

## **IMPACT OF TARGET LANGUAGE CULTURE IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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### **ÖZET**

Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğreniminin öğrenenlerin hedef kültürle ilgili tutumları üzerine etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma Gürcistan'daki Özel ve Devlet üniversitelerinden seçilen 150 öğrenci üzerinde uygulanmıştır. Veriler araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen Likert tipi anket ve Oller v.d. (1977) kullandığı anlamsal diferansiyel tekniği kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Bu ankette, katılımcılara Gürcü ve Amerikalı'ların kişisel özellikleri ile ilgili fikirleri tespit edilmeye çalışıldı. Bu amaçla, belirlenmiş olan 20 tane sıfat yansız bir şekilde 10 tanesi olumlu 10 tanesi olumsuz olarak sıralanmıştır. Olumsuz anlam taşıyan sıfatlarla ilgili bulgular etkisiz olmasına rağmen olumlu anlamlı sıfatlarla ilgili sonuçlar hipotezimizi destekleyerek, şu sonucu ortaya koymuştur; olumlu anlama sahip sıfatlarla ilgili elde edilen sonuçlar, hedef kültür ve ana dil üzerindeki tutumlarla ilgili olumlu bir etki oluşturmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yabancı dil öğretim/öğrenim, Kültürel farkındalık seviyesi, yabancı ve anadil üzerindeki tutum

### **ABSTRACT**

This study addresses the influence of foreign language learning on learners' attitude towards the target culture. The sample of the research consists of 150 university students in state and private universities in Georgia. Data were collected from a Likert type questionnaire developed by the researchers and a semantic differential technique used by Oller et al. (1977). In this questionnaire, the participants were asked to assess to what degree Americans and Georgians possess certain personality traits. For this purpose, 20 adjectives (10 with positive meanings and 10 with negative) were offered in a random order. The results dealing with adjectives with positive meanings supported our hypothesis that the cognizance level of the target culture has a positive impact on the attitudes towards the target and the native culture, while the findings were

inconclusive for adjectives with negative meanings. Participants' opinions about some specified personality traits of Georgians and Americans were tried to be assessed in this questionnaire.

Key words: foreign language teaching/learning, level of cultural awareness, attitude towards the native and target culture

## **1. Introduction**

When the world is fast becoming a “global village” with more and more people learning foreign languages, it is essential not only to find more efficient ways to teach them but also to look farther and investigate the impact of learning a foreign language on some social issues, including more positive attitudes towards native and target cultures, certain changes in attitudes and values judgments.

This article offers only a modest research dealing with attitudes of 150 Georgian students towards their own and target (American) culture in connection with English language learning. Although we realize that students with other native and target languages will most probably react differently to an analogous questionnaire, we believe that this article will contribute to some degree to the better understanding of the topic under study.

## **2. Literature review**

Although some decades ago language teaching involved only language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and domains (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) (Crookes & Krashen, 1981), nowadays nobody denies that verbal communication embraces much more than these purely linguistic competences. Today in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language/ English as a Second Language (EFL/ESL) it is an obligation to form functional, strategic, and sociolinguistic and ethnocultural competences necessary to use a language effectively (CEF, 2001).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the crucial influence that social interactions and language, embedded within a cultural context, have on cognitive development (Kozulin, 2003, Lantoff, 2000). According to Kramsch (1993, p. 30), for example, a “linguaculture” emerges dynamically from actual, concrete exchanges between learners in EFL/ESL classrooms.

When we teach a foreign language, not only pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, but also discourse behaviors may cause interference. We cannot apply a language in real life situations well, if these behaviors are not a part of teaching / learning processes. Culture is a complex phenomenon. Nostrand (1989, p. 51) suggests that the central code of a culture consists of not only customs and properties but also of major values, habitual patterns of thought, and certain prevalent assumptions about human nature and society which the foreigner should be prepared to encounter.

As Kramsch (1993) argues, learning another language for communication also means leaving behind the native paradise of native-tongue socialization. As language learners become more and more proficient in a second language and familiar with a second culture, they tend to articulate their new experience within their old one, making it relevant to their lives, one day their way, another day the other, creating their own inter-popular culture.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1994) view different aspects of culture to deal with in the process of teaching English (customs and traditions, idioms, symbols, history, literature, etc.) and recommend how to present and effectively involve this information in practical tasks. Many authors (Buttaro, 2004; Chang, 2000, Moscovitz, 1996, etc.) discuss culture shock issues in the process of teaching/learning English. It is a culture shock, for example, for Georgian students of English to read that the city center is a bad place for living. If not explained in language classes why this is viewed so, they will not be able to normally understand the text.

While in the literature on ESL/EFL the necessity of dealing with culture in the process of language teaching has been discussed since the 1990s, the effects of the so-called acculturation through language teaching are less studied. It is this urgency that led us to investigate this aspect of foreign language learning. Acculturation (or, at least, adaptation) of immigrants (EFL learners) is desirable if they want to live successfully in the new country. However, luckily, it does not necessarily imply their complete assimilation and loss of national identity. As for acculturation of people who learn English in the home country, it is usually not one of the teaching goals. Their goal is to use the target language basically during their short-term stays abroad or in the home country while dealing with foreigners. Therefore, with such kinds of purposes in mind, there is no need to be culturally adapted. What we seek

to explore is, whether we pose this goal or not: do the foreign language learners not only become more aware of the target culture, but also change their attitudes towards it in a positive direction?

The closest previous studies we have found regarding this topic include Culhane's (2004) and Graham and Brown's (1996) studies. The question under study in these studies is in reverse direction to ours because these authors have investigated how acculturation affects second language study. Culhane (2004) examined Korean students of English during their sojourn in Canada. The conclusion Culhane comes to is:

- Learners with a stronger instrumental motivation feel less obliged to interact with members of cultural group
- Learners with a higher degree of integrative motivation are interested in social interactions and increasing their socio-cultural competence

“However, irrespective of whether learners are physically brought into contact with L2 speakers, their language and its cultures in a study abroad sojourn, or merely through classroom materials in a foreign language classroom, decisions about the relative importance of acquiring linguistic and cultural components, and also the extent to which one seeks to acculturate into these differing contexts are being made” (Culhane, 2004, p. 59).

Graham & Brown (1996) studied how native Spanish speakers (NSSs) in a small town in northern Mexico with a sizable English-speaking minority population and a two-way bilingual program in the schools have developed native-like proficiency in English. A sample of native Spanish-speaking households in the town was selected and members of each household were asked a series of questions relating to Schumann's (1978) acculturation variables. Each participant was also given an oral proficiency interview (OPI) in English. Results indicate that despite favorable conditions for English language acquisition among NSSs, the only NSSs acquiring English at a satisfactory level are those attending the bilingual schools. Graham and Brown also concluded that the native-like proficiency being attained by the NSSs who attend the bilingual schools was likely due to their favorable attitudes toward the English-speaking community and the fact that they developed close friendships with native English-speaking peers.

### **3. Current study**

We believe that while learning a language and thereby learning about the culture of the target language community, we unavoidably become more tolerant and appreciative of the people in that country, their traditions, values, behaviors, and so forth. Besides, our experience shows that listening to, reading, speaking and writing about the target language country and its culture, L2 learners are led to think deeper about their own culture. Our study seeks to explore the degree at which this really so happens. We surveyed the attitudes of three groups of Georgian students of English: (a) people, who learn in English (i.e. possess at least C1 level according Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), (b) people who learn English on B1/B2 level and (c) people who are complete beginners. We want to find out whether there exists a relationship between higher proficiency in the target language and higher level of being cognizant about the target culture as well as higher level of positive attitude towards the target culture.

#### **3.1. Significance of research**

We believe that this study has both theoretical and practical implications. It will help to get a deeper insight into the nature of language/culture relationship. The theoretical findings have broader implications for specific areas in linguistics, language teaching, psycholinguistics, psychology, sociolinguistics, sociology and philosophy. The goals of this particular research are rather modest; however, we would be pleased if they are supported by other studies.

In addition, the conclusions of our study can help language teachers avoid “acute corners” of culture shock in the process of language learning. The texts for listening and reading, the topics for oral discussions and essays, in our opinion, should contain more than information stimulating mutual tolerance and intersections of L1 and L2 cultures instead of biased judgments.

#### **3.2. Limitations and future directions**

The research has been conducted on Georgian students learning English in Tbilisi, Georgia. We certainly realize that results may vary depending on the native-to-target languages and cultures interrelations. They may even differ within the same country in different periods of its

development. However, if our judgment is right, we expect the general model to be approximately the same.

As our analyses indicate, to continue the research we need to select adjectives standing for better-defined concepts. Besides, as we were unable (see below) to obtain a clear picture for adjectives with negative meanings, the direction of future research of the issue under study might be “the impact of learning a foreign language on the negative image of the native speakers of this language.”

#### **4. Research methodology**

##### **4.1. Design and instrumentation**

In this quantitative study we used a questionnaire based on a Likert scale of assessment: 5 meaning “it very well reflects their character”, 4 meaning “it somewhat reflects their character”, 3 meaning “it on average level reflects their character”, 2 meaning “it only a little reflects their character”, and 1 meaning “it does not reflect their character at all”. The questionnaire is also based on a semantic differential technique used by Spolsky (1969) and Oller et. al.(1977) and first proposed by Osgood et al (1957).

The adjectives were selected very carefully so that each adjective had a distinctively positive or negative denotation and connotation. For example, initially, we included “humble” in the list, but then realized that even as “modest” it did not have positive connotation for all respondents, not to say anything about its secondary meaning as “obedient” and even “humiliated”. Moreover, the adjectives were presented (as below) in a random order, not provoking the respondents to select all positive or all negative qualities.

The questionnaires were anonymous. They included questions dealing with the level of knowledge of English (zero, some basic level<sup>1</sup> and native-like level) and assessment features typical for Georgians and Americans to some degree done in a semantic differential technique used by Spolsky (1969) and Oller et al. (1977). The questions can be found in Appendix II. We decided to include the evaluation of features not only of Americans, but also of Georgians, as we believe that the positive /

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<sup>1</sup> In Georgian universities, unified national exams provide at least Intermediate (B1) level of knowledge of foreign languages.

negative attitudes would be more noticeable in this way (presumably, their image of a Georgian is basically positive). The data were analyzed for each adjective separately, and then mean scores were calculated for all adjectives with a positive meaning, as well as for all adjectives with a negative meaning.

#### **4.2. Research hypothesis**

As Culhane (2004) and Graham & Brown (1996) state, acculturation increases the motivation of language learning and hence the efficiency of language learning. We propose that it might also be true in a reverse relationship. We expected that people who did not speak English at all would have the lowest attitude towards Americans, those who spoke English would choose adjectives with positive meanings more often, while those who spoke English at a native-like level would give the highest evaluation to the features possessed by Americans, as knowledge of English contributes to not only knowledge about the culture of those who speak it as a native language (i.e. Americans), but also to positive attitude towards them. Undoubtedly, these are just hypotheses since the fact that participants do not speak English does not mean they possess the least cultural background about Americans. Some of them may be even better informed than others regarding American culture, but statistically this is the trend, because all three groups can benefit from books and mass-media, while those students who are learning English have an additional source of information compared to those students who do not learn it. Hence, if the selection of positive features to characterize Americans in the group of students who speak English on the native-like level is the highest while in the group with zero English level – the lowest, we will consider our hypothesis proved.

To ensure that the hypotheses are confirmed, the results for adjectives with positive meanings should correlate with the results for adjectives with negative meanings. In other words, the rating of negative features should decrease with the increase in the English language level.

#### **4.3. Participants**

The participants included 150 students from two universities in Tbilisi (capital city of Georgia), one of them being state and the other private. The English level of students was defined according to self-report in the questionnaire. The first group consisted of 50 participants

who had been learning English for 10-11 years (English was their medium of instruction language at university): C1 English level group. The second group included 50 freshman participants who had studied English as a foreign language for 7 years at school, but medium of instruction both at school and at university was not English: B1/B2 English level group. The third group of respondents involved 50 participants who have not studied English either at school or at university, but studied other foreign languages (Russian, German, French, etc.) for 7 years at school: the zero English level group. In each group, the male / female participants' ratio was approximately equal. The age range for respondents in all groups was 17-20. All respondents were Georgian citizens.

## 5. Findings

We did not include in the article the complete results of the tables filled in by the students as they are too voluminous. The tables involve a line for each student's answer and the columns include their ratings of the adjectives. They look like this:

Table 1  
*Format of the primary data*

Adjective	X		Xx		Xxx	
	typical for Georgians (1-5)	typical for Americans (1-5)	typical for Georgians (1-5)	typical for Americans (1-5)	typical for Georgians (1-5)	typical for Americans (1-5)
Student 1	5	3	5	5	5	4
2	5	4	4	4	5	5
etc.						

The secondary treatment of the data involves average results for each adjective. For the results to be more visual we grouped together the adjectives with positive and negative meanings.



Table 2

*Group III. Selection of adjectives with positive meanings by participants with C1 English level*

Adjective	Average (Am.)	S. D.	Average (G)	S. D.	Difference
Friendly	3.75	0.73	4.78	0.34	-1.03
Confident	4.51	0.62	4.08	0.59	0.43
Cheerful	4.20	0.75	4.50	0.60	-0.30
Optimistic	4.42	0.75	4.32	0.76	0.10
Clever	3.92	0.77	4.42	0.70	-0.51
Hard-working	4.57	0.67	3.42	0.89	1.15
Outgoing	3.98	0.89	3.98	0.75	0
Deep	3.51	0.91	4.26	0.86	-0.70
Honest	3.67	0.92	4.1	0.70	-0.50
Caring about family	3.42	1.16	4.56	0.62	-1.14

Adjectives with positive meanings used for Americans received a high enough average point from 3.42 (caring about family) to 4.57 (hard-working). Standard deviation (maximum 1.16) is not very high, so respondents' views are rather unanimous. However, by six traits respondents regard their compatriots as having these good traits on a higher level.

Table 3

*Group III. Selection of adjectives with negative meanings by participants with C1 English level*

Adjective	Average (Am.)	S.D.	Average (G)	S.D.	Difference
Dull	2.82	0.93	2.50	1.10	0.32
Narrow-minded	2.96	1.27	2.42	1.25	0.54
Unreliable	2.70	1.08	2.66	1.25	0.04
Mean (greedy)	3.06	1.00	2.81	1.19	0.25
Withdrawn	3.06	0.86	3.45	0.95	-0.39
Mediocre	3.49	0.97	3.34	0.67	0.15
Lazy	2.88	0.97	3.78	1.01	-0.90
Ignorant	3.18	0.98	2.81	1.18	0.37
Unpractical	2.57	1.28	3.39	0.93	-0.80
Passive	2.49	1.09	3.38	0.96	-0.89

Adjectives with negative meanings used concerning Americans received lower rates: from 2.49 (passive) to 3.184 (ignorant). Standard deviation is higher (at least 0.93 – maximum 1.28), so respondents were not so unanimous in this regard. By six traits respondents value their compatriots as having negative traits to a lesser degree.

Table 4

*Group II. Selection of adjectives with positive meanings by participants with B1/B2 English level*

Adjective	Average (Am.)	S.D.	Average (G)	S.D.	Difference
Friendly	3.50	0.80	4.94	0.11	-1.44
Confident	4.24	0.67	4.14	0.58	0.10
Cheerful	3.83	0.89	4.21	0.79	-0.38
Optimistic	4.10	0.65	4.18	0.73	-0.08
Clever	4.50	1.54	4.74	0.40	-0.24
Hard-working	4.42	0.63	3.00	0.68	1.42
Outgoing	4.00	0.74	3.74	0.86	0.27
Deep	3.21	0.62	3.71	0.87	-0.50
Honest	3.54	0.79	4.16	0.74	-0.60
Caring about family	3.54	1.02	4.58	0.60	-1.04

Adjectives with positive meaning used for Americans received a high enough average point from 3.5 (friendly) to 4.5 (clever). Standard deviation (maximum 1.53) is a bit too high when Americans are assessed, so respondents' views are less unanimous. Assessing respondents' compatriots is much more unanimous (standard deviation from 0.11 to 0.87). However, by seven traits respondents regard their compatriots as having these good traits on a higher level.

Table 5

*Group II. Selection of adjectives with negative meanings by participants with B1/B2 English level*

Adjective	Average (Am.)	S.D.	Average (G)	S.D.	Difference
Dull	2.46	0.90	2.04	0.81	0.41
Narrow-minded	2.45	0.87	2.45	1.06	0.00
Unreliable	2.73	0.90	2.55	0.97	0.18
Mean (greedy)	3.35	0.84	2.71	1.09	0.65
Withdrawn	3.19	0.83	3.21	0.83	-0.02
Mediocre	3.54	0.79	3.18	0.57	0.35
Lazy	2.57	0.89	3.94	0.84	-1.4
Ignorant	3.45	0.94	2.72	0.91	0.73
Unpractical	2.50	1.02	2.34	1.10	-0.8
Passive	2.46	1.04	2.98	0.67	1.04

Adjectives with negative meaning used concerning Americans received low rates: from 2.449 (passive) to 3.447 (ignorant). Standard deviation is reasonable (at least 0.67 – maximum 1.038), so respondents were more or less unanimous in this regard. By six traits respondents value their compatriots as having negative traits to a lesser degree.

**Table 6**  
*Group I. Selection of adjectives with positive meanings by participants with zero English level*

Adjective	Average (Am.)	S.D.	Average (G)	S.D.	Difference
Friendly	2.96	0.803	4.17	0.87	-1.21
Confident	3.96	0.798	3.85	0.79	0.11
Cheerful	3.64	0.900	3.52	1.05	0.11
Optimistic	3.98	0.673	3.62	0.95	0.36
Clever	3.35	0.828	3.85	0.99	-0.50
Hard-working	4.17	1.091	3.04	0.99	1.13
Outgoing	3.40	1.102	3.70	1.04	-0.30
Deep	3.02	0.78	3.53	1.05	-0.50
Honest	2.94	0.786	3.35	0.91	-0.40
Caring about family	2.89	1.0888	3.65	1.22	-0.76

Adjectives with positive meaning used for Americans received a lower average point from 2.89 (caring about family) to 4.17 (hard-working) than in group 3 and 2. Standard deviation (maximum 1.22) is a bit too high both when Americans and Georgians are assessed, so respondents' views are less unanimous. Respondents regard their compatriots as having these good traits on a higher level (maximum 4.17-friendly, minimum – 3.04 – hardworking).

**Table 7**

*Selection of adjectives with negative meanings by participants with zero English language level*

Adjective	Average (Am.)	S.D.	Average (G)	S.D.	Difference
Dull	2.59	0.87	3.13	0.77	-0.54
Narrow-minded	2.94	0.86	2.13	0.96	0.80
Unreliable	3.06	1.09	2.30	1.01	0.77
Mean (greedy)	3.44	1.07	2.73	0.97	0.71
Withdrawn	2.96	0.85	2.96	0.93	0.00
Mediocre	3.12	0.67	3.29	0.69	-0.17
Lazy	2.38	0.90	3.50	1.10	-1.10
Ignorant	3.02	0.99	3.02	1.07	0.00
Unpractical	2.09	1.01	3.43	0.99	-1.30
Passive	2.44	1.26	2.81	0.83	-0.37

Adjectives with negative meaning used concerning Americans received low rates: from 2.45 (passive) to 3.45 (ignorant). Standard deviation is reasonable (at least 0.67 – maximum 1.04), so respondents were more or less unanimous in this regard. By six traits respondents value their compatriots as having negative traits to a lesser degree.

Comparing standard deviations in the tables, we can say that our respondents were more unanimous on the subject they knew better – the Georgian character. What is interesting is that most of big standard deviations dealt with adjectives with negative meanings (12 out of 16), which show that our respondents were more unanimous in their positive views on themselves than in negative ones.

We can see that the attitudes towards neither nation is totally positive, the average figures change by qualities, e.g., “optimistic”: 4.41- 4.1 – 3.98- the lowest in the zero English group, but still very high); “friendly”: 3.75– 3.5. – 2.96. The pattern according to which the attitudes change is the same in all groups: this is fall – fall (the highest in

the C1 English level group group, lower in the B1/B2 level and the lowest in the zero English level group). However, for “optimistic” the assessment in all groups is rather high, while for “friendly” in all groups it is rather low.

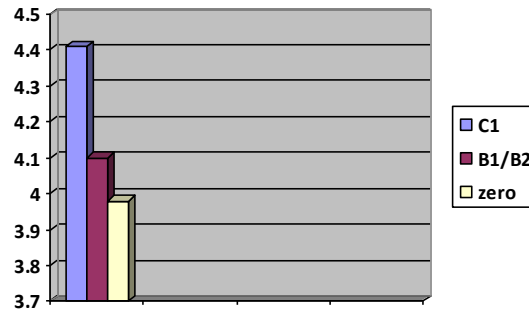


Figure 1. Attitude change from C1 English level to zero English level groups: fall-fall for 7 out of 10 positive adjectives: “optimistic”

The selection of seven out of ten adjectives with positive meaning demonstrates the tendency corresponding to our hypothesis. However, three adjectives (clever, outgoing and caring about family) were selected on a different pattern: “clever”: 3.92– 4.5 (the highest) – 3.35 (the lowest), “outgoing”: 3.98 – 4 – 3.4, “caring about the family”: 3.42 – 3.54 – 2.89 (all three on the same pattern: rise - fall). Anyway, both C1 and B1/B2 English level group assess positive features higher than zero English level group does. In fact, these three positive features were more often chosen by groups with knowledge of English (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> groups) than by zero English level group (1<sup>st</sup> group).



Figure 2. Attitude change from C1 English level to zero English level groups: rise-fall for 3 out of 10 positive adjectives: “clever”

The participants were not strongly critical of either nation, either. Adjectives with negative meanings never received a higher than 3.53 (for Americans) and 3.94 (for Georgians) rating<sup>2</sup>. The picture turned out not as simple as we had imagined. Only three adjectives were selected according to the expected pattern: lowest ratings for the C1 English level groups and highest ratings for the zero English level groups: “lazy”: 2.88 – 2.57 – 2.38; “unpractical”: 2.57 – 2.5 – 2.08; and “passive”: 2.49 – 2.46 – 2.44; even for them the tendency is weak.



<sup>2</sup> for negative features lower rating means more positive attitude towards somebody and vice versa



*Figure 3.* Attitude change from C1 English level to zero English level groups: fall-fall for 3 out of 10 negative adjectives: “lazy”

Three of them (dull, narrow-minded and unreliable) follow a fall-rise pattern: “dull”: 2.82 – 2.45 – 2.59.



*Figure 4.* Attitude change from C1 English level to zero English level groups: fall-rise for 3 out of 10 negative adjectives: “dull”

Four of them (mean, withdrawn, mediocre and ignorant) demonstrate a rise-rise pattern: “mean”: 3.06 → 3.35 → 3.44

The variety of results may indicate two things: the zero English level group still chose negative features more often than the C1 English level group (7 adjectives out of 10 have higher ratings than in the most informed group). These results may indicate that better cognizance of the culture may simultaneously mean better knowledge of its drawbacks.

In 6-7 out of 10 cases participants rated positive adjectives higher for Georgians than for Americans (no significant difference between the groups see the difference column). In 6 (groups III, II) and 3 (group I) cases out of ten respondents rated negative adjectives lower for Georgians than they did for Americans. This indicates that they more often assess themselves more positively than they assess Americans, which was a part of our hypothesis. The patterns regarding their opinion dealing with positive features fluctuated from the most informed about Americans group to the least informed group. These included: rise-fall (friendly, confident, honest, and caring about family) and fall-fall (cheerful, optimistic, hard-working, outgoing, and deep). Nevertheless,

there is no certain pattern; the least informed group demonstrates lower self-assessment than that of Americans.

As for selection of adjectives with negative meanings, there was more variation in the patterns of assessment of Georgians. The models of fluctuations was fall-rise of rating (dull, mean, reserved, mediocre, unpractical, passive), rise-fall (narrow-minded, lazy, ignorant), and fall – fall (unreliable).

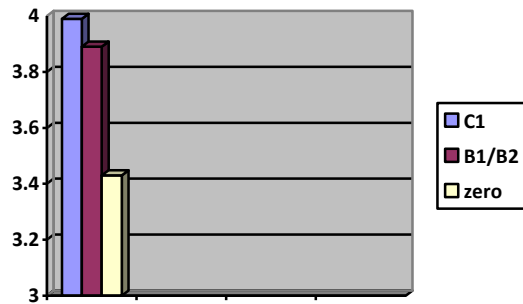
These results again demonstrate no trend to speak of, except, probably, the fact that self-assessment does not reveal any serious trend for self-disrespect in connection with being better informed about the target language culture. The tables below show results of the third level of generalizations of the questionnaire – average ratings of all adjectives).

Table 7  
*Selection of adjectives with positive meanings*

Parameter Group	Average rating of adjectives with positive meanings selected to characterize Americans	S.D.	Average rating of adjectives with positive meanings selected to characterize Georgians	S.D.	Difference
Group III (zero English)	3.99	0.34	4.25	0.28	- 0.25
Group II (B1/B2)	3.89	0.36	4.14	0.39	-0.25
Group I (C1)	3.43	0.40	3.63	0.22	-0.20

The standard deviations on this level of generalization are quite acceptable. We can see that the C1 level group has rated the positive features of Americans the highest – 3.99, the B1/B2 English level group

– lower – 3.89, while the zero level English group – the lowest -3.43, which is exactly in line with our hypotheses.



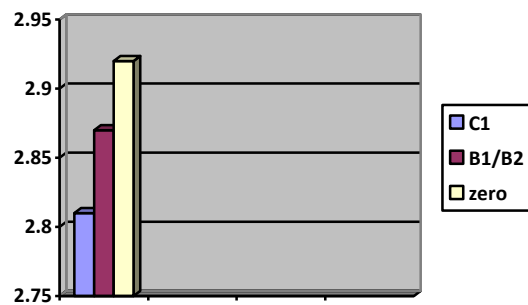
*Figure 5. Average attitude change from C1 English level to zero English level groups: adjectives with positive meanings: fall-fall*

Average rating of positive features of Georgians demonstrates the same pattern. In fact, we expected the attitude of participants towards themselves to be stable, but it looks like self-esteem is also rising at the expense of more thoughtful attitudes towards one's own culture in the process of culture-oriented teaching. The most C1 English level group has rated the positive features of Georgians the highest – 4.2429, the B1/B2 English level group – rated lower – 4.1395, while the zero English level group – rated the lowest -3.6277. The difference is always in favor of students' own culture, which proves the usefulness of culture-oriented foreign language teaching for increasing the esteem of one's own culture.

Table 8

*Selection of adjectives with negative meanings*

Parameter Group	Average rating of adjectives with negative meanings selected to characterize Americans	S.D.	Average rating of adjectives with negative meanings selected to characterize Georgians	S.D.	Difference
Group III (zero English)	2.92	0.23	3.054	0.41	0.13
Group II (B2/B1 level)	2.87	0.41	2.81	0.41	0.06
Group I (C1)	2.81	0.35	2.93	0.35	-0.13



*Figure 6. Average attitude change from C1 English level to zero English level groups for negative adjectives: rise-rise*

This picture is also in consistence with our hypothesis. However, the difference of attitudes between groups is nominal (0.05-0.12). The

difference of attitudes of students towards Americans and their own nation in connection with their negative features in this study is not so big (average ratings differ from -0.13 to 0.13).

## **6. Conclusion**

Although the results of this study are inconclusive, which may be due to the sample size, they adequately address two things: One, the positive attitudes towards the target culture were more noticeable for the learners of higher proficiency levels in L2. Two, the negative attitudes towards both cultures were similar across all three groups. Nevertheless, this research reveals that there is no need to worry about being affected negatively by the cultural components of the target language while studying foreign language as it may be a concern shared by some educators and/or parents. As a result, findings suggest that L2 learners do not face serious challenges to be totally assimilated into the target culture. Last but not the least, this study suggests that the more L2 learners are culturally informed due to target language study, the more critical and aware of their own culture they become.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Definition of some terms**

1. instrumental motivation - wanting to learn a language for the purpose of obtaining some concrete goals such as a job, graduation, or the ability to read academic materials. (see [http://bogglesworldesl.com/glossary/instrumental\\_motivation.htm](http://bogglesworldesl.com/glossary/instrumental_motivation.htm))
2. integrative motivation - When students want to learn a language to become part of a speech community (integrate). (see [http://bogglesworldesl.com/glossary/integrative\\_motivation.htm](http://bogglesworldesl.com/glossary/integrative_motivation.htm))
3. two-way bilingual program – it groups language minority students from a single language background in the same classroom with language majority (English-speaking) students. Instruction is provided in both English and the minority language. Both groups have the opportunity to acquire proficiency in a second language while continuing to develop their native language skills. Students serve as native-speaker role models for their peers. (see <http://www.education.com/definition/twoway-or-developmental-bilingual-programs/>)
4. EFL – English as a foreign language (such as English learned in a non-English-speaking country, e.g., English studied in Georgia or Turkey) (see <http://www.teaching-english-in-japan.net/acronyms/efl>)
5. ESL – English as a second language (such as English learned in an English-speaking country, where learning is done not only in the classroom, but also in an English-speaking environment) (see <http://www.teaching-english-in-japan.net/acronyms/esl>)

6. B1 level of foreign language skills – according to Common (2001), this is Threshold level, B1 and B2 levels are for Independent User
7. B2 level of foreign language skills – according to Common (2001), this is Vantage level
8. C1 level of foreign language skills – according to Common (2001), this is Effective Operational level, C1 is for Proficient User

## **Appendix II: The Questionnaire**

**The participants had to answer the following questions:**

Age:

Gender:

Do you speak English?

Do you use English as medium of instruction?

Below is a list of adjectives to describe people. Think of each word as it might describe Georgians and Americans. Please rate all adjectives as 5 - “it very well reflects their character”, 4 - “it somewhat reflects their character”, 3 - “it on average level reflects their character”, 2 - “it only a little reflects their character”, or 1 - “it does not reflect their character at all”. If you do not know the meaning of some adjective, use a dictionary. (For students who do not know English the questionnaire was in Georgian. The translation was done by the author of the article who is a certified translator. We did our best not to spoil the validity and the reliability of the test.)

	Georgians	Americans
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friendly	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
confident	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
cheerful	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
dull	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
narrow-minded	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
optimistic	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
unreliable	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
mean (greedy)	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
reserved (withdrawn)	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
clever	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
hard-working	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
mediocre	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
outgoing	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
deep	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
lazy	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
ignorant	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
honest	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
unpractical	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
passive	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
caring about family	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2

