



AN ANALYSIS OF TURKISH PROSPECTIVE EFL TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE INTEGRATION OF TARGET CULTURE INTO THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The association of culture and language, though relatively a new perspective, seems to be apparent and continuous as both concepts accentuate the same basic properties such as attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and perception. This association has caught the interest of many researchers particularly in the last decades. The aim of this research is to reveal the attitudes of prospective EFL teachers at the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department towards culture and its integration into language teaching and their cultural awareness. Data are collected from 146 participants through a questionnaire consisting of three parts (i.e. demographic information, multiple-choice questions, and 5-point Likert-type scale). For data analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and means), one-way ANOVA and T-test are conducted via SPSS. The findings of the study reflect the positive outlook of a considerable number of ELT students towards culture and its incorporation in language learning and teaching. The results of the analysis reveal that the primary target of the participants for learning culture is to improve their cultural awareness and communicate satisfactorily with people from distinctive cultures. The urgent inclusion of culture with its all components into the text books, curriculums and language materials is also underlined by the participants who feel the non-presence of those items in language learning and teaching environments. In the final section, necessary implications are presented to teaching professionals, teacher trainers and teacher trainees on cultural awareness and its integrity into foreign language learning and teaching fields.

Keywords: Prospective EFL Teachers, Beliefs And Perceptions, Target Culture, Integration.

1. INTRODUCTION

The way people started to live brings some changes and improvements not only in their lifestyles but in their attitudes towards each other as well. These changes and attitudinal enhancements give rise to the merge of the term "culture". Street (1993) defines culture as "an active process of meaning making" which is obtained through the interaction of the people in specific context. Additionally, according to Hammers (1985), culture is respected as a set of concepts, values and approaches towards life and it is developed through human beings. These definitions show that main components of culture can be summed into people, their behaviors and the association with others. Later on, the connection between language and culture has been identified in the studies of Hymes (1971, 1974). Furthermore; the bidirectional association of culture and language learning captured the interest of the researchers and it gained ground as an attention gripping issue in the field of second or foreign language learning. Therefore, second language learning in most cases is treated as learning a second culture. According to Brown (1980) learning a second language itself requires the acquisition of a new identity. With this identity, second language learning is often referred to learning a second culture and Brown (1980) underlines this identity as "in order to understand just what second language learning is, one needs to understand the nature of acculturation, culture shock." (p. 129). Here, this new identification is not regarded as a single, unitary pattern, rather; it is often seen as associated with social boundaries. According to Hall (2002), the relationship between identity and sociocultural contexts is cyclical and reflexive. In this view of language as a social behavior, language itself is considered as a sociocultural resource which is made up of "a range of possibilities, an open-ended set of options in behavior that are available to individual in his experience of a social man" (Halliday, 1973, p. 49). Meanwhile, a similar connection of culture and language education can be seen in the studies of Hymes (1972a, 1974) that he created a conceptualization for language and defined it as "social action". Consequently, as learning the target language, it is proportionally required to learn the culture so as to foster a well-structured communication with social and linguistic ties. Together with these ties, the perception of culture may enable us to comprehend the feelings, attitudes, behaviors, ideas and intentions of the interlocutors. This perspective is also underpinned by Byram (1988) who discussed that the function of a language can never be free from context as it is the situation where language is used to shape the reflection of values, feelings, habits and emotions.

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After the connection of language and culture is revealed, there are some terms emerged in the area. Language teaching, before assuming the integration of culture, was dealing merely with “linguistic competence” a term conceptualized by Chomsky (1957, 1965). Hymes (1972) thought that this view of language is too limited and repetitive to accentuate the real nature of it. Then he used the term “communicative competence”. In 1990s, the term “communicative competence” has lost its reputation and a change was needed to redefine the concept. Byram (1997) holds the term intercultural communicative competence as “the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries” (p. 7). This term has also been defined, in general terms, as “the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own” (Guilherme, 2000, 297). It is also claimed by Byram (1997) that intercultural competence consists of three components, which are knowledge, skills and attitudes. As the components of cultural competence and language learning are overlapped, the integration of culture into instructional education areas seems inevitable. According to Kramsch (2004) the integration of these components into a foreign language environment and curricula is an adjustment for all changes taking place in all communities, where such a regulation in educational area, particularly language teaching, is a must. On the other hand, the integration of the culture into language instruction is still a problematic issue. According to the researchers in the field of language teaching (Byram, 2012; Kramsch, 2004; Osborn, 2006), there is a need to discuss the integration and collaboration of cultural intercultural competence and awareness in foreign language curricula. For this reason, prospective teachers’ and teachers’ perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards the integration of culture in language learning and teaching should be highlighted.

1.1. Literature review

Based on the studies in the fields of culture and language, three different categorizations of the culture perspectives in instructional areas can be put forward. The first group of studies, focused on foreign language teachers' perceptions of the teaching of intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education. Serçu et al. (2005), for example, found two profiles of teachers, the first group of which sees culture as important as teaching the foreign language. On the other hand, teachers in the second group believe that it is impossible to integrate language and culture teaching. They do not believe in the positive effect of intercultural competence teaching on pupils' attitudes and perceptions. Similar findings were found in the study of Guilherme (2002), in which Portuguese language teachers' understanding of the concept critical cultural awareness was tested in the study. Similarly, Galeano, R., & Torres, K. M. (2014) conducted a study on both pre service teachers and native teachers of English and found that pre service students, who have spent a considerable time in a foreign country where English is the national language, did not find it necessary to teach cultural competence in the language classroom. Besides, native language teachers were also in the opinion of keeping culture and language separate from each other. While some teachers found the culture interference as significantly relevant to language teaching, others found no collaboration between language teaching and culture. On the other hand, in the studies conducted by Medina-López- Portillo (2004) and Salisbury (2011), it was found that all the participants especially those who stayed abroad longer confessed that their understanding of the target culture and level of intercultural sensitivity were developed in considerable amount, and this finding, to some extent, coincides with acculturation as Schumann, J. H. (1986) stated. In a more domestic domain, there are rare studies which focused on teacher perception of culture and language teaching. To illustrate; in the study of Kahraman (2016), it is concluded that teachers opt for providing and getting experience of target culture, and the tendency of teachers is mostly on using textbook as culture provider. It is also clarified that teachers’ prime concerns are on culture and language teaching more than the cultural components. Similarly, Bayyurt (2000) studied non-native EFL teachers to accentuate their attitudes and the cultural assets of the target language and it was concluded the teachers were apprehensive about raising their students’ awareness towards the cultural values of the target language.

The second group of the studies was in the scope of material and curriculum base. Nugent and Catalano (2015) state that it is strongly needed to implement critical competence into language curricula to create powerful classroom atmosphere to motivate their students. Kramsch (1987) underlined that the cultural elements in textbooks or classroom materials are the main concern of some other researchers that examined how culture is presented in the teaching materials. Additionally, in a study which targeted to see the influence of cultural materials on cultural competence, Catana (2014) found that students seemed to be motivated to learn intercultural principles of the language with the integration of cultural materials into language teaching. The syllabus, when designed to include the culture and its assets, may help both teachers and learners to teach and learn collaboratively as “one natural consequence of taking such an



approach is that we have to accept the expression of values and attitudes, not just information or knowledge. In another study, Sidhu, Kaur & Fook, (2018) conducted a research on the textbooks and materials to identify whether the ELT materials used are suitable and have various elements of moral and cultural issues. They found that teachers were successful in highlighting and integrating moral values from the ELT materials. Nevertheless, the understanding and incorporation of cultural awareness left much to be desired. The materials without the guidance of the teachers may not be adequate to help students gain cultural competence. Teachers must recognize that they themselves are constantly involved in a "lifelong process of learning and change." (Williams and Burden, 1997, p. 63). In a relevant study, DeCapua (2018) found that ESL students need to develop cross-cultural awareness by exploring the values, beliefs, norms, language behaviors, and the worldviews of their own culture. Besides, they need to be familiar with English-speaking cultures if they want to become competent in the target language more precisely. This can be achieved with a teacher-student corporation and culture primed language materials. Similar results were also gathered in the study of Sharifian, (2018) which concluded that ELT curricula should focus on developing meta-cultural competence in learners and by exposing them to the sociocultural reality and the diversity of the English language today. Some books may have more cultural reference than the others, as in the study of Baleghizadeh and Motahed (2012) who examined the ideological content of three American and three British internationally-used ELT textbooks. The results showed that the extent of cultural content in American books was more than British ones, though both American and British textbooks contained more target-culture information.

A new flow of the studies put the interest on the learners' perception of culture and language association. In a recent study done in Finland, Acquah and Commins (2013) assessed the cultural sensitivity of learners throughout their education career. Interestingly, the majority of the participants held the belief that English should be integrated into culture and should be seen as a component of it. This study underlines the importance of the integration of cultural components into instructional language environments. Byram (1988) discusses that it is impossible for any language to function without its context which is the place where language is used. In that case, thinking a language separate from any cultural ties is not a plausible idea. In a similar study, Chao (2016) measured the Taiwanese ELT students' culture perception and it was revealed that regardless of the type of English mainly being taught in school contexts, students should be informed that there are different varieties of English and their related cultures, and should be given opportunities to be exposed to those diversities. The findings of this study coincide with the study of Chinh (2013), who studied learners' perception of cultural competence and found that diverse cultures represented in ELT might enhance ELT learners' cultural understanding and intercultural competence.

Language learning is not only an educational phenomenon. As Osborn (2006) states, it is needed to reveal the integrated assets of language education with other variables such as culture and materials. In this aspect, Önalın (2005) and Şen (2010) found that culture compromises an essential position of language instruction and culture teaching has become more evident in EFL pedagogy when compared to previous periods. Additionally, in one of the rare studies, Atay (2005) revealed that the students of English Language Department possess the perception and understanding of culture and language association. On the other hand, they were found too far away from the practices of this integration in language classrooms. In contrast, in the study of Çalışkan (2009) majority of the students reflected positive attitudes towards culture learning and its incorporation to language teaching, materials, course books, and tasks. Apart from these studies, the investigations on the perception of Turkish ELT students are not as common as their counterpart in the rest of the world. It seems that not enough empirical research has been done regarding the perspective of Turkish language teachers and learners.

In summary, the literature review helped us to gain some background knowledge about the culture and language association in a descriptive way. In this part, it is aimed to display the teacher, student and material triangulation into the culture and language associations. The teachers and their cognition of the culture and its perception in the language classes have been cited. In addition, the learners' feelings, attitudes and perception of the culture have been described and it seems that culture apparently has direct relation with the language and instructional learning environment.

1.2. Significance of the study

Language and culture have long been viewed as important areas of research study and these two processes seem to be intertwined when people begin to socialize with each other intensively (Ochs, 1996). Additionally, language, culture and thoughts are assumed as three interrelated concepts that are bound to each other with strong ties. (Hall, 2013). The necessity of teaching culture in and through language teaching has been publicized and debated thoroughly over the last two hundred years. (Heidari, Ketabi & Zonoobi,



2014). At this point, the integration of culture and cultural components into language teaching and learning started to gain ground in the last decades and culture has captured the main interest of language pedagogy, as a consequence from the first day of the beginning of the class, culture is at the front. As Byram (1997) pointed out, cultural awareness should be integrated in foreign language education curricula so that learners can clarify their ideological point of view and contact with other people in a sensible and conscious way. Moreover, together with the necessity of gaining linguistic competence, the term cultural competence, aligned with communicative competence, gained ground in language pedagogy in that the relationship between language and culture is expressed vividly as “the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool” (Bennett, Bennett & Allen, 2003). Therefore, this study is conducted to add more insight into the field of research by evoking awareness and perception on the necessity of culture interference in language instructions in order to foster the intercultural understanding, behavioral change and knowledge levels of prospective EFL teachers.

To be more specific, the necessity to conduct such a culture and language association based study has become apparent in that it has the purposes to fill the gaps in the literature because of the fact that not much is known about the culture involvement in ELT departments in Turkey. Besides, the attitudinal culture perceptions of prospective EFL teachers as well as their understanding and awareness towards the target culture need to be emphasized.

1.3. Research questions

This study aims to demonstrate the attitudes of prospective EFL teachers on target culture, cultural components and its association with language instructions. Additionally, it is targeted to reveal possible relations of participants' birthplace, experience abroad, gender and the type of high school graduated with their attitudes towards the target culture learning association. The following research questions are addressed in the current study:

1. What is the attitudinal point of view of prospective EFL teachers towards culture, components of culture and its association with language learning?
2. Do gender, birthplace, experience abroad and type of high school graduated have any effects on ELT students' perception towards the targeted culture?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

A cross sectional survey design is adopted in this study as surveys are a good way of gathering information from participants about a specific topic. According to Brown and Rodgers (2002), “surveys are any procedures to gather and describe the characteristics, attitudes, views, opinions, and so forth of students, teachers, administrators or any other people who are important to a study. Surveys typically take the form of interviews or questionnaires or both” (p.142). Additionally, Creswell (2002) defined surveys as procedures to be applied to either a single sample or a whole population to depict their ideas, attitudes and opinions via a questionnaire to collect data. As an instrument, a questionnaire is used to reveal the participants' current attitudes and beliefs of culture and cultural issues as well as their self-awareness of culture and culture learning association.

2.2. Participants

The data is collected from 3rd and 4th year of 146 English language teaching department students at Dokuz Eylül University. Convenience sampling method is used for selecting the participants. The rationale behind the decision of the participants is that they are conveniently available during the period of gathering data for the study and they are thought to be the good examples of the research questions (Creswell, 2002). Additionally, 3rd and 4th year students are believed to have gone through the experience of the target language teaching and learning for some years, which might help researcher to gather data more profusely. The study consists of 83 third year students and 63 senior students from the same department consisting of 80 females and 66 males. The research site, Dokuz Eylül University, is a state university in Turkey and most of the participants possess almost the same socio economic status.

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

In order to conduct the study, a questionnaire is allocated to the participants to give away their traits and attitudes towards the culture, involvement of culture and its association with language learning. This questionnaire is developed by Önalın, (2004) at Middle East Technical University (METU) to measure the attitudes of ELT teachers towards the place of culture and culture teaching in language classrooms. Later, it is adapted by Çalışkan (2009) to improve the content validity of the questionnaire and to measure pre service



English Language Teachers' attitudes rather than teachers. The results are calculated in SPSS 18.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Science).

There are three fundamental sections in the questionnaire. The first part has 15 multiple-choice questions, each ending with an open-ended option to share their opinions about the target culture and language learning association. The open ended options are deliberately given to participants as they don't need to feel themselves confined to compulsory answers and write their ideas freely. In the following section, a 13 itemed 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) is given to participants and they are expected to rate each statement on the level of agreement/ disagreement depending on their own beliefs and perceptions. The last part has four questions related to the participants' demographic information including gender, birthplace, experience abroad and the type of high school they graduated from. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, consent forms were given to participants to fill in to ensure that they agreed to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

2.4. Data Analysis

For the analysis of data, statistical tests are performed via SPSS 18.0 (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*). First, Cronbach's Alpha is calculated to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, and it is found to be "0,869," which means that the test has high internal reliability. Second, the responses of participants to the multiple-choice test items and Likert-type scale items in the questionnaire are calculated through descriptive statistics. Additionally, one-way ANOVA and T-test are applied to see any statistically significant associations between participants' beliefs on culture integration in language education.

3. RESULTS

In this part, the analysis of prospective EFL teachers' responses to the questionnaire is documented in terms of frequency, percentages, means and statistical test results and discussed in the light of the relevant literature. As the questionnaire items differ from one another in terms of item format, the responses of students to each item are discussed one-by-one to shed a light on students' perceptions regarding the concept of culture, cultural awareness and its integration to language teaching. The results are divided into two parts. The first part comprises 15 multiple choice questions and the second one consists of a 13-itemed Likert scale questionnaire.

3.1. Multiple choice test results

In item 1, participants are asked to respond to whether cultural information should be integrated into ELT classroom or not. Based on their answers, if they select the option "No", they are asked to provide two reasons among five options and one open-ended option. It is revealed that 80, 1% (117) of the participants think that culture should be taught in ELT classroom whereas 19, 9 % (29) of them are of the opposite opinion. It is also determined that males who answered "Yes" consist of 29, 3 % (33) and females who thought the same account for 71, 7%. (84). When answers of "No" are scoped, 11 participants chose the option that "some issues could have negative effects on their own culture". On the other hand, 12 participants choose the option that "culture-specific information is inappropriate to the classroom environment". Additionally, 8 of them state that they do not feel comfortable with certain culture-based topics and 4 participants explain that some cultural information is not suitable to their language levels. The reason why 12 participants choose the answer 'No' is that particular cultural subjects have sensitive/controversial nature in local culture. There aren't any participants who state other options to show the opposition against "Turkish learners of English should be taught English/American culture".

In item 2, the way how participants value culture is investigated. It was found that 29, 5 % of participants preferred "Culture refers to the customs, traditions and institutions of a country" as the most significant aspect of culture. As the second most significant one, "community and relations aspect" statement took place. However; the least important one chosen by 12, 3 % percent of the participants was "Culture entails what people do at work, at home, in their free time and while they are entertained" The whole percentage is shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. The most significant aspect of culture

Aspects of culture	Percentage %
Customs, traditions and institutions	29,5
Community and relations	24,4
System Country	23,3
People's daily activities	18,5
Culture entails what people do at work, home and in their free time and while they are entertained"	12,3

In item 3, the participants are expected to put ten items in order according to their significance in learning and the position of culture is aimed to be revealed among other items. As far as the results are concerned, 49 participants (33, 6 %) regard “speaking” as the most important skill in learning a target language. This is followed by “vocabulary” (18, 5%) and “Accuracy” (14, 5 %). On the other hand, the participants’ position “culture” as number “9” in the ranking with the percentage of 14, 5 and it is followed by “pronunciation” (21, 2 %). Figure 1 below shows the ranking of culture in terms of its priority in learning a foreign language. This finding reveals that although the participants accept the idea that culture should be integrated into ELT classroom, they do not give it priority as it comes after the teaching of four basic skills, accuracy and grammar.

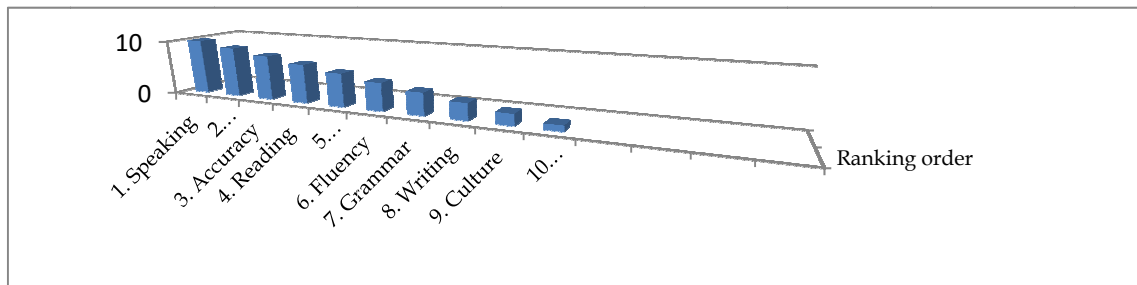


Figure1. The priority of culture in learning a foreign language

In item 4, the participants’ perception about the variety of information that culture should include is measured. Prospective teachers are given eleven options about the integration and variety of cultural information in language classes. The students are asked to choose three out of eleven. Hence, the majority of the students (103) are inclined to support that cultural information should include “daily lifestyles, food and clothes” in ELT classroom; this is followed by “communicative aspect” and “art” as second and third. The whole distribution is demonstrated in Figure 2.

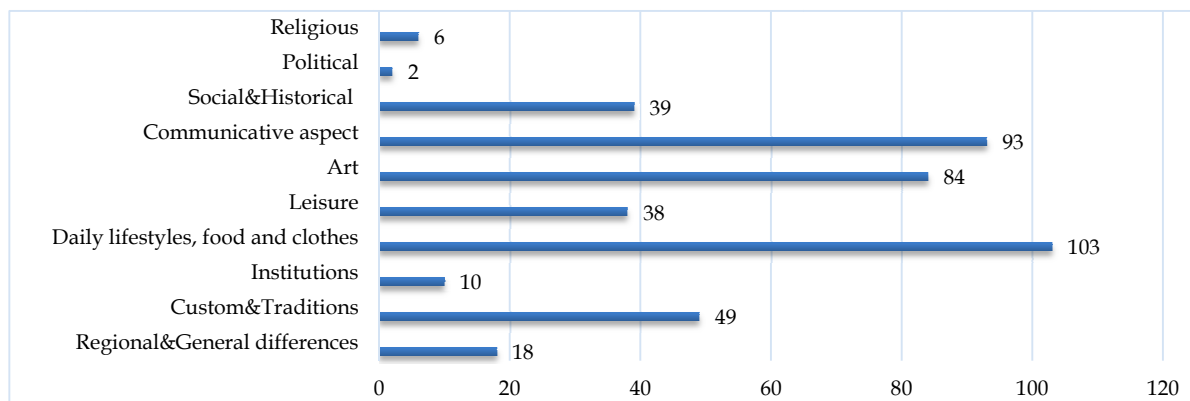


Figure 2. Frequency of responses for the elements of cultural information in the ELT classroom

Item 5 seeks to determine the appropriate level in which culture and cultural information should be embedded into language teaching. As Figure 3 obviously presents, the number of participants who think the “intermediate” level as the appropriate one is 63 with the percentage of (43,2%). Additionally, the level which they think is the second best stage is “does not matter” for 34 participants with 23, 3%. The whole illustration is shown in Figure 3. This finding indicates that in order to teach culture, students should be competent in English to a certain degree and this is possible at intermediate level according to the participants’ views.

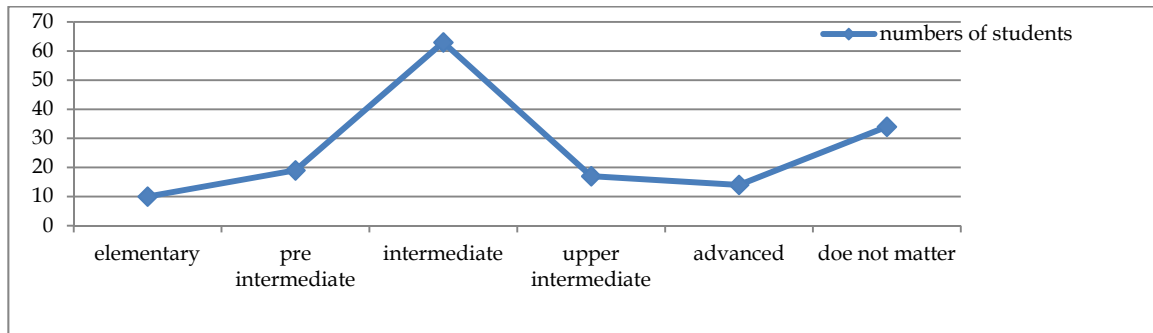


Figure 3. The distribution of the levels in which cultural information should be given

In item 6, the participants' reaction to cultural information in language learning is measured and they are asked to choose from "interested (positive), analytical, skeptical, rejected (negative), no reaction or other reason". According to the results, it is publicized that 47, 3 % of students (69) react positively to cultural embellishment into the language learning and 45,9 % of them (67) are found analytical. The rest of the percentage is given in Figure 4.

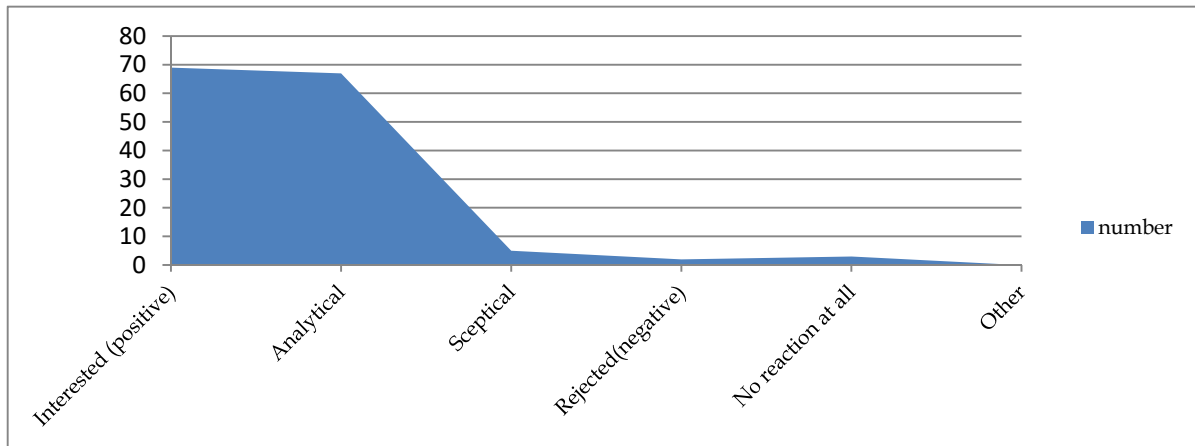


Figure 4. The reaction of participants to cultural information

In item "7, the participants are anticipated to provide a "Yes/No" answer about the inclusion of cultural elements in language learning. According to the findings, it is clearly seen that 100 of the participants (68,5 % percent), respond "Yes" and think that cultural elements should be included in language learning. On the other side; 46 participants (31, 5 %) consider quite the opposite. Moreover; the participants with the responses "No" are asked to put forward the possible reasons of their preferences and it is found out that 44 out of 46 students (99 % percent) share the belief that culture is not necessary for themselves.

In item 8, the participants are asked to put forward three appropriate material/task types with the help of which cultural elements should be introduced to them. As it is clearly seen in Table 2, the majority of the participants (110), with the percentage of 79%, prefer culture to be introduced via "video films and documentaries". This is followed by "cultural experience, novels and short stories, pictures and posters, daily used articles, newspapers and magazines". Amazingly, "course books", with a small number of participants (15), is considered to be least preferable by the participants in the ranking order.



Table 2. The ranking of culture integrated materials and tasks in language learning

Kinds of materials/tasks	Frequency
Video films & documentaries	110
Cultural experiences	74
Novels and short stories	73
Pictures and posters	68
Daily used articles	50
Newspapers and magazines	43
Course books	15

In item 9, students are asked the question of whether there are any disadvantages of learning the target culture in EFL classes and they are expected to provide an answer of “ Yes/ No”. Additionally, the participants who preferred “Yes” are also asked to state two reasons among 6 options, one with an open-ended item. It is demonstrated that 73 participants (50%) respond “No” by emphasizing that there is no disadvantage. On the other hand, the remaining 73 participants (50% percent) share the opinion that learning culture in language classes has disadvantages and drawbacks. For the analysis of reasons provided by the remaining half, as seen in Figure 4, it is revealed that more than half of the students (25 out of 73 students) choose “*over-sympathy to US/UK culture*” which is the most frequently chosen option as a disadvantage. This is followed by “*cultural assimilation*” and “*linguistic & cultural imperialism*”.

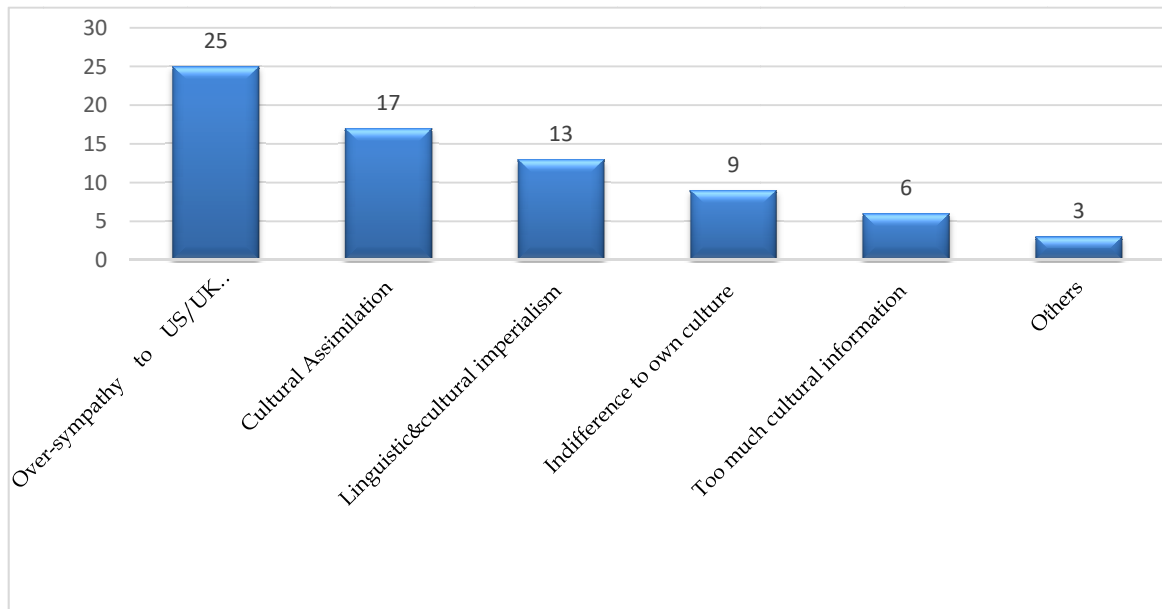


Figure 5. Frequency of responses regarding the disadvantages of learning culture in EFL classes

Item 10 seeks for the responses to the question whether learning cultural information in EFL classes is advantageous or not and if their answer is “Yes”, participants are asked to choose two appropriate options among 6 items the last one of which is open-ended. Majority of the students (81%) are of the opinion that culture brings “*global understanding*” and 64% of them reconcile on the fact that cultural information is useful for “*respect to different cultures*”. The variance is indicated in the Figure 6.

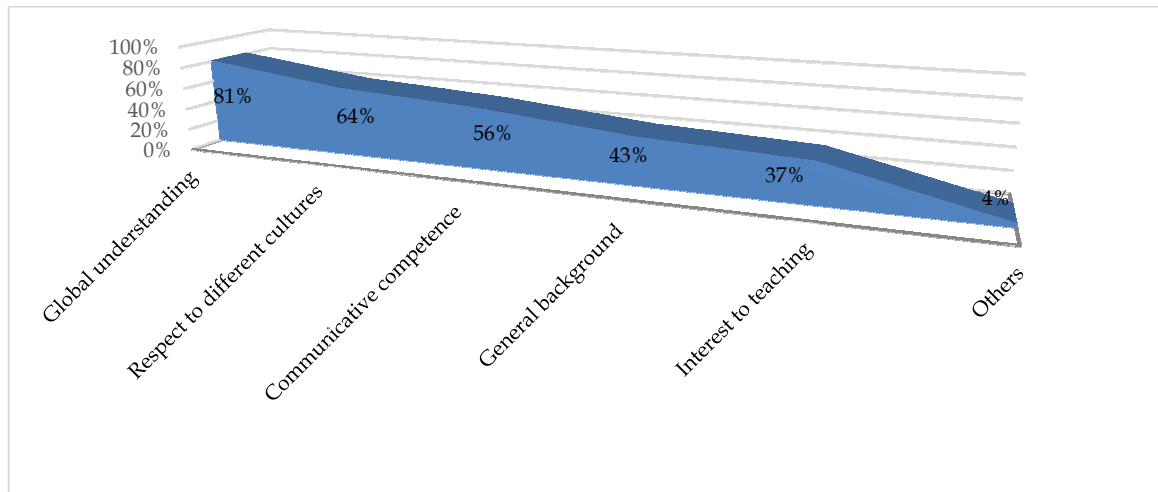


Figure 6. Advantages of learning cultural information in EFL classes

In item 11, the participants are asked the question of whether they experience any difficulties in learning the cultural content of their textbooks or texts and they are also asked to state two problems that they encounter while learning culture. According to the statistical outcome, 86 participants (59 %) feel that they have no challenges in learning the cultural content of text/books. On the other side, 60 participants (41 %) find it difficult to grasp some aspects of American/British culture. They also clarify that that their course books do not include any help for learning target culture and there is too much information on American/British culture and they are not so knowledgeable about American/British culture.

Item 12 aims to reveal the need of supplementary materials regarding cultural information during language learning process and it is reported that they need supplementary materials including cultural information during their language learning process. The number of the students and their preferences of supplementary materials are given in Figure 7. This finding makes it clear that authentic materials, pictures of cultural elements and real objects are very important in teaching a foreign language and just giving explanations are not beneficial and practical in effective teaching.

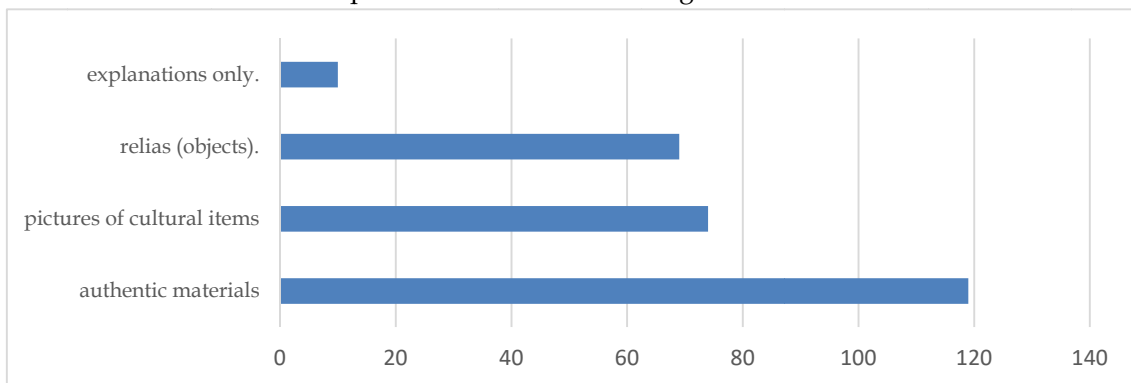


Figure 7. The variety of supplementary materials

In item13, the participants are expected to provide answers about the aim of presenting cultural information in language learning and they are asked to choose among six options. 54, 1 % of the participants were of the opinion that the aim of presenting cultural information should be "developing an awareness of other cultures and people" whereas only 2,7 % of the whole participants think that the aim should be the "comparison between own and US/UK culture". Table 3 below illustrates a detailed description of the percentages of the participants' responses of the aims. This finding highlights the fact that developing cultural and intercultural awareness are very important for the understanding of the target language as a whole.

Table 3. The main aim of presenting cultural information in language learning



Items	Frequency	Percent
Developing an awareness of other cultures and people	79	54
More successful communication	27	18,5
Intellectual development	23	15,8
Insight into one's own culture	8	5,5
Familiarization with US /UK culture	5	3,4
Comparison between own and US/UK culture	4	2,7

In item 14, the role of the teacher in increasing participants' awareness of the target culture is measured and two appropriate options are expected to be marked. According to the results, the most expected teachers' role to increase cultural awareness is to "present the differences and similarities between their own culture and the target culture" which is followed by the role of "encouraging students to respect the target culture". On the other hand, the role, which is "to arouse interest and promote target culture", is ranked as third. From these findings it can be concluded that arousing interest in the target culture is of least importance for the prospective teachers. However; understanding and respecting the target culture, finding the differences and similarities between the two cultures seem to be crucial for them. Details are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers' role in increasing cultural awareness

Items	Frequencies
Present the differences and similarities between my culture and the target culture	95
Encourages me to respect the target culture.	72
Arouses interest and promotes target culture.	69
Gives personal experiences along with cultural information.	37
Provides me with cultural information only when I need it.	19

In item 15, participants are asked whether cultural information should be assessed or not and they are required to choose an appropriate option explaining their reasons of preference. The results of the analysis reveal that 67 out of 146 participants (45, 9%) respond "Yes", which means that more than half the participants react positively to the cultural information assessment in language learning process. Quite the opposite, 79 students (54, 1%) share the idea that cultural information should not be assessed.

3.2. The Analysis of Participants' Responses to Scale Items

The last part of the scale comprises of a typical Likert Scale questionnaire, which aims to pose 13 statements to the participants and ask them to rate these statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The purpose of this questionnaire is to gauge the participants' inclination towards culture and the adaptation of it into real language settings. It is also aimed to consolidate the findings that are gathered from multiple-choice test in the 1st part of the scale. Table 5 demonstrates the average mean scores of participants.

Table 5. The Likert Scale

No.	Items	Means	SD
1	EFL teachers should have culture teaching objectives to linguistic goals.	3,95	,908
2	Learning a foreign culture harms the native culture.	1,82	1,026
3	I should learn about target culture.	4,23	,865
4	EFL teachers should focus only on the teaching of language, not culture.	1,81	1,433
5	Cultural content is an element of the foreign language teaching curriculum.	4,04	,873
6	EFL content should exclude English/ American culture.	2,67	1,254
7	Learning cultural components explicitly fosters our proficiency in the language.	3,84	,844
8	EFL teachers should be well equipped with cultural patterns of the language they teach.	4,13	,865
9	English can be taught without reference to British/ American culture.	2,49	1,146
10	Learning the cultural elements of the target language should be a must for the learners.	3,48	1,032
11	I find it unnecessary to learn the British/ American culture.	1,93	,987
12	I feel uncomfortable when a question on foreign language culture is asked in the classroom.	2,06	1,048
13	Learning British/ American history helps us improve our language skills.	3,74	1,029



Of all the items illustrated above in the Likert questionnaire, it is deduced that item 3 holds remarkably high average score “4.23”, which states “I should learn about target culture”. This is a satisfying example of the fact that participants are inclined to accept the gravity of culture in learning the target language. What is more, item 8 “EFL teachers should be well equipped with cultural patterns of the language they teach” and item 5 “Cultural content is an element of the foreign language teaching curriculum” are reported as the following highest average scores.

On the other hand, items 4 and 2 “EFL teachers should focus only on the teaching of language, not culture” and “learning foreign culture harms the native culture” are found to have the lowest mean scores. These two statements are followed by item 11 which states “I find it unnecessary to learn the British/American culture”. Students are reconciled that culture with its all patterns is an inevitable part of learning a foreign language. Students seem to have developed positive perspective towards integrating culture into language teaching and learning. It seems clear that the positively stated items in the questionnaire surpass the negative attitude statements, which is a sign that participants build up respectively a welcoming approach towards culture, its integrative elements and cultural inclination of teaching language in formal classes.

3.3. Demographic Information Results

In terms of demographic information, Table 6 demonstrates the frequency and percentages of participants based on the demographic information (i.e. gender, birthplace, experience abroad, and the type of high school they graduated from) obtained from their responses to four questions in the survey.

Table 6 Demographic Information Results

	N	%
Gender		
Female	101	69,2
Male	45	30,8
Birthplace		
Aegean	68	46,6
Central Anatolia	8	5,5
Black Sea	5	3,4
Marmara	21	14,4
Mediterranean	13	8,9
Southern East Anatolia	18	12,3
East Anatolia	9	6,2
Other than Turkey	4	2,7
Experience Abroad		
Yes	57	39,0
No	89	61,0
High school		
Anatolian High School	98	67,1
Anatolian Teacher High School	1	,7
Regular	8	5,5
Private	4	2,7
Intensive Foreign language Science High School	31	21,2
Other	1	,7
	3	2,1

In order to reveal the prospective importance and associations of these demographic features on students’ responses to the questionnaire, independent sample T-Test is conducted. Table 7 demonstrates the statistical test results.

Table 7. Independent T-test

		N	Mean	s.d	t	P
Gender	Male	45	3,1043	,32311	-,189	,943
	Female	101	3,0937	,30877		
Experience Abroad	Yes	57	3,1457	,32333	1,519	,848
	No	89	3,0657	,30252		



As it is clearly demonstrated in Table 7, the findings of the study put forth no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of students towards culture and its integration into classroom in terms of demographic variables such as gender and experience abroad.

In order for perceiving whether there are any statistically significant differences between each of these demographic features and the students' responses to the questionnaire, one-way Anova is conducted. Table 8 demonstrates that the findings of the study carry no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of students towards culture and its integration into classroom in terms of demographic variables such as high school and birthplace.

Table 8 Anova test

High School	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	,366	6	,061	,616	,717
Within Groups	13,765	139	,099		
Total	14,131	145			
Birthplace					
Between Groups	,402	7	,057	,578	,773
Within Groups	13,728	138	,099		
Total	14,131	145			

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this research study is to reveal the attitudes of prospective EFL teachers at the English Language Teaching Department towards culture, cultural components and the association of culture with language instructions. Their opinions on the place of culture elements in the EFL setting are analyzed and various insights are provided into their attitudes about the most significant aspects of culture, the priority of culture in learning a foreign language, the elements of cultural information and the levels in which cultural information should be given the students. Besides, their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of learning culture in EFL classes, the variety of supplementary materials and the teachers' role in increasing cultural awareness are asked to the prospective EFL teachers respectively.

The initial conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that a significant amount of the participants reconcile on the collaboration of culture in language teaching together with other skills and teaching methods, and this preference holds a prominent position in the targeted area. Moreover, participants positively favor and react against the cultural knowledge that they are presented with the assistance of teachers and course book materials. This puts forward the fact that learning a second or a foreign language should not be separated from its moral and traditional context. That also coincides with Osborn (2006) who states that language education is closely interrelated with other variables such as values, culture, customs and traditions of the community that the target language belongs to. The study also shares a similar finding with Önalın (2005) and Şen (2010) who claim that culture teaching gains ground and strengthens its position in EFL pedagogy. Students' inclination gives us the clue that the language should be taught not free from cultural knowledge. Furthermore, what is found holds the same perspective with Byram (1988) who indicates that it is impossible for any language to function without its context. In that case, thinking a language separate from any cultural ties is not a plausible idea. Besides, this current finding shows accordance with the findings of the previous studies conducted by Önalın (2004), Çalışkan (2009) and Belli (2018) which highlight that majority of the ELT students are in the favor of reflecting positive attitudes towards learning culture and its integration into language learning and teaching. Culture and cultural elements seem to have been welcomed in these previous studies by a great majority of the participants. On the other hand, it poles apart with the study of Atay (2005), who views the culture and language association as being far away from the practice. However; the practice of culture integration into language environment is thought to be implemented for the majority of the participants in this study. The current study underlines the fact that the textbook by itself is insufficient to supply the cultural integration into language education, more and more audio visual materials should be included into the learning process. This may stem from the technology tendencies of the students as they mostly learn via socio technological ways. This may lead to another research topic to be discussed on.

For many scholars culture and language are interwoven. To illustrate, Kramsch (2004) indicates that the integration of culture and cultural components into a foreign language teaching environment and curricula is regarded as a fixation and it should take place almost in all communities. The current study holds the same belief that a very remarkable number of the participants reconcile on such integration into



the language teaching, starting from curriculum to textbooks and activities. This may stem from the necessity of culture in learning a language in formal context. It shows harmony with the study of Catana (2014) who finds that students seem to be motivated to learn intercultural principles of the language with the integration of cultural materials into language teaching. On the other hand, a relatively small number of participants think that culture is unnecessary and unimportant to be implemented into the classroom. This is the finding that supports Galeano & Torres, (2014) in whose study pre-service students do not find it necessary to teach cultural competence in the language classroom.

Another significant conclusion to be deduced from the study is the significance of intercultural competence in language learning. The global understanding and perception of the culture in a more international way is the main concern of the learners and a similar conclusion is reached in the study of Nugent (2015), who suggests that curriculum designers need to take intercultural competence as a prior concern if they want to create powerful classroom atmosphere to motivate their students. It is also underpinned in the current study that communicative competence can be boosted up with such a curriculum change and the perception of the students towards diversities may alter positively. Moreover, this finding goes hand in hand with the study of Sharifian (2018) who concludes that ELT curricula should focus on developing meta-cultural competence in learners and it should expose learners to the sociocultural reality and diversity that characterizes the English language today. Such awareness may lead to an increase of building rapport with other people from unique cultural values, beliefs and attitudes. The highly remarkable numbers of ELT prospective teachers welcome the culture involvement into language learning terrain with a view of widening their world. Additionally, they claim that cultural involvement increases their awareness of intercultural communicative competence.

The participants' demographic variables seem to have no statistically meaningful association with the concept of culture. The way how they perceive culture shows no distinctive features depending on their individual differences. This might stem from the perception of the students about language teaching and idealizing the learning process as a holistic social phenomenon, which is earlier highlighted by Hymes (1974). The curriculum designers are expected to react initially to the situation in that the curriculum should have contexts embellished to develop the perception of cultural expectations, behaviors, knowledge, and language use. Such a transformation of formal language teaching may end up with reaching to the up-to-date language and the enhancement of the communicative competence. In this respect, the current needs and expectations of language learners are required to be taken into account by the language teachers while planning and constructing the inside classroom flow with essential language tools to facilitate the process of language and culture learning (Allwright, 1981).

To sum up, the profound significance of learning a language being not free from target culture seems to have a growing recognition in language learning and teaching terrains. In this study, it is aimed to reflect the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the target culture. The outcomes of the study lead us to the recommendation that culture, with its all varieties and richness, will be a torch with the help of which the learners can easily walk through the darkness of unknown hidden paths of communication. Being knowledgeable in the target culture will help them feel in a new identity so that a better perception of the global world becomes apparent.

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