HOW LIKELY IS IT TO TEACH CULTURE IN EFL COURSES? - THE CASE OF PRIVATE AND STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TURKEY

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Abstract:

With the recognition of English as a Lingua Franca, intercultural communication has gained great importance. As a result, culture teaching has become an indispensable component of EFL classrooms. Even though there has been extensive research on the attitudes of EFL teachers towards culture teaching, few studies were found bringing attention to the differences between private and state school teachers to this end. The purpose of this research is therefore to shed light on private and state school EFL teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching, their classroom practices, and the obstacles they come across upon this. The participants are 72 EFL teachers (32 state, 32 private) working at different institutions in Turkey. The data were collected employing a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that both private and state school teachers have positive attitudes towards culture incorporation in their lessons. However, private school EFL teachers were proven to have more positive opinions about culture teaching. The findings also indicated that both private and state school EFL teachers integrate culture into their lessons to some extent. However, both groups reported some obstacles that they come across while teaching culture. The details are further discussed and the implications are made in the article.

Keywords: culture teaching; intercultural communication; EFL; private school teachers; state school teachers

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication has become an indispensable component of everyday life for many non-native speakers of English drastically with the recognition of English as a lingua franca, the inevitable impact of globalization, and the advancements in Computer-Mediated Communication. As a result, countless non-native speakers engage in

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communication with native and non-native speakers of English in various contexts. Undoubtedly, successful communication in intercultural environments requires interlocutors to have much more than lexico-grammatical knowledge.

After Hymes' (1972) proposal of "*communicative competence*" (CC), the perspective for language learning and teaching shifted from learning of grammatical formulas and lexicon to the use of language for communicative purposes in various contexts. After his notion, different models of CC were presented by other scholars (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990). McConachy (2009) underscored that all these models of CC "*…share one point; recognition of the fact that being competent in a language, whether first or subsequent, means a lot more than simply knowing how to form syntactically accurate sentences*" (p. 116). Karatepe and Yılmaz (2018a) assert that focusing on culture in EFL courses helps learners achieve sociolinguistic competence that is a crucial subdivision of CC.

Many scholars contend that improving Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) should also be the focus of language instruction in addition to CC (Byram, 1997; Mostafaei & Nosrati, 2018). Deardorff (2006) puts forward the definition of ICC as the "*ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes*" (p. 247). Bennett (1993) defines the non-native speakers who are linguistically competent in the target language while having little or no knowledge about the target language culture as "*fluent fools*". Thus, EFL teachers are required to draw specific attention on particular cultural elements to avoid their learners becoming fluent fools. Brown (2000) emphasized that "*a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture*" (p.177). Furthermore, Neff and Rucynski (2013) underscored the vital role of cultural familiarity for successful interaction in English.

Learning ICC is a challenging task, especially for the ones who learn the target language in educational contexts where English is not spoken outside the language classroom due to the lack of engagement with the cultural elements of the target language community. When EFL learners lack knowledge of cultural and social norms of English, they tend to transfer the norms of their L1, which leads them to perform inappropriate language in intercultural contexts (For instance; Karatepe, 2016). Fantini (2006) emphasized that grammatical errors are more likely to be tolerated by the listeners while culture-oriented errors can be offensive for them. This, as a result, may cause a breakdown in communication or a negative impression of the speaker on the listener. In order to avoid such unpleasant situations in intercultural communication, "*learners need to also develop behaviours and attitudes as well as cognitive skills in order to avoid cultural misunderstandings*" (Petosi & Karras, 2020, p. 9). Moreover, Karatepe and Yılmaz (2018a) suggested that teachers are required to adopt a holistic view for their teaching practices that covers cultural dimensions.

More recently, there has been a growing recognition of the vital links between culture and EFL teaching in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Many studies have been carried out to find out the attitudes of EFL teachers towards culture teaching

(Bayyurt, 2006; Karabinar & Yunuslar-Güler, 2012; Ghavamnia, 2020), the relationship between their beliefs and classroom practices (Zhao, 2011; Kuru Gonen & Saglam, 2012; Petosi and Karras, 2020), and parents' beliefs (Punar & Karatepe, 2019). All of these studies have made valuable contributions to the field and highlighted the significance of culture teaching in EFL courses. However, a few studies were found focusing on private and state school EFL teachers' views on culture teaching and their instructional practices to this end (Bayyurt, 2006; Karabinar & Yunuslar-Güler, 2012). To fill in this gap, this paper is an attempt to investigate the attitudes of private and state school EFL teachers in Turkey towards incorporating culture in their courses and their instructional practices.

2. Literature Review

The term "ICC" was first introduced by Byram (1997). According to Byram (2009) language education should aim to enable learners to interact with both native and nonnative speakers of the language in intercultural contexts. However, it may be highly difficult for non-native speakers of English to engage in successful communication with people from diversity of cultural backgrounds when they lack ICC. In order to accomplish ICC, EFL learners are required to have adequate cultural awareness. Thus, culture teaching should be incorporated in EFL courses.

The concept of culture has received considerable interest from scholars and it has been defined in various ways. In the field of ELT, one of the most referred definitions of culture was made by Brown (1987, p.122) as:

> *"a way of life; the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others; the 'glue' that binds a group of people together; and the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools which characterize a given group of people in a given period of time."*

As seen in Brown's definition, culture includes more than customs, skills, and arts. It is a broader term that also covers shared invisible features of a specific community such as the way people live, feel, and interact with others. However, it has been noted culture teaching is limited to visible aspects of the language such as holidays and special days in EFL classrooms (Sayer, 2012).

Even though many researchers underscored the significance of culture teaching in EFL courses (Genç & Bada, 2005; Gönen & Sağlam, 2012), Önalan (2005) stated that grammatical aspects of the language are mostly covered in EFL classes while cultural aspects are regarded as optional-extra. Yet, Damen (1987) postulated culture as the fifth skill in addition to the four language skills.

Many studies have been carried out to investigate to what extent culture teaching takes place in EFL classrooms. Some of these studies examined the place of cultural elements in textbooks (Moirano, 2012; Kim & Paek, 2015). Unfortunately, these studies advocated that textbooks fail to represent cultural elements. If so, even culture-related activities frankly aim to foster linguistic competence. Since textbooks are the main source

of language input and information in EFL classrooms, they are strictly followed by teachers and students. This results in the underrepresentation of cultural elements of the target language in EFL classrooms. Due to the shortcomings of EFL textbooks in terms of presenting culture, it appears to be the teachers' duty to enrich the lesson content to familiarize their learners with specific cultural elements.

It has been emphasized that there is a strong relationship between teachers' attitudes towards a specific topic and their classroom practices (Carter & Doyle, 1995). Thus, EFL teachers' opinions about culture teaching have been the subject of interest for the last decades. For instance, one of the most cited studies was carried out by Sercu (2006). In her study, she aimed to explore to what extent the teachers' profiles match with the expected foreign language and ICC teacher. Being an international research, it was conducted with secondary school foreign language teachers from seven countries. (Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Mexico, Poland). The findings indicated that even though teachers regard themselves as culturally equipped, their profiles do not meet the requirements of a typical foreign language and ICC teacher. In other words, teachers felt competent enough to teach culture but not the ICC fully. It was also seen that teachers are not capable of modifying teaching materials by pursuing an intercultural perspective. On the whole, teachers from all the countries are inclined and willing to incorporate ICC in foreign language education. These teachers state that culture teaching is equally important as language education. On the other hand, the teachers who do not support the integration of ICC are appeared to have the opinion that it is not achievable to integrate both language and ICC teaching.

Another study was conducted by Kuru Gonen and Saglam (2012) in the Turkish context. They aimed to shed light on the views of Turkish EFL teachers on culture teaching and to what extent they include cultural elements in their lessons. The participants were 60 EFL teachers, 30 of whom graduated from ELT programs, and the other half graduated from non-ELT departments such as English Language and Literature, Translation and Interpretation, etc. The results yielded that most of the participants were aware of the significant role of culture in language teaching. It was also reported that teachers had more or less knowledge about the cultural aspects of the language. However, it was noted that they had some obstacles to include cultural dimensions in their classrooms due to curricular expectations and shortcomings.

Similarly, Nguyen, Harvey, and Grant (2016) carried out research to question EFL teachers' beliefs about integrating culture in their classes and to what extent they include culture in their classroom practices. The results indicated that the participants did not allocate much time to teach culture in their EFL courses. In other words, their classroom practices regarding culture teaching seemed to be quite limited. Some of the participants reported that it was not their duty to introduce cultural elements of the target language. They also stated that their duty in the classroom is to teach the target language rather than the culture.

Likewise, Ahmed, Qasem, and Pawar (2019) conducted research to investigate Yemeni EFL teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching and their classroom practices.

The participants were EFL instructors working at Aden University. The results revealed that EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards culture teaching; however, it has been noted that there was a gap between their opinions and classroom practices. The findings also indicated that the female participants have more positive attitudes than the male ones towards culture teaching in their classrooms.

In another study, Ghavamnia (2020) investigated the EFL teachers' beliefs and perspectives on the embodiment of culture in EFL courses in Iran. The results revealed that participants' opinions were in favour of combining language teaching with cultural elements. Yet, they reported some obstacles preventing them from teaching culture in their classes such as lack of time to include culture teaching, lack of required skills and knowledge, inadequate support for culture learning, and prioritization of teaching linguistic aspects of the language etc.

Additionally, Petosi and Karras (2020) brought attention to the beliefs of Greek EFL teachers regarding ICC teaching and their instructional practices. Their findings remarked that the EFL teachers adopted highly positive attitudes towards culture teaching. They appeared to be willing to integrate culture in their lessons. It was noted that even though they prioritized linguistic objectives over cultural ones, they regarded cultural elements as a must in English language teaching and learning. The findings regarding teachers' instructional practices indicated that helping students develop positive attitudes towards other cultures was considered as the core cultural objective.

In Turkey, private schools mostly advertise their education with a strong focus on foreign language education. As a result, they are expected to provide students with a more intense language training program. Therefore, private schools differ from state schools in terms of their language teaching policy. For instance, the number of hours allocated to EFL courses, the materials, and extra-curricular activities related to English can be listed as some aspects that private schools outperform the state schools. However, the studies addressing the place of culture in private and state schools in Turkey are quite a few (Bayyurt, 2006; Karabinar & Yunuslar-Güler, 2012). Thus, this paper is an attempt to reveal the answers to the following research questions (RQ);

1. What are the attitudes of EFL teachers towards the embodiment of culture in their courses?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of private and state school EFL teachers towards the embodiment of culture in their classrooms?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the classroom practices of private and state school EFL teachers in terms of culture teaching?
4. What aspects of culture are taught in EFL courses by state and private school EFL teachers?
5. What are the obstacles that private and state school EFL teachers come across while teaching culture in their courses?

3. Methodology

This paper was based on a mixed-method approach since the data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study benefited from the "Triangulation Design" that refers to the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously so as to reach out to well-validated conclusions (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009, p.142).

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study are 72 private and state school EFL teachers teaching different age groups (see Table 1). 54 of the participants (75 %) were female while the remaining 18 of them (25 %) were male. The age of the participants varied from 23 to 47. However, more than half of the participants (*n*= 47; 65.2 %) were aged between 23-26. The study included both novice and experienced teachers. Yet, novice teachers having experience of 1-3 (*n*=51; 70.8 %) years outnumbered the more experienced ones in this study. The participants were accessed via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a useful data collection strategy at times when it is difficult to access participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). The data were gathered during the Covid-19 outbreak when it was difficult to access participants.

Table 1: Participants' workplaces

	State	Private
Primary school	5	16
Middle school	14	11
High school	14	9
University	3	0
Total	36	36

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaire

In the first phase of the study, a questionnaire consisting of three parts was employed for data collection. The questionnaire was first developed by Sercu (2005) and employed in various studies for data collection afterwards. Kuru Gonen and Saglam (2012) later adapted Sercu's questionnaire to collect data in Turkey. In this study, Kuru Gonen and Saglam's version of the questionnaire was used since this study also took place in Turkey.

In the adaptation process of the original questionnaire, Kuru Gonen and Saglam (2012) employed expert judgement for content validity and its applicability to the Turkish context. After that, they consulted 15 EFL teachers for the clarity of the items. Accordingly, they have made the necessary changes to the original questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions regarding the participants' demographic information such as age, gender, workplace, years of teaching experience, etc. The second part of the questionnaire included a 5-point Likert scale (from 1- *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*) consisting of 15 items regarding the attitudes towards culture

teaching in EFL courses. The final part of the questionnaire included a 3-point Likert scale (from 1-*never* to 3- *often*) consisting of 15 items related to classroom practices of EFL teachers considering culture. Before calculating Cronbach's Alpha values, negative statements in the attitude scale (Items 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) were reverse-coded. Later, the reliability scores of each scale were calculated and they were found to be reliable (see Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability scores of the scales employed in this study

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Score
Attitudes of EFL teachers towards culture teaching in their courses	15	0.74
Classroom practices of EFL teachers regarding culture	15	0.83

3.2.2. The Interview Protocol

After the analysis of quantitative data, "*a semi-structured interview*" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.361) was conducted with 16 of the participants (8 private school teachers, 8 state school teachers) to get in-depth information about their views on culture teaching in their courses, the obstacles they come across while teaching culture, and the aspects of culture they teach in their lessons. The interviews consisted of 4 questions (see appendix A).

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The first participants were contacted via e-mail or the instant messaging tool *WhatsApp* and they were kindly asked to participate in the study. The questionnaire was presented in a Google Forms format and the link of the questionnaire was shared with the participants. The first participants were also asked to share the URL of the questionnaire with their colleagues. The names of the participants were not asked in the questionnaire to prevent any bias and for anonymity considerations.

After the collection and the analysis of the questionnaire data, 20 participants were invited to take part in the interview protocol and 16 of them agreed. The interviewees were contacted via mobile phones by the authors and the interviews were recorded with another mobile phone. They lasted between 8 to 11 minutes.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed by using SPSS 26. In order to answer the RQ 1, descriptive statistics were calculated and percentages for each item were presented. For RQ 2, the normality test was first conducted. Skewness and kurtosis values were found to be between +1.5 and -1.5, which means that the data were normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, an independent samples t-test was employed to investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of EFL teachers working at state schools and their counterparts at private schools towards

culture embodiment in their lessons. To answer the RQ 3, independent samples t-tests were conducted for each item in the second scale regarding teachers' classroom practices.

In order to answer RQ 4 and 5, the interview data was analysed. To this end, content analysis was employed through which the interviews were transcribed, and recurring themes were identified. The interview data was also used to provide an in-depth investigation of the RQs 2 and 3.

4. Results

In order to investigate the attitudes of EFL teachers towards the embodiment of culture in their lessons, descriptive statistics of the participants' responses to the attitude scale were calculated and demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Results of the Attitude Scale

Scale	Percent (%)			Mean	SD
	Disagree	**Undecided**	**Agree**		
1. In a FL classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the FL.	1.4	12.5	86.1	4.40	0.76
2. It is impossible to teach the foreign language and the foreign culture in an integrated way.	79.2	19.4	1.4	1.77	0.80
3. The more students know about the foreign culture, the more tolerant they are.	6.9	11.2	81.9	4.20	0.90
4. When speakers of different languages meet, misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic as from cultural differences.	4.2	27.7	68.1	3.91	0.85
5. Foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.	4.2	20.8	75.0	3.97	0.85
6. The cultural dimension in foreign language classes should be expanded.	8.3	12.5	79.2	4.01	0.92
7. European and global identities of the student/ citizen should be fostered in foreign language/ culture classes.	9.7	20.8	69.5	3.80	0.92
8. All the English-speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an English syllabus.	23.6	30.6	45.8	3.31	1.07
9. The study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy.	29.2	15.3	55.5	3.34	1.29
10. Learning about a foreign culture can change the student's attitude towards her/ his own culture.	61.1	20.8	18.1	2.34	1.21
11. An emphasis on the study of foreign cultures can contribute to the student's loss of cultural identity.	20.8	13.9	65.3	3.66	1.19
12. The most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is to develop a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures.	56.9	29.2	13.9	2.36	1.09

13. The development of cultural awareness should be kept only for the most advanced levels.	19.4	15.3	65.3	3.52	1.17
14. Teaching culture motivates students.	0	5.6	94.4	4.55	0.60
15. Combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills.	1.4	4.2	94.4	4.55	0.64

As seen in Table 3, most of the participants (86.1 %) advocated the importance of culture teaching in EFL courses. Two of the items (14 and 15) received the highest score on the scale (M= 4.55). These findings demonstrated that EFL teachers agreed that the integration of culture in EFL courses motivates learners and enables them to enhance their language skills. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics showed that the participants held the view that cultural knowledge is as important as linguistic knowledge while learning a foreign language (M=3.91). The results also indicated that the participants have some doubts about the incorporation of culture into EFL lessons. Even though most participants (79.2 %) professed the view that it is possible to include culture as a component in EFL classes, more than three-quarters of the teachers (65.3 %) supported the idea that culture should be a part of advanced language classrooms. Another striking result is that more than half of the participants (65.3 %) believed that culture teaching could bring about loss of learners' own cultural identity. Furthermore, some of them also worry that including cultural elements in EFL classes might interfere with the learners' development of linguistic accuracy (M= 3.34).

RQ 2 asked whether there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of private and state school EFL teachers towards the integration of cultural elements in their classes. To this end, an independent samples t-test was run. Before conducting the t-test, negative items (2, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13) in the scale were reverse-coded. The t-test results were presented in Table 4.

Table 4: T-test results regarding private and
state school EFL teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching

Groups	N	$\bar{x}$	Sd	t	p
State School Teachers	36	3,59	0.41	2.24	.028
Private School Teachers	36	3,83	0.46		

The independent samples t-test results revealed that private school EFL teachers have more positive attitudes towards culture teaching than state school EFL teachers (respectively; M= 3.83, M= 3.59). The t-test results also indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of private and state school EFL teachers towards culture teaching. (*p*= 0.028). However, the effect size was found to be small (Cohen's *d*= 0.48).

The interview results supported the questionnaire results. Both state and private school EFL teachers agreed that culture and language are interwoven. Thus, they stated

that culture should be an unavoidable part of language classrooms. They reported some reasons to integrate culture into EFL courses. These reasons are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Reasons to integrate culture in EFL courses

Reasons	Frequency	
	Private	State
Including culture in EFL courses motivates learners.	5	4
Cultural elements attract learners' attention.	1	5
Presenting cultural elements creates a meaningful context.	4	5
Learners become more tolerant towards other cultures.	3	1
Integration of culture increases cultural awareness.	4	2
Integration of culture helps learners improve their intercultural competence.	4	2
School's expectations	3	0

The findings presented in Table 5 indicated that both private and state school teachers are aware of the benefits of including culture in their classes. As different from state school teachers, some private school teachers reported that their schools expect them to integrate culture teaching in their lessons.

RQ 3 attempted to investigate whether there is any statistically significant difference between state and private school EFL teachers' classroom practices regarding culture. To this end, the mean scores of each item in the second scale for both private and state school teachers and their t-test results were presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Classroom practices of private and state school EFL teachers regarding culture

Scale	Mean		t-value
	Private	State	
1. I ask my students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country.	2.41	2.00	0.007
2. I tell my students what I heard (or read) about the foreign country or culture.	2.80	2.61	0.091
3. I tell my students why I find something fascinating or strange about the foreign culture(s).	2.63	2.66	0.827
4. I ask my students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture.	2.38	2.30	0.592
5. I use videos, CD-ROMs or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign culture.	2.63	2.61	0.844
6. I ask my students to think about what it would be like to live in the foreign culture.	2.66	2.36	0.045
7. I talk to my students about my own experiences in the foreign country	2.33	2.13	0.303
8. If I have the chance, I invite a person originating from the foreign country to my classroom.	2.44	2.44	1.000
9. I ask my pupils to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language.	2.38	2.36	0.855
10. I bring objects originating from the foreign culture to my classroom.	1.77	1.86	0.626

11. I decorate my classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture.	1.94	1.83	0.529
12. I comment on the way in which the foreign culture is represented in the classroom materials.	2.08	2.27	0.240
13. I ask my students to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture.	2.33	2.38	0.738
14. I touch upon an aspect of the foreign culture regarding which I feel negatively disposed.	2.02	1.75	0.056
15. I talk with my students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries.	2.47	2.11	0.023

In Table 6, each statement represents an activity that can be conducted in an EFL classroom regarding culture. The results in Table 6 indicate that both private and state school EFL teachers try to integrate culture in their lessons to some extent. It was seen that state school teachers outperformed the private school teachers in some activities (3, 5, 10, 12, 13) while it was vice versa in other activities except Activity 8 in which both groups have the same mean score. According to t-test results, statistically differences between the two groups were found in only 3 activities (1, 6, 15) in all of which private school teachers outperformed their counterparts working at state schools.

RQ 4 asked what aspects of culture are taught in EFL courses by private and state school EFL teachers. In order to answer this question, interview responses were analysed and recurring themes were presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Cultural aspects taught by private and state school EFL teachers

Cultural Aspects	Private	State
Capital C	7	6
Small c	4	3
I don't teach cultural aspects.	0	2

As demonstrated in Table 7, state and private school teachers cover both visible (Capital C) and invisible (small c) aspects of culture. However, it was seen that visible aspects of culture such as food, drinks, music, and special days etc. are taught much more than invisible aspects of culture such as lifestyle, and conversational behaviour etc. by EFL teachers from the two groups.

RQ 5 asked what the obstacles that private and state school EFL teachers come across while teaching culture in their classrooms. Therefore, the interview findings were analysed and recurring themes were identified in Table 8.

Table 8: Obstacles that state and private school EFL teachers come across while teaching culture

Obstacles	Frequency	
	Private	State
Parents' bias	1	2
Students' bias	4	4
Lack of time/curricular considerations	1	3
School Administration	1	4

Learners' proficiency	0	3
No obstacle	2	0

As shown in Table 8, both state and private school teachers mentioned various obstacles that they encounter while teaching culture. The most common obstacle reported equally by both private and state school EFL teachers was "students' bias". Two of the private school teachers stated that they do not come across any obstacles while teaching culture in their classrooms. One of the interviewees strictly criticized the obstacles which were reported by other teachers by saying:

> *"Probably, there'll be teachers complaining about lack of time or too much workload, but I don't agree with them. I think they are making ridiculous excuses to cover their laziness. I've been teaching English for 5 years and I haven't had any problems while teaching culture. I think they do not love their job and are not trying to do their best."*

5. Discussion

In the light of the data analysed, the findings reveal the following aspects. Firstly, the study investigated the views of EFL teachers on the integration of culture in their classes. The results indicated that the participants mostly have positive views on the embodiment of culture in EFL classes as found in the previous studies (Sercu, 2006; Bayyurt, 2006; Luk, 2012; Ghavamnia, 2020; Ahmed, Qasem & Pawar, 2019). They also reported that the incorporation of culture into EFL classes has a motivating impact on learners and helps them foster their language skills. The motivating impact of culture integration was also underscored in other studies (Genç & Bada, 2005; Önalan, 2005). As opposed to the previous studies (Kuru Gonen & Saglam, 2012), this paper reveals some concerns of the EFL teachers about the emphasis on cultural elements in their lessons. For illustration, more than half of the teachers maintained that such emphasis might bring about a detrimental impact on learners' own cultural identity. Loss of learners' own cultural identity was also emphasized as a concern in Choudhury's (2013) study. Moreover, a significant number of participants reported that culture teaching should be a component of advanced language classrooms. This finding is also in line with the previous reach in the field (Karabinar & Yunuslar-Güler, 2012; Tran & Dang, 2014). The teachers also reported that including cultural elements provide learners with a meaningful context. The contextualization of lesson content in EFL classrooms has been regarded of great importance (Yılmaz & Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe & Yılmaz, 2018a; Karatepe & Yılmaz, 2018b). Apart from the positive views of teachers mentioned previously, more than half of the teachers believed that integration of culture might inhibit the progress of linguistic accuracy.

Secondly, the study questioned whether there is any statistically significant discrepancy between the opinions of state and private school EFL teachers about the integration of culture in their lessons. The results yielded that the private school EFL

teachers have more positive opinions about the incorporation of culture when compared to the state school EFL teachers. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, no difference was found between state and private university EFL instructors in Karabinar and Yunuslar-Güler's (2012) study.

Another aim of this paper was to compare the classroom practices of state and private school EFL teachers regarding culture teaching. The findings suggested that both teacher groups embed cultural aspects in their lessons to some extent as found in other studies (Sercu, 2006; Kuru Gonen & Saglam, 2012). However, it was also reported that private school teachers outperformed the state school teachers in their classroom practices even though there hasn't been found any statistically significant difference between the two groups in most of the activities. It is worth noting that some statistically significant differences were determined for three activities in which the private school teachers surpassed the state school teachers. These activities are (1) asking questions about stereotypes regarding a particular culture, (2) asking learners to think about what it would be like to live in a foreign country, (3) asking learners to consider how media portrays a particular country.

Additionally, the paper inquired the aspects of culture which are covered by private and state school teachers. The results demonstrated that the visible aspects of culture such as music, food, clothes are included much more than the invisible aspects of culture such as beliefs, lifestyle, and conversational behaviour by both state and private school teachers. Sayer (2012) also expressed that invisible aspects of culture are underrepresented in EFL classrooms.

The final purpose of this research was to reveal the obstacles that private and state school EFL teachers encounter while teaching culture in their classrooms. Both private and state school teachers rated student bias as the most common obstacle they face during their classroom practices. They also mentioned some other obstacles such as parents' bias, lack of time, the opposition of school administration about the incorporation of culture, and learners' proficiency. These obstacles were also remarked in the previous studies (Nguyen, Harvey & Grant, 2016; Karatepe & Punar, 2020; Ghavamnia, 2020). It was also seen that state school teachers are more likely to come across these obstacles in their working environments.

6. Conclusion

With the recognition of English as a lingua franca, the number of English speakers has been increasing gradually. What's more, intercultural communication has become an unavoidable part of our lives recently. Thus, non-native speakers of English are required to become competent in communicating in intercultural contexts. In other words, they need to improve their ICC. To accomplish this, they are to have cultural awareness. However, it is not an easy task for EFL learners to improve their cultural awareness on their own. Therefore, cultural aspects of the target language should be included in EFL courses.

As emphasized in the review of literature, there is a strong relationship between teachers' attitudes towards a particular subject and their instructional practices regarding this subject. Therefore, this paper was an attempt to investigate private and state school EFL teachers' opinions about the incorporation of culture into their lessons and their classroom practices.

The findings of this study provided us with rich information about private and state school EFL teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching and their instructional practices. It is documented that both private and state school EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards the embodiment of culture in their lessons. However, it is notable that private EFL school teachers were proven to have more positive opinions than their counterparts working at state schools. Moreover, private school EFL teachers also outperform state school EFL teachers in terms of their culture-embedded classroom practices. The reason for this may stem from the time that is allocated to English courses at private schools is much more than state schools. This provides private school teachers with more time to integrate cultural elements in their courses. Furthermore, the textbooks used at private schools are mostly international commercial books that are more likely to include cultural elements which makes culture embodiment much easier for private school teachers. The EFL teachers also pointed out some concerns about the impact of such integration on learners such as causing loss of their cultural identity and interfering with the progress of linguistic accuracy.

Additionally, it was indicated that visible aspects of culture are taught in EFL classrooms while invisible aspects are overlooked by both state and private school EFL teachers. It is also reported that both private and state school EFL teachers encounter obstacles while including culture in their classes. However, it is documented that private school EFL teachers are less likely to come across obstacles while implementing culture-embedded lessons.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

One limitation of this study is that it is conducted with a small sample. Thus, the results of this study may not be generalizable to a broader range. We recommend that more studies should be conducted to explore the opinions of private and state school EFL teachers about culture incorporation and their classroom practices with larger samples. Since some aspects of culture are overlooked in EFL courses, we suggest that teacher training programs should revisit their curriculum. So, they can equip prospective teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills for teaching all aspects of culture.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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