

## **Student teachers' and teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in EFL**

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The connection between language and culture has drawn for many years the attention of researchers specifically who deal with applied linguistics. The issue becomes more complicated for the case of English due to its varieties regarding World Englishes function. Relevant studies dealt with which culture should be taught in English classes, specifically at expanding circle settings. Despite the existence of contradictory findings, recently, developing intercultural communicative competence rather than native-like competence is privileged from the perspective of teaching ELF. Thus, by considering their vital role in the teaching process, this study aimed to determine student teachers' and teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in English at expanding circle settings. For this purpose, 40 senior students at the department of English Language Teaching (ELT), Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (COMU) and 35 teachers of English from different regions of Turkey were surveyed. The reason for dealing with COMU ELT seniors was related to the elective course of 'Intercultural Communication' that the BA programme offered. An adapted version of Yılmaz's (2006) instrument was used to collect data about 'demographic information', 'course content', 'teacher qualifications' and 'course books'. Semi-structured interview sessions were administered to 14 teachers, representing each region of Turkey; and 4 teacher candidates who were randomly chosen with reference to their GPAs. Gender homogeneity was established and they answered five questions on their perceptions about teaching culture in EFL setting. The results highlight the necessity of a road map for better development of intercultural skills. EFL teacher training departments should incorporate more courses in their curriculums. In addition, Ministry of Education is also expected to provide in-service training regarding the

development of intercultural skills for those who are currently employed as EFL teachers.

This is believed to contribute to raising learners who can welcome cultural differences in peaceful manner.

**Keywords:** EFL teacher training, intercultural communicative competence, teaching culture, World Englishes




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**STUDENT TEACHERS' AND  
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT  
TEACHING CULTURE IN  
LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS**

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## OUTLINE

- ▶ Language and culture
- ▶ Status of English
- ▶ Intercultural dimension
- ▶ Intercultural awareness
- ▶ Intercultural communication
- ▶ History of teaching culture
- ▶ The study
- ▶ Findings
- ▶ Discussion
- ▶ Conclusion
- ▶ Implications



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## LANGUAGE and CULTURE


**Language:**

- ▶ "a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3).

**Culture:**

- ▶ "a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create".


(Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003, p. 45).



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## STATUS OF ENGLISH

- ▶ Changes with the status of English language over the past years.
  - Lingua Franca status (Alptekin, 2002; Smith 1976).
  - Intercultural communicative competence
    - rather than native like competence (Alptekin, 2002).




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## Interculture in language teaching

- ▶ "develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity".

(Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 9)

▶ **INTERCULTURAL SPEAKER**  
(Byram & Zarate, 1994)




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## INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

- ▶ "a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication".

(Baker, 2011, p. 202)



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## Recent citation: Kumaravadelu (2015) in his plenary speech at IAWÉ 2015

- ▶ Referred to Kachru and discussed culturally decontextualization:
  - Not compatible with spread of English
  - Linguacultural identification to global cultural identity



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## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC)

- ▶ the ability of successful communication with people of other cultures.
- ▶ Free from prejudices
- ▶ Two people from different cultures easily communicate and understand each other.



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## ICC COMPONENTS (BYRAM & ZARATE, 1994)

- ▶ Intercultural attitudes (savoir être)
- ▶ Knowledge (savoirs)
- ▶ Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)
- ▶ Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)
- ▶ Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)



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## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Educational aims of intercultural communication:
    1. to encourage tolerance to unfamiliar,
    2. to promote positive attitudes towards others, and
    3. to reduce cultural biases.
- (Prodromou, 1992)



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## HISTORY OF TEACHING CULTURE

- ▶ Before the Second World War – great works of literature, social institutions and historical events (culture with a **capital C**). (grammar translation method)
- ▶ After the Second World War (especially 1960s)– anthropological view of culture (culture with a **small c**) (audiolingual method)
- ▶ 1970s – culture capsules, culture assimilators and culture clusters were developed for teaching about cultural differences in the USA



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## HISTORY OF TEACHING CULTURE

- ▶ 1980s – culture's role in language curriculum grew (communicative approach) and using target culture
  - ▶ 1990s – the idea of intercultural learning became widely recognized (Risager, 2007)
  - ▶ Poststructuralism – changes in language and teaching.
- What **culture** does rather than What **culture** is



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## HISTORY OF TEACHING CULTURE

- ▶ Culture teaching does not necessarily mean 'teaching the target culture'.
- ▶ By considering all existing cultures, creating awareness about all of them.



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## THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

### Main aim:

- ▶ Determine student teachers' and teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in language classrooms.



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## THE STUDY



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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the student teachers' and teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in language classrooms?
2. How aware student teachers and teachers of intercultural communicative competence?
3. Does the curriculum include aims and objectives related with culture teaching in language classrooms?
4. How do course books approach teaching culture?
  - a. Do they teach culture?
  - b. If yes, whose culture? Target, native, or intercultural communicative competence?



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## METHODOLOGY

- ▶ **Method:**
  - A qualitative and quantitative research design was used in this study.
- ▶ **Setting and Participants:**
  - 38 teachers from different regions of Turkey (9 male, 29 female).
  - 38 senior students of ELT Department of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (11 male, 27 female)



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## METHODOLOGY

- ▶ **Instrument – Questionnaire:**
  - Adapted from Yılmaz (2006)
  - Constituted of questions regarding 'course content', 'characteristics of teachers' and 'course books'.
  - Administered in Turkish (original language)
  - Explanations related to terminologies were provided.



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## METHODOLOGY

### ► Interview:

- Follow up interview sessions:
- 13 teachers from 7 different regions of Turkey and
- 4 student teachers from Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University



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## FINDINGS



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## COURSE CONTENT

1. How often do you give place language skills below in your class?  
Teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
language culture	2,65	38	,937
listening	3,55	38	,795
writing	3,55	38	,828
speaking	3,63	38	,997
grammar	3,94	38	,984
reading	4,18	38	,651
vocabulary	4,23	38	,714



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## COURSE CONTENT

1. How often do you give place language skills below in your class?  
Student teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
language culture	2,94	38	,984
listening	3,23	38	1,050
writing	3,68	38	,933
speaking	3,73	38	1,155
vocabulary	3,89	38	1,007
reading	4,10	38	,923
grammar	4,36	38	,997



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## COURSE CONTENT

2. What should be done to make language classes more effective?  
Teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
Giving importance to grammar	3,07	38	,881
Giving importance to language culture	3,84	38	,789
Writing activities should be done	4,21	38	,741
Giving importance to reading activities	4,31	38	,574
Listening activities should be done	4,50	38	,506
Vocabulary activities should be done	4,55	38	,554
Speaking activities should be done	4,71	38	,459



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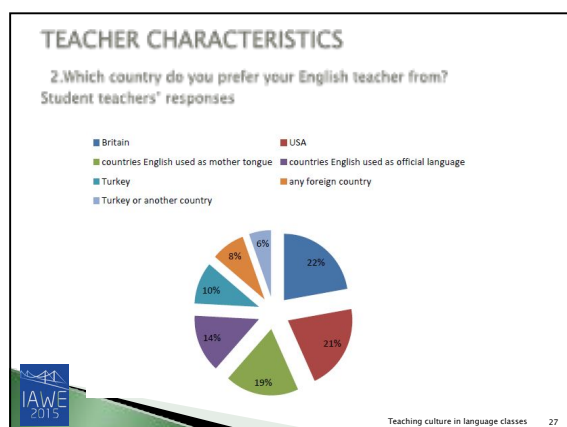
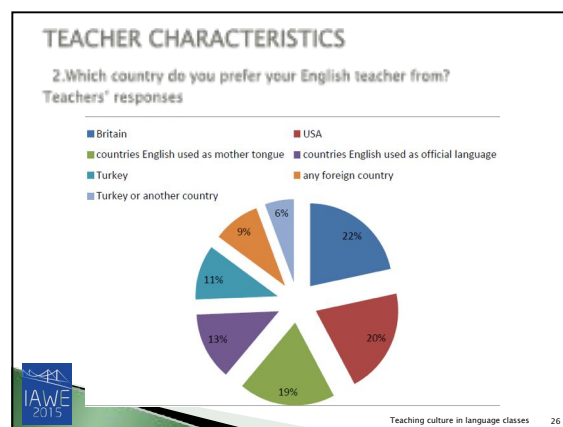
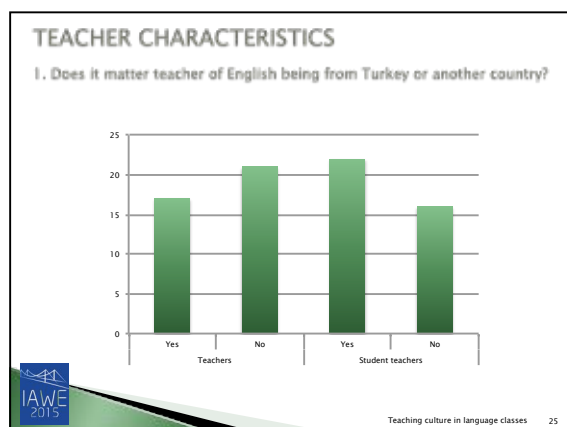
## COURSE CONTENT

2. What should be done to make language classes more effective?  
Student teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
Giving importance to grammar	3,21	38	,963
Writing activities should be done	4,07	38	,941
Vocabulary activities should be done	4,13	38	,934
Giving importance to reading activities	4,18	38	,925
Giving importance to language culture	4,28	38	,956
Listening activities should be done	4,57	38	,889
Speaking activities should be done	4,63	38	,942



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### TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

3. Do you agree with the opinions below about English language teachers?  
Teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
His/Her mother language should be English	2,71	38	1,037
He/She should have information about cultures of countries English as a foreign language	3,42	38	1,056
He/She can speak Turkish	3,47	38	1,108
He/She should have information about other cultures besides Turkish or British culture	3,55	38	1,005
He/She should have information about cultures of countries English as an official language	3,60	38	,973
He/She should have information about countries English as a mother language	4,18	38	,766
He/She should have information about Turkish culture	4,26	38	,794

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### TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

3. Do you agree with the opinions below about English language teachers?  
Student teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
His/Her mother language should be English	3,26	38	1,223
He/She should have information about other cultures besides Turkish or British culture	3,57	38	1,106
He/She can speak Turkish	3,63	38	,997
He/She should have information about cultures of countries English as a foreign language	3,84	38	1,000
He/She should have information about cultures of countries English as an official language	3,94	38	,928
He/She should have information about Turkish culture	4,15	38	,822
He/She should have information about countries English as a mother language	4,31	38	,808

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### TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

4. Do you agree with the opinions about Turkish English teachers?  
Teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
They teach English better than foreign teachers	2,89	38	,923
They inform us about cultures of countries English as official language	2,92	38	,941
They inform us about cultures of countries English as foreign language	3,10	38	,831
They inform us about cultures of countries English as mother language	3,21	38	,905
They teach by comparing Turkish culture and other cultures	3,68	38	,989
They understand us better than foreign teachers	4,13	38	,923

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## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

4. Do you agree with the opinions about Turkish English teachers?  
Student teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
They teach English better than foreign teachers	2,76	38	,852
They inform us about cultures of countries English as foreign language	2,97	38	1,052
They inform us about cultures of countries English as official language	3,05	38	1,012
They inform us about cultures of countries English as mother language	3,26	38	1,031
They teach by comparing Turkish culture and other cultures	3,28	38	,956
They understand us better than foreign teachers	3,55	38	1,107



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## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

5. Do you agree with the opinions about teachers of English as their mother language?  
Teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
They understand the difficulties related with language teaching better than Turkish teachers	2,15	38	,945
They teach English better than Turkish teachers	2,78	38	1,043
They teach by comparing British culture and other cultures	3,42	38	,976
They inform us about other cultures	3,47	38	1,058
They inform us about cultures of countries English as foreign language	3,52	38	1,006
They inform us about cultures of countries English as official language	3,60	38	,916
They inform us about cultures of countries English as mother language	4,10	38	,952



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## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

5. Do you agree with the opinions about teachers of English as their mother language?  
Student teachers' responses

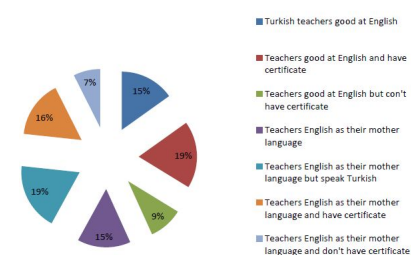
	Mean	N	SD
They understand the difficulties related with language teaching better than Turkish teachers	3,02	38	,914
They teach English better than Turkish teachers	3,68	38	,873
They inform us about other cultures	3,73	38	,794
They inform us about cultures of countries English as foreign language	3,92	38	,969
They inform us about cultures of countries English as official language	4,02	38	,972
They teach by comparing British culture and other cultures	4,15	38	,678
They inform us about cultures of countries English as mother language	4,39	38	,754



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## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

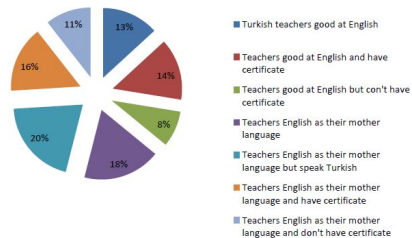
6. Which type of teachers do you prefer if you can choose?  
Teachers' responses



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## TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

6. Which type of teachers do you prefer if you can choose?  
Student teachers' responses



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## COURSE BOOKS

1. Do the components below should take place in course books?  
Teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
Culture in countries English as a foreign language	3,42	38	1,003
Culture in countries English as a official language	3,50	38	,951
Culture in countries English as a mother language besides Britain and USA	3,73	38	,828
Culture in Turkey	3,92	38	,996
Culture in Britain and USA	4,15	38	,789



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## COURSE BOOKS

1. Do the components below should take place in course books?  
Student teachers' responses

	Mean	N	SD
Culture in countries English as a foreign language	3,47	38	,892
Culture in countries English as a mother language besides Britain and USA	3,65	38	1,097
Culture in countries English as a official language	3,78	38	,963
Culture in Turkey	4,00	38	,958
Culture in Britain and USA	4,52	38	,687

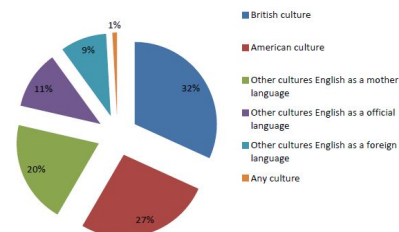


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## COURSE BOOKS

2. Which culture comes to your mind when you consider English language?

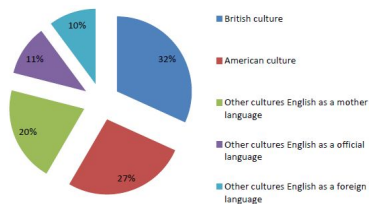
Teachers' responses



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## COURSE BOOKS

2. Which culture comes to your mind when you consider English language?  
Student teachers' responses



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## INTERVIEW

**Researcher:** Do you think English Teaching Curriculum should include cultural subjects? If your answer is yes, which cultural components should be included and related to which culture?

**Teacher 1:** In my opinion, Language learning is an integrated process. So, cultural issues are very important for ELT. Intercultural awareness raises the personal motivation and guides the language learning. Idioms, proverbs, non-verbal language, history of the language and the culture etc. are essential for the communication.



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## INTERVIEW

**Researcher:** Do you think English course books used at state schools should include cultural subjects? If your answer is yes, do they include them at an acceptable level?

**Teacher 2:** Yes, I do. The new curriculum include cultural components but they are not at an acceptable level.



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## INTERVIEW

**Researcher:** What if you prepared English Teaching Curriculum, would you place cultural subjects? If your answer is yes, how would you do that?

**Teacher 3:** Yes. I would try to compare countries in cultural ways like clothes, special days, foods, drinks, values, religion. I think comparing countries would increase the interest and discussion and help using the target language.



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- ▶ For both group, teachers who can speak Turkish is the most favourite choice.
  - Similar to Yılmaz (2006).
- ▶ Culture in Britain, USA and Turkey are most favourable cultural subjects in course books for both groups.
- ▶ The number of teachers and student teachers who consider
- ▶ British and American cultures are the priorities.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ▶ Consensus among participants:
  - Language classes and language books should include cultural subjects.
  - Desire to implement activities including cultural components.
  - Positive attitude about teaching culture in language classes.

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THANK YOU  
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