A qualitative study of Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning culture: A case study

Elaheh Sotoudehnama[1]
Associate Professor, Alzahra University
Seyyedeh Susan Marandi
Assistant Professor, Alzahra University
Parisa Mehran
Ph.D. Student, Alzahra University

Abstract

Culture has always been the center of attention in English language teaching (ELT) and there are arguments for and against its teaching. This study was an attempt to explore Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning the target (i.e., American or British) culture in the realm of ELT; it also tried to arrive at a definition of culture based on the interpretations of Iranian EFL teachers. Twenty full time and part time teachers of the English Language and Literature Department of Alzahra University participated in the present study. In this study, a qualitative research method was used. To achieve triangulation, the data were collected from three main sources: Questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The findings revealed that the teachers of this study mainly perceived culture in terms of small c culture, including beliefs, behaviors, traditions, customs, and way of living. In general, the results of this study demonstrated that most of the

[1] Corresponding author at Alzahra University
Email address: esotoude@alzahra.ac.ir

Teaching/learning culture

teachers supported teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. However, this advocacy was not blind and they believed some prerequisites should be met.

Keywords: culture, culture teaching, culture learning, teachers' beliefs

1. Introduction

In the world of language teaching, culture has received special attention. Language teaching scholars have defined culture in different ways. For instance, Risager (2006, p. 33) defines culture as "something that marks off groups of people from each other." Giroux (2000, p. 132) considers culture as "the site where identities are constructed, desires mobilized, and moral values shaped." Gebhard (2006, p. 119) refers to culture as "the common values and beliefs of a people and the behaviors that reflect them."

Defining culture, many scholars have distinguished between small c culture and Capital C culture (e.g., Chastain, 1988; Thanasoulas, 2001). According to them, Culture with a Capital C is based on the definition of culture as cultural products of a society, including art, literature, music, politics, economics, etc.; and culture with a small c is based on the definition of culture as a way of life comprising beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors, customs, and lifestyles of everyday people.

In the field of language teaching, culture is a significant notion and there are various views of the concept of culture in ELT leading to controversies (Atkinson, 1999). Among these debates, for a long time, the very exclusion or inclusion of the target culture in language teaching has been under discussion.

2. Literature Review

On one hand, most language teachers have traditionally stressed that the target culture should be an integral part of language instruction. The early roots of teaching culture can be traced back to

the seventeenth century when culture was introduced mainly through realia dealing with factual knowledge (Risager, 2007). In the history of language teaching, investigated by Larsen-Freeman (2000), the Grammar-Translation Method or Classical Method is one of the oldest known teaching methodologies, and it viewed culture as literature and fine arts. With the emergence of other methods of language teaching, such as the Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, culture was treated differently. "The history of the people who speak the target language," "the geography of the country or countries where the language is spoken," "information about the daily lives of the speakers of the language," (p. 29) and "the everyday behavior and lifestyle of the target language speakers" (p. 46) became the center of attention in the realm of teaching culture. In the Silent Way and Community Language Learning, culture was regarded as an inseparable part of language and an integral part of language teaching and learning. In Communicative Language Teaching, culture was considered as the everyday lifestyle of people who use the language. Thus, teaching culture almost always had a place in language teaching and, as Higgs (1990) states, language teachers have kept their profession's implicit commandment: "Thou shalt not teach language without also teaching culture" (cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

The advocates of teaching culture not only insist on the teaching of the target language culture but they also believe that culture cannot be separated from language and that every language teacher is thus a culture teacher (e.g., Kramsch, 1993; Tang, 1999). In fact, the main rationale that supporters of teaching culture use to justify teaching culture is that language and culture are inseparable, interconnected, and intermingled (e.g., W. Jiang, 2000; Kramsch, 1998). The importance of context in language teaching has been mentioned as another reason for teaching culture (Kramsch, 1993). Furthermore, Kramsch (2004), Larzén-Östermark (2005), and Sercu et al. (2005) believe that teaching the target culture can increase intercultural communicative competence. According to Baker (2003), Cheung (2001), and G. Jiang (2006), motivation is augmented through teaching the target culture. Chastain (1998) also

Teaching/learning culture

believes that teaching the target culture can cause awareness about the learners' own culture. In addition, some scholars like Kilickaya (2004) and Kramsch (1993) remark that teaching the target culture leads to authenticity in language classrooms.

On the other hand, opponents of teaching culture claim that teaching the target culture is irrelevant and can even be problematic, disadvantageous, and dangerous in the process of language learning (e.g., Alptekin, 1993; Alptekin & Alptekin, 1984; McKay, 2003; Modiano, 2001).

A large number of scholars like Baker (2012), McKay (2003), Modiano (2001), and Nizegorodcew (2011) believe that English as an international language pedagogy belongs to no particular culture and instead requires cultural pluralism, and thus teaching the target culture no longer makes any sense. Thus, the use of English as a lingua franca is not limited to the culture of British or American native speakers and the role of English language is no longer related to the target language culture(s); rather, it is a language for international and intercultural communication.

Moreover, opponents of teaching/learning the target culture have taken into account different orientations that language learners have toward learning a second language. Traditionally, according to Gardner and Lambert (1972), there are two types of orientations to motivation: Instrumental and integrative orientations. Those language learners who have an integrative orientation are eager to involve and integrate themselves in the culture of the target language. On the other hand, some language learners just have instrumental goals for learning a second language; for example, learning a language in order to find a job. Gardner and Lambert believe that integrativeness is a necessity for successful language learning. In contrast, it was revealed that there are some language learners who have an anti-integrative orientation toward the target language and its culture; i.e., they are not interested in integrating with the target culture and in fact they resist the target culture. Nonetheless, such language learners do learn the target language in spite of their anti-integrative attitude (e.g., Perez, 1984, cited in Action & Walker de Felix, 1986; Sotoudehnama, 2001). Dörnyei

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

(2005) also questions the traditional consideration of integrative orientation due to the spread of English and its use as a lingua franca. He believes that language learners no longer want to integrate with the culture associated to the native speakers of English; rather, they want to assimilate with a global culture.

Linguacultural imperialism (linguistic and cultural imperialism) is postulated as one of the possible dangers of not only teaching/learning the target culture but also English language teaching and learning in general. Phillipson (1992), as one of the major advocates of this view, believes that English is an imperialist language. For Kachru (1986) and Pennycook (1998) also, English is a colonial language. Moreover, Canagarajah (1999) is against the imposition of western values through ELT and he suggests critical pedagogy, through which the linguistic and cultural imperialism of ELT can be resisted. Indeed, according to these scholars, there should be a move toward the decolonization of applied linguistics and ELT and there is a need to "work in and against English to find cultural alternatives to the cultural constructs of colonialism" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 218).

Here it is worth mentioning that culture has also been the center of attention for Islamic-Iranian scholars and it has been a matter of great importance to them (Siahpoosh & Aghapoor, 2011). Imam Khomeini (1983), the leader of the Islamic revolution of Iran, believes that "without a doubt, the greatest and most exalted element which greatly affects a society is the culture of that society" (Vol. 15, p. 16). Imam Khomeini was against colonial culture and always warned against self-alienation, westernization, and easternization and emphasized Islamic culture, because for Imam Khomeini, Islamic culture is "the highest, most advanced culture of all" (Vol. 10, p. 71). Ayatollah Khamenei (1994), the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, also warns against the danger inherent in cultural invasions and puts emphasis on the necessity of resisting cultural invasions. According to Ayatollah Khamenei (1993, pp. 20-21), there is a difference between cultural *invasion* and cultural *exchange*. "The purpose of cultural exchange is to enrich and complete the culture of a nation; however, the

Teaching/learning culture

purpose of cultural invasion is to eradicate and destroy the culture of a nation."

Such a diversity of beliefs necessitates researching into the variety of views about teaching and learning the target culture in language instruction. Moreover, culture has recently become an increasingly important component of ELT due to the social and cultural view of language and the increasingly multicultural use of English; however, as Baker (2003) and Risager (2010) mention, the controversy concerning English language teaching and learning in connection with culture still exists.

Lessard-Clouston (1997) emphasizes that research on beliefs about teaching/learning the target culture needs to be conducted in different contexts to examine the differences in attitudes. As a result, some studies have been done in contexts such as China (Han, 2010; Lessard-Clouston, 1996), Japan (Stapleton, 2000), Finland (Larzén-Östermark, 2005), Estonia (Saluveer, 2004), Algeria (Merrouche, 2006), and Turkey (Bayyurt, 2006; Önalan, 2005). In the Iranian EFL context, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is a general lack of research on the views of Iranian EFL teachers toward teaching/learning the target culture in English language instruction. Other studies have been done in the domain of culture such as Mehdipur (2009), who investigated the effect of cultural knowledge on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners, and Baradaran (1988) and Pishghadam and Navari (2009), who explored the role of culture in ELT; however, none seem to have been carried out on teachers' views on teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. The examination of EFL teachers' beliefs regarding culture in the Iranian context is thus worthwhile. The purpose of this study was to explore Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning the target (i.e., American or British) culture in the realm of ELT. This study also tried to arrive at a definition of culture based on the interpretations of Iranian EFL teachers. The following research questions guided the researchers in their study:

1. How do Iranian EFL teachers define culture?

2. What are Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning the target culture in ELT?

3. Method

3.1 Participants and Setting

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages of Alzahra University, which is a single-sex university for females in Tehran. Out of a total 24 full time and part time female Iranian EFL teachers of the English Language and Literature Department, 20 of them cooperated with the researchers. Seven of these teachers were full time teachers and 13 of them were part time teachers. All the teachers of this study had the experience of teaching General or Prerequisite English Courses at the university, although some of them were not teaching such a course at the time of this study. It should be mentioned that General or Prerequisite English Courses designed for non-English majors were the concern of the current study, because in such classes there is more possibility of teaching the target culture in comparison with specialized courses, like Testing, Teaching Methodology, etc. Courses like Reading Comprehension, Speaking and Listening, etc. were not selected either, since they are designed for English majors. In addition, by choosing General and Prerequisite English courses, the researchers had the chance of including a greater number of teachers. The teachers' educational background was different; some were majors of TEFL and some English Literature or even Linguistics. The age of the teachers was not controlled and their age range was between 28 and 56. Their years of teaching English experience varied also, and ranged between 2 and 28 years.

The strategy to select Alzahra University as the research setting of the present study was a kind of purposeful selection (Maxwell, 2005). At the time of the present study, the teachers themselves could select their textbooks for the General and Prerequisite English Courses and it was therefore expected that their choice might implicitly reveal their definition of culture and their beliefs about

Teaching/learning culture

including or excluding the target language culture in English language instruction.

3.2 Instruments

In this study, the data were collected from three main sources: Questionnaires, interviews, and observations. In order to achieve triangulation and to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, a diverse range of data collection methods was used.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire was designed in English to elicit Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. The questionnaire was piloted to uncover any problems and address them before the main study.

3.2.2 Interview

Semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide which was piloted in advance, were conducted with all the teachers. The teachers were interviewed one by one. The interviews of full time teachers took place in their offices with preplanned appointments. Part time teachers were interviewed in the room allocated to them or in one of the classes of the faculty at a time convenient for the teachers. Interviews were carried out in a single or multiple sessions. Second or third interviews allowed the researchers to ask any follow-up questions. Interviews were recorded and were transcribed word by word for later analysis. Field notes were taken during the interviews as well, in order to record feelings, impressions, and interpretations, and even questions as they emerged.

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

3.2.3 Observation

Some of the teachers were selected based on the results of the questionnaires and interviews and some sessions of their General and Prerequisite English classes for undergraduate students were observed. An observation checklist was designed as a guide, making the observations more structured. The checklist was piloted during four sessions, and some parts were omitted, added, and modified. Despite the use of the observation checklist, field notes were taken during nonparticipant classroom observations. Moreover, all of the classes were audio taped, and the recordings were transcribed for later analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

At the beginning of this study, a questionnaire was designed to elicit the beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers toward teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. The questionnaire was piloted by 19 Iranian EFL instructors. Being revised after the pilot study, the questionnaire was completed by 19 full time and part time Iranian EFL instructors of Alzahra University from the English Language and Literature Department. It is worth mentioning that one of the participants of the study was not comfortable with completing the questionnaire. Instead, she was interviewed both formally (twice) and informally. In general, the research policy of the researchers was to create an atmosphere as comfortable as possible for the participants. As the questionnaires were being gathered, four teachers of the pilot study were interviewed to pilot the interview and its guide.

After gathering and analyzing all the questionnaires, it was revealed that there is a great variety of beliefs, and although most of the respondents believed in teaching the target culture in ELT, their reasons were different. Thus, the researchers decided to interview all the teachers to shed more light on the data obtained from questionnaires based on an interview guide designed in advance. As

Teaching/learning culture

the researchers were conducting interviews, the observation checklist was test-piloted too during four sessions.

After conducting and analyzing all the interviews, five teachers were selected based on the results of the questionnaires and interviews and five to six sessions of their General or Prerequisite English classes for undergraduate students were observed to validate the claims made in the questionnaires and interviews. The classes were chosen in a way that different beliefs of the teachers were covered. A total of 26 sessions of four General English classes and one Prerequisite English class were observed.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study was based on the participants' beliefs about teaching/learning the target culture in ELT and the way that they define culture. The aim was to develop a theory out of emergent themes via analyzing the data collected through the main sources of questionnaires, interviews, and observations. To do so, grounded theory introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 was used for data analysis (cited in Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006).

The initial step of data analysis in qualitative research is transforming all the recordings into a textual format. Thus, all the recordings collected through interviews and classroom observations were transcribed. Then, all the transcriptions were typed in Microsoft Office Word 2007. Moreover, the results of the handwritten questionnaires were typed as well.

After the transcribing phase, there was a pile of raw data including transcriptions, questionnaires, and field notes. As Maxwell (2005) points out, reading these data is the preliminary stage of qualitative research. Notes were also taken during this reading and rereading phase and tentative ideas about categories and relationships were developed.

In the next step, the raw data needed to be organized. Therefore, coding the data began, in order to fracture the raw data and rearrange them into categories (Maxwell, 2005). Three levels of coding were then used: Open, axial, and selective coding.

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), cited in Jones et al. (2006), in open coding the data of the present study, key words were identified and listed as codes through careful line-by-line reading. Then, categories were labeled. This step was done by reading and rereading the data and then highlighting or color-coding the key points. The highlighting process was done with the use of Text Highlight Color of Microsoft Office Word. It is worth noting that to search for the key words or phrases and derive themes, the Edit-Find facility of Microsoft Office Word and its Highlighting Tool were used. After this microscopic phase, the researchers used axial coding to pull the data back together into categories. This phase was conducted through reading the participants' accounts to find similar categories. Through the process of axial coding, in order to organize the codes and categories and relate them together, Microsoft Office OneNote 2007 was utilized. In the selective coding phase, a core category was selected and related to other categories.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question 1

At the beginning, defining culture was difficult for the teachers; however, many definitions of culture emerged. The common features of the teachers' definitions of culture are as follow:

Culture is a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, habits, traditions, and customs. Culture is way of living and it is indicated even by the kind of words that a person chooses to communicate.

The following are some of the teachers' definitions of culture:

Teaching/learning culture

Culture is a set of thoughts, behavior, and customs, through and with which people live.

Culture is a set of beliefs, customs and traditions, values, dos and don'ts, and habits.

Culture is the kind of words that a person uses to express his/her demands and to communicate.

Excerpt 1. **Some of the teachers' definitions of culture, questionnaire and interview, Spring 2011**

A number of teachers defined culture as language. In fact, they believed that culture is language. For instance, one of the teachers referred to language in her definition of culture:

Culture is the language, customs, values, beliefs, morals, knowledge, any habits acquired by people as a member of a society is culture.

Excerpt 2. **Questionnaire, May 2nd, 2011**

The majority of the teachers defined language as a tool for communication. Defining language, some of the teachers referred to culture; for instance, two of them wrote:

Language is a means to talk about culture.

Language helps people to transmit their culture from one generation to the next.

Excerpt 3. **Questionnaire, Spring 2011**

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

Some of the teachers believed that language is culture. In fact, all the teachers, in some way or another, believed that language and culture are related. Two of them wrote:

> *Language and culture are interwoven and cannot be separated.*

> *The relationship between language and culture is a two-sided and mutual one. Culture gives rise to language and better to say to specific languages. On the other side, language can cause the emergence of different cultures. In another word, they are the product and at the same time the origin to each other.*

Excerpt 4. **Questionnaire, Spring 2011**

4.2 Research Question 2

The findings of this study revealed that the beliefs of the teachers about the teaching and learning of the target culture in ELT are varied. Overall, their beliefs can be categorized into two main groups: Those who support teaching/learning the target culture in ELT (the majority) and those who oppose it (a minority). However, in each of these categories, there was a continuum of beliefs. For example, some of those who were in favor of teaching/learning the target culture believed that some prerequisites must be met before teaching/learning the target culture. And some of those who were opposed to teaching/learning the target culture believed there are some occasions in which the target culture can and even should be taught.

For some of the teachers, due to the inseparability of language and culture, teaching culture was teaching language and learning culture was learning language. The words *teaching* and *learning* were problematic for several teachers and they explicated what teaching and learning mean to them. "To teach does mean to

inform, not to force a person to accept," one of the teachers asserted. Moreover, teaching is not advocating or advertising. Another teacher wrote:

The point is that teaching, having some information, and watching something critically are all different. Having learned is not equal to applying in the real life, so while learning and teaching a language, the culture to which it relates will be introduced, understood and taught simultaneously.

Excerpt 5. Questionnaire, May 2nd, 2011

In fact, to most of the teachers of this study, teaching the target culture in ELT was to make students familiar with and aware of the target culture. It should be noted that to the teachers, *learning* the target culture was also *becoming familiar* with the target culture.

The teachers of this study who advocated teaching/learning the target culture in ELT classes provided some reasons. According to some of the teachers, the main reason for teaching/learning the target culture was the inseparability of language and culture.

Teaching the target culture is something that occurs whether language teachers want it or not, because language and culture are inseparable.

Excerpt 6. Interview, May 25th, 2011

Moreover, a number of teachers asserted that the target culture should be taught for better understanding and even learning of the target language. One of them wrote:

Language without culture means putting the student in a void. There are many terms which refer to the culture of that language, so to learn them, one needs to learn the culture as well.

Excerpt 7. **Questionnaire, May 30th, 2011**

According to some of the teachers, teaching the target culture can also prevent communication breakdowns and thus it leads to a better and more successful communication.

Teaching the target culture helps the students understand the English texts more easily and avoid communication breakdowns.

Excerpt 8. **Questionnaire, May 4th, 2011**

In addition, some of the teachers asserted that they teach the target culture, because it increases the motivation and interest of the learners. One of the teachers remarked:

Knowing culture is a motivation for continuing language learning and it causes interest.

Excerpt 9. **Interview, May 21st, 2011**

Most of the teachers of this study also believed that teaching culture in ELT is not limited to the teaching of the target culture (the British or the American culture); rather, the native culture of the learners should be taught too. In this way, learners' awareness about their own culture is increased. A few teachers surpassed this and declared that multiculturalism should be addressed in EFL classes; i.e., consideration of different cultures, not just the target culture and the students' own culture. According to one of the teachers, through a multicultural approach to language teaching:

Teachers encourage students to go beyond dichotomous 'this OR that' thinking and help them focus on multiple possibilities instead 'this AND that.' To work effectively with language students, teachers need to realize how vital cultural diversity is to student achievement.

Excerpt 10. Questionnaire, Apr. 30th, 2011

In contrast, one of the teachers emphasized that teaching English with a multicultural approach should be done correctly; otherwise, it can be against the Islamic values, since she believed that such an approach has its roots in cultural pluralism and relativism. In fact, she believed that it is not possible to accept all ideas; if they are against Islam, they should be rejected. According to her, students should not be encouraged to equally respect all cultures, regardless of whether they go against their religious beliefs or not. Rather, they should be urged to critically discuss different cultures, and recognize and respect the good parts and throw out the bad parts.

The teachers of this study who were in favor of teaching/learning the target culture believed some prerequisites should be met. A number of them believed that teaching/learning the target culture depends to a large extent on the purpose of teaching and learning a language. For instance, two teachers said:

The extent to which culture should be highlighted, talked about and explored depends on our PURPOSE. Who are our learners and why they need the target language knowledge are questions which determine the degree to which they should be exposed to a certain culture.

It depends on what you want from this language. If you want to read an academic essay, no. But if you want to go deep down in this language, yes. It depends on your purpose.

Excerpt 11. Questionnaire and interview, Spring and Fall 2011

The teachers of this study also emphasized that the target culture can be discussed only when the learners' own culture is highlighted as well. They stressed that the students' own culture should not be ignored, downgraded, and put down. In other words, teachers

should not teach the target culture at the expense of students' own culture.

> *We should talk about our own culture alongside the target culture.*

> *Target culture can be talked about when highlighting our own culture.*

Excerpt 12. **Questionnaire and interview, Spring and Fall 2011**

According to one of the teachers, knowing the Islamic culture is necessary to ensure that the students' own culture is not downgraded:

> *The only people who are qualified to teach the target culture are those who know and respect the Islamic culture enough to ensure that they are not overly impressed by the target culture and know how to remain open-minded and fair toward the target culture without trying to downgrade their own culture.*

Excerpt 13. **Questionnaire, May 4th, 2011**

The classroom observations also revealed that the Persian culture as the native culture of the students was highly stressed. For instance, a number of lectures in the class in which culture itself was chosen as the topic of presentations were about the Persian culture, such as "The Culture of Iran, Norouz," "The Culture of Charshanbeh-soori," "The Culture of Yalda Night," etc. One of the teachers also asked her students to do a search to find unknown places in Iran and present it in the class. The following session, the teacher brought a map of Iran and stuck it on the board; then the students came and gave their lectures on unknown cities in Iran and tried to find the city on the map.

Teaching/learning culture

For some of the teachers, critical thinking was very important in teaching/learning the target culture.

All in all, what is important is weighing up the cultures. Cultures should be juxtaposed, compared, contrasted and their weak and strong points evaluated. Critical evaluation of the cultures is what matters.

Excerpt 14. Questionnaire, Sept. 25th, 2011

Thus, the critical evaluation of culture is more important than whether to teach it or not. Some of the teachers believed that the students should critically reflect upon the ideology behind what they learn. The negative and positive aspects of the target culture should be discussed and then the students themselves can decide and choose consciously rather than blindly. However, one of the teachers believed teachers sometimes have to take sides, especially in cases where the target culture is against the students' religious values. This teacher supported critical thinking; yet she warned that the way critical thinking is practiced is very important.

Some of the teachers warned that teaching/learning the target culture should be geared to the age of the learners.

We don't tell everything about our own culture to our children. Gradually, they learn.

The same as we don't recommend all kinds of Farsi books to children, that would be for nonnative (FL) ones.

Excerpt 15. Questionnaire and interview, Spring 2011

A few teachers believed that level of language proficiency affects teaching/learning the target culture. To them, students should be proficient enough in English language to be able to deal with the English culture; for example, they should at least not have

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

problems understanding a text. One of the teachers wrote in her questionnaire:

> *A successful communication through language necessitates a deep understanding of the culture particularly at the higher levels of language proficiency.*

Excerpt 16. Questionnaire, May 3rd, 2011

The majority of the teachers also believed that English language textbooks should contain the target culture for the same reasons that they had for teaching the target culture and they again proposed the same prerequisites.

In the classroom observations, it was revealed that teaching the target culture is mainly textbook-oriented; i.e., whenever the book introduces cultural content or whenever the text has some culture-bound words, the teachers would start to teach the target culture.

A few teachers of this study (i.e., three out of 20) opposed teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. One of them believed that culture cannot be taught and learned.

> *"I hate culture teaching," she emphasized, because:*
> *I hate culture teaching, because it is artificial and it is a lie.*

Excerpt 17. Interview, May 4th, 2011

This teacher, strongly disagreeing with teaching the target culture, remarked that teaching the target culture is rooted in a positivistic outlook which considers human as an object that can be studied. She explained further as follows:

> *Culture teaching doesn't exist. It shouldn't exist. It is degrading, because you feel that learner doesn't have the ability to recognize, but s/he has this ability and we have to increase that by being together and sharing and seeing each other… Culture teaching reduces human to something very*

Teaching/learning culture

small… Culture teaching creates a dead atmosphere, dead humans, dead minds. That is, the mind is not active and it doesn't work and then one thinks that s/he has understood everything instead of thinking that everyday s/he can understand a new thing.

Excerpt 18. Interview, May 4th, 2011

Another teacher also doubted the teachability and learnability of the target culture. In her opinion, culture is transferable rather than teachable. Therefore, culture cannot be taught or learned. She averred that if teaching culture happens, it is artificial and fake rather than natural.

One more teacher claimed that she does not deal with the target culture in her classes ,because her purpose is teaching the language , not culture. In other words, "language for the sake of language" is her concern. When she was told that such a claim contradicts her view of the interrelationship between language and culture, she explained as follows:

We cannot talk about culture-neutral, culture-free classes. However, the extent to which this culture should be highlighted, talked about and explored depends on our purpose... Therefore, we can talk about degrees of presence of culture… In addition, I didn't mean that we can totally separate culture from our language. We can use English language to talk about our own culture. Why we should use English language to talk about a culture which is foreign and so remote from us?

Excerpt 19. Interview, Sept. 27th, 2011

This teacher again emphasized that if the purpose of language teaching and learning requires teaching the target culture, such as when learners want to go abroad, the target culture should be taught, but critical thinking should not be forgotten, since the

critical evaluation of culture is what matters. Moreover, teaching the learners' own culture should go hand in hand with the target culture. Furthermore, she questioned the concept of *target* culture and asserted that the concept of native speaker is currently under question:

> *In my opinion, "target culture" is one of those heavy-duty words. Do we really have a target culture in the outside world waiting for us to discover? When we talk about English as an international language, a lingua franca, language of globalization and global communication, can we determine one single target culture? You see how complicated the issue is getting!*

> *Excerpt 20*. **Questionnaire, Sept. 25th, 2011**

In fact, she believed that since English is a lingua franca, it cannot be attributed to a single culture, and thus teaching the target culture loses its meaning, since there is no one single culture to be taught.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that at the beginning, defining culture was difficult for most of the teachers. The studies of Byram and Risager (1999), Larzén-Östermark (2005), Han (2010), Saluveer (2004), Önalan (2005), and Lessard-Clouston (1996) also revealed the difficulty of defining culture for some of their teachers.

The teachers of this study mainly perceived culture as the way people live, and their beliefs, values, behaviors, traditions, and customs; and these are all related to small c culture and the sociological sense of culture. This finding is in line with the findings of Lessard-Clouston (1996), Byram and Risager (1999), Önalan (2005), Merrouche (2006), and Han (2010). It can be said that understanding culture mainly as small c culture indicates that

Teaching/learning culture

the teachers did not think of culture just as high culture belonging to the elite; rather, they generally looked at culture as popular culture belonging to the ordinary people. This shows that the teachers were aware of the fact that the concept of culture is very broad and it is not limited to the intellectuals.

As evident in the results, almost all the teachers of this study considered language and culture as related. The findings of Lessard-Clouston (1996), Han (2010), Önalan (2005), Merrouche (2006), and Bayyurt (2006) also indicated that according to the teachers' views, language and culture are related and cannot be separated. However, Byram and Risager (1999) found contradictory answers, since some of the teachers thought that language and culture are inseparable and others considered the two as completely separate issues. Those for whom language and culture were separate claimed that language can be taught as a tool and as an international language without the cultural dimension. Byram and Risager's interpretation of this result is that the increase of internationalization and the use of different languages as lingua francas have led to a reconsideration of the relationship between language and culture. In Merrouche's (2006) study, one teacher also believed that language and culture are separable entities.

The teachers of this study who were supporters of teaching/learning the target culture justified their support as follows: Language and culture are interconnected and hence teaching the target culture happens unconsciously and spontaneously. Teaching the target culture leads to a better understanding and use of the target language, as well as better communication, and it prevents misunderstandings and culture shock. Moreover, teaching the target culture increases motivation and interest as well as awareness of the learners' own culture. These justifications have also been mentioned by the teachers in the studies of Merrouche (2006), Han (2010), Atay (2005), Atay et al. (2009), Sercu et al. (2005), Larzén-Östermark (2005), Lessard-Clouston (1996), Bayyurt (2006), Byram and Risager (1999), and Önalan (2005).

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

Another finding of this study was that some of the teachers advocated multiculturalism in ELT. They believed ELT should include not only the target culture and the learners' own culture but also other cultures. This result is in line with those who support intercultural and transcultural communicative competence (such as Byram, 1997; Ho, 2009; Sercu et al., 2005). In fact, according to many scholars, ELT today is moving toward multiculturalism (e.g., Kramsch, 2004; Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011a, 2011b). However, one of the teachers warned that multiculturalism can be against the Islamic views if it is not practiced in a correct way, since it can result in cultural pluralism and relativism. According to Siahpoosh and Aghapoor (2011), some Muslim scholars like Ayatollah Khamenei believe that cultural pluralism and relativism lead to indifference and then the acceptance of any kind of beliefs and consequently pave the way for colonialism. Similarly, the teacher mentioned above emphasized that a multicultural approach is possible; yet, whenever there is something against our culture and the Islamic values, we have to take sides.

The teachers of this study who were advocates of teaching/learning the target culture proposed some prerequisites. Determining the purpose, highlighting the learners' own culture, critical thinking, and considering the age of the learners and their level of language proficiency were the teachers' prerequisites for teaching/learning the target culture. Some of the teachers in the studies of Bayyurt (2006), Merrouche (2006), and Önalan (2005) also mentioned that the consideration of learners' needs and aims in language teaching and learning is important, since sometimes their goal is just learning a language for business or other local purposes and most of them do not want to go abroad and live in a foreign culture.

The inclusion of the learners' native culture (the Iranian and particularly the Islamic culture in the case of the current study) along with the target culture is in line with the theories of Canagarajah (2005), Kachru (1997), and McKay (2003). In actuality, as remarked by Jabeen and Kazim Shah (2011), such a response indicates the preference of the Muslims for the Islamic

Teaching/learning culture

culture in ELT, since the target language culture is an intellectual weapon and a tool for imposing the West's cultural beliefs, so the best way to resist cultural onslaught is the development of Islamic English. Indeed, "Islamic English provides a safety wall against the materialistic and utilitarian western culture" (p. 607). Turning to the literature we can see that the teachers in the studies of Atay et al. (2009), Merrouche (2006), Stapleton (2000), Byram and Risager (1999), and Bayyurt (2006) also remarked that the target culture should be presented only in relation to the learners' own culture.

On the whole, the observations of the classes of this study revealed the importance of the learners' own culture to their teachers. Contrary to the results of Pishghadam (2007), in which some teachers depreciate the students' own culture and appreciate the English culture (cited in Pishghadam & Navari, 2009), and as opposed to the claims of Pishghadam and Navari (2009), the majority of the teachers of this study did not centralize the English culture in class at the expense of marginalizing the Persian culture, and they did their best to teach their students to be proud of their own culture and to enrich it.

Critical thinking as another prerequisite for teaching/learning the target culture in this study has also been suggested by many scholars like Alptekin (1993), Canagarajah (1999), and Hyde (1994). Some of the teachers of Larzén-Östermark (2005) and Merrouche (2006) also tried to make their students reflect and they attempted to awaken in the learners the spirit of criticism. This finding is a counterpoint to Pishghadam and Navari's (2009) claim asserting that in English classes in Iran, complete and unquestioned acceptance of the English culture's norms and values usually happens.

As mentioned above, some of the teachers of this study believed that teaching/learning the target culture should be geared to the age of the learners. Önalan (2005), Pishghadam and Navari (2009), and Larzén-Östermark (2005) also suggest that the cultural information that is presented to the learners should be appropriate to the age of the learners. However, most of the teachers of Merrouche (2006) believed that the foreign culture should be introduced at early levels

of foreign language learning, because they believed that learning about culture requires many years of teaching and the earlier it is introduced, the better it is.

Also, a few teachers of this study believed that students should be proficient enough in English language to be able to deal with the English culture. These teachers believed that it is better to teach culture at higher levels. Some of the teachers in the studies of Önalan (2005), Han (2010), Larzén-Östermark (2005), and Sercu et al. (2005) also emphasized that the cultural information should be in agreement with learners' language proficiency levels.

The beliefs of the teachers about the necessity of culture in English language textbooks were in line with their general beliefs in regard to teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. That is, those who supported teaching/learning the target culture believed that language textbooks already include or should include the target culture, and those who disagreed with teaching the target culture stated that language textbooks should not contain target cultural information. In line with the finding of this study, Han (2010), Lessard-Clouston (1996), Larzén-Östermark (2005), and Sercu et al. (2005) found that teachers mainly teach the target culture based on their textbooks.

The results of this study also revealed that a few teachers were against teaching/learning the target culture in ELT. This finding is similar to the results of Sercu et al. (2005), in which some of the teachers were against teaching/learning the target culture, because they believed that it is not possible to merge language and culture teaching, and that teaching the target culture has a negative effect of reinforcing the stereotypes that learners already have in their minds. The research of Han (2010) also revealed that a small number of teachers had negative attitudes toward teaching/learning the target culture. Moreover, a few teachers in the study of Larzén-Östermark (2005) declared that they do not incorporate the target culture in their teaching due to some obstacles such as lack of time, lack of material, etc. Some of the teachers of Bayyurt (2006) were against including cultural information in their language teaching as well. In addition, a few teachers in the study of Atay (2005) believed that

Teaching/learning culture

culture and language learning are not related to each other, and culture is not so significant for the mere purpose of learning the language. The findings of Merrouche (2006) also showed that a few number of teachers were worried about teaching/learning the target culture, since they thought that it is possible that learners would imitate foreign behaviors and adopt foreign thoughts. Some of the teachers of Önalan (2005) were concerned about the disadvantages of teaching/learning the target culture, such as linguistic and cultural imperialism. They believed that there is a possibility that students would be excessively influenced by the target culture.

One of the teachers of this study remarked that her purpose is teaching the language, not culture, and this result is in harmony with the finding of Han's (2010) study, revealing that the reason that some teachers did not implement teaching the target culture in practice was that they considered language teaching as their main task. Moreover, this teacher of the current study questioned the concept of target culture, similar to Jahan and Roger (2006) and Widdowson (1994), and asserted that since English is recently used as an international language, it is not restricted to the British or the American culture, and thus the concept of target culture does not make any sense. This teacher emphasized that if the purpose of ELT requires the teaching of the American or the British culture, teachers should teach it; however, this should go hand in hand with critical thinking and the learners' own culture should be considered as well. It is noticeable that just one of the teachers of this study believed in the theory of World Englishes, which is in line with the results of the studies of Pishghadam (2007) cited in Pishghadam & Navari, 2009) and Pishghadam and Saboori (2011a, 2011b), indicating that English language teachers in Iran generally do not subscribe to the idea of World Englishes. However, unlike Pishghadam (2007) cited in Pishghadam & Navari, 2009) and Pishghadam and Saboori (2011a, 2011b), this does not mean that the teachers of this study emphasize the idea of perfect American and British English. Some of Bayyurt's (2006) teachers also averred that because English is an international language, its culture does not belong to only English-speaking cultures. Thus, these teachers

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

supported an international culture and they tried to provide a taste of world cultures for their students. In fact, Bayyurt's teachers believed more in the notion of World Englishes in comparison with the teachers of the current study.

6. Conclusion

As evident in the findings, the main concern of the teachers of the current study was how to deal with the target culture rather than to teach it or not. The majority of them, even some of those who disagreed with teaching the target culture, believed that language teaching involves some aspects of culture teaching. However, the teachers faced a dilemma: Language teaching inevitably includes the target culture and this sometimes uninvited guest can cause some problems and harms. That is why the teachers suggested some prerequisites for teaching the target culture.

In fact, those teachers who believed that language and culture are intermingled did not leave any room for discussing the exclusion or inclusion of the target culture in second/foreign language teaching (Tang, 1999). In this sense, according to these teachers, the target culture is an integral part of the target language. Learning the target language, language learners concurrently learn the target culture. In other words, exclusion of culture equates the exclusion of language and if language teachers want to close the door of their class to the target culture, the target language will remain behind the door as well. It can be said that such a view toward language teaching regards language teaching and culture teaching as inseparable and that is why the majority of the teachers of this study were worried about the consequences that teaching English can have for their students; as a result, certain prerequisites were introduced to avoid the probable harms.

On the other hand, as mentioned by one of the teachers, English as a lingua franca reduces the importance of the target culture, the culture that belongs to English native speakers; therefore, we can have EFL language classes in which language is taught for the sake of language and as a tool for international communication.

Teaching/learning culture

However, Kayman (2004), on the other hand, states that although English as a lingua franca is not limited to a specific national culture, this does not mean that it is culturally neutral. And that therefore, it is not possible to have a culture free language. In fact, English is not a cultural *tabula rasa* and to regard a lingua franca as neutral and owned by no one is like a cultural *terra nullius*; i.e., an empty land or a nowheresville. In fact, global English is a utopia of communication. As noted by Phillipson (2009), such a view toward English language disconnects English language from the powers and ideologies behind it. In addition, Canagarajah (2012) believes that speakers of English do not use a common language with a common culture; rather they negotiate their differences, and this tendency to such a communication indirectly suggests that the quest for common cores is a linguistic utopia.

It can thus be concluded that responsible language teaching does not ignore the cultural dimension and it does not support a culture-free language to avoid cultural imperialism. Indeed, culture can have its integral role in language teaching and at the same time linguistic and cultural imperialism should be and can be avoided. Here, a question comes to mind: How can culture be included in language teaching without contaminating it with linguistic and cultural imperialism? Based on the results of this study, it can be said that the answer is not culture-specific or culture-free approaches; rather, a "culture general" approach which neither ignores culture nor promotes the norms of the target culture seems more appropriate. This helps further develop an understanding of the nature of language, culture, and their relationship. In other words, the target language is not artificially disconnected from its culture and the target culture is not imposed on the learner for internalization purposes (Meier, 2003). In this vein, the marriage between language and culture can proceed, although this marriage is very conditional. In fact, as the findings of this study showed, a critical path is the best and safest road to be taken. This is similar to Hyde's (1994) view, saying that there are two paths to take at the juncture of teaching the target culture: The censorship path or the analytical path. The former is not the road to travel down, because

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

learners are in any case increasingly in contact with western values through advertisements, magazines, newspapers, books, satellite television, films, computers and information technology, etc. Therefore, the problem should be faced, not avoided, through developing critical language awareness in students, and focusing students' attention on the ideology behind English discourse.

English language teachers should be cognizant of the fact that teaching the target culture is conditional. Teachers should pay attention to the purpose of their class, the learners' own culture, and the age and the level of language proficiency of their learners; and they should deal with the target culture critically. In this way, teachers will not be the advertisers of the target culture. The beliefs of the teachers of this study indicated the necessity for a balanced view of culture; that is, the target culture should not be censored totally and it should not be taught without critical evaluation. Teachers should be more careful about American and British cultural values presented in the EFL textbooks. They should introduce them along with those of the learners' own culture. Teachers should tell their learners that learning about a culture does not mean abandoning their own culture. Teachers should explicitly explain their goal of teaching the target culture to avoid any misunderstandings.

Textbooks continue to constitute the guiding principle of many EFL courses throughout the world, and Iran is no exception. The findings of this study revealed the central role that textbooks play in teaching/learning the target culture. Consequently, the role of textbook writers becomes crucial and they can be helpful in this regard. This presupposes that textbook writers themselves be familiar with the issues and challenges of teaching/learning the target culture in the context of Iran. Due to the emphasis that teachers gave to the local culture, textbook authors should prepare local materials in which Iranian, English, and even other cultures exist in the textbooks to make the students familiar with different people's way of living in comparison to their own, but giving the most weight to our native culture. Moreover, based on the findings of this study, teaching materials should be prepared in accordance

Teaching/learning culture

with the learners' particular needs, their level of language proficiency, and their age.

The present study was delimited to Iranian EFL teachers of Alzahra University. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other universities, and the ability to generalize the findings may be limited, and the results of this study are only generalizable to similar contexts; for example, where teachers can choose their teaching materials for the General and Prerequisite English Courses, and if they are not free to select their materials, they are concerned with how to deal with the target culture. Only female teachers attended this study, so the obtained results may differ from a study including male participants. The participants in this study were all Iranian, so the results cannot be generalized to other nationalities, and care should be taken not to overgeneralize the results of this study. Each of these factors can be considered and investigated in later studies, since the opinions of people of other universities, nationalities, sex, etc. might be different.

References

Action, W. R., & Walker de Felix, J. (1986). Acculturation and mind. In J. M. Valdes (Ed.), *Culture bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching* (pp. 20-32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alptekin, C. (1993). Target-language culture in EFL materials. *ELT Journal*, *47*(2), 136-143. doi:10.1093/elt/47.2.136

Alptekin, C., & Alptekin, M. (1984). The question of culture: EFL teaching in non-English-speaking countries. *ELT Journal*, *38*(1), 14-20. doi:10.1093/elt/38.1.14

Atay, D. (2005). Reflections on the cultural dimension of language teaching. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *5*(3), 222-236. doi:10.1080/1470847 0508668897

Atay, D., Kurt, G., Çamlibel, Z., Ersin, P., & Kaslioglu, Ö. (2009). The role of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching. *Inonu University Journal of the Faculty of Education*,

10(3), 123-135. Retrieved October 18, 2009, from http://web.inonu.edu.tr/~efdergi/103/10308.pdf

Atkinson, D. (1999). TESOL and culture. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(4), 625-654. doi:10.2307/3587880

Baker, W. (2003). Should culture be an overt component of EFL instruction outside of English speaking countries? The Thai context. *Asian EFL Journal*, *5*(4). Retrieved October 18, 2009, from http://www.asian-efljournal.com/dec_03_sub.wb.php

Baker, W. (2012). From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT Journal*, *66*(1), 62-70. doi:10.1093/elt/ccr017

Baradaran, A. (1988). *The role of culture in ELT in Iran*. Unpublished master's thesis, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran.

Bayyurt, Y. (2006). Non-native English language teachers' perspective on culture in English as a Foreign Language classrooms. *Teacher Development*, *10*(2), 233-247. doi:10.1080/13664530600773366

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., & Risager, K. (1999). *Language teachers, politics and cultures*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2005). Reconstructing local knowledge, reconfiguring language studies. In A. S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp. 3-24). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2012). Postmodernism and intercultural discourse. In C. B. Paulston, S. F. Kiesling & E. S. Rangel (Eds.), *The handbook of intercultural discourse and communication* (pp. 110-132). London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing second-language skills: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Teaching/learning culture

Cheung, C. (2001). The use of popular culture as a stimulus to motivate secondary students' English learning in Hong Kong. *ELT Journal*, *55*(1), 55-61. doi:10.1093/elt/55.1.55

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gardner, R. C., Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gebhard, J. G. (2006). *Teaching English as a foreign or second language: A self-development and methodology guide* (2nd ed.). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Giroux, H. A. (2000). *Impure acts: The practical politics of cultural studies*. London: Routledge.

Han, H. (2010). *An investigation of teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in secondary schools in Xinjiang, China*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Durham, Durham. Retrieved October 19, 2009, from http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/109/

Ho, S. T. K. (2009). Addressing culture in EFL classrooms: The challenge of shifting from a traditional to an intercultural stance. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *6*(1), 63-76. Retrieved October 20, 2009, from http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/v6n 12009/ho.pdf

Hyde, M. (1994). The teaching of English in Morocco: The place of culture. *ELT Journal*, *48*(4), 295-305. doi:10.1093/elt/48.4.295

Jabeen, F., & Kazim Shah, S. (2011). The role of culture in ELT: Learners' attitude towards the teaching of target language culture. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, *23*(4), 604-613. Retrieved January 25, 2012, from http://www.eurojournals. com/EJSS_23_4_10.pdf

Jahan, R., & Roger, P. (2006). Global perspectives on the notion of 'target culture' associated with English as a foreign language. *University of Sydney Papers in TESOL*, *1*, 1-17. Retrieved

Sotoudehnama, Marandi, and Mehran

January 20, 2012, from http://www-faculty.edfac.usyd.edu.au/ projects/usp_in_tesol/pdf/volume01/article01.pdf

Jiang, G. (2006). Necessity of teaching culture in foreign language classroom. *Sino-US English Teaching*, *3*(2), 55-57. Retrieved October 20, 2009, from http://www.linguist.org.cn/doc/su 200602/su20060211.pdf

Jiang, W. (2000). The relationship between culture and language. *ELT Journal*, *54*(4), 328-334. doi:10.1093/elt/54.4.328

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2006). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues*. New York: Routledge.

Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of Non-native Englishes.* Oxford, England: Pergamon.

Kachru, B. B. (1997). World Englishes and English-using communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *17*(1), 66-87. doi:10.1017/S0267190500003287

Kayman, M. A. (2004). The state of English as a global language: Communicating culture. *Textual Practice*, *18*(1), 1-22. doi:10.1080/0950236032000140131

Khamenei, A. (1993). Words of the Supreme Leader of Revolution among the employees of mass media and bosses of education. In A. Khamenei, فرهنگ و تهاجم فرهنگی: برگرفته از سخنان مقام معظّم [Culture and cultural رهبری حضرت آیت الله خامنه ای "مدظله العالی" invasion: From words of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei]. Qom, Iran: Sazman Madarek Farhangi Enghelab Eslami.

Khamenei, A. (1994). Words of the Supreme Leader of Revolution among the ulema and the clergy of Tabriz. In A. Khamenei, فرهنگ و تهاجم فرهنگی: برگرفته از سخنان مقام معظّم رهبری حضرت آیت الله خامنه ای "مدظله العالی" [Culture and cultural invasion: From words of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei]. Qom, Iran: Sazman Madarek Farhangi Enghelab Eslami.

Khomeini, R. (1983). صحیفهٔ نور [The book of light]. Vol. 6 and 15. Tehran, Iran: Vezarate Farhang va Ershad Eslami.

Teaching/learning culture

Kilickaya, F. (2004). Authentic materials and cultural content in EFL classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal*, *5*(2). Retrieved October 25, 2009, from http://iteslj. org/Techniques/Kilickaya-AutenticMaterial.html

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2004). The language teacher as go-between. *Utbildning Demokrati*, *13*(3), 37-60. Retrieved January 25, 2012, from http://www.oru.se/Extern/Forskning/Forskningsmilj oer/HumUS/Utbildning_och_Demokrati/Tidskriften/2004/Nr_3/ Kramsch.pdf

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Larzén-Östermark, E. (2005). *In pursuit of an intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching exploring cognitions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Lessard-Clouston, M. (1996). Chinese teachers' views of culture in their EFL learning and teaching. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *9*(3), 197-224. doi:10.1080/079 08319609525231

Lessard-Clouston, M. (1997). Towards an understanding of culture in L2/FL education. *The Internet TESL Journal*, *3*(5), 1-12. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from http://iteslj.org/Articles/ Lessard-Clouston-Culture.html

Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McKay, S. L. (2003). Toward an appropriate EIL pedagogy: Re-examining common ELT assumptions. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *13*(1), 1-22. doi:10.1111/1473-4192.00035

Mehdipur, N. (2009). *The impact of cultural background and linguistic simplification on the reading comprehension of*

Iranian low proficient learners. Unpublished master's thesis, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.

Meier, A. J. (2003). Posting the banns: A marriage of pragmatics and culture in foreign and second language pedagogy and beyond. In A. M. Flor, E. U. Juan & A. F. Guerra (Eds.), *Pragmatic competence and foreign language teaching* (pp. 185-210). Castelló, Spain: Universitat Jaume.

Merrouche, S. (2006). *The place of culture in the teaching of English in the Algerian middle and secondary school*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Mentouri University of Constantine, Algeria. Retrieved January 9, 2012, from http://bu.umc. edu.dz/theses/anglais/MER100036.pdf

Modiano, M. (2001). Ideology and the ELT practitioner. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *11*(2), 159-173. doi:10.1111/1473-4192.00012

Nizegorodcew, A. (2011). Understanding culture through a lingua franca. In J. Arabski & A. Wojtaszek (Eds.), *Aspects of culture in second language acquisition and foreign language learning* (pp. 7-20). New York: Springer.

Önalan, O. (2005). EFL teachers' perceptions of the place of culture in ELT: A survey study at four universities in Ankara/Turkey. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *1*(2), 215-235. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from http://www.jlls.org/ Issues/Volume1/No.2/okanonalan.pdf

Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London: Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. New York: Routledge.

Pishghadam, R., & Navari, S. (2009). *Cultural literacy in language learning: Enrichment or derichment?* A paper presented at UITM of Malaysia. Retrieved January 9, 2012, from http://profdoc.um.ac.ir/articles/a/1007558.pdf

Pishghadam, R., & Saboori, F. (2011a). A qualitative analysis of ELT in the language institutes of Iran in the light of the theory

Teaching/learning culture

of 'World Englishes.' *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *2*(2), 569-579. Retrieved January 9, 2012, from http://ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/jltr/article/view/020 3569579

Pishghadam, R., & Saboori, F. (2011b). A quantitative survey on Iranian English learners' attitudes toward varieties of English: World English or World Englishes? *English Language and Literature Studies*, *1*(1), 86-95. Retrieved January 9, 2012, from http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ells/article/view/1072 4/7545

Risager, K. (2006). *Language and culture: Global flows and local complexity*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Risager, K. (2007). *Language and culture pedagogy: From a national to a transactional paradigm*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Risager, K. (2010). *The language teacher facing transnationality*. Retrieved January 11, 2012, from http://in3.uoc.edu/Karen_ Risager_The_Language_Teacher_Facing.pdf

Saluveer, E. (2004). *Teaching culture in English classes*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Tartu, Estonia. Retrieved October 18, 2009, from http://dspace.Utlib.ee/dspace/ bitstream/10062/922/5/Saluveer.pdf

Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheva, L., Laskaridou, C., Lundgren, U., Mendez Garcia, C. M., & Ryan, P. (2005). *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Siahpoosh, A., & Aghapoor, A. (2011). فرهنگ در منظر مقام معظّم رهبری [Culture from the point of view of the Supreme Leader]. Tehran, Iran: Moasesseye Nashr Shahr.

Sotoudehnama, E. (2001). *Motivation, attitude, and English language learning: A case of Iranian undergraduate English major students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran.

Stapleton, P. (2000). Culture's role in TEFL: An attitude survey in Japan. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *13*(3), 291-305. doi:10.1080/07908310008666605

Tang, R. (1999). The place of "culture" in the foreign language classroom: A reflection. *The Internet TESL Journal*, *5*(8). Retrieved October 18, 2009, from http://iteslj.org/Articles/Tang

Thanasoulas, D. (2001). The importance of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. *Radical Pedagogy 3*(3). Retrieved October 26, 2009, from http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue3_3/7-thanasoulas.html

Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, *28*(2), 377-389. doi:10.2307/3587438