

## **Culture in Language Instruction: Perceptions of Prospective Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

The changing status of English has caused paradigm shifts in the ELT world. English as an International Language (EIL) mainly focuses on EIL is the recognition of World Englishes, no matter which circle they belong to. English in this paradigm is seen as the language of international and intercultural communication. It requires changes in the approaches and methodologies of English language teaching. Relevant research recognizes the change in the relationship between the new paradigm in ELT and culture. Considering the international lingua franca status of English, it seems vital to consider the recent assumptions in language teaching rethink the ways of teaching culture in EFL classrooms. However, researchers and teachers have long been trying to answer the question of “Whose culture should be taught in ELF classes?”. To answer this question, awareness on developing intercultural communicative competency seems to be essential. Thus, teachers should be aware of this shift in the field and the availability of different cultural materials to help their students communicate with people from different backgrounds. By considering these issues in mind, the present study investigates pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions about culture namely the importance of instruction on culture, the amount and frequency of instruction on culture, the types of materials used in cultural instruction in teaching EIL. Employing a mixed design, the study comprises the development and implementation of a 28-item questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was administered to a number of 140 ELT Department undergraduates at İzmir University and Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University in 2013-2014 academic year. Randomly selected 20 participants participated in the interview sessions. The results of the study show that pre-service teachers are well aware of the changing status of English and the changes it causes in the language classroom. However, they still believe that native-speaker is the norm and instruction on culture should conform to the norm.

**Key words:** teaching culture, intercultural communicative competence, English as an international language, world Englishes

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## Outline

- Classification of teaching English
- Alternative classification
- English as an International Language (EIL)
- Communicative competence
- Role of culture in language teaching
- Whose culture?
- Which culture?
- The study
- Conclusions



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## Which English?

ENL	ESL	EFL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom</li> <li>• United States</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India</li> <li>• Nigeria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkey</li> <li>• China</li> </ul>

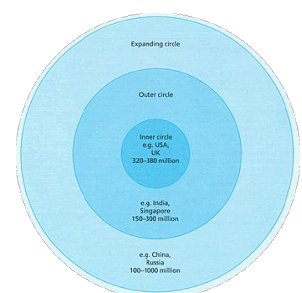
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## Shortcomings

- Do all the speakers in ENL countries speak a standard variety?
- Is ENL superior to ESL and EFL ?

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## Alternative Classification: Kachru's Circles

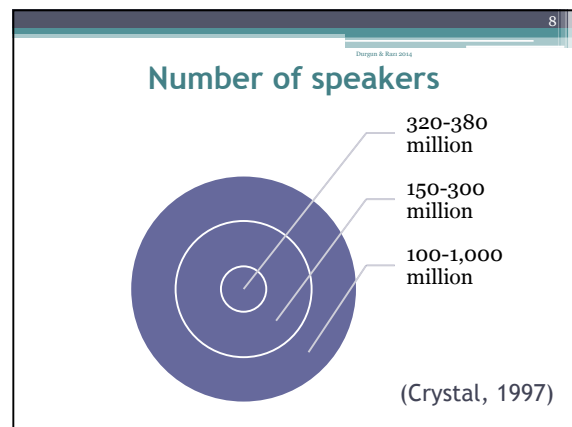
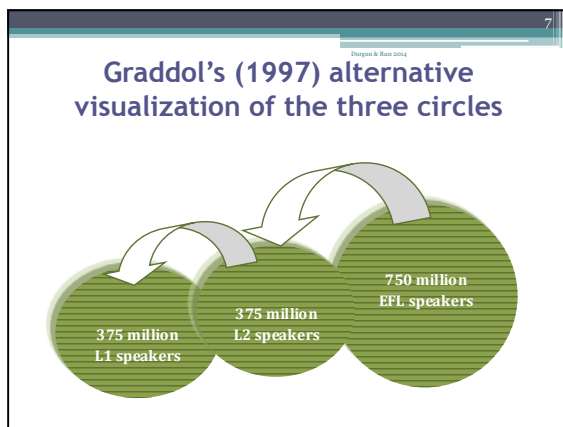


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## Advantages

- English is plural: **Englishes**
- No single variety is any better.
- "English now has multicultural identities."

(Kachru, 1985, p. 357)



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Change of the nature: EIL

- In the process of achieving this status, the very nature of English has changed in terms of how many of its speakers make use of English and how English relates to culture.

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What is EIL?

- A paradigm for thinking, research and practice.
- Paradigm shift in TESOL, SLA and the applied linguistics of English

(Sharifian, 2009)

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EIL

- **English-language of international, and therefore intercultural communication.**
- Call for:
  - a critical revisiting of the notions,
  - analytical tools,
  - approaches and methodologies within the established disciplines
    - such as the sociolinguistics of English and TESOL.

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EIL contexts

- English is used between speakers coming from different cultural and national backgrounds.
- Spread of Outer-Circle Englishes and Expanding-Circle English into the so-called 'Inner-Circle' countries.
- Native speakers' exposure to World Englishes
- Revising the notion of 'proficiency' even for the English of native speakers

(Canagarajah, 2006)

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### What we need to do?

- A need for a **new notion of communicative competence** which recognizes the current status of English as a world language.
- A need to consider both **local and international contexts** as settings of language use
- A need to **(re)define** native–nonnative and nonnative–nonnative **discourse participants**
- A need to take **successful bilinguals with intercultural insights and knowledge as pedagogic models**
- Realization of **intercultural communicative competence** in ELT.

(Alptekin, 2002)

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### Today...

- **Students may be learning English:**
  - to share with others information about their own countries,
  - to encourage economic development,
  - promote trade and tourism, and contribute to international scholarly exchanges.
- This undermines the traditional relationship between culture and the learning of English:
  - **Learning about the concerns and cultures of Inner Circle countries.**

(McKay, 2003)

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### International language and culture

- Learners of an international language do not need to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers of that language.
- The ownership of an international language becomes “de-nationalized”.
- The educational goal of learning an international language is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others.

(Smith, 1976)

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### Re-assess the role of culture

- Consider teaching of EIL and re-assessment the role of culture in language teaching.
- Role of culture in language pedagogy:
  - Providing the basis for the content and topics that are used in language materials and classroom discussions.
  - Pragmatic standards are frequently based on particular cultural models.

(McKay, 2003)

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### Which culture to use?

- **Three types of cultural information in language textbooks and materials:**
  - **Source culture materials:**  
*draw on the learners' own culture as content.*
  - **Target culture materials:**  
*use the culture of a country where English is spoken as L1.*
  - **International target culture materials:**  
*Use a great variety of cultures in English- and non-English-speaking countries around the world.*

(Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 204)

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### Main Research Question

**What are  
the perceptions of  
prospective ELT teachers  
on teaching culture?**

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## Rationale for the study

- “Taking local resources and local constraints into serious consideration, teacher educators need to help present and prospective teachers develop the knowledge and the skill necessary to, either individually or collectively, assess the local needs, observe their teaching acts, evaluate their outcomes, identify problems, and find solutions.”  
(Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 13)

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## Participants

University	N	%
ÇOMU	152	61
İZU	97	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Year	N	%
<b>1st year</b>	58	23.3
<b>2nd year</b>	78	31.3
<b>3rd year</b>	70	28.1
<b>4th year</b>	43	17.3

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## Instrument

- **Culture in Language Instruction Questionnaire**
  - Piloted in 2013
  - 26 items
  - 5-Likert-Scale
  - Cronbach Alpha = .74
  - Items based on:
    - Bayyurt (2006)
    - Byram (1998)
    - Kramsch (1993)
    - McKay (2000)
    - Sharifian (2009)

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## Rationale of interpretation

- Descriptive Statistics
  - Likert-scale Choice Scale
    - **Strongly Disagree:**  
• between 1.00 and 1.80
    - **Disagree:**  
• between 1.81 and 2.60
    - **Partly Agree:**  
• between 2.61 and 3.40
    - **Agree:**  
• between 3.41 and 4.20
    - **Strongly Agree:**  
• between 4.21 and 5.00

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# Results

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## Instruction on culture

- **Increase motivation**  
•  $M = 4.06; SD = .93$
- **Must be part of the curriculum**  
•  $M = 3.95; SD = .94$
- **As important as grammar and vocabulary**  
•  $M = 3.80; SD = .94$
- **Consider student needs**  
•  $M = 3.49; SD = .94$
- **Only when there is extra class time**  
•  $M = 2.35; SD = 1.02$
- **No need for detailed information**  
•  $M = 2.01; SD = 1.06$
- **Only when Ss ask questions**  
•  $M = 1.81; SD = .87$

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### Aim of cultural instruction

- **Establishment of connections among cultures**
  - $M = 4.27; SD = .82$
- **Introduction of own culture in TL**
  - $M = 3.94; SD = .98$
- **Internalization of source and target cultures**
  - $M = 3.67; SD = 1.10$
- **Presentation of differences among cultures**
  - $M = 3.61; SD = .92$
- **Internalize the target culture behaviours**
  - $M = 3.20; SD = 1.13$
- **Bicultural learners**
  - $M = 3.08; SD = 1.15$
- **Awareness of differences among cultures**
  - $M = 1.90; SD = 1.00$

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### Cultural instruction should focus on ...

- **Where English is L1**
  - $M = 3.37; SD = 1.05$
- **Comparisons among various cultures**
  - $M = 3.36; SD = .98$
- **Comparisons between source and target culture**
  - $M = 3.27; SD = .94$
- **Where English is L2/FL**
  - $M = 2.90; SD = 1.07$
- **Turkish culture**
  - $M = 2.18; SD = .85$
- **But not on ...**
  - **Where it is L1**
    - $M = 2.15; SD = .98$

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### Whose English?

- **English belongs solely to British and American cultures**
  - $M = 3.64; SD = 1.12$
- **English belongs to L1 speakers**
  - $M = 2.33; SD = 1.17$
- **EIL, no single culture of English**
  - $M = 3.83; SD = 1.12$

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### Bilingual / Bicultural?

- **It is possible to become bilingual without becoming bicultural**
  - $M = 3.07; SD = 1.15$

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### How competent they perceive themselves?

- **I feel competent ...**
  - **to teach Turkish culture**
    - $M = 3.80, SD = .95$
  - **to teach cultural components of the language**
    - **I will be teaching**
      - $M = 2.80, SD = 1.00$

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### How competent they perceive themselves at the beginning and at the end of the program?

- **1st year**
  - $M = 2.53, SD = .99$
- **4th year**
  - $M = 3.14, SD = .83$
- $t(101) = -3.234, p = .002, d = -0.67$

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## Discussion

- Learning about another culture does not necessarily imply the acceptance of that culture (Kramsch, 1993).
- No expectation of behaving accordingly to the new culture in case of gaining cultural competence (Kramsch, 1993).
- Consider the assumptions (Byram, 1998):
  - **Biculturalism:**
    - An individual identifies with and accepts the beliefs, values, and practices of a particular culture.
  - **Interculturalism:**
    - A knowledge of, rather than acceptance of, another culture.

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## Conclusion: Criticism on Kachru's Circles

- Plenary speech Bayyurt (2014):
  - EIL does not belong to one country or a culture:
    - It does not belong to the Centre anymore.
  - Question ownership of English.
  - Question teaching culture.

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## What should be the goal in the EIL classroom?

**Interculturalism or biculturalism?**

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In the EIL classroom,  
**interculturalism**  
rather than  
biculturalism  
should be the goal.

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**To reach this aim:**

**ELF-Aware teacher education should  
be provided (Bayyurt, 2014).**

