



INTEGRATING CULTURE INTO EFL TEXTS AND CLASSROOMS: SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS

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Abstract

The need to integrate culture and its teaching into foreign language education is not a new debate, and has long been highlighted in countless studies. Yet, it seems to be common practice that foreign language textbooks and classrooms frequently overlook the conclusions drawn in such studies and neglect the essential information about the target language culture that would help students reach a cultural understanding to accompany their linguistic knowledge. The authors of this paper draw attention to this ignorance by using Turkey as an example, and argue that there will always be something missing in language learners' L2 proficiency and use, if culture is left out in their language learning. Thus, language teachers are offered specific ways of integrating culture into their classrooms and supplementing their textbooks with cultural elements. As an implication, the authors provide a practical unit plan that includes three lessons showing practitioners how to teach about American holidays. These sample lessons demonstrate one of the creative ways for teachers to incorporate culture into their classrooms.

Keywords: Culture, culture teaching, language, language teaching, EFL, textbooks

Özet

Kültürün ve öğretiminin yabancı dil eğitimindeki önemi sayısız çalışmada irdelenmiştir. Buna rağmen yabancı dil kitapları ve sınıfları bu çalışmaların ortaya koyduğu sonuçları ve önerileri göz ardı ederek öğrencilerin kültürel doygunluk ve bakış açısı kazanmasına ve edindikleri dilbilgisini pekiştirmelerine yardımcı olacak kültürü ve kültürün önemli bileşenlerini çoğu zaman dışlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'yi baz alarak, bu soruna dikkat çekmeyi ve öğrenilen dilin kültürünün dil eğitiminden soyutlanması durumunda bir şeylerin eksik kalacağını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle yazarlar, dil öğretmenleri için kültürü sınıflarında nasıl işleyebileceklerinin ve bu amaçla ders kitaplarını nasıl geliştirebileceklerinin örneklerini vermekte ve bunlardan birini somutlaştırmak amacıyla hazırladıkları Amerikan kutlamalarını öğreten ve üç dersten oluşan bir ünite planını paylaşmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Sözcükler: kültür, öğretim, dil, öğrenim, ders kitabı

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid globalization has increased the need for cross-cultural communication so that people have access to information all over the world. This growing and extending need leads to growth in the foreign language teaching profession. Many acknowledge that learning a foreign language is a requirement to survive in today's world. The English language plays an important role, because it has become the lingua franca of the world, and the default language that one needs to learn in order to keep up with the information age. Similarly, Phillipson (1992) adds that "...at the present time English, to a much greater extent than any other language, is the language in which the fate of most of the world's millions is decided" (p. 6).

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Burchfield (1985) also acknowledges the role of English as lingua franca, and argues that even a literate person may experience linguistic deficit and deprivation, that is, lack of opportunities in language learning. As this view suggests, this language deficiency is a significant condition, yet not a specifically identified one.

Given the necessity of English language learning, second language acquisition is not a process that occurs in a 'vacuum' (Halliday, 1975). Students get to be involved and actually act in various sociolinguistic situations. Second language acquisition involves mutuality among speakers through the interrelation of any language learning processes that are situated within the sociolinguistic and socio-cultural norms. As Volosinov (1973) declares, "the actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psycho-physiological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances" (p. 94). Second or foreign language learning, therefore, is a socially constructed process just as are all the other socially mediated activities. Since culture is embedded within every aspect of society, language learning, in Seelye's (1984) words, should not be isolated from the society that uses it.

1.1. Aims

Based on this theoretical ground, this paper argues that socio-culturally informative themes selected from English speaking cultures should be integrated into the teaching of English, both in terms of classroom practices and the textbook selection. Given that the authors were trained in English language teaching programs in Turkey and were exposed to English as a foreign language instruction there, the ultimate targeted audience is English language teacher education programs and English language practitioners in the country.

The leading observation underlying this paper is that English language education in primary through high school levels is dependent on massively produced mainstream English language textbooks devoid of the teachers' attempts to integrate the target culture into language teaching and learning. In this regard, it is maintained that culture teaching is inevitably a motivating and engaging component of language teaching and learning. Therefore, it is specifically proposed to language teacher educators, as well as language teachers, in Turkey that they pay closer attention to integrating culture into their classrooms and supplementing the textbooks with the essentials of the target culture. Furthermore, some of the other most commonly applied ways of integrating culture into language education are discussed. At last, a unit plan including three lessons on American holidays is presented to exemplify how culture can be incorporated in English language classrooms in Turkey.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Controversies exist around what kinds of content should be incorporated into a foreign or second language curriculum. Since the early 1970s, momentous changes have occurred in the field of foreign language teaching. The early 1970s witnessed the reform of structural methodologies such as the Grammar Translation Method and Audiolingualism, because it became important that "language was not to be studied but to be learned and spoken" (Byram, 1991, p. 13). After all the transitions from one approach to another, the widely-held belief was that it was essential to teach the target language through meaningful and culture-based content. In order to be successful in real life situations, this, in turn, would help the learners to employ the social rules of that target culture in learning its language.

The social rules of language use require an understanding of the social context in which the language is used, and hence, the language learner ends up with the inevitable culture-specific

context of the foreign or second language class. As Alptekin (2002) puts it, “learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers” (p. 58). Similarly, applied linguists such as Halliday (1975) have suggested that learners should acquire knowledge about how to use the language in order to function successfully in socio-cultural contexts. Thus, language teachers are inevitably supposed to be equipped with target language communicative competence, so that the students can gain access to educational or economic opportunities within the target language setting. What is more important, since acquisition of target language communicative competence entails the integration of both language and its culture, learners should become familiar with the “experience of another language, and a different way of coping with reality” (Alptekin, 2002, p. 59). Similarly, as Risager (1991) notes, speaking with a native speaker includes the ability to act in real life situations, and is not merely a question of knowing the grammar and lexis. Thus, it is important for the learners to be involved in communicative acts, as well as in the reality of the target culture, so that they can understand the cultural references and views that the native speakers of the particular target culture possess.

2.1. The Current Situation: Do Materials Include L2 Culture?

It is widely acknowledged that textbooks are the main materials used in language classes. They may be the teacher, the trainer, the authority, the resource, and the ideology in the foreign language classroom (Hinkel, 1999). Such textbooks are produced massively for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) purposes all over the world, and aim to meet the needs of language learners, so that they can function linguistically and culturally well in English communicative acts. Thus, it is extremely important that these textbooks include the vital components to teach the language, its culture, and are appropriate for learners’ needs, cultural background, and level. Yet, regrettably, certain aspects of the target culture, such as oral and written history, literature, music, drama, dance, visual arts, celebrations, and the lifestyle of native speakers are not always represented in these resources, nor are the intercultural phenomena. To illustrate, textbooks produced at a national level for particular countries mirror the students’ local cultures, rather than the English-speaking cultures. For instance, an EFL textbook for Venezuela, *El Libro de inglés* (Núñez, 1988), has a text describing the country’s chief geographic features, yet this can hardly be new content information for the Venezuelan ninth grade students with whom the book is used. As Hinkel (1999) reports, the sociolinguistic situations, such as asking for and giving directions, take place in Caracas, Venezuela. Other places outside Venezuela are also mentioned, but priority is given to the source culture.

Another example is *English for Saudi Arabia*, by Al-Quarishi, Watson, Hafseth, and Hickman (1999), in which virtually every setting is situated in the source culture. Hinkel (1999, p. 205) conveys the following comments on this textbook: “When the textbook characters greet one another, talk about professions, make Arabian coffee, or talk about going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, they are predominantly Saudi Arabians performing culturally-familiar activities in their own country with their own citizens (in English).” According to Hinkel’s description, none of the maps in the book are of other countries. When there is a text about currency, it discusses only the Saudi Riyal. Learners, therefore, see members of their own culture and in their own context. With regard to the reasons why the source culture is featured so strongly in such textbooks, Hinkel (1999) states that learners are encouraged to talk about their culture through the use of such materials, because then they become aware of their own cultural identity. However, it seems unlikely that students would be able to learn about the target culture, unless teachers and students reflect on the nature of culture, and actually contrast or

compare the cultural aspects likely to be held in common between the native and target cultures.

2.2. Culture Teaching in EFL Classes: Turkey's Case

Similar to the current situation in most, if not all, EFL contexts, in Turkey, too, target language culture is often omitted in the textbooks. To illustrate, the cultural content of an EFL textbook for Turkey, *Spotlight on English* by Dede and Emre (1988), is primarily Turkish. The main themes include Turkish food, history, and weather, all discussed in English. When the textbook characters travel, this is done exclusively within Turkey, even though some characters are English-speaking visitors to the country. The implication is that students learn English to talk to visitors who come to their country, but they are not expected to travel to English-speaking countries or to learn about English-speaking cultures. If they speak with visitors, they can only do so within their Turkish cultural framework, because they have not encountered cultural alternatives, and are therefore, likely to carry their home culture with them in their use of English. Thus, paradoxically, unless native speaker visitors are already familiar with the Turkish culture, they may have problems understanding the Turkish speakers of English due to potentially conflicting cultural norms. In other words, native and non-native speakers use the same language, but communicate on different cultural wavelengths, uninformed about each other's cultural views and values—a classic setup for miscommunication.

Further, EFL textbooks for public schools in Turkey are centrally selected by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, and are forced upon language teachers who do not have a say on what to use in their own classrooms. What's more, though these teachers have the autonomy and responsibility to alter their textbooks and/or develop materials that contain a manifestation of L2 culture, they often fail to do so, due to the reasons such as, but not limited to, overloaded curricula, fear of not knowing about the target language culture themselves and their lack of training to teach culture, and their students' likely negative reactions toward the new cultural norms.

In addition, based on our personal and academic past experiences in Turkey both as foreign language learners and practicing teachers, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that EFL classes have a tendency to focus on linguistic aspects of the language being studied, and hardly ever present to the learners the lifestyle and standards of the target language community to enrich their cultural understanding and to help them build an international awareness and socio-cultural competence. Without clear understanding, recognition, and execution of this wakefulness and knowledge in one's practice of learning and use of language, knowing when to say what, to whom, where, and how, becomes difficult, and this, needless to say, hinders successful communication in the foreign language. However, the lack of teaching culture in EFL classes in Turkey should not be seen as merely caused, although it is influenced by, the deficiencies in the textbooks, but is also directly related to issues, such as language teacher education practices in the country. The absence or shortage of training regarding the cultural assimilation of the target culture, and how that culture can be integrated into classrooms and effectively taught, is potentially leading to the future teachers' lack of knowledge, fear, and ineffective teaching practices with respect to culture. Correspondingly, as Çelik (2005) illustrates, even English language teachers with exceptional mastery of prescriptive rules (i.e., syntax) in the language, let alone language learners at lower levels, may wind up having difficulties in getting their ideas across within the norms of the target language culture, due to their ignorance of the cultural rules underlying successful communication.

Yet, although the teacher training programs in the field of language education fail to provide the necessary means for teachers to be prepared to teach L2 culture, teachers should be conscientious about identifying and recognizing their weaknesses and the insufficiencies in their contexts (i.e., materials), and make an effort to improve themselves and their situation as they look for ways to integrate culture into their classrooms for the sake of inclusive and victorious teaching practices.

2.3. How to Integrate Culture into Language Teaching Texts and Classrooms?

The main argument the authors attempt to articulate is clear by now that teaching culture should be integrated into the foreign language textbooks and classroom practices. Although language teaching materials may not include the target language culture and its teaching, it is the language teachers' responsibility to find practical solutions to this problem to integrate culture into their teaching in one way or another, and it would not be reasonable to assume that language learners will later be exposed to cultural material after they reach mastery of the linguistic features of the language.

The foremost and most important prerequisite for language teachers to incorporate cultural material into their teaching is to make them familiar with the culture of the language they are teaching. Often times, as disclosed earlier, teachers lack the necessary knowledge of the target language culture and training in how to teach it, resulting in a state of insecurity to even approach culture. However, one should have the basic backdrop to be able to effectively help students accomplish the essential skills in language learning to rationalize and identify with the target language culture. This, unlike the widespread misconception, is not the denial of one's own culture or one's absorbing and accepting a foreign culture as ideal. On the contrary, this awareness serves as a safeguard against potential negative attitudes students may encounter when they learn about a new set of norms at odds with the ones of their own, and helps language learners to recognize and appreciate the differences between the two cultures for the benefit of successfully combining form and meaning in language learning.

Subsequently, language teachers should adhere to clear goals and successful instructional strategies to put their cultural awareness into practice to establish an intercultural understanding in the classroom. Seelye (1974) puts forward a number of goals for language teachers to set while teaching culture, which serves as a reference list in the process of selecting, collecting and compiling cultural materials. According to Seelye, teachers should first invoke interest and curiosity about the target culture. Secondly, they should ensure that their students recognize the fact that social factors like age, gender, social class, and ethnicity influence how people use the language. Thirdly, teachers should seek to present to their students the case that language use changes according to whether the particular situation entails an ordinary routine for people of the target culture or is an unusual and unexpected situation (i.e., emergency). Hence, students should be able to make sense of why people of the target culture choose to behave in certain ways in certain situations, and ultimately, acquire the skills to know the proper thing to say, at the appropriate time and place, and to the right people. However, students should avoid oversimplifications by carefully analyzing and assessing the generalizations about the target culture through utilizing a wide range of available sources, such as books and the media, authentic materials from the target culture, and personal experiences, if applicable.

Integrating the target culture into language teaching does not inherently provide a clear-cut framework for teachers to employ. The reason why this process is so fuzzy basically stems from the complex and vast nature of culture. The critical question, at this point, regards what

the teachers should focus on within the wide range of topics or operations occurring in a culture. Correspondingly, language teachers should not be misled by the delusion that including culture in their classrooms is a straightforward act, but should be alert to the fact that selection, development and/or adaptation of cultural materials or topics require tremendous care to ensure numerous premises. To illustrate, such materials, as Brooks (1975) lays out, should be derived from symbolism, values, authority, order, ceremony, love, honor, humor, beauty, and spirit, and should take into consideration and reflect several aspects, such as the life style, uniqueness, common sense, religion, and family values of the speakers of the target language. In light of the issues mentioned and emphasized here, the creative classroom teacher can come up with numerous ideas regarding how to integrate culture into the textbooks and classroom activities. Some of the strategies the authors would like to suggest are the utilization of movies, lectures from native speakers of the target culture, audio-taped interviews with native speakers, video-taped observations of the target language community, and authentic readings and realia. However, it should be noted that the potential activities and strategies are endless, and that each teacher should assess their own context to evaluate the effectiveness of any prospective activity, and should modify any activity or material at hand to fit their students' needs better. To set an example, the authors share a sample unit plan to teach about three American holidays (Please see the Appendix), as they believe that popular themes, such as celebrating festivals, would be a simple and effective way to start approaching and teaching culture in language classrooms.

3. PEDAGOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

The acquisition of cultural knowledge in language learning is defined as intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is the underlying knowledge successful language learners of English acquire through culturally and linguistically integrated English language instruction. Intercultural competence, as part of a broader foreign speaker competence, identifies the ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures (Meyer, 1991). This appropriateness and flexibility imply an awareness of the cultural differences between one's own and the foreign culture. Intercultural competence includes the capacity of establishing one's self identity in the process of cross-cultural mediation, and of helping other people to stabilize their self-identity.

In intercultural foreign language education, the process of foreign language learning engages the learner in the role of a 'comparative ethnographer' (Byram, 1991, p. 19). Entering into a foreign language implies a cognitive modification that has implications for the learner's identity as a social and cultural being, and suggests the need for materials which consider the identity of the learner as an integral factor in developing the ability to function fully in cultural 'third places' (Kramsch, 1993, p. 233-259). To develop cultural awareness alongside language awareness, materials need to provide more than a superficial acknowledgement of cultural identity and address more thoroughly the kind of cultural adjustment that underlies the experience of learning a foreign language. The authors suggest that the following practical tips will be quite useful for classroom teachers.

These tips aim to create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to opening minds to other cultures. With this aim in mind, teachers could apply personalizing activities in order to invoke identification with the students' own realities. The activity could be started by mentioning a remote country. In case students start stereotyping about the country, teachers could simulate the students to talk about their own lives as most students love talking about themselves. This way, they would be able to draw the differences between the distant country

and their own. In addition to personalization activities, discussion activities organized around the elements of the target culture are preferred by most teachers. Consequently, when asked about possible ways of integrating culture into a language class, most teachers may agree on planning 'discussion' activities. However, the authors assert that not every element of the target culture is particularly helpful with lower level learners, and activities such as simple surveys, and question and answer tasks may prove to be more beneficial. If discussion activities are designed, teachers should remind themselves that language learners in EFL contexts, such as Turkey, might not comprehend all that is being explained to them. Thus, if lack of comprehension plays a part, students might lose interest in the target culture.

The issue of making the topics about the target culture as interesting as possible is imperative. The first strategy to engage students' interest is selecting appealing aspects of the target culture to talk about. One interesting facet of culture that attracts the attention and interest of every human being is food and eating behaviors. Teachers could designate one of the class periods as the international food or cuisine day and could bring in ingredients and recipes. Students will basically listen to the simple recipe directions from the teacher and try to prepare simple dishes from the United States, England or another English speaking country. In doing so, students could be put into groups which would allow for exchange of whatever aspect of the target culture each peer might have picked up by that point in time. Lastly, in engaging in all of the culturally integrated activities elaborated on above, teachers should never assume or expect to cover every single aspect within the target culture, and as previously mentioned, should carefully select only the areas that the students are interested in. Finally, the teachers themselves should advance their knowledge of both the students' culture and the target language culture, and should ensure that their materials and lessons feature their familiarity and understanding of both of these cultures to create opportunities for their students to develop their socio-cultural skills.

4. CONCLUSION

Integration of culture into language teaching is, by no doubt, a requirement to pass on general humanistic knowledge. If successful integration takes place, the foreign and/or second language learners of English or any other languages will be able to act flexibly and sensibly along the lines of cultural norms that they encounter within the target language culture.

Throughout the paper, it has been suggested that intercultural competence should be fostered at every stage of the English language learning experience. In doing so, English language learners get to assume the role of a comparative ethnographer and fully comprehend the role of their own identity during this comparison between their own culture and the target culture. Embedded within this claim is that language awareness is not sufficient all by itself. By all means, cultural awareness should be integrated while developing language awareness. At this point, the authors draw attention to the significant role that EFL teachers play in promoting motivation to integrate cultural awareness into language learning. Thus, it has been recommended that EFL teachers should attempt to help the student personalize a particular content by having them discover the differences between their own culture and the target culture. Discussion activities were mentioned as an example for teachers to employ in class. However, it is also cautioned that relevant discussion activities should be designed at a simple level as learners might lose interest in the content. Repeatedly, the main point has been that students' interest in the target culture should be cultivated and maintained at a level in which the students are actively engaged in the material, merely because intercultural competence will make them more aware of their own culture, as well as the target culture. During the

whole process of learning about the target culture, language learning would most commonly be accelerated.

In sum, language learning cannot be detached from the cultural content it inherently carries to the language classrooms. The ideal case for teachers, therefore, would be to create a classroom atmosphere in which questions and discussions about the target culture, comparisons between students' native culture and the target culture will reinforce the students' language learning.

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APPENDIX

Lesson Plans

Holiday Season in the United States

Three Sample Lesson Plans to Teach American Holidays¹

Lesson 1: Thanksgiving (50 Minutes)

Materials Needed: Pictures (of Turkey, turkey and Thanksgiving celebrations in the U.S.), Thanksgiving greeting cards, timeline of American Thanksgiving holiday (adapted from the text at <http://www.thanksgiving.org/2us.html>), Thanksgiving recipes from “Crocker, B. (2001). *Betty Crocker’s cookbook* (9th edition). Foster City, CA: IDG Books” (Pages 62, 132, 298 and 417), a metric conversion guide, a poem: “*Being Thankful*” by Cath available at <http://www.poetspassion.com/mypoem.htm?C=3252>), pens/pencils and the text at <http://www.preservice.org/T0300236/history.htm>

Lesson Objectives: At the end of the lesson:

- 1) The students will have learned “Thanksgiving” and will be able to name at least two/three American customs attached to it,
- 2) The students will have expanded their collaborative learning skills through pair and group work,
- 3) The students will be able to use advanced thinking skills such as evaluation, synthesis, and analysis, and
- 4) The students will be able to check their abilities at getting their points across in speaking and writing, and at comprehension in reading and listening.

Cultural Context: The students go to the United States for a semester to study at a language school there to develop their language skills. At the same time, they have to work part-time at a restaurant to pay for their expenses. They have been staying with an American family.

Sequence of Activities

¹ The unit plan presented here is geared towards English language learners studying at the upper intermediate and advanced levels. These lesson plans and activities are aimed to serve as templates for practitioners to either directly apply in their classrooms or adapt to the appropriate needs and proficiency levels of their students.

Warm-up (5 minutes)

The teacher asks the students what ‘Turkey’ means? S/he further questions the students about whether it makes a meaning change or not if ‘T’ is not capitalized and written in small caps. The teacher, then, shows some ‘Turkey’ and ‘turkey’ pictures to illustrate the difference between these two terms. The teacher asks the students if they know what ‘turkey day’ means; if they think it is a special day in Turkey or a holiday related to turkeys. Later, the teacher shows some pictures from Thanksgiving celebrations and makes it explicit to the students that it is a holiday celebrated in the United States., when Americans have turkey as the traditional meal of the day. Then, the class discusses what they are thankful for, to whom, when and/or where. The teacher shows a poem, “Being Thankful,” to the students on an overhead projector and reads it aloud.

Activity 1: Info Gap “Timeline of American Thanksgiving Holiday” (15 minutes)

The teacher tells the students to suppose that they are taking an American culture class at a language school in the States. They will have a test tomorrow on a timeline of the American Thanksgiving holiday. They took some notes in class when the teacher was talking about the topic, but they are missing some information which they have to complete from their classmates’ notes to study for the test. An information gap activity is commenced. Each student is given a sheet showing the timeline of the American Thanksgiving holiday with some information missing. They are asked to move freely in the class to talk to one another in the target language to complete their sheets. They are advised to refuse to answer the questions if they think they have not been asked in a polite manner. To make the activity more challenging, more than 5 or 6 different sheets are produced, which makes it necessary for each student to talk to at least 5 or 6 students. Since most of the students have different information on their pages, it is not likely that the students will ask the same and/or simple questions such as “What’s missing in number 2?” They have to use different question words and types as well as tenses and structures. The teacher models what the students are expected to do by interacting with two different students:

E.g.1) “Hi Murat, how are you? / Can you tell me who resumed the tradition in 1863? / Thanks” (The teacher is missing the subject of the sentence in his/her sheet: “1863: _____ resumed the tradition in 1863”)

E.g.2) “Hi Serpil, how’s it going? / I will be glad if you could tell me when the Pilgrims and Native Americans enjoyed a harvest feast in Plymouth / I appreciate that. (The teacher is missing the time/year of the event in his/her sheet: “_____ : Pilgrims and Native Americans enjoyed a harvest feast in Plymouth...” When the majority of the students are done, they are asked to compare their sheets with their classmates in groups of four to see if the information in the sheets is the same.

Activity 2: Jigsaw “Thanksgiving Dinner” (15 minutes)

The same students taking an American culture class also work at a chain restaurant in the United States part-time, and they will be preparing Thanksgiving specials for their customers today. Before they can do so, they should review some Thanksgiving recipes from a cookbook. A jigsaw activity is introduced: The students are assigned to teams and each team member is given a recipe for one part of the dinner (Main dish: turkey with lemon rice; bread: corn bread; salad: creamy potato salad; dessert: pumpkin pie) to be experts of these specific dishes. Each student is also given a ‘metric conversion guide’ since Turkish and American measurement and weight units are different. After the students skim the recipe they have been given, each group will have an expert for each food planned. They are free to take notes (**6 min**). Then, all experts for a particular food meet to discuss their understanding of the food (**3**

min). Once every expert within each expert group is comfortable with the information, the teams meet again and each team member shares their knowledge with their team. **(6 min)**

Activity 3: Making a List of the Ingredients (5 minutes)

For health purposes, some customers might want to know what the ingredients are for each of these foods. For this reason, the students are asked to make a list of the ingredients. Then, as the teacher reads aloud the ingredients from the recipe book, the students check to see if they got them right. This activity serves to see how well the experts were able to share information with their teams.

Activity 4: Writing a Thanksgiving Greeting Card (10 minutes)

It was a hectic day for the students: an American culture lesson and a busy day at work (at the restaurant). They still have something to do. Their host family is waiting for them to be home for a Thanksgiving dinner together. A Thanksgiving card would be a good way to show their appreciation and to give them thanks.

The students will be given a chance to pick from a variety of genuine Thanksgiving cards the teacher has brought to the classroom. Then, they will be asked to be as specific as possible when thanking their host family for what they have done so far **(6 min)**.

After this, they will read their cards to their classmates in pairs and get some ideas and comments **(4 min)**.

Activity 5: Homework/Extension

The teacher tells the students that Santa Claus will be visiting their class in the next lesson. S/he wants them to read the texts ‘Who is Santa?’ and ‘What is Christmas’ before they come to the next class. The students are already curious to meet Santa.

Evaluation Criteria: Evaluation Criteria: The main criterion is the students’ participation in the activities. Taking an active role in the implementation of activities is a must. Questions (true/false, comprehension, etc.) and required tasks (role-plays, writing, etc.) during the activities will help the teacher to offer ongoing feedback and will also provide the opportunity to vigorously evaluate the students.

Lesson 2: Christmas (50 Minutes)

Materials Needed: Santa Claus costume, Christmas story (from Bible), a stuffed animal (a dog in Santa’s costume), pictures about Christmas (from “Parish, P. (1986). *Merry Christmas, Amelia Bedelia*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books”), name tags/cards, tapes/post-it notes, board and highlighter, online texts at

<http://www.theholidayspot.com/christmas/history/index.htm>, sample department store pictures (from “Harris, T., & Rowe, A. (1995). *Exploring English 2*. White Plains, NY: Longman”), actual bank checks, store catalogs, valid coupons (for stores), Christmas greeting cards (with addressed envelopes), overhead projector, online texts at

<http://wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm> and

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/7214/newyear.htm>

Lesson Objectives: At the end of the lesson:

- 1) The students will have learned about “Christmas” and will be able to name at least two/three American customs attached to it;
- 2) The students will have learned how to ask for and give information politely;

- 3) The students will learn some basics about shopping in the United States such as ‘redeeming coupons’ and ‘writing checks’;
- 4) The students will have expanded their collaborative learning skills through pair and group work; and
- 5) The students will be able to check their abilities at getting their points across in speaking and writing, and at comprehension in reading and listening.

Cultural Context: The students are continuing their stay in the States. Together with other international friends at school, they go to church as they are curious to know what it is like. Next, they go to a happy hour organized by their school. After the happy hour, they decide to go to a department store all together to shop for Christmas. After all of this fun time, they have to go home and do their assignment for their American Culture class.

Sequence of Activities

Warm-up (5 minutes)

The teacher comes to class in a Santa Claus costume. He tells the students that he has been visiting all of the classrooms in the world before Christmas. He asks them what they know about him and Christmas. He then asks who Jesus Christ is and what Bible is about. He facilitates the discussion with some sample pictures about Christmas.

Activity 1: Story-Telling (15 minutes)

The students are supposed to be at a church service in the United States and the topic is Christ and Christmas. They have to be quiet and listen to it carefully. If they do not hear or understand something, they should kindly ask the teacher or a classmate. Santa tells the students that he will be bringing them to a church service in the States with his reindeers. He will tell a Christmas story from the Bible and they will understand the real meaning of Christmas. He also tells the students that the language of the Bible or the sound system at the church can make it difficult for them to hear or understand the sentences. For that reason, after each sentence he will stop for a minute and throw the stuffed animal (a dog in a Santa costume) to ask in a polite manner for the repetition of the whole sentence or specific information in the sentence. Then, whoever is passed the stuffed animal will answer the question. If s/he does not know the answer, s/he should pass it to another student. Although not expected, in case a few students cannot answer, the teacher will read the same sentence again. This will provide ongoing feedback and self-evaluation for the students. In addition, as Santa tells the story, he will make use of illustrations to make the meaning of unknown words clear (**10 min**).

The teacher models what the students are to do before the story-telling takes place: He utters a sample sentence like “We will celebrate Christmas soon” and asks the class:

‘Could you please tell me what you have heard?’ or ‘Can you repeat the sentence, please?’

‘Could you tell me what will we celebrate soon?’ (**1 min**)

At the end of the activity, the students will be asked some basic questions to check their understanding (**4 min**).

Activity 2: Christmas Party (10 minutes)

The students are invited to a Christmas party. After the service is done, they go there for some fun. They do not know any of the people there. They will introduce themselves, as well as try to get to know others. Each student will be assigned a name, which has something to with Christmas (Santa, Christmas Tree, Mistletoe, Poinsettia: Christmas Flower, Christmas Rose,

Reindeer, Christmas Star, Holy: Christmas Green, the Glastonbury Thorn). Each student will be given a paragraph or two explaining the characteristics of only their name and what made this name important. After they read the information given to them, the party will start. Their names (tags/cards) will be stuck to their foreheads (with tape or post-it notes) so that others can see who they are. The teacher states that all students should try to talk to as many different people as possible. Since there will be students who are assigned the same names, the teacher warns them to avoid talking to people with the same names on their forehead. The main aim is to try to get to know new people! They will not only keep talking about themselves, but should also ask questions and listen to others to get to know them better. Interpersonal relationships are emphasized, so the teacher recommends that the students approach others in a kind way (**5 minutes**). The teacher models what the students are supposed to do and starts the party. After 10 minutes, the party ends. The students are asked what they have learned about others. The teacher puts everyone's name on the board, and the students take turns listing at least one thing under anyone's name they have interacted with (**5 minutes**).

Activity 3: Role Play "Paying for Christmas Shopping" (15 minutes)

After the party, the students decide to go to a department store to buy Christmas gifts for friends and family. The teacher asks the students if they like giving and receiving gifts. S/he tells the students that they will go Christmas shopping at a department store since this is one of the customs. The teacher asks the students what they think a department store is. To help the students understand better, the teacher shows the students several pictures from a department store (furniture, house-wares and appliances, men's and women's apparel and cosmetics) and finally shows a department store picture showing all of these different sections. Then, the teacher gives some examples of famous department stores from the students' countries such as Gima, Migros and Beğendik (**3 min**). The teacher gives some basics about shopping in the United States. The teacher explains the use of coupons and how to write a check and (where the put the name, date, etc) with the help of a sample check s/he will shows the students using an overhead projector. The teacher tells the students about coupons, which help people to get discounts when purchasing items. The teacher mentions to the students that paying in cash is not common in the United States and that they should write checks or pay by credit card (**3 min**). Later, the students are distributed catalogues from a department store, as well as coupons and checks. First, they are asked to think about what they want to buy and what coupons they want to redeem for these items. Then, they will role-play the shopping activity in pairs by taking the roles of the customer and cashier. The teacher wants the students to be creative and ask as many questions as they need to for various things. She reminds them that they have to be kind and ask politely. (**2 min**)

The teacher models what s/he expects the students to do by using puppets and playing both roles:

A: "Hi, how're you?"

B: "Great, thanks! What can I help you with today?"

A: "I would like to pay for this fragrance and watch"

B: "Ok, your total is \$25."

A: "Can I redeem this coupon?"

B: "Sure! Your new total is \$20. Are you going to pay by credit card or write a check?"

A: "I will write a check. (S/he writes it) Here you go."

B: “Thank you. Anything else today?”

A: “No, thank you!”

B: “Do you want the receipt in the bag?”

A: Yes, please. Thank you! Have a nice day!”

B: “You too!” (1 min)

Finally, 3 or 4 pairs are encouraged to role-play in front of the class. They are free to look at their notes (6 min).

Activity 4: Writing a Christmas Greeting Card (5 minutes)

It is time for the students to go home and do their assignment for their American Culture class. They are supposed to write a letter to Santa Claus.

The teacher tells the students to imagine that they have to write a Christmas greeting for Santa as an assignment for the American Culture class they are taking at a language school in the United States. S/he reminds the students that Santa would like them to be good boys and girls and to use polite questions to ask for what they want as a gift for Christmas. S/he then distributes the greeting cards and addressed envelopes, and tells the students that s/he will be collecting them to mail to Santa’s address:

Santa Claus,

Christmas Cottage,

Ho-ho Lane,

North Pole

Activity 5: Homework/Extension: The teacher tells the students that New Year’s is coming and they will be learning about an American New Year’s. S/he asks the students to visit <http://wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm> and <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/7214/newyear.htm> to get a general idea of why people celebrate the coming of a new year

Evaluation Criteria: The main criterion is the students’ participation in the activities. Taking an active role in the implementation of activities is a must. Questions (true/false, comprehension, etc.) or required tasks (role-plays, writing, etc.) during the activities will help the teacher to constantly evaluate the students’ progress and to provide prompt feedback.

Lesson 3: New Year’s (50 Minutes)

Materials Needed: Pictures of New Year’s celebrations in the United States, an authentic letter (with a stamped envelope) from an American (Jennifer), a piece of paper, note cards

Lesson Objectives: At the end of the lesson:

- 1) The students will have learned about New Year’s and will be able to name at least two or three American customs attached to it;
- 2) The students will be able to use advanced thinking skills such as evaluation, synthesis, and analysis;
- 3) The students will have learned how to ask for and give information politely;
- 4) The students will have expanded their collaborative learning skills through pair and group work; and

5) The students will be able to check their abilities at getting their points across in speaking and writing, and in comprehension in reading and listening.

Cultural Context: The students come back to Turkey to spend the New Year's with their family and friends. A few days later, they receive a letter from one of their American friends in the United States. They should write this friend back before they meet their friends at a café.

Sequence of Activities

Warm-up (5 minutes)

The teacher asks the students what they have discovered in the readings about New Year's. Then, the students discuss what "new year" means to them. The teacher shows the students some pictures of New Year's and its celebrations in the United States, and asks the students where they think these pictures are from and why.

Activity 1: Reading a Letter (15 minutes)

The students are back home in Turkey to spend New Year's with their families. They have made many American friends during their stay in the United States and one of their friends has sent them a letter for New Year's.

The teacher tells the students to read the letter they have just received from their friend living in the United States. Before they start reading (silent), they have to guess the answers to a true/false exercise (**2 min**).

Then, they can read and see if they have the correct answers. It is not anticipated that the students will have difficulty in understanding the letter since their friend gave the meanings of the unknown words in parentheses as s/he knew that they would not know some words (**7 min**). When the students are done, they are going to give answers to a set of questions about the letter. As they try to find answers, they are free to scan through the text (**6 min**).

Activity 2: Writing a Letter (15 minutes)

The students should send a reply to their friend's letter. The students are put in pairs to discuss how Turkish people celebrate the New Year before they are asked to write a response to Jennifer's letter (**2 min**).

The teacher tells them that the letter should be at least 2-3 paragraphs long and it should provide information about how Turkish people celebrate the New Year with examples. The students are advised to write their letters on a separate piece of paper since they will randomly exchange the letters with their classmates when they are done (**3 min**).

Each student will evaluate their partner's letter in regard to the criteria given by the teacher in advance: "Does it give examples of at least two/three things Turkish people do for fun on New Year's Eve and/or day?; Does it talk about any special food Turkish people eat for New Year's?; Are there any examples of special occasions which take place on New Year's, such as religious events, games, parades and television programs?; Is the tone of the letter friendly? (Can you see language functions such as *greeting, thanking* and *farewell*?)" (**5 min**)

The students are then encouraged to share what they have read. The students report the class on their classmates' letters; what they have found to be interesting, if they have learned something new, etc. (**5 min**).

Activity 3: Meeting with Friends (15 minutes)

After they write the letter and mail it, the students will meet their friends, who they have not seen for a few months. They will want to know about the United States and the differences

between Turkish and American cultures. The main topic of interest in the conversation will be holiday customs. The teacher tells the students to discuss in groups of four what New Year's customs they have in Turkey, as well as Turkish cultures (**4 min**). Next, each group is given a note card with an American New Year's custom on it. They are asked to compare and contrast this custom to theirs in their groups: Is it similar, same or totally different? In what ways? (**6 min**) One person from each group will report on what they have discussed in their groups (**5 min**).

Activity 4: Homework/Extension: The students are asked to do a project work or portfolio in any style and format to present what they have learned from the unit. They are given some ideas: For instance, they can design a newspaper or a holiday guide for tourists. They are encouraged to synthesize the information passed on to them through the study of the unit and to be as creative as possible. Pair or group work is promoted, but individual projects are accepted as well. This will be a cultivating activity for the students and will make up some portion of the total evaluation and assessment.

Evaluation Criteria: The main criterion is the students' participation in the activities. Taking an active role in the implementation of activities is a must. Questions (true/false, comprehension, etc.) or required tasks (role-plays, writing, etc.) during the activities will assist the teacher in assessing the students and providing feedback.