Review Article

The Role of Cultural Awareness in the EFL Classroom[1]

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Abstract

Language learning involves four skills named as reading, listening, writing, and speaking for learners to practice both in and outside the classroom. Interaction in the class may be limited to the backgrounds and common values of its members, but once learners are outside the class, pragmatic skills are required to engage in social and cultural aspects. This study aims to examine the qualitative and quantitative studies about cultural awareness in EFL classrooms in a systematic way. Therefore, the meta-synthesis procedure is used as a research design. After applying four specified criteria, 50 studies about cultural and intercultural awareness in EFL classrooms were included to meet the aim of this meta-synthesis. There are two main themes called *foundations* and *acquirements* that emerged as a result of the analysis of the studies about cultural and intercultural awareness. Foundations of cultural awareness have four codes named *lesson components, interaction, dynamic and personal connection.* Furthermore, acquirements of cultural awareness have four codes as *conversational competency, cognitive competency, cultural competency,* and *global involvement.*

Keywords: *Intercultural awareness, English as a foreign language, multicultural education, qualitative research*

İngilizce Sınıflarında Kültürel Farkındalığın Rolü

Öz

Dil öğrenimi öğrencilerin hem sınıf içi hem de sınıf dışında pratik yapmaları için okuma, dinleme, yazma ve konuşma olmak üzere dört beceri içerir. Sınıf içi iletişim bireylerin geçmişleri ve ortak değerleriyle sınırlanmış olabilir, ancak öğrenciler sınıf dışına çıktıklarında, pragmatik becerilerinin sosyal ve kültürel özelliklerle bütünleşmesi gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma yabancı veya ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenimi sınıflarında kültürel farkındalık üzerine yapılmış nicel ve nitel araştırmaları sistematik açıdan incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu yüzden, araştırma yöntemi olarak meta-sentez yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu amacı karşılamak üzere İngilizce derslerinde kültürel ve kültürlerarası farkındalıkla ilgili 50 araştırma, belirlenmiş dört kriterden sonra bu meta-senteze dahil edilmiştir. Kültürel ve kültürlerarası farkındalık araştırmalarının analizinin sonucunda *temeller* ve *edinimler* olmak üzere iki ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Kültürel farkındalığın temelleri *ders bileşenleri, etkileşim, dinamik ve kişisel bağlantı* olmak üzere dört koda sahiptir. Ayrıca, kültürel farkındalığın edinimleri *konuşma yeterliği, bilişsel yeterlik, kültürel yeterlik* ve *küresel ilgi* olmak üzere dört koda sahiptir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Kültürlerarası farkındalık, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, çok kültürlü eğitim, nitel araştırma*

Introduction

Collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity are listed as important four C's in 21st-century teaching classrooms (National Education Association, 2010). There is a constant change in knowledge and students need to be prepared for this change with learning these crucial C's. These can be achieved by knowing others, accepting, and respecting their culture while developing awareness. English language learning as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) brings along the familiarization with the culture of another community or country. While second language learners are usually within the environment of their target language, foreign language learners train themselves to be proficient in the target language settings. Whether second or foreign, language learning requires an understanding of cultural elements. Nowadays with the use of technology and rapid globalization, culture has become an essential part of language classrooms, and learners are expected to converse through cultures and beyond borders (Byram, 1997a). Learning a language through intercultural understanding means "the awareness and acceptance of one's own world and the perception and acceptance of the foreign world." (Neuner, 2003, p.49). Therefore, interaction in the language classrooms becomes cross or intercultural as it inevitably includes an integration of the target culture and native cultures of any individual. Knowing culture undergoes a process of knowing differences, similarities, or uniqueness of any cultural element which discloses itself as cultural awareness.

Getting to know cultures is not an easy task for the language learner. It does not happen rapidly over studying a single coursebook, doing repetitive tasks, or getting limited opportunities of communication with target language speakers, especially during foreign language learning. Studies have shown that cultural awareness needs to be integrated into teacher education (Atay, 2005; Byram, 2012; Hişmanoğlu, 2013), curriculum and coursebook designs need to be done accordingly (Beresova, 2015; McConachy, 2008; Lo Bianco, Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Pulverness & Tomlinson, 2013), and students should be in a conscious process of growth in their target language (Agudelo, 2007; Prodromou, 1992; Dasli, 2011; Ware & Kramsch, 2005).

Literature Review

Four language skills are the main essentials of a language classroom and we also construct a healthy communication with them outside the classroom. Learners need to go beyond familiar

elements like backgrounds and values of peers and need pragmatic skills to be in cultural interaction. Culture is regarded as the fifth skill of the language class reminding itself through interactions that can be troubling even for a proficient language speaker (Kramsch, 1993). Therefore, formal teaching of culture within the language classroom might be helpful for learners. Byram (1986) states that culture teaching introduces students to the lifestyles of the places that target language is spoken. Getting to know target language culture helps feeling comfortable in authentic situations when learners step out into the target language world. Learning a foreign language pushes the students out of their comfort zone and makes them gain new perspectives (Byram, 1988). Integrating cultural knowledge with language skills helps learners become better interactors. Cultural adaptation into the target language is crucial for second language learners, and the culture shock experienced by these learners should be regarded as a positive aspect in the way to raise cultural awareness (Irving, 1984). On the other hand, foreign language learners are less likely to find themselves in a culturally diverse environment as much of the practice happens in the classroom. Yet, materials and interactions can be designed to increase exposure to raise awareness.

Kramsch (1995) emphasizes the importance of culture by indicating "Teaching culture means, therefore, teaching not only how things are and have been, but how they could have been or how else they could be" (p.85). Interactions enriched in cultural contexts present invisible communication elements such as interlocutors' behaviors, emotions, and speech acts. With the age of technology and globalization, the boundaries of different cultures have become even more blurred. Learners outreach various sorts of media to engage in cultural interaction. Kramsch (2014) highlights that the styles and conditions in which foreign languages are taught have shifted and the methods instructors used for teaching cultural norms are now about to be outdated. Local cultures of the learners are now undeniably influencing the flow of interaction. Moving from your own country to another for business, study or other reasons, and being multicultural make culture rather unfit to clarify manners and acts (Kramsch, 2011). Not focusing on one culture but putting the perspectives of many into communication has become the key point in culture teaching and cultural communication in ESL / EFL classrooms. Being considerate towards other cultures, knowing their lifestyles no matter how different they are from yours is also crucial in recognizing and enriching your own culture (Byram, Lloyd & Schneider, 1995). The importance of understanding other cultures puts forward the idea of intercultural (communicative) competence and cultural awareness (Byram, Holmes & Savvides, 2013). According to Irving (1984), people are likely to overlook how their cultures

affect their own values; however, educators should realize the importance of their native culture before working with the learners to make them culturally attentive. Only then, speakers can understand and get into a compromise in case of any misunderstandings, leaving any kind of judgments behind.

Byram (1989) merges the concepts of language awareness and cultural awareness. He indicates that when language as a form involving competences is combined with its sociocultural character, it brings out the concept of language awareness. Then, language is connected to culture by adding elements of the students' native languages or cultures and by confronting such sociocultural factors with the values of target language speakers. Therefore he forms a model of intercultural communicative competence by proposing the concepts of *saviors*: skills (*savoir comprendre*), knowledge *(savoir être),* education (*savoir s'engager*), attitudes (*savoir être*), and skills *(savoir apprendre/faire)*. Byram (1997b) explains the model by stating that "... it demonstrates how closely the two phrases, 'cultural awareness' and 'language awareness', are related, and more importantly because it demonstrates that language and culture cannot be treated separately in the discussion of language teaching theory and practice." (p.51). People might be expected to form a connection between their social identity and interacting speakers' identity, and at the same time be a negotiator among cultures in diversity (Byram, 1997a). He emphasizes this issue as "It is this function of establishing relationships, managing dysfunctions and mediating which distinguishes an 'intercultural speaker', and makes them different from a native speaker." (p.38). Language speakers with the idea of awareness can engage in well-formed conversations with proper meaning and negotiation.

The Emphasis of Cultural Awareness in the European Framework

The idea that language education needs to integrate cultures has emerged itself in the curriculums, plans, materials designed in many countries. Kramsch (2011) states that "The adjective 'intercultural' has been applied to competences, speakers, learning, pedagogy, stances." (p.308). She also indicates that the aim of intercultural communication is to ease the interaction in the European Union and countries support each other within Europe. Adopting the intercultural way of language teaching has helped to reach out to many learners and with cultural awareness; their identities have not been disregarded. That is one of the language learning and teaching aspects that the Council of Europe included in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in 2001. Having been used as a source to

develop and design nationwide curriculums in language teaching by European countries and countries such as Mexico, Canada and Japan, CEFR states that "It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively." (Council of Europe, 2001, p.1). To promote culturally enriched language learning, the terms plurilingualism and pluriculturalism were introduced and expanded as the repertoires needed while developing linguistic and cultural communication (Council of Europe, 2018). Both of these terms imply that language learning has an active nature and plurilingualism involves participating in the language starting from one's own social circle and expanding that involvement into the society. As attitudes beyond linguistic skills take part in communication such as gestures, tones, body language, or other interaction mediators like understanding social and cultural cues, the learner develops pluricultural awareness and does not just practice the four skills of language classroom.

Since its launch, CEFR has been used in thirty languages not specifically restricted to the European area, and European organizations have been using its six common reference levels in language measurement (Little, 2012). Little (2012) also indicates that one of the aims of CEFR is to raise intercultural and pluricultural awareness and help learners monitor their own competences while learning languages. Within the perspective of CEFR, language learners are regarded as 'social agents' who are active both in language learning and contributing to their community to develop language awareness (Council of Europe, 2001). CEFR adopts an action-oriented approach to guide the social agents, so that the learners would be able to act within their social environment through their plurilingual and pluricultural competences. Moreover, general and communicative language competences are emphasized as the essentials to improve this social agency. Therefore, while students become socially and linguistically attentive participants of language environments with the help of intercultural awareness, they can organize their own language learning process.

In CEFR, the learner in a cultural environment is culturally aware and can construct cooperative skills. "Seeing learners as plurilingual, pluricultural beings means allowing them to use all their linguistic resources when necessary, encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures." (Council of Europe, 2018, p.27). Learners have social and cultural skills that help them reconcile through cultural distinctions within their own community or across multiple regions. North and Piccardo (2017) describe cultural

mediation of CEFR as an aspect happening for a language or for many languages along with an inclusion of cultural differences of communities, and social mediation as a bridge between speakers who would face difficulties during interactions. Through the guidance of CEFR on social and cultural use of language, language materials and syllabi are designed with the intention to improve pluricultural and plurilingual competences. Moreover, CEFR has become influential in curriculum design and teaching perspectives (Byram & Parmenter, 2012) such as valuing students' social cultural backgrounds and organizing authentic materials to promote pluriculturalism and plurilingualism. In addition to taking learners' cultural diversities into consideration, teachers have become aware of arranging tasks and putting more action oriented approach into language planning. Adequate education should be delivered to teachers so that plurilingualism and pluriculturalism values of CEFR can be applied accurately (Diez-Bedmar & Byram, 2019) . Hence, every individual in the classroom can be a part of a thorough CEFR cycle when appropriate design and teaching which address the needs, levels and background of the learners are done.

Studies on Cultural Awareness

How cultural awareness affects language teaching or how much the learners are really aware of the culture is among the current issues of foreign or second language teaching. Beyond personal concerns, the design and planning of materials are among the issues of culture-related discussions. Beresova (2015) argues that using authentic materials improves the intercultural understandings of English language learners. Through the principles of CEFR in enhancing cultural awareness, authentic materials act as a connection to cultures of the language being learned or even to the international cultures. It is stated that by using such materials in the class, educators may also get a chance to actively participate in the material arrangement and monitor their students (Beresova, 2015). Agudelo (2007) states that communicative language teaching activities ease the dialogue to improve intercultural communication. Engaging in intercultural communication consisting of national and international values is a great way to develop awareness. In his study, prospective language teachers watched language classes as a group, conducted interviews, and made lesson plans with cultural integration. Having intercultural values in lesson material makes students realize both their native culture and other cultures (Agudelo, 2007).

Sometimes, students' already existing perspectives affect the attitude toward the language being learned. These perspectives, however, are prone to change with the influence of teachers or materials. In a survey about the cultural awareness of language teachers in Greece, Prodromou (1992) states that students think EFL teachers should be bicultural. Students emphasized that teachers should be competent both in native and target languages and cultures. In a study conducted with university students in target language environment, İşcan, Karagöz, and Konyar (2017) declare the importance of knowing the values of target culture while learning a language. It is pointed out that when students are in the target language environment, they want an introduction to the cultural elements and teacher support as earlier as possible. However, through critical cultural awareness, they want to evaluate aspects of their own culture and target culture so as not to feel assimilated. To lessen the sense of being belittled compared to target language culture, recognizing your own culture, and comparing and feeling empathetic towards other cultures is essential in intercultural awareness (Byram et al., 2013). It is important that while teaching culture, teachers should give the students a sense of trust by referring to students' cultures occasionally so that they can participate more. Therefore teacher education and development in terms of cultural awareness are important steps in pre and in-service teaching.

Prodromou (1992) indicates that teachers need to adopt a learner-based approach to use dynamic activities to improve cultural understanding. In Murray and Bolinger's (2001) research, activities such as e-mail interactions with the speakers of the target language, interviewing people from target cultures, video projects and internet research helped students get to know target language cultures and compare them with the values of their own to reach intercultural awareness. The design and nature of materials are also important. McConachy (2008) stresses the importance of designing culturally enhancing language coursebooks. He states that educators need to improve their own awareness and contribute to the flow of communicative activities to go beyond what is presented in the books. "In this case, the aim is not to elicit some kind of predetermined 'correct' answer but rather to develop meta-awareness concerning the fact that sociocultural context is important in language use." (McConachy, 2008, p.124). Thus, students need to understand this sociocultural context to communicate effectively as well that is not given in the course books. If some activities with a good potential for discussion go unnoticed during class time, students may feel alienated or sense a lack of interest which would end up failing to promote cultural awareness. According to Lo Bianco, Crozet, and Liddicoat (1999), language teachers can promote students to interact and ask

questions about the context and the language used while discussing both written or oral texts in the target language in order to take both cultural and the personal variables into consideration). Pushing the borders of coursebook design by directing questions and bringing in more authentic materials makes teachers' jobs easier in raising cultural awareness (Pulverness & Tomlinson, 2013). For that reason, it is one of the tasks of the language teacher to enrich what is presented as the classroom material.

Atay (2005) highlights the importance of educating teachers on cultural awareness and states that pre-service teachers are aware of the importance of culture in language teaching, yet most of them feel inadequate in the amount of information they have and they are unsure about how they are going to transfer cultural skills to the students. While Atay (2005) proposes that teachers should improve reading and involve in dialogues on culture, Kambutu and Nganga (2008) argue that visiting foreign cultures and spending time in that environment definitely contribute to cultural awareness and remove any existing prejudices. Even when teachers do not have a chance to travel to other cultures, they should look for engagement in the target language culture through self-education. Byram (2012) emphasizes the importance of language and culture education and citizenship education. He states that "Combining these two perspectives ensures that the 'here' is not just 'our community and country' but intercultural, and that the focus is on language and culture learning for 'now', and not just for some future application in the so-called real world." (Byram, 2012, p.11). The essential aspect of learning about intercultural values is researching them and engaging through different mediations even when there is no proximity.

Cultural awareness becomes an inevitable part of the English learning process (Byram 1997a; Byram, 2012; Kramsch, 2011). There are many studies emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness in EFL / ESL classrooms (Atay, 2005; Agudelo, 2007; İşcan, Karagöz & Konyar, 2017) and offer classroom applications for teachers (McConachy, 2008; Prodromou, 1992; Pulverness & Tomlinson, 2013). This study aims to examine both qualitative and quantitative studies about cultural awareness in EFL classrooms in a systematic way. Therefore, it is intended to gather influential and efficient practices and create a guide for EFL teachers.

Methodology

Research Design and Research Process

This study aims to examine the qualitative and quantitative studies about cultural awareness in EFL / ESL classrooms in a systematic way. Therefore, the meta-synthesis procedure is used as a research design (Lachal, Revah- Levy, Orri & Moro, 2017). Meta-synthesis is defined as the gathering of a group of studies to understand the vital components of a particular subject and present these studies with original review results by stating new conceptualizations (Schreiber, Crooks & Stern, 1997). This technique helps the researchers to get information from different studies and discover a particular topic from different points of view. Thus, it affords assistance to develop recommendations (Tong, Flemming, McInnes, Oliver & Craig, 2012).

Electronic search is conducted with the following databases; EBSCO, Eric, Sagepub, Scopus, Proquest, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, and Jstor. The keywords as (inter)cultural awareness & ELT & EFL", "awareness & ELT", "(inter)cultural awareness & ELT & EFL & implementation & application" were used during the search process. The words of "cultural awareness" and "intercultural awareness" were used for each combination not to miss any related study which can be included in this review. Furthermore, four criteria are identified for deciding on the studies. According to these criteria;

> *Criteria 1:* Studies related to the cultural and intercultural awareness published in and after 2002, since the Common European Framework (CEFR) which contains cultural awareness issues was published in 2002,
>
> *Criteria 2:* Studies that are published in peer-reviewed journals,
>
> *Criteria 3:* Studies written in English or Turkish languages,
>
> *Criteria 4:* Studies including cultural/ multicultural awareness issues in EFL classrooms are included in this study.

After searching stated databases, the acquired studies are included by applying the specified criteria indicated above. As a result of adopting the relevant key terms, 19300 studies were found about cultural and intercultural awareness in EFL / ESL classrooms. Thereafter, 50 studies were found in total by restricting the studies according to the relevant years (criteria 1), restricting language (criteria 2), including studies published in peer-reviewed journals (criteria

3), and considering the aim of the study (criteria 4). Therefore, 50 studies are included in this meta-synthesis about the cultural and intercultural awareness of EFL classrooms.

Each article is read by the researchers in the beginning. Afterwards, every researcher creates her own codes and themes. These themes and codes are discussed and finalized after reaching a consensus. Codes are the short phrases that are assigned to explain and summarize the language-based data (Saldana, 2008). After the coding process, patterns of codes are considered and these repetitive patterns are created the 'theme' for the recurring issue. However, there are some differences and variations occur under the same theme but these differences are not the patterns that can create a theme or subtheme during the data analysis. Therefore, these variations are indicated under the related theme as codes.

Trustworthiness and Transferability

Triangulation process in qualitative research provides a deeper understanding of the phenomena and paves the way for handling the data from different perspectives. There are four types of triangulation; methods triangulation, triangulation of sources, analyst triangulation and theory/ perspective triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Analyst triangulation method was used to employ the validity of the data in this research. This process is conducted by two academics from the Faculty of Education. 25 selected studies shared with each academic and their own themes and codes were taken into consideration. Suggestions about themes and codes of the data were evaluated and the consensus was reached (Creswell, 1998). Periodical help from the academics were received during the analysis to provide trustworthiness. Moreover, brief explanations about each theme and code were given in the result section to ensure transferability.

Results

This study aims to prepare a guide for EFL / ESL teachers to develop more effective practices to develop cultural awareness in their classrooms. There are 50 studies that included cultural and intercultural awareness in EFL classrooms in this meta-synthesis in order to meet this aim after applying the specified criteria stated in the previous section. In this section, themes and general information about the studies included in this meta-synthesis are given in a systematic

way. Table 1 shows information such as authors, year, research design, research type, and keywords of the included studies about cultural and intercultural awareness in EFL classrooms.

Table 1

Summary of the Studies Included in Meta-synthesis

Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Research Type	Keyword(s)
Aguilar	2008	Descriptive	Deductive Research	Intercultural Communicative Competence
Ahmed and Mohammed	2014	Quantitative	Survey	Teachers' role in developing cultural awareness
Alptekin	2002	Descriptive	Deductive Research	The concept of 'native speaker'
Altay	2005	Descriptive	Deductive Research	Cultural awareness
Angelova and Zhao	2014	Qualitative	Case Study	Computer technology and cultural awareness
Arcagok and Yılmaz	2020	Mixed-Method	Survey and Interview	Intercultural sensitivity of pre-service EFL teachers
Atasever Belli	2018	Quantitative	Survey	EFL students' cultural awareness and attitudes
Baker	2009	Qualitative	Interview	Cultural globalization
Baker	2008	Descriptive	Deductive Research	Cultural awareness in Thailand
Baker	2012	Descriptive	Deductive Research	Key components of intercultural awareness
Baker	2015	Descriptive	Review	Research on cultural and intercultural awareness
Bayyurt	2006	Qualitative	Case Study	Non- native English language teachers' cultural awareness
Bloom	2008	Qualitative	Case Study	Developing cultural awareness for students in service-learning
Borghetti	2013	Descriptive	Deductive Research	Integrating two models for ELT classrooms to develop intercultural awareness
Byram and Feng	2004	Descriptive	Review	Culture and language learning

Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Research Type	Keyword(s)
Campos	2009	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Activities to raise cultural awareness in ELT classroom
Çakır	2006	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Cultural awareness
Dema and Moeller	2012	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Teaching culture in EFL classrooms with digital sources
El- Hussari	2007	Qualitative	Case Study	Cultural awareness in Lebanese EFL classrooms
Escudero	2013	Quantitative	Experimental	Teaching intercultural awareness in EFL classrooms
Fay, Lytra and Ntavaliagkou	2010	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Multicultural awareness in Greek schools
Galante	2014	Quantitative	Experimental	Developing intercultural sensitivity through digital sources in Canada
Genç and Bada	2005	Quantitative	Survey	Role of culture for students of EFL
Heliot and Young	2006	Quantitative	Experimental	Language and cultural awareness at primary level in France
Ho	2009	Descriptive	Review	Teaching and learning culture through EFL textbooks in Vietnam
Kim	2002	Descriptive	Review	Teaching culture in EFL classrooms and designing culture-based lessons
Kiss and Weninger	2017	Qualitative	Survey	Teaching culture through the use of visuals in multicultural EFL classroom
Knutson	2006	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Learning and teaching culture in ESL / EFL classroom
Kramsch	2013	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Changing the perspective of culture teaching in language learning
Lee	2015	Qualitative	Case Study	Race in intercultural communication in ESL classroom
Lenchuk and Ahmed	2014	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Importance of teaching pragmatics in ESL cultural awareness
Liang	2014	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Culture teaching in EFL classroom
Moecharam &	2014	Quantitative	Experimental	Use of Literature in Indonesian EFL

Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Research Type	Keyword(s)
Kartika Sari				classes to raise awareness
Moeller & Nugent	2014	Descriptive	Review	Intercultural communication models and activities for EFL classroom
Monfared, Mozaheb & Shahiditabar	2016	Mixed Method	Survey	Teaching culture and culture in textbooks through the perspectives of teachers from multiple backgrounds
Nugent & Catalano	2015	Descriptive	Review	Critical cultural awareness
Önalan	2005	Mixed-Method	Survey, Interview	Turkish EFL teachers' perspective and use of culture in tertiary level classes
Porto	2010	Descriptive	Deductive Reasoning	Culture, identity and classroom practices
Razı & Tekin	2017	Quantitative	Experimental	Intercultural competence perspectives of Turkish trainee teachers
Shahed	2013	Qualitative	İnterview	EFL teachers' cultural sensitivity and awareness in Bangladesh
Su	2008	Mixed-Method	A questionnaire, written oral reports, interview	Cross-cultural awareness in Taiwanese EFL college classes
Svalberg	2007	Descriptive	Review	Language awareness
Toyoda	2016	Qualitative	Observation	Intercultural learning and awareness
Tsuda, Shigemitsu & Murata	2007	Qualitative	Interview	Intercultural communication between Japanese and American speakers, cultural awareness
Vourdanou	2017	Mixed-Method	The survey, interview, journals	Content and Language Integrated Learning, The use of literature and wikis in EFL classroom in Greece
Wu, Marek & Chen	2013	Qualitative	Critical Text Analysis	Computer-Mediated Communication, cultural awareness
Young & Sachdev	2011	Mixed-Method	Diary, Survey, Focus group interview	Intercultural communicative competence perspectives of English language teachers

There are two main themes that emerged as a result of the analysis of the studies about cultural and intercultural awareness. They were named as *foundations* and *acquirements*. Each theme has four codes. There are codes named as *lesson components, interaction, the dynamic and personal connection* under the theme called as foundations of cultural awareness. Furthermore,

there are four codes named as *conversational competency, cognitive competency, cultural competency,* and *global involvement* coded under the theme called acquirements of cultural awareness. In this section, themes and codes that appeared as a result of the analysis are explained in a detailed way.

Foundations of cultural awareness

The first theme referred to as *foundations* explain the components of the EFL classroom that fosters cultural and intercultural awareness. Each code of this theme discloses one assisting aspect for EFL classrooms. The first code named as *lesson components* includes the studies about the importance of teachers and activities' on cultural and intercultural awareness. Young and Sachdev (2011) stated in their study that intercultural communicative competence is a vital component and teachers are the inseparable part of this process. Teachers who identify themselves as intercultural speakers become good learning models for their students. As Heliot and Young (2006) stated, teachers are important components inside the classroom to integrate culture and language.

Activities and practices inside the EFL classroom are significant parts for both language teaching and developing cultural awareness. Furthermore, Vourdanou (2017) notified that cultural elements in EFL classrooms make students question their own attitudes and work on feeling empathetic for cultural differences. Teachers should be aware of the cultural elements and use those elements while working with students to develop cultural communication (Önalan, 2005; Svalberg, 2007). Such elements may lean towards culturally sensitive issues such as diversity, discrimination, equality and so on (Compos, 2009; Frank, 2013; Porto, 2010) , so that the students can express themselves better in their target language community. Such issues could be integrated within the lesson components by tasks designed by the teachers. For example, teachers might use task-based cultural classroom activities (Shaded, 2013) and help students to identify cultural issues through some authentic tasks. The aim should be to evoke students' curiosity and help them to learn about different cultures (Çakır, 2006). In this way, students will be more mindful about how they can use their language skills no matter how they experience cultural issues.

Second code named as *interaction* refers to the students' interaction with people from different cultures. According to Toyoda (2016), when students work with peers in a culturally diverse

setting, they can enrich their cultural awareness and high- order thinking skills. This intercultural interaction paves the way for effective interaction, makes students active participants of the target culture, and teaches sharing social values and personal problems (Kourova & Modianos, 2013; Moecharam & Kartikasari, 2014; Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Tsuda, Shigemitsu & Murata, 2007). When students have direct contact with the people from their target culture, they are able to do positive shifts to increase cultural sensitivity and promote cultural awareness (Bloom, 2008).

The third code stated as *dynamic* explains the dynamic structure of the intercultural and cultural awareness. In the 21st century, communication has become both more intercultural and dynamic with the use of technology. Therefore, culture should be considered from the global perspective while historical roots are taken into consideration (Kramsch, 2013). As Knutson (2006) stated, culture has a dynamic nature. Therefore, learners should be equipped with awareness and understanding of different cultural components.

The fourth and last code of the foundations' theme stated *personal connection*. Teachers should understand the relationship between culture and language in a specific country to provide cultural awareness skills and materials in ELT classrooms (Baker, 2008). Thus, they can develop skills to make individual orientations (Baker, 2009). Students can develop cultural and intercultural awareness while making personal connections with the target culture's values, traditions, and beliefs. Furthermore, literature tells us that students who share social values and personal problems tend to become culturally aware and be knowledgeable about cultural awareness (Moecharam & Kartikasari, 2014).

Acquirements of cultural awareness

The second theme of this review is called *acquirements* since this theme includes the studies emphasizing the benefits of the different aspects of cultural and intercultural awareness. The first acquirement coded under this theme is *conversational competency*. Tsuda, Shigemitsu, and Murata (2007) stated that strategies and activities using intercultural interaction help students to carry out an effective interaction. Building intercultural competence strengthens students' language abilities (Sowden, 2007).

The second code named as *cultural competency* refers to the cultural learning outcomes of intercultural and cultural awareness. It is found that video-conferences carried out with native speakers to improve cultural awareness help students to improve confidence perspectives on different cultures (Wu, Marek & Chen, 2013). Intercultural communication strategies with the aim of developing intercultural awareness emphasize cognitive components as well (Baker, 2008; Ho, 2009). Therefore, Byram and Feng (2004) asserted that the cultural dimension of intercultural awareness should be taken into consideration in EFL classrooms. Students who are introduced to cultural knowledge by teachers through EFL course books and materials develop positive attitudes towards cultural knowledge in the language learning process, enhance cultural awareness by expanding their knowledge of cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors (Atasever Belli, 2018).

The third code-named *cognitive competency* contains the utilities of intercultural awareness on the cognitive aspect of the students. Cognitive competency includes cognitive skills such as reflective thinking, conflict resolution skills, and empathy. Toyoda (2016) stated that the students who are studying a culturally diverse setting can enrich their cultural awareness and high- order thinking skills. Furthermore, interacting with native speakers assists students to develop empathy, cultural awareness, and conflict resolution skills in communication. Realizing that language is used within a culturally diverse environment helps students to improve their confidence and motivation (Baker, 2015; Su, 2008). In addition, Nugent and Catalano (2015) asserted that critical cultural awareness activities and strategies help students to develop communicative competence and critical thinking skills.

The fourth code referred to as *global involvement* includes the studies discussing intercultural awareness from an international point of view. Monfred, Mozaheb, and Shahiditabar (2016) indicated that global and local "glocal" way of teaching has been adopted in EFL/ESL culture teaching. Teachers believe that lessons should include cultural elements and students' own culture should be integrated with the target culture. The emphasis should be on not only target but international culture for cultural awareness. In addition, students educated within the critical cultural awareness perspective of language learning become globally aware and interculturally competent learners (Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Alptekin (2002) asserted that since English became an international language, the concept of 'native speaker' vanished. Rather than a dominant native speaker culture, an interlanguage which includes the culture of second and foreign speakers should be adopted by language

teachers or institutions. Thus, language teaching textbooks and materials should involve both local and international contexts to develop local and international interaction, develop cultural awareness and awareness of differences.

Eventually, as a result of the analysis of 50 selected studies about cultural and intercultural awareness, two main themes emerged as foundations and acquirements. Each theme has four codes. There are codes named as lesson components, interaction, the dynamic and personal connection under the theme called as foundations of cultural awareness which emphasize the role of the EFL classroom in fostering cultural awareness. Furthermore, there are four codes named as conversational competency, cognitive competency, cultural competency, and global involvement coded under the theme called acquirements of cultural awareness which includes studies indicating different aspects of the benefits of cultural awareness.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to examine the studies about cultural and intercultural awareness to help EFL / ESL teachers to improve efficient practices in their classrooms to develop cultural and intercultural awareness. There are 50 studies examined in order to meet this aim. Certain criteria were followed while studies are included in this meta-synthesis. As a result of the analysis, there are two main themes that emerged as *foundations* and *acquirements*. Each theme has four codes. There are codes named as *lesson components, interaction, the dynamic and personal connection* under the theme called as foundations of cultural awareness. Furthermore, components named *conversational competency, cognitive competency, cultural competency,* and *global involvement* coded under the theme called acquirements of cultural awareness.

Cultural awareness is an inseparable part of the language learning process. Ware and Kramsch (2005) integrate language awareness with cultural awareness. Studies presented that cultural awareness paves the way for the integration of cultures and a better understanding of one another. Learning a new language while learning its culture may not be an easy process for language learners. There are implications by CEFR about the importance of language learning curriculum on developing cultural awareness, such as widening the views on language learning and accepting and appreciating cultural variety. However, improving cultural awareness skills may not happen rapidly over studying a single coursebook, repetitive tasks or limited opportunities of communication with target language speakers especially during foreign

language learning. Studies have shown that cultural awareness needs to be integrated into teacher education by putting emphasis on a global presence of teachers with adequate competence and skills (Atay, 2005; Byram, 2012; Hişmanoğlu, 2013), and curriculum and coursebook designs need to be done accordingly by implementing authentic communicative tasks embracing cultural awareness (Beresova, 2015; McConachy, 2008; Lo Bianco, Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Pulverness & Tomlinson, 2013), and students should be in a conscious process of growth in their target language (Agudelo, 2007; Prodromou, 1992; Dasli, 2011; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Within the light of such studies, suggestions regarding the result of this research that might help EFL teachers are given in the next section.

Suggestions

There are some suggestions and implications presented as a result of this study to help English language teachers to develop more effective practices in order to integrate cultural awareness in their classroom. Sometimes culture-based lessons are affected by the prejudices or perceptions of the teachers. Therefore, teachers need to be self- aware of their assumptions and prejudices. School counselors may help with this issue by conducting seminars and workshops for teachers to get to know themselves better. In addition, bonding target and learner cultures is an important step in teaching culture. Teachers need to adopt culturally enriched practices. This can be achieved by creating an equal class environment, respecting diversity, accepting differences (Porto, 2010). Teachers should use democratic education components like encouragement and giving feedback. They should be careful while making confrontations and not to use criticizing language for the students' personalities. They need to emphasize the students' behavior while giving feedback and making confrontations. Basically, teachers should respect the students' individuality and personality.

As Kim (2002) stated, using portfolios and making students discuss equally would provide ideal intercultural learning. EFL teachers may learn about different cultural backgrounds of their students and help them to prepare portfolios to describe the differences and similarities of their culture to their peers. Application of analysis of the critical texts and discourses in EFL classrooms contributes to developing intercultural awareness and a new form of consciousness for the language learning process (Escudero, 2013). Therefore, teachers should conduct a discussion about different cultures and cultural awareness inside the classroom. This method should be adapted to the education level of children. However, teachers can start the discussion

and help students to express themselves at all levels.

The integration of cultural learning with EFL classrooms does not ensure to develop intercultural sensitivity, but it helps to pave the way for exploring diversity and cultural awareness in multicultural communities (Fay, Lytra & Ntavaliagkou, 2010; Galante, 2014; Kourova & Modianos, 2013). Thus, teachers should be aware of their work in EFL classrooms about cultural awareness and help their students to develop this sensitivity and respect for every unique individual. The most important limitation of this study is that there is not any application and implication process for the classroom environment in the examined studies. Furthermore, this study analyzes a limited number of studies about cultural awareness. There is crucial work about cultural and intercultural awareness which paves the way for CEFR and intercultural, pluricultural and plurilingual curriculum in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, cultural awareness is not limited to developing awareness about cultural components in the EFL classroom. However, there are other components while developing cultural awareness such as critical thinking, collaboration, and empathy. Therefore, further research should be done in the field while integrating other components of cultural awareness in order to improve students' and teachers' cultural awareness skills.

Statements of ethics and conflict of interest

"I, as the Corresponding Author, declare and undertake that in the study titled as *"The Role of Cultural Awareness in EFL Classroom"*, scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed; Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry Journal Editorial Board has no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, that all responsibility belongs to the author/s and that this study has not been sent to any other academic publication platform for evaluation. "

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