

Accordingly, Çakır (2006) states that pragmatic failure is generally the result of socio-cultural and sociolinguistic differences between students' first language and the target language. Awareness of these differences might help to overcome possible breakdowns of communication.

6. Recommendations

As the study reveals, one of the reasons why EFL instructors prefer to teach culture as much as included in

textbooks and accompanying ancillaries is their cultural knowledge at a superficial level. To be able to teach culture effectively, FL instructors should be interculturally-competent themselves. Intercultural activities and courses must be given the same importance in the curriculum as well as the other language activities. Thus, teacher training courses and/or professional development activities which focus on culture teaching methods and techniques should be organized to make FL instructors more aware of the fact that culture teaching is not something to be neglected but appreciated.

In order to educate interculturally-competent EFL instructors provided with sufficient amount of cultural knowledge, culture should be addressed much more extensively in in-service teacher education programs. In addition, opportunities for teachers to travel and study abroad such as teacher mobility programs should be provided. Also international events, projects and organizations should be carried out to foster intercultural cooperation with instructors from other cultures and thus develop a better intercultural understanding and awareness.

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