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AN EXPLORATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURE TEACHING AND THEIR EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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MASTER'S THESIS

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ÖZET

YEŞİL, Şeyma. Hedef Dil Kültürün İngilizce Derslerine Entegre Edilmesiyle İlgili İngiliz Dili Öğretmenlerinin Algıları ve Bu Algıların Öğrencilerin Akademik Başarısına Etkileri. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Sivas, 2013.

Bu çalışma, hedef dil kültürünün yabancı dil derslerine bütünleşmesiyle ilgili, İngiliz dili öğretmenlerinin algılarını ve kişisel görüşlerini analiz etmek ve araştırmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, hedef kültürün derslere dahil edilmesiyle ilgili öğretmen görüşleri ve öğrencilerin İngilizce derslerindeki akademik başarısı arasındaki bağlantıyı tespit etmektir. Çalışma ayrıca dil öğretiminin sadece öğrencilerin dilin cümle yapısı ve kelime bilgisine sahip olmasını kapsayan bir süreç olmadığını, aynı zamanda da onların kültürel elementlerin entegre olduğu ortamlarda, İngilizceyi ana dili olarak konuşan insanlarla doğru ve etkili bir iletişim kurmalarına imkan sağlanan bir süreç olduğunu göstermektedir.

Herhangi bir özel yöntem kullanmadan seçilen araştırmanın katılımcılarını, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesinde çalışan 7 İngilizce okutmanı oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılar tamamen gönüllü olarak çalışmaya katkıda bulunmuşlardır.

Nitel araştırma metodunun en etkili yöntemlerinden biri olan mülakatlar, güvenilir ve geçerli veri toplamak için kullanılmıştır. Dikkatli bir çalışma sonucu seçilen mülakat soruları, İngiliz dili öğretmenlerinin algılarıyla ilgili bilgi toplanmasını sağlamıştır. Nitel araştırma yöntemi ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yoluyla yapılan araştırma, öğretmenlerin hedef dil kültürünün derslere bütünleşmesini desteklediğini ortaya çıkarmıştır, fakat zaman yetersizliğinden dolayı kültürel anlamda entegre derslere yeterli vakit ayıramamaktadırlar. Hedef dil kültürünün öğrencilerin akademik başarısına etkisinden bahsedilecek olursa, bu anlamda katılımcılar bu faktörün, öğrencilerin dil seviyesi üzerinde gerçekten etkili ve motive edici olduğu konusunda hemfikirdirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil Öğrenimi, Yabancı Dil Öğrencileri, Kültürel Etkileşim, Hedef Dil Kültürü, Kültürel Farklılıklar, Öğretmen Algıları, Kültürel Farkındalık

ABSTRACT

YEŞİL, Şeyma. An exploration of English language teachers' perceptions of target culture teaching and their effects on students' academic achievements, Master's Thesis, Sivas, 2013

This study analyzes and explores English language teachers' perceptions and viewpoints about the integration of target culture into the foreign language courses. The objective of this research is to find out the correlation between the instructors' thoughts about the incorporation of the target culture elements and students' academic achievement in English classes. This study also reveals that language teaching is not only a process of enabling the learners to master the syntactic and lexical elements of the language, but also helps them communicate appropriately with native speakers of the language or in culturally orientated settings.

Having been randomly selected, the participants of the study included 7 English language instructors, working in the School of Foreign Languages, Cumhuriyet University, Sivas. The subjects participated in and contributed to the study voluntarily.

The interviews, one of the most effective methods of qualitative research, were implemented as the instrument to elicit valid and reliable data. The interview questions, selected with assiduous attention, gathered information regarding the perceptions of English language instructors. The results obtained qualitatively through semi-structured interviews revealed that the instructors favour the incorporation of target language culture into the courses; however they cannot allocate enough time to have culturally embedded courses due to time constraints. As for the effects of target culture teaching on students' academic achievement, they unanimously agree that it has a positive and motivating impact on their proficiency level of English.

Keywords: Language Learning, EFL Learners, Acculturation, Target Language Culture, Cultural Differences, Teachers' Perceptions, Cultural Awareness

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL   : English as a Foreign Language

ELT   : English Language Teaching

ESL   : English as a Second Language

FL   : Foreign Language

FLE   : Foreign Language Education

TL   : Target Language

TLC   : Target Language Culture

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1.1. The Concept of Culture

English language functions as one of the most significant ways of transmitting cultural knowledge in today's globalized world. Prodromou (1992) contends "English, as the foremost medium of international communication at the present time, is called upon to mediate a whole range of cultural and cross-cultural concepts to a greater degree than in the past." At the outset, describing the culture phenomenon appropriately is of great importance on the grounds that the study focuses on the inherent connection between language and culture. The definition of the term 'culture' is significant in terms of the theme and core elements of this thesis study. Greey (1994) defines culture as a learned system of values, beliefs and norms among a group of people. Trinovitch (1980, p. 550) describes culture in a more detailed and particular way: "... an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behaviour starting from birth."

In the same vein, The National Centre for Cultural Competence defines culture as an "integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviour of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations" (Goode, Sockalingam, Brown & Jones, 2000, p. 1). Culture is summed in behaviours, thoughts of people living in a certain area and cultural support can help in resolving the differences between communities. The observation made in native speaker milieus would help to understand the cultural diversities inherent in peoples' nature.

1.1.2. The Connection between Language and Culture

People express their ideas, thoughts and beliefs with language and similarly language reflects the cultural reality of peoples. At that point, the term 'language' is important and the definition of the term refers to the seamless connection between language and culture. The American linguist Edward Sapir (1921) defined language in the following way: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (p. 8). In the same vein, Kramsch (1998) defines language as "... principal means whereby we conduct our lives (p. 1). Everything about the social and cultural facet of our lives refers to the use of language. In this thesis study, language is evaluated from the perspective of English language acquisition. The title of the thesis study includes the theme of 'culture teaching' and 'culture teaching' should be regarded and evaluated as the culture of English speaking nations. In other words, target language culture refers to everything related with English language and native speakers of this language.

As the seamless connection between language and culture is commensurate with related literature, it is not wrong to state that culture and language also crisscross with each other through cumulative human experience. Language educators and some prominent researchers in the field assert that language reflect culture and vice versa. Because culture is inherently in connection with the linguistic concepts of the language, the existence of one phenomenon depends on the other. As being the keystone of culture, language is greatly affected and structured by cultural values, attitudes and beliefs. Kramsch (1991, p. 217) holds that culture and language are "inseparable and constitute a single universe or domain of experience." As Gleason (1961) delineates, language is the product of culture while being the symbol of culture at the same time. More specifically, the matter is examined and analysed from the target language and target culture perspective in this thesis. The study is substantially about the perceptions and thoughts of English instructors about the outright incorporation of target culture knowledge into the foreign language courses.

When the needs of the foreign language learners are taken into account, English language and its indigenous milieus would form the basis for building cultural competency and carry out acculturation process gradually and appropriately. Judging from this, it is plain that language and culture have been mutually dependent. Only with the appropriate internalization of the cultural features can a language learner be effective in conveying the intended messages.

1.1.3. Target Language Culture and Foreign Language Teaching

As for the place of culture in foreign language teaching and specifically target language teaching, it is plain that cultural background knowledge fosters students' cross-cultural awareness in ELT setting and their communicative encounters. In other words, to have a good command of syntactic and morphological rules does not guarantee appropriateness of discourse. The students' acquaintance with as much target culture knowledge as possible paves the way for the development of communicative competence. Because students' ability in figuring out the semantic and syntactic particles of the language depends on the extent to which cultural knowledge is incorporated, the teachers should try to give sufficient attention to culturally- orientated courses.

Some students have neither desire nor aptitude to pursue the realization of communicative competence; however target culture information would function as a means of motivating them if the teacher has a good rapport with his students. Gardner & Lambert (1972) express that students need to be motivated for successful accomplishment in learning a foreign language.

On the other hand, some students may evaluate the incorporation of target culture knowledge into the courses as a means of imposing the values of the community referred to and aforementioned in paragraphs above. At that point, a comparative perspective would function as a pedagogical means of motivation because comparison of the target language culture with students' native culture would be motivating in the continuum of foreign language education. With that way, the teachers could overcome another difficulty in the process, for some

students cannot discern exactly what the role of the target language culture is in the process of language acquisition. They may regard target culture as a threat to their own native culture. At that point, a contrastive analysis of these two cultures would enable the students to have tolerance towards the community and their cultural attitudes. The teacher should take part in conveying the message that the success in expressing what you mean in a certain context depends on your ability to communicate interculturally. In a similar fashion, Smith (1985) claims that the presentation of an argument in a way that sounds fluent and elegant in one culture may be regarded as clumsy and circular by members of another culture (p. 2). If the learner does not have general knowledge about the norms of another culture, this may result in failure to convey intended ideas or messages.

The teacher's perception and appraisal of target language community have a paramount importance in the success or failure of the process. The teachers should try to be responsive to the students' fragility so as not to let them feel alienated in that process. It should not be forgotten that misunderstandings and breakdown in communication arise from the lack of cross-cultural awareness. Such kind of instance has a great impact on students' motivation in that continuum.

It is inevitable that misunderstandings would sometimes be observed in the event that people from different communicational backgrounds communicate and have social relations. The teachers should make an endeavour to prevent such kind of instances. Additionally, they should exploit appropriate approaches and methods for infusing cultural features of the target language in foreign language teaching curricula. The students should learn to understand the native speakers' language of the mind in order for communication to be successful. Through the study of other languages, the students have the opportunity to classify and recognize cultural items. The restrictions of mono-cultural behaviour patterns and views eventuate from the deficiency of cultural knowledge. It is crystal clear that a scrupulous investigation into the learners' idiosyncrasies would help them explore the means for embracing a new language and culture concurrently.

As cultural points have some exquisite elements, it is not surprising to witness differences in terms of proximity, paralinguistic features and other codifications. Another point that needs to be addressed is that the learners should be immersed in a culturally rich environment to ingest the new culture's elements. When they acquire a new language, they recognize the fact that there exist multitude ways of making sense of the world in their close vicinity. Foreign language will mean, therefore, changing the learner's behaviour and injecting a new way of life and new values of life into his already settled behaviour pattern (Lado, 1963, p. 110). Bearing all this in mind, the courses and curricula should be organized in a way that enriches students' cultural background knowledge. The methodologies and activities applied in the classroom atmosphere should encompass certain features of target language and native speakers of that language.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The extant literature on the relation between target language and its cultural features shows that language educators prioritized the integration of cultural issues into their teaching practice. As learning English means more than merely mastering its morphological and lexical features, the teachers should strive to help students acquire insight into culture. The idea of incorporating culture into the foreign language courses is nothing new in this field and in modern world teachers aim to enrich students' linguistic or social insight. Culture is accepted as a vital component of language learning, for that reason foreign language teaching curricula should be determined accordingly. In a similar fashion, the perceptions and teaching practices of foreign language educators have paramount importance in resolving the problems in the area.

Slipping into the foreign language culture is to be as natural as possible and with that way the students can use the language effectively and appropriately in terms of English discourse. At that point, cultural awareness would contribute to students' cultural competence level if the emphasis is laid on the inclusion of

these certain issues. Only when the learners recognize cultures are not monolithic entities can they form cultural tolerance towards the native speakers of the language.

Taking the factors mentioned above into account, it can be stated that language is a whole with its inextricable links and components. Accordingly, cross-cultural communication is a tough task and necessitates great efforts to achieve a native-like competency. Being receptive to the elements of culture and language is a must in foreign language teaching environment in which the students are equipped with a real experiential content.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this present study is to explore teachers' perceptions and thoughts about the integration of cultural components into foreign language teaching curricula. To that end, one of the most influential qualitative methods was used. Interviews with the instructors working in School of Foreign Languages, Cumhuriyet University was carried out scrupulously. The data elicited from the teachers' responses and actually transcripts written verbatim after the completion of the interviews paved the way for drawing the conclusion about their thoughts and teaching practices.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As the locus of culture is not generalizable in certain settings and instances, it may bring about and reproduce falsifiable sides. For that reason, the interview questions were formed and prepared with studious care and attention in order not to skip the core elements of the study. The most significant points were included in the study without overshadowing the details of the phenomenon. In the light of the studies implemented in the field, inquiring into the teachers' perspectives through the use of a semi-structured interview was regarded as the most suitable method in gathering data and spotting the problems experienced in

foreign language classes. Exploratory questions were commensurate with the objectives of the research and appropriate in identifying patterns and themes of the study. Without interfering in the emergent nature of qualitative analysis, the questions listed below were posed:

1. How do the instructors of English define culture?
2. What is the place of target culture in English as a Foreign Language classes?
3. What is the effect of target language culture on students' academic achievement?
4. What role does the incorporation of target culture play in students' motivation during EFL courses?
5. How much time is distributed to integrate cultural elements of the language in EFL classes?
6. What role do the course books play in transmitting the cultural knowledge of the foreign language?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

The concept of culture is one of the prominent issues in foreign and second language teaching. For that reason, the components of culture and their characteristics are pointed out by a whole host of authors in many studies. The instructors are also interested in finding out effective methods to integrate culture teaching in language teaching curricula. The description of the term has a great importance and should be studied well in order to understand the integration process better. In other words, understanding the basic terms would enable the instructors to construe the importance of culture integrated courses. The identification made by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) is effective in promoting an understanding of the term: "Culture can be seen as a framework of assumptions, ideas and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's actions, words and patterns of thinking."

Defining the term 'culture' in a comprehensive way is a really daunting task and accordingly there exist lots of different opinions and viewpoints on the definition of the term. Similarly, an oversimplification of the definitions would result in disregarding some crucial elements to be included in it. To that end, this thesis study tries to shed some light on this issue. Tang (2006) postulated that there is no single definition for that general word 'culture' in spite of efforts and studies to realize the matter comprehensively. Nieto (2002, p. 10) pointed out that "culture is complex and intricate; it cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are of course elements of cultures." From this definition, it is clear that culture includes lots of different entities and it consists of a great number of individual components. Means of communication, ways of rewarding and punishment, family relationships, sets of different beliefs and social etiquette all refer to the comprehensive term 'culture'. For Brown (2007), "culture'

includes tangible and intangible aspects of the society, it binds the members of that community and functions as a 'glue' (p. 188). He describes culture as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a certain group of people in a given period of time" (p. 380).

Culture is defined with different terms depending on the time and personal idea of the scholar and for that reason it is a complex phenomenon. Goodenough (1957) describes it in a social perspective:

> …a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves (p. 167).

Kramsch (1998) defines culture as "membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings" (p. 10). On the other hand, Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) describe culture as:

> "...a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals and lifestyle of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create" (p. 45).

In a study by Yajuan (2009), the author defines and categorizes the term under two broad titles. The first one is called as 'advanced' or 'formal' culture, which is in connection with civilization. It is also referred to as 'cultural knowledge information'. The second category is 'popular culture' or 'deep culture', which is more related to everyday life and living style.

It appears that it is really hard to form a comprehensive definition of the term which satisfies everyone. However; the components and elements of the terms can be studied well in order to realize unique characteristics of the phenomenon. Accordingly, Damen (1987) postulated that there exist six certain features of culture, which are really helpful in forming an understanding of the individual components. These characteristics are listed as:

1. Culture is learned.
2. Cultures and cultural patterns change.

3. Culture is a universal fact of human life.

4. Culture provides sets of unique and interrelated blueprints for living and accompanying sets of values and beliefs to support these blueprints.

5. Language and culture are closely related and interactive.

6. Culture functions as a filtering device between its bearers and a great range of stimuli presented by the environment.

In the same vein, the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning points out the tangible and intangible elements of the society and these elements are really helpful in understanding the language in detail with every component affecting the way of language teaching.

Practices   Products

(Patterns of social interactions)   (Books, tools, foods, laws, music)

Perspectives

(Meanings, attitudes, values, ideas)
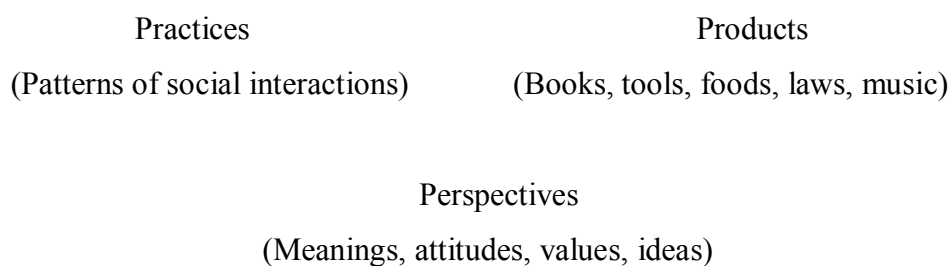
Figure 1: What constitutes culture? (The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, 1996, p. 43).

2.1.1. The Concepts Related with the Term 'Culture'

In today's world, the national boundaries are being rubbed away gradually and accordingly interpreting the cultural elements in a territorialized way is out of question in that 'globalizing village.' One cannot deny the relevance of cultural awareness and intercultural dimension for education policy. In order to understand the matter in a detailed way, it is significant to analyze fundamental terms relevant to the umbrella term 'culture'. In most prominent studies, the terms enculturation and acculturation are commonly defined and described.

To start with the first one, enculturation, it refers to the process of obtaining the social elements, etiquette of your community together with the

pragmatic aspects and discourse elements of your mother tongue. Acculturation is generally regarded as the acquisition of an additional culture apart from yours and the individual has to adapt to a new culture in that process. For that reason, the integration of target language culture (TLC) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes is figured as a part of acculturation process. If the teachers are not experienced enough to help them internalize the social perspectives, the students may alienate from the acquisition process of cultural elements. In the same vein, Damen (1987) signified these two terms with similar words:

> Enculturation builds a sense of cultural or social identity, a network of values and beliefs, patterned ways of living, and, for the most part, ethnocentrism, or belief in the power and rightness of native ways. Acculturation, on the other hand, involves the process of pulling out the world view or ethos of the first culture, learning new ways of meeting old problems, and shedding ethnocentric evaluations (p. 140).

Hanvey (1975) has posited that there are four levels of acculturation, which he calls levels of 'cross-cultural awareness.' According to him, the learner evaluates culture in a superficial and stereotyped way in Level One. Upon experiencing difficulties and new contexts, the learner is subjected to the effects of culture shock. At Level Two, s /he feels frustrated with his inability to adapt to these new situations. The learner can reach Level Three only if he has positive attitudes towards cultural patterns. It is at that level that the students regards TLC as an alternate to his own and does not have a negative attitude towards it. Hanvey credits that achieving third level in a school setting is possible and realistic. Lastly at Level Four, the learners understand how members of the target culture feel and put themselves in their shoes.

Another matter worthy to discuss is cultural awareness and it is one of the significant steps in internalizing the TLC and it should be taken into consideration in that process. The teachers can give the students the opportunity to be familiar with the values, social factors determining the way language is used and the members of the society having these beliefs. Kuang (2007) represents the four levels of cultural awareness in a detailed way. At the first step of that continuum,

the individual thinks that his/her culture and related features are superior to another one and the attitudes towards other peoples are shaped in that way. It means that the person mentioned does not endeavour to acquire the cultural patterns of a different society. Additionally, the person intentionally does not give attention to the impact of cultural differences. At the second step, the individual is somewhat aware of the differences in terms of culture and societal influences; however he thinks that his own culture is the best when the cultural superiority is taken into account. Similarly, the person reflects that the source of problems arise from the cultural differences of the nations. At the third level of that phase, the person tends to accept the term 'cultural diversity' and tries to choose the best depending on the situation. In a way, the cultural features of two communities are regarded as equal and both of them can be used and evaluated in different circumstances.

Also, this approach gives the chance of solving the matters with a tolerance towards other nations. The individual believes that cultural diversity can be utilized to form new solutions to certain problems in an intercultural atmosphere. At the very last step, the peoples form a mutual understanding and constantly interact with each other in order to perceive and appreciate the differences better. They can communicate repeatedly with each other without taking into account the cultural differences. As Kuang (2007) delineated, the person switches to the stage of 'cultural competence' from a stage of 'cultural ignorance'. As described in a detailed way, the instructor should be well aware of this changeover and analyze the steps accordingly in order to determine the appropriate methods. Also the teacher would aim at promoting an understanding and awareness of the target culture in language classes.

Intercultural competence is again one of most significant terms in that field and it refers to the ability to communicate with various people from other national and geographical groups. If a person has intercultural competence, it means that this individual has tolerance towards other entities and do not judge people by the stereotypes ascribed to a particular group. Actually foreign language education is not the sole way to have intercultural competence but it is regarded as the major

source of having knowledge and skills to communicate better by integrating discourse elements to your daily speech patterns.

Another prerequisite for intercultural competence is crossing borders and mediating between different entities and human profiles. As İşisağ (2010) described in his essay about intercultural competence, this ability can be defined as 'turning intercultural encounters into intercultural relationships'. As long as the learner is intrigued by the differences and special manners of speaking peculiar to that group, he can gain an inside view of other person's cultural characteristics. In other words, readiness for relativizing the specialties and features of another person from a different social group will make it possible to form a mutual understanding and respect between the cultures. These are some of the most significant intercultural attitudes and in addition to these ones, a person having intercultural competence is required to suspend disbelief about other cultures. With this way, it is possible to eradicate the negative beliefs and prejudices towards other social groups and their products.

Some specific behaviours are spotted by intercultural theorists as a sign of intercultural competence and the individual is to gain these features so as to behave accordingly. One of these qualities is tolerance for ambiguity and the instructor is to tolerate unexpected changes. The second one is maintaining personal cultural identity and to achieve this aim, the person should not try to fit into the frames of another culture. Another term related with the topic is having the necessary skills for interpersonal communication and this feature can be regarded as a prerequisite to achieve intercultural competence. As it is widely recognized by ELT practitioners and instructors, foreign language education is the most versatile tool in order to help the learners' development of intercultural competence.

With the help of the courses, the learner has the opportunity to observe how language and culture shape one's own world and identity. At that point, the students are to be able to deal with complex and multiple characteristics of the people from different background cultures. It would be possible if one avoids stereotyping which includes the perception of ascribing a community a single

identity. Accordingly, the scholars' writings attest to the necessity of an intercultural stance in culture teaching during foreign language classes. When the learners have an education with an intercultural dimension, it helps them to acquire the essential linguistic competence to ensure a shared understanding between their own and other cultures.

Cross-cultural awareness is another related term discussed in that field and regarded as a prerequisite in forming an understanding towards other communities. While doing this, the person generally explores his/her own way of thinking together with the culturally-embedded elements of his own mother tongue. As Damen postulated, "cross-cultural awareness is the force that moves a culture learner across the acculturation continuum from a state of no understanding of, or even hostility to, a new culture to near total understanding, from monoculturalism, to bi- or multi-culturalism" (1987, p. 141). The learner would try to obtain cross-cultural awareness and therefore has to execute a clear way and plan to achieve intercultural communication in today's changing and globalizing world.

Culture-shock is again a common experience for especially most of the foreign language learners because second language learner has the opportunity to practice the language in the community using that language in their daily lives. In acculturative process, culture shock is deemed as one of the important steps in that continuum which follows the first step of euphoria and joy. When faced with real communities and speakers of the language, the learner may alienate from the foreign language learning process because of some unfavourable experiences.

Similarly, such kind of experiences may give rise to discouragement and despair and for this reason language classes and teachers play a crucial role in helping them acquire the necessary skills and knowledge in that field. At the outset, these occasions may have a deterrent effect on the students; however these experiences would function as instructive for students in internalizing a great deal of mainstream values. With the contribution of these incidences, the students' communicative competence will blossom more swiftly. Culture bump is another similar term but it can be defined as valid for more specific situations. As Archer

(1986) explicated, culture shock may be effective over an extended period of time, however culture bumps happen straightaway during a short dialogue or even within seconds. The impact of culture bump can be long-lasting albeit instantaneous.

2.2. THE PLACE OF CULTURE IN EFL CLASSES

As an undeniable fact, language and culture have an interdependent relationship and this relation is described with different terms in some studies such as *linguaculture* (Friedrich, 1989) and *languaculture* (Risager, 2005). Given the fact that the culture exerts considerable influence on language patterns and pragmatic use of it in a certain community, it is of great importance for a language learner to make great effort to develop his/her cultural awareness in that process. Very often what the scholars evaluate the culture in foreign language courses is that language teaching should be accompanied with culture teaching. This idea is stressed explicitly in the American National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project (1999) as below: "The exquisite connection between the culture that is lived and the language that is spoken can only be realized by those who possess a knowledge of both" (1999, p. 47). On the face of this fact, Lessard-Clouston (1997) contended that foreign language teachers teach and their students acquire the cultural elements of that community regardless of the fact that whether culture is overtly included in the curriculum or not.

The inclusion and integration of culture attained respectability especially in the last a few decades. Mitchell and Myles (2004) express that 'language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other' (p. 235). In order to understand the details of the matter clearly, it is necessary to define term 'culture learning' because there has been a great change in attitudes and approaches towards the incorporation of certain elements into 'culture learning' process. Culture learning is described as:

> …the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally and affectively (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2003, p. 177).

The influence of their own culture is to a great extent in developing and raising the learners' cultural awareness. The learner is to have the opportunity to find a 'third place' between cultures in order to decentre from his/her own culture. In that way, they have the chance of establishing their own understanding of the target language culture and bridging the gap between these two cultures. Furthermore, the cultural awareness of the TLC is evaluated in two different perspectives. The first one is 'dynamic approach' to the internalization process of cultural components. In that view, the culture of a community is regarded to have an ongoing and changing nature. Oppositely, the developing nature of culture learning is not taken into account in 'static approach' because previously determined set of rules, rituals, pragmatic qualities of language are taught as the representatives of that culture without adding anything new in that process. The approach adopted by the instructor of the course determines the ways of acquiring cultural components in learners' minds.

According to Tomalin and Stempleski, cultural awareness embraces three qualities:

> -awareness of one's own culturally-induced behaviour
> -awareness of the culturally-induced behaviour of others
> -ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint (1993, p. 5).

There has been a great concern for the dialectical relation between language and culture in the last a few decades and the pendulum has swung back to the other extreme. At the beginning of the century, only the importance of incorporating cultural elements into the language teaching curriculum was discussed. However, researchers and foreign language instructors have begun to realize the seamless connection between TLC and TL with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching in the late 1970s. This approach endeavours

to provide the students with the necessary qualifications that would help them communicate in an intercultural setting. With this way, it is possible to promote an understanding and harmony between cultures.

On the other hand, some scholars are of the opinion that learning about the target language community and their everyday life practices are not enough to be fluent in the foreign language and gain certain patterns of intercultural competence. First of all, the individual should be well aware of his own cultural elements in order to form an understanding among cultures. Acting at the level of practice would be possible if the person is competent enough to explore the intercultural features and remain up-to-date in terms of innovations in cultural aspects. In fact, this situation is confirmed by the writings of some scholars and they pave the way for the development of new methods for foreign language instructors.

Especially over the last decade, with the writings of some prominent scholars such as Byram (1989; 1994) and Kramsch (1998; 2001), most of the foreign language instructors espouse a view based on the fact that there exist an intertwined relation between language and culture. On the other hand, some instructors keep on adopting Grammar Translation Method in their courses, nonetheless researchers agree that only the manipulation of syntax and lexicon is not sufficient for conducting an effective interaction with a native speaker.

As a well-known fact, culture is one of the most significant elements of language learning process. Without adding the cultural and contextual differences of a language during the course, the teacher would be insufficient in presenting the pragmatic aspects of everyday language. Having a native-like fluency in one or two foreign languages is a contemporary need in today's world , however if the cultural components are not integrated to that process, the speaker may sometimes find it difficult to convey the meaning in a communicational setting. For that reason, culture is considered 'as a fifth skill' apart from the other skills in language learning process (Savignon, 1997). If the focus is only on the syntactic and lexical features of the foreign language, then the learners of that language would be candidates of becoming a 'fluent fool'. According to Bennett (1993), "A

fluent fool is someone who speaks a foreign language well, but does not understand the social or philosophical content of that language" (p. 9). In other words, the students may know the grammatical structure of the foreign language very well but this does not mean that they would also be successful in communicating in that language. In a similar way, Liddicoat (2003) explains the inseparable connection between language and culture in the figure given below:

Culture ←——————————————————→ Language				
world knowledge	spoken/ written genres	pragmatic norms	norms of interaction	grammar/lexicon prosody pronunciation/ kinesics
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Culture in context	Culture in general text structure	Culture within utterances	Culture in the organisation and selection of units of language	Culture in linguistic and paralinguistic structures
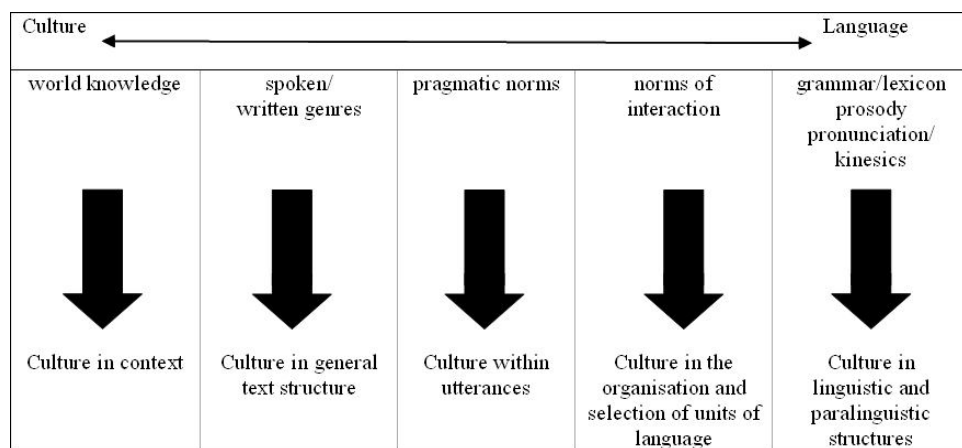
Fig. 2: Points of articulation between culture and language (Liddicoat et al., 2003, p. 9)

Due to the lack of cultural and contextual knowledge of the foreign language, the students may find difficulty in comprehending some expressions or texts. Given the importance of having a cross-cultural understanding in today's multicultural environment, the students should be knowledgeable in TLC in order to overcome certain barriers in interacting with other people. The extent of societal and individual interaction of the person on TLC is decisive because knowledge of social processes could be obtained in that way because illustrations of cultural products are manifested in speech acts and social interactions.

Some significant researchers in that field assert that culture and language are not separate entities, for that reason culture is an integral part of language learning process. Brown (2007) succinctly indicated that acquiring a second language is acquiring second culture. A language consists of culturally loaded rudiments (Pennycook, 1989; Alptekin, 1996) and in that sense the learners of

foreign language would need these elements in order to fully comprehend societal and contextual differences during communication process. The cultural background knowledge about that community would give students a chance of observing other people's attitudes and daily life and they would automatically use their findings in their use of language. For that reason, culture classes have a motivating role in students' learning process. If this is not the case, they become culture-bound individuals who are possible to make inappropriate and inaccurate value judgements about others' cultural characteristics (Izadpanah, 2011). It is not possible to master the linguistic and syntactic elements of the language in a real sense without comprehending the context in which it occurs. Discourse as a scientific realm is an important determiner in demonstrating the appropriate usage of the language in daily speeches. Therefore, it is necessary to add three crucial elements that are the core of teaching cultural aspects of other entities:

- To raise awareness of one's identity and of the existence of difference
- To enhance understanding of self and others
- To foster appreciation of otherness (İşisağ, 2010).

As a different point in that matter, Alptekin (2002) draws attention to the students' intercultural communicative competence rather than native-like competence. The use of English as a world language removes the boundaries and for that reason focusing on the cultural features of English people is meaningless in that sense. The teachers aim at promoting a dynamic view of cultures which holds the belief that culture as a phenomenon cannot be evaluated in a territorialized way, limiting that comprehensive term to the boundaries of countries. We use English for some instrumental reasons and if one is fluent and successful in communicating her/his message, the considerations about pragmatics, discourse events etc. are irrelevant.

The teachers have a great role in implementing culture related courses in foreign language classes and these courses are absolutely critical in involving students in an intercultural setting and enable them to develop a wider vision in

terms of tolerance towards other peoples and entities. The materials and strategies the instructors use in order to integrate cultural elements of another community are examined in some preliminary studies and they are indeed instrumental in diagnosing the conception of culture in a wider sense. The authentic information the students get through the appropriate materials used during the courses let them open their minds to a wider learning of the human beings as complex identities. The sociocultural practices taking place during the courses help the learners internalize the core elements constituting the 'culture' as a phenomenon. In addition to this side of the process, social and cultural anthropology provides a comprehensive understanding of the peoples and provides information about the way of life of a society. It is significant to have a clear description of the society if the aim is to internalize the features of that community in a communicative setting.

On the other hand, these cultural elements have a great impact on the students' way of thinking and philosophy. Therefore, they may naturally internalize the cultural features of the community speaking target language as their native tongue. The teachers would find themselves in the dilemma of imposing target language culture and integrating cultural elements as an indispensable part of language learning process. As English language is really dominant in the world arena and accepted as lingua franca in many countries and communities, the learning process of that foreign language may be a form of assimilation and for that reason some teachers of English refuse to integrate cultural elements during their courses. Conversely, the students can create filters for the features and values of the target culture that are not compatible with their own culture when they are given the chance to broaden their knowledge of this community. It would also help them to develop cultural awareness and flexibility by all means.

Undoubtedly, it, in no way, means to impose target culture values on students or coerce them to internalize the every bit of these features. Such kinds of interactions are enriching experiences for them and ensure that every individual is a part of diverse community. To further explicate the matter, the comparison and

analysis processes evoking their home culture are absolutely salutary and help them to accept people from other communities as individuals with distinctive features. While doing this, it is significant to preserve students' sense of identity. As intercultural competence induces empathy and tolerance vis-à-vis target cultural values, understanding of discourse elements is fundamental to an effective communication. Upon being well-equipped in literary, semantic and communicative fields of the language, the students can extrapolate one cultural influence on everyday life and use the filters to accommodate themselves to the new elements of another culture.

2.2.1. The Influence of Home Culture in the Integration of TLC

Another matter worthy of discussion is the incorporation of students' mother tongue and the related cultural elements for the sake of implementing a culture-based instruction. Undoubtedly, it is not easy as it sounds because the students should be assisted to evaluate the differences between them and develop an analytic and comparative approach. Because there exist abundant sources of information on techniques attaching to the importance of culture-integrated courses, the instructor has a great role in adapting these materials and taking into account the students' home culture. The use of home culture could facilitate students apply their previous acquisition and background knowledge in different skills. It is a commonly held belief that background values are manifested in the way they communicate and for that reason the local cultural elements of students should not be neglected in preparing the suitable blueprints for the course and curricular activities.

In line with the facts above, there exist a distinct differentiation in thinking style (linear versus circular) depending on the background values and mother tongue of the person and this difference is reflected in the writing style and reactions of the individual to certain circumstances. As an example, Asian people think in an indirect way and actually 'beat about the bush' whereas English people appraise the situations in a more direct way.

2.3. THE HISTORICAL CHANGES IN TERMS OF INCORPORATING CULTURE IN EFL CLASSES

In the 1920's, Edward Sapir stipulated that language and culture of a certain community could not be analyzed as separate entities on the grounds that language is the most significant way of describing human experiences and features of a people. Members of a language community eminently provide information about their way of life and assumptions about communicative purposes underlining the construction of the world. After a few decades, the focal points of culture teaching were analyzed under the domains of anthropology and sociolinguistics. At that point, the rudiments of the matter had already been studied and some prominent scholars developed impressive works in that area: 'Language and Culture by Hymes (1964), the study of Gumperz (1972) on interactional sociolinguistics and Kaplan (1966) investigated the rhetorical patterns accepted in different cultures to establish facts about the styles of writings.

Hymes (1972) was the first to develop some certain terms in the area such as speech community, speech events and communicative competence. In the teaching practice, the terms culture and foreign language were consolidated in the early 1970s in order to allow the learners to be competent in a communicational setting (Omaggio, 1986).

Culture was pre- eminently described as "everything and the best in human lives" and this approach was considered as an elitist one by some scholars. Other concepts such as Olympian Culture or Culture MLA (music, literature and arts) were regarded as enchanting and powerful in terms of its contribution to the teaching practices. In addition to invent of these terms in the literature, Valette (1977) sorted out these matters under five general headings: Cultural awareness, command of etiquette, understanding of daily life, understanding of cultural values and analysis of the target culture. Seelye (1984) indicates that the

development of seven skills is definitely significant in students' comprehension and perception of rhetorical writing and speech:

1. The sense of functionality of culturally conditioned behaviour

2. Interaction of language and social values

3. Conventional behaviour in social situations

4. Cultural connotations of words and phrases

5. Evaluating statements about society

6. Researching another culture

7. Attitudes toward other cultures (cited in Ariza, 2007)

Damen (1987) pointed out the impact of culture on interaction and communication by adding the descriptions of cultural values and beliefs. On the whole, the scholars working on this field focused on behavioural paradigms and body language in the 1980's. Current beliefs about the relation between culture and language were shaped with the researches of Kramsch (1991) and his ideas are widely accepted in this field. It is an axiomatic fact that teaching culture is eminently effective in comprehending the details of spoken and written language. As a well-known fact, a language cannot be learned without the appreciation of the cultural context in which it is used. Current perspectives about the integration of culture into the foreign language classes affirm the importance of being a second culture learner apart from being a foreign language learner.

In some studies about this subject, Crawford-Lange & Lange (1984), Kramsch (1993) and Seelye (1994), the scholars concentrate on and draw attention to three main criteria that are prerequisite for the realization of cultural instruction:

1. The learners' exploration of their own culture

2. The discovery of the relationship between language and culture

3. The learning of heuristics for analyzing and comparing cultures

These studies basically condense on the fact that culture teaching includes cognitive, social and affective components of the matter. The process skills required in that continuum are indicated in Galloway's (1984) works and he concurs with previous studies in the field. The instruction of culture was analyzed under four primary categories: Conventions (people's behaviour), Connotation (inference skills), Conditioning (interpretative skills) and Comprehension (analysis, hypothesis formation, tolerance of ambiguity). Provided that the learner is competent enough and has the fundamental skills to get into touch with individuals from diverse backgrounds, he would interiorize the paralinguistic features of that foreign language.

During the last a few decades, ELT practitioners had different ideas about this subject and discussed it in a detailed way. In the course of time, the application of Communicative Language Teaching in the late 1970s caused a great shift because this method entails the use of interactive programs and cultural components during the language classes. With the writings of scholars such as Byram (1989; 1994) and Kramsch (1998; 2001), the seamless relationship between language and culture was studied in detail over the last decades. According to a study by Pulverness (2003), educators taking part in that process have begun to understand the intertwined relationship of language and culture. Without giving enough importance and allocating the necessary time for the integration of cultural components in language classes, the teachers would observe the inaccurate and incomplete parts in students' linguistic knowledge. According to Bada (2000),

> "The need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers (p. 101)."

While examining the relationship between language and culture, we should mention most prominent scholars in this field such as Wittgenstein (1980; 1999), Saussure (1966), Foucault (1994) and Chomsky (1968). However, the most significant scholars in this field are Sapir (1962) and Whorf (1956). The term

'linguistic relativity' is discussed in detail in their works and means the difference of perception in people's minds depending on their native tongue. We use and categorize the differences in a language with the help of these perceptual differences. During the internalization of lexical and grammatical features of a foreign language, the students would try to make a distinction between their native tongue and foreign language they are trying to learn. These distinctions and categories are the entities forming the framework of a language. In addition to the information above, Bonvillain (2000) concisely summarized Sapir Whorf hypothesis:

> "The opinions of Sapir and Whorf on relationships among language, thought and behaviour have come to be known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. One summation of this theory, sometimes referred to as the 'weak version', is that some elements of language, for example, in vocabulary or grammatical systems, influence speakers' perceptions and can affect their attitudes and behaviour. The 'strong version' suggests that language is ultimately directive in this process. The difference between the two versions seems to be the degree of control that language exerts. The 'strong' position is clearly unprovable" (pp. 51-52).

Even though the discussion about the importance of culture in EFL classes has been going on over the last decades, the necessity for teaching culture was recognized at the beginning of 1980s. Especially in 1990s, the scholars and educators started to incorporate the cultural elements of the target language community in a more conscious way. As a significant scholar in that field, Pulverness (2003) asserts that' due to the undeniable growth of English as an international language, cultural content as anything other than contextual background began to be included in language teaching programmes'. This sentence refers to a significant fact about the importance of English as a lingua franca in the world arena and in order to comprehend the details and everyday use of that language, the students widely focus on functional differences in pragmatics.

As mentioned before, a wide range of advantages of incorporating cultural side of the language in classes was generally accepted by the mid of 1980s; however the style of teaching such kind of elements was a significant matter and

question for most educators. These questions were faced more and more in 1990s (Kitao, 2000). McKay (2003) also added that culture teaching has a great impact on language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. In terms of linguistics, the pragmatics, discourse and syntactic features of the language could be mentioned because culture is embedded in language learning process with all these elements.

On the other hand, pedagogical aspect of the matter is concerned with the textbooks used during the courses hence the teachers pay attention to the needs of learners in terms of culturally-embedded courses during the course book selection process. While some materials and course books sufficiently present the cultural features of the community speaking target language in a detailed way, some others may be insufficient in providing necessary examples and activities in that aspect. To that end, it is not wrong to state that culture has become a significant component of language teaching curriculum and for that reason the teachers are interested in searching out related ways and materials to incorporate the everyday speech patterns and societal values of the peoples speaking the target language. In other words, curricular matters play a part in the application of cultural knowledge. Therefore, it seems axiomatic that the integration of cultural aspects into the curriculum enables the learners to acquire the focal points of the foreign language community.

2.4. CULTURE AND CONTEXT

In order to make the language learning process more meaningful, the contextual knowledge is needed in a foreign language class. Byram (1988) argued that language has no function independent of the context in which it is used, for that reason cultural context is accepted as the key term to achieve a native- like fluency in foreign language teaching. Cultural context refers to language patterns, linguistic etiquette and speech events altogether because one would choose the words and expressions according to social distance of interlocutors. Undoubtedly, these combinations of elements always carry a different message and this point

affects the language use of the speaker. While bearing in mind the contextual differences, the speaker has background knowledge about the codes of the community. For that reason, the learners are influenced by the value system of another culture, and some of these values may be passed on to them (Işık, 2003).

Additionally, the learners would have a chance of forming a world view by being familiar with some other cultures and their some other features apart from language. Language would play a role in reflecting these features as Kramsch (2001) asserts "Common attitudes, beliefs and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language, for example, what they choose to say or not to say and how they say it" (p. 6). In other words, the beliefs and background values are manifested in the way a society live or communicate with other people. The quotation below reiterates this fact once again:

> "Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed or interpreted. Culture is the foundation of communication" (Samovar, Porter, & Jain, 1981, cited in Abisamra, 2009)

From the excerpt above, it is explicitly stated that communication is not only related with the linguistic competence of the learner but also with the communicative competence of his playing part in the conveying of messages. It is a commonly held belief that communication embodies socio-cultural and intercultural aspects, thus the components of local culture should not be neglected in language classes. In today's shrinking world, almost everybody gives unanimous support for the indispensability of culture integrated courses. At that point, another question arises: To what extent do the instructors are knowledgeable to transmit the cultural values of the target community? Do they exploit suitable strategies to implement culture teaching? If the aim is to achieve communicative competence in certain settings and contexts, the instructors should be prepared for the application of curricular activities.

2.5. TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

As one of the most important topics in ELT, the relation between target language culture and language itself has been discussed throughout the decades. Similarly, language teachers adopt the bandwagon of language and culture teaching approach in their courses and try to integrate related elements to their teaching practice. While doing this, they try to develop some innovative methods and atmosphere that is conducive for the integration and development of intercultural competences. Pedagogical documents and the application of suitable teaching practices would enable the instructor to facilitate the inclusion of the term 'culture' in their courses. The way teachers address cultural issues in their courses depends on the perception of the language teacher about the subject and viewpoints about culture integrated courses.

The materials used to address cultural issues in their teaching practices are to be selected after a detailed analysis of the classroom atmosphere and student profiles. If this is not the case, the students would feel distinctly indisposed to participate in the courses. On the other hand, another group of language teachers often treat culture as supplemental or incidental to the 'real task' (Fantini, 1997) because they generally focus on the everyday speech patterns and practical side of communication. Also Reid showed that only one third of language teaching programs offer a course in culture (1995/1996, p. 3). Even though the importance of incorporating cultural aspects of the foreign language is a well-known fact for language teachers, there exist some problems appearing in the application of this knowledge. During the past decade, the instructors have started to contemplate on the problems stemming from not including cultural side of the foreign language.

Given the fact that the background and previous knowledge of a language instructor directly affect the subject matter materials and methods used during the course, it is crucial that teacher educators in ELT programs are knowledgeable in target language culture. As most of them regard themselves as insufficient in target culture, it causes them to appreciate it much less in foreign language classes. Having a positive attitude towards cultural elements together with an

accurate knowledge of the community in which target language is spoken paves the way for the use of appropriate materials and design of the syllabus, which will enable students to internalize the use of language in everyday situations. Kramsch (2004) contends in his research that the contemporary foreign language teacher has an accurate knowledge of target culture together with being an expert in syntactic and semantic forms of that language. There exists research-based evidence that understanding the interplay between language and culture shapes the approaches used in language teaching process. Most probably, a language teacher who is knowledgeable enough in TLC would allocate more time to carry out activities which enable students to acquire native-like fluency in target language. Positive perception of the TLC would not only arouse interest of the students in TL but also pave the way for academic achievements in that field.

The systematic study of culture is generally underestimated in foreign language courses and the instructors have some different reasons for this case and it is generally due to time allocation problems. The overcrowded curriculum do not let them to include some different authentic materials at large and apart from syntactic and lexical features of the language embodying the courses, the integration of culture based activities imply extra time. At that point, the use of authentic materials is of great importance. Authentic materials are described by Peterson and Coltrane (2003) as "authentic resources from the native speech community that helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences" (p. 1). On the other hand, some teachers espouse a 'language first, culture later' approach on the grounds that the students should be exposed to authentic cultural elements only after they have completely mastered the linguistic aspect of the language. Understanding the cultural background of the language is only possible if the teacher is effective enough to help the learners attain certain skills. In addition to this, some pupils persistently reject the target culture and this is another reason why some teachers neglect the idea of teaching culture during their courses.

The teaching and learning process of language should basically focus on internalizing a means of communication. However, it is generally regarded as mastering an object of academic study. Given the international nature of the jobs

in today's world, it is a requirement to master the language with its cultural background in addition to the syntactic and lexical parts. Pluricultural nature of some societies, popular music and some trends are other factors stimulating students to attain cultural knowledge. A greater openness towards new cultural cases can be achieved by expanding individual experiences from one's own to the target culture. Current national English projects are not adequate to provide the learners with necessary skills of communication in a cultural setting. New programs and curricula are to be developed in order to place a greater emphasis on the integration of cultural facets in the teaching practices. The systematic analysis of culture would eminently allow the teachers to include cultural issues inherent to that process. On the other hand, to what extent do the teachers include these issues depend on the personal viewpoint of them as Holme indicated. Holme (2003) succinctly explains another contentious issue with a combination of five views: the communicative view, the classical curriculum view, the instrumental or culture-free language view, the deconstructionist view and lastly the competence view.

It is easy to spot the differences in language teachers' perceptions shaped by previous experiences, childhood memoirs or their background in general. Some studies show that social, (inter) cultural, socio-economic and educational factors determine the attitude of a foreign language instructor. Bayyurt (2006, p. 243) contends that 'the background of individual teachers influences their attitude towards the incorporation of culture into their language teaching'. Similarly, Ahlquist's (2000) claim bolsters the importance and effects of social circles in our environment causing us to adopt chauvinistic ideologies which hamper the appreciation of other cultures. Faas (2008) expressed that having less access to the opportunities related with European life style such as travelling and sightseeing, social attitudes result in developing nationalistic identities which inevitably lead them to take part in various ethnic divisions. In order to eradicate the hostile feelings towards TLC, the learners of that foreign language should be exposed to the cultural components of the language while experiencing it by direct contact. When they have enough knowledge about their native tongue and target language

together with their cultural sides, it would be easier to form a mutual understanding between these two cultures and communities.

In addition to the effect of background knowledge and experiences in formation of different perceptions about TLC, one should note the different correlations between language and culture. The language teacher being deprived of intercultural connections and overseas experiences would find it difficult to present cultural information in language classes since being exposed to the daily speech patterns of the target language community in its naturally occurring ways is the determining factor in forming an understanding of the TLC. According to a study conducted by Villegas and Lucas (2002), intensive cultural immersion enables the individuals to evaluate and construe the world around them in a more meaningful way. Nonetheless, having such an opportunity depends on the financial situation of the individual. Although the importance and effect of socio-economic status are not articulated in that field very often, it is shown that individuals having higher socio-economic status are more successful in appreciating different cultures and demonstrate a higher academic level of achievement (Arikan, 2010).

On the other hand, neither the instructor of the course nor the foreign language learner can be knowledgeable about all the cultural aspects of the target language community. The teachers may help learners integrate the new elements being taught with the ones that already exist and in order to achieve this, the students are to gain certain skills of interpreting and relating. In other words, the instructors' task is to guide students to generate positive attitudes and approaches towards TLC to form a bridge between two cultures by explaining and relating it to events of his own. If the learner is successful enough to integrate the new forms with what they already know by making a comparison with their own cultural forms, it means that the student is really conscious in evaluating the perspectives and implicit elements of the society.

In other words, critical cultural awareness is another significant ability to be gained in that process because the purpose of teaching a foreign language and culture is not to change the values and beliefs of the individual. It is principally

through these sets of abilities that foreign language learners can deal with dynamics of cultural dynamics. The inseparable connection between language learning and intercultural communication is the key term to understand the phenomenon in a clear way and to be ready for inevitable encounters with the cultural aspects, the learner has to be equipped with the necessary skills allowing flexibility. In this regard, the instructor can form the curriculum in a flexible way which allows the learner to express his own thoughts, rather than a rigid one.

Language and culture are inseparably linked and most of the researchers in that field are of the same opinion about this fact (Kramsch, 1988; Seelye, 1984). Some language teachers are well aware of the fact that there exists a continuous interplay between the linguistic and cultural elements of a foreign language. On the other hand, some researchers uphold that English as a lingua-franca should be taught in a culture-free context. Undoubtedly, the language instructors' perceptions about TLC permeate in every part and phase of their teaching processes. For that reason, the integration of cultural elements into the language classes depends on the personal viewpoint of the instructor. The personal view of the instructor also affects the way in describing and determining the techniques to teach cultural awareness and other related terms in foreign and second language classrooms. To do this, the language teacher should be well aware of some commonly used terms in language teaching if he is to foresee the difficulties that students may face during that process.

Linguistic imperialism is one of the problems that may arise during the implementation of culture-based curricula. Some teachers feel uneasy about the influence target culture has on students. Some others think that students should learn the cultural aspects of the foreign language community midway through the process, or in other words only after they have mastered the syntactic and lexical side of the language. Some authors hold widely divergent opinions on incorporating both cultures to deal with the constraints of exclusively employing the components of one culture. If the pupils are given the chance of exploring the features of the target community by analogy with their own culture, they will feel more tolerant towards them.

2.5.1. A Traditional or Intercultural Stance

In this increasingly multi-cultural world, the instructors feel the need to help the students raise their intercultural skills and internalize linguistic forms and rules in a foreign language class. When two people from diverse cultural backgrounds try to communicate in a certain setting, some problems may arise due to contextual differences and their differing social lives and customs. In other words, only with the appreciation of foreign language culture and fostering the students' perception of otherness can the instructor of the FLE class achieve the goal of overcoming the obstacles that hinder the development of intercultural awareness. Foreign language educationists aim at encouraging the learners to search for the societal differences and raise awareness that people from different countries perceive the world in a distinctive way. Intercultural awareness fosters the students' tolerance towards other communities and their viewpoints change accordingly. It is high time that educationists broke down stereotypes and encouraged their students to become aware of cultural diversities. There is often a dichotomy between what educators think and what they are expected to do in a socially appreciated way. For that reason, the instructors try to find a compromise in that matter.

As a goal of language education, the syllabus and curriculum are designed according to the needs of the learners while they acquire the necessary skills for a cross-cultural understanding. Additionally, the cultural components in a language class aim at raising the students' cultural awareness while engaging them cognitively. If this is not the case, the learners have difficulty in conveying meaning in a certain setting and particular environment. The methods of Communicative Language Learning can be implemented during the courses in order to allow them feel comfortable and focus on everyday language.

The development of intercultural communicative competence prepares the learners for the multi-cultural environments in today's world. What may be considered appropriate and practical may not be so in another cultural context and

for that reason the instructor has the role of transmitting the idea that cultural components of the foreign language being taught are to be evaluated in an unbiased way. Gaining an insight into different societies would be helpful in forming an understanding of their lives and traditions while trying to obtain the grammatical rules of the referred foreign language.

Undoubtedly, the linguistic competence of the foreign language learners is regarded as a prerequisite for the formation of an intercultural understanding. However, some instructors are not of the same opinion about that matter because they prefer to allow the students make mistakes from the very beginning before being linguistically competent in that foreign language. In a study by Ho (2009), the researcher questions the teachers' challenge of having a traditional or intercultural understanding in language courses. The results of the study shows that adopting an intercultural understanding is necessary if the aim is to help the learners internalize the inextricable relation between language and culture. This relation may be regarded as an abstract phenomenon; however cultural variables embodied by the referred foreign language are the concrete part of this process. As the language can be defined as the symbols and words by which the culture and social norms are transmitted, it can also be referred to as the symbolic representation of the values and beliefs.

It is surely beyond doubt that the internalization of an intercultural understanding necessitates being knowledgeable in one's own native tongue while trying to comprehend the contextual differences in a particular setting. Kramsch (1993) contends that EFL learners have to gain insight into their own culture if they want to have an intercultural understanding. The use of the term 'intercultural' refers to the fact that the learner has to mediate between these two cultures if the aim is to form a mutual understanding. At that point, it is meaningful to describe the term intercultural communicative competence with other words and it is defined as 'the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and the ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality' (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkeyy, 2002, p. 10).

In a similar vein, the intercultural competence enables the individuals to bridge the gap between their culture and the associated culture. The cultural components embedded in the language itself are reflected in every linguistic element composing the meanings and expressions. These cultural features constitute the language barriers if they aren't comprehended fully by the learners and mostly misunderstanding and miscommunication result from being not knowledgeable in pragmatic rules of the TL.

It is high time that language educators accepted that learning a foreign language necessitates entering a cultural world and determined the curricular activities accordingly. Due to fear of instilling unsuitable values to students, the instructors refrain from incorporating certain elements of TLC. Some of these incidences stems from the lack of knowledge about these features. Under no circumstances should the instructors rule out the students' chances of acquiring intercultural and communicative competence. Even though some teachers figure that culture integrated courses are significant for hermeneutic skills of students, there is a discrepancy between their ideas and implementation. Positive attitudes towards the incorporation of the target culture do not mean to prioritize this aspect in their courses.

While focusing on the significant points mentioned above, the students should be well aware of their own culture. Inasmuch as the acquisition of the foreign language and its culture is in direct proportion to the background knowledge of one's own cultural aspects, the instructors are to develop the curriculum accordingly and not to put pressure on the students for acquiring every bit of target culture. While the students are on track to internalize the features of both cultures, the instructor would try not to alienate them from their own cultures. Damen (1987) elaborates on the issue by adding: "cultural relativity, the non-evaluative acceptance of the logic and holism of a given cultural system, precludes attitudes of chauvinism, especially on the teachers' part" (1987, p. 212). At this juncture, it is impossible to underestimate the contribution of our own cultural identities in the acquisition of the foreign language culture. As Byram and Morgan (1994) reconfirms that fact in impressive way: "Learners cannot simply

shake off their own culture and step into another , their culture is a part of themselves and created them as social beings."

2.5.2. The Role of Teachers in Preparing Students for Meaningful Culture Learning

Despite not being oblivious to the importance of TLC in the appreciation of linguistic elements, the instructors occasionally does not address to some important facets of target culture learning.

In order to form a basis for the comprehension of certain cultural elements, the instructors should be aware of certain topics. Mantle-Bromley (1995) analyzes these topics under four headings:

1.   The role of attitudes
2.   The process of acculturation
3.   The need for readiness
4.   The need for self-awareness (p. 372-386)

In line with the facts above, Brown (2007) clarifies the teachers' role in the culture learning process:

> "Teachers can play a therapeutic role in helping learners to move thorough stages of acculturation. If the learner is aided in this process by sensitive and perceptive teachers, he can perhaps more smoothly pass through the second stage and into the third stage of culture learning, and thereby increase his chances for succeeding in both second language learning and second-culture learning" (p. 33-46).

Most of the studies in that area confirm the common-sense notion that the instructors should guide students insofar as possible to use the target language in a culturally appropriate manner. If this is not the case, the students run the risk of experiencing miscommunication and misunderstanding or they might use the wrong addressing style or writing system when faced with a cultural setting. The intention of a conscientious educator should be to teach the cultural issues in an

explicit and overt manner. Damen (1987, p. 5) affirms that there exist certain reasons for the limitations of teachers' efficiency as cultural guides:

1. Teachers do not know what 'culture' to teach
2. Until recently only a few textbooks of methodologists have been available to assist teachers in the direction of culture learning

Learning a culture is lifetime undertaking, hence the instructor should set the objectives of the lesson from the very beginning. Valette (1986) postulated that cultural goals can be classified into four categories: (1) developing a greater awareness of and a broader knowledge about the target culture, (2) acquiring a command of the etiquette of the target culture, (3) understanding the differences between the target culture and the students' culture, and lastly (4) understanding the values of the target culture.

2.6. THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE INTEGRATED COURSES ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

In a qualitative study, Önalan (2004) showed that teachers' main aim in giving cultural information in their classes is to 'develop a global understanding of other cultures and people'. This point is really significant in motivating students because students would feel themselves inclined to learn the language just out of curiosity. While incorporating the cultural components of the language during the classes, the teachers use this aspect in order to evoke students' attention. Another important function of using cultural elements in these courses is to foster the communication; however this can be regarded as the next step after motivating and encouraging students to learn more.

Some of the foremost scholars in that field cite the recent guidelines given by the Common European Framework which emphasizes the achievement of a plurilingual approach by adding "...as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands from the language of the home to that of

society at large and then to the languages of other peoples, he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact."

Once the students and the instructors achieve their objective of acquiring the pluricultural nature of the foreign language, the pupils would definitely feel more motivated towards other the constituents of culture. The students may occasionally feel that the two cultures are utterly disparate, hence they could find it difficult to adapt from one to the other. At times like these, the instructors are in charge of steering them to the right direction by indicating the common aspects of these two cultures. Also they could be given the opportunity to form their own cultural system to expound their views on the differences between two cultures. Some instructors exert considerable pressure on their students to become aware of different cultural frameworks and this may cause them to feel demotivated in this process. With the course of time, the students would understand the crucial necessity of absorbing the cultural elements of the community in order to communicate with them in real terms.

The influence of motivation in the field of FLE has been indicated by scholars like Gardner and Lambert (1959; 1965; 1972). In order to motivate and encourage students in that process, culture classes and such kind of activities have a great role in their understanding of cultural background. Such types of activities not only encourage them to learn more about the target language culture but also increase students' interest in that field. When the need for developing a cross-cultural understanding is considered, the contribution of culture integrated courses on students' motivation is much clearer. If the appropriate methods for incorporating the cultural elements into language teaching are used, the students would find the courses more interesting.

The flexible environment and rapport encourage students to learn more and become fluent in that foreign language. Due to the time allowance problems in terms of including culture-based elements, the teachers generally focus on the

syntactic patterns and linguistic rules of the language. However, they are aware of the fact that culture, as an integral part of language teaching process, enhances the students' awareness and affects their academic achievement level. At that point, it is not a risk to state that the cultural peculiarities of the TL contribute to the development of tolerance towards other communities and bring about a full understanding of their own cultural background.

In the field of language teaching, cultural aspect of the language being learned is a prerequisite for the internalization of the target language. If foreign language courses accommodate the needs of the foreign language learners, they will be successful in addressing to different student profiles. In other words, this point can be regarded as one of the most significant determinant factors in the acquisition of the foreign language. Generally, linguistic and syntactic aspects of the language being learned are discussed and taught in courses; however it is evident that the students feel more motivated towards the course if the cultural aspect is taught concurrently with the grammatical aspect of the language. The traditional language teachers typically focus on and emphasize the syntactic elements while underestimating the difficulties and components of culture learning. This stance of the instructor directly affects the understanding and motivation of the language learner.

2.7. THE INFLUENCE OF COURSE BOOKS

When we explore different and various views about culture teaching, it is clear that textbooks have a great impact on the success and failure of that process. Integrating cultural elements to foreign language teaching necessitates the use of appropriate language materials together with techniques for cultural awareness. Another important point to bear in mind is that the course books are to accommodate the needs of the learners while addressing to different student profiles. The researchers in that field unanimously agree that the cultural components and elements of the foreign language should be taught concurrently with the grammatical and lexical aspects of that language. As a well-known fact, the prospective language teachers and learners of a foreign language are exposed

to a wide range of ELT materials during the courses. However, the quality of these materials is discussed because some of them contains some prejudiced, hegemonic or chauvinistic ideologies which affect the perceptions of learners in a negative way while forming hostile feelings towards the community in which TL is spoken (Kachru, 1994).

For inexperienced or untrained teachers, the course books serve as a trainer and they are effective in transmitting the culturally-conditioned speech patterns of the target community. Furthermore, textbooks can be deemed as a map providing an overview of a structured program of cultural features.

The ages and proficiency levels of students are distinctive factors in adapting the materials according to the objectives of the course. With that way, the materials would enable them to internalize the speech patterns used in a communicative setting. In a similar vein, it would not be wrong to claim that knowledge obtained from experience leads to a more deeply rooted understanding of the cultural patterns.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis study was conducted to elicit teachers' perceptions and viewpoints about the integration of target language culture into foreign language classes. Qualitative data analysis method was used to gather data about their teaching practices in their classes because firsthand information is valuable in evaluating their attitudes and reaching a conclusion about the matter. The detailed information about the participants and data collection process will be explained in separate titles.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of this research was to acquaint the people with teachers' perception of the factors effective in promoting an understanding between the students' own culture and TLC and their contribution to students' proficiency level in language. To this end, qualitative research techniques were employed and the use of interviews suits the objective of this study. Qualitative research methods are based on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data such as observations, interviews, focus groups and videotaping (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

In a qualitative study, the researcher has the chance of observing the participants in their natural setting rather than a superficial one designed for the survey of a certain topic. As a matter of fact, interview is one of the most appropriate data collection techniques. To eliminate the barriers of using quantitative techniques in a social context, the instrument of the study was chosen as interviews on the grounds that interviews give the researcher the opportunity to gain verbal insight into ELT teachers' perceptions about the integration of cultural elements into their classes.

"Qualitative methods are advantageous that may have an impact on the integration of when examining factors that may have an impact on the integration of TLC because they provide rich descriptions of the dynamic process in participants' own terms" (McIntyre, 2007, p. 572).

Given the chance of reflecting on their experience, the participants select some significant points of their experience from their stream of consciousness. As individuals' consciousness ensures access to social and educational issues, every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987, pp. 236-237). In a study carried out in the educational field, it is appropriate to use a qualitative method in order to gather the most reliable and 'firsthand' data from the educationists. In the 1970s, a reaction to the dominance of experimental and quantitative research began to develop (Gage, 1989). Similarly, Bertaux (1981) expressed that the subjects of inquiry in natural sciences and those in social sciences are totally different for the subjects of inquiry in the social sciences can talk and think. Bertaux (1981) also added: "If given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on" (p. 39). Symbolizing our beliefs, ideas and thoughts through language is at the heart of being a human. Heron (1981) reiterates that fact by adding:

The use of language, itself, ... contains within it the paradigm of cooperative inquiry; and since language is the primary tool whose use enables human construing and intending to occur, it is difficult to see how there can be any more fundamental mode of inquiry for human beings into the human condition (p. 26).

The aim of in-depth interviewing is neither to form theses nor to get answers to certain questions. As the individuals' stories are worth listening to and having an interest in, it is not possible to convey the core meaning of educational issues only with numbers. That is why people whom we interview are hard to code with numbers, and why finding pseudonyms for participants are a complex and sensitive task (Kvale, 1996, pp. 259-260). Similarly, observational understanding of people is critical in terms of our effort to strive to comprehend them. Interviewing can be regarded as the best avenue of inquiry in making sense of the participants' experiences and evaluating their 'subjective understanding',

thereby yielding results for researchers to conceive new ideas in the field. The subject of this study is related with the education and in particular, foreign language education. Social abstractions like 'education' are best understood through the experience of the individuals whose work and lives are the stuff upon which the abstractions are built (Ferrarotti, 1981).

Dörnyei (2003) postulates that some external feedback is indispensable in the process of writing questions especially when an initial item pool is prepared. Before directing these questions to the participants, the items in the interview went through different processes in order that the researcher could be sure the questions are clear enough for the subjects to respond correctly. After the theme and scope of the study were introduced and presented to the participants, the interviews were conducted with one participant at a time between 10-15 minutes. As far as the length of the interviews was concerned, the participants could express their ideas freely in a flexible setting. With the aim of deriving the results of the survey and exploring teachers' perceptions about the integration of target culture in EFL classes, a semi- structured interview was conducted by the researcher. The implementation of semi-structured interviews is highly critical in terms of obtaining the most accurate results and allowing the subject to express his/her ideas in a flexible setting. The occurrence of unexpected answers makes it possible to explore the disparate dimensions of the issue.

As the interviews are implemented so as to learn about the complexities and unknown sides of the phenomenon, the design and even the focus of study have to be seen as 'emergent' (Lincoln &Guba, 1985, pp. 208-211). However, an overemphasis of the 'emergent nature' can be construed and interpreted as a sign of being nonchalant or looseness. Therefore, the interview questions were prepared beforehand and the direction of the interview was shown to the subjects without putting pressure on them.

These interviews constructed the core context of the study and for this reason the questions were selected carefully and specified in advance to encompass different parts of the scope. Another objective was to find out how the incorporation of cultural elements affects students' academic achievement level.

By doing that, the researcher endeavoured to find out certain underlying themes of the topic and the instructors were helpful indeed in debriefing and revealing the features of a classroom atmosphere in that sense. Through semi-structured interviews, the fundamental theme of each interview question was retained while enabling the subject to make necessary additions and reflect their own ideas related with the topic of the study. The interview questions are given in the appendix part.

The interviews were conducted in Turkish, in the participants' mother tongue, in order for them to carry out better verbal communication. Using the mother tongue during the interviews allows the respondents to feel freer in expressing their opinions and elaborate more clearly on their viewpoints. In order to elicit as accurate information as possible, the instrument, interviews, was exploited in an objective and unbiased way. These interviews with seven instructors working in the School of Foreign Languages, Cumhuriyet University lasted for approximately 2 hours. Verbatim transcription of the interviews and resulted in about 28 pages of transcript.

The data emerged from the interviews was transcribed verbatim after being audio-taped. As the interviewer should have a neutral standpoint throughout the process, the aim of the researchers is to direct the questions with 'a certain sense of naiveté, innocence and absence of prejudgements' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). In the same way, the transcription of the interviews was fulfilled without adding any personal comments or ideas.

3.3. PARTICIPANTS

Data were gathered from seven English Language instructors, working in the School of Foreign Languages, at Cumhuriyet University. The participants of the study were chosen randomly and the participation to this study was utterly voluntary. The instructors were the focal respondents of this research. Before the implementation of interview questions, a written consent was received from the subjects of the research. Also, the researcher ensured that pseudonyms will be

used instead of their real names. The participants were my colleagues at School of Foreign Languages, Cumhuriyet University. My colleagues accepted me as an unbiased researcher just as they recognized the investigational side and characteristic of the study. As Eisner (1991) and Patton (1990) contend in their works, the credibility of a qualitative research report relies heavily on the confidence the readers have in the researcher's ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field. They were not hesitant to make a contribution to the research. All the subjects were Turkish and spoke Turkish as their mother tongue and English as a foreign language. One of the respondents was a male and six of them were females.

The subjects were asked to state their years of teaching experience at the very beginning of the interview. The teaching experiences of the instructors change between 4-20 years. The educational level of the teachers was as follows: 4 of the participants had MA degrees while 2 of them had only BA degrees. One of them was engaged in MA studies and additionally the last participant was engaged in PhD studies. Three of the teachers were graduates of English Language and Literature Department from several different universities. One of the participants is a graduate of Western Languages and Literatures Department. The rest of the participants were graduates of English Language Teaching Department. Additionally, the teachers were inquired about their visits to the countries where English is spoken. The vast majority of the participants (5 of them) stated that they had been abroad before; however only three of them have been in a country where English is spoken as a mother tongue. According to the responses taken from the subjects, the most popular one visited by them is England. 3 of them visited some different countries including Italy, France and Czech Republic. The ages of the participants change between 31-49 years and that's why the implementation of an interview is the best avenue to obtain the necessary results related with the research. Interviewing children or teenagers may not work below a certain age.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The analysis of the qualitative data was carried out after the formation of the categories under certain headings. The incidents taking place in a classroom atmosphere are applicable to each category after the comparison of teachers' perceptions in their classes. After conceptualizing the project, the researcher has to work with material obtained from the subjects and share what she has learnt. One of the widely decried features of the qualitative research method is its turning human beings into numbers, for that reason the aim of the researcher espousing qualitative research technique is to attract attention to the significance of human experiences. Without denigrating the possibility of collaboration, the goal of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of individuals about social and educational issues.

The role of the interviewer cannot be undervalued because asking the appropriate questions at some significant points can minimize the distortion of the main research topic. In order to channel the facts, terms and significant points appropriately, the researcher must have some passion about the subject of the research and sustain the process with the inclusion of new aspects, typical indicators of qualitative research's emergent nature. In addition to the role of the instrument to gather reliable and valid data, human interviewer can be a marvellously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 107). Data collection procedure was implemented with these facts in mind and this enabled the researcher to have reliable data and facilitated the process of data analysis.

Throughout the study, the researcher tried to explore teachers' perceptions about the integration of cultural elements and analyzed the data accordingly. The interview was designed for the realization of this aim and tried to answer certain questions. Data analysis included the following steps:

1. After the completion of the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews, the transcripts were checked along with the audiotapes of the recordings and the aim is to review the data and go through the data in terms of accuracy.

2. The researcher read the data carefully in an iterative process and found out 'the meaning units.'

3. Varied raw data was summarized and condensed into a succinct format. The categories were formed after the careful examination of the data obtained from the interviews.

4. The data was reviewed and analyzed while adding the necessary comments in the light of the literature and previous findings in this field.

Every single word was transcribed after the audio-taping and the analysis of the data was carried out with the inclusion of their personal features. Subsequently, the researcher reached the aim of finding out how our participants understand and make meaning of their experience. With the subject of the study taken into consideration, the teachers strived to present information about their experiences in integrating culture into their teaching practices while reconstructing and reflecting upon them.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Qualitative method is substantially creative and subject to emerging themes at the core. To a great extent, it is contingent upon the strenuous efforts and conceptual capabilities of the researchers along with their insights. In addition to these points, it is a matter of forming a balance between the amount of evidence and data while seeking the best fit for the analysis of antithetical viewpoints. There exist various philosophical and theoretical orientations to qualitative inquiry; however the aim of the researcher is mainly to link the empirical questions with the methods to analyze data. Previous studies were perused and probed studiously in order to get an idea and understanding about the research topic. The study of compendia and other works are absolutely fundamental to gain an insight into the core of the study. Hyman (1954) stated that without a certain and pre-determined structure for their work, the researchers may increase the chance of distorting what they learn from their participants. Such pre-reading is a must in order to respond correspondingly to what emerges as the research proceeds.

The qualitative research was chosen as the most appropriate way of getting research outcomes of the perceptions of English language instructors about the integration of target culture elements into the foreign language courses, specifically English. Qualitative research design intends to enable the researcher to obtain a broad insight of the participants' perspectives, values and ideas. On the other hand, content analysis has some distinctive features and these features fit the purpose of this research. For that reason, content analysis would be implemented in order to analyze and evaluate the data elicited from teachers' responses to interview questions. As Patton (1990) defines, the main purpose of content analysis is to examine what is there and label it.

According to Hoepfl (1997) qualitative research has got five basic characteristics:

1. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data. The researcher attempts to observe, describe and interpret settings as they are, maintaining empathic neutrality.
2. The researcher acts as the human instrument of data collection.
3. Qualitative researchers predominantly use inductive data analysis.
4. Qualitative research reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the presence of voice in the text.
5. Qualitative research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them, and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher. In this research the data was collected by doing in-depth interviews. (para.13)

The rationale for choosing a qualitative over a quantitative one is well-grounded with the excerpts and findings from previous researches in that field and they are explained in detail in the methodology part. Taking into account these basic characteristics of qualitative method, the analyst aims to explore the direction that makes the most sense after the data were read in an iterative manner to grasp all constituents at the core of the interviews. To capture all variations in participants' teaching practices that are on line with their perceptions, the researcher kept the flexible mindset while allowing for evolving and emerging themes in due course time.

4.2. DATA ANALYSIS

Having been selected randomly, the teachers were directed a pre-determined sets of questions related with the purpose of the study. Interviews

created a natural conversation atmosphere and this enabled the participants to express their ideas freely without any pressure. The participation to the study was definitely voluntary and there was no imposition on them. Interviews were made individually with the participants in order to let them feel comfortable during the interview and were only interjected to make clear the gist of their ideas. Before the implementation of the interviews, the teachers taking part in the study were informed succinctly to acquaint them with the theme and purpose of the study.

The instructors were given the chance to emphasize any pertinent point without constraining time. The aim of enabling them to express themselves to the utmost has been achieved. The analyst should be astute observer of the participants' gestures and body language in order to exploit these details in the pattern recognition and analysis process. Some instant questions arose during the interviews and this gave rise to modification in the order of some questions. After the completion of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and read in an iterative way. With reading the transcripts recursively, the aim was to describe the empirical data by summarizing interview transcriptions. The analysis of the data was carried out with the help of previous studies in the field along with review of literature. Thereafter, the teachers' perceptions, beliefs and ideas about the integration of target language culture were categorized under certain headings. The researcher appreciated the significance of paying attention to each word the interviewee used and this is critical in reflecting the attitude of the subject while allowing for the report on results as much as possible. After the completion of these processes, the investigator sorted out the direction that makes the most sense regarding the data elicited from interviews.

Table 1- Background Knowledge about Interviewees

	Age	Gender	Experience	Pedagogical Education
1	29	Female	Six years	Boğaziçi University
2	31	Male	Seven years	Cumhuriyet University
3	40	Female	Seventeen years	Cumhuriyet University
4	39	Female	Sixteen years	Cumhuriyet University
5	49	Female	Twenty-six years	Ondokuz Mayıs University
6	37	Female	Fourteen years	Dokuz Eylül University
7	31	Female	Eight years	Hacettepe University

4.3. RESULTS

4.3.1. The Definition of Culture

In this thesis study, the aim was to elicit the teachers' perceptions, beliefs and practices about the place of culture in English language courses. Their practices in relation are pre-eminently significant in terms of motivating students who are on track or presenting the positive aspects of target culture incorporation for the participation of indisposed pupils in language courses. Additionally, these practices would determine the students' affiliation with the cultural content of the language courses. First and foremost, the teachers should recognize the fact that cultural attitudes play a paramount role in forming an understanding of another country and related culture.

The teachers also have a great role in encouraging students insofar as possible to hold the belief that cultural events of another community are alternate ways of behaving. For that reason, it was crucial to elicit the teachers' attitudes towards the 'culture phenomenon 'itself and some questions were directed to obtain the necessary data. There exist two interview questions that intended to grasp the subjects' definition of culture. The first interview question elicited the

instructors' general description of culture while the second question focuses on the significance of incorporating cultural elements in EFL setting. For that reason, the analyses of the definitions made by the teachers would be carried out at the outset in order to pave the way for the analysis of the cultural features in English courses.

It is perfectly plain that teachers cannot only utilize the traditional definition of culture in the process of determining the elements of curriculum. Teachers should avail themselves of the opportunity to keep track of technological developments and developing cultural features of peoples. Almost all of the instructors defined culture by adding a list of features related with the term 'culture.' Observable aspects of culture (eating habits, arts, customs and behaviours) and invisible parts (values, attitudes) of the phenomenon were included in that broad definition. Some instructors expressed their viewpoints with a holistic approach. The first part of the question necessitates evaluating the term in a broader concept; whereas the second part of the first item questions the attitude of the instructor towards the inclusion of TLC in foreign language classes. Interestingly yet not surprisingly, the teachers emphasized the difficulty of defining the term in one concrete way. Most of the participants evaluated the term in a common scientific ground and defined 'culture' in the sociological sense (Adaskou et al, 1990); being made up of customs, traditions, beliefs and interpersonal dynamics of a community. Of seven instructors having been interviewed, five teachers converged in the sociological sense of culture. To start with the general definition of the term, Ece pictured more general view of culture while adding these words:

> "Culture is the lifestyle of all the people living in a certain area along with their eating habits and views of life. Actually, it is a general term and phenomenon including lots of disparate elements."

Calling attention to one significant feature of the term, Sevgi defined the term with a different view point:

"Culture can be defined as a phenomenon which is transmitted to the next generations and accommodates moral values and material elements altogether. Language can be counted in this term, and the fluency of the speaker is contingent upon the incorporation of cultural elements."

Another important definition that was brought up by another interviewee, Mehmet, was that 'Culture could be described as an aggregate of moral values transmitted from one generation to another. It develops over a period of time while being open to change. An accumulation of historical facts and values are absolutely necessary in order for culture to be formed as an indicator of a certain community.' Zeynep gives a definition of the term in a similar fashion:

"Culture can be regarded as the summation of people's beliefs, related thoughts and countries' histories formed and transmitted to the next generations all along the line"

These definitions confirm the common-sense notion that defining the term culture is a contentious issue and the integration of cultural elements may face outright rejection due to some prejudice. Due to its complex nature, it is almost impossible to saturate people with a definitive description. Hinkel (1999, p. 1) maintained that the terms are too broad to define by adding: "There are as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviours and activities"

In conjunction with the assumption that culture is transmitted from one generation to another, Ayşe underlined the fact that culture is formed with the inclusion of all the behaviours determining the way people live and react to certain situations. More importantly, it constitutes the core of being a human while being the accumulation of beliefs and result the generative processes. The definitions provided by the subjects of the current research are in line with the previous findings and works of the some notable scholars and institutions in that field. The National Centre for Cultural Competence defines culture as an "integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic,

religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations" (Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, & Jones, 2000, p. 1).

4.3.2. The Place of Culture in EFL Context

As for the place and importance of culture in foreign language classes, the vast majority of the participants stated that culture is an indispensable part of language and communication. They also expressed that the teachers should adopt an eclectic approach while focusing on the cultural matters in their courses. It is not wrong to state that modernist definition and conception of culture perseveres in their minds. Additionally, the participants stated that target language culture should be addressed in a systematic way without overshadowing the locus of native culture. They also tried to define the term in a way covering every available facet of culture. Upon being directed the question whether teaching the target language culture is subordinated to teaching the language itself, they stated these two broad concepts should be inserted in foreign language classes concurrently.

With the course of time, the teachers embarked on new projects and formed innovative ideas about the incorporation of target language. In the last decades, the teachers' awareness of methodology and perceptions of culture have undergone a change in a positive way. Taking into account the focus and purpose of the study, the integration of cultural elements is momentous and vital in terms of students' success in the field.

Ece believed that culture is the determining factor in using different structures in different circumstances and for that reason we need to keep pace with the developments in cultural areas. She illustrated the point by giving the example of phone calls and added that the expressions and ways of addressing during a phone call depend on the cultural features of a community and language spoken in that community. In other words, the students generally know how to express a situation in grammatically correct way; however these sentences and expressions are principally wrong in terms of appropriateness in that certain context. Her statements and comments about the integration of target language culture into the

courses are in line with the thoughts expressed in Rivers (1981): "Language teaching should go hand in hand with culture because they are inextricably linked to each other". While drawing attention to these points, Ece mentioned a similar study carried out in the field of discourse:

> "I participated in a study implemented by a friend of mine. In that study, she wanted me to respond to the statements written there. Some of them were in Turkish, the other ones were in English. After the completion of the study, we noticed that I gave short and brief answers to the statements in English while giving long and detailed answers to the rest of them. This shows that the learners cannot express their thoughts freely and correctly if they do not internalize the language in culturally embedded courses."

As teachers' main purpose in giving cultural information in foreign language classes is to help them develop a global understanding of other cultures, the course curriculum and activities should be determined and designed accordingly. Despite consensus and mounting evidence about the importance of cultural knowledge, most of the teachers feel that they have to focus on grammatical and lexical points and skip the cultural elements due to time constraints.

Of the seven participants having been interviewed, Mehmet delineated there is likelihood that the students may feel inclined to adopt the features of target language culture while drawing attention to the significance of cultural elements in terms of reading comprehension skills. He said,

> "The person should try to make sense of what the collocutor means rather than focusing on the syntactic part of the language. The speaker should have background knowledge in order to the construe the meaning of the sentences and expressions uttered during a conversation. We, as teachers of English as a foreign language, have to acquaint our students with the culturally embedded behaviour patterns of the target language community."

In conjunction with the assumption that cultural knowledge is decisive in students' continuum of development in learning English, Ayşe stated that she tries to teach target language culture; however she sometimes fails to do so due to time constraints in English courses. She also added perception level of students along with the existence of low achievers in English courses limits the incorporation of cultural features into the courses. According to her, English should be evaluated in

the global world context because you cannot refer to a 'pure English culture' in your courses. She claimed there was a distinctive English culture in 14th and 15th centuries; however in today's world you can only teach and share the usage of certain expressions in communicative settings.

Sevgi, on the other hand, concluded that she could not focus on the cultural patterns to a great degree due to the overcrowded curriculum that she had to follow up. When her personhood is involved, it is plain that the instructors cannot allocate enough time for the inclusion of target language culture, notwithstanding their concerted efforts to do so. She also claimed that they could teach the language only with its basic syntactic rules and lexical knowledge rather than teaching the language in a communicative atmosphere.

The possibility of assimilation in the event that teachers try to impose target language cultural values on students is a contentious issue. On the other hand, most of the instructors are aware of the fact that language is employed in cultural exchanges while having a great impact on the way the students react to the input they have been subject to. As the structure and cultural background of a foreign language has a significant role in predisposing the learners towards a certain way of thinking, the process of foreign language acquisition should be evaluated meticulously. And besides, cultural attitudes play a paramount role in restructuring the students' cultural conceptions, accordingly the instructors should attach great importance to the incorporation of cultural elements while trying to form a balance between native culture and target culture.

The students' culture-bound behaviours must be observed non-judgmentally in order to encourage them insofar as possible to endorse the target language community features as an alternate way of behaving. The students may sometimes feel perplexed or uncommunicative in the presence of different themes and cultural features related with the target language. The teachers' role here is to help them form a positive understanding about the foreign language and the community in which it is spoken without denigrating the importance of native culture.

On the basis of the findings above, it would make sense to claim the teachers unanimously agree and advocate the incorporation of target culture into the courses while trying to allocate enough time for the sake of students' cultural competence. The concerted efforts of language teachers have a paramount importance in that continuum. The students may sometimes be reticent about responding to culturally embedded questions or activities; nevertheless the teachers would have a hand the outputs of the process by integrating miscellaneous communicative activities into the courses.

In addition to the perceptions mentioned above, the participants stated they did not adhere to course books as a reliable source of cultural information. The reference to cultural elements in course curriculum and subject materials should be beneficial to some extent; however they regard native speakers of English as the best source of learning the target language culture. Since they do not have that opportunity all the time, they try to use realia and appropriate materials as a source of cultural information. Undoubtedly, it is not possible to apply the same procedure to different student profiles. For that reason, they preferred to choose and adapt the cultural activities and elements according to the qualities of classes and academic level of students in terms of English proficiency. Foreign language course curriculum should cover linguistic and cultural information on equal terms on the grounds that cultural background information is crucial in establishing appropriate communication.

4.3.2.1. Time Allotted to Grammatical and Lexical Features of Language Compared with Cultural Components

Contrary to the conceptions mentioned above by most of the participants, the instructors complain about not being able to spare enough time for the integration of cultural knowledge into the language courses. Although they want to address to the requirements of today's world and accommodate the communicational and academic needs of the learners, the overcrowded curriculum and two-hour-course per week do not permit them to do so. In order to clarify the

deeper causes behind the problem given and find solutions for it, the teachers try to do their best in order to apply the methods that would be beneficial for the intercultural development of students. Additionally, the participants averred that the students should be aware of their responsibilities and be curious about the cultural features of the target language in order that they could internalize the culturally appropriate behaviour patterns. Although some instructors have preformed ideas based on what they have gleaned from their educational process, they also try to keep pace with the needs of global world.

The participants having been interviewed emphasized the significance of incorporating cultural elements into the courses in order to induce positive attitudes towards the foreign language and its native speakers. Notwithstanding their ideas on the issue, they complain about not sparing enough time to cultural features of the language. The results of present study are in line with Han (2010) which emphasized the problems of English language instructors in allocating time for the cultural features of the language. Zeynep said,

> "The course books focus on the students' subsequent development of grammatical and linguistic competence, for that reason I could not integrate cultural elements of target language culture despite having positive ideas about that matter. As for my opinion on the subject, I think we should try to teach how native speakers use the language in their daily lives. "

Ahsen, on the other hand, stressed a different aspect of the matter and reiterated the importance that she attached to the development of speaking skills. She added,

> "I generally try to focus on the development of speaking skills and communicative competence of the learners. I believe they would be successful if they achieve to become aware of the cultural differences and form a positive attitude towards different identities. With that way, they can internalize the syntactic and lexical patterns of the language along with cultural features."

As one of the general goals of language teaching, the instructors try to develop and utilize materials urging the learners for the development of intra-curricular cultural awareness constituent element as an indicator of foreign

language culture. In the same vein, language educators regard the acculturation phenomenon as a natural concomitant of language learning process. By the same token, the researchers in this field draw attention to the fact that the students should gain access to better learning English for communicative purposes because the learners can make sense of socio-cultural encounters with higher level of cultural awareness. A communicative atmosphere would provide a nurturing milieu for the students' cross-cultural awareness and subsequent development of cultural competency.

There exist antithetical views about the integration of cultural patterns into the courses, however the instructors should try to have astute pattern recognition and apply the methods epitomizing the changes they want. Additionally, they take a holistic approach to address to different learner profiles. The literature in the field and previous studies provide plausible explanations for the application of communicative activities and spare enough time for them.

4.3.3. The Contribution of Cultural Information to Students' Academic Achievement

The integration of cultural information into the foreign language courses has some benefits and it runs the gamut from readiness to communicate with native speakers to understanding the culturally embedded units in a text. The participants stipulated that the inclusion of cultural elements in English courses makes a great contribution to students' proficiency level by motivating them to learn more about the language itself and the related cultural background. The participants of the study unanimously agree that the students' communicative skills can be honed to perfection with the contribution of target language cultural elements. The interviewees overwhelmingly deem the integration of cultural aspects appropriate.

The vast majority of the participants states that the teachers of English language should systematically deal with the questions directed by students about the 'culture' phenomenon. In other words, they are in favour of teaching culture in

the lessons. The statements given above explain the reason why the instructor should share the cultural values of the target language speech community when there exists a chance to do so. On the other hand, some interviewees articulated that contrastive analysis should be made between the target culture and native culture of students in order not to allow for the possibilities of assimilation. Apart from that aspect, some participants claimed that it is required to attach equal importance to different cultures and nationalities. They also preferred to prioritize the subjects that would appeal to the interests of the students and accommodate the needs of these learners.

Zeynep pointed out that the students having background knowledge about target culture and native culture continued to thrive in English courses. She added that the knowledge of target language culture is not sufficient on the grounds that the students should have a general knowledge about their native culture so as to make a comparison between them. If this is not the case, the students have difficulty in construing the core of the meanings in culturally embedded courses. She stated that it is not appropriate to try to transmit foreign language culture in English from the very beginning inasmuch as the student may form a reaction to the inclusion of cultural components if they cannot succeed in these courses. She said,

"Cultural features of target language community should be presented on a regular basis in English courses. Culture is a broad term, for that reason culture should be incorporated into the courses when appropriate."

Zeynep was in favour of the idea that the features of target culture and native culture should be provided while teaching the linguistic aspects of the language. She does not hesitate to include new items about target culture. Upon being directed the question about the effect of culturally embedded courses on students' achievement and motivation, she concluded that successful students are far more knowledgeable in target language culture. On the other hand, some students from low achievers group may confound the idea that only successful students make comments on cultural issues. She added that there exist some

students who read lots of materials about the cultural issues and international challenges in their mother tongue. Zeynep also claimed that culture learning distinguishes the good and enthusiastic learners from the indifferent ones in classroom atmosphere.

Analyzing the enunciations and statements of the interviewees, I can assert that a great majority of the participants advocates the incorporation of cultural components into the courses. They figure that culture is a must so as to use language in the suitable context and not to allow for misunderstandings in certain settings. The prevailing idea about that topic was the emphasis that should be put on the pragmatic sense of culture as the background knowledge. As pragmatic sense of culture has a significant role as a mediator between people, the function of the culture in this direction should not be underestimated in English courses. Begüm, a female English instructor in School of Foreign Languages, expressed that in reading courses they had to include cultural features of the language as these items enable the students to comprehend the gist of the texts. She teaches reading courses of prep classes, for that reason she tried to evaluate the matters in terms of reading skills and drew attention to the relation between culture understanding and being able to get the basic ideas in a text. She said,

"If we fail to understand the cultural elements in a certain text, we would also fail to understand the language itself inasmuch as the language and cultural features are factors and phenomena fostering and influencing one another. I do not mean that these two concepts should be taught separately. I would say the other way round. Culture and language should be taught in the same context and at the same time in order to allow for the students' development of intercultural competence"

Through her statements, it is explicit that the students having an interest in English courses are far more knowledgeable in target language culture and try to direct related questions during the courses. She claimed,

"The students having high grades in English courses are also inquisitive and enthusiastic about the cultural patterns of the language. As far as I observed in my courses, high achievers in English courses also have social and paralinguistic skills that make communication successful".

Sevgi, who has been teaching English in School of Foreign Languages for sixteen years, shared her ideas, experiences and observations with us and pointed out important matters about the incorporation of cultural patterns into the English courses. She also claimed that the linguistic aspects of language do not mean anything without the knowledge of cultural context. The students should be ready to communicate with native speakers without any misunderstandings and this aim can be achieved with the help of cultural knowledge about the target language and the community. In other words, helping students to gain an understanding of the society speaking this language and develop intercultural competence can be regarded as the ultimate aim of teaching a foreign language. Sevgi said,

> "I read an essay a few weeks ago and as mentioned in it, the knowledge of cultural patterns is absolutely necessary in order to comprehend what you read. If one does not have cultural background knowledge about a particular society, that person also cannot make sense of certain idioms, phrases and locutions written in the language of the same society. When you read something in this foreign language, some expressions will remain 'up in the air' if you are not acquainted with discourse patterns of the community."

In brief, she articulated that cultural background knowledge about the target language is a contributing and crucial factor in the motivation and academic achievement of students. Sevgi also reported that the most important thing that should not be expunged is the disparity between a class in which students internalize the related topics in real terms and the other one in which the teacher only focuses on grammatical and lexical knowledge of the language. When I wanted her to make a comparison between the students who are interested in cultural subjects and the one not wanting to procure cultural knowledge, Sevgi holds that the students' academic achievement level is directly proportional to the knowledge of cultural patterns in foreign language. Aside from this point, she added that there are some exceptions as can be seen in any circumstance and some students direct questions about the cultural features of the language and community despite the fact that they cannot get high grades in grammar exams.

The data of the study demonstrated that the cultural background knowledge about the target language community is influential in students'

motivation towards the course and proficiency level of students. Ece, who has taught in preparatory classes of English Language and Literature Department, contended that the more the students immerse themselves in cultural patterns of the language and are integrated into the cultural environment of the foreign language community, the more they thrive on the communicative competence together with lexical and linguistic patterns. The involvement of students in the courses increases when the teacher has an excellent rapport with her students and draws attention to affinities between target culture and native culture.

On the other hand, Ece expressed that there does not exist a direct relation between the number of questions asked about the target culture and the academic level of the student. She claimed that the students generally want to obtain information about their native culture and show interest in the target culture only when you evaluate the matter in a contrastive way. Another factor bringing about this result is the fact that English is taught as a foreign language in Turkey, not as a Second Language.

Mehmet, who also taught English in preparatory classes of English Language and Literature Department, elucidated that somewhat national issues concerning Turkey and native culture should be included in English courses. As for the effect of cultural background information on the students' academic level, his stand supports the view that the exclusion of cultural components will seriously impinge upon students' communicative competence. In other words, he has positive outlook of the aspects facilitating English learning while drawing attention to point that cultural values of the target language should not be imposed on the learners. The positive outcome at the end of the process is by no means guaranteed if the teachers adopt an unreasonable and extreme attitude towards the inclusion of the cultural values. He added that students direct questions about the way some expression are formed in American or English culture. Mehmet elaborated his views about the inclusion of target language as such:

> "I praise the cultural facet of language learning due to its positive impact on students' motivation and learning environment; however different student profiles and political ideas should be taken into consideration. When the teacher enforces any sort of methods insisting on the incorporation of American or English culture, the students

may show outright rejection or have a negative outlook towards target language culture. They may question whether their teacher is trying to acculturize them or impose the cultural values on them."

Ayşe, on the other hand, stated that the impact of cultural knowledge is falsifiable and it is not appropriate to generalize the topic. She added that as she did not carry out surveys about the relation between cultural knowledge and proficiency level of students, she could not refer to such an affiliation or a connection. When I probed into her statement, she added that this relation is valid in her courses because the students having an interest in English as a foreign language also have a specific and distinctive interest in cultural features of the language.

Lastly, Ahsen emphasized the inseparable interconnection between the academic achievement in a foreign language and background information about the cultural patterns of that language. She added that the students would work fondly on the subjects about the language if they have an interest in cultural issues. Broadly, she emphasizes motivation issue as the core element in the internalization of cultural and linguistic features concurrently.

The teachers participating in the study unanimously agree that there exist an inseparable connection between culture learning and language acquisition. When they were asked to clarify the gist of discourse in a more elaborate way, they added that meticulous care should be provided so that the students can gain the cultural and linguistic patterns contemporaneously, albeit challenging. Another observation shared by the interviewees was that fact that the students having an enormous amount of cultural knowledge about the target language community surpass others in terms of language capacity and lexical knowledge. Every detail and chance should be exploited in order to help the students constitute a step to internalize the conventional habits and cultural speech acts. By understanding that specific culture, the students can enter that language and form a positive attitude towards it. The teachers should make an endeavour in order to create cultural awareness in the language.

4.3.4. The Readiness of Students to Internalize Cultural Elements of Target Language

The study also contributes to the insights about the readiness of students to integrate the cultural features of the target language speech community by focusing on the prerequisites for the implementation of culture incorporated courses. We asked the teachers whether it is a prerequisite for a language learner to possess a sufficiently high level of proficiency in the foreign language before he can acquire the necessary skills of intercultural communicative competence. When the category is examined through the transcripts of the interviews, it is explicit that the participants support the integration of cultural elements into the foreign language courses from the very beginning. Focusing on the belief that language expresses cultural reality, Ahsen stipulated that cultural content of a language community could be taught concurrently with the grammatical, syntactic and lexical patterns of the language itself. She thinks that students can easily learn the culture of the target language community along with the formal rules from the very beginning. Another interviewee, Ece, contends that grammar and writing skills of the learner can be well enough; however, it cannot be counted as the full acquisition of language.

> "It would be too late to incorporate cultural elements of the community when the student acquired a high level of English grammar. The proficiency level and academic achievement of the learner would be deficient in terms of the communicative competence in a certain setting while lacking the necessary skills. A student, at an intermediate level of English, cannot reach this level in a real sense if he does not have educational attainments about the cultural concepts and elements of the language. As culture and language are accepted complementary phenomena, they should be taught simultaneously from the very beginning."

Culture is employed as a tool that fosters the acquisition of language and as a transition from culturally incompetent learner to interculturally competent learner. Being aware of this fact, Zeynep put forward not only the importance of target language as a tool of instilling the related cultural components but also the importance of having general knowledge. She added that when the target learner

profile is university students, in other words if the foreign language education is in tertiary level, the students should have general knowledge about their own culture and the other nations in the world. If this is not the case, then trying to expose them to target language culture elements would not make sense.

One of the interviewees, Sevgi, gave answers about the readiness of students to come to know the cultural side of the language:

> "In my opinion, lexical and syntactic elements of language should be taught along with the cultural features of the community in order to allow for a better understanding of students. Actually, this can be achieved on the sly, without articulating the logic behind the integration of cultural elements into the courses. You do not have to say 'Yes, we will learn culture of the British people today.' The inclusion of cultural elements should be decided spontaneously during the courses. "

As a well-known fact, teaching the language is bound to teaching the culture itself. The participants, in a general sense, favoured the idea that language transforms the culture while transmitting the knowledge about it.

In contradiction with the excerpt given above, Mehmet pointed out the significance of nationhood in culture. In general, he has the same idea in terms of the simultaneous development of linguistic and cultural knowledge; however he added that this should be achieved for the students' mother tongue and their own culture in the first place:

> "As for the readiness of students to find out English culture, it is in a similar fashion when compared with the acquisition of our mother tongue and culture. First of all, we learn the culture of a community before the acquisition of the language actualizes within this process. In a way, internalizing the cultural and linguistic components of language happens at the same time. On the other hand, curiosity and eagerness to learn the language and culture are absolutely necessary prerequisites of this process. If the student does not have an inquisitive mind about the relation between language and culture or is not enthusiastic about learning them, he simply cannot learn the elements included in the courses".

The participant contends that they act out as facilitators and mediators in most of the instances during the courses; however learning a foreign language is incomplete without an effective participation of the students. As learning is a longitudinal process, it entails strenuous efforts of the learners themselves. Understanding the rationale behind English language cannot be achieved without

the incorporation of cultural components. In some instances, it is observed that the teachers cannot convey the core meaning of a sentence without clarifying the cultural elements embedded in the sentence.

Of the seven interviewees, Ayşe also denoted her ideas about the readiness of students to internalize these elements:

"Having a certain proficiency level of language is not necessary to find out the components of target language speech community especially in adult learner groups. They can conceive every bit of this culture starting from scratch and studying the other details"

4.3.5. The Role of Textbooks in Teaching Culture of the Target Language Community

Most of the participants gathered around the common idea that the use of English language course books written abroad is critical in transmitting the correct discourse patterns and language dynamics together with the general cultural characteristics of the community. Using an English course book written in Turkey by some Turkish authors can yield advantageous results to some extent, especially in conveying the grammatical use of the language. On the other hand, these books are inadequate in presenting the cultural features with the help of authentic materials. As expressed clearly in a saying, "You cannot see the forest from a tree." Although textbooks are not enough to reflect the cultural side of the language, almost all the participants are of the same opinion in using English textbooks written abroad by native speakers of that language.

Ece stated that she always preferred the textbooks published and prepared abroad by individuals speaking English as their mother tongue and the excerpt taken from the interview given below:

"I prefer English course books written abroad all the time in that they include authentic and real life examples. This is a crucial topic in ELT; otherwise you can only teach grammatical side of the language. You will, presumably, convey the meanings of some unserviceable words which cannot be used in communicative settings. Dialogues contain cultural elements and sometimes I learn new things from

these activities. These course books are supplementary and complementary in terms of providing original and authentic materials".

By adding these remarks, Ece favoured the mirroring character of course books in terms of cultural components. As high culture is pioneering human development, the use and selection of course books for the sake of that purpose is crucial. One cannot ignore and deny the role of ELT course books in the spread of culture on global scale.

From cultural facet, a dilemmatic problem arises because Zeynep and Begüm participating in the study have different ideas and viewpoints. They stated in their interviews that cultural elements of our own culture should be enshrined to transmit them to the next generations. When the students are exposed to foreign language culture to a great extent, this may result in their assimilation. If this is not the case, the students should learn the culture of at least a few countries in order to make a comparison between them.

Mehmet stated that the course books should emphasize the global character of English language without having any national issues. In other words, he tends not to associate global side of culture with Anglo-American cultural features. The extract from the interview is provided below:

> "I opt for the use of course books written abroad by native speakers; however I try to choose the ones transmitting the cultural elements of different societies, not focusing on a particular country. The ones published in Turkey do not contain original and authentic information. Actually, the students may give reaction to the use of course books focusing on some specific characteristics of one particular society."

Sevgi drew attention to the inefficiencies of teaching settings and added that the choice of English language course books is inarguably important in the integration of cultural elements; however it is not sufficient to meet the needs of today's contemporary and global world. She told that "If one wants to internalize the discourse and speech patterns of a particular society, that person should go and live there. Otherwise, it is not possible to wholly realize intercultural competence." She added,

"I think course books prepared in Turkey are different from those prepared by native speakers of English on the grounds that they do not provide picturesque and enjoyable activities, materials etc. Additionally, they do not serve for the purpose of being instructional and informative in terms of the cultural patterns of target language speech community. For that reason, I prefer the ones prepared by native speakers of English. I should also note that the course books are not merely enough to achieve a cultural understanding of the society. It does not work if you do not have continual communication with native speakers."

In addition to the quotation given above, she gave information about the selection process of course books. In School of Foreign Languages, Cumhuriyet University, the course books are chosen according to some criteria determined before and a commission charged with the selection of appropriate course materials and every phase of that process make a proposal after working on that matter. Taking into account the student profile and academic level of students, the commission tries to do their best in order choose the one that best fits the proficiency level and background information of pupils. Regarding the reflection of the teachers with whom I made an interview, I noticed that they complain about students' being indifferent to cultural issues and linguistic elements of English language. Despite the fact that the teachers strive to instill the cultural elements and speech patterns of the language, they sometimes fail to attract the attention of the students. Undoubtedly, this fact cannot be generalized for all the students and departments at Cumhuriyet University because the participants added that the students being successful, curious and involved in the courses helped us to form an exuberant classroom atmosphere in terms of culture integrated activities.

In addition to these perceptions, Ahsen, a female instructor in School of Foreign Languages, criticized the selection process of course books in School of Foreign Languages and added that the instructors taking part in the determination period of course books should at least have a Master of Arts degree in the field of Educational Sciences. She reported that "This is absolutely necessary if our aim is to help our students achieve intercultural competence. Taking charge in this commission voluntarily is praiseworthy; however the criteria determined for the selection of the course books should be grounded on a scientific foundation. As the selection process of course books in terms of the cultural elements is a critical

and serious pursuit, the people charged with that duty should be well-educated in these scientific areas."

One of the significant points that she added was the practice of communal final exam in English courses. In order to follow the weekly syllabus of the curriculum, the teachers try to transmit only the syntactic and lexical parts of the language because the exam includes these parts and all the students should be at the same grammar level before the implementation of the final exams.

She also noted that the students should be aware of cultural differences between the two cultures, whence the teachers should make a comparison of the two communities in order to make the course more enjoyable. When I probed into this statement, she held that she followed the socio-cultural trends both domestically and globally. She elucidated that if the activities included in the course books are totally unfamiliar to students, they feel unsympathetic towards foreign language culture. As English courses are two hours per week in almost all of the departments at Cumhuriyet University, it is generally not possible to listen to text book CDs or incorporate other different communicative activities.

She reported that the use of course books prepared by Turkish instructors of English may be more plausible on the grounds that you can only teach grammatical rules of the language in two hours per week. She states, furthermore, the use of English course books written by native speakers of English is more appropriate in terms of culturally embedded courses. As transmitting the cultural features of a community would remain incomplete and insufficient without the inclusion of authentic materials, the instructors should prefer to use these books and develop materials from a wide range of topics for the sake of cultural elements of the language.

Ayşe, a female instructor in the School of Foreign Languages, expounded on the employment of course books in foreign language courses, specifically in English courses. She thinks that the use of the course books prepared by native speakers of English is more feasible in presenting culturally appropriate materials. Through her statements, it is understood that she favours the use of these course books inasmuch as the students, at least more enthusiastic ones, learnt lots of

items that can be used to express themselves in certain instances. Furthermore, she tends to advocate the utilization of these books in the name of appealing to students' interests and motivation. It is obvious that the students taking interest in English courses endorse the employment of books written abroad because these books arouse interest and make contribution to students' academic achievement. Ayşe, in response to the question asking for the use of course books prepared by Turkish teachers of English, expressed that the students may not have learnt cultural components of the language if this kind of books were chosen. She articulated,

"The English course books chosen by the commission in School of Foreign Languages were quite reasonable in accommodating the needs of the students. Since some students are in the group of low achievers in our university, the text books were appropriate for their proficiency level of English. The books also teach them culturally appropriate behaviours and how to react in certain settings. Even the students in Vocational Schools learnt how to express their ideas courteously and it was achieved through the use of these books."

Zeynep was directed a question related to the varieties of English language on which she preferred to focus on in her courses. She averred that course books determined the way and variety she taught English. Zeynep, like Mehmet, supported the idea that multi-culturalism presented by English course books is based on British and American values and viewpoints. She stated that the books prepared by American writers contain lots of elements about popular culture when compared with textbooks written in British English. According to her, there is a competing manner in providing the learners with cultural features of the individuals in their society and they try to transmit as much knowledge as possible; however the cultural elements are introduced gradually and by degrees in British English course books. She concluded that culturally conditioned behaviours are presented in an exaggerated way in American English textbooks because they try to impose their own cultural values on the learners of English. She uttered,

> "American English course books try to give the message 'You are teenagers, you should listen to rap music, you should eat hamburger and drink coke...' and it goes on like this one after another. When we scrutinize the activities involved in course books, it is obvious that the students are made to memorize the cultural features. These activities are pre-eminently instrumental in facilitating the process of language acquisition and comprehension of some idiomatic expressions; however they should not be used to impose their values on students."

Zeynep overtly stated that this kind of books just exhibit the available facade of popular culture. Therefore, the cultural values are presented stereotypically. She added that she tried to form a balance by including our own cultural values during these courses. To exemplify, she asked some questions to her students about national holidays of Turkey if the text books mention the Independence Day of America. In this way, they learn which words to use in expressing their ideas about a certain topic. She stated "When they asked to express their own cultural values in English, it immediately caught their attention because they had not been given the chance to mention themselves and had never stood out." It is plain that the students appreciate these kinds of activities and regard them as enjoyable tasks to implement for the sake of language acquisition.

As students need a platform and channel to practice what they have learnt, giving a chance to express themselves in English is encouraging and motivating for them in that continuum. Zeynep also rendered her opinion about the use of course books prepared by Turkish teachers of English language: "We employed a wide range of course books during my professional life; however the books contain some grammatical and lexical mistakes if not prepared by a native speaker of that language."

Begüm holds a positive attitude towards comparing two cultures in the EFL classrooms. During the interview, she drew attention to the comparison of target and native cultures. She said,

> "In my opinion, the course books we used are prepared by native speakers of English and they really were beneficial in reflecting the essence of the target culture. There exist different texts in these books giving information about different societies. To my way of thinking, the books, not just focusing on the target language community, are more advantageous and educative for the pupils on the grounds that they incorporate the features of different groups of people into the language courses."

Apart from this aspect about that matter, she adduces the reasons by giving some examples from her own education and university life. She stated,

> "I remember that we used English course books published and prepared abroad. At that point, I should put emphasis on the dynamic side of culture because we have to integrate different cultures into our courses. When I was a student, the books just focused on the culture of two big English speaking countries: England and America. Compared to the past, it is no longer possible to exclude the cultural elements of other nations. The books do not exclusively include the cultural features of English or American people. There exist various texts enlightening us about the linguistic performance and features of different nationalities."

By adding these remarks, she signified that she associates the term target culture with the culture of everyone who speaks English. Additionally, she stated that a growing number of authors predicated on the integration of international culture in their books. Seeing that she favours the idea of contrastive cultural examples in the course books, it is not wrong to state the course books should incorporate international culture systematically into their lessons.

4.3.6. The Role of English Language Instructors in Teaching Target Language Culture

ELT teachers should be equipped with the cultural background information about the communicative patterns of the target language. The overwhelming majority of the participants stressed that monumental aspects of the culture should be incorporated into the courses together with the everyday life speech patterns in order to accommodate the needs of the learners. The participants believe in their own need to acquire the cultural knowledge about the way native speakers use the language in communicative ways.

On the other hand, some of the participants stated that the internalization of target language culture would have harmful effects on Turkish culture. When the instructor has such an attitude towards the integration of target language culture, it would not make sense to mention the advantages of culturally embedded courses. Conversely, the aim of educating the learners to have

intercultural competence in the world arena would be attained when the instructor do not regard target culture as a threat to the native culture. This obviously reveals that there is a distinct connection between the teacher's attitude and the degree to which culture is incorporated.

With a perusal of the responses, it is clearly stateable that teachers prefer to transmit the cultural knowledge through another language skill such as reading or speaking and not to give it separately. As the term 'culture' is a broad term, the teachers evaluated the term in different ways. While Begüm and Ece see the function of culture from behaviouristic perspective, Zeynep and Sevgi took into account sociological or pragmatic sense of culture.

One of the participants, Zeynep, articulated explicitly that she does not try to impose her own ideas about the cultural features of the target language community in order to let the students form their own attitudes and ideas about the subject. She is aware of the fact that target language is used so that it allows culture to flourish in the students' learning environment. She said,

> "There are some cultural values and patterns about which I have positive ideas; however I generally try to encourage the students use the language appropriately as often as they can do. The teachers should function as a mediator and facilitate the language learning process rather than trying to impose her own preformed ideas on students."

The teachers acquire the cultural knowledge about the foreign language from epistemological sources; besides most of them do not have the opportunity to practice the language and observe paralinguistic skills in communicative patterns of native speakers. One of the interviewees, Sevgi, emphasized that point in her remarks about the background knowledge of teachers about cultural resources and attitudes. Sevgi stated,

> "One of the basic reasons underlying the lack of cultural and communicative activities in English courses is the instructors' inadequate knowledge of cultural patterns of target language community. To illustrate, I have never been to a country in which English is spoken as a native tongue. For that reason, the degree and quality of incorporating the cultural information is questionable in terms of my teaching practice."

Mehmet is of the same opinion about the matter mentioned above because he does not think that his university education equipped him with the communicative skills that are fundamental and essential for the application of target language. Having background knowledge about these patterns is indispensable in order to teach the target language effectively in classroom atmosphere. He expressed,

> "We try to teach the language and cultural patterns in the way we learnt them throughout our education life. I cannot assert 'I'm knowledgeable enough about the paralinguistic skills and cultural values of the English and its native speakers.' Nevertheless, I try to improve myself and acquire the necessary information in the area."

In conclusion, the teachers emphasized the significance of incorporating target culture elements in order to help students achieve a native-like proficiency. On the other hand, they focused on the constraints of this approach and the impact of student profile on the determination period of the curricula. Although they regard the term 'culture' itself as a confusing phenomenon, they added that they try to analyze and interpret it by keeping up-to-date on recent developments. The dynamic side of culture necessitates studious efforts of English instructors in order that they can enable the learners to acquire the components in the latest trend and speech patterns. The other issue that was focused by the participants was the necessity of cultural courses so as to prepare the learners for the linguistically and non-linguistically patterns of the target language speech community. As language is accepted the main medium through which cultural meanings are conveyed, the successful command of language is dependent on the extent of cultural knowledge.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in order to find out and explore teachers' opinions about the integration of target language culture. What the definition of the target culture is and which methods teachers use to include cultural information were central to the focus of this study. As it is imperative to address to the interwoven relationship between culture and language, the teachers feel the need to develop students' communicative abilities to be agents of world peace in today's multicultural world. Semi-structured interviews were conducted so that the researcher could have the chance of gathering information about instructors' practices in learning environments and their impact on students' motivation along with their success in the foreign language courses. The interviews were implemented in Turkish, native tongue of the participants, in order that they can express their thoughts freely in the maximum comfort zone. The flexible mindset was kept as a prerequisite of qualitative researches' emerging nature.

After the completion of the interviews, the transcripts were written verbatim so as to analyze the data assiduously. The subjects were given the opportunity to read their statements in the transcripts and they verified that these statements belonged to them. It was frequently recognized that culture contributes a great deal to the language proficiency level of students. As culture and language are not two separate entities, the teachers preferred to include these two at the same time. They are all aware of the fact that culture teaching raises acceptance and appreciation of other societies. In sum, integrating culture into the language teaching syllabi and curricula has a motivating role on language acquisition process.

As Hofstede and Hofstede (2005, p. 11) contends, "Studying a language without being exposed to its culture is like practicing swimming without water."

As it is easily recognized from this statement, most of the educators in the field gather around the idea that the students should be presented cultural knowledge in order that they can acquire better communication and comprehension skills. In the same vein, the instructors strive to enact and incorporate academic tasks and make the cultural input comprehensible and applicable for the students. With this realization, it would be possible for language educators to adopt holistic approaches in the application of their knowledge in different classroom atmospheres.

Most of the participants united in the common idea that the teachers should help the learners form tolerance towards target language culture and dispel the prejudices against the stereotypes in certain communities. As affective barriers bring about many problems in exchanging information in target language culture, the first objective should be to overcome these barriers in order not to inhibit development of cultural awareness.

The participants also claimed that they do not know how to handle the culture phenomenon on the grounds that it is a broad and general term. As some teachers are not well-equipped with the cultural, paralinguistic and discourse elements of the language, they refrain from incorporating cultural sides and skip these elements. Some of the participants stated that they also try to learn new information in the courses together with the students. However, they observed the rise in the motivation level of students when the subjects appeal to them and they find a relation or similarity with their own cultural elements. That's why the instructors should present discourse elements of both languages in the courses.

Additionally, some participants, Begüm and Mehmet complained about the dominance of British culture in the text books and added that culture phenomenon is somewhat similar in every society because the world can be regarded as a' global village'. They also reflected that teaching target culture does not mean teaching mainly British culture.

As parallel with the findings elicited from a great number of studies in the field, teachers are of the same opinion about the culturally embedded courses and its place in ELT curricula. Byram et al. (1991, p. 111) stated that learning about other cultures promoted personal improvement. By the same token, the teachers aim to enable learners to develop a knack for English learning and communicating appropriately in cultural settings. They should be quick to distinguish prodigies from other students or low achievers. Culture teaching curricula is determined and organized according to the qualities or learning styles of the different student profiles when the multiple intelligence theory is taken into account. Ahsen expressed that classroom activities should include enjoyable texts or role-plays instead of turgid writings or activities. The learners should also be exposed to culture-rich content and rich sources of acculturation to internalize the communicative side of the language. This may help students to immerse in cultural components of the language and make most of the courses.

5.2. TEACHERS' ROLE IN THE PROCESS

Teachers are regarded as the main agent in helping the learners to develop cross-cultural awareness in foreign language courses. "The teacher, who has to deal with the learners own cultural expectations and understandings and at the same time to introduce them to the new cultural viewpoints enshrined in the target language, is the cultural mediator between cultures" (Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997, p. 4). Acknowledging the inevitability of cultural information in teaching methodology would have an impact on instructors' teaching practices, hence the activities incorporating communicative side of the language would make up for the deficiency of cultural knowledge about the target language community.

The instructors also propounded that employing authentic sources of native speech community would engage students in authentic cultural experiences and enable them to exploit their cultural knowledge in communicational settings.

Adapting cultural material to suit the proficiency level of students is a necessity when the teachers' experiences are taken into account.

Additionally, the teachers share the idea that first and foremost personal contact and communication with native speakers of English are more helpful in acquiring cultural information. Firsthand cultural knowledge is more effective than the one presented in English textbooks.

As it is a precarious situation to be caged in a monocultural milieu, the instructors have the role of broadening students' horizon by making them acquainted with different cultures and societies. That is to say, the instructors believe that they should incorporate the cultural features of the language for the sake of the learners' language proficiency and education as a human being. The integration of culture into the language teaching programs will preclude the possibility of developing a sense of enmity toward the native speakers of the language. The results of this study are in line with one implemented by Robinson (1981) as his participants elaborated that foreign language study would give a person the key to another cultural milieu, which would lead to an understanding of other people and life styles. With this method, the students would welcome the new culture more cordially.

The upshot is that the participants of the study reflected the importance of cultural perception and intercultural training. They also drew attention to the influence of cultural knowledge exerted over the individuals' thoughts and ways of interpreting the world. Linguistic and extra linguistic aspects of the language should be presented in a way that motivates students to explore the language with an inquisitive mind. The attitude of the teacher would help the learners bridge the cultural gaps because only after they have general knowledge about the cultural patterns of the language can they communicate effectively in certain cultural settings.

5.3. STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

Cultural knowledge associated with target language instils the learners with an innate impetus to internalize the features of the language. At that point, it would not be wrong to state the necessity of culturally orientated activities and courses in foreign language classroom curricula. When the learner virtually settle himself to cultural environment of the class, it will be possible to respond to statements effectively and speak the language fluently in terms of discourse elements. Interlocutory situations in which participatory interactions take place have a contributing role in enhancing students' communicative competence.

Only when the students internalize the cultural elements of the speech community can they master the linguistic and lexical components of language. In other words, the instructors all agree that manipulation of syntax and lexicon is not enough to respond to certain statements in cultural settings. Sometimes, local and national reservations inhibit the development of cross-cultural awareness; at that point the teacher would take part in as a mediator in English classes and help them incorporate their home culture into the courses.

The students' motivation and achievement in the courses are highly dependent on the teachers' ability to encourage them to help them make comparisons between their native culture and target culture. When students find their own voices in foreign language class, they find it easy to adapt to the cultural setting of the language. In this way, the students also achieve a level of empathy and appreciate the way other people perceive the world.

Lazaraton (2003) draws attention to the significance of personal experience with the native speakers of the community by adding: "Limited personal experience with the target language culture restricts the teachers' ability to teach culture, leads students to question the credibility of the teachers as a cultural informant, and thus constraints the teachers' ability to help students bridge the home and target language cultures" (p. 216). As teaching English is inseparable from teaching its culture, the teachers' participating in the study

favour the idea that these two phenomena are fostering each other, and the proficiency level of students is dependent on their interest in other components of language.

On the other hand, the participants articulated that the students can feel alienation in this continuum and this result will possibly stem from unintended pragmatic failures or breakdown in communication. Foreign language curricula should be intricately woven into the fabric of the language teaching process. Language and culture have verbal as well as non-verbal components. Bearing these facts in mind, the activities should be determined based on the students' interests. Regardless of the language proficiency of the students, cultural components of the language should be embedded in classroom activities.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The participants of the study included 7 English language instructors working at the School of Foreign Languages, Cumhuriyet University. For that reason, the findings and results of the study cannot be generalized to other foreign language instructors; however the results of the findings are significant in reflecting the teachers' practices in classroom environments when their viewpoints about the components of target culture are taken into account.

On the other hand, a similar research could be implemented by including more participants. The participants of the study were generally female instructors, only one subject was male. Additionally, the research was carried out by an English instructor working in the same department with the participants. This fact may have had an impact on the responses of the participant during the interviews, albeit in a relaxing atmosphere.

The last but not least, at the heart of much controversy about qualitative research lies the opinions pertinent to the limited number of subjects participating

in the study. Similarly, quantitative analysis has some advantages in that aspect inasmuch as the researcher has the chance of directing the related questions to a great number of respondents. Besides, the analysis phase of qualitative research depends on the preconceptions or insights of the researcher. In quantitative research, the results are more objective in a way because they are interpreted with the help of numerical findings.

5.5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As a result of various researches and findings that indicate the intertwined relation between target language culture instruction and foreign language acquisition, teaching techniques and implications have become a major concern in terms of motivating students to take part in the courses effectively and acquire necessary skills to communicate appropriately in certain settings. To this end, the researchers provided sound pedagogical advice and possible measures teachers should take in order for the learners to internalize culturally embedded behaviour patterns. Dörnyei (2001) suggests that the instructors should help the learners acquire cultural information by exploiting appropriate methods and techniques and promote an understanding of cultural knowledge and adds two significant points:

1. The teachers should help the learners promote an informed understanding of the nature of foreign language acquisition

2. The teachers should help them to be aware of disparate learning techniques to master certain skills in this continuum and exploit the most suitable one.

From the explanations given above, it is clear that different student profiles should be taken into consideration while incorporating cultural components of the target language. The application of different methods has crucial importance in gaining firsthand insight into learners' conceptual frameworks in FL acquisition.

The following recommendations for the integration of cultural knowledge in English courses can be suggested:

1. Teachers should incorporate cultural activities personalizing the linguistic content of the language. Discussion activities and role plays should be employed to help them discover the differences and similarities between their own culture and TLC while enabling them to internalize the culturally embedded behaviour patterns of the language.

2. The activities should invoke identification with students' native culture. This can be achieved by simulating them to talk about themselves while drawing the differences between two different peoples. Embedded within this claim is that a contrastive approach will reinforce the students socio-cultural awareness. In other words, the instructor should establish a tolerant classroom atmosphere in which all cultures are appreciated.

3. Selecting appealing aspects of TC is crucial in engaging learners in English courses and it would be conducive to help them form tolerance towards other nations. The courses including the distinctive features of the community and the language would be effective in accelerating language acquisition process.

4. The classroom atmosphere should create opportunities for students to advance their knowledge of target language culture and the instructors should incorporate interesting facets of culture such as food, eating habits or traditional celebrations etc. The inclusion of different activities will function as a pedagogical means of motivation by activating their interests in English study.

5. English idioms and phrases should be incorporated into the courses just like the mirror of societal features. Additionally, these materials should be developed and employed in accordance with students' level of English and other features.

6. The activities and materials involved in foreign language courses should focus on global cultural awareness rather than impose English or American culture.

7. All of these comments will be beneficial in material development on the grounds that the English language textbooks are of great importance in creating inviting language environment and enhancing students' intellectual development. Selecting the appropriate language material and compiling new series will enable the learners to be actively engaged in the courses.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. How do you define culture in your own words? What is the place of culture in EFL context?

2. Do you believe that teaching culture is as important as teaching the foreign language in a foreign language classroom**?**

3. Are you interested in teaching culture(s) of English speaking countries when teaching English as a foreign language?

4. Do your class instructions or activities include the teaching of foreign cultures and international issues? Please describe a typical activity that occurs in a class period.

5. If you think you actually do teach about the target culture, how much time do you spend in teaching the target culture comparing to grammar and vocabulary teaching?

6. What is the aim of presenting cultural information in English language classrooms? Does it contribute to students' academic achievement in English courses?

7. Do you believe that it is important to teach English with a worldview such as using English as a tool to learn about different cultures and to communicate in a multicultural context?

8. When you talk about the target culture in your classrooms, would you present the positive aspects or the negative aspects or both? What kind of precautions would you keep in mind when you teach about the areas of target culture?

9. Do you agree with this statement, "A learner can only use English properly if he or she is familiar with native English-speaking culture"? Please justify your answer.

10. Do you think that students have to possess a sufficiently high level of proficiency in the foreign language before you can teach culture or do anything about the intercultural dimension of foreign language teaching?

11. How do you feel about the textbooks used and their role in teaching culture? Do you use locally-published materials or books from English-speaking countries? Do your textbooks offer an authentic reflection of the multicultural character of the foreign society?