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**ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING CULTURE  
IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

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**Gülin OSMANCIK**

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BURSA ULUDAĞ ÜNİVERSİTESİ

EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ

YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANA BİLİM DALI

İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ BİLİM DALI

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE DİL DERSLERİNDE KÜLTÜR

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## **Abstract**

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## **ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING CULTURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

As the English language has become more and more important in our increasingly globalized world, the concept of language learning has also changed. The notion that language acquisition is learning a collection of rules and syntax made up of words and sentences by imitating and drilling has been replaced by another concept. According to this new point of view, language learning covers different components like grammatical competence, communicative competence, and intercultural competence. On the other hand, culture teaching in foreign language classrooms is still being undermined (Thanasoulas, 2001). Therefore, the main goal of the present study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of culture and teaching

culture in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom; it is simply because language teachers are considered as the main agents that help learners learn the cultural competence. Along the same line, this study aims to find out the teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in foreign language classes in terms of gender, educational background, active teaching period, the experience of being abroad (English speaking countries), preference for the type of English and the problems they encounter while teaching culture in foreign language lessons. The participants of the study included 250 EFL teachers working in High schools and equivalent schools affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used since the data was gathered utilizing two different data collection tools; a written survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that language teachers' attitudes towards teaching culture were quite positive and they provided a high level of agreement to teaching culture in the ELT classroom. However, they faced some problems during the inclusion of cultural elements and they needed some training on teaching culture in language classrooms.

***Keywords:*** Culture, Language, Teaching Culture, Foreign Language Teaching, Intercultural Competence.

## Özet

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## İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE DİL DERSLERİNDE KÜLTÜR ÖĞRETİMİ ALGISI

Küreselleşen dünyamızda İngilizce dili gittikçe daha önemli hale gelirken, dil öğrenme kavramı da değişti. Dil ediniminin taklit ederek ve derinlemesine inceleyerek, sözcük ve cümlelerden oluşan bir dizi kural ve sözdizimi öğrenmek olduğu düşüncesi yerini başka bir kavrama bıraktı. Bu yeni bakış açısına göre dil öğrenimi, dilbilgisi yeterliliği, iletişimsel yeterlilik ve ayrıca kültürlerarası yeterlilik gibi farklı bileşenleri kapsamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, yabancı dil sınıflarında kültür öğretimi hala baltalanıyor (Thanasoulas, 2001). Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, dil öğretmenlerinin öğrencilerin kültürel yeterlilik kazanmalarına yardımcı olacak ana etmenler olarak görülmesi nedeniyle, öğretmenlerin İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği sınıflarda kültür ve kültür öğretimi algılarını incelemektir. Aynı doğrultuda bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin cinsiyet, eğitim geçmişi, aktif öğretim süresi, yurtdışında bulunma deneyimi (İngilizce konuşulan ülkeler), İngilizce türü tercihi açısından yabancı dil

derslerinde kltr ğretme algılarını ve yabancı dil derslerinde kltr ğretiminde karşılaştıkları sorunları ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları, tm T.C. Milli Eđitim Bakanlığı'na bađlı liselerde ve dengi okullarda grev yapan 250 İngilizce ğretmeninden oluřmuřtur. Veriler iki farklı veri toplama aracı ile toplandıđı için hem nicel hem de nitel yntemler kullanılmıřtır; yazılı anket ve yarı yapılandırılmıř grřmeler. Sonuçlar, dil ğretmenlerinin kltr ğretimine ynelik tutumlarının oldukça olumlu olduđunu ve İngilizce derslerinde kltr ğretimine yksek dzeyde bir onay verdiklerini ortaya koymuřtur. Bununla birlikte, kltrel ğelerin dahil edilmesi sırasında bazı sorunlarla karşılařmakta ve dil sınıflarında kltr ğretimi konusunda biraz eđitime ihtiyaç duymaktadırlar.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:*** Kltr, Dil, Kltr ğretimi, Yabancı Dil ğretimi, Kltrlerarası Yeterlilik.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELF:** English as a Lingua Franca

**FL:** Foreign Language

**ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence

**RQ1:** Research Question 1

**RQ2:** Research Question 2

**RQ3:** Research Question 3

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, initially the background of the study is presented. This part gives information about the relationship between language and culture, the importance of this relationship in foreign language teaching, and the need for studies on the perceptions of Turkish ELF teachers on culture teaching in language lessons. In the following chapters, the purpose and the significance of the study are presented. Finally, the limitations of the study are addressed.

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

In this day and age, many people from different societies have been extensively in touch with one another due to the developing technologies. Communication at this rate brings cultural interaction, and this only happens through language. This close relationship between language and culture reveals the importance of cultural transfer in foreign language teaching (Köşker, 2015).

We learn a foreign language to be able to communicate with those who speak that language. However, mastering a foreign language may not always be as easy as it is assumed. Since language is a means that reflects the way of thinking of the society it belongs to, the first requirement for mastering a foreign language is to think like those people in that society (Er, 2006). Therefore, learning a foreign language involves not only gaining linguistic and communicative competence, but requires students to become familiar with the cultural background of that language, their cultural awareness, and intercultural competence (Sercu & Garcia & Prieto, 2004).

However, as Bennett (1993) states, language can be seen, by both students and teachers, just as a device that is formed by some vocables and some codes to name the things and concepts. This point of view may bring a false perspective on learning a foreign language. It may be perceived as learning to name the same things and concepts differently, without understanding the basic beliefs and values that lie behind. As a result, foreign language learners may experience some problems such as misunderstandings or negative feelings towards the native speakers. Therefore, learners need to gain intercultural competence and expectations for foreign language teachers increase because teachers are the ones to support them in this regard (Sercu et al., 2004). It is basically because the simplest way for students to acquire intercultural competence is through teachers' and teachers' being intermediaries who teach the target culture to their students while teaching the target language. While there are such expectations from foreign language teachers, teachers' perceptions of culture teaching and the extent to which they have mastered the culture of the target language are equally crucial.

When we consider the situation in terms of foreign language education in Turkey, it is possible to say that the methods of teaching and learning a foreign language have proven to be inefficient in most cases even if foreign language learning/teaching starts in the second grade of state primary schools and even at the pre-school age in some private schools affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Since culture teaching is considered as a solution for better language teaching, foreign language teachers' perceptions towards culture teaching is an issue that needs to be investigated.

In this respect, there have been studies carried out at universities in Turkey in an attempt to find out in-service or prospective language teachers' perceptions towards culture teaching (Arıkan, 2011; Bayyurt, 2006; Ekmekçi, 2017; Kahraman, 2016; Karabınar & Güler, 2012; Karatepe & Yılmaz, 2018; Önalın, 2005; Tanıř & Baltacı, 2018; Yeřil & Demiröz, 2017).

There are also some studies done by Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersin, and Kaslıoğlu (2009) at primary schools, secondary schools, and high schools. Since the majority of the studies have been performed at universities, there is a need for more studies to investigate the perceptions of high school EFL teachers in Turkey.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

In this study, we aim to identify High School English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Culture in the EFL Classrooms. In an attempt to find out the potential results, we asked the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers working in state schools at the high school level in Turkey in relation to the element of culture in foreign language classes?
2. What are the Turkish high school language teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in foreign language classes in terms of?:
  - a. Gender
  - b. Educational background
  - c. Active teaching period
  - d. Having been abroad (English speaking countries)
  - e. Preference for the type of English (British, American, or both)
3. What are the problems encountered while teaching the culture element in foreign language lessons?

## **1.3. The Significance of the Study**

Children in Turkey mostly begin learning English at the age of 7-8 (2nd grade) and this is where and when their indirect exposure to a foreign culture also commences. How much cultural knowledge they will be exposed to over the years is limited with the curriculum and the teachers' interest and readiness to put extra effort to highlight and teach the cultural elements.

For this reason, the expectations from language teachers to guide their students in the path to the acquisition of different skills increase. Furthermore, they are expected to help their students to grasp the target language and its culture as well as to contemplate on their own culture. From this point of view, language teachers should have an insight of the underlying foundations of the new skills and strategies which the students need to acquire for intercultural understanding (Atay et al., 2009).

What are the factors leading the teachers to go an extra mile and design their lessons to incorporate the cultural elements? This thesis aims at looking into the factors which lead the high school teachers to do this. Although the literature is rich with studies investigating this issue at university level, not many studies have been carried out which investigate teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in EFL classes at primary, secondary, and high school levels.

Considering that the perceptions of English teachers working at different levels are also very important, this study aims to provide an insight into the EFL classes by investigating the perceptions of High School English teachers on culture and culture teaching.

#### **1.4 Limitations of the Study**

This study has investigated only High School English Teachers' perceptions on culture and culture teaching. However, English language teaching does not start at High school, it starts at much earlier stages in Turkey. If the perceptions of primary school, secondary school, and high school teachers on culture teaching were analyzed comparatively, a more significant result could be obtained. However, the results are only based on the opinions of the teacher participants; it has to be noted here that the students' attitudes towards learning culture in foreign language lessons would be equally important.

## 1.5. Related Terms

**Language:** In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2015), language is defined as "the use by humans of a system of sounds and words to communicate" (p.848). In this context, it can be said that the most basic feature of the language is being used as an instrument for communication.

**Culture:** British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), the founder of anthropology, defines culture as a "... complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society" (p. 1). On the other hand, culture is defined in the dictionary of Türk Dil Kurumu (2019) as "all the material and spiritual values created in the process of historical, social development, and the tools used to create them and convey them to the next generations, showing the measure of the sovereignty of the human to its natural and social environment".

**Lingua Franca:** In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2015) lingua franca is defined as "a shared language of communication used between people whose main languages are different" (p.881).

**Target culture, Source culture and International culture:** Cortazzi and Jin (1999) talk about three kinds of culture taught in the English Language teaching materials. The first one is the source culture defined as one's own culture. The second one is the target culture which is the culture of native speakers of the target language. The last one is the international culture, which includes all other cultures in the world apart from one's own culture and the target culture.

**Cultural awareness:** Cultural awareness is defined by Parker, Webb & Wilson (2017) as "the knowledge of, understanding of and experiences with one's own culture as well as others' cultures that inform one's ability to navigate new experiences". Similarly, Tomalin and

Stempleski (1993) define "cultural awareness" as "the term we have used to describe sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behavior on language use and communication".

**Intercultural Competence:** Bennett & Bennett (2004) define intercultural competence as "The ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts". Similarly, Deardorff (2011) explains "the external outcome of intercultural competence" as " the effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations"



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

In this chapter, the literature related to language, culture, and culture teaching in language classrooms, which are the main subjects of the study, will be examined under various subheadings: Initially, the definition of language is presented and the importance of English as the lingua franca is explained. Then culture, the relationship between language and culture, the importance of culture and its place in the foreign language education, some approaches to culture teaching, the problems faced in classroom during culture teaching, and the previous studies are described in detail.

#### 2.1. Language

People have always required languages since the very beginning of the era of communication (Tran, 2010). They convey what they think, see or hear through language. We can say that it is hard to think about communication and socialization without language. That is why Sapir (1949) describes language as an essence that leads us to social reality since it adjusts the way we think on all social processes.

In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2015), language is defined as "the use by humans of a system of sounds and words to communicate" (p.848). In this context, it is possible to say that the primary feature of the language is being a tool for human communication and we can see that many definitions are based on this feature of language. For instance, Sirbu (2015) defines language as "a means of communication among the members of a society" (p. 405). Likewise, Çiftpınara and Tanır (2013) describe language as the most important tool that prepares people for the socialization process.

To sum up, without language human communication cannot take place. The common sense and thought that connect the members of a society can be defined in the language they

speak. Besides, a society's history, geography, value measurements, folklore, music, literature, science, world view, and all common values are transferred to the next generations through language. In other words, language is the most important social entity of the human community. For this reason, it is the first and most basic element of a culture.

**2.1.1. English as a lingua franca.** We need a global language in our increasingly global world. Therefore, English is considered to be that "global language", in other words, the "lingua franca". It is spoken all around the world by both native and non-native speakers for various reasons like education, science and technology, employment, business, the internet, travel and tourism, press and media, and entertainment (Rao, 2019). However, it is not about how many people speak English as a mother tongue. When a language cultivates a distinctive role that is acknowledged by every country in the world, it becomes a global language. It is about being received as "special" by the other countries (Crystal, 2003). That is why English has become the "lingua franca" of our current times.

Tosuncuoğlu (2018) underlines that in today's world, there are many different devices to contact other people like the internet, television, broadcast, and press. English is predominantly the language of this worldwide communication as well as a means in education, science, and technology, and travel all around the world. Therefore, he refers to English as "the world's most powerful language" and he asserts that the role of "English as a Lingua Franca" should be taken into account by every nation.

When we consider the status of English in Turkey, we can say that English has been a significant element in education and employment since the 1980s. It is the most preferred foreign language in both state and private schools and an agency for education after the native language, Turkish, and it is the most common foreign language which is used for international business as well as tourism (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1998)

As a result of being the second language and preferred foreign language in many countries as well as being the first language in some countries, 'English as a Lingua Franca' (ELF) arose. It has been used by many speakers with different mother tongues to communicate for different reasons all over the world. Besides, the number of interplays that happen among 'non-native' speakers of English beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries is greater than the ones among native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005).

Moreover, English as the lingua franca affects the views on how this language should be taught as well. Tosuncuoğlu (2018) calls attention to the learners' need for expressive communication about significant topics since they have significant intentions for learning English as a lingua franca. Learners need something more to master this powerful language rather than focusing only on linguistic aspects of it. Learners' goal is to obtain fluency in their English practices among different citizens of the world. As was mentioned previously, in an increasingly global world, since the learners' interactions presently as well as in the future will be multicultural, it is crucial that teaching culture should not be ignored in English lessons. English teachers should make their students aware of the importance of English as a lingua franca and include cultural content into their teaching practices.

The fact that English is a lingua franca also affects what kind of cultural elements will be presented in the language lessons. This feature of the English language makes it necessary to teach not only the target culture but also the international culture.

In conclusion, in today's ever-shrinking world, there is certainly a need for a common language for communication in many fields like science and technology, business, the internet, travel and tourism, press and media, or education. Like French and Spanish were the lingua Franca in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, English today is the global language which fulfills this need for international communication. Therefore, the importance of English teaching together with intercultural or multicultural competence is undeniable. Since culture teaching

in English lessons is important, the perceptions of English teachers on this issue become equally important, too. After all, the ones who will help learners to become intercultural or multi-cultural speakers are the English teachers.

## **2.2. Culture**

Many different definitions of culture have been made by anthropologists, sociologists, or linguists so far. Yet, it is one of the least understood concepts (Bostan,2016). British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), the founder of anthropology, defines culture as a "... complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society." On the other hand, culture is defined in the TDK (Türk Dil Kurumu) dictionary as "all the material and spiritual values created in the process of historical, social development, and the tools used to create them and convey them to the next generations, showing the measure of the sovereignty of the human to its natural and social environment."

However, at this point, we need to talk about what culture is in terms of language learning and teaching. From this point of view, Brooks (1968) asserts that the definition of culture which has the most significant role in language instruction is what we need. He defines culture as follows:

Culture refers to the individual's role in the unending kaleidoscope of life situations of every kind and the rules and models for attitude and conduct in them. By reference to these models, every human being, from infancy onward, justifies the world to himself as best he can, associates with those around him, and relates to the social order to which he is attached (p. 210).

Here what Brooks (1968) wants to emphasize is that all the dialogues which are required to sustain human beings' lives and to meet their needs are the products of culture.

That is why language is a product that is born out of this aspect of culture. If we want to understand what role culture plays during the process of teaching a foreign language fully, we should especially look into this aspect of culture.

On the other hand, Hinkel (2014) underlines that culture is divided into two; visible culture and invisible culture. The visible culture mostly represents the part of a culture that can be easily seen by anyone such as the history, the literature, the arts, and the architecture of a group of people or the styles of dress, cuisine, customs, festivals, and other traditions of them. On the other hand, the invisible culture, which is much harder to notice, covers socio-cultural norms, worldviews, beliefs, assumptions, and value systems (Karatepe & Yılmaz 2018). Hinkel (2014) also emphasizes that our language use is mostly affected by these invisible aspects so our teaching and learning a target language is affected by this invisible culture since the classroom is an environment where the target language use mostly takes place for EFL learners.

Although culture is referred to as "hard to define" by Hinkel (2012), many researchers have tried to define culture in years. For instance, Engin (1990) describes culture as an acquired pattern of behavior and a way of life that includes everything that man makes and creates. In other words, culture is a whole that includes all human behavior patterns such as traditions and customs, speech, music, food and drinks, home, clothing, etc.

Hinkel (1999) also defines cultural assumptions as intangible, regulated, common notions and these notions overspread one's viewpoint and attitudes. Karimboyevna (2020) underlines that culture has plenty of definitions such as "a way of life, as a set of social practices, as a system of beliefs, values, and attitudes, as a shared history or as a set of experiences in a country" (p.380).

According to Çakır (2011), it is inevitable to talk about a community if we are referring to any kind of culture. Whether it is written or oral, culture covers all kinds of behavior and speech that an individual has consciously or unconsciously acquired in a society. Therefore, culture is specific to a society. He also talks about two dimensions of culture: One of its dimensions relates to elements such as artworks, literature, and daily life while the other dimension relates to elements such as behavior and beliefs, and way of thinking shared by members of that society.

Culture is generally classified into two different types: "The Big C" culture and "the Little C" culture. Tomalin & Stempleski (1993) refer to "Big C" as "achievement culture" which includes "history, geography, institutions, literature, art, music and the way of life". In other words, the things that will never disappear. On the other hand, they refer to "Little C" as "behavior culture" which includes culturally influenced beliefs and perceptions. These beliefs and perceptions are enounced by both languages and by cultural behaviors which are confirmed by the society.

On the other hand, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) talk about three kinds of culture which we recognize in the English language teaching materials: The first one is the source culture which is defined as one's own culture. The second one is the target culture which is the culture of native speakers of the target language. The last one is the international culture, which includes all other cultures in the world apart from one's own culture and the target culture. International culture is not limited to a country or a group of people; so it can also be described as global.

We have so far presented numerous different definitions of culture. The importance of culture in terms of language teaching in this study is crucial. Therefore, the definition of culture made by Brooks (1968), as we stated above, is what we need here since it is directly related to language teaching. Moreover, the definitions of visible culture and invisible culture

(Hinkel, 2014), and the source culture, target culture, and international culture (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999) should be useful to understand the place of culture in language classrooms from the teachers' perspectives which we try to reveal in this study.

**2.2.1. Language and culture.** In order to exist in a society, it is necessary to be in contact with the other members of that society; and to be able to contact them, it is necessary to use language, whether with words or signs. However, speech is not only a biological activity of human beings. Brooks (1968) asserts that a person's part in language action is divided into two; biological and social. While one's genetic heritage defines the biological part, the social part is shaped by the way of thinking and the way of life which he/she inherits from the society that surrounds him/her. This common mindset which shapes our part in language action is the product of the culture.

In this relation, language and culture are the integral parts of a whole. According to Sun (2013), language and culture constantly affect each other and one cannot exist without the other. Language is a means that conveys the norms and values of a culture and culture has an endless impact on language. Sun also asserts that it would not be possible for us to identify "the culture" if there was no such thing as "language" and language without culture would be like "water without a source or a tree without roots" (p. 371).

There are other metaphors used to define the relation between language and culture. For example, Jiang (2000) refers to the metaphor "language is the mirror of culture" to explain this relationship and adds that "people can see a culture through its language". "Iceberg" is another metaphor she refers to describe this relationship. She explains that the visible part of the iceberg is the language with a minor chapter of culture. However, the bigger part of the iceberg, which is covered below the surface, is the invisible culture (p.328).

Moreover, we can say that language greatly affects how we interpret life. The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, in other words, the linguistic relativity hypothesis, argues that the language spoken by a person affects his/her perception of reality (Lucy, 2005). In other words, the way we decipher the world is defined by the language we speak. In this context, there are many different ways to interpret the world we live in since there are many people who speak different languages in the world (Tözün, 2012). However, the effect of the diversity between the structures of languages on people's behaviors and thoughts is arguable. The diversity between cultures may be the factor that affects people's behaviors and thoughts instead of the diversity between the structures of languages (Scovel, 1994).

As a result, through language, we express and share our feelings and thoughts and we connect. As Brown (2007) indicates that these feelings, thoughts, connections, and even our existence occur in a context. This context is culture. He describes the correlation between language and culture as "intricately interwoven". If we try to disconnect them, surely each will lose its significance.

**2.2.2. Foreign language education and culture.** Language plays an important role in commercial, cultural, and political relations among different societies. Especially in our country, as a developing country, foreign language teaching has an important place in the framework of educational policies. To be involved in the process of existence, societies have to be in contact with other societies so the importance given to the foreign language is increasing constantly (Çiftçınar & Tanır, 2013).

From this point of view, the aim of learning a foreign language is to communicate through that language with people from different countries. However, is it enough to learn a language just linguistically to achieve this goal? According to many researchers, it is not sufficient (Bennett, 1993; Kramsch, 1996; Hinkel, 2001). The culture of the language learned



is also of great importance for those who learn that language because a language cannot be considered independent of the culture of the society who speaks it (Çiftçınar & Tanır, 2013).

Since a language cannot be separated from its culture, learning a foreign language brings the need for learning a foreign culture, too. However, some learners may have concerns about losing the essence of their mother tongue while learning a foreign language. They are afraid of losing their essence by being influenced by the culture of the foreign language they speak (Kramersch, 2000). It is not to be argued here whether learning a foreign language causes such a problem, but we can only say that the culture of the society that speaks the same language is mostly there to influence your choice of words, whether it is your mother tongue or a foreign language. You may not always be sure that your words are your own choice or the influence of others (Widdowson, 1994).

In this respect, Kramersch (2000) explains that your speech is the product of two agents; your voice and the culture of the society that speaks that language. They both form what you speak. That is why speaking a language well is not only about using the syntax and grammatical rules correctly, but also conforming to the common thoughts of the society who speaks that language.

In other words, people use language to transfer their feelings and thoughts to each other every day but that is not the only thing they do during the process. They also consider the person they speak to both as an individual and as a part of a social group. The speech is affected by the socio-cultural characteristics of the person they are talking to such as gender, profession, or educational background. It is the same when you speak a foreign language. Therefore, the inclusion of the intercultural field in the language learning process is of great importance. Learners of a foreign language should become "intercultural speakers" who can communicate equally with other individuals who speak that language, and are aware of the identity of the person they speak to (Cinkara, 2016).

Çakır (2011) also supports the idea that it is not enough to learn a language just structurally. He asserts that cultural elements of the target language should be taught alongside structural elements since people from different cultures have different ways of communication and they need to be aware of each other's cultures in order to avoid misunderstandings and other communicational problems.

Yule (1996) gives an example of such a misunderstanding of how a Vietnamese worker got disappointed when he was asked about his plans for the free period of five days. It was the Easter holiday coming and the one who asked the question assumed that the other one in the conversation already knew what was being talked about. However, the Vietnamese worker misinterpreted the case and thought that he was laid off. Yule (1996) summarizes this incident as "Something good in one person's schema can sound like something bad in another's." The reason for this is the cultural schemata that are shaped by what we experience in our lives.

Similarly, Bennett (1993) asserts that ignoring the cultural content of a language and considering the language only as a means of defining objects and concepts can lead us to turn into 'fluent fools'. He defines 'a fluent fool' as "someone who speaks a foreign language well but does not understand the social or philosophical content of that language." According to him, this may cause mutual negative thoughts between the fluent fools and the native speakers in social settings and the only way to prevent such cases is to sense the cultural aspect of language better.

**2.2.3. Culture in the EFL classroom.** Since plenty of changes occurred in politics, economics, and socio-cultural life in the 1980s, a new perspective arose on the education system. It aimed to cultivate us to become individuals who were capable of adapting to what was new and who were tolerant to what was different. This is the way of existing in a

multicultural world and that is why culture teaching began to be considered mostly as an academic discipline apart from linguistics (Karabınar & Güler,2012)

Learning target culture is more likely about better communication. Especially the invisible culture has a great effect on better communication since it symbolizes basic sociocultural rules. More importantly, these sociocultural rules assign appropriate language use and norms of behavior (Hinkel, 2001). Therefore, becoming linguistically competent in the target language requires sensing the sociocultural matters, rules, and concepts in language use (Hinkel, 2012). This relationship is the reason why culture teaching plays an important role in language teaching.

However, some questions came to the agenda as the perspective of culture teaching changed. For instance, Barrow (1990) refers to some language teachers' concerns about "cultural imperialism"; in other words, urging their students to accept the values and beliefs of the target culture which is quite different from theirs. If so, to what degree should they exemplify these values and beliefs? What should a language teacher's aim be in an EFL classroom?

Researchers have different ideas that might be the answers to these questions. Çakır (2011) emphasizes that an FL teacher's aim should be neither to break down the students' prejudices nor to show the target culture different from what it is. He asserts that an FL teacher should arise interest in the target culture and offer different learning atmospheres in which different kinds of communications take place. Similarly, Cruz (2010) talks about the role of the language teacher as a guide who helps the students as they interpret, compare, and contrast the target culture and their own culture.

Kramsch (2000) indicates that language teachers should be in charge of assisting their learners to acquire their voices while embracing culturally approved genres, styles, and

rhetorical rules of the target language. In other words, they should lead the way for their students to being true to their multilingual and multicultural essence as well as being proper speakers of the target language.

Learners can become more efficient in other language skills if they know socio-cultural norms and how to apply them in their target language interactions. In the long-term, culture gives students the chance to be successful in all kinds of L2 interactions since it provides them an awareness and mediums. In this respect, what a language teacher should do is to practice cultural aspects and pragmatic uses since they affect the learners' learning the language and better communication skills immediately (Hinkel, 2014; Karatepe & Civelek, 2021). Similarly, Byram (1990) claims that teaching the language itself does not provide the students' insight and tolerance spontaneously, or acquiring language skills may not come with competence. On the other hand, teaching language and culture together not only ensures some skills for their future but also contributes to their instruction.

However, McKay (2003) draws attention to the inadequacy of learning only the target culture since learners have different reasons for learning a foreign language. Besides, bilingual teachers who lack the knowledge about the target culture may feel distressed. According to her, source culture and international culture as well as target culture should be presented in language classes. She asserts that presenting source culture in language classes provides major advantages to both learners and teachers. While learners have the chance to learn more about their own culture and learn the target language at the same time, bilingual teachers will be able to teach culture more effectively when it is needed. Moreover, she underlines the importance of the knowledge of international culture for learners in case of cross-cultural encounters with other bilingual speakers of the target language.

Similarly, Alptekin (2002) underlines that English is mostly used for international communication and it should not be ignored that the encounters between nonnative speakers

may also take place between native speakers and nonnative speakers. In this respect, he criticizes the notion of teaching only the target culture in language classes. What he suggests is to present not only the target culture but also the learners' own cultures and international culture in language classes. In this way, learners will be supported to become competent intercultural speakers of the target language as well as bilinguals who can fulfill successful conversations in local settings.

Furthermore, Villavicencio (2004) asserts that language teachers should be well equipped to teach culture, and to be able to do that, they should travel and see other cultures, watch and read cultural works, and learn exactly what may lead students to misunderstandings. Then they should help their students interact with people from other cultures and help them realize the similarities and differences between other cultures and their own. That is to say, a teacher should be a multicultural speaker to help foreign language learners to develop cultural competence and to create an intercultural communication environment. Students should be able to incorporate their experience in local culture and target culture into the classroom communication and activities. Teachers should make their students to be aware of the importance of culture and how to use it as a key element of communication in the target language. That is why the items of both local and target culture should be included in classroom activities and students should be oriented to improve their intercultural competence (Cinkara, 2016).

Likewise, Gorjian and Aghvami (2017) underline that it is necessary to see into both the target culture and our own culture. In a language classroom, students should have the chance to compare and contrast the foreign culture and their own. Students should also be encouraged to realize that there is a variation in the world, and the differences between cultures should be respected (Negro, 2013).

**2.2.4. Approaches to teaching culture.** Over the years approaches to teaching culture have changed. According to Crozet, Liddicoat, and Bianco (1999), as the approaches changed, the concept of culture and the place of culture in language teaching changed too. The perspective of "cultural competence" has also changed with the change of each paradigm. In this respect, they specified four different paradigms in the history of language teaching: 1. The traditional approach to teaching culture 2. The 'Culture studies' approach 3. The 'Culture as practices' approach 4. The Intercultural language teaching.

The first paradigm mentioned by Crozet et al. (1999) is the traditional approach to teaching culture. We can see this kind of culture teaching in literature teaching, via written language. The culture being taught here can be called high culture since highly educated native speakers set the criteria for the literature. It is also possible to say that the correlation between language and culture is rather weak in this paradigm because the main goal here is learning the language itself with a low prospect of communicating with native speakers in real life. The text being studied may even belong to an earlier period of the target society that provides little help to understand the current culture of the target language.

The second paradigm mentioned is "The 'Culture Studies' Approach" which emerged in the 1970s. In this view, cultural knowledge is the knowledge of the target country like its history, geography, and institutions. Furthermore, cultural competence is a segment of knowledge that a nonnative speaker should know about the target country. Although this paradigm aims to communicate with native speakers unlike the traditional approach, it still falls short since the learners have a superficial knowledge of the target country. They are like tourists who have some knowledge about the target country but they are still outsiders. Besides, the link between the language and culture is not natural since the language is mostly used for naming people, places, or events, not to internalize them.

The third paradigm is "The 'Culture as practices' Approach" which gained importance in the 1980s. In this paradigm, culture is perceived as a whole of common behaviors accepted by the members of a society and performed through language. The main goal here is to define culture from the point of practices and values that represent it. If we talk about cultural competence, the learners are expected to remain in their cultural models and to monitor native speakers and interpret their acts and speeches. Unlike the previous approaches, in this paradigm, there is a potent relationship between the culture and the language since it puts the action through language in the heart of culture.

The fourth and last paradigm mentioned by Crozet, et al. (1999) is "Intercultural Language Teaching". The primary goal here is to assist learners to gain intercultural competence by learning a foreign language. Exploring the connection between language and culture in the target language and also in the learner's mother tongue helps to develop intercultural competence. Therefore, the fundamental facet of intercultural competence is to figure out how worldviews arise.

According to Crozet et al. (1999), language covers all the acts of our lives. Since language and culture are intertwined, culture covers all the acts of our lives, too. In this sense, to reach the goals of learning a foreign language, both linguistic and cultural behavior changes are required for learners. Therefore, intercultural language teaching is required in foreign language classes.

Furthermore, Crozet et al. (1999) indicate that there are three main facets of Intercultural Language Teaching. First of all, the connections between language and culture should be taught. Learners should be able to learn and sense the culture which is intertwined with the language use and is not attained straightforward. Secondly, learners should learn both the target culture and their own culture by making comparisons. Finally, learners should reach a "meeting place" where they can appreciate various worldviews. This happens through

intercultural exploration as they state "It is in the intercultural space that unity and diversity can be reconciled".

In this section, we have presented different approaches to cultural teaching. However, in this study, we tried to reveal the language teachers' perceptions regarding the fourth paradigm, "Intercultural Language Teaching", and three main facets of Intercultural Language Teaching which we mentioned above.

**2.2.5. Problems faced in classroom culture teaching.** As we know cultural elements have been included in ELT more often lately. However, there are still significant problems that are faced during the inclusion of cultural content in foreign language classes. The analysis of the studies has presented many different opinions about what these problems are and what their solutions might be.

One of the major problems which occur while teaching culture in the FL classroom is the lack of a definition for culture related to language teaching and for culture teaching itself. As Brooks (1968) stated, many language teachers were eager to teach culture but there was still something missing. No matter how they tried their best, they might still end up failing to form a better understanding in terms of intercultural knowledge. The reason for this can be explained as the lack of an explicit definition of culture especially made for language classes because language teachers need to know what they are exactly dealing with and how exactly it should be handled.

Similarly, Chen and Yang (2016) claim that the first problem faced by language instructors is the lack of standards for culture teaching. Since there is not an accepted definition of culture valid for the language classes and no current standards for teaching culture, teachers will continue to have conflicts about how to handle and when to handle



cultural information as well as to what degree they should include cultural elements into their teaching.

Dema and Moelller (2012) claim that finding efficient methods to associate culture and language is also problematic. Today, teaching a foreign language is different from the past. It has shifted to a new direction from teaching a series of grammatical rules through drills and made-up dialogues. However, teaching culture can still be excluded from language teaching. It can be perceived as a distinct concept and presented apart from language. Without effective methods determined by the authorities, language teachers will continue to have concerns about associating culture and language and they will have problems with finding efficient methods for this association. Whereas, the right methods of integrating cultural content into language teaching may provide opportunities for students to be ready for better communication and collaboration in the modern world.

Another problem mentioned in the studies is the negative attitudes of students towards learning the target culture. Besides not knowing what exactly culture is and what the best ways are to integrate culture into a language course, sometimes teachers have to deal with the resistance from learners. We can come across students' false perceptions as an obstacle since some of them may not want to internalize the target culture completely. Under the influence of the thought system shaped by the local culture, students only see other cultures as behavioral forms they are unfamiliar with (Gönen & Sağlam, 2012).

Bennet (1993) also talks about the defense against what is different as a problem that teachers face in language classes. Sometimes learners group people strictly as "us" and "the others" with negative feelings towards other cultures, including the culture which belongs to the people whose language they are learning. They may feel "under siege" by the target culture so they revile what is different while they ennoble what is their own. A question like "Why don't these people speak my language?" can often be put into words by these learners.

Similarly, Gorjian and Aghvami (2017) explain that some students see their own culture as superior to other cultures because they find it hard to sense the line of visions different from theirs and accept people with these different thoughts and views.

Another problem mentioned by Brooks (1968) is keeping the learners motivated while presenting cultural information. He talks about three sources that motivate students in language classes: The first one is the students' awareness. This awareness is of their development in a new language and would keep them motivated for a while. The second one is the curiosity which comes from their nature. Learners' curiosity towards different lifestyles in different parts of the world would make them willing to learn about other cultures and participate in the language lessons. The third one is the pleasure students get from the articles that contain topics of their interests. The first and the second sources may be considered mostly intrinsic. However, the third one mostly depends on the appropriate choice of the material and a good presentation by the teacher.

Bernhardt and Berman (1999) emphasize that it is often problematic for students to decide whether cultural information is substantial for their target language learning since they have neither adequate language skills nor sufficient background knowledge and enough time. In this case, teachers are expected to assist students in making this distinction. Therefore, language teachers must be qualified to give such assistance to the learners.

As Schulz (2007) states, it may not be so hard to find samples for some practices like greetings or apologizing and culture-based products like films or books or traditional food while teaching culture. However, are the language teachers qualified enough to relate these practices and products with the cultural aspects which shape them? The answer to this question is not always "yes". Here Schulz asserts that there is a considerable need for teacher training to make teachers ready for being the instructors who have the senses to analyze manners, beliefs, and thoughts. Then they could help their students to interpret the cultural

content in both the target and the local culture. In this way, the students will be able to decide whether cultural content is of importance for their linguistic development.

On the other hand, those who show resistance towards culture teaching may not always be the learners. Some teachers' attitudes towards target culture and culture teaching can also be problematic. For instance, Gönen and Sağlam (2012) point that some factors prevent language teachers from teaching culture. First of all, some teachers have concerns about not being well-equipped with the target culture. This results in teachers presenting some cultural facts rather than teaching culture. Secondly, some teachers may feel that they do not have enough time for teaching culture because of the overcrowded curriculum. Thirdly, some of them may consider that their learners should learn the linguistic aspects of a language first. They suppose that the time for learning culture will come later but it may never come for some learners.

Similarly, Chen and Yang (2016) assert that teachers' negative thoughts and opinions towards culture teaching can be the main handicap. As we know, many teachers present the obstacles they face during culture teaching as an excuse for not including cultural elements in their teaching. However, their study shows the real problem as that some of the teachers do not believe that culture teaching is a significant issue and they have no goals such as teaching culture in language classes.

Lange and Paige (2003) came up with a similar finding in their study. They stated that some of the instructors saw culture as a separate phenomenon from the language and being occupied with cultural elements in their teaching as a waste of time so they wanted to focus only on the linguistic and communicational aspects of a target language.

Moreover, Yang and Chen (2016) talk about two barriers to integrating culture and language teaching in language lessons. The first barrier is some teachers' misperceptions that

they see culture teaching and grammar teaching as two separate phenomena. They feel that they have to choose one of them in their teaching practices instead of integrating them. Therefore, they choose to teach just grammar, neglecting the importance of culture teaching in foreign language classrooms. The second barrier is many instructors' and the ELT departments' misperceptions that being linguistically competent is a must for language teachers but knowing how to teach the culture of that language is arbitrary. However, a language teacher needs to have both linguistic knowledge of the target language and the knowledge of the target culture as well as pedagogical knowledge. They conclude that only a good teacher training program can provide teachers with all these kinds of knowledge and turn them into good language teachers.

The problems mentioned by Yang and Chen (2016) are also present in the language classrooms of high schools and the ELT departments of universities in Turkey. There are many Turkish teachers of the English language who think that teaching a language is simply transferring its linguistic aspects. They have become EFL teachers who know the linguistic aspects of the target language but who are not aware of the importance of culture teaching or do not know how to teach culture in the EFL classrooms due to the education they received.

As Bayyurt (2006) suggests, qualified non-native English teachers can assist their students very effectively while the students are dealing with the obstacles, both linguistically and culturally. Besides, they may become very good models for the learners as they display how successful nonnative speakers of English can be. As a result, it is very essential to train both linguistically and culturally qualified Turkish teachers of the English language who are aware of their strengths.

**2.2.6. Studies on teachers' perceptions of teaching culture.** There have so far been some research studies on the teachers' perceptions of Teaching Culture. For instance, Sercu, et al. (2004) investigated EFL secondary school teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in foreign

language classes. The study was carried out in Spain but in fact, it was part of a larger study in seven countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Mexico, Spain, and Sweden. The Spanish participants were 35 EFL teachers from different regions of Spain working at secondary schools. An electronic questionnaire was used to reveal participants' views. The study tried to find out how EFL teachers saw themselves as mediators and what objectives they followed in EFL classes and to what extent their culture teaching assisted the progress of intercultural competence of learners. The results of their study showed that EFL teachers confirmed intercultural objectives and considered the culture teaching noteworthy. However, their teaching practices cannot be described as intercultural. They give little importance to support their learners to gain intercultural skills, to help their learners to think about their cultural identities and they are not aware of the advantage of foreign languages as a means for intercultural communication. They also choose their materials according to the learners' proficiency levels and eligibility for the curriculum, without paying attention to the quality of the cultural content they include. In other words, the EFL teachers place linguistic goals above cultural goals in their teaching.

Önalán (2005) conducted a study on Turkish teachers' perceptions on the place of target cultural information in English language teaching and their related practices in EFL classrooms. The study was carried out at four universities in Ankara, Turkey. A written survey questionnaire and a follow-up interview were used to collect data. The number of participants who took place in the questionnaire was 98 while the number of participants who took place in the interviews was 24. The results of the study showed that teachers had positive attitudes towards the inclusion of target culture in the EFL classrooms. However, the majority of the teachers had the priority give priority to grammar reading and vocabulary teaching in their lessons while they placed culture teaching last in the rank order of importance due to instructional concerns. Furthermore, most of the teachers considered culture as "a sociological

entity" but they did not associate culture with language and communication. They taught more concrete cultural items like clothing, food, and body language, in other words, they taught the facts only, without mentioning "why" and "how".

Karabinar and Güler (2012) investigated the attitudes of language instructors at Turkish universities towards teaching culture. The participants were 155 English language instructors, both native and non-native, from a total of 17 different both state and private universities. The results of the study revealed that most of the instructors had positive attitudes towards the teaching culture in FL classrooms whether they were native or non-native speakers of English or whether they were working at state or private universities. However, the results also showed that instructors could not devote enough time to culture teaching due to the lack of time and the requirements of the syllabi. On the other hand, an important finding of the study was that the instructors who participated in training courses and professional development activities improved their knowledge of teaching culture and had more favorable attitudes towards the integration of culture in the FL classroom.

Another study was done by Tran and Seepho (2014) on perceptions of EFL teachers toward incorporating cultural competence in ELT. The participants were twenty-seven EFL teachers working at a university in Thailand. All the participants were teaching fundamental English at the moment. To collect data, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. First, a questionnaire was answered by all twenty-seven participants and then eight of them participated in semi-structured interviews. The results of the study revealed that the participants agreed that to assist learners' adequate interaction with people from different cultures, it was essential to ensure cultural knowledge, to improve their attitudes, and to support their cultural skills. Although teachers were aware of the significance of incorporating cultural competence in ELT, the time they dedicated to it was not enough due to some knowledge, attitudinal, and skills problems.

Al-Amir (2017) conducted a study on Female Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms. The participants were 25 female language teachers, all non-native, working at the University of Jeddah. The study tried to find out language teachers' perceptions towards culture teaching in EFL classrooms, as well as their perceptions towards the kind of cultural competence that should be stimulated. The results of the study showed that most of the teachers were of one mind that teaching the target culture and teaching the target language itself was equally important and culture and language could be combined in language classes. According to the participants, the integration of culture and language resulted in students becoming more tolerant, more motivated, linguistically more competent, and able to avoid misunderstandings. Finally, the majority of the teachers found it more useful to support a more multicultural competence in their learners.

Yeşil and Demiröz (2017) conducted a qualitative study on English Language Teachers' Perceptions of Culture Teaching. They also investigated whether there was a connection between the instructors' thoughts of culture teaching and students' motivation. Seven participants who were all English Language instructors working at a Turkish state university took place in the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The results of the study showed that the participants agreed that culture was a necessary part of the language. According to the language instructors, target culture should be presented without neglecting the local culture but the main goal of presenting cultural content in FL classes should be to assist learners to build up a global understanding of cultures and the curriculum should be prepared for this purpose. However, most participants felt compelled to deal with grammar and vocabulary rather than cultural elements due to the limited time they had. Finally, the participants agreed that the implication of cultural content in the EFL courses increased learners' motivation of learning that language and contributed to their proficiency level.

Estaji and Rahimi (2018) conducted a study on EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Intercultural Communicative Competence. They tried to find out the effects of some characteristics of the teachers, such as level of instruction, education, and experience, on their perceptions of ICC and the effects of their perceptions on their practices. The participants were 111 non-native Iranian EFL teachers who were teaching at elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced levels at private English language institutes under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. To collect data, a Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to all 111 participants. Then, 12 of the participants took part in semi-structured interviews. The results of the study showed that among all levels of instruction, the participants displayed a high perception of ICC. Besides, there was no prominent effect of teacher's level of education and level of experience on their perception of ICC. However, the results showed that teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence affected their practices of culture teaching considerably in EFL classes. To sum up, the participants had a high perception of Intercultural Communicative Competence. They considered cultural teaching highly important in EFL classes and this perception affected their instructional behaviors.

To conclude, there have been various studies on the perceptions of language teachers on culture teaching in language classrooms around the world. Some of the studies were performed with the participants teaching to different levels at primary schools, secondary schools, or high schools (Estaji & Rahimi, 2018; Sercu et al., 2004). Yet, most of the studies, specifically those in Turkey, were conducted at the university teaching contexts (Karabinar & Güler, 2012; Önalın, 2005; Yeşil & Demiröz, 2017). As was mentioned previously, there is still a need for more studies to find out the perceptions of teachers working at primary, secondary and high school levels on culture teaching since English learning begins at much earlier levels in Turkey as well as in many countries.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter presents the procedure of the study in which data collection and analysis processes are described. Accordingly, the chapter starts with a description of the research design. Then, information on the research context and the participants are explained in detail. Finally, the instruments used for data collection and the procedure followed for the data analyses are presented.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) define mixed methods research as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e. g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (p.23).

This study is also a mixed methods research that both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. A questionnaire was chosen as a result of the field survey, and quantitative data on the participants' perceptions of culture teaching in foreign language lessons were collected through this questionnaire. To analyze the collected quantitative data, SPSS Package Program V. 23 was used. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The questions asked in the interviews were prepared according to the findings obtained from the data collected.

The Research Questions of the study are as follows

1. What are the perceptions of teachers working in state schools at the high school level in Turkey about the element of culture in foreign language classes?

2. What are the perceptions of teachers working in state schools at the high school level in Turkey about the teaching culture in foreign language classes in terms of?:

a. Gender

b. Educational background

c. Active teaching period

d. Experience of being abroad (English speaking countries)

e. Preference for the type of English

3. What the problems encountered while teaching culture in foreign language lessons are.

### **3.2 The Research Context**

This study was conducted throughout Turkey in an attempt to investigate and identify the perceptions of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers working at different High Schools.

The questionnaire and the interviews were applied to the English language teachers working at state high schools in the seven major regions of Turkey. All of the participant teachers worked at schools in which the same curriculum was applied and the same coursebooks used.

### **3.3 Participants**

The participants were a total of 250 EFL teachers, 156 females and 94 males, working in state high schools affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education. All of the participants were selected randomly from 60 different cities and 7 different major regions in Turkey and they all participated voluntarily in the study. The teaching experience of the

participants ranged from 1 year to 28 years. Moreover, 84.8% of participants held bachelor's degrees, 13.6% of them master's degrees, and 1.6% of the participants Ph.D. degrees.

### **3.4 Instruments**

In this study, the data was collected utilizing two different data collection tools; a written survey questionnaire and an interview. A pilot study was performed to test the reliability and normality of the questionnaire before the questionnaire was applied to the participants.

**3.4.1. The Questionnaire.** The questionnaire used to collect data was adapted from Önalın (2005) which was used in his study, "EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Place of Culture in ELT: A Survey Study at Four Universities in Ankara/Turkey". The permission required to use the survey was obtained. The questionnaire contained three parts:

1. Demographic information
2. The English teachers' general perceptions towards culture in English education in the Ministry of Education in Turkey: This part consisted of seven main questions with three sub-questions.
3. Teachers' general perception of teaching culture: This part consisted of 16 Likert Scale items.

To obtain more reliable results, we removed some questions from Part 1 and Part 2A of the questionnaire. Since all the questions in the Part 2B were relevant to the research questions of the study, we kept them all intact. In the first part, we removed only one question, "date of birth", and we kept to the rest of the questions about gender, the institution teachers' teach, educational background, active teaching period, overseas experience and the type of English teachers taught in the first part of the questionnaire.

As was mentioned before, in order to obtain more reliable results, we removed nine of the questions in the Part 2A of the questionnaire, and we kept the questions that were more relevant to the research questions of the study. The questions that were present in Part 2A of the questionnaire are as follows:

1. When you think of culture, which of the following is its most significant aspect in your opinion?
2. What should cultural information in the ELT classroom include?
3. Which stage would you consider most suitable for providing the students with cultural information in ELT?
4. What might be/are the reactions of your students when you provide them with cultural information?
5. Do you tend to avoid cultural content in your teaching?
6. Are there any drawbacks of incorporating cultural information in EFL?
7. Do you experience any difficulties in handling the cultural content of your textbook/texts?

**3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews.** After the application and return of the questionnaire, 10 participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews included questions following the results of the questionnaire. The interviews aimed to obtain more detailed information on High School English Teachers' perceptions of culture and element of culture in the EFL classrooms, the importance of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language, common major difficulties in culture teaching in EFL classrooms, and the factors that affect culture teaching in the EFL classrooms at High Schools.

Krippendorff (1989) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” and describes it as “indigenous to communication research and is potentially one of the most important research techniques.” (p.403). In this respect, content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter includes two main sections regarding the research results; quantitative and qualitative results, which provide detailed accounts of the important findings of this thesis study. The first main section focuses on the quantitative findings of the research results and includes five sub-parts, starting with the participants' demographic information and descriptive statistics analysis. The second part of this section reports the English teachers' general perceptions about culture in English education. The third part gives details as to teachers' general perception of teaching culture. In the fourth part, these teachers' general perceptions of teaching culture are compared in terms of their gender, educational background, teaching and overseas experiences, and their preferences for using American English, British English, or both in their teaching. The fifth and final part of this section demonstrates statistical findings of general problems that English teachers encounter in the course of teaching culture in English language classrooms.

The second main section emphasizes the qualitative findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews as to teachers' general perception of culture and their general perception of teaching culture in English classrooms, their perceptions of the importance of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language, some common major difficulties which English teachers have faced during culture teaching, and other factors that affect culture teaching in EFL classrooms.

#### 4.2. The Results of the Questionnaire

**4.2.1. English teachers' demographic information.** In this section, descriptive statistics and frequency analysis were applied in order to report teachers' demographic information.

The total number of participants included in this thesis study was 250 English teachers working in high schools affiliated with the Ministry of Education in Turkey. Participants' demographic information was presented according to their gender, educational qualifications, teaching and overseas experiences, and their preferences for using American, British, or mixed English in their English classrooms.

Table 1.

*Participants' overall demographic information*

		<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Valid				
	Female	156	62.4	62.4	62.4
	Male	94	37.6	37.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
Qualification	Valid				
	Bachelor's	212	84.8	84.8	84.8
	Master's	34	13.6	13.6	98.4
	Ph.D.	4	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
Teaching Experience	Valid				
	1-5	60	24.0	24.0	24.0
	6-10	67	26.8	26.8	50.8
	11-15	67	26.8	26.8	77.6
	16-20	42	16.8	16.8	94.4
	20+	14	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
Overseas Experience	Valid				
	Yes	57	22.8	22.8	22.8
	No	193	77.2	77.2	100.0

Englishes	Total	250	100.0	100.0	
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	UK	186	74.4	74.4	74.4
	USA	44	17.6	17.6	92.0
	Mixed	20	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

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According to the participants' gender, it is possible to conclude that the study population was predominantly made up of 156 females (62.4%), and 94 (37.6%) males. Concerning the participants' educational qualifications, the frequency statistics demonstrate that the majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (84.8%), the second-highest frequency was those who were master's degree holders (13.6%), and the participants with a Ph.D. degree (1.6%) was the least in number (n=4).

Concerning the participants' teaching experience, it can be seen from Table 1 that 24 percent of the participants had a teaching experience that ranged from one to five, 26.8 percent participants from 6 to 10 years of teaching experience, and the participants with 11 to 15 years of teaching experience also comprised the 26.8 percent of the total participant population of the study. The participants whose teaching experience ranging from 16 to 20 years was 16.8 percent, and the number of participants who had over 20 years of teaching experience was only 5.6 percent.

In addition, participants' overseas experience was also another demographic factor asked in the questionnaire. According to the frequency table (table 1), the majority of participants had no overseas experience (77.2%), and the participants with overseas experience was only 22.8%.



Results illustrated in Table 1 also show which type of English that English teachers preferred to use in their ELT classrooms. According to table 1, there was a substantial preference for using the British English (74.4%) while 17.6% of participants tended to make use of American English; meanwhile, 8% of participants also stated using both British and American English in their ELT classrooms.

To answer the research questions listed in the research question section of this thesis study, the test of reliability and normality was performed. The test of reliability was tested to make sure the data was reliable thus ready to proceed with the relevant statistical analysis. Furthermore, the test of normality was also performed because the result of the test could determine whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests for the analyses.

According to the test of reliability, the retrospective analysis of data collected showed that the thesis data was highly reliable due to the high Cronbach's Alpha (0.805) produced from the test of normality.

Table 2.

*Item-total statistics of teachers' general perception of teaching culture in ELT classrooms.*

<b>Item-Total Statistics</b>				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	41.63	41.608	.294	.801
Q2	44.40	42.995	.137	.808
Q3	44.75	43.828	.055	.811
Q4	42.17	35.096	.645	.773
Q5	41.85	34.354	.686	.769
Q6	42.52	34.965	.665	.771
Q7	42.55	33.758	.761	.762

Q8	44.90	41.954	.349	.799
Q9	44.73	42.408	.273	.802
Q10	42.59	36.885	.658	.776
Q11	42.55	37.012	.532	.784
Q12	44.55	42.666	.288	.802
Q13	43.42	39.184	.282	.808
Q14	44.64	42.543	.194	.806
Q15	44.69	43.073	.177	.806
Q16	42.86	40.680	.217	.810

According to table 2, it is possible to report that there were 16 questionnaire items which also showed the higher reliability in terms of individual questionnaire items.

Moreover, the test of normality was also carried out to determine whether the parametric or non-parametric tests were conducted for further analysis.

Table 3.

*The test of normality of English teachers' general perception of teaching culture*

<b>Case Processing Summary</b>								
	Cases				Shapiro-Wilk Test			
	Valid		Missing		Statistics	Df	Sig.	
	N	Percent	N	Percent				
Perception of Culture	250	100.0%	0	0.0%	0.856	250	0.000	

The test of normality shown in table 3 indicated that the data was not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ). As the data was not normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used for all the statistical analyses. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was used for comparing participants' general perception of teaching culture in ELT classrooms in terms of gender and

overseas experience. Besides, Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to compare participants' general perception of teaching culture in ELT classrooms in terms of their educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, and the type of English (American, British, or both) preferred by the teachers.

**4.2.2. English teachers' general perception of culture in ELT classrooms.** Data regarding the English teachers' general perception of culture in ELT classrooms was obtained through the use of part 2 questions which was comprised of seven main questions with three sub-questions. In the questionnaire used for the study, the first four questions were asked to elicit teachers' general perception of culture in ELT classrooms. The first question asked the participants' perception of culture and what the most significant factor of culture in ELT classrooms was. The question was "When you think of a culture, which of the following is the MOST significant aspect in your opinion?" To analyze the results of this question, a Multiple Responses analysis was conducted because there were 11 options provided to the participants to check.

Table 4.

*The most significant aspect of culture in ELT classrooms.*

<b>Question 1 Frequencies</b>				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Question_1 <sup>a</sup>	The system that is reflected by the media, cinema, music, literature and art of a community.	37	14.8%	14.8%
	The characteristics of home life, family nature and interpersonal relations in a community.	45	18.0%	18.0%
	Culture refers to the customs, traditions and institutions of a country.	106	42.4%	42.4%

Culture entails what people do at work, at home, in their free time and while they entertain themselves.	11	4.4%	4.4%
The background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills that make communication successful.	29	11.6%	11.6%
The conceptual system embodied in the language covering semantic areas such as food and clothes.	22	8.8%	8.8%
Total	250	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4 shows the most important aspects of culture in ELT classrooms according to the ranking of the English Teachers' perceptions. As far as the participants' perceptions are concerned, majority of English teachers (42.4%) stated that culture referred to the customs, traditions and institutions of a country. There were also 45 participants (18%) who believed that culture represented the characteristics of home life, family nature and interpersonal relations in a community. The third aspect stated by participants was that the culture meant the system that was reflected, by the media, cinema, music, literature and art of a community (n=37, 14.8%). There were also some participants (n=29, 11.6%) who stated culture symbolized the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills that made communication successful. There were 22 participants (8.8%) who also indicated that culture incorporated the conceptual system embodied in language which covered semantic areas, for example, food and clothes. The minimum number of English teachers (n=11, 4.4%) stated culture represented what people normally did at work, at home, in their free time and while they entertained themselves.

To summarize, the majority of participants agreed that culture referred to customs, traditions, and institutions of a country; meanwhile, participants also believed culture depicted the characteristics of lives at home, the nature of the family, and interpersonal relations in a community. There were also a few participant English teachers who believed that culture

accounted for the work and home lives and free-time activities. The second question also asked to elicit the English Teachers' perceptions of what cultural information to be included in ELT classrooms. The question was "what cultural information should be included in the ELT classrooms? Please select all the appropriate ones."

Table 5 illustrated the teachers' general perception of what cultural information should be included in ELT classrooms. In the given table, it is possible to see two different percentages; one is about the percentage of culture perception according to the responses, and the other one is the percentage of culture perception according to the number of cases.

Regarding their responses, the larger number of participant English teachers (n= 225, 18.2%, 90%) stated daily lifestyles, food, and clothes of the target culture should be included in ELT classrooms. The surprising result is that 4 factors had the same percentage (13%).

Table 5.

*Perception of what cultural information included in ELT classrooms.*

<b>Question_2 Frequencies</b>				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Question_2 <sup>a</sup>	Regional and general differences in American and British English.	102	8.3%	40.8%
	Customs and traditions in American/British community.	162	13.1%	64.8%
	British/American institutions.	42	3.4%	16.8%
	Daily lifestyle, food and clothes.	225	18.2%	90.0%
	Leisure activities and entertainment styles.	172	13.9%	68.8%

Architecture, literature, music and art.	163	13.2%	65.2%
Communicative aspects like body language and idioms.	170	13.8%	68.0%
Social and historical aspects such as national holidays and national heroes.	116	9.4%	46.4%
Political problems in USA/UK.	39	3.2%	15.6%
Information on religious practices in USA/UK.	39	3.2%	15.6%
Other	4	0.3%	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1234</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>493.6%</b>

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As table 5 illustrates, 13% of participants believed that customs and traditions of American or British community; leisure activities, entertainment styles; architecture, literature, music, and art; communication aspects like body language and idioms were significant cultural elements and should be taught. Some of the participants (n=116, 9.4%) also stated that social and historical aspects such as national holidays and national heroes could be incorporated. Moreover, 8.3% of participants stated that regional and general differences in American and British English might be taught in ELT classrooms. The small number of participants (approximately 3%) expressed that British and American institutions; political problems in USA/UK; and information on religious practices in USA/UK might be taught. Furthermore, less than 1% of participants also told “other” factors could be included as part of learning materials in ELT classrooms.

The third question also aimed to elicit English Teachers' perceptions of culture in ELT classrooms. The question asked the English teachers' opinions about the appropriate proficiency level to provide students with cultural information in ELT. The third question was "which proficiency level would you consider MOST suitable for providing the students with cultural information in ELT? Choose only one."

Table 6.

*The students' appropriate proficiency level for providing with cultural information.*

		Question_3 Frequencies			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Elementary	44	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Pre-intermediate	53	21.2	21.2	38.8
	Intermediate	69	27.6	27.6	66.4
	Upper-intermediate	15	6.0	6.0	72.4
	Advanced	5	2.0	2.0	74.4
	Does not matter	64	25.6	25.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 illustrates the frequency of the student's proficiency level preferred by teachers to implement cultural information in ELT classrooms. According to table 7, it is possible to state that intermediate proficiency level of the students (n=69, 27.6%) was the appropriate level of proficiency for the English teachers' clear preference to incorporate cultural information in ELT classrooms. Surprisingly, similar percentage of English teachers (n=64, 26.6%) also stated that proficiency did not matter as far as teaching culture was concerned in the ELT context. Pre-intermediate proficiency level was also suggested by

21.2% of English language teachers (n=53) as the appropriate level of proficiency to start to teach culture. Moreover, some participant English teachers (n=44, 17.6%) indicated that an elementary level of proficiency was also suitable for including cultural content in their teaching. Based on the data analysis, it was revealed that upper-intermediate proficiency (n=15, 6%) and advanced proficiency (n=5, 2%) were also the least preferred levels by English teachers to incorporate cultural knowledge in the ELT context.

In conclusion, intermediate and pre-intermediate were the students' most preferred proficiency levels to incorporate cultural content in English language teaching. The second-highest frequency with slightly over 25 percent was the English teachers who stated that proficiency level did not matter in incorporating the cultural content in teaching English. Besides, some English teachers preferred the other proficiency levels to include the cultural context in their ELT classrooms.

The next question inquired about participants' opinions on their students' reactions when cultural information was integrated into English teaching. The fourth question was "what the reactions of your students are/might be when you provide them with cultural information?".

When we look at table 7, it is possible to state that almost 35% of English teachers believed that based on their students' reactions, they were interested in the cultural information, followed by 33.8% of English teachers who indicated that their students would be analytical when the cultural content was included in their ELT classrooms. It is very interesting to note that 15% of participant teachers suggested that their students would reject the integrated cultural content. The table also shows that almost 7% of participants also suggested that their students might react as skeptical or may show no reaction at all. Besides, almost 2% of participants also expressed other reactions.



Table 7.

*English Teachers' perceptions on their students' reactions to cultural integration in ELT*

		Question_5 Frequencies		
		N	Responses Percent	Percent of Cases
Question_5 <sup>a</sup>	Interested	164	34.6%	66.7%
	Analytical	160	33.8%	65.0%
	Skeptical	37	7.8%	15.0%
	Rejected	71	15.0%	28.9%
	No reactions at all	33	7.0%	13.4%
	Other	9	1.9%	3.7%
Total		474	100.0%	192.7%

**4.2.3. English Teachers' general perception of teaching culture in ELT classrooms.** In the last final part of the questionnaire, the ELT teachers were asked 16 questions related to their perceptions of teaching culture in the ELT classrooms, and these participants were asked to rate the statement according to their agreement to the statements which required the participants to rate from 1 to 5; 1 meant strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree (Likert 5 scale). The statements were written randomly to eliminate the fixed responses to the statements; therefore, eight statements (statement 1, 4, 6,7,10,11,13,16) in the part 3 of the questionnaire had the positive direction whereas the other 8 statements (2,3,5,7,8,12,14,15) were directed negatively. High school teachers' general perception of teaching culture in the ELT classrooms was presented in table 9 below; all the mean scores and level of agreement were given to understand how the high school teachers perceived the culture teaching in their ELT classrooms.

Table 8.

*The high school ELT teachers' general perceptions of teaching culture in their ELT classrooms.*

Scale Items	N	Mean	St. D	Level of Agreement
1.ELT teachers should have culture teaching objectives in addition to linguistic goals.	250	4.69	0.638	Strong
2. Students themselves are responsible for the learning of cultural information.	250	4.35	0.600	Strong
3. Learning a foreign culture harms the native culture.	250	5.00	0.000	Strong
4.My students enjoy learning about British/American culture.	250	4.15	1.072	Strong
5.ELT teachers should focus only on the teaching of language, not culture.	250	4.47	1.102	Strong
6.Cultural content is an element of the foreign language teaching curriculum.	250	3.80	1.060	Strong
7.In order to learn a foreign language effectively, learners should improve their cultural knowledge.	250	3.77	1.076	Strong
8.ELT syllabi should exclude English/American culture.	250	5.00	0.000	Strong
9.Including cultural information in ELT will result in students' alienation from their native culture.	250	4.98	0.001	Strong
10.Teaching cultural components explicitly fosters the learners' proficiency in the language.	250	3.73	0.854	Strong
11.ELT teachers should be well equipped with cultural patterns of the language they teach.	250	3.77	0.994	Strong
12.English can be taught without reference to British/American culture.	250	5.00	0.000	Strong
13.Learning the cultural elements of the target language should be a must for the learners.	250	2.90	1.127	Moderate
14.My students find it unnecessary to learn the British/American culture.	250	4.64	0.604	Strong
15.I feel uncomfortable when a question on foreign language culture is asked in the classroom.	250	5.00	0.000	Strong
16. Teaching about British/American history helps learners improve their language skills.	250	3.46	0.998	Moderate
Total	250	4.29	0.632	Strong

Results illustrated in Table 8 show the high school teachers' general perception of teaching culture in the ELT classrooms. According to the table 9 above, the mean score of each statement indicated high school English teachers' high level of agreement towards teaching culture. When taking 16 questionnaire items into account, the data in table 9 shows that teachers obtained a high level of agreement to teaching culture in their ELT classrooms. Moreover, fourteen statements of teaching culture in the ELT classrooms received a strong level of agreement among the total of 16 items according to the participants' perceptions towards teaching culture. However, two items produced a moderate level of agreement on the topic in question.

As for taking the questionnaire items (8) which had a positive direction, it is possible to conclude that most of the questionnaire items (6) showed a high degree of agreement; however, other two statements showed a moderate level of agreement towards teaching culture in the ELT classrooms. For example, the questionnaire item 1, which had a positive direction, produced a rather high score ( $M=4.96$ ) that expressed the high school ELT teachers' higher level of agreement. In other words, a larger of participants believed that ELT teachers could have culture teaching objectives in addition to linguistic goals.

With regards to the ELT teachers' moderate level of agreement towards teaching culture, teachers considered that it might not be a must for the learners to know the cultural elements of the target language ( $M=2.90$ ). Therefore, the data showed that teachers had a moderate level of agreement as to whether learning a target culture was a must for learners. Moreover, high school ELT teachers might not have the opinion of that teaching about British/American culture might help their learners improve their language skills ( $M=3.46$ ).

With regard to the questionnaire items which had the negative directions (Statements 2,3,5,7,8,12,14,15), it is possible to conclude based on table 9 that high school ELT teachers also showed a strong agreement towards teaching culture in the ELT classrooms. For instance,

teachers hardly ever believed that students themselves were responsible for the learning of cultural information. Moreover, the high school ELT teachers thought that they hardly felt uncomfortable when a question on foreign language culture was asked in the classrooms.

Overall, the data results on table 8 showed that high school Teachers' perception of teaching culture was considerably high while there were only two items which showed moderate level of agreement towards teaching culture in their ELT classrooms.

**4.2.4. English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in term of their gender, educational level, teaching experience, overseas experience and English used in their English lessons.** In this study, high school English teachers' general perception of teaching culture was also analyzed in terms of their gender, educational background, teaching experience, overseas experience, and the English they used in their English classrooms. The collected data in this study showed non-normal distribution; therefore, Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to compare high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture concerning their gender and overseas experience while Kruskal-Wallis T-tests were applied to compare the statistical difference between their perception of teaching culture regarding their educational level, teaching experience and the English used in their English classrooms. The findings are presented in the tables below.

Table 9.

*High school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture by gender.*

		<b>Ranks</b>			
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	P
Perception of Teaching Culture	Female	156	132.18	20619.50	6290.500
	Male	94	114.42	10755.50	
	Total	250			

Table 9 above demonstrates the high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in terms of their gender. According to table 10, it is possible to conclude that female participants produced a considerably higher mean score than the male participants ( $m=132.18$ ,  $M=114.42$ ). Moreover, the high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture was found statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between female and male high school Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture.

Concerning high school English Teachers' perceptions towards teaching culture in terms of overseas experiences, again, the Mann-whiney U test was performed.

Table 10.

*The high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture by overseas experience.*

	<b>Ranks</b>				p
	Overseas Experiences	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
Perception of Teaching Culture	Yes	57	123.95	7065.00	5412.000
	No	193	125.96	24310.00	
	Total	250			

Table 10 illustrates the teachers' general perception of teaching culture regarding their overseas experience. According to table 11, the teachers without overseas experience were twice as much as the teachers with overseas experience. According to the table 11, teachers who had overseas experience showed a slightly lower mean score than those with no overseas experience ( $M=123.95$ ,  $M=125.96$ ).

However, the Mann-Whitney u test found no statistical difference between the teachers with overseas experience and those who did not have any overseas experience ( $p >$

0.05). The study also compared the high school English teachers' teaching culture in terms of their educational qualification. Kruskal-Wallis Test was performed in order to find out if there was any statistical difference between the teachers who had different educational backgrounds.

Table 11.

*The high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture by educational qualifications*

		<b>Ranks</b>		
	Qualification	N	Mean Rank	P
Perception of Teaching Culture	Bachelor	212	125.84	0.737
	Master	34	126.65	
	Ph.D.	4	97.63	
	Total	250		

Table 11 reveals the high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture according to their educational background. As far as table 12 is concerned, 212 participants had bachelor's degrees, 34 participants' master's degrees, and 4 participants doctorate degrees. According to table 12, that teachers with master's degrees (M=126.65) showed a slightly higher mean score than the other participants', and a lower mean score was found among teachers with a doctorate degree (M=97.63).

According to the mean score that emerged, high school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). We also asked the high school English teachers' teaching experiences to be compared to see whether there was any statistically significant difference concerning their perception of teaching culture in their

English lessons. Kruskal-Wallis T-test was performed to compare Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in terms of their teaching experiences.

Table 12.

*High school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture by teaching experience*

	Teaching Experience	Ranks		Test Statistics	
		N	Mean Rank		
Perception of Teaching Culture	1-5	60	147.16	Chi-Square	11.260
	6-10	67	119.40	df	5
	11-15	67	121.66		
	16-20	42	125.05		
	20+	14	81.64		
	Total	250		Asymp. Sig.	0.024

Table 12 shows the high school English teachers' general perception of teaching culture according to their teaching experience. According to table 13, it is possible to conclude that teachers who had between 1 and 5 years of teaching experience had a higher mean score than the other groups. The Kruskal-Wallis T-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between groups with different years of teaching experiences ( $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, it is possible to report based on the data on table 13 that teachers who had from 1 to 5 years of teaching experience had a strong perception of teaching culture in their English lessons, and teachers with more years of teaching experience had a moderate or lower level of perception towards teaching culture in their English lessons.

Another variable that was considered in this study was teachers' preferences whether to use American or British English in their English lessons. Kruskal-Wallis T-test was used to

compare if there was a statistically significant difference between the teachers who had a preference for using American English, British English, or both in their English Lessons.

Table 13.

*High school English Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture by using different Englishes*

		Ranks		Test Statistics	
English		N	Mean Rank		
Perception of Teaching Culture	UK	186	127.64	Chi-Square	0.853
	USA	44	122.09	df	2
	Mixed	20	113.10		
	Total	250		Asymp. Sig.	0.653

Table 13 shows the comparison between teachers' general perception in terms of their preference for using American, British, or mixed Englishes. According to table 14, it can be concluded that there were 186 participants who used British English in their classrooms (M=127.64) whereas only 44 participants reported that they preferred American English in their English lessons (M=122.09). Moreover, 20 participants expressed that they used mixed English in their English lessons (M=113.10). The Kruskal-Wallis Test statistics showed no statistically significant differences between the groups in terms of their preferences for using a variety of Englishes in their English lessons.

**4.2.5. The problems English teachers encountered in the course of teaching culture.** In this part, there were three questions from part 2 of the questionnaire. Questions 5, 6 and 7 were asked to find out what problems high school teachers experienced in teaching cultural content in their English lessons. The frequency of the given responses was analyzed by using multiple responses analysis.



The question 5 consisted of 2 sub-questions. First of all, high school English teachers were asked whether they avoided teaching cultural content in their English lessons. Second of all, if it was the case, the reasons behind this avoidance were enquired about in an attempt to have in-depth understanding of the root of the problem. While 214 participants (85.6%) reported that they did not avoid teaching culture, 36 participants (14.4%) stated that they did.

Table 14.

*Teachers' reasons why they avoid teaching culture in their English lessons.*

		<b>Responses</b>		
		<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent of Cases</b>
Problems <sup>a</sup>	There is not enough time.	25	<b>45.5%</b>	64.1%
	The occupational field of my students (information technologies, hairdressing, etc.) does not require it.	3	5.5%	7.7%
	My institutional policy does not incorporate cultural content in the curriculum.	5	9.1%	12.8%
	I do not find it necessary for my students	7	<b>12.7%</b>	17.9%
	I myself do not have sufficient cultural information.	15	<b>27.3%</b>	38.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>141.0%</b>

Table 14 demonstrates the information related to the high school teachers' problems they encountered related to teaching culture in their English lessons. According to table 16, it is possible to conclude that almost 46% of teachers believed that they did not have sufficient time for delivering cultural information in their English lessons. In addition, 27.3% of participants also stated that they themselves did not have enough cultural information to

teach. It is also very interesting to note that approximately 13% of high school English teachers reported they did not believe that cultural information was necessary for their students. Moreover, almost 9% of the teacher participants stated that their institutional policy did not incorporate cultural content in their curriculum. There were also some teachers who stated that the fields of their students, who attended vocational High Schools, were irrelevant for the cultural information (information technologies, hairdressing, etc.). Therefore, the major problems that high school English teachers encountered were the teachers' insufficient knowledge, lack of time, whether cultural knowledge was irrelevant for the students' occupational fields and institutional policy, and other reasons.

In part 2 of the questionnaire, question 6 was asked to elicit high school English teachers' opinions as to whether incorporating cultural information had any disadvantages in their English lessons. Question 8 was "What drawbacks are there to incorporate cultural information in ELT?".

According to the statistical results of table 16, there were 36 participants (14.4 %) who believed that there were drawbacks to include cultural information in English lessons whereas 214 participants (85.6%) stated that there were no disadvantages to incorporate cultural information in ELT. When the participants were asked about the drawbacks, they stated that incorporating too much cultural information in ELT was likely to cause a boring atmosphere in ELT classrooms (26.5%). In addition, approximately 21% of participants believed that including cultural information would lead the students to alienate their own culture (20.6%). Nevertheless, while 16.2% of the participants believed that teaching cultural information to students may cause over-sympathy to the UK and the US culture, 19.1% of them believed that teaching culture would cause cultural assimilation among students. Moreover, almost 15% of the participants believed that teaching cultural knowledge to the students may lead to

linguistic and cultural imperialism, whereas almost 3% of the participants stated the other reasons for not including the cultural information in their ELT classrooms.

Table 15.

*Teachers' perceptions on the drawbacks of incorporating cultural information in ELT.*

		QUEESTION6 Frequencies		
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
QUEESTION6 <sup>a</sup>	Cultural Alienation of one's own	14	<b>20.6%</b>	32.6%
	Over-sympathy to the US/UK culture.	11	<b>16.2%</b>	25.6%
	Linguistic and cultural imperialism.	10	<b>14.7%</b>	23.3%
	Cultural assimilation.	13	<b>19.1%</b>	30.2%
	Inclusion of excessive cultural information creates a boring atmosphere.	18	<b>26.5%</b>	41.9%
	Other	2	2.9%	4.7%
Total		68	100.0%	158.1%

Table 15 illustrates the high school English teachers' difficulties in handling the cultural contents in their textbooks. Question 10 also consisted of 2 sub-questions; the first questions was "Do you experience any difficulties in handling the cultural content of your textbooks/text?" and the second sub-question of question 10 was "what kind of difficulties do you experience in handling the cultural content of your textbooks/text?" First of all, with respond to the first sub-question of question 10, 126 participants stated that they experienced difficulties (50.4%) whereas 124 participants stated that they had no difficulties in handling cultural contents of their textbooks (49.6%).

Regarding the high school English teachers who encountered difficulties when handling the cultural content of their textbooks, the table 17 below demonstrates the challenges that teachers experienced.

Table 16.

*The difficulties teachers experienced when handing the cultural contents of the textbooks.*

		QUESTION7 Frequencies		
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
QUESTION7 <sup>a</sup>	I find it hard to clarify some aspects of US/UK culture	56	<b>22.5%</b>	44.1%
	My coursebook does not provide any assistance.	71	<b>28.5%</b>	55.9%
	My knowledge on US/UK culture falls short.	28	<b>11.2%</b>	22.0%
	There is too much emphasis on US/UK culture.	8	3.2%	6.3%
	I usually have to supply my own supplementary material	38	<b>15.3%</b>	29.9%
	It is difficult to raise the interest/motivation of the students.	46	<b>18.5%</b>	36.2%
	Other	2	0.8%	1.6%
Total		249	100.0%	196.1%

Table 16 shows the difficulties teachers experienced when handing the cultural contents of the textbooks. It can be clearly seen from the table that 28.5% of the participants stated their coursebook provided almost no assistance at all; 22.5% of the participants believed they found it hard to distinguish some aspects of British and American culture. While 18.5% of participant teachers stated that raising students' interest and motivation could be difficult for them, 15.3% of the participant reported that they had to provide or supply their own supplementary materials. 11.2% participants also believed that their knowledge of

US/UK cultural was insufficient; a small percentage of teachers also stated that there was too much emphasis on the US/UK culture (3.2%).

Thus, the potential problems that teachers might encounter when handling the cultural content of their textbooks were their insufficient knowledge, difficulties in motivating students, insufficient cultural content in the textbooks, and being helpless in the process of delivering cultural content to the students.

### **4.3. The Results of the Interviews**

**4.3.1. High School English Teachers' perceptions of culture and culture in the EFL classrooms.** First of all, we asked the participants to define culture from a general point of view. Most of the participants' definitions (60%) gathered around the elements such as "values, beliefs, lifestyles, customs, and traditions that a group of people shares". On the other hand, pieces of art, literature, and music were some other elements mentioned by the participants. From this point of view, the participants included both the elements of visible and invisible culture. Some of the participants defined culture as in the following:

**Teacher 1** "Culture is all common values, traditions and customs and all practices that can be perceived as a lifestyle."

Then the participants were asked what kind of culture they taught in the language classrooms. Participants' responses were examined in terms of teaching the target culture, source culture, or international culture. 5 (90%) of the participants stated that they included the contents of the target culture in their teaching but they also emphasized that international culture should be the main focus in English lessons. It is possible to say that there are 3 main reasons why participants generally included international culture in their lessons: (1) Teachers want to promote tolerance and respect to other cultures (2) Teachers want to prepare students

for future encounters with other nonnative speakers of English. (3) The textbooks often focus on international culture. Some of the participants said the following:

**Teacher 4** "I prefer to teach international culture because my students need to learn about as many different cultures as possible. They will not only meet English or Americans in the future. Maybe they will have to speak to a Japanese or an Indian. Who knows?"

On the other hand, 4 (40%) of the participants stated that they usually presented the target culture, the source culture, and the international culture together while only 1 (20%) of the participants stated that the main focus should be on the target culture. One of the participants stated the following:

**Teacher 2** "I present British/American culture, other cultures, and Turkish culture all together. I usually make comparisons between the other cultures and local cultures. When I focus on the target culture solely, my students start to have negative attitudes towards English lessons. They don't have enough tolerance towards differences since they come from small villages and they have never met anybody different before. That is why I compare the target culture with the local culture. I explain the similarities and the differences between cultures because I want to help my students to accept the differences of people from other cultures. I want them to be more tolerant individuals."

We also investigated what cultural items the participant teachers presented in their courses. All (100%) of the participants presented cultural elements that could be considered as visible. These elements included food and drinks, clothes, lifestyles, daily routines, manners, customs and traditions, special occasions, national holidays, music, songs, games, dances, movies, national heroes, and historical events. On the other hand, 5 (50%) of the participants stated that they presented the elements referred to as invisible culture as well as the elements referred to as visible culture. These elements included social structures, social values, familial

relations, attitudes, gestures, and body language. Among the items presented, "food and drinks" had the highest score with a rate of 60%; "lifestyles and daily routines" had the second-highest score with a rate of 50%, and "Special occasions and national holidays" had the third-highest score with a rate of 40%. To conclude, half of the participants preferred to teach only the visible culture elements while the other half preferred to teach both the visible culture and the invisible culture elements in their language classrooms.

Furthermore, the responses showed that teachers had different ideas about students' appropriate proficiency level to teach culture in their English lessons. 3 (30%) of the participants stated that students' appropriate proficiency level to teach culture was "elementary". They emphasized that culture learning should start at early proficiency levels because learners should get acquainted with the cultural elements as soon as their foreign language learning began. They asserted that the early proficiency levels were the most appropriate stages to make the students love to learn the (about) other cultures. Otherwise, it might be more difficult to develop a positive attitude towards learning culture. The following response shows a participants' view on this issue:

**Teacher 6** "Culture teaching should start at early proficiency levels, like elementary. The earlier the culture teaching begins, the more positive perspectives/attitudes students develop towards learning culture. If culture teaching is left to the next proficiency level, it may be too late to make students want to learn the culture. It becomes harder to help them to break their prejudices when they grow older."

On the other hand, 5 (50%) of the participant stated that "pre-intermediate" and "intermediate" levels were the most appropriate levels for culture teaching. All five participants gave similar reasons for their choices and they asserted that learners needed to have reached a certain level of linguistic knowledge and gain some language skills to

understand the cultural information provided. The participants' views are demonstrated in the following responses:

**Teacher 3** "I think learners should be at least at the pre-intermediate level to learn culture. First, learners should improve their four main skills and linguistic knowledge. Then cultural information can be presented."

Finally, 2 (20%) of the participants stated that there was no specific proficiency level to teach culture, and "no level" can be considered as "the most appropriate". They emphasized that teaching culture could be offered at any level of proficiency. What matters is not the proficiency level of the students, but their needs. One of the participants stated the following:

**Teacher 9** "Teaching a language includes both verbal production and the context. Of course, at advanced levels, the transfer of cultural elements can be more intensive. However, even the patterns of meeting somebody, which is the first function of a language like "hello" or "nice to meet you", has cultural points. For this reason, I don't think that there is a certain level for culture teaching. Cultural content can be presented whenever it is needed."

**4.3.2. The importance of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language.** The results of the interviews revealed that all participants (100%) agreed that culture was significantly important in learning/teaching foreign language/English. They pointed out that the culture of a society greatly influenced not only the way they lived and the way thought but also the way they spoke as well. The language people speak is a product of their culture. If a person wants to speak the English language effectively, s/he should also know how English-speaking societies think and live. One of the participants said that:

**Teacher 10** "Language is a way of communication which has been formed by society. Words are not only used to refer to objects but also to express abstract concepts such as thoughts, beliefs, emotions, or desires. Therefore, a similar way of cognition is needed to interact



effectively with the people from the target culture. Knowing about the target culture serves this purpose."

Moreover, participants stated that learners should know about the international culture due to the role of English in international communication (English as Lingua Franca). In other words, learning about other cultures contributes to learners' development of communication skills since English as Lingua Franca is spoken all over the world. They stated that learners were likely to communicate with people from other cultures/communities. One of the participants stated that:

**Teacher 5** "I think students should have basic knowledge about as many cultures as possible. Knowing about other cultures will widen their worldviews. This way, they will have the motivation to learn a language and it will be easier to contact with other people all around the world."

Furthermore, participant teachers consider culture teaching as a very important and integral part of language teaching. In line with this view, they all reflected language and culture as two inseparable parts of a whole: 9 (90%) of the participant teachers stated that culture teaching was as important as teaching linguistic aspects of a language while 1(10%) of the participants asserts that it was even more important than the linguistic aspects. They indicated that the presentation of cultural elements both contributed to a better understanding of linguistic aspects and increased students' motivation. Therefore, all of the participant teachers included cultural elements in their language teaching. One of the participants explained the importance of teaching culture as follows:

**Teacher 2** "As I mentioned before, the culture and the language are not two separate matters. Culture is a general term that includes different elements of a society. Music, cuisine, and traditions are some of these elements. Learning about the elements of a culture makes the

students more competent in that language and makes their linguistics productions more natural. Besides, to be able to communicate appropriately, one needs to know the gestures, body language, and unwritten social rules of the people whose language they speak. Therefore, English teachers should create a rich environment in terms of the culture of the target society so that the language functions as it should. That is what I try to accomplish in my lessons."

However, not all of the participant teachers focused on the cultural elements as much as they focused on grammar, vocabulary, and four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Although they thought that teaching culture was of great importance, they focused more on linguistic aspects for various reasons. 4 (40%) of the participants stated that they could not spend equal time on culture teaching and grammar teaching. According to them, one of the reasons for not spending enough time on culture teaching was due to the national education policy. Another reason was that some teachers did not feel well-equipped in culture teaching. Some participants stated that:

**Teacher 1** "It is very important to integrate culture within the whole language education. Yet I focus on grammar most of the time and I teach culture as far as the curriculum allows me to do so. Besides, I mention the cultural elements as far as I know. To tell the truth, I don't feel confident enough while teaching culture."

**Teacher 7** "I think teaching culture is just as important as teaching grammar and vocabulary. However, I mainly concentrate on grammar. When we look at the language education policy in our country, we see that teaching grammar and vocabulary or four skills are what is required of us. Still, I consider culture as an important part of the language and I try to mention the details of all kinds of culture as long as I can spare time for it."

**4.3.3. Common major difficulties of teaching culture in EFL classrooms.** Not surprisingly, all of the participants mentioned that they had problems one way or another while teaching culture. Most of them referred to at least one problem and some referred to more than one. However, the most mentioned problem by the participants was the negative attitudes of the students towards the target culture and other cultures. 7 (70%) of the participants reported that they had difficulties while teaching culture mostly related to students' negative thoughts and feelings towards the cultures other than their own. We can understand from the responses that students may sometimes be biased against people from other cultures. Therefore, they may have some troubles with accepting the differences between people from different cultures. Unfortunately, teachers may not always be able to deal with these kinds of negative attitudes and behaviors of their students. They may feel "uncomfortable" or "disturbed" by these negative reactions. One of the participants expressed her complaint as follows:

**Teacher 10** "When I present cultural information related to the target culture or any other culture, the first thing my students do is to compare them with the Turkish culture. Comparison is fine, but some students assume that their own culture is better than all other cultures. They tend to see other cultures as something inferior and they mostly make fun of the cultural content I present. These negative attitudes and behaviors disturb me and I don't know how to handle them."

The second problem expressed by the participants was the shortage of materials and equipment. 3 (30%) of the participants stated that there were not enough materials provided so they had to bring their own materials to present the cultural content. Some participant teachers mentioned that they also had some problems due to technical issues while teaching culture. One of the participants expressed her problems as follows:

**Teacher 6** "I like to teach culture but I always have to prepare and bring my own materials to the classroom which is very exhausting and time-consuming. There are cultural elements in the textbooks but they are not enough for me and my students. The pictures of cultural items in the textbooks are not always adequate. We need realia and more authentic materials. Besides, the frequent malfunctioning of the smart boards or the lack of internet makes it even harder to present cultural content. For example, I want to use videos to present cultural content, but this is not always possible due to the technical problems."

Another problem mentioned by the participants was the lack of time for teaching culture. 3 (30%) of the participants stated that they did not have sufficient time to teach culture even if they wanted to. Therefore, they had worries about their students not being exposed to different cultures as much as they needed to. One of the participants said that:

**Teacher 8** "Another problem is lack of time. We have only four hours per week to teach all the aspects of a new language. In vocational and technical high schools, the teachers have even fewer teaching hours. We try to teach grammar, four skills, vocabulary, and culture in a very limited time. In my opinion, watching a film or reading a book in English and talking about them would be very helpful for students to learn the target culture but as you know we don't have time for those."

The last problem mentioned by the participants was the teachers' lack of cultural knowledge. 2 (20%) of the participants stated that they had some troubles while teaching culture since they did not feel they had enough cultural knowledge. One of the participants stated that:

**Teacher 9** "While teaching culture, I have some problems due to the lack of my cultural knowledge. I feel that I need to know the culture of the language I'm teaching but I don't believe I do.... Well, this thought usually discourages me."

#### **4.3.4. The factors that affect culture teaching in the EFL classrooms at high schools.**

We asked the participants what their opinions were about some factors that might affect culture teaching in foreign language classrooms. First of all, the participants were asked whether teachers' overseas experience contributed to their culture teaching in English lessons. 9 (90%) of the participants agreed that language teachers' overseas experience contributed greatly to their teaching culture. What is interesting here is only 2 of the participants had overseas experience, and yet a majority of the participants emphasized the importance of experiencing other cultures for a better culture teaching. They indicated that it would be quite beneficial for language teachers to spend a certain period of time abroad and be exposed to the target culture or other cultures if they wanted to teach culture effectively. The general opinion of the participant teachers was that teachers could have the chance to make cultural and social observations and gain real-life experiences of what they taught in language classes through this overseas experience. One of the participants expressed how his personal overseas experience contributed to his culture teaching in the classroom as follows:

**Teacher 3** "I had the chance to live in Germany for a couple of years and visited few more countries while I was there. I am sure that my experiences contributed to my cultural knowledge and teaching the culture methods."

Another participant said the following:

**Teacher 4** "Overseas experience is what contributes to culture teaching the most. A teacher who shares his/her own experiences would be more productive and more convincing than a teacher who theoretically says "The British do this and Americans do that". Unfortunately, I haven't had the chance to have an overseas experience yet but I definitely want to visit England someday. You know, an English teacher should see that red phone booth and get on that two-decker red bus."

It is interesting to note here that only 1(10%) participant stated that overseas experience was not always necessary for teachers to improve themselves in culture teaching. She asserted that she did not need to travel abroad to learn about other cultures since the developments in technology made it possible to learn more about other cultures easily. The participant said the following:

**Teacher 5** "I have never traveled abroad. Yet, in this century we have the internet as an amazing source of information and social media for various interactions. We can always find information about any culture by searching for them on the internet in seconds. We can communicate with native speakers on social media. Besides, we can watch films and documentaries about any culture. Therefore, I don't think it is necessary to travel abroad to teach culture better."

We also asked the participants whether teachers' teaching experiences contributed to their culture teaching. 7 (70%) of the participants stated that teaching experience did not make a definite contribution to culture-teaching in English lessons. The participants mentioned another feature of a language teacher which they considered more effective in teaching culture than teaching experience; personal interest in other cultures and teaching culture. The general opinion was that the cultural development of a teacher was not achieved thanks to many years of teaching but was accomplished through searching, watching, reading about other cultures, and traveling to other countries. One of the participants said that:

**Teacher 3** "I don't think the teaching experience will make a direct contribution to culture teaching. Teachers' perspective on teaching culture and their ability to transfer the cultural information to the students is mostly related to their interest, how much they read and how much they travel."

On the other hand, 3 (30%) of the participants indicated that their teaching experiences contributed to their culture teaching. The following response shows how one of the participant teachers connects her cultural development to her teaching experience:

**Teacher 2** "I have been teaching English for fifteen years and I can say that I have gained much more cultural knowledge through these years. I have learned much about the target culture and many other cultures while teaching English. I am better equipped in terms of culture compared to my first years in this profession."

In addition to these, we asked the participants whether any other factors affected culture teaching in the EFL classrooms. The responses of 6 (60%) of the participant teachers revealed that the most essential element for an efficient culture teaching was the cultural competence of the teacher. They asserted that language teachers should be adequately equipped in the target culture and have a certain amount of knowledge of other cultures. They should also know how to transfer cultural knowledge to their students for effective teaching of culture. However, not every English teacher was well-equipped and knew how to teach culture. Participant teachers had three suggestions on how teachers could become more equipped in culture teaching: 1. There should be some compulsory or elective courses on teaching culture in teacher training programs. 2. In-service training programs on culture teaching should be provided to teachers. 3. Teachers should be supported by the Turkish Ministry of National Education for overseas travel and experience. Some participants stated that:

**Teacher 5** "Unfortunately at teacher training programs we, I mean the English (EFL) teachers, learn how to teach grammar or how to handle with four skills, but we don't learn enough about target culture or how to teach it. We don't get the chance to have in-service training about culture teaching, either. I think I am well-equipped with English and American cultures but this may not be the case for every English teacher. My cultural competence is the

result of my own efforts. If we want to make culture teaching better, teachers should be trained on culture teaching. Therefore, at universities, selective courses of teaching culture would be useful and fun as well for interested teacher candidates."

**Teacher 4** "In-service teacher training programs or internships abroad would be very useful for language teachers. The necessary arrangements can be made by the Ministry of National Education and more language teachers would have the chance to experience occupational and cultural mobility."

Furthermore, 3 (30%) of the participants stated that there should be a change in the curriculum and the education policy. They pointed out that there were no clear goals for culture teaching in the current curriculum and the curriculum focuses more on linguistic aspects and four skills. There are cultural elements in the books that are published in Turkey and used in the state high schools, but these are not enough neither in terms of quantity nor in terms of presentation of target language cultural elements. Furthermore, these textbooks do not always meet the needs of students and do not always contain items of interest to the students. The need for a change in the curriculum and the language education policy was pointed out by a participant as follows:

**Teacher 6** "I think there should be some changes in both the curriculum and the education policy. When preparing English books, the best schools are generally taken as models. But regional differences and the needs and interests of the students must be considered, too. Different books should be published for students considering the regional differences, their needs and interests and the types of the schools."

We can understand from the teachers' responses that the education policy also affects the students' perspectives on language learning. Participants stated that some of the students thought that language learning was just learning the equivalent of words and grammar



structures in another language and they did not need to learn about culture to become more proficient in the language they learnt. One of the participants said that:

**Teacher 10** "Students should be made aware of the fact that culture is an important part of a language. Some students think that they only need to learn the meanings of words and some rules to learn a language due to the education policy. They are not aware that the more natural they sound in the foreign language and the more acceptable they behave in a foreign society when they learn about the target language culture, the more satisfied they will feel."

Finally, 3 (30%) of the participants stated that weekly hours of English lessons were an important factor in culture teaching and should be increased to make culture teaching more effective. The participant indicated that there were many efficient methods to teach culture but language teachers did not have enough time to apply them.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Starting with the introduction, this chapter consisted of two sections: In the first section consisting of 5 parts, the results of quantitative data were revealed. In the first part of this section, demographic information of the high school English teachers was provided along with reliability and the test of normality. The second part of this chapter demonstrated the high school English teachers' general perception of culture. The third part of this chapter illustrated the high school English teachers' general perception of teaching culture and in the fourth part, teachers' perception of teaching culture was demonstrated in term of gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, overseas experience, and their preferences for American English, British English or both in their English lessons. Finally, this chapter ended with the section on the problems encountered by the teachers in teaching culture in their English classrooms.

Then, in the second chapter consisting of 4 parts, the results of qualitative data were revealed. The first part demonstrated High School English Teachers' perceptions of "culture" and "culture in the EFL classrooms". The second part illustrated their opinions in terms of the importance of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language. The third part displayed the major difficulties they faced in culture teaching in EFL classrooms. The fourth part illustrated their opinions of the factors that affected culture teaching in the EFL classrooms at High Schools. The next and last chapter presents a discussion with regard to the results of the current chapter along with the previous findings in the relevant literature.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

This study aimed to explore English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom. In order to achieve this goal, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were applied. First, a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on the perceptions of the participants towards culture and culture teaching in foreign language classrooms. Then, semi-structured interviews were held with the volunteers, which were prepared according to the findings obtained from the collected data. The analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews revealed English teachers' perceptions of culture and culture teaching in the EFL classroom and the problems they faced during culture teaching, and other factors that affected culture teaching.

Considering the relation between language and culture, whether language teaching include cultural information should be discussed first. Salim (2017) suggests that we must start by defining culture to clarify this matter. From this point of view, it was aimed to reveal the participants' perceptions of culture and how they defined it. As there was no common definition of culture accepted by all the participant teachers, they could not reach a common consensus in defining culture. Nevertheless, most of the participants referred to the customs, traditions, and institutions of a country and all common values, beliefs, and lifestyles of a group of people in their definitions of culture. However, the participants did not refer to the aspects of culture related to language and communication in their definitions as much as the other aspects they referred to, which is compatible with Önalın (2005). As he pointed out, we can attribute this result to the nature of the question since the participants were asked to make a general definition of culture in both studies. If they were asked to define culture with semantic and pragmatic senses, their responses would probably differ.

The results of this study are also compatible with the previous studies by Atay et al. (2009), Kahraman (2016), and Monfared, Mozaheb, and Shahiditabar (2016), Sercu et al. (2004) that teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching were quite positive and they provided a high level of agreement to culture teaching in the ELT classroom. Teachers considered culture as "significantly important" in both learning and teaching a foreign language. They regarded culture teaching as a substantial and a complementary part of language teaching and most of them did not feel uncomfortable while presenting cultural content in their lessons. Despite not all at the same rate, they included cultural elements into their language teaching because most of them thought that the language was greatly influenced by the culture of the society who spoke that language and they regarded culture as a key for using a foreign language most effectively.

As is commonly known, what is meant as a "foreign language" in this study is specifically the "English language". Teachers consider that it is very beneficial for learners to be knowledgeable about the culture of English-speaking communities to master the English language. It is also beneficial to know about other cultures in the world to be able to communicate competently with the rest of the world. Therefore, most of the teachers believed that in addition to their linguistic goals, ELT teachers could have cultural teaching objectives as well. However, they also thought that students were not responsible for learning cultural information themselves. It is the language teachers who are responsible for presenting cultural elements in their lessons. In other words, learners should know the cultural elements of the target language and other cultures but it should not be a must for them.

Moreover, as we mentioned in the results section, high school ELT teachers may not have the opinion that teaching about British/American culture may help their learners improve their language skills. They may think this way because they think that British/American culture is not enough alone and international and source cultures should be taught as well or

they think that cultural knowledge will contribute more to the communication skills of the students, not to their linguistic skills.

However, some of the participants do not focus on the cultural elements as much as they focus on grammar, vocabulary, and four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Some studies revealed that teachers' most common excuses for not focusing on culture teaching as much as they focused on other aspects of the language were the time constraints (Tran & Seepho, 2014), the requirements of the curriculum (Kahraman, 2016) and not knowing how to handle cultural elements in the language classrooms (Yeşil & Demiröz, 2017). Similarly, this study also revealed that teachers focused more on linguistic aspects for various reasons such as not having enough time, the policy of the national education, and not feeling sufficient enough in culture teaching even if they believed that culture teaching was of great importance.

On the other hand, even though they were in minority, there were some participant language teachers who considered cultural knowledge unnecessary. They did not consider language and culture as two integral parts of a whole. As Lange and Paige (2003) explain, some teachers may misjudge that "language is not culture" and they question the need for the focus on culture teaching in language classes. As a result, these teachers mostly avoid cultural content in their practices of language teaching. However, as was mentioned previously, this group of teachers are in minority.

While integrating culture in their language teaching, as the results of this study revealed, most of the teachers tended to present visible cultural elements such as food and drinks, lifestyles and daily routines, manners, customs and traditions, leisure activities, entertainment styles, architecture, literature, art, special occasions, national holidays and historical events. These results are mostly compatible with the results of studies like Civelek & Toplu (2021), and Sercu et al. (2004) that investigated what kind of cultural elements were

presented by the teachers in language classrooms. On the other hand, some teachers presented invisible cultural elements such as communication aspects like body language and idioms, social values, familial relations as well as visible cultural elements. Apparently, the majority of the teachers preferred focusing on visible culture and the rest of them preferred focusing on both visible and invisible culture in language classrooms. There may be several reasons why the teachers mostly focus on visible culture. They may know more about visible culture (Tran and Seepho, 2014) or they may find it easier to deal with visible culture (Önalın, 2005) because it is more concrete and manageable. Besides, the fact that learners may be more familiar with the visible culture may affect the teachers' choices of the cultural elements they present (Karabınar & Güler, 2012).

As was mentioned previously, many researchers argued that learning the target culture was essential to enable learners to be competent (Bennett, 1993; Er, 2006; Hinkel, 2012; Sun, 2013; Tran, 2010). On the other hand, some researchers argued that local and international cultures were very important in language classrooms, too (Alptekin & Alptekin, 1984; Cinkara, 2016; Gorjian & Aghvami, 2017; Mc Kay, 2003; Qu, 2010). Alptekin and Alptekin (1984) specify that EFL teachers should be the ones who offer their students a chance for using English in the context they are into, in both local and the international context. EFL teachers should demonstrate to their students how it is probable to reach cultural pluralism within a mind frame and they should help their students to obtain new identities as they improve their English, a bilingual and intercultural identity. In line with Alptekin, Yılmaz and Karatepe (2013) and Karatepe and Yılmaz (2018) suggested that localization should be one of the strategies to contextualize the lesson. The teacher localizes the topic by relating it to the local life and cultural features before relating it to any foreign elements.

In this respect, we investigated what kind of cultural aspect the teachers preferred to teach in their courses in terms of target, source, and international cultures. The qualitative data

showed that the majority of the participants considered that international culture should be included in English lessons. As was mentioned in the results section, the participants offered three reasons for including international culture in their language lessons. Firstly, they wanted to promote tolerance and respect for other cultures. Secondly, they wanted to prepare their students for future intercultural encounters. Finally, they felt they should focus on international culture since the English textbooks published in Turkey mostly focused on international culture.

Although more than half of the teachers stated that they presented the target culture in the EFL classrooms, only a few of them believed that the main focus should be on the target culture. Moreover, some teachers emphasized how beneficial it was to present the target culture and source culture together. According to those teachers, presenting the international culture, the target culture, and the source culture together would be more beneficial for their students to gain intercultural competence, instead of focusing only on the target culture. What teachers are trying to do here is compatible with Alptekin and Alptekin's (1984) suggestions about the mission of English teachers.

Previous studies revealed that most teachers thought that culture should be taught to advanced students (Civelek & Toplu, 2021), or culture could be taught at any level (Tran & Seepho, 2014). When we asked what level of proficiency was the best for students to be exposed to cultural elements, teachers seemed to have different ideas. Most of the teachers in this study stated that intermediate and pre-intermediate were the most appropriate proficiency levels to combine cultural content in English teaching. They asserted that learners needed to have reached a certain level of linguistic knowledge and gain some language skills to understand the cultural content better. From their point of view, intermediate and pre-intermediate levels were neither too early nor too late to expose learners to the target culture and other cultures. However, the number of participants who stated that there was not a

certain level for the presentation of cultural knowledge cannot be ignored either. These participants asserted that the proficiency level of students was not relevant to the integration of cultural content into English lessons. According to them what mattered the most was the needs of the students. Karabinar and Güler (2012) evaluate this as favorable thinking since it lets culture teaching and the progress of cultural competence begin earlier.

Among many others, students' reactions to what is taught may be one of the factors that affect teachers' practices in ELT classrooms. From this point of view, we investigated what the teachers thought their students' reactions were or might be like towards cultural content. English teachers mostly believed that based on their students' reactions, they were interested in and also analytical of the cultural information, when the cultural content was included in their ELT classrooms. This result is compatible with the results of Önalın (2005). However, he states that the results are only based on the opinions of the participants, which is also true for the current study. He signifies that an empirical study with student participants is what is needed if we want to reveal their perceptions of culture learning in language classrooms.

As was stated before, we also investigated the effects of participants' backgrounds and some features, like gender, teaching experience, overseas experience, and educational background, on their perceptions of culture teaching. As a result, we found that some of these variables had an effect on their perceptions, and some of them did not. First of all, the difference between female and male high school teachers' perceptions towards teaching culture was statistically significant. In other words, female participants performed a significantly higher mean score than the male participants. On the other hand, the results of the present study were quite different from the results of Kahraman's (2016), which showed no gender difference between participants' perceptions. The reason for this difference may be that the two studies were carried out in different contexts; one in the high school context and



the other one in the university context. When the context changes, other background features of the participants associated with gender may also change and these changes may affect the results.

Teachers' teaching experience level was another factor whose effect on culture teaching was surveyed in previous studies. For instance, Estaji and Rahimi (2018) held a study that revealed no significant difference between the perceptions of the groups of teachers with different teaching experiences towards culture teaching. However, the quantitative results of this study showed that teachers who had from 1 to 5 years of teaching experience had a more positive attitude towards teaching culture in language lessons than the teachers with longer years of teaching experience. Moreover, the qualitative results revealed that teachers did not think teaching experience made a definite contribution to culture-teaching in English lessons. They believed that personal interest in other cultures and teaching culture, searching, watching, reading about other cultures, and traveling to other countries was more important than a language teacher's teaching experience. Based on these results, we can say that teachers who are at the beginning of their teaching careers are more willing to conduct culture teaching and teachers' efforts to develop themselves as culturally-competent may be the key to a better culture teaching.

The educational background of the teachers was another variable whose effect on culture teaching was investigated. However, the difference between the perceptions of teachers who had bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctorate degrees was not statistically significant. On the other hand, Karabinar and Güler (2012) point out that teachers who attended teacher training courses like conferences, in-service training, or university courses that improved their cultural knowledge and culture teaching skills showed higher mean scores than the ones who did not. From this point of view, we can say that teachers'

participation in the training courses which is likely to improve their culture teaching is more important than their academic degrees.

Although the quantitative results revealed no statistical difference between teachers who had overseas experience and those who did not, the qualitative results indicated that there was a strong belief among teachers' that a language teacher's overseas experience would contribute greatly to his/her culture teaching. Spending a certain period abroad and being exposed to the target culture or other cultures was considered as a key to effective cultural teaching by the participant teachers. They stated that making observations abroad and gaining real-life experiences would support teachers to achieve their goals of helping their learners to sense cultural information instead of presenting the facts only. Similarly, Serin (2017) supports this idea saying that "Teachers with international experience are more eager to learn about different cultures and show more positive but more critically-minded attitudes towards their own countries". In fact, what Serin means here by "international experience" for teachers is "working abroad"; however, the teachers who took part in this study mostly had the experiences of only "traveling abroad". This might be the reason why the quantitative data showed no significant difference between teachers who had overseas experience and those who did not.

The last background feature that was investigated was whether culture teaching affected teachers' preferences for English (American English, British English, or both) in language classrooms. It has to be noted here that the results showed no statistically significant differences between groups in terms of their preferences for using a variety of English in their English lessons.

As we said before, most of the teachers had positive attitudes towards culture teaching in EFL classrooms. However, as it was displayed by both the quantitative and qualitative results, high school language teachers encountered some problems while teaching culture.

Although the majority of the language teachers did not avoid teaching culture in language classes, some of them might still feel overwhelmed by the challenges they faced during the presentation of cultural content. While the qualitative data showed that most of the participants had difficulties mostly related to students' negative reactions towards cultural content in EFL classes, quantitative data showed that the participants who believed that their students' reactions were positive to the cultural content had the highest score. This shows that most of the students have positive attitudes towards cultural content while learning a language but some students still have negative attitudes towards cultural content which is often a problem for teachers. These results are compatible with Yeşil and Demiröz (2017) who state that sometimes the students might be indifferent to cultural elements or confused by them and may not want to communicate which the teachers complain about. However, they emphasize that these reactions should not be generalized for all the learners, which is true for this study, too.

The quantitative results also showed that more than half of the teachers had difficulties while dealing with cultural elements in coursebooks. The problems that teachers may encounter when handling the cultural content of their textbooks seem to be their insufficient knowledge, difficulties in motivating students, insufficient cultural content in the textbooks. The textbooks used in state high schools are published in Turkey and there are some cultural elements in these books. However, the participants complained that these cultural elements were not sufficient enough neither in terms of quantity nor in terms of presentation of cultural elements. Moreover, as the participant teachers continued to complain, these textbooks were not satisfactory enough to meet the needs and interests of learners.

Yeşil and Demiröz (2017) emphasize that the language teachers are in favor of using textbooks written by native speakers and published in English-speaking countries since these kinds of books are more comprehensive and reliable recourses for cultural information. On

the other hand, Önalán (2005) indicates that the coursebooks written for general audience mostly cover British/American culture but a coursebook should be written for local audiences, especially according to local learners' specific needs and should not exclude international cultural elements. From this point, we can say that there is a need for some regulations regarding the contents of the books.

Another problem referred to by the participant teachers was the shortage of materials and equipment. As was stated before, some teachers considered that the contents of the textbooks were not sufficient for effective culture teaching and they needed both culturally richer textbooks. Moreover, they stated that they needed different materials other than textbooks, maybe realia or videos related to cultural elements. It is possible to conclude at this point that no matter how willing they are to present cultural content in their language teaching, they may be discouraged by the obstacles due to the lack of materials and technical issues. As Tran and Seepho (2014) pointed out, "additional reference materials" should be provided to both teachers and students so that they can cultural content easily whenever they want. Besides, coursebook writers may suggest the type of materials which could be found in the digital world.

As was mentioned previously, English teachers were challenged by lack of time which was one of the reasons they give for not focusing enough on culture teaching. Teachers thought that some precautions should be taken by the Ministry of Education to help teachers who felt obliged to skip culture teaching and concentrate solely on linguistic aspects due to the lack of time. They specified that it was urgent to increase the weekly hours of English lessons.

Another finding is that the vast majority of teachers did not think there were disadvantages in teaching culture in language classes. However, there were still some teachers who reflected the opposite. Some participants were concerned about creating a boring

atmosphere in ELT classrooms by incorporating too much cultural information. Participants also believed that including cultural information would lead students to alienate their own culture and have over-sympathy to the UK and the US culture. Moreover, some of them thought that teaching cultural knowledge to students might open the road to linguistic and cultural imperialism and cause cultural assimilation. These findings are compatible with Önalın (2005).

Over and above, we investigated the teachers' opinions on what was needed for a better culture teaching in EFL classrooms. The qualitative results of the study revealed that teachers considered the cultural competence of a language teacher as the primary element for better teaching of culture in language classrooms. They argued that language teachers should be sufficiently equipped in the target culture, international culture, and local culture. For effective culture teaching, they also needed to know how to transfer cultural information to their students. Hence teachers proposed that there should be some compulsory or elective courses on teaching culture in teacher training programs.

From this point of view, teachers' opinions are mostly compatible with what Karatepe and Yılmaz (2018) suggested. According to them, language teachers should be prepared to raise awareness in their students. This is an awareness of students' language and culture in connection with the foreign language culture. Moreover, they should internalize a language teaching perspective that includes intercultural communication. However, their study revealed that teacher training programs did not always give point to teaching culture enough. In this case, it is possible to expect teachers to accomplish what is expected of them. Therefore, there is a requirement for a standardization process for teaching culture in EFL teacher training programs.

According to Karabınar and Güler (2012), in order to train EFL teachers who are interculturally competent, in-service teacher education programs that will supply sufficient

knowledge of culture and culture teaching are needed. Similarly, the teachers in this study suggested that in-service training programs on culture teaching should be provided to teachers by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Moreover, the teachers proposed that they should be supported by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in terms of traveling abroad.

Since language and culture are considered inseparable, the balance between linguistic and cultural elements in the curriculum should be provided for sufficient foreign language learning. Nevertheless, the curriculum focuses more on linguistic aspects and four skills in Turkey. In this respect, teachers referred to the need for a change in the curriculum and the education policy. They also complained about the lack of explicit goals for culture teaching in the current curriculum which was compatible with Chen and Yang (2016) who claimed that the lack of standards for culture teaching was one of the main problems faced by language instructors.

Furthermore, teachers mentioned that the education policy also affected the students' perspectives on language learning. As the educational policy focused more on teaching linguistic aspects of a foreign language, some of the students considered language learning as learning only the equivalents of the words and grammar structures in another language. However, it seems to be unfortunate that those students may have the misconception that they do not need to learn about culture to become competent in the foreign language they learn.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### 6.1. Summary

Language enables us to communicate not only with the individuals belonging to our society but also with those of other societies. It plays an important role in commercial, cultural, and political relations among different societies. As a result, the importance of learning a foreign language has increased and foreign language teaching has become an important element in the framework of educational policies for developing countries, including Turkey.

Today, English is considered a global language, in other words, a lingua franca. Therefore, it is the most preferred language as a foreign language in the world in addition to being the native language and second language of some countries. As Rao (2019) emphasizes, it is spoken all around the world for various reasons like education, science and technology, employment, business, the internet, travel and tourism, press and media, and entertainment.

For better foreign language teaching, not only linguistic aspects but also culture should be taught in language classrooms. Language teachers should be the agents who assist their students to be able to understand and interpret both their own culture, the target culture, and the international culture to communicate better when speaking in a foreign language.

Students in Turkey begin to learn English at the age of 7-8 (2nd grade). However, how much cultural knowledge they will be exposed to over the years is limited with the curriculum and the teachers' interest and readiness to put extra effort in order to highlight cultural elements. This thesis aimed at looking into the factors which led high school teachers to go an extra mile and design their lessons to incorporate cultural elements. Although the literature is rich with studies investigating this issue at university level, not many studies were carried out

which investigated teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in EFL classes at primary, secondary, and high school levels. Considering that the perceptions of English teachers working at different levels are also very important, this study aimed to provide an insight into the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes by investigating the perceptions of High School English teachers on culture and culture teaching. We analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data in the light of three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers working in state schools at the high school level in Turkey in relation to the element of culture in foreign language classes?
2. What are the Turkish high school language teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in foreign language classes in terms of?:
  - a. Gender
  - b. Educational background
  - c. Active teaching period
  - d. Having been abroad (English speaking countries)
  - e. Preference for the type of English (British, American, or both)
3. What are the problems encountered while teaching culture in foreign language lessons?

RQ 1 "What are the perceptions of teachers working in state schools at the high school level in Turkey about the element of culture in foreign language classes?" intended to find out the general perceptions of language teachers towards culture and culture teaching in EFL classrooms in state high schools. The findings revealed that teachers had quite positive attitudes towards culture teaching and they provided a high level of agreement to culture teaching in the ELT classroom. They indicated that it was very beneficial for learners to know about the culture of the English-speaking societies to master the English language. However, the data also showed that participants mostly considered international culture as an



indispensable part of culture teaching in English lessons while they supported the inclusion of source culture as well.

Visible cultural elements such as food and drinks, lifestyles and daily routines, customs and traditions, leisure activities, entertainment styles, architecture, literature, art, special occasions, national holidays, and historical events were the most preferred cultural elements.

Teachers also considered the cultural competence of a language teacher as the primary element for better teaching of culture in language classrooms. According to the language, teachers should be sufficiently equipped with culture and teaching culture. Moreover, they emphasized that it was the language teachers who were responsible for presenting cultural elements. While presenting cultural elements, teachers should avoid making comparisons which would indicate whether home culture or target culture was better.

Furthermore, the teachers mostly considered the reactions of their students towards cultural content as “interested”, and “analytical”. However, they emphasized that learners needed to have reached a certain level of linguistic knowledge to learn the cultural content better. From their point of view, intermediate and pre-intermediate levels were the ideal levels to expose learners to the target culture and other cultures. On the other hand, there was a significant number of participants who stated that there was not a certain level for the presentation of cultural knowledge that could not be ignored. It is because what mattered the most was the needs and interests of the students. However, the problem is that the students will not know what they need or will not be aware of whether they are interested in it. From this point of view, language teachers can create a level of awareness in culture learning and arouse curiosity in cultural elements. Therefore, the topics that may attract the interests of students may come up.

Finally, there is one point that needs to be mentioned here: Even though most of the teachers had positive attitudes towards culture teaching, some of the teachers did not focus on the cultural elements as much as they focused on grammar, vocabulary, and four skills because of time constraints, the policy of the national education and feeling insufficient in teaching culture. Moreover, some of them considered cultural knowledge unnecessary and did not consider language and culture as two integral parts of a whole.

RQ 2 "What are the teachers', working in state schools in the high school level in Turkey, perceptions of teaching culture in foreign language classes in terms of gender, educational background, active teaching period, the experience of being to abroad (English speaking countries) and preference for the type of English?" intended to find out how the backgrounds of the teachers affected their perspectives towards culture and culture teaching in language classrooms. The results showed that some of these variables positively affected their perceptions, and some of them do not.

Initially, it was found that that gender played a role in determining the perceptions of teachers towards culture teaching; it was further established that the female participants performed a significantly higher mean score than male participants.

Furthermore, the quantitative results showed that teachers who had from 1 to 5 years of teaching experience had a more positive attitude towards teaching culture in language lessons than the teachers with more years of teaching experience. On the other hand, the qualitative results revealed that teachers did not consider teaching experience as a factor that would contribute to culture-teaching in English lessons. They emphasized that personal interest in other cultures and teaching culture was more important than a language teacher's teaching experience.

Besides these, the quantitative results displayed no statistical significance in terms of the teachers' educational backgrounds, preferences for English in language classrooms, and overseas experience. However, the qualitative results indicated that there was a strong belief among teachers' that a language teacher's overseas experience in terms of travelling abroad should contribute greatly to his/her culture teaching.

RQ3 "What are the problems encountered while teaching culture in foreign language lessons?" intended to reveal the difficulties and obstacles that language teachers faced during the inclusion of culture into language teaching. The results revealed that teachers had difficulties while dealing with cultural elements in coursebooks. They had problems handling the cultural content of their textbooks because of their insufficient knowledge, difficulties in motivating students, insufficient cultural content in the textbooks, and the shortage of supplementary materials and equipment. Moreover, English teachers were challenged by the lack of time and the imbalance between linguistic aspects and cultural content in the curriculum which led them to ignore teaching culture.

Although quantitative data showed that the participants who believed that their students' reactions were positive to the cultural content had the highest score, the qualitative data revealed that teachers had difficulties mostly related to students' negative reactions towards cultural content in EFL classes. Even though most of the students had positive attitudes towards cultural content, some students still had negative attitudes towards cultural content which caused problems for teachers.

Finally, some teachers were concerned about creating a boring atmosphere in ELT classrooms by incorporating too much cultural information, leading students to alienate their own culture and to have over-sympathy to the Anglo-Saxon culture by including cultural information into language teaching. Moreover, some of them were concerned about opening

the road to linguistic and cultural imperialism and causing cultural assimilation by teaching cultural knowledge in the language classrooms.

## **6.2. Implications**

The results of the current study brought along some implications. First of all, results from both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that the time spent for culture teaching in language classrooms was less than expected since the majority of the teachers had positive attitudes towards culture teaching and were aware of the importance of the inclusion of culture into language teaching. One of the reasons put forward by teachers for not spending enough time on culture teaching was the lack of their cultural knowledge and the skills for handling cultural elements in the language classrooms. In this respect, some regulations should be planned and made by the relevant authorities.

Primarily, cultural education should be viewed as a work for raising awareness on inter-cultural communication, not teaching the linguistic knowledge only. A cultural study done in a limited time should be an interesting and motivating one for the student. For this reason, teacher candidates require special education in their teacher training process. There should be some compulsory courses for culture teaching with basic information and some optional courses for further information in ELT departments. Moreover, teachers should constantly improve themselves for efficient teaching and one of the most effective ways to achieve this is the in-service training. Therefore, some regulations should be made by the Turkish Ministry of Education and teachers should be provided, on a regular basis, with in-service training opportunities related to cultural education.

The other reasons put forward by teachers for not spending enough time on culture teaching were time constraints and the requirements of the curriculum in which there was not a balance between linguistic and cultural elements. Again, some regulations should be made

by the Turkish Ministry of Education. Principally, specific objectives for teaching both target and local cultures as well as an international culture should be added to the English teaching program. In this way, teachers will be aware of the goals for culture teaching and they will know what to do about cultural elements in their language lessons. Then, some regulations should be made to provide a balance between linguistic and cultural elements in the curriculum. Furthermore, the Turkish Ministry of Education should make some regulations for weekly hours of language classes in state high schools. For teachers to focus on cultural elements as well as linguistic aspects in language classrooms, weekly lesson hours need to be increased as well.

On the other hand, some other problems faced by teachers such as lack of motivation and negative reactions of the learners towards some of the cultural content will automatically be eliminated if the education policy changes in favor of culture teaching and the regulations we have mentioned above are made. More students will enjoy learning culture in language classrooms through the agency of teachers who have enough time to balance the cultural aspects and the linguistic aspects, also who know what the objectives of culture teaching are, how to present cultural elements in language lessons, how to motivate their students, and how to raise awareness of culture in them.

As we mentioned before, there were some complaints made by the teachers that cultural elements in the textbooks were unsatisfying in terms of both quantity and presentation of knowledge and information. In this respect, some regulations should be made by the relevant authorities about textbooks used in high schools. It is possible to recommend that coursebooks be written by a group of writers, including both Turkish writers and native speaker ones, and published in Turkey. Moreover, supplementary books which contain much more explanation for the presentation of cultural content may be provided. This may also help

the teachers to eliminate their problem of insufficient knowledge during the inclusion of cultural elements into language lessons.

Furthermore, every generation has different tastes and interests. The materials need to be interesting and revised according to the learner's taste. The material needs to be topically attractive and revised according to learners' interests. Therefore, sections of the books on culture should be reviewed and renewed at least once every three years.

Even though the quantitative results showed no statistical difference between teachers with or without overseas experience, the qualitative results revealed that there was a strong belief amongst language teachers that experience abroad would contribute to their culture teaching. Therefore, they recommended the relevant educational authorities to deal with this issue in an attempt to support EFT teachers' overseas mobility programs. As is commonly known, there are current projects supported by the Turkish Ministry of National Education for the overseas mobility of teachers such as Erasmus, eTwinning, etc. However, some regulations can be made to include as many teachers as possible in those projects and offer the teachers more project opportunities for internships or in-service teacher training programs abroad.

However, the issue of overseas occupation mobility should not only be left up to the relevant authorities in the government. Teachers also need to take initiative themselves and change their perspectives for a better culture teaching. As they stated before, the cultural competence of a language teacher was the primary element for better teaching of culture in language classrooms. They also mentioned that becoming competent teachers in culture teaching was only possible through personal interest in other cultures and teaching culture. Therefore, efforts of searching, watching, and reading about other cultures and changing their perspectives towards culture and culture teaching should be exerted by the teachers

themselves. Briefly, language teachers should take up responsibilities and fulfill them for a better culture teaching.

### **6.3. Suggestions for Further Research**

This study investigated High School Teachers' perceptions of culture and culture teaching. However, more significant results could be obtained if primary and secondary school teachers, in addition to high school teachers, were included in the study; similarly, the perceptions of the teachers working at schools of different levels could be analyzed comparatively. As was mentioned previously, an empirical study with student participants is also needed to reveal their perceptions of culture learning in language classrooms since the results in the current study are only based on the opinions of the teacher participants.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### PART 1

Dear colleague,

Doing my Master's degree at Uludağ University, I am working on a thesis on English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom. As an ELF teacher, your ideas are of utmost importance to this study.

The following questionnaire is made up of two parts: The first part asks for personal information; the second part of the questionnaire includes three sections that are related to your teaching practices. Please answer all of the questions, stating your own ideas and give the questionnaire back as soon as possible (48 hours at the latest). Your responses will definitely remain anonymous and confidential, and all the information will be used for the purposes of my thesis only. I will be happy to answer any questions. You can reach me via my email address or mobile phone number written below. Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Gülin OSMANCIK  
[gulinoss@hotmail.com](mailto:gulinoss@hotmail.com)  
 0 505 499 53 97

### PART 1

1. Gender : Male ( ) Female ( )

2. Institution you teach at : \_\_\_\_\_

3. Educational Background :

Level	Name of the University and Department
BA	
MA	
PhD	

4. Active teaching period : \_\_\_\_\_ years

5. Have you ever been to the : USA? ( ) UK? ( ) Neither ( )

6. Which type of English language do you teach? : English ( )  
 American ( )  
 Other ( )

## PART 2

### A. Please check the appropriate option or options. State reasons where necessary. Specify when you choose "other".

1. When you think of culture, which of the following is the ***MOST*** significant aspect in your opinion? (Not from a teaching point of view, but rather a general one.) Please mark ***only one***.
  - a. The system that is reflected by the media, cinema, music, literature, and art of a community.
  - b. The characteristics of home life, family nature and interpersonal relations in a community.
  - c. Culture refers to the customs, traditions and institutions of a country.
  - d. Culture entails what people do at work, at home, in their free time and while they entertain.
  - e. The background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills that make communication successful.
  - f. The conceptual system embodied in the language covering semantic areas such as food and clothes.
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What should cultural information in the ELT classroom include? Please choose ***all appropriate***.
  - a. Regional and general differences in American and British English.
  - b. Customs and traditions in American/British community.
  - c. British/American institutions.
  - d. Daily lifestyle, food and clothes.
  - e. Leisure activities, entertainment styles.
  - f. Architecture, literature, music and art.
  - g. Communicative aspects like body language and idioms.
  - h. Social and historical aspects such as national holidays and national heroes.
  - i. Political problems in USA/UK.
  - j. Information on religious practices in USA/UK.
  - k. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Which proficiency level would you consider ***MOST*** suitable for providing the students with cultural information in ELT? Choose ***only one***. Please state reason(s) why.
  - a. Elementary \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Pre-intermediate \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Intermediate \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Upper-intermediate \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Advanced \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. It does not matter \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What might be/are the reactions of your students when you provide them with cultural information? Check ***all appropriate***.
  - a. Interested (positive reactions)
  - b. Analytical (analyzing, comparing with own culture)

- c. Skeptical
- d. Rejected (negative reactions)
- e. No reaction at all
- f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you tend to avoid cultural content in your teaching?

- a. No.
- b. Yes. Please give the possible reasons marking *any suitable one*.
  - a. There is not enough time.
  - b. The occupational field of my students (information technologies, hairdressing, etc.) does not require it.
  - c. My institutional policy does not incorporate cultural content in the curriculum.
  - d. I do not find it necessary for my students.
  - e. I myself do not have sufficient cultural information.
  - f. I believe American/English culture is harmful to students' own culture.
  - g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are there any drawbacks of incorporating cultural information in EFL (English as a foreign language) classes?

- a. No.
- b. Yes (please mark *all appropriate* drawbacks).
  - a. Cultural Alienation.
  - b. Over-sympathy to the US/UK culture.
  - c. Linguistic and cultural imperialism.
  - d. Cultural assimilation.
  - e. Inclusion of too much cultural information creates a boring atmosphere.
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you experience any difficulties in handling the cultural content of your textbooks/texts?

- a. No.
- b. Yes (please give specific problems). Choose *all suitable*.
  - a. I find it hard to clarify some aspects of the US/UK culture.
  - b. My coursebook does not provide assistance.
  - c. My knowledge on the US/UK culture falls short.
  - d. There is too much emphasis on the US/UK culture.
  - e. I usually have to supply my own supplementary material.
  - f. It is difficult to raise the interest/motivation of the students.
  - g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Read the statements carefully and mark (X) the appropriate box.**

		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT DECIDED	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1.	ELT teachers should have culture teaching objectives in addition to linguistic goals.					
2.	Students themselves are responsible for the learning of cultural information.					
3.	Learning a foreign culture harms the native culture.					
4.	My students enjoy learning about British/American culture.					
5.	ELT teachers should focus only on the teaching of language, not culture.					
6.	Cultural content is an element of the foreign language teaching curriculum.					
7.	In order to learn a foreign language effectively, learners should improve their cultural knowledge.					
8.	ELT syllabi should exclude English/American culture.					
9.	Including cultural information in ELT will result in students' alienation from their native culture.					
10.	Teaching cultural components explicitly fosters the learners proficiency in the language.					
11.	English teachers should be well equipped with the cultural patterns of the language they teach.					
12.	English can be taught without reference British/American culture.					
13.	Learning the cultural elements of the target language should be a must for the learners.					
14.	My students find it unnecessary to learn the British/American culture.					
15.	I feel uncomfortable when a question on foreign language culture is asked in the classroom.					
16.	Teaching about British/American history helps learners improve their language skills.					

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview Questions**

1. In your opinion, what is culture?
2. Do you think culture is important in learning English? How? Please elaborate.
3. What kind of culture do you teach in your English lessons? Why? Please elaborate.
4. How important teaching culture is in English lessons? Please elaborate.
5. What problems or difficulties do you experience while teaching culture in your English lessons?
6. Do you think your overseas experience contribute to your culture teaching in your English lessons? How? Please elaborate.
7. Do you think your teaching experience makes contributions to culture-teaching in your English lessons? How? Please elaborate.
8. What is the students' appropriate proficiency level to start to teach culture in your English lessons? Why?
9. What other factors can you think of in order to make culture-teaching more efficient? What are they? And why?

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Details

Name: Gülin Osmancık

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

### Education

1990-1997: Uşak Orhan Dengiz Anatolian High School

1997-2001: BA: Uludağ University, Bursa

English Language Teaching

2014-2021: MA: Uludağ University, Bursa

English Language Teaching

### Work Experience

2001-2004 : Bursa Gemlik 100.Yıl Primary Education School, English Teacher

2004-2006: Amasya Ziyaret Primary Education School, English Teacher

2006-2008: Nevşehir Uçhisar Primary Education School, English Teacher

2008-2016: Bursa Yıldırım Ahmet Vefik Paşa Anatolian High School, English Teacher

2016- : Uşak Ulubey Atatürk Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School, English  
Teacher