

Cultures in the Foreign Language Curriculum: Instructors' Views at a State University

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Abstract

This study investigates how the concept of 'culture' is situated within the curriculum of a school of foreign languages by instructors at a state university in Western Turkey. Data were collected in two phases. First, all instructors at the research site were invited to complete a survey exploring how teachers viewed the place of culture in the curriculum and their practice and the choices they made in order to develop their own cultural awareness. After reviewing the responses of the participants (N=85), we categorized the patterns in three groups. Those with high utilization levels of culture were coded "HUC"; the ones with moderate utilization levels of culture were labelled "MUC" and those with low utilization levels of culture were named "LUC". Based on a purposeful stratified sampling procedure, up to 4 participants were selected from each of these clusters and interviewed (n=10). The qualitative analysis of the interview data revealed that the instructors faced challenges related to self-development and integrating culture(s) in teaching. These were associated with the structure of the curriculum and pressures caused by the push to focus on too much content in limited time in the classroom. While some instructors referred to concepts associated with target culture(s) more, others predominantly stated that they incorporated local cultural elements (Turkish) in their instruction. The results underscore the need for the restructuring of the curriculum and in-service teacher education focusing on the place of culture(s) in foreign language classes. The knowledge generated in this research report is relevant for teachers, administrators, and researchers interested in language teaching and teacher education. Through participation in the study and review of the disseminated results, instructors in this setting reported having experienced reflective thinking on the issue.

Keywords: Cultures in language education, teacher education, curriculum, foreign language education in Turkey



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Yabancı Dil Müfredatındaki Kültürler: Bir Devlet Üniversitesinde Eğitimcilerin Görüşleri

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Öz

Bu çalışma, 'kültür' kavramının, Batı Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesindeki eğitimciler tarafından bir Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu müfredatına nasıl yerleştirildiğini araştırmaktadır. Veriler iki aşamada toplandı. İlk olarak, araştırma alanındaki tüm eğitimcilerin, öğretmenlerin müfredatta kültürün yerini ve uygulamalarını ve kendi kültürel farkındalıklarını geliştirmek için yaptıkları seçimleri nasıl gördüklerini araştıran bir anketi doldurmaları istendi. Katılımcıların cevaplarını inceledikten sonra (N = 85) katılımcılar üç gruba ayrıldı. Kültürü yüksek oranda kullananlar "HUC" olarak kodlandı; orta düzeyde kültür seviyesine sahip olanlara "MUC", düşük oranda kültürel bilgi kullananlara "LUC" adı verilmiştir. Amaçlı bir tabakalı örnekleme prosedürüne dayanarak, bu kümelerin her birinden en çok 4 kişi olacak şekilde katılımcı seçildi ve mülakat yapıldı (n = 10). Görüşme verilerinin nitel analizi, öğretmenlerin kendini geliştirme ve kültür (ler) i öğretime entegre etme ile ilgili zorluklarla karşılaştığını ortaya koydu. Bunlar, müfredatın yapısı ve sınıfta sınırlı bir süre içinde çok fazla içeriğe odaklanmanın neden olduğu baskılarla ilişkiliydi. Bazı eğitimciler hedef kültür (ler) ile ilgili kavramlara daha çok atıfta bulunurken, diğerleri ağırlıklı olarak eğitimlerine yerel kültürel unsurları (Türkçe) eklediklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Sonuçlar, yabancı dil derslerinde kültür (ler) in yerine odaklanan müfredat ve hizmet içi öğretmenlik eğitiminin yeniden yapılandırılmasına duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Bu araştırma raporunda üretilen bilgiler öğretmenler, yöneticiler ve dil öğretimi ve öğretmen eğitimi ile ilgilenen araştırmacılar ile ilgilidir. Çalışmaya katılım ve yayılan sonuçların gözden geçirilmesi yoluyla, bu ortamdaki eğitimcilerle konuyla ilgili yansıtıcı düşünceye sahip olduklarını bildirdi.

Anahtar Kelimeler:Dil eğitiminde kültürler, öğretmen eğitimi, müfredat, Türkiye'de yabancı dil eğitimi



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Introduction

Recent conceptualizations in education have underscored the concept of culturality with an emphasis on dynamic cultural processes in language and intercultural communication (Dervin, 2016). Culture can be defined as “the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning” (Bates & Plog, 1991, p. 7). Kramsch (1998) associates culture with “the membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings” (p. 10). In this article, instructors’ perspectives on teaching culture will be investigated. The issue can be discussed in three categories proposed by Byrd et al. (2011):

- (i) Cultural Products (tangible products-literature, art, crafts and song, dance)
- (ii) Cultural Practices (knowledge of what to do, when, and where)
- (iii) Cultural Perspectives (ideas and attitudes)

In foreign language education, culture has a pivotal role (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1996). Linguistic competence alone is not sufficient for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999). Culture and language learning involve a dynamic interrelationship (Street, 1993). This cultural context defines the language patterns that are being used when particular persons come together under certain circumstances at a particular time and place. This combination of elements involving language patterns that are being used when particular persons communicate always have situated cultural meanings which influence language use. In foreign language classes, most teachers lack the time and confidence to teach cultural themes in depth. Instead, they focus on linguistic elements (e.g., Castro, Sercu, & Méndez Garcia, 2004; Sercu, 2006). Furthermore, a recent Hong Kong study of ‘cross-cultural encounters’ between native-English teachers and local students found that typical classroom activities “required students to participate with only their institutional identities” and engaging in procedures such as reading questions and answers out of textbooks (Luk & Lin, 2007, p. 196). Since there are always ‘other’ priorities in language classes, there is never enough time to allocate to culture (Sercu, 2006).

In the Turkish education context, many language teachers prioritize preparation for high-stakes tests and even ignore aspects of the curriculum. Some place more emphasis on grammar because the language tests in Turkey primarily include multiple-choice items, with little or no emphasis on productive skills. Therefore, some teachers tend to put emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills, rather than sociopragmatic elements such as cultural literacy. A study exploring Turkish pre-service teachers’ views and practices on this issue, found that culture was not given sufficient importance by the participants (Atay, 2005). Among the recommendations proposed as a result of the study were: the need for readings, reflections, and discussions on cultures and their place in language education among prospective teachers. Some studies investigated teachers’ attitudes towards the target culture in the Turkish context. For instance, Çamlıbel (1998) investigated Turkish teachers’ perspectives towards target culture teaching and found that participants recognized the importance of target culture teaching and tried to integrate culture in their language classes.

Some teachers and students even consider culture teaching/learning as a threat to their local identities. Discourses producing images that represent unequal power relations are resisted by some language learners (Kubota, 2003). For example, English language teaching has often been associated with globalization and world homogenization steered by the West (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 39). Because of such discursive associations between the English language and politically powerful nations such as the United States and Great Britain, many learners consider the language (and associated cultural practices and perspectives) a significant threat to their local identities (Canagarajah, 1999; Ryan, 2003). In contrast to these different views on cultural themes in language education, some scholars emphasize the importance

of teaching target cultures so as to increase the efficiency of language teaching. In relation to these stances, which culture(s) would be included in the foreign language classroom is also a contentious issue.

Culture(s) Associated with the Target Language

Familiarity with the culture(s) associated with the target language is significant for language learners because they need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. They have to understand that, in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Target language cultures are necessary for a fuller understanding of the true meanings of a language (Byram & Fleming, 1998). Thus, the teachers need to make the target culture part of their lessons by exposing students to aspects of it.

Some teachers believe that the more exposure to the target culture students will have, the more fluent they will be in the target language. As Schumann (1978) stated, "the degree to which the learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree which he acquires the target language" (p.34). However, it is also important that students not be 'required' to learn the target culture. There could always be a negotiation of the target culture(s) and native culture(s). In this regard, Adaskou et al. (1990) reported the disfavor among some teachers about EFL classroom practices which made students draw comparisons between their own culture and the English language culture. Classroom strategies designed to break down native and target cultural barriers may be considered as attempts to invalidate the native culture, which might lead to students' developing defensive feelings toward the native culture and hostility toward the target culture (Kelman, 1996). These activities may also result in dissatisfaction among students about their own native culture. As a result of this, some students might start to think of their indigenous social and cultural practices as being inferior to those in the other culture. Thus, teachers should be very careful while teaching the target culture.

Local (Native) Culture(s)

Teaching the target culture alone would not always satisfy both learners and teachers and putting emphasis merely on the target culture would mean ignoring local realities. As Nault (2006) noted, "it makes little sense to speak of a 'target culture' of the English language or to suggest that American or British culture alone are worthy of study regarding that English is now spoken worldwide" (p. 324). Thus, it is very natural that students may even see something that is related to their own culture in the language classes. They may want to read texts that explain a well-known tradition of the country they are living in. Teaching local culture all the time is not without its potential demerits. In her survey of ELT texts from Morocco, Chile and Japan, McKay (2004) found that many publications that had the intention of challenging Western cultural dominance ironically ended up linking English to the cultures of native speakers. A different problem that can result from a narrow focus on local content is that students may be prevented from learning about cultures outside their country. Too often, such discussions would leave "the students in their native cultural mindsets and failed to engage them in making sense of a reality other than their own" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 27). Thus, rather than teaching only the target or native culture, teachers could try to include cultural elements from all over the world, which brings up the issue of "intercultural education".

Intercultural Education

Teachers can contribute to broadening their students' horizons by introducing various cultures (Karaman & Tochon, 2007; Tochon & Karaman, 2009). Such exposure can also help students to reflect on their existing prejudices about other cultures. As Gaston (1992) noted, "to minimize misunderstandings when communicating within international, cross-cultural and multicultural settings; English learners clearly will require heightened cultural awareness or the recognition that culture affects perception and that culture influences values, attitudes, and behavior" (as cited in Nault, 2006, p. 320).

Interculturality is an "awareness and a respect of difference, as well as the socioaffective capacity to see oneself through the eyes of others" (Kramsch, 2005, p. 553). According to Menard-Warwick (2009), "interculturality does not mean agreement; it means understanding, and it can be essential to the development of responsive action" (p. 44). As English has become a lingua franca, teachers are not constrained to exploring only the target culture(s). Most of the time, people learn English to communicate

with other non-native speakers of the language just like themselves. As Nault (2006) noted, "when EFL/ESL speakers do communicate in English with people outside their speech communities they frequently do so with other non-natives. In other words, they often find themselves using English in situations where knowledge of British or American culture is of no practical use" (p. 318).

As Yoshida (1996) also pointed out, "teaching culture must include individualized realization of cultural traits" (p. 98), which might prevent students from overgeneralizing elements they learn about other cultures. An individual is linked to several different elements related to cultures (gender, education, age, nation, interests, etc) any of which all indicate that people experience their own culture at different degrees at different times (Yoshida, 1996). People do not necessarily behave in accordance with cultural norms that can be generalized to their own society.

There are some other elements related to culture teaching processes in language education such as coursebooks, teachers' roles, and the language teaching methodology. As Alptekin (1992) underscored, "most textbook writers are native speakers who consciously or unconsciously transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of their own English-speaking society -usually the United States or United Kingdom" (p. 138). Teachers' background, the context of teaching and their attitudes towards the incorporation of culture into language instruction influence the design of lessons as well (Bayyurt, 2006). In the literature on appropriate cultural pedagogies, three recommendations stand out: problematizing cultural representations (Harklau, 1999; Kubota, 1999, 2003), encouraging dialogue (Guilherme, 2002; Kramsch, 1993), and promoting interculturality (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2005).

Overall, in the related literature, there is an emphasis on the need for teachers' awareness of the importance of culture(s) and their role in language education. Yet, there is also a diversity in reported views and practices related to culture teaching in these studies. In this study, based on these arguments emerging from the literature and considering the scarcity of research on instructors' cultural pedagogical views and practices, the researchers chose to inquire into how instructors view the place of culture(s) in foreign language curriculum in higher education and what they do both in class and for professional development related to this domain. Therefore, this article explores how instructors at a state university in Turkey situate cultures in the foreign language education curriculum and their practice so that it will give some insights to the academics about both the perceptions and practices of Turkish instructors of English language in a higher education context.

Method

In this case study, we employed two-phases. The first phase involved the use of a descriptive survey. A survey was administered only to explore the opinions of instructors related to teaching culture as part of foreign language education at the state university. At the next phase, the clusters that would form the basis for sampling for interviews were identified. In this case study, we targeted "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (Gall et al., 2003, p. 545). Case study researchers do fieldwork by watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language in their own natural settings. The case study is consistent with qualitative research in general and it is the researcher's interpretive acts that give importance, order, and form to the study (Peshkin, 2000). In order to generate thick descriptions, we sought depictions of the phenomena and the context accompanied by the meanings and intentions which were inherent in these situations (Geertz, 1973). Thus, for this inquiry we utilized a mixed methods design "involving the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 164).

Setting

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) at an urban-state university located in Western Turkey. This SFL was founded in 2006. There were 100 instructors that were employed based on full-time work contracts at the time of this research project. The university campus is located in a central area of the city. Public transportation to the school from different parts of the city is available. The metropolis where the university is located is home to numerous cultural attractions and world renowned historical sites. Members of the campus community have easy access to these locations. On this mid-size university campus, there are five faculties. There is also a café in each faculty. At the SFL, a series of events

featuring student projects, competitions, films, and other cultural artifacts are organized annually during a week focusing on foreign cultures related to the languages taught at this institution. In this research endeavor, we explored the thoughts of instructors working at SFL on the use of cultures in foreign language curriculum and instruction as well as the degree in terms of importance attached to this issue.

Participants

Of the 100 instructors working at the institution, 93 agreed to participate in the study. 90 participants completed and returned the surveys. 5 surveys were excluded due to erroneous completion by the participants. Survey data from 85 participants were analyzed. The average age of the participants was 38.8. 89.4 % of participants were women and 10.6 % were men.

Most of the instructors (87.1 %) had learnt English in Turkey, whereas 11 instructors learned English language out of Turkey, in places such as Germany, Bulgaria and the USA as a foreign language when they were in primary school. Most of the participants (86%) had been abroad, while 12 of them had never been abroad. Most of them went abroad on holiday and for educational purposes, and they stayed in their destinations for more than four weeks.

Of the 85 participants who completed the survey, 10 were interviewed. 9 of the all interviewees had more than 10 years of working experience in this SFL apart from the one having 5 years of working experience. Thus, they were all familiar with the system of this SFL and they were regarded as experienced teachers. Among these teachers, four had M.A. degrees and two were pursuing graduate degrees at the time of study. The first researcher also had some conversations with the students to provide a deeper understanding of the research context.

Data Collection

Instruments

The survey

The survey in the study entitled “An examination of culture knowledge: A study of L2 teachers’ and teacher educators’ beliefs and practices” by Byrd et al. (2011) was adapted. The survey was then sent to four expert faculty members from English Language Teaching departments. All experts who reviewed the survey were involved in culture teaching studies. Additionally, two instructors in the SFL where the study was conducted provided feedback on the survey. Minor revisions were made in the light of the feedback received from the reviewers in the Turkish context. Furthermore, two more items were added to the original survey for the researchers to determine the interviewers in accordance with the results of those sections. One section focusing on how instructors teach culture (24th item) and how frequently they incorporate it and another section focusing on teachers’ views on culture and its place in the foreign language classroom (25th item) were constructed. These sections were piloted with 10 instructors working in the SFL and these sections were found reliable in terms of the results provided by the statistical software program as follows:

Table 1 - Reliability Statistics of Item 24

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.858	10

Table 2 - Reliability Statistics of Item 25

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.874	9

The final section of the survey elicited demographic information about the participants.

The Interviews

In this research context, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data right after the survey entries were explored. The interviews were the focal data collection tools in this study as this is a descriptive case study. The interview protocol was revised with input resulting from expert peer review. The finalization of the interview questions completed after the researchers had taken the feedback of three

different academicians who had conducted cultural studies beforehand. All 10 interviewees were given the choice for location of the interview, and all participants chose to be interviewed in similar comfortable settings (e.g. café, office). The interviews were conducted in Turkish, the mother tongue of the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and all recordings were transcribed verbatim.

The procedure

Participants' engagement with surveys can tend to be rather shallow and the survey data reveal little about the nature of the context. To address this shortcoming, in this case study, a qualitative exploration was necessary (Dörnyei, 2007). This consequently improved the content representation of the survey and the interval validity of the study. This structuring is labelled "sequential explanatory design" (Creswell et al., 2003). Access to the research site was based on ethics committee approval and the first author had an emic perspective, which requires member-checking and viewing the data from the participants' perspectives. Emic perspective is generally used when one is doing an interpretive research such as a case study just like this. Participants were familiar with the first researcher and this ensured the trust crucial for experience sharing in qualitative data collection. Data were collected in two phases. First, all instructors at the research site were invited to complete a survey exploring how teachers viewed the place of culture in their practice and the choices they made in order to determine their own cultural awareness especially taking the 24th and 25th items of the questionnaire. After analyzing the responses of the participants (n=85), we systematically categorized the patterns in three groups by looking at the descriptive statistics of those items.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation values in responses to Item 24

	\bar{x}	σ
1. I provide explicit descriptions about specific cultural elements in my lessons.	3.4	0.89
2. I do research on cultural aspects of course readings before my lessons.	3.08	1.01
3. I provide additional readings focusing on cultural elements to my students.	2.8	0.89
4. I provide videos including cultural elements to my students.	2.5	1.02
5. I provide excerpts from the Internet about cultural issues to the students.	2.8	0.99
6. I recommend books about different cultural elements to my students.	3.3	1.15
7. I create opportunities for my students to organize role-plays focusing on cultural themes.	2.8	1.27
8. I encourage my students to have pen-pals or facebook friends from other countries in order to learn about other cultures.	3.6	1.15
9. My students and I share our cultural experiences in our course discussions.	3.7	1.09
10. I make comparisons between American/British cultures and Turkish culture(s) in my lessons.	4	0.82

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation values in responses to Item 25

	\bar{x}	σ
1. Culture and language are not separable.	4.5	0.78
2. Culture should be explicitly taught in language lessons.	3.8	0.97
3. "Cultural aspects of language teaching" should be introduced in English Language Teacher preparation programs.	4.1	0.76
4. World politics has an impact on how cultural elements are introduced in courses.	3.6	0.75
5. Teachers should focus on the linguistic features of the language rather than cultural aspects.	2.5	1.04
6. Teaching American/British cultures would be a threat to students' national identities.	1.5	0.79
7. Teachers can teach English without introducing American/British cultures.	2	1.12
8. Knowing about the American/British cultures will facilitate students' successful communication with speakers of English.	4.3	0.85
9. Cultural elements of the English language should only be taught to students who have a strong interest in them.	2.3	1.07

By looking at the mean scores of the instructors, they were divided into three groups by the researchers. Those with high utilization levels of culture were coded "HUC"; the ones with moderate utilization levels of culture were labelled "MUC" and those with low utilization levels of culture were named "LUC". Based on a purposeful stratified sampling procedure, 3 participants from HUC cluster, 4 participants from MUC group and 5 participants from LUC group were selected and interviewed. The selection of these interviewees and the division of the groups were based on the descriptive statistics obtained from the survey entries as well as the willingness of these participants to contribute to this study. Only ten people were interviewed because of the time limitations and the duration of the every interview took nearly one hour.

Data Analysis

Two different types of data collection methods were used in this study: surveys and interviews. Surveys functioned as instruments depicting the patterns in this setting and identifying participants with varying practices and opinions. Descriptive statistical analyses involved calculating frequencies and computing arithmetic mean values for each set of likert scale item responses. This initial pattern analysis functioned as the sampling base for recruiting participants with varying opinions for semi-structured interviews. For the analysis of the interviews, an impressionistic reading of the transcriptions was done first, in order to find the different categories that can be analyzed under different titles. Category here refers to "a construct that refers to a certain type of phenomenon mentioned in the database" (Gall et al., 2003, p. 454). After categorizing the qualitative data, the researchers did member-checking and shared transcripts and initial emergent categories with participants in order to verify the accuracy and completeness of the categories

derived from the qualitative data. These categories were also examined so as to find the subcategories under each category. The categories were also checked by both researchers so as to increase the inter-rater reliability. Afterwards, the researchers did interpretational analysis which involved “a process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 453). The researchers needed an interpretive zone which involved “a process when the researchers bring together their different kinds of knowledge, experience, and beliefs to forge new meanings throughout the inquiry in which they are engaged” (Wasser & Bresler, 1996, p. 13). In reporting the results direct quotes were also used so as to present the reader personal stories of the participants.

To demonstrate compliance with interpretive criteria for qualitative case study findings, the standards framed by Miles and Huberman (1994) were addressed. We summarize how these standards were handled below.

Objectivity/Confirmability: In the analysis, we reflected on what might be considered as researchers’ biases, values, and affective states and took measures to have a neutral stance while observing and interpreting participant perspectives. To address this area, we also explicitly described the qualitative methods with sufficient detail. The sequence of data collection, processing, and transformation in relation to how we drew conclusions can be followed.

Reliability/Dependability/Auditability: To address concerns related to this domain, we carefully designed our data collection instruments and procedures in line with our research questions. We also explicitly described the data collector’s (first author) role in the research site. Furthermore, data were collected with attention to representation of various strata (e.g. participants with various opinions related to the research questions) related to the theme explored within this setting. In addition, the generation of categories and interpretive analytical steps were confirmed by two researchers. Initial survey and interview protocols were also reviewed by expert peers.

Internal Validity/Credibility/Authenticity: To address these considerations, we generated descriptions of the setting and events thoroughly. Our triangulation among complementary methods and sources of data led to conclusions that matched. The conclusions were also confirmed by study participants during member checking.

External Validity/Transferability/Fittingness: While reporting methods, we provided the features of the sample thoroughly and this would make possible comparisons with similar samples from other settings. The sampling method we used to identify interviewees made sufficient theoretical diversity possible and can be employed elsewhere. Regarding the reporting of results, we highlight areas that may be of relevance to other similar settings (related to the degree of generalizability of findings).

Utilization/Application: The findings and data from this study have been stored and data can be made accessible with minor restrictions such as those related to confidentiality of identities in accordance with the ethics committee guidelines. The knowledge generated in this research report is relevant for teachers, administrators, and researchers interested in language teacher education. Through participation in the study and review of the disseminated results, instructors in this setting reported having experienced reflective thinking on the issue.

Findings

How do the Instructors View the Place of Cultures in Foreign Language Curriculum and Instruction?

The instructors in the MUC (Moderate Utilization levels of Culture) and LUC (Low Utilization levels of Culture) groups were not that conscious while choosing a career in the ELT field whereas the ones in HUC (High Utilization levels of Culture) groups were conscious enough to explain why they became language teachers. They also categorized the place of culture(s) in language classes as “very important”. MUC group members also accepted that culture is an “important” part of language classes while the ones in LUC group did not agree with their counterparts. All instructors in the MUC group said that they would learn a lot from their colleagues about culture because of the huge number of instructors working in that school of foreign languages but LUC and HUC group members did not agree on this issue because HUC members said that they would benefit from their colleagues for the improvement of their cultural knowledge if they were native speakers or if they belonged to different cultural groups outside Turkey. However, all the members of these three groups reached a consensus on that the curriculum and the textbooks that they were covering directly affected their way of culture teaching. They all complained about the amount of

content in the curriculum and the frequency of Anglo-Saxon culture presentations in the textbooks. When discussing how they improved their knowledge of culture(s), most interviewees reported having conversations with English language speakers if they are able to find such individuals. For these participants, expanding their knowledge of culture(s) is associated with residing in a foreign community for some time. However, due to insufficient funds, almost all of these teachers expressed not being able to reside abroad for this purpose.

How do the Instructors Teach Culture(s)?

In response to how often they taught culture in classes, 83 % of the instructors who participated in the survey noted that they did not integrate culture teaching into their lessons all the time because of the large amount of content they had to cover as part of the curriculum. This was also confirmed by the interviewees who claimed that they did not allocate enough time for culture because they had some other topics that they had to cover so as to meet the demands of the program.

When asked which cultures to teach in classes, most instructors said that they paid more attention to the target culture than their native (Turkish) culture. They also reported that the British culture was more prevalent in textbooks that were used in the SFL. Among the interviewees, MUC1 and MUC2 stated that they gave importance to the American culture first and then the Turkish culture because they said they were familiar with the American culture and they thought it would be more beneficial for students. They stated that they mentioned the Turkish culture just to compare it with the American culture. However MUC3 and MUC4 stated that their first focus was Turkish culture in their classes because their students were familiar with their own culture, Turkish culture. This necessitated starting with Turkish culture first and then moving on with either American or British culture. MUC4, on the other hand, noted that it was beneficial for students to be exposed to both the UK and the USA culture(s):

You can teach them things in fifteen minutes through a cultural video or song, which would otherwise take you to teach them in 3 hours without using them.

MUC4 also emphasized the importance of teaching about target culture(s) just like her colleagues in the same group because it made it easier for her students to understand in a contextualized environment. The interviewees in the HUC group attached the greatest importance to American and British culture(s). They mentioned referring to the Turkish culture occasionally as well. HUC1 said that she taught American culture most because it facilitated the language teaching process and for students to internalize the language in a better way. She said:

I teach culture because I think it is vital to understand the perspective of the language and culture. For instance, to be sick of it means I am bored in English but in Turkish culture we may associate sickness with something good or holy due to our perspective and religious beliefs but it is not like that in English.

For this participant, putting more emphasis on teaching about the target culture is considered important because this would make students understand the logic of the language that they were learning. Otherwise, they would misunderstand some phrases and connotations.

HUC3 said she firstly gave importance to British culture because the books they used were published by British publishing houses but she added that she tried her best to attach as much importance to American culture as she did to British culture because this would help students to perceive the English language system easily. HUC3 emphasized the necessity of knowing about the target culture and its traits but she also accepted that she mentioned Turkish culture in her lessons as well in order to make comparisons.

Interviewees in the LUC group all said that they attached importance to the Turkish culture the most in their lessons. This was because both teachers and students shared this common culture. When asked whether it would be beneficial to teach the target culture(s) in addition to the Turkish culture, LUC1 stated:

The USA and the UK are the countries where the English language lives and stays alive. As the language progresses gradually, it would be effective to give examples by referring to the cultures of these countries. I certainly accept the benefits and advantages of providing such an environment but I do not supply it not because of the fact that I do not believe in the benefit, but because I do not have such working conditions here.

She said she wanted to teach the target culture(s) but she could not do it because of the lack of facilities at the school. LUC3 did not approach the issue as positively as LUC1. He opposed to discussing American and British culture(s) in his classes. He said:

I do not want to talk about Anglo-Saxon culture in my class but I want to make my students aware of the fact that this language is a tool to communicate with people outside our country. We have considered the language as a set of rules by forcing on grammatical structures for ages but this is not the way that I affirm. However, we can bring a native-speaker to the class just to show students that English language is a communication tool to express our own culture.

This participant articulated that the only purpose of teaching English should be to make students aware that they needed it to communicate with other people living out of our country. He refused the idea of presenting target culture elements in lessons.

The instructors interviewed were also asked what had prevented them from teaching about cultures in particular circumstances and why. All of the instructors in the MUC group said that lack of facilities and authentic materials prevented them from teaching cultures. MUC1, MUC2, and MUC4 said that they encountered some technical problems with the equipment at the institution. When technical problems are not solved, they are unable to show the videos/songs that they included in their lesson plans. Such hurdles discouraged them in teaching. MUC1 and MUC4 also complained about the curriculum of the school, with reference to the large amount of content to be covered.

HUC2 also complained about the curriculum because she said she had lots of things to do and she even offered some extra hours for her students to stay in the class so as to keep up with the curriculum because the time never seemed to be enough especially when she was teaching something extra about cultural knowledge related to the topic. She also mentioned the lack of materials as a concern. She stated:

I bring my own materials to the class in order to make some additions to the reading text that we cover. I bring my laptop within which I have some photos and pictures that I show to my students. Without them, it would be impossible for me to do some additional cultural teaching.

HUC1 and HUC3 in the same group complained about encountering cultural bias towards elements of other cultures among students when they teach culture(s). They resist learning things that do not belong to them. HUC3 stated that she either avoided teaching culture or she limited its inclusion in her teaching in order to not be viewed as a person who promoted target culture(s). For HUC3, such concerns were particularly emerging in classes where students' emphasized religiosity.

All instructors in the LUC group expressed a lack of motivation for teaching culture(s). For LUC1 and LUC3, not incorporating culture teaching was due to the structure of the curriculum. LUC1 said:

Personal efforts are important everywhere but the institution should create a mentality for us to teach culture because I do not feel motivated enough to teach culture individually in my class as we have lots of things to cover in the curriculum so I cannot allocate time to teach culture. However, if the culture teaching is also given importance within the curriculum, I will be compelled to teach it anyhow.

In addition to complaining about the amount of content in their curriculum, LUC1 stated that the SFL should make it obligatory to teach culture by integrating it into the program. Otherwise, it would be difficult for instructors to teach culture while trying to cover all content in the curriculum in the prescribed time.

When discussing whether and how they integrated teaching culture(s) in their instruction, all instructors from MUC group stated that they shared their cultural experiences with their students by telling them anecdotes either related to countries they visited or interactions with their foreigners. They also mentioned the importance of using videos including cultural elements. For instance, MUC4 stated:

Culture cannot be taught with abstract information but it requires some concrete information and this can be done by referring to something that might create an image in students' minds. Thus, at this point, showing a related video is of great help.

MUC4 also noted that she made her students role-play by giving them a situation and asking them how to respond based on identification with a particular culture. Conversely, MUC3 stated that he never made his students organize role-plays because he found such tasks childish and not appropriate for university

context. On the other hand, the importance of role-plays was acknowledged by all the instructors from the HUC group, and they reported that they incorporated such tasks in their classes. Another technique these instructors reported using was providing explicit descriptions about specific cultural elements. These instructors considered this necessary because they argued that cultural elements would not initially be open to discussion and the risk of students' misunderstandings due to sufficient explicit information from the teacher should be averted. HUC3 stated that she explained everything about different cultures by warning students that the explanations she made were not what she particularly favored but the norms accepted by the members of those culture(s). Similarly, underscoring the need for cultural presentations, HUC1 explained how students could not comprehend culture(s) they did not have any idea about. For HUC1, providing students introductions to culture(s) could also support vocabulary development. Unlike other instructors, participants from the LUC group reported not using any such instructional methods (e.g. role-play) related to introducing culture(s) in their courses. Overall, the interview data revealed that instructors from both the HUC and the MUC groups used role-plays and videos for introducing culture(s) in courses.

The Opinions of Instructors on Methods for Teaching Culture(s)

Most instructors in this SFL considered language and culture inseparable. Those that diverged from this perspective were those from the LUC group. For example, LUC2 stated that he never integrated target culture into his teaching but his students learned the language. For LUC2, this affirmed that language and culture did not necessarily have to be addressed together. Similarly, LUC3 considered it unnecessary to teach target culture(s) to teach the language. Instead, for LUC3, language functions must be taught. In this regard, LUC3 stated that the students would not live in those cultures, so it would be unnecessary to integrate these into lessons. LUC1 stated that emphasis on knowledge of culture(s) could bring variety to lessons. For LUC1, culture(s) and language education had links but the curriculum of SFL did not make it possible to connect these elements.

Instructors from the MUC and the HUC groups considered it important to integrate cultural elements related to language teaching in ELT education programs. According to these teachers, teachers could not teach languages if they did not have knowledge of related culture(s). For MUC3, ELT education without the integration of cultural aspects of language teaching resembled "flesh without backbones". Furthermore, MUC4 highlighted how knowing the related culture(s) increased the credibility of a foreign language teacher.

The interviewees also commented on the impact of World Politics on culture teaching in language classes. For instance, LUC2 said that world politics related to the local context also affected how he introduced cultural elements because there were some sensitive topics and issues such as the Armenian and Kurdish conflicts, about which most of the instructors avoided talking about. Thus, world politics and conflicts also affected the flow of lessons.

All the instructors from HUC and MUC group ruled out the possibility that teaching American/British culture(s) would be a threat to students' national identities. These instructors argued that the more they learned other cultures, the more they would be aware of their own values and cultural heritages. For example, MUC1 stated that the introduction of American/British culture(s) in instruction in a school context would be well designed and this would be a source of motivation rather than a threat for foreign language learners. For these instructors, teaching English without introducing American/British culture(s) would not be effective because there were idioms and phrases that were tied to aspects of the culture(s) and could not be taught without introducing cultural elements. Conversely, interviewees from the LUC group noted that not introducing American/British culture(s) would not have a negative effect on teaching English. These instructors underscored that they did not incorporate cultural elements in their courses. On the other hand, all instructors from all three groups acknowledged that knowing about the American/British culture(s) would facilitate students' successful communication with speakers of English. For instance, MUC1 stated that knowledge of American/British culture(s) would make possible effective communication which is not interrupted by misunderstandings. Similarly, HUC3 drew attention to the importance of knowledge of some cultural elements such as knowledge of inappropriate lexical items and gestures with different meanings across cultures. Even instructors from the LUC group acknowledged the role of cultural elements in successful communication and their relevance for learners. For instance, LUC3 stated:

I do not want our students to be totally unaware of the target culture. For instance, our last lesson, we came across a phrase 'Black Friday' which I did not know. I connected to the Internet and googled it and learned that it was the Friday just after the Thanksgiving Day when the prices in shopping centres fall down and

people rush to the shopping malls to do shopping in large amounts. I did not know that and I did not feel the lack of this information but I learned it with just a click on the net. Thus, in my opinion, our students might learn target culture but the exaggerated presentation of it should be avoided in our lessons.

Based on these comments, it becomes clear that what distinguishes teachers from the LUC group from others is how the role of culture(s) in language education is situated. LUC3 emphasized that knowing about the target culture(s) provided an advantage while speaking with native speakers but he claimed that neither students nor instructors should make strong efforts to teach or learn these. For LUC3, cultural elements are situated in the reference access domain, not instructional spaces. If particular cultural elements need to be explored, learners or teachers can explore these via web searches and related readings.

Overall, the design of this study made possible a distinct contribution to the field. Studies have mainly utilized survey designs in similar contexts. In this study, the focus on the practices within a particular school of foreign languages and with the employment of survey, interview, and observational methods followed by an analysis of instructors' pedagogical practices and related views allowed for a multidimensional interpretative process. The results of this study confirm and extend findings that explore language teachers' views on cultural elements in foreign language education in Turkey (e.g. Atay, 2005; Çamlıbel, 1998).

Discussion & Conclusion

Teachers' backgrounds can influence whether and how they teach elements about culture(s). The ones who were taught the target culture or had been to another cultural context were more inclined to teach different cultures in their classes (HUC and MUC groups) whereas the ones who had never been abroad or exposed to a different culture were more resistant to teach different cultures (LUC group). As Bayyurt (2006) noted, "the context of teaching and the background of individual teachers influenced their attitude towards the incorporation of culture into their language teaching" (p. 243). Providing opportunities for reflections on culture(s) in the foreign language curriculum during pre-service teacher education programs is important since these themes may lead language teachers to become aware of cultural elements in language instruction once they enter the profession as well.

Teachers who participated in this study reported some degree of awareness on the place of culture teaching in foreign language education. Those who incorporated cultural elements in language instruction noted that students enjoyed exposure to cultural elements. Most participants referred to either target culture(s) or the local culture when discussing the issue. There was variation in areas of emphasis. The interviewees from the HUC group attached importance to target culture(s). Those from the LUC group put more emphasis on the local culture. Those in the MUC group underscored both local and target culture(s) in the curriculum. Expanding the range of cultures incorporated in foreign language courses could help students develop comparative global perspectives. Teachers at this SFL could also foreground the setting their school is located in. Since the school is located in a cosmopolitan urban setting, students and instructors have immediate access to diverse cultures. Field trips to historical sites, community centers, and other cultural attractions can provide opportunities for incorporating cultural themes in an experiential framework within the foreign language education curriculum.

With diverse backgrounds, participants also varied in their approaches to teaching culture(s) in their courses. Teachers reported frequently using culture(s) just to draw the attention of students or to contextualize language teaching. The teachers at this SFL reported having limited first-hand experiences with the target culture(s). Interviewees drew attention to their need for opportunities to stay and live in communities where the target culture(s) could be observed. We interpreted that such needs were most urgent among instructors in the LUC and MUC groups since they generally avoided incorporating cultural elements in their classes due to their sense of inadequacy caused by not having lived in foreign settings.

In this setting, we observed that instruction is primarily steered by textbooks. It is noteworthy that this strong emphasis on selected course books goes as far as influencing the determination of course topics and sequence of instruction. Due to this emphasis on course books and the large amount of content in the curriculum, these instructors reported not having sufficient time for cultural discussions or additional materials

In the literature, various reasons for teachers' unwillingness to incorporate cultural elements in foreign language instruction were reported. For example, in a Moroccan setting, researchers found that teachers were unwilling to integrate target culture(s) in their courses because they thought that it would not be a

good example for Moroccan learners of English. Thus, they emphasized themes from the local culture in their courses (Adaskou et al., 1990). Conversely, a study at a setting in China found that teachers of English preferred to integrate target culture(s) in their lessons and acknowledged their importance (Lessard-Clouston, 1996). In this study, we analyzed perspectives of teachers with varying approaches to the place of culture(s) in foreign language education.

Overall, the two-phase sequential design incorporated in this study helped explore teachers' perspectives on the place of culture(s) in foreign language education with more depth. The survey responses revealed that most instructors at this SFL were interested in teaching target culture(s) in their courses. The interview data gathered during the second phase helped explicate how instructors with different profiles diverged in their approaches to culture(s). For instance, instructors in the LUC group explained that they preferred not to incorporate presentations/discussions on target culture(s) in foreign language courses. These findings revealed that within an institutional context, there was also notable differences among instructors in the ways they conceptualized and taught culture(s). Professional development endeavors for language teachers need to address such diversity. The case reported in this study also highlighted a need for professional development efforts that are informed by the particular characteristics of instructors and institutions. In this regard, teacher research and other inquiry processes can be considered.

Educational Implications

One of the most important issues that should be considered is the curriculum of the school because most of the instructors complained about the amount of content that had to be covered. This was reported as the primary reason for not being able to allocate some time to culture(s) in courses. In this regard, some participants argued that cultural themes had to be incorporated into the curriculum in order to enable teachers to design lessons related to these themes. The curriculum could be redesigned and it could include a section that focuses on cultural elements each week to bring some variety to lessons. Clearly, cultural elements should be part of the foreign language curriculum. Each week, there can be a two-hour session on culture(s) in each class. To support this process, material selection and development should also be reconsidered. Materials including a "culture" section/part/chapter can be used or supplementary materials can be provided as resources for instructors. Furthermore, instructors should analyze the needs and interests of their students. Funds for field trips and professional development related to cultural elements also need to be supported by this institution. The school should also improve the quality of instructional facilities. This may involve the allocation of study rooms for students and creating more office space for staff.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study can also be implemented in other schools of foreign languages both in state and private universities in Turkey so as to determine their instructors' perspectives on teaching culture(s) as part of foreign language curricula and to investigate how institutions can support cultural themes in foreign language education. This study can also be replicated in high schools in Turkey. This will help educators to make comparisons across different contexts. Furthermore, research designs can also incorporate analyses of learners' perspectives and experiences with cultural elements in foreign language curricula.

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