TEACHING CULTURE IN EFL CONTEXT: STUDENT TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Learning a language requires the ability of using not only vocabulary and structures accurately and fluently but also it includes the appropriate use of language within cultural context (Byram 1997). This study aimed to investigate student teachers’ (STs’) perspectives of culture and teaching of cultural features in EFL context and their preference of cultural elements. The informants were 134 third year STs studying in an ELT department.

The data was collected by means of a questionnaire. The analysis of the elicited data provided a list of two broad dimensions of culture: global and country specific cultural themes, based on which a two-part questionnaire was designed. While the first part questioned STs’ preferences of ‘visible and invisible culture’ (Hinkel 2014), the second contained ‘visible and invisible’ cultural elements which were put in the order of importance. Statistical results showed that the majority believed that they should teach culture explicitly and stated that they should not ignore cultural features in coursebooks. However, only 30% STs said that they would plan their lesson based solely on cultural themes. Moreover, while STs chose the UK/US life style as the most important element (42.5%) and speech acts (34.3%), they preferred elements of global culture (90.9%). The results indicate that STs need to have their awareness raised on this issue.

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Culture has become a prominent aspect of modern life with the fast spreading use of digital interaction in the globalisation era. Young people, in today’s world, are in connection with the other people from various countries via internet sources and the social media. They are expected to be more aware of the significance of cultural elements on language use. This can offer opportunities to get in touch with different cultures and to learn different languages. In fact, as Byram (1997) indicates, learning a foreign language requires not only the ability of using vocabulary and structures accurately and fluently but the appropriate use of language within a cultural context.

Kramsch (1993) claims that culture is there in the background from the first day of the process of foreign language learning. Because the English language is an international language and it has become a vital means for learning about the world and different nations and their traditions, including a cultural aspect to English courses could enable learners from different nationalities to find a common ground to foster interaction in English (Cates 2004).

The term ‘communicative competence’ is based on Hymes’ (1974) definition which is ‘an aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts of culture’. (summarized from Brown 2000). Clearly, Hymes (1974) emphasizes that interpersonal communication by means of oral or written communication or even behaviours, actions, way of thinking. Thus, language cannot be seen as a system of grammar rules and vocabulary only but complete with its cultural elements. In fact, grammatical structures and vocabulary are means for expressing culture.

Teachers need to be ready to foster an awareness in learners of their own language and culture in relation to the foreign language culture. Teachers need to develop a holistic view of language competence which includes the concept of intercultural communication. It is defined by Byram as being open-minded and permissive towards people from different cultures and be able to transmit this to their learners.

1- What are the STs’ perception of culture teaching in EFL context?
2- What are the STs’ preferences for teaching cultural topics?

Methodology

The informants were 134 third year STs studying to become English teachers at a state university in Turkey. This study was carried out within the ‘Teaching Language Skills’ course which has got both theoretical and practical aspect. This study aimed to answer the following research questions.

The data was collected by means of a two-section questionnaire which was given to the STs during class hours by the researchers. The first part of the questionnaire was designed based on the results of a pilot study where STs were asked to define culture and provide a list of dimensions of culture. In the pilot study, STs tended to see culture having two broad dimensions, international target culture and target culture, mainly British and American culture. In the pilot study STs were also
asked to suggest a list of cultural topics. Based on their suggestions, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) which consisted of two main sections was designed.

The first section of the questionnaire contained 10 statements which were STs’ perceptions about culture. The second section of the questionnaire included lists of visible cultural elements such as movies, festivals and celebrities and invisible cultural elements, such as use of speech acts, issues of politeness, hospitality and gender differences. The STs were asked to select five topics which they considered as important. Besides, they were asked to indicate their choices by ranking them in the order of importance for an EFL teacher. These issues were selected in the light of Hinkel’s (2014) pedagogical description and Corbett’s (2003) understanding of culture.

**Data Analysis**

The first section of the questionnaire was analysed quantitatively by means SPSS (version 13). Descriptive statistics presented mean scores and percentages results. The responses of the participants to 10 items in the questionnaire were computed according to scales. The second section was analysed by counting occurrences of each cultural element. Under these two headings the analysis of these will be presented comparatively.

**PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

The results will be presented under two main headings:

1. Student Teachers’ Perspectives of Culture and Culture Teaching

2. Student Teachers’ Preferences of Cultural Elements.

**Student Teachers’ Perspectives of Culture and Culture Teaching**

In the first section of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics for general results of student teachers’ perceptions of cultural elements indicated that they had an average mean rating between 2.20 to 4.49. These results showed that they had a positive idea about teaching culture though some of the STs may not have a very clear idea of what it means to teach culture. The responses of the participants to 10 items in the questionnaire were computed according to scales. They were described in percentages.

The first item presented that 70% of the STs believed that they should teach culture explicitly. Besides, 85.9% of the STs stated that they should not ignore cultural aspects within their English course books. Besides, they mostly tended to prefer international target cultural aspects (90.9%) rather than British and American culture elements (70%).

Moreover, STs declined to focus their lessons either solely on visible elements (21.7%), or solely on invisible elements, Only one third of the STs stated that they would choose to plan and perform English lessons based solely on a specific cultural element. This was well below our expectations.

The last two items questioned their perception of the effect of context of situation on language use and the place of appropriate language use. The results showed that 88% of the STs thought that they
should teach how language changes according to the context of situation. Moreover, 92% of the STs believed that they had to teach how to use language appropriately.

**Student Teachers’ Preferences of Cultural Elements**

In the second part of the questionnaire, STs were asked to state the cultural elements they preferred to teach and put them in the order of importance. It has got two sub-parts: visible cultural topics and invisible cultural topics.

The analysis of the visible cultural topics part showed that STs did not put their preferences in the same order. Each one of them had a unique combination of topics which made the analysis phase a difficult one. The topic of UK/US life-style was chosen as the most important cultural item by 46.27% STs (62 out of 134). The second most popular item was literature with 15.61% STs (21) who chose it as the most important cultural topic. The third one was UK/US festivals with 10.45%. The next popular cultural item was UK/US history (8.96%). These items were followed by UK/US celebrities, music and other items such as geography and school systems.

Likewise, in the invisible cultural topic part, their preferences did not accumulate on certain topics. As a result, 37.31% (50 out of 134) of the STs presented their most important choice as the use of speech acts in context. This is about language choice in different formal and informal context of situations such as making a request or making a complaint.

The next popular choice was the social life in UK/US with 20.14% (27). This issue included specific behaviours within a particular social context such as attending a wedding ceremony and knowing how to give a present to the couple or greetings in formal and informal context. The following items can actually be handled under the title of sociopragmatic issues altogether. These are politeness (11.19%), punctuality (4.47%), friendliness (2.98%) and privacy (5.97%).

**DISCUSSION**

In general terms, STs appeared to perceive culture teaching positively. However, they did not consider planning and organizing a separate lesson focusing on certain cultural elements. They seemed to prefer teaching cultural elements if these were included in the English course book. Some possible reasons for this tendency might be the fact that they did not know how to teach culture systematically since they have not been trained on this issue. Although they studied how to plan a lesson in various practical courses, cultural features were not emphasized in these courses.

They appeared to prefer to integrate both visible and invisible cultural elements rather than dealing with them separately. It may be a consequence of their short term specific training by the researchers during the ‘Teaching Language Skills’ course, where they were introduced the terms visible and invisible culture.

It was observed that 46.2% of the STs tended to put the UK/US life-style on the top of their preference list.
Similarly, in the course books available in the market, UK/US lifestyle seemed to be the most common subject matter. For example, they include topics such as clothing, food, and festivals which are more concrete and observable facts and easier to handle for the teacher. Next, they believed that literature could be a means for presenting culture and language. One reason for this seemed to be five different literature courses they attended in their teacher education programme.

In addition, they considered speech acts as the most important invisible cultural issue to teach (37.31%). The second popular invisible preference seems to be social life in UK/US. This result is in line with the previous finding which is about the lifestyle in UK/US as a visible element. Thus, it is not surprising to find out that STs were interested in target culture elements related to social elements such as giving presents in different social context.

In addition, sociopragmatic issues such as politeness, punctuality, friendliness, and privacy were the forefronted issues which were the mostly preferred ones. This tendency appeared to show that some STs though small in numbers, have developed an understanding of the knowledge of sociopragmatic concepts.

**CONCLUSION**

The results indicated that STs’ views of culture teaching seemed to be shaped by the representation of culture in the course books available in the market mostly and their previous language learning experience. Moreover, their teacher training programme may have contributed to their understanding of culture. However, all these seem to have failed to help them develop a conscious understanding of teaching culture systematically in EFL context. Thus, there is an urgent need for a process of standardization for teaching culture in the EFL teacher education.

As part of pedagogical implications the results lead us as teacher educators to consider the importance of raising STs’ awareness on teaching and learning cultural issues integrated to teaching EFL. This kind of education would yield much better results than our STs’ direct contact with any culture -not limited to the target language culture (Zhu 2014). This kind of learning will lead STs develop a conscious approach to cultural features.

**Keywords:** Culture in foreign language teaching, EFL teacher education programmes

**YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETİMİNDE KÜLTÜR: ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ PERŞPECTİFİ**

**ÖZET**

Bir dil öğrenmek sadece kelime ve yapıları hatasız ve akıcı bir şekilde kullanma becerisini gerektirmez bir de kültür bağlam içinde dili uygun olarak kullanma becerisini de içerir (Byram 1997). Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretimi bağlamında kültür ve kültürel öğelerin öğretimi hakkında geliştirdikleri...
Introduction

Culture has become a prominent aspect of modern life with the fast spreading use of digital interaction in the globalisation era. Young people, in today’s world, are in connection with the other people from various countries via internet sources and the social media. They are expected to be more aware of the significance of cultural elements on language use. This can offer opportunities to get in touch with different cultures and to learn different languages. In fact, as Byram (1997) indicates, learning a foreign language requires not only the ability of using vocabulary and structures accurately and fluently but the appropriate use of language within a cultural context. Learning other languages gives us insight into the people, culture and traditions of other countries and helps us to understand our own language and culture.

Kramsh (1993) claims that culture is there in the background from the first day of the process of foreign language learning. Because the English language is an international language and it has become a vital means for learning about the world and different nations and their traditions, including a cultural aspect to English courses could enable learners from different nationalities to find a common ground to foster interaction in English (Cates 2004). Accordingly, Moeller & Osborn (2014) explains that ‘[When] two non-native speakers are communicating in English, cultural familiarity on the part of each interlocutor is still of great importance’ (Neff and Rucynski 2013, p.13).

Moreover, as it is stated in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), one of the aims of a good language learner is achieving a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other people and of their cultural heritage, not only learner of the target language (Council of Europe, 2001). Learners should be made aware of the fact that culture shapes up our interaction and they need to be conscious about the role of culture in language learning. It is obvious that teachers have this responsibility in language teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to find out to what extend teachers are trained for this. The following section will elaborate on this issue.

The place of culture in communicative competence

Learners’ communicative competence is based on Hymes’ definition which is ‘an aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and negotiate meanings...
interpersonally within specific contexts of culture’. (summarized from Brown 2000). Clearly, Hymes emphasizes that interpersonal communication by means of oral or written communication or even behaviours, actions, way of thinking. Thus, language cannot be seen as a system of grammar rules and vocabulary only but complete with its cultural elements. In fact, grammatical structures and vocabulary are means for expressing culture. Therefore, Canale (1983) categorizes four different components of communicative competence which are

1- grammatical competence  
2- discourse competence  
3- sociolinguistic competence  
4- strategic competence.

When we are concerned with defining the instructional objectives for teaching culture, it is necessary to look at the definition of discourse and sociolinguistic competence. Discourse competence is ‘the ability we have to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and to form a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances’. (Brown, 2000, p.247) Sociolinguistic competence is ‘the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules of language and of course discourse’. This type of competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used. For this reason, the sociolinguistic aspect of language teaching will require as specific attention on culture.

Teachers need to be ready to foster an awareness of learners’ their own language and culture in relation to the foreign language culture. This can be possible through dialogue which would establish a common ground for negotiation. Teachers need to develop a holistic view of language competence which includes the concept of intercultural communication. They are expected to be aware of the significance of intercultural competence. It is defined by Byram as being open-minded and permissive towards people from different cultures and be able to transmit this to their learners. Foreign language teachers should have the ‘ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as different from our own.’ (Guilherme, 2000, p. 297). As Moeller and Faltin Osborn (2014) remarked

.... A classroom teacher should help students develop varied types of skills that allow them to critically analyse their own culture, and maintain effective relationships, especially those skills that allow learners to continue to develop their own competence outside the classroom and beyond their formal education (p. 676).

STs should develop an understanding that they are expected to act as a guide to their students in the process of language teaching and learning (Moeller and Faltin Osborn 2014). Therefore, it is important to emphasise the place of culture teaching in teacher education. However, foreign language teachers are generally expected to learn how to teach culture on their own. The reason for this might be the fact that there are not many studies on how to teach culture in teacher education programs (Schulz, 2004). Various studies have documented that foreign language teachers and student teachers (STs) alike do not receive much training in terms of teaching culture and what to teach about culture (Bryd, Hlas, and Valencia, 2011; Bryd 2014; Driscoll, Earl and Cable, 2013; Hinkel 2014; Schulz 2007).

Besides, in teacher education context, concrete instructional objectives for teaching cultural elements have not been stated. As a result, cultural issues are only touched upon in passing in the process of teaching other topics such as literature and skills courses. Bryd, Hlas, and Valencia (2011) also complain about the same issue and in a study with his friends they argue that ‘Too often the linguistic elements of L2 teaching overshadow the area of culture even in teacher preparation programs’. Byrd (2014) reports that ‘this lack of prominence in teacher education’ has been compensated by the introduction of the “Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st
Century” in the United States (US) and the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001) in Europe (p.76).

Even if teachers have a relevant cultural background knowledge and want to include this type of cultural elements in their lessons, they would not know where to start and how to do it. Similarly, Bryd (2014) asserts that ‘L2 teachers often struggle to identify cultural resources and instructional strategies for culture’(p.76). Just the sheer breath of culture concept can be discouraging for teachers. For this reason, teachers would appreciate guidance on this. Hence, this issue has to be considered in the teacher education programs and the STs should be assisted to understand the significant role of culture in teaching a foreign language.

STs should also gain an understanding that learning about culture cannot be completed by taking a couple of courses but it is a ‘lifelong learning process’ (Byram,1997). Besides, since culture is a dynamic phenomenon, it changes overtime. This alone makes teaching culture and preparing teaching materials about it a very challenging task. Byram (1997) proposed a set of objectives for developing intercultural awareness of learners. They are the attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating skills of discovery and interaction and critical cultural awareness and political education. However, these objectives are far too challenging for Turkish EFL learners. Because they do not have any chances to have a ‘real-time interaction’ in English in their daily life (Schulz 2007, p.15).

The place of culture in Turkish EFL context

It is rather important to determine the objectives that are appropriate in Turkish educational context. However, Turkish Teacher Education Program for English language Teaching does not include any aspect of culture and its teaching methodology (see Higher Education Council- Teacher Education Program Curriculum). Moreover, as the prime employer of the graduates and the educational authority, the Ministry of National Education does not expect EFL teachers to be able to teach culture as any of the teacher competencies. Thus, Turkish teacher education programmes should be revised to include culture as an essential part of language teaching.

This issue needs to be investigated in Turkish context in a more comprehensive manner. For example, Bayyurt (2006) investigated the role of culture in ELT from the perspectives of teachers in Turkey and found that teachers were aware of the importance of teaching culture as well as the language itself. They tended to see culture as the lifestyle, gastronomy, traditions, etiquette, history, belief and value systems, and language of urban and rural communities. The results also indicated that some of the teachers agreed on the explicit form of teaching culture but they warned that it should not be done in a threatening way for the students’ national identity.

Another study was carried out by Önalan (2005) on instructors teaching in Turkish higher education context. He examined teachers’ opinions and beliefs on the place of target cultural information in English language teaching and also how they teach culture in classroom. The results indicated that teachers mostly had positive attitudes towards integrating cultural elements in their lessons. Their definition of culture was in fact limited to the concepts within visible culture, such as food and clothing. Teachers reported that topics related to culture were not presented systematically but superficially and such topics were underrepresented. Although they believed that it was beneficial to incorporate cultural information in their classes, they rated culture in the 9th place among their top 10 priorities. Their priorities were still vocabulary and reading. ‘Whatever the reason might be, it was clear that EFL teachers’ positive attitudes towards culture did not necessarily bring about its prioritization in their instruction’ (Önalan 2005, p.229).

Like many other studies in Turkish context (Karabinar&Güler,2012; Gönen&Sağlam,2012), both Bayyurt (2006) and Önalan (2005) looked at teachers’ attitudes
Teaching Culture in EFL Context: Student Teachers’ Perspective

Towards teaching culture but there is not any study which offers a way of integrating culture to the present syllabus at various educational level systematically. Findings of such studies suggest that foreign language teachers should be prepared to teach culture in a more comprehensive manner.

The present study has been motivated by this kind of necessity which is the first step of a project which aims for a process of standardization. This project initially determines the STs’ perspectives of culture and culture teaching then it aims to develop teaching techniques and materials in the following stages. However, it is not easy to narrow down the view of culture for language teaching purposes. For this reason, the study adapted Hinkel’s (2014) practical description of culture with a pedagogical scope in mind: visible culture and invisible culture. In EFL teaching, the term visible culture can be employed to refer to different domains of people's lives. It can be used to refer to literature, arts, the architecture (monuments and buildings, e.g. the Eifel Tower, The Empire State Building), institutions (e.g. the BBC) and the history of a group of people. Other features of visible culture can also include the styles of dress, food, customs, festivals and other traditions. These aspects of culture can be discussed and explained easily in the classroom. It seems that such cultural features are those which first come to mind teaching culture. The aspects of globalization can make it easy for the teachers and students to have a common knowledge of some cultural elements.

Yet another far more complex meaning of culture refers to social norms, world views, beliefs, assumptions and value system (e.g. privacy and personal space) that influence language in all contexts including in the classroom. The invisible culture applies to social cultural belief and assumptions that most people are not even aware of. Thus, they cannot be examined consciously. For example, politeness is considered to a universal concept (Brown and Levinson 1987). But its linguistic and behavioural practice in interaction can differ across cultures and languages (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989; Hinkel,1995). Invisible culture knowledge covers culture appropriate communication skills which plays an important role in interpersonal communication skills and successful interpretive skills (Yule 1996). Interpersonal skills include interactional skills required in one-to-one intercultural communication. These skills imply ability to understand and react in a culturally appropriate manner. All these skills are defined within socio-linguistic competence as mentioned previously. Even learners with a high proficiency level may fail to develop sufficient interpersonal and interpretive language skills (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Karatepe 2001). In fact, the matter of invisible cultural elements can cover a huge range of issues. For example, Corbett (2010) included conflict resolution, reflecting on conflict, gender and sympathy, job interviews and etc. in the category of invisible culture.

In the light of this view of culture, this study aims to examine STs’ perspectives of culture and culture teaching on practicing

Methodology of the study

The informants were 134 third year STs studying to become English teachers at a state university in Turkey. This study was carried out within the ‘Teaching Language Skills’ course which has got both theoretical and practical aspect. This study aimed to answer the following research questions.

3- What are the STs perspectives of culture teaching in EFL context?

4- What are the STs’ preference of cultural elements?

The Background of the Study

The course teachers decided to include ‘Teaching Culture’ in the syllabus of the course. They believed that this aspect of language has not been dealt in a satisfactory manner. As it has been stated previously in the study, this issue needs to be represented in an explicit manner in the program.
Data collection

The data was collected by means of a two-part questionnaire which was given to the STs during class hours by the researchers. The first questionnaire was designed based on the results of a pilot study where STs were asked to define culture and provide a list of dimensions of culture. Pilot study, STs tended to see culture having two broad dimensions, global and culture specific mainly UK/US culture. In the pilot study STs were also asked to suggest a list of cultural themes. Based on their suggestions, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale which consisted of two main parts was designed.

The first part of the questionnaire contained items which were about STs’ perception of teaching culture. Their preferences of visible culture and invisible cultural elements were also questioned. The second part of the questionnaire included lists of visible cultural elements such as movies, festivals and celebrities and invisible cultural elements, such as use of speech acts, issues of politeness, hospitality and gender differences. They were asked to indicate their choices by ranking them in the order of importance for an EFL teacher. These issues were selected in the light of Hinkel’s (2014) pedagogical description and Corbett’s (2003) understanding of culture.

Data Analysis

The first section of the questionnaire was analysed quantitatively by means SPSS (version 13). Descriptive statistics presented mean scores and percentages results. The responses of the participants to 10 items in the questionnaire were computed according to scales. The second section was analysed by counting occurrences of each cultural element. Under these two headings the analysis of these will be presented comparatively.

PRESENTATIONOF RESULTS

The results will be presented under two main headings:

1-Student Teachers’ Perspectives of Culture and Culture Teaching and
2-Student Teachers’ Preferences of Cultural Elements.

Student Teachers’ Perspectives of Culture and Culture Teaching

In the first section of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics for general results of student teachers’ perceptions of cultural elements indicated that they had an average mean rating between 2.20 to 4.49. These results showed that they had a positive idea about teaching culture though some of the STs may not have a very clear idea of what it means to teach culture. The responses of the participants to 10 items in the questionnaire were computed according to scales. They were described in percentages.

The first item presented that 70% of the STs believed that they should teach culture explicitly. Besides, 85.9% of the STs stated that they should not ignore cultural aspects within their English course books. These results appeared to suggest that not many of the STs tended to support the idea of teaching culture explicitly but they would not miss the opportunity when they came across cultural elements within the coursebook.

When we questioned the matter of teaching culture-specific elements or international target culture aspects, we realized that they mostly tended to prefer international target cultural aspects (90.9%) rather than British and American culture elements (70%).

They were asked about their preferences of visible and invisible culture, since they were already taught about the terms. The data analysis revealed that STs declined to focus their lessons
Teaching Culture in EFL Context: Student Teachers’ Perspective

either solely on visible elements (21.7%), or solely on invisible elements (14.1%). Instead, the 94% of the STs rather preferred to integrate elements of both visible and invisible elements.

Finally, when we asked if they liked to make one or two cultural elements the centre of their teaching, only 29.8% of the STs agreed. This meant only one third of the STs stated that they would choose to plan and perform English lessons based solely on a specific cultural element. This was well below our expectations.

The last two items were regarding sociolinguistic features within invisible culture. They questioned their perception of the effect of context of situation on language use and the place of appropriate language use. The results showed that 88% of the STs thought that they should teach how language changes according to the context of situation. Moreover, 92% of the STs believed that they had to teach how to use language appropriately.

**Student Teachers’ Preferences of Cultural Elements**

In the second part of the questionnaire, STs were asked to state the cultural elements they preferred to teach and put them in the order of importance. It has got two sub-parts: visible cultural topics and invisible cultural topics.

The analysis of the visible cultural topics part showed that STs did not put their preferences in the same order. Each one of them had a unique combination of topics which made the analysis phase a difficult one.

**Table 1: Student teachers’ preferences of visible cultural elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Topics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK/US Life style</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/US Literature</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/US Festivals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/US Celebrities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/US History</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/US Music</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is seen in Table 1, the topic of UK/US life-style was chosen as the most important cultural item by 46.27 % STs (62 out of 134). The second most popular item was literature with 15.61% STs (21) who chose it as the most important cultural topic. The third one was UK/US festivals with 10.45 %. The next popular cultural item was UK/US history (8.96%). These items were followed by UK/US celebrities, music and other items such as geography and school systems.

**Table 2: Student teachers’ preferences of invisible cultural elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Topics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech acts</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social life in UK/US</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational strategies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness and hospitality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turkish Studies

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Likewise, in the invisible cultural topic part, their preferences did not accumulate on certain topics. They seemed to make different combination of topic preferences. Table 2 showed that 37.31% (50 out of 134) of the STs presented their most important choice as the use of speech acts in context. This is about language choice in different formal and informal context of situations such as making a request or making a complaint.

The next popular choice was the social life in UK/US with 20.14% (27). This issue included specific behaviours within a particular social context such as attending a wedding ceremony and knowing how to give a present to the couple or greetings in formal and informal context. The following items can actually be handled under the title of sociopragmatic issues altogether. These are politeness (11.19%), punctuality (4.47%), friendliness (2.98%) and privacy (5.97%).

The findings will be discussed in the light of the relevant literature, and the research questions will be answered in the following section.

DISCUSSION

In general terms, STs appeared to perceive culture teaching positively. However, they did not consider planning and organizing a separate lesson focusing on certain cultural elements. They seemed to prefer teaching cultural elements if these were included in the course book. Some possible reasons for this tendency might be the fact that they did not know how to teach culture systematically since they have not been trained on this issue. Although they studied how to plan a lesson in various practical courses, cultural features were not emphasized in these courses. Therefore, their training did not highlight teaching culture enough to enable them to teach culture as a separate subject matter. Thus, it is not realistic for us to expect them to teach culture deliberately or systematically.

The fact that they tended to prefer international target culture elements rather than culture specific aspects indicated that they were aware of the significance of the role of English in the globalized world. This was not surprising since they have already been exposed to the elements of international target culture through the social media in their daily lives. Although this may indicate that they have adapted a global view of language teaching, this may not be the right interpretation of the data. STs’ contradicting preferences of cultural elements which were presented above appeared to show that STs may not have made a conscious choice. They may have acted due to their worries of giving the correct answer to satisfy the researchers.

It was observed that they preferred to integrate both visible and invisible cultural elements rather than dealing with them separately. It appeared that they have developed an understanding of the breadth of culture. It may be a consequence of their short term specific training by the researchers during the ‘Teaching Language Skills’ course, where they were introduced the terms visible and invisible culture.

When their choice of favourite cultural elements to teach were examined, it was observed that 46.2% of the STs tended to put the UK/US life-style on the top of their preference list. This was rather a contradictory result with their view of the significance of the role of English in the globalized world. As we have already stated before, they preferred teaching cultural elements which were included in the course books.

Similarly, in the course books available in the market, UK/US life-style seemed to be the most common subject matter. For example, they include topics such as clothing, food, and festivals which are more concrete and observable facts and easier to handle for the teacher. These results show similarity with Bayyurt (2006) who reported that practicing teachers tended to see the culture limited to the lifestyle, gastronomy, traditions and etiquette.
Moreover, in a study which was carried out within the context of teaching Turkish as a foreign language, Çetinoğlu and Güllülü (2018) examined two different course books by basing their analysis on Common European framework and found out that the cultural themes were not represented evenly within the course book units. Certain cultural topics such as food and beverages in daily life and Turkish cuisine were the most frequently mentioned ones which were rather concrete concepts and visible cultural elements. However, the cultural behaviours related to these concepts (invisible cultural elements) such as table manners were not included at all.

In addition, as Alptekin (1993) stated “most text book writers are native speakers who consciously or unconsciously transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of their own English-speaking society -usually the United States or United Kingdom” (p. 138). As a result of their learning experience, students and teachers might have felt obliged to adopt topics of UK/US culture in the course books published by Western publishers. If the teachers followed the course book strictly, they would eventually emphasize those specific cultural elements. In our study, the STs may have had this kind of language learning experience which might be the underlying reasons for their preferences.

In addition to life-style, literature seemed to be the second popular visible culture element. They believed that literature could be a means for presenting culture and language. One reason for this seemed to be five different literature courses they attended in their teacher education programme. Another reason could be their own past language learning experience.

Another popular issue with high occurrence was observed in the invisible part. They considered speech acts as the most important invisible cultural issue to teach (37.31%). They seemed to have an idea about the importance of teaching about appropriateness in the use of speech acts have a cultural aspect (Wierzbicka1985). The possible reason for this might be the fact that the course teachers put special emphasis on the teaching of speech acts in the Teaching Skills course. It was also possible that STs were influenced by their other instructors during their education.

The second popular invisible preference seems to be social life in UK/US. This result is in line with the previous finding which is about the life style in UK/US as a visible element. Thus, it is not surprising to find out that STs were interested in target culture elements related to social elements such as giving presents in different social context.

In addition, sociopragmatic issues such as politeness, punctuality, friendliness, and privacy were the fore-fronted issues which were the mostly preferred ones. This tendency appeared to show that some STs though small in numbers, have developed an understanding of the knowledge of sociopragmatic concepts.

CONCLUSION

The results indicated that STs’ views of culture teaching seemed to be shaped by the representation of culture in the course books available in the market mostly and their previous language learning experience. Moreover, their teacher training programme may have contributed to their understanding of culture. However, all these seem to have failed to help them develop a conscious understanding of teaching culture systematically in EFL context. Thus, there is an urgent need for a process of standardization for teaching culture in the EFL teacher education.

It is possible to conclude that the participants of this study are ready for further training on teaching culture. They are aware of the significance of teaching culture in EFL and the distinction between international target culture and target culture elements. Moreover, they are aware of the main concepts and they tend to integrate visible and invisible cultural elements. They well realize
that they need to gain more knowledge about culture in general and also how to teach culture. If the STs are provided with a model where culture is integrated with an EFL course, they will have a clear idea of what it means to teach culture and how to do it. Thus, we need to support the existing course programme with a more systematic and explicit culture supplement.

As part of pedagogical implications, the results lead us as teacher educators to consider the importance of raising STs’ awareness on teaching and learning cultural issues integrated to teaching EFL. This kind of education would yield much better results than our STs’ direct contact with any culture -not limited to the target language culture (Zhu 2014). This kind of learning will lead STs develop a conscious approach to cultural features. It is expected that STs would also develop a reflective stance with the help of their teachers (Karatepe and Yilmaz 2018, Zhu 2014). Therefore, teacher educators should be ready to integrate reflective practice when incorporating culture to their teaching.

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**APPENDIX**

**CULTURE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**STATEMENTS**

1- I should teach target culture explicitly in EFL classroom.

2- I should ignore target culture in EFL classroom.

3- Teaching of specific cultural features should be limited to UK/US culture in EFL classrooms.

4- International target cultural features should be integrated to English lessons.

5- I prefer teaching only visible cultural elements in EFL classroom.

6- I prefer teaching only invisible cultural elements in EFL classroom.

7- I prefer integrating both visible and invisible cultural elements in EFL classroom.

8- I prefer international target features in English lessons.

9- I should teach how the use of language changes according to context of culture.

10- I should teach appropriate language use.
PREFERENCES

1- Examine the following list and select your preference of five visible cultural elements which should be included in an English lesson. Put them in the order of importance.

   a- UK/US literature
   b- UK/US movies
   c- UK/US history
   d- UK/US geography
   e- UK/US celebrities
   f- UK/US music
   g- UK/US cuisine
   h- UK/US festivals
   i- UK/US school systems
   j- UK/US family life
   k- UK/US life style

2- Examine the following list and select your preference of five invisible cultural element which should be included in an English lesson. Put them in the order of importance.

   a- Speech acts
   b- Politeness
   c- Conversational strategies
   d- Punctuality
   e- Friendliness and hospitality
   f- Small talk
   g- Gender differences
   h- Privacy
   i- Personal space
   j- Giving presents
   k- Democracy and human rights
   l- Social life