

Importance of Culture Teaching in Kurdish EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Since language and culture are intimately intertwined, the purpose of the current research is to investigate how instructors and students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq perceive the significance of culture in teaching English as a foreign language in the classroom. To gather data, a quantitative approach using questionnaires was used. In the present study, 100 Kurdish learners and 120 Kurdish teachers of English language participated. The findings indicate that there was consensus among educators and students regarding the importance of culture in the English language curriculum. Most of them understand how crucial it is to teach and include culture into foreign language classes. The teachers who answered the questionnaire seemed to understand the need of adding culture to language instruction, but in reality, there is still little time set aside for cultural awareness. Teachers may be anxious to include a cultural component in their lessons, but in practice, the influence of it is limited by their own inadequacies. Put differently, there are students getting ready who are aware of how much they need to learn about other cultures and who are ready to absorb and use it as an additional component of their "communicative competence." The study's conclusions about the value of incorporating culture into English language instruction are drawn from the data, and suggestions for more research are offered.

Key words: culture, cultural awareness, EFL teachers and learners, foreign language education.

1. Introduction

It is not necessarily the case that teaching a language without introducing culture will result in a competent learner (Krasner, 1999). A language is learned not only through creating sentences, paragraphs, and texts correctly, but also by understanding the underlying meaning of each word, utterance, and gesture (Kramsch, 2014). As Liddicoat (2005) points out, learning a foreign language (FL) requires learning to converse in that language, as well as communicating implicates engaging with cultures. In order for language to be used appropriately, it needs to be aligned with the behavior expected from a given cultural perspective (Choudhury, 2013). Culture and language are actually tightly related. They are both interconnected and closely woven. According to Agar (1994), language and culture are unified by this concept of linguaculture. The culture of its speakers plays a vital role in learning or using any language, as Kramsch (1998) mentions. Culture in terms of language and language in terms of culture are inseparable entities (Brown, 2007). *The concept of culture encompasses the manner in which people live, including their customs, attitudes, lifestyles, traditions, beliefs, norms, and values within the society in which they exist (Brown, 2007). Members of a group are aware of the rules of proper and impolite behavior and the manner in which to use language in various social situations based on a shared set of values, beliefs, and norms. As a result, languages are used differently according to culture. In order to teach languages effectively, cultural integration is important (Liddicoat, 2004, 2005, 2008; Kramsch, 1998; Byram, 1997, 2009, 2014; Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). In light of the available literature, the main goal of the present study is to more progress and grasping of how culture is integrated into the learning of English as a foreign language (TEFL). To achieve this, I conduct a qualitative and quantitative study involving Kurdish EFL teachers and learners.*

Culture is very important in language communication. Using language skills, linguistic differences are not sufficient to qualify while communicating, but also to be aware of proper use of language in a cultural context. According to Byram (1997) the ability of using vocabulary and structures accurately and fluently is not enough for learning a language; it needs proper use of language in a cultural context. As Krasner (1999) believes that for learners of a language to be skillful in that language, linguistic ability alone isn't any longer sufficient, thus, communicative competence has ended up the essential point of English language teaching (Van Ek, 1986). Byram, (1997) thinks that specific consideration is presently being paid to empower students to speak with individuals from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds in this multicultural world because communication is becoming more and more global. Teaching culture by English language teachers to students that culture plays a major role in learning language, in an effort to achieve success in language teaching, language use requires appropriate cultural behavior. Therefore, it is basic to educate culture and language at the same time.

Sometimes some Kurdish language learners have studied English language for more than 12 years (they study English for 12 years in primary and high school) and have a high grade in English but are still unable to communicate well with others. One of the reasons is that the language learners do not understand foreign culture and don't know what should be said when communicating with foreigner. The Kurdistan region of northern Iraq has taken fundamental steps to move forward with the region's education standards. Similarly, the English language classes in the early grades and fostering the creative thinking in the classrooms were included into the school curriculum, but such programs do not focus on culture and culture education program. As a result of this need, language teachers are increasingly trying to introduce cultural resources to their learners.

The connection between language and culture is significant in FL education because culture plays a key role in language communication and helps learners to be skilled in the target language (Nault, 2006). According to Pennycook (1994) and Clyne (1994), they believe that the goal to learn a foreign language is to communicate with users of the target language. Alptekin (2002, p.58) sets that, —learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers. The purpose of this study is to examine issues regarding the promotion of culture teaching within Kurdish contexts in Iraq. The question of whether teachers teach culture alongside language is important on the one hand. Additionally, to determine whether cultural knowledge produces cultural awareness in terms of matters, facts, or aspects relating to culture.

1.2 Research questions:

- 1-** How important do Kurdish teachers and learners consider teaching culture in language class?
- 2-** What is the place of culture in Kurdish ELT classrooms?

1.3 Review of Literature

The present study relays on culture in English as a foreign language learning (EFL) teaching and learning. The chapter concludes with a discussion that emphasizes the importance of culture in language teaching and learning, which acknowledges the inseparable bonds between language and culture. In addition, there is an increasing trend of recognizing the significance of integrating culture into language education and developing intercultural skills as a major goal of language teaching (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). There are however significant limitations in language studies and educational practice (Byram, 2012; Kramsch, 2013; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). As part of this study aimed at better understanding teachers' understanding of culture, the last section investigates teachers' knowledge and beliefs related to language education.

The cultures of every language are entwined and closely linked; they are intertwined and closely interconnected. According to Agar (1994), language and culture can be unified through the use of the term "linguaculture.". According to Kramsch (1998), learning or using a foreign language cannot happen in its absence of knowing the culture of its native speakers. Hutchinson & Torres (1994) argue that there is no teaching-learning condition that can be complete without a textbook, so the availability of a relevant textbook remains imperative for teaching and learning English. Educators are required to study constantly, to acquire knowledge of the ideologies and cultural values (Asgari, 2011) embedded in the materials presented to students that they will expose them to directly or indirectly (Xiao, 2010).

Researchers focused on culture from different perspectives because culture is a complex and comprehensive subject (Riley, 2007). Other researchers considered the knowledge or lifestyle of the people as well as the social system when defining culture. Some researchers focused on culture's conceptual component, while others emphasized its experiential dimension. Behavioral norms and social relations make up the concept of culture (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). Culture is an unfixed concept, according to Dlasaka (2000), which means that these definitions are focused on the aspect of how culture is perceived by the minds of people. The interaction between language and culture is also stated by Liddicoat et al. (2003), as culture is integrated into every level of language use and structure; thus, there is no linguistic level self-determining of cultural influence. Despite this, there is no way to inform learners everything they require to know about the target culture because of the sheer diversity of cultures.

2. Methodology

The current study deals with the perspectives of Kurdish EFL teachers and learners on understanding culture and attitudes towards culture education. The current study, which is a case study, involved teachers and students from the ELT department and was carried out at the universities of Sulaimani and Raparin in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. This study employs a mixed-methods research design and uses written interviewing and questionnaires as its tools. Mixed method research is the process of collecting of data using both qualitative and quantitative methods. First of all, a survey is one of the instruments used in the quantitative research approach to gather data. Statistics

are used to analyze the data and present the findings. In a qualitative research design, the respondents and the interviewer both participate in written interview to gather the data.

The participants in the current study are split into two groups ELT department learners and teachers. This study included 40 university English instructors, 20 from Sulaimani University and 20 from Raparin University, as well as 80 school teachers from various schools in Sulaimanayah, 60% of participants had Master degree, 10% of them had PhD degree and 30% of the participants had B.A. degree, as well as 100 undergraduates from both universities, 40 from Raparin University and 60 from Sulaimani University in English department college of basic education. They were all regarded as non-native English speakers. The majority of the learners in this study were third- and fourth-year students. Ten instructors from English department of both universities were selected to participate in the follow-up interview. The numbers distributions of male and female teachers and students were equal. They were randomly select in this study. Their ages are from 18 to 60.

Table2.1. Number participants of the survey questionnaire

No.	Questionnaire Category	Teachers	Male	Female	Students	Male	Female
1.	Sulamani university	20	10	10	60	30	30
3.	Raparin university	20	10	10	40	20	20
4.	Schools	80	40	40			
5.	Total	120			100		

Table2.2. Number of participants of the interview

No.	Interview category	Teachers
1.	Sulaimani University	8
2.	Raparin University	8

This study embodies two outlook regarding data analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The interview has been seen as a qualitative method which is ordinarily used to assemble broad information from participants.

3. Results and Findings

The first research question: — How important do teachers and learners consider teaching culture in language class?" was answered with descriptive statistics including frequencies, and percentages .A small number of indices can provide a meaningful description of many sources using descriptive statistics.

The question 1 and question 2 in survey questionnaire request teachers _Are your students interested in learning culture(s) of English speaking countries?' and _Are you interested in teaching culture(s) of English speaking countries?'. To determine the attitude of teachers towards cultural teaching, the first question is about students and the second is about teachers themselves. The scale range is _very interested, interested, uncertain, less interested and not interested'.

Table3.1. Teachers' Interest in Culture Teaching

Interested in teaching culture		Frequency	Percentage
Q1	Very interested	91	75.83%
	Undecided,	18	15%
	Not interested	11	9.16%
Total		120	99.99
Q2	Very interested	95	79.16%
	Undecided,	10	8.33%
	Not interested	15	12.5%
Total		120	99.99

As shown in Table 3.1, the majority of teachers report that their students are interested in learning about cultures of English-speaking countries from their everyday classroom teaching (75.83 %). The importance of raising students' cultural awareness in language teaching has become increasingly apparent to teachers as they integrate language teaching with cultural teaching. As well as (79.16%) of the teachers are very interested in culture teaching. Furthermore, (15 %) of teachers are unsure whether their students have any interest in foreign cultures, and (8.33 %) of teachers are unsure whether they are interested in teaching foreign cultures themselves. (9.16%) of the instructors are sure that their learners are not interested in learning of culture of the target language and (12.5%) of the participants are not interested in teaching target culture. It may be normal and acceptable for opinions about this new dimension to be uncertain and even negative. Culture teaching is a rather complex subject that can't be understood simply by a few training courses.

As part of question 9, teachers are requested about whether a cultural item is necessary to be included in the English curriculum. They are given a five-point scale: 'very necessary, necessary, undecided, less necessary and not necessary'. As well, teachers' positive attitudes toward culture teaching are shown with the combination of 'Very necessary and necessary'. Negative attitudes are shown through the combination of 'less necessary and not necessary'. Following is the result:

1= very necessary 2= necessary 3= undecided 4= less necessary 5= not necessary

1+2= necessary 3= undecided 4+5=not necessary

Table3.2. The Necessity of Having a Cultural Item in the Curriculum

Q9	Teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage
Very necessary	30	25%
Necessary	54	45%
Undecided	25	20.83%
Less necessary	6	5%
Not necessary	5	4.16%
Total	120	100

As shown in Table 3.2, based on answers 1 and 2, it seems that majority of teachers (70%) believe a culture items to the curriculum would be a useful tool and only less than 10 % believe it is not necessary. Furthermore, (20.83%) of teachers are unsure whether cultural item is necessary in the curriculum.

Table3.3. Frequencies and Percentages for necessity of Teaching Culture

	Frequency	Percentages
Very interested	178	49.4
interested	88	24.4
Undecided,	49	13.7
Less interested	31	8.6
Not interested	14	3.9
Total	360	100.0

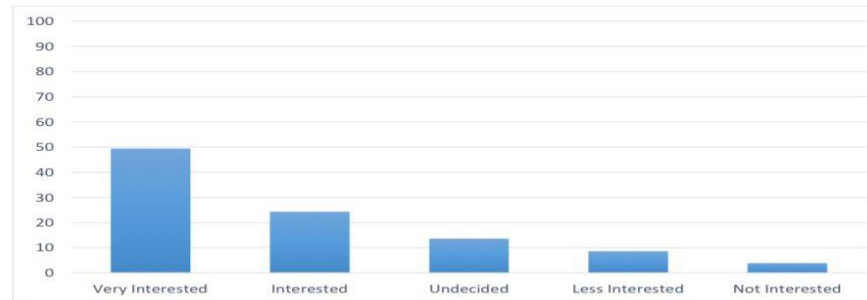


Figure3.1. Percentages for Importance of Teaching Culture

To explore the first research question, items 1, 2 and 9 of the teachers' questionnaires targeted the necessity of teaching culture. Table 3.3 shows the frequencies and percentages for the EFL teachers' responses attitude towards necessity of culture. Based on these results it can be concluded that 73.8 percent of Kurdish EFL teachers believed that they were "very interested" (49.4 %) and "interested" (24.4 %) in teaching culture. On the other hand; 12.5 percent claimed that they were "less interested" (8.6 %) and "not interested" (3.9 %) in teaching culture; and 13.7 percent were "undecided".

Using the results presented above for Q1, 2 and 9, one can come to the conclusion that majority of teachers are interested in teaching culture, and most students are also interested in learning culture as well. Language teachers believe it is necessary to teach culture and to have a cultural item in the classroom. Clearly, the first research question can be answered. Teaching culture as part of English language instruction is considered necessary by teachers. Author's interest lies in how teachers understand the objectives of language learning from the perspective of culture learning. The next section examines the objectives for language teaching as thought by teachers.

3.1. Teachers' perceptions of language teaching objectives (Q4)

Based on the information presented above, it is clear that teachers have a positive attitude towards culture teaching and are interested in teaching it. Language teaching should incorporate a cultural dimension, according to the

majority of teachers. What are the purposes of incorporating a cultural dimension into their teaching? The purpose of this section is to explore how teachers perceive English teaching's aims. A Likert Scale question in Q4 allows teachers to rate their perception of the aims of English teaching. Teachers rate their perception of the aims of English teaching' ' they are asked such questions ranging from 'very important' to 'not so important' in Q4. According to (HAN, HUI, 2010, p.205) a total of six objectives for English teaching are listed in this question. In the questionnaire, the six objectives were presented in random order. Three aspects of culture education have been made the focus of the table below: language education, general language education, and culture education (HAN, HUI, 2010, p.205)

Table3.4. the List of Objectives in English Language Teaching

Cultural learning objectives
1= Promote students' familiarity with the culture, the civilization of the countries where the language which they are learning is spoken.
2= Raise students' awareness of openness and willingness to accept the world culture.
3= Assist students in developing a better understanding of their own identity and culture.
Language learning objective/skills
4= Assist students to acquire a proficiency of English language which will enable them to meet their future needs in their learning, work and life .
General language objectives/learning skills
5= Develop students' long-lasting enthusiasm for learning, good learning habits and Self -confidence in learning English well.
6= Let students experience the learning process, acquire the learning methods of scientific research and promote awareness of cooperation

Note. Adapted from(HAN, HUI, 2010, p.205)

Teachers		
Items	Frequency	Percentage
Q4-1	70	58.33
Q4-2	76	63.33
Q4-3	74	61.66
Q4-4	81	67.5
Q4-5	79	65.83
Q4-6	77	64.16

Table3.5. Frequency and Percentage of List of Objectives in ELT

To support students in becoming proficient in the English language (Q4-4); to cultivate in them students' enduring enthusiasm for learning, positive learning habits, and self-assurance in their ability to learn English (Q4-5); and to provide opportunities for students to engage in the learning process, attain scientific research methods, and foster a cooperative mindset(Q4-6); play a crucial role (67.5%; 65.83%; and 64.16%) respectively. Language learning objectives were clearly preferred by teachers. There is an interpretation that teachers find language teaching important in order to accomplish their goals.

(Q4.2, Q4.3 and Q4.1) with percentage of (63.33%; 61.66% and 58.33%) respectively are designed to promote a better understanding of the foreign culture and better promoting of the students' own culture and identity. According to these results, their empathetic of cultural teaching isn't at a high level, and how to accomplish this objective stays unclear. In addition, teachers need training in teaching cultural dimensions practically. In this study, English language education is viewed by teachers more as a general language learning process, which promotes learners' enthusiasm and sustains their interest in English learning.

Language learning objectives rank higher than cultural learning objectives in relation to teachers. Adding the cultural dimension to language teaching will take time for teachers, and they will need professional training/assistance in this regard. The researcher will discuss below 11 possible cultural teaching objectives to further examine teachers' perceptions of cultural teaching objectives.

3.2. Culture Teaching Objectives as Perceived by Teachers (Q5)

Teachers are invited to identify which of 11 cultural objectives best represents their opinions. According to the scale, there is a range of importance from 'very important', 'important', 'unsure', and 'less important to not important'. There is a list of 11 objectives for cultural teaching presented in random order in the questionnaire. The researcher has

regrouped the objectives into four categories: general objectives, skills, knowledge, and attitude. Four dimensions will be considered in the analysis(HAN, HUI, 2010, p.205)

Table3.6. Teaching cultural values: general objectives

Q5.8	Make language teaching more interesting and motivating.
Q5.9	Widen students' horizons on the world.

Skills dimension

Q5.6	Promote increased understanding of students' own culture.
Q5.7	Promote the ability to handle intercultural contact situations.
Q5.10	Promote students' ability to evaluate and their sensitivity to different cultures.
Q5.11	Promote students' awareness of similarities and differences of English speaking countries.

Altitudinal dimension

Q5.5	Develop attitudes of acceptance and tolerance towards other peoples and cultures.
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Knowledge dimension

Q5.1	Provide information about the history, geography and political system of the foreign culture(s).
Q5.2	Provide information about daily life and routines
Q5.3	Provide information about shared values and beliefs.
Q5.4	Provide experiences with a rich variety of cultural expressions (literature, music, theatre, film, etc.).

Note. Adapted from(HAN, HUI, 2010, p.205)

Table3.7. The result of Culture teaching objectives in four dimensions

	Frequency	Percentage
Q5.1	61	50.83%
Q5.2	86	71.66%
Q5.3	69	57.5%
Q5.4	85	70.83%
Q5.5	79	65.83%
Q5.6	88	73.33%
Q5.7	92	76.66%
Q5.8	93	77.5%
Q5.9	95	79.16%
Q5.10	89	74.16%
Q5.11	91	75.83%

Results of a questionnaire sent to English language teachers were presented in Table 3.7. Teachers shared cultural teaching objectives, which is interesting to learn. Their top priorities for culture teaching were items 7, 8, 9, and 11. Clearly, culture teaching objectives (Q5-8, 9) show a similar tendency as language teaching objectives. As a result of culture teaching, (79.16%) of teachers believe students' horizons on the world may be broadened and (77.5%) of teachers state that language instruction will be more engaging and motivating. According to them, language learning could be made more effective by adding a cultural dimension. It opens up a gateway for learners to the outside world they are involved about when they are exposed to a foreign language and its culture. The objectives of culture teaching, according to (76.66%) teachers, think this will help learners handle situations involving cross-cultural interaction(Q5-7) and (75.83%) of participants praise students' understanding of the similarities and differences across English-speaking nations.. (Q5.11) the teachers' skill development is improving their ability to deal with intercultural contact situations. Due to the fact, English is still not a popular medium for intercultural contact among students, and they don't have more opportunities for interact across cultures through English. Culture instruction may help students communicate with persons from different cultural backgrounds, if students have chances for well-equipped preparation in their language education. Promotion of students' cultural sensitivity was given a higher priority by (74.16%) teachers. Teachers believe that it is relatively important for students to understand the difference between what we have and what we lack through English learning by comparison, and for them to be sensitive to different cultures.

(73.33%) of Teacher beliefs about culture teaching are seen in Q5-6, which states the purpose is to promote the students' own cultural understanding. As a result, teachers recognize the importance of helping students understand their own culture and giving them a piece of their own cultural identity through language instruction. The knowledge dimension is dominated by (71.66%) teachers' preference for providing information about daily life and routines (Q5-2). Small c is the focus here. In other words, teachers could relate cultural information with something that is close to the learners' everyday lives, something they are likely to be interested in. It appears that small c culture is discussed more frequently in the textbook than big c culture, suggesting that knowledge of small c culture may be useful in everyday communication with people of other cultures.

Provide an experience with a rich variety of cultural expressions (literature, music, etc) is put in the eighth and develop of acceptance and tolerance is put in the ninth by (70.83%), (65.83%) of the participants respectively. In terms of information about history, geography, political system, and values and beliefs, Q5-1 and Q5-3 is placed at the bottom of the list. The knowledge of 'information about history, geography, political system is placed in the last among 11 culture teaching objectives. There are a number of factors affecting language teaching in the KRG at the present time. English education includes the objectives of language knowledge and language skills. Linguistic competence is based on these components. English can be useful in students' future careers if they acquire the language. English proficiency can bring students luck in many aspects of their lives, such as getting into good universities, landing a good job, moving abroad, and attaining an Master's or Doctoral degree. They indicated their interest in teaching culture, but the results showed that this is not as important as language teaching.

Overall, this section examines teachers' perceptions of cultural education objectives and notices that a large majority of teachers highlight the overall goals of cultural education. It is important for teachers to understand that their primary concern is ensuring that the students are motivated and interested in language education and to expand their world view by learning a new language. It's encouraging that teachers seem to be more supportive of skills than knowledge dimensions. This indicates that knowledge input is being replaced by skills input in theory, along with the traditional knowledge input.

3.3 Analysis of Teachers' Perspectives on Culture (Q3, Q6)

As a result of analyzing teachers' perceptions of language and culture teaching objectives, teachers strongly support the general objectives in the field of language and culture education. According to their understanding, teaching culture emphasizes enhancing students' motivation and interest in learning languages; enhancing their language ability to meet their needs. It would be more helpful to researcher how teachers interpret and understand the concept of culture in general. How do you understand the term of culture, was the open-ended question that the instructors were asked. This open-ended question was placed with the goal of inviting participants to share their present idea of "culture" without much regard for the investigation as they proceeded. It's crucial to have the open-ended concept of culture from those academics.

It is clear that traditions and customs are the major way that (39.16%) of the instructors define culture. According to their opinions, the following traditions and practices are mentioned in their written works: Social customs and habits, local circumstances, traditions and morals of the people, proper manners, interactional ritual, social norm, and cultural customs. 29.16% of instructors additionally discuss how they comprehend culture in terms of everyday life and habits. Teachers utilize some phrases that are specifically relevant to daily life, such as habits, conventions, little concerns of everyday life, and so on.

According to (25%) of instructors, "culture" may be related to historical, geographical, and political aspects. (12.5%) of teachers have perspectives on culture that is more focused on literature, art, and music. 11.66% of the participating teachers, who make up a small but significant portion, believe that the English-speaking world's culture influences its educational systems. The traditional conception of culture as traditions and customs, etc., affects the instructors, who are among the minority of educators who have a working knowledge of cultural notions. (9.16%) of teachers define culture as norms and value and social behaviors. They don't appear to comprehend the function that values, norms, and social behaviors play in communications when seen in communicating.

Up to this point, it can be stated that the instructors' shared understanding of cultural concepts tends to be more centered on folklore, traditions, and customs, as well as history, geography, and people's everyday lives. Therefore, it is clear that the textbook materials may serve as a foundation for and a reflection of instructors' understandings of culture. As for standards and values, perhaps they perceive them as having a more complex understanding and finding them challenging to describe. Since they are so artistically focused, cultural goods like literature, the arts, and music may not be able to comprehend the complicated idea of culture in this way.

It has been observed that some participants openly reveal their cultural ambiguity. These brief but quite precise statements demonstrate their lack of understanding of what culture is and how to describe it, as well as their inability to convey such a complex subject in the classroom. Furthermore, it is positive that educators may offer many perspectives on the idea of culture. Even if the discussion of culture teaching in language classrooms is still in its

early stages and is pretty inconsequential, it is important to assess how much cultural knowledge language instructors have.

It would be interesting to know what part of culture teachers find most interesting to teach in English classrooms from a different angle. According to these broad descriptions, British and American culture (Anglo-American culture) and Kurdish cultures are popular. One or more factors may be responsible for this. In Kurdistan Region of Iraq, students perceive British and American English as more refined and purer. Or this could be due to the popularity of TOEFL and IELTS examinations in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Teachers may consider that knowing about British and American culture whose English they are teaching can help students in a way. The teachers emphasize the concepts of "own" and "other" culture. Comparing differences between one's own culture and that of another is an important part of language learning, according to some teachers. The target language can only be understood more, used more flexibly and reduced cultural misunderstandings if we are able to discern similarities and differences of other cultures by contrast and comparison. As a result, the most interesting aspects of cultural teaching, from the perspective of teachers, are those related to Anglo-American cultures. It should be interesting to compare and contrast Kurdish cultures with other cultures as well due to their long history. The teachers also say they want students to learn something interesting or relevant to their lives, suggesting they lack cultural understanding in this aspect. This suggests that a new perspective on language education needs to be developed in the teacher training programme.

A third question (Q3) is being asked in order to understand teachers' general opinions about cultural education (the importance of culture education in English education), with five points: 'Very important, important, undecided, less important and not important'. Teachers' positive attitudes towards cultural teaching are indicated by their use of the words 'very important' and 'important', and their negative attitudes by their use of the terms 'less important' and 'not important'. As shown in Table 3.8, the result is as follows.

1= very important 2= important 3= undecided 4= less important 5= not important

1+2= important 3= undecided 4+5=not important

Table 3.8 Teachers' Perception on the Importance of Culture Teaching

No.	Teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	44	36.67%
Important	60	50%
Undecided	3	2.5%
Less important	7	5.83%
Not important	6	5%
Total	120	100

As shown in Table 3.8, clearly, teachers are positive about the cultural dimension of language education, as shown in the results above. In relation to teaching culture, according answer 1 and 2 over 86.6% of teachers think it is important, and only 10.83% believe it is not important. The significance of teaching culture in language education is clearly recognized by teachers on the whole, and it is also evident that they are interested in teaching culture in language education.

3.4 Teachers' Perspectives on How Much Time They Devote on Teaching Culture (Q7)

To find out whether teachers are willing to spend more time on 'culture teaching', their attitudes and willingness is necessary to be studied. The instructors are welcomed to explain their reasons for wanting to spend more time on culture teaching. The table 3.9 will provide the findings in terms of percentage and frequency.

Table 3.9. How Much Time They Devote on Teaching Culture

Question 7. Would you like to devote more of your English teaching time to "culture teaching"?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, very much so	26	21.66%
Yes, up to a certain extent	46	38.33%
No, not particularly	30	25%
No, not at all	6	5%
No opinion	12	10%
Total	120	99.99

It is clear from Table 3.9 that teachers are eager to dedicate more time to teaching culture. Nearly half of the teachers express their willingness to devote more time to culture teaching if the 'yes, very much so' and 'up to some extent' groups are combined; however, 30% of teachers do not wish to devote more time to culture teaching,

whereas 10% remain neutral, expressing neither a willingness nor a reluctance to devote more time to culture teaching. There is no doubt that teachers' strong desire to teach language in a cultural dimension is evident from the variety of expressions above when they discuss the reasons for having more time to dedicate to teaching culture. Despite this, 30% of teachers find teaching culture is difficult. Lack of time; the difficulty putting cultural dimensions in practice and lack of knowledge or interest; are some possible reasons.

Nevertheless, the results are positive because they show that many instructors have come to understand the necessity and significance of teaching languages in a cultural context and are prepared to invest more time in doing so. The next part will focus on the textbooks that instructors use to determine if they are given the flexibility to select what they require, if the textbook has adequate cultural knowledge or information, if educators are satisfied with the textbook's ability to live up to their expectations for cultural education, etc.

3.4 How Cultural Education Materials in Textbook are perceived by Teachers (Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16)

During this section, English teachers will discuss their views on the cultural dimension of textbooks they use in class; for instance, whether they have free choice of materials; whether the textbooks have enough cultural content, whether they are satisfied with the cultural content in the new textbook, and so on.

Historically, KRG subject courses have relied heavily on textbooks. Authorities, academics, and information are some of its characteristics. It offers knowledge, educational learning procedures, and instructional teaching procedures. It may assist a teacher's judgments about what and how to teach, it can support the interaction of the teaching process, it can codify specific types of information and instructional methods, and it can certify that a student's learning is taking place in a productive manner. Who selects the textbook(s) for you is the first question posed to teachers. because I'm interested in learning whether the KRG's new English language curriculum's guiding principle gives instructors more choice to select many textbooks in order to meet the curriculum's objectives. The result is displayed below in terms of frequency and percentage.

Table 3.10. Who Choose the Text Book

Q12/ Who chooses the text book for you?	Frequency	Percentage
You yourself	27	22.5%
The school/college	13	10.83%
The local educational administration	16	13.33%
The provincial educational administration	62	51.66%
None of the above	2	1.66%
Total	120	99.99

The table demonstrates that most of the instructors are not allowed to select their own textbooks. Only 22.5% of instructors claim to have this freedom. Here, it is important to make the argument very clear. To prepare for regional unified exams depending on the textbook, instructors must utilize the textbook selected by schools or the educational administration. This fact suggests that educators are requested to utilize particular textbooks, indicating that the textbooks comprise a significant part of the teaching/learning process. Thus, it is reasonable to predict that the textbooks will have a big influence on the methods used to teach culture in English-language classes. The textbook serves as a tool to shorten instructors' planning times, ensure that they may approach the teaching of the English language methodically, and ensure that all levels of standardized exams can be conducted using a single textbook. Additionally, this outcome provides an overview of how students are taught about culture using a comparable body of knowledge and methodology.

When it comes to university lecturers, their department, not the regional or provincial directorate of education, often selects the textbooks. There is no standardized test at this stage. In light of this, colleges and universities can choose the textbooks they want to utilize based on the preferences of their teachers. More specifically, the lecturer who will be teaching the course will select the textbook. In addition to the restriction on free textbook choice, the researcher is curious if instructors are allowed to utilize any extra resources they deem helpful or essential for integrating cultural education into their lessons.

Table 3.11. Using More Materials is Unrestricted

Q13 Are you free to use additional materials you think useful for cultural teaching in your class?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I can	69	57.5%
No, I can't.	47	39.16%
I don't know.	4	3.33%
Total	120	99.99

It is noticeable in Table 3.11 that almost half of the instructors (57.5%) have the freedom to employ supplemental resources that are pertinent to cultural instruction. If instructors feel it is essential to augment linguistic information even if they are limited to one textbook, it may indicate that the cultural components provided by the textbook are insufficient. They are able to choose what should be covered in terms of cultural knowledge. According to the research presented in the preceding section, instructors do not frequently employ extra cultural teaching resources in the classroom, such as animations, photographs, or videos. This leads the researcher to conclude that the majority of language and cultural lessons are taught by instructors using textbooks. To some extent, the most of teachers at least 50% enjoy this flexibility to choose what ought to be taught in the classroom. It is assumed that university lecturers have greater latitude in utilizing extra resources than do instructors in schools. It's possible that universities have less stringent curricula to cope with and lack the provincial- standardized examination. They are more adaptable in terms of everyday classroom management.

A significant portion of instructors (39.16%) state that they are unable to employ more materials in their instruction. This finding can indicate that teachers are unable to employ materials other than the textbook since they are dealing with a heavy workload of textbook-based teaching materials. Only a tiny percentage of instructors (3.33%) claim to have no ideas on how to incorporate more resources into the classroom. It could be interpreted as a sign that this tiny set of professors prefers to maintain their objectivity or that they still view the textbook as a "code" that must be followed.

In the questionnaire, teachers are asked for their opinion on the cultural contents of the textbook, and most teachers feel that the textbook contains enough cultural content and if those cultural contents are sufficient to meet their expectations. The outcome is displayed in the table below.

Table 3.12 Teachers' Level of Satisfaction with the Cultural Content of the Textbooks They Use

Q16 Do the cultural contents of the textbook(s) you use meet your expectations?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, that is a great extent	6	5%
Yes, to an acceptable level	47	39.16%
No idea	23	19.16%
No, not that much	30	25%
No, Not at all.	14	11.66%
Total	120	99.99

It is apparent that 44.16% of instructors are happy with the cultural material in their textbooks to some level. Though it is also obvious that a significant number of instructors (36.66%) are dissatisfied with the textbook they are using since the textbook, they believe, does not match their expectations, and they might wish to complement some teaching resources beyond the textbook, but for various reasons, they are unable to do so.

As a result of overloaded curriculums, lack of time, examination pressure, self-payment for photocopied materials, and inadequate choice of cultural materials for culture teaching, teachers may not have the opportunity to select additional cultural teaching materials. The cultural content of the course is either not systematically presented or poorly selected, and the theme and information selected are narrow.

3.5. Learners perceptions on the importance of culture and cultural learning

According to Kahraman,(2016), to help students become more proficient in intercultural communication while learning ESL/EFL, cultural context and knowledge must be presented to them. Table below displays how the Kurdish learners view the value of culture and cultural education.

A= Very interested B= Interested C= Undecided D= Less interested E= Not interested

Table 3.13. Importance of culture and culture learning

	A	B	C	D	E
Q1 It is important for students to learn cultures of English-speaking countries, such as American and British cultures.	16%	46%	20%	11%	7%
Q2. It is important to obtain information about the target culture.	30%	45%	15%	6%	4%
Q3. It is important to obtain information about the shared values and beliefs of L2 culture.	9%	42%	31%	10%	8%
Q4. It is also important to promote students' understanding about their own culture.	22%	60%	6%	10%	2%
Q5. It is important to develop positive attitude and tolerance toward L2 culture.	19%	23%	51%	6%	1%
Q6. It is important for students to spend more time on learning L2 culture.	20%	39%	14%	20%	7%

The majority of participants, it can be shown from the statistics, believe that culture and cultural learning are important in the language education. The majority of participants (82%) agree that cultural learning can enable them to better appreciate their own culture, showing that these learners value their own culture just as highly as they do the target culture. Understanding one's own culture is crucial since it may prevent individuals from imposing their own beliefs on others. This might occur when individuals seem difficult to identify their own values from those of other cultures (Byram, 1997) due to their ignorance of their guiding principles. In contrast hand, understanding the culture of a different language might allow learners comprehend their own culture better. Learning about other cultures' differences can help students comprehend their own cultures better. Additionally, most of the participants (52%) thought that cultural learning might foster the growth of a positive perspective and tolerance towards language cultures. Cultural sensitivity develops tolerance while lowering learners' anxiety and preparing them to interact with various individuals in various contexts. Learners will better comprehend and resonate with their cultures' language and behavior as their awareness of them expands. This will increase students' tolerance for cultural differences and give them the ability to consider a certain language or behavior from the viewpoint of a different culture. It is unquestionably true that cultural learning can positively impact learners' perceptions of L2 culture (Allison & Vining, 1999). (51%) of the participants believed it is significant to learn about the shared values and viewpoints of L2 culture. Along with values and beliefs, culture also includes ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that define a particular group of people during a certain period of time (Allison & Vining, 1999). Furthermore, because they are conscious of cultural aspects, learners want language classes to give more time to L2 culture.

As a result, when teaching a foreign language, teachers should emphasize more than just the values and beliefs of the L2 culture. In a nutshell, cultural learning is essential for learning a new language. It clarifies what learners are learning about their own culture and increases their tolerance for cultures other than their own.

Table 3.14 shows the teachers and learners' overall perceptions towards cultural and learning culture in Kurdish EFL classrooms. The results showed that 43 percent of teachers were "very interested" in teaching culture; while the same percentage for the learners was 19.3. On the other hand; 42.5 percent of learners were "interested" in learning culture. The same percentages for the teachers were 25.1. The results also showed that 17.1 percent of teachers; i.e. 12.4 % "less interested" plus 4.7 % "not interested", claimed that they were not interested in teaching culture; while 15.2 percent of learners; i.e. 10.7 % "less interested" plus 4.5 % "not interested", believed that they were not interested in learning culture. Moreover; 14.8 percent of teachers, and 23 percent of learners were "undecided". Figure 4.2 shows the percentages discussed above. The teachers and learners have positive perspective towards culture and culture learning.

Table3.14. Frequencies and Percentages for Teachers and Learners' Perception of Culture & Culture Learning

		Very interested	Interested	Undecided	Less interested	Not interested	Total
Teachers	Count	516	301	178	149	56	1200
	%	43.0%	25.1%	14.8%	12.4%	4.7%	100.0%
Learners	Count	116	255	138	64	27	600
	%	19.3%	42.5%	23.0%	10.7%	4.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	632	556	316	213	83	1800
	%	35.1%	30.9%	17.6%	11.8%	4.6%	100.0%

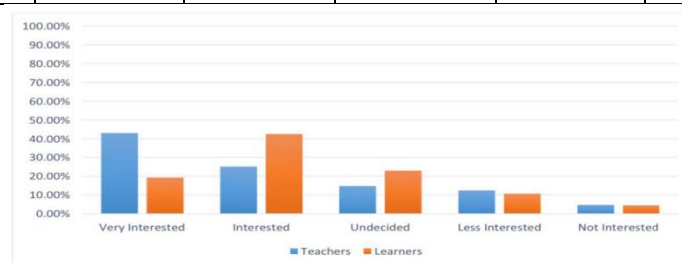


Figure 3.2

3.5. The Result of the Interviews

In order to confirm the findings of the questionnaire, 16 English teachers were interviewed. The use of cultural artifacts in English language courses, on the other hand, was suggested by one of the educators (**participant 14**), who thought it may help learners learn the language. This teacher thought that any cultural product, including films, music, and drawings, may benefit the kids' linguistic and cultural development. Via listening to and watching, they can increase their vocabulary, phonological understanding, and grammatical proficiency. The setting that the learners would learn English in would be created with a lot of focus on natural setting by this teacher. The details that cannot be taught can only be understood through art and media. Using cultural artifacts to build up courses in environments that are as natural as possible is something he highly advised teachers do.

This excerpt shows that **Teacher 6** was aware of the close relationship between language and culture and held the opinion that cultural learning was an integral part of learning a foreign language. Therefore, from his perspective, knowing about a culture entails discovering facts about the nation where the majority language is spoken.

Moreover, in this part their perspective on the role that culture has in their teaching methods is examined. Despite the fact that most of respondents think that cultural topics should be covered in the lectures, they do not prepare for them prior. They only make an effort to raise students' cultural knowledge and awareness when the teacher specifically asks them to or whenever the textbook places a great focus on a topic that is culturally relevant. The majority of the tasks in their lesson plans are focused on the four skills and the learners' linguistic competence:

Teacher 9, 13 and **12** extensively emphasized the value of infusing culture into language instruction, in opposed to Teacher 3 and 11 who tends to avoid discussing the cultural aspects. They make the argument that various social groups have diverse cultures. They think that the learners develop different kinds of culture depending on where they reside. According to these contributors, the students only learn a small amount about target culture. Learning, communication, and conduct are all influenced by culture. As a result, it significantly affects how learning and teaching are done. Some educators agree that it's important to cover all aspects of the target culture in the classroom.

The remaining participants think that bringing up cultural themes and elements can help to improve the learning environment and ultimately motivate the students. One recurring theme that reveals why the majority of educators consider it is crucial to include cultural components in English language instruction is their conviction that doing so will increase students' motivation.

Results and findings

The information offered relates to the instructors' attitudes toward cultural teaching and their opinions of the objectives of language and culture instruction. The statistics in this section demonstrate that most teachers are

enthusiastic about incorporating cultural teaching into language education and that they have positive views toward doing so. They view either the language teaching objectives or the culture education objectives more in terms of the overall educational goals, which include encouraging students' motivation and maintaining their enthusiasm in studying English, as well as broadening students' horizons through cultural teaching.

According to the results of the learners' survey study; Kurdish students place a high value on cultural learning during the course of their language acquisition. Kurdish learners contend that cultural learning can increase comprehension of a culture and is just as important as studying a language. Furthermore, cultural learning in language lessons can help students become more interculturally competent, and teachers are an essential part of this process.

The answers to the questionnaire revealed a number of inconsistencies in the regional education system. While the instructors who responded to the questionnaire appeared to comprehend the goal of incorporating culture into language education, the time allotted for cultural awareness remains restricted in practice. However the instructors who responded to the questionnaire appeared to comprehend the goal of incorporating culture into language education, the time allotted for cultural awareness remains restricted in practice. Despite educators have expressed an eagerness to incorporate a cultural component into their classroom instruction, in reality their personal inadequacy limits the impact of it. Teachers think language learning should ultimately aim to help students enhance their intercultural competence (ICC), and that doing so requires that students have an open attitude toward various cultures. The curriculum, in the opinion of the instructors, did not expressly explain or clarify these affirmations of belief. Therefore, it appears that there is a discrepancy between the official statement and the instructor's ideas.

In addition, information indicates instructors have made an effort to discover the curriculum's designated cultural teaching objectives. Based on their comprehending, the goal of culture education seems to promote and sustain students' long-lasting engagement and inspiration in language learning, to broaden their perspectives through the language they are acquiring, and to make learners comprehend the most widely acknowledged cultural differences. Despite explicit cultural goals have been established, judgments must still be taken regarding which cultural elements should be incorporated to improve communication and how they should be given to learners. According to Kramsch & Murphy-Lejeune (1996), language teaching is still functioning on a fairly limited conception of both language and culture" because there do not appear to be any obvious criteria that can aid appropriate decisions (Met, 1993).

4. Conclusions:

Since this research is compared to numerous others in the literature, the findings are occasionally similar and occasionally different. In a nutshell, we can simply state that teachers only educate what they believe to be critically vital to their students. Intercultural competency is essentially conceptualized in this way by language teachers and students. The practicality of introducing cultural factors in our educational settings will become more apparent if this reality is understood by both participants. The next stage is within our reach and feasible because, as the study has shown, most students are inherently prepared to accept and assimilate the cultural knowledge. In other words, there are students preparing who are conscious of how desperately they demand new cultural information and who are prepared to study and apply it as a supplementary element of their "communicative competence." Overall, despite the fact that culture in ELT remains one of the contentious problems, English teachers in the globalized world may serve as flag bearers and be well-educated in order to be capable of meeting the requirements of the students in this rapidly changing environment. Curriculum for teacher education must be changed and may contain modules like intercultural communication in order to provide future teachers with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence in order to prepare English teachers who are mindful of the requirements of the century. English teachers will ultimately be better equipped to incorporate cultural practices in their teaching and satisfy the needs of the students in today's changing environment if they have more knowledge and competence in this area.

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