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The Assessment of Teachers' Attitude towards Expanding Intercultural Competence in English Learners in Iran

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study concerns Iranian teachers of foreign languages in general, and EFL teachers in particular who face the challenge of fostering intercultural competence in language learners. More specifically, the attitudinal aspect of teaching culture is considered as a vital element, seemingly less manipulated in Iranian EFL teachers. The study, therefore, aims to understand whether EFL teachers in Iran believe that language teaching is necessarily culture-bound, and how teachers' knowledge about culture and strategies for teaching culture affect their attitudes in developing intercultural competence in learners. To these purposes, the current research comprised a mixed-methods design. So as to collect the required data, a questionnaire was carried out on 50 Iranian EFL teachers who were selected randomly. Among them, 10 teachers were further interviewed to discuss their experiences of teaching language intertwined with culture. Having gathered and analyzed the data, it was found that the participants believed that language teaching is, in effect, culture teaching. The results also exposed that there was a significant relationship between the teachers' knowledge of nature of cultural elements and developing intercultural competence in learners.

Introduction

We are certainly living in the era of huge change, and the teachers preparing their students for being part of 21st century are mostly sensible of local and global changes. Geographic mobility proceeds all through the world, bringing extensive intercultural contact among languages and cultural groups. Therefore, teachers need to confront the problems of encouraging the acquirement of intercultural competence throughout their teaching (Sercu, 65). It is definitely true for teachers of foreign languages: teaching the target language culture to learners would foster 'sociocultural competence' or 'intercultural competence' in these learners (qtd. in Fleet, 2). In this enterprising, multicultural world, language learners probably require an intellectual effort to understand, accept, and respect the cultures of other people. Involving the class in learning a foreign language means connecting the learners to a world that is certainly different from the world of their source language.

Although culture is considered inseparable from language and it is only through an intercultural approach to language teaching and learning that effective communication can occur, teachers know little about 'intercultural competence' and they are not prepared and they are not trained to integrate intercultural communication issues into their teaching. In reality, what most teachers and students seem to lose sight of is the fact that 'knowledge of the grammatical system of a language [grammatical competence] has to be complemented by understanding of culture-specific meanings [cultural competence]' (Byram et al. 4). According to the researcher, Hargreaves, 'it is necessary to understand the factors that influence perceptions of teachers' status' because their performance in class is shaped by their status and attitudes (Hargreaves 63). Furthermore,

Hargreaves argues that 'teachers' feelings, emotions and desires' during their actual teaching in classrooms are such important factors that they can be considered as the cause of success or failure in learning process (qtd in. Al-Magid 4). However, the way teachers see themselves in relation to their work is an attitudinal factor that has been overlooked in Iran. However, the main objective of this study is to make Iranian EFL teachers aware that in current multicultural world, their attitude toward teaching culture and fostering intercultural competence in learners help them to have good attitude toward the people of the other societies and analyze and adapt their own behaviors, values and beliefs. In order to support intercultural learning process, language teachers need significant additional knowledge, some specific skills and also some materials to teach communicative competence in a foreign language. Moreover, foreign language teachers need to be disposed to teach intercultural competence and to know how to (Sercu et al. 6). Uncovering teacher's attitude toward intercultural language teaching may help them increase their understanding about their performance and practice in the classroom and will give them some trace of how to tackle effective ways to improve their cultural teaching so to improve their language classrooms.

It is not the purpose of teaching to try to change learners' values, but to make them explicit and conscious in any evaluative response to others. There is nonetheless a fundamental a fundamental values position which all language teaching should promote: The role of the teacher is to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as to develop a knowledge of a particular culture or country (Byram et al. 134). It is the hope that teaching target culture help the learners to be successful in developing human relationship with people of the target language and its culture.

This study seeks answers to the following questions:
1. Do Iranian EFL teachers believe that language teaching is culture teaching?
2. Does the Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge about the nature and function of cultural elements have any effect on developing intercultural competence in their learners?
3. Does the Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge about strategies of teaching culture and their abilities of applying these strategies affect their attitude toward teaching culture?
4. Is there a significant difference between the attitude of the teachers who believe more and those who believe less in teaching cultural elements?

Literature Review
There are some studies which support fostering intercultural competence in language learners. The following studies defend the ability of teachers to interest language students in intercultural competence by engaging students in activities which raise the development of tolerance, perception and empathy for the foreign culture:

Browsing through Cross-Cultural Awareness: Searching for Internet-Based Projects to Discover Cultural Stereotypes (Abrams)
Abrams (2002) carried out a study on sixty-eight intermediate German university students who were involved in an internet-based cultural case to learn what cultural stereotypes these students find in German, Austrian and Swiss languages. Two groups worked as the control group and two groups performed as the treatment group. However, the reported findings by the control groups were recognized very different from the results of the treatment groups. Both groups defined culture variously. Question three of the questionnaire which distributed after the main project (What have you learned from this culture project?) submitted the most significant results presenting that language learners expanded more cross-cultural understanding through the experimental than the treatment portfolios (Abrams, 150).

Benefits of Teaching Sociocultural Strategies to Students (Savignon and Sysoyev)
Savignon and Sysoyev (2002) conducted research into sociocultural strategies for a dialogue of culture. The number of participants was thirty, eleven male students and nineteen female students in Tambov Grammar School in Russia. All members were in their eleventh year of study and all were believed to be advanced English student in their final year of study at university. Before investigating the strategies, about ninety percent of the participants announced that they acquire English for what was consider intercultural communication.

Raising willingness to accept Culture Learning: Ethnographic Interviews for Spanish Language Students (Bateman)
Ethnographic study exposes the participant to the target culture. It is regarded as one of the important strategies for teaching language and culture. They suggest observing the community and its social setting and conducting interviews with speakers of the target culture, the results can be recorded or handwritten. This study is an applicable example of how ethnographic interviews can help English students work towards developing intercultural competence. Bateman (2002) recommends the

use of an ethnographic interview which does not need to be planned and it is the one in which the interviewer prepare questions based on what they hear from the interviewee; the interviewer reacts to what the interviewee says and invents new questions as the dialogue continues. The results proved that interviews have positive effect on students' openness towards learning the Spanish culture.

Teachers as a model for presenting intercultural competence in young language learners (Moloney, Robyn)
The study by Robyn Moloney (2008), reports on a case study in an Australian primary school that used qualitative research methods. The study is a snapshot, cross-sectional study of teachers and students. Classroom observation took place over a ten-week period. Field notes were taken during observation and the classes were also audio-recorded. In addition to being observed, the four teachers each took part in a 40-minute structured interview. Students also took part in one semi-structured focus group discussion of around 60 minutes, held in groups of between five and seven students. Focus group and individual interviews were audio-recorded. Recorded data were transcribed.

The importance of teaching culture in teaching languages has been recognized and widely discussed over the last two centuries. These discussions have drawn language teachers' attention to the fact that languages do not exist in separation from culture and that knowledge of culture holds a key to understanding of a language. Culture teaching "derives from social and cultural anthropology, which aims to provide a comprehensive description of way of life of a society" (Stern, 250); in Britain, it is called *background studies* and in France, it is often referred to as *civilization*. In a broader sense, Peterson and Coltrane (2003) write that "Students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms" (2), and that "linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language" (1); they stress that to be successful in communication, language use must be contributed to behaviors that are culturally proper (Peterson et al. 2).

As far as, teaching foreign language encourages cultural pluralism or multicultural education, cultural competence should be considered as an important aspect of L2 learner's comprehensive ability and the goal of L2 learning, too. In intercultural language learning, the goal is not native speaker-level competence in the target language. Instead, "language learners need to follow the norms of an intercultural speaker" (Byram et al. 280). They want the learners to acquire the competence which enables them to mediate the values, beliefs and behaviors of themselves and of others (Byram et al. 12). Intercultural language learning equips students with skills in negotiating the relationships between their languages and cultures.

A five-element model for interculturality in language education comes up by Paige and Stringer (1997):

1. learning about the self as a cultural being;
2. learning about culture and its impact on human language, behavior, and identity;
3. culture-general learning, focusing on universal intercultural phenomena including cultural adjustment;
4. culture-specific learning, with a focus on a particular language and culture;
5. learning how to learn about language and culture (qtd. in Liddicoat 16)

In such learning process, there are not only facts in teaching target language culture which are important but they need some transformation of skills and abilities for development in learning.

Coming back to Lies Sercu's investigation, for supporting intercultural learning process, foreign language teachers need additional knowledge, *attitudes*, competency and skills to the ones sufficient for teaching communicative competence in a foreign language. He added "teachers need an adequate sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, frequent and varied contacts with it and a thorough command of the pragmatic rules of the use of the foreign language in contexts" (Sercu et al. 5). It suggests that teachers should be knowledgeable enough to develop culture awareness in students. Concerning the same issue, Clark posits that helping teachers develop language proficiency and cultural sensitivity are two goals that are a must in teacher training programs (Clark, 15). And thus, the prominent task for the current FL teacher is to be culturally understanding. For developing intercultural competence in language learners, EFL teachers need to be acknowledged about strategies of teaching culture.

To integrate culture and language teaching, Byram mainly suggested some ideas, more than 25 years ago and since then, he and his colleagues have worked on the integration of culture and language teaching. Although there are few researches on 'intercultural competence in practice', there are several strategies which are fruitful for teachers in teaching language and culture. Cullen and Sato encourage an approach encompassing materials which are tactile, visual or audio-based in order to touch on many various learning styles (Cullen et al. 2000); according to Cullen, there is a variety of possible sources of

information for teaching culture: Video, CDs, TV, readings, internet, stories, songs, newspapers, realia, literature etc. Marilyn Fleet also suggests some strategies for teachers which can be helpful including the internet as a resource, virtual realia, reformulation, research, selling differing cultural views, personalizing cultural content, presentation of cultural misunderstandings, cultural presentations and the learning cycle (15). Kramsch, who has a lot to offer in the context of culture in language teaching, mentions some perspectives which have influenced teaching of culture containing institutional structures and other aspects of civilization and highbrow information, i.e. immersion in literature and the arts, and lowbrow information, i.e. focus on the customs, habits, and folklore of everyday life; the other perspectives draw upon cross-cultural psychology or anthropology to embed culture within an interpretive framework and establish connections, namely, points of reference or departure, between one's own and the target country (qtd. in Thanasoulas 3). All in all, "using the transcultural metaphor of Persian and French gardens to illuminate the fact that culture in language study has to be seen as a way of making meaning", Kramsch concluded that teaching of culture will involve them in the post-modern and globalized world which seems complex but more relevant (Kramsch, 71).

Methodology

Participants

The participants in the present study were 50 English language teachers of the institutes in two cities of Rasht and Yazd with two different cultural views. They were participated in a survey questionnaire in which they were asked to take part in an interview if they were willing, after that. Their ages ranged from Twenty-two to fifty-seven and their years of teaching ranged from less than 5 years to above 16 years. It should be mentioned that the educational level of about a half of the teachers was BA and that of the other half was MA. Based on their educational level and their years teaching, it could be presumed that they should have been known about the relationship of language and culture. Also, they should have identified some probable difficulties in dealing with cultural questions posed by learners. Therefore, they were expected to answer to the questions according to their academic knowledge and their teaching experience in their EFL classrooms. In this study, the participants were chosen randomly and according to their willingness to participate in the survey questionnaire and to be asked questions. The researcher had no background information about the participants' cultural view or their intercultural experience. Out of total number of 50 teachers, 25 were selected from Yazd and 25 were selected from Rasht. The subjects were aware of participating in a research study which was part of an MA thesis; they were well-informed about the purpose of the study. They were also known that their answers would be kept confidential and without use of their names.

Detail of participants and instruments has been given, previously. However, a brief reminder of data sources is provided in following table:

Table 1: Source of Data

Type of data	Quantity	
Questionnaire	50	
	25 (Rasht)	25 (Yazd)
Individual interview (Volunteers)	10	
	5 (Rasht)	5 (Yazd)
Audio-recorded interviews	4 hours and 15 min	
	2 hours and 45 min (Rasht)	1hour and 20 min (Yazd)

Materials and Instruments

Instrument 1

In order to collect data, a survey questionnaire was prepared. The survey questionnaire was consisted of three parts. In the first part of it, the participants were asked to take part in a semi-structured interview if they were willing to be contacted to discuss their experience. Using these two different types of instruments, the researcher strengthened the reliability and internal validity of this study. To find out whether and to what extent EFL teachers in Iran believe language teaching is culture teaching and if they are aware of benefits of intercultural language learning, the researcher tried to prepare a survey questionnaire concerning these matters. The survey questionnaire comprised of three main parts. The first part, about the respondents, covered participants' personal information, their educational level and their years of teaching. The second part, intercultural experience, would made the researcher aware if the respondents had ever been abroad, how much access they

had access to foreign culture, their expectation for their future learners and their difficulties in teaching culture in Iran. The third part of the survey was consisted of 60-statemnet Likert-Scale questionnaire. It was divided to five parts. Part A tried to capture Iranian understanding of culture and its relation with language. In part B, the researcher posed some statements to investigate if EFL teachers are aware of the importance of intercultural language learning. Part C, wholly talked about culture teaching. In part D, the important role of EFL teachers was made clear and it was explored how much Iranian EFL teachers agreed their behavior and knowledge affect the development of intercultural competence in their learners. In addition, Iranian EFL teachers' preparation and their ability in dealing with cultural questions could be revealed. And the last part, presented some strategies based on what Marilyn Fleet (2003) and other scholars suggested for teachers; in this part, the researcher would become aware of Iranian EFL teachers' tendency toward different strategies to consider them in possible future decisions.

Instrument

An interview was prepared to cover what stated in the survey questionnaire and to increase the validity of research. It was comprised of 10 open-ended questions. In this part, participants could discuss their opinions about culture teaching, their available resources for engaging culture in their classrooms and how they dealt with cultural questions posed by learners. When the survey questionnaire and the interview questions were prepared, the researcher went to different institutes to distribute the questionnaires and to find teachers who were willing to participate and cooperate. In some cases, the institute itself, offered teachers to the researcher. They had two or three days to answer to the questions and gave it back to the researcher so they had time to think about the topic, search for it and answer to the questions carefully. In this step, the researcher went through the collected questionnaires and searched for the subjects who were volunteers to be asked questions in a semi-structured interview. The participants' E-mail address or their telephone numbers were available in the questionnaire so the researcher could coordinate with them in this way. The interviews' occasion and place were allocated and everything was ready for the interview. The interviews lasted as long as necessary for the researcher to obtain the answers she needed and also for the interviewee to express his/her opinions adequately. The interviews were audio-recorded by the permission of the interviewee. As soon as the interviews were finished, the researcher wrote down her impressions, comments, etc. before she forgot them. So, she reasonably recorded all her observations, questions, problems and interpretations. The next step followed, was to analyze all the data gathered during the whole research

Procedure

The process of data analysis in this research was somehow 'Content analysis'. All data were read several times in order to find it operationally adequate. The findings which emerged from these data were interpreted and categorized into major areas. The outcomes were written up in descriptive, interpretative and analytical ways (patton, 1990). It is difficult to separate the process of data collection and analysis practically because they overlap and recur; the data analysis can be conducted at the same time as the data collection. Therefore, to answer research questions, the data gathered from the survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were analyzed to find out the extent to which the attitude of teacher affects the development of intercultural competence in learners. Thus, initially, survey questionnaires were summarized and interview recordings transcribed.

Data Analysis

To calculate the findings, participants' answers to questions related to each research question were added up for each variable. Then, the correlation of two variables was estimated. The last and forth research question was different. According to this research, the questions in association with that were analyzed and base on how far above and below the mean their score fell, the participants were placed in either of two groups, high and low, better to say, who believe more and who believe less in teaching cultural elements. After identifying the extent to which the participants believe that language teaching is culture teaching, the next step followed was to investigate whether there is a relationship between their knowledge about nature of culture and cultural elements and developing intercultural competence in learners. Then, in association with last part of the Likert-Scale questionnaire, it was explored if there is a relationship teachers' knowledge about strategies of teaching culture and their attitude toward teaching culture. Finally, the researcher had tries to discover whether there is a significant difference between the attitude of teachers who believe more and who believe less in teaching cultural elements.

As previously mentioned, to accomplish the purpose of the study, the participants were asked to discuss their further experience in an interview, voluntarily. All the interviews were conducted "personally" (face to face) in different physical locations by the researcher. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed after that. An interview was cited in this research because the questions researcher asked every one might be exactly the same but interviewees reacted to the

interview situation differently. These differences could be very informative. Interview data supported the research and added new dimensions to that. All interview's transcriptions were read by the researcher for several times in order to decide what information were most useful for the research. Then, all were summarized.

To estimate the reliability of this research as a sample, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used which is defined as:

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{K} \sigma_{Y_i}^2}{\sigma_X^2}\right)$$

Indeed, several investigators have shown that alpha can take on quite high values even when the set of items measures several unrelated latent constructs. As a result, alpha is most appropriately used when the items measure different substantive areas within a single construct. In term of content validity, it is a non-statistical type of validity that involves 'the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behavior domain to be measured' (Anastasi et al. 114); a test has content validity built into it by careful selection of which items to include. concerning this matter, the researcher used two experts to review the questionnaire, questions' specification and the selection of questions to improve the content validity of research. The experts reviewed the questions and commented on the questions which hadn't covered a representative sample of research domain.

As the data were obtained from the questionnaire, the analysis of Pearson Correlation was utilized related to first three research hypothesis; A Significance (2-tailed) level of 0.05 was selected for rejecting the null hypotheses. Concerning hypothesis four, after obtaining the data, the analysis of t-test was utilized; An alpha level of 0.05 was selected for rejecting the null hypothesis.

Results and Discussion

Results
According to the answers provided by 50 teachers to the question, 'Your access to foreign culture', the researcher observed that the majority (48 teachers) reported that they had access to 'Film' as a source of foreign culture. Furthermore, those who had access to 'Web' (thirty-eight teachers, they also had access to 'TV' (41 teachers), 'Music' (37 teachers) and 'Books' (36 teachers). Slightly more than a half of the participants (29 teachers) had 'E-friends'. And only 11 teachers stated that they had access to travel. It is also demonstrated that 'Poor knowledge of foreign culture' was identified as the greatest difficulty by Iranian EFL teachers. Moreover, it shows that more than a half of the teachers identified 'Lack of time' (29 teachers), 'Shortage of suitable resources' (31 teachers), 'Lack of training' (26 teachers) were some difficulties they had in teaching culture in their EFL classrooms. Minority of teachers believed, 'it's not necessary to teach culture' and only 3 teachers stated that their learners wouldn't be interested. The answers in relation to Culture Teaching is stated in accordance with the question No.25 in Likert-Scale questionnaire; culture teaching is easier than language teaching. It is shown that 24% of participants (teachers) strongly disagreed and 42% of them disagreed and as a result, they strongly believe that culture teaching is not easier than language teaching. The answers to Question 35 (Teachers' role) express that how much the teachers might agree with 'The way teachers position themselves with respect to cultural representation of others need to be examined'. It is discovered that 22% of participants agreed, 36% strongly agreed, 38% somewhat agreed or disagreed and only 4% disagreed. So, it conveys that most of the participants believe that teachers' position with respect to cultural representation of others need to be examined. Regarding research question 3, talking about teachers' knowledge about the strategies of teaching culture and their applying these strategies, the researcher tried to discover whether they feel sufficiently well-equipped for cultural teaching as passing on knowledge about foreign culture. It is believed that most of the teachers (44%) somewhat agreed or disagreed, 24% of them disagreed, 16% agreed and 8% strongly disagreed. As a result, the researcher somehow discovered that teachers don't feel sufficiently well-equipped for teaching culture. Because there was no observation of classes to allow the researcher witness how teaching plans are implemented and how learners respond to teaching culture in classrooms, question No.41 was asked by the researcher, 'Iranian EFL teachers know how to deal with cultural questions posed by their learners'. It is realized that most of the participants (44%) disagreed, 32% of teachers somewhat agreed or somewhat disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed and only 4% of them agreed. This obviously means that Iranian EFL teachers, they, themselves believe that they do not know how to deal with cultural questions posed by learners.

In part E in Likert-Scale questionnaire, strategies for teachers, the participants were asked how much they agreed with 'Culture must be taught explicitly'. It is found out that most of participants (40%) somewhat agreed or disagreed and they didn't express their exact opinion, 30% of them agreed and 14% strongly agreed; whereas the minority (8% strongly

disagreed and 8% disagreed) had the opposite opinion. While this section only provided basic summary of descriptive statistics, a good idea of how data had summarized was given. By providing this information and by understanding the basics of tables and graphs in this section, inferential statistics become easier. In fact, much of the information in this section became the foundation for more advanced statistics which will be discussed in next section.

Table 1: *Item Statistics*

	N	Mean	SD
Intercultural competence	50	54.60	7.567
Teachers' attitude	50	52.68	6.387
Cultural knowledge	50	30.20	5.402
Intercultural competence (Hypothesis 2)	50	38.42	5.368
Cultural knowledge (hypothesis 3)	50	66.66	7.800
Teachers' attitude (Hypothesis 3)	50	59.60	7.256
Teachers' belief	50	58.30	7.657

Table 2: *Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.924	7

The alpha coefficient is 0.924. Therefore, the items have high internal consistency. (A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most research situations.)

Table 3: *Correlations (Hypothesis 1)*

		Teacher's Attitude	Intercultural Competence (Hypothesis 1)
Teachers' attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.608**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Intercultural competence	Pearson Correlation	.608**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 1. Do Iranian EFL teachers believe that language teaching is culture teaching?

Null Hypothesis. There is no meaningful interrelation between Teachers' attitude and Intercultural competence ($r = 0$).

Alternative Hypothesis. There is a meaningful interrelation between Teachers' attitude and Intercultural competence ($r \neq 0$).

Table 4: *Correlations (Hypothesis 2)*

		Cultural Knowledge	Intercultural competence (Hypothesis 2)
Cultural Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Intercultural competence (Hypothesis 2)	Pearson Correlation	.526**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 2. Does the Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge about the nature and function of cultural elements have any effect on developing intercultural competence in their learners?

Null Hypothesis. There is no meaningful interrelation between teachers' cultural knowledge and intercultural competence ($r = 0$).

Alternative Hypothesis. There is a meaningful interrelation between teachers' cultural knowledge and intercultural competence ($r \neq 0$).

Table 5: *Correlations (Hypothesis 3)*

		Cultural knowledge	Teachers' attitude (Hypothesis 3)
Cultural Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.598**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Teachers' attitude	Pearson Correlation	.598**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 3. Does the Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge about strategies of teaching culture and their abilities of applying these strategies affect their attitude toward teaching culture?

Null Hypothesis. There is no meaningful interrelation between teachers' cultural knowledge and their attitude ($r = 0$).

Alternative Hypothesis. There is a meaningful interrelation between teachers' cultural knowledge and their attitude ($r \neq 0$).

Table 6: *One-Sample Statistics (Hypothesis 4)*

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teachers' belief	50	.7773	.10209	.01444

Research question 4. Is there a significant difference between the attitude of the teachers who believe more and those who believe less in teaching cultural elements?

Null Hypothesis. There is no meaningful difference between the attitude of teachers who believe more and those who believe less in teaching cultural elements. ($\mu = 0.5$)

Alternative Hypothesis. There is a meaningful significant difference between the attitude of teachers who believe more and those believe less in teaching cultural elements. ($\mu \neq 0.5$)

Table 7: *One-Sample Test*

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = .5					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Teachers' belief	19.210	49	.000	.27733	.2483	.3063

According to the table, value of meaningfulness equals 0.00 (Less than α=0/05), therefore there is a meaningful significant difference between the attitude of teachers who believe more and those who believe less in teaching cultural elements. So, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative one is accepted.

In order to obtain in-depth information from teachers who had been directly involved with the research, the researcher conducted a 10-question semi-structured interview. This section is an important one because teachers as primary sources could provide perspectives which might not be available from other sources. Here, individual interviews are used to establish and support the previous parts of the research. Among teachers who were volunteer to discuss their further experience in a face-to-face interview, 10 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Table 8: *Interview Questions*

1.	What is your understanding of culture?
2.	What concepts are engaged in teaching culture?
3.	Do your available resources normally have an intercultural focus?
4.	How is language and culture teaching incorporated in your contexts? (Your policy, curriculum, assessment, textbooks, materials, and any other aspects of practice)
5.	How do you define "intercultural competence"?
6.	How often do cultural issues happen in your classes? Do these cultural issues motivate learner's language learning?
7.	Do your methods and techniques of teaching take into account the cultural elements?

8. Are you willing to teach cultural elements and develop intercultural competence of your learners?
9. What cultural topics do you consider important to teach or not to teach?
10. How do you deal with cultural questions posed by learners in classrooms?

What follows is a direct quote of each 10 interviewee in accordance with questions asked by the researcher:

- "I was born in America and I always have a relationship with the culture so they can understand it better …… About "Intercultural competence", I think you have to have knowledge of the culture of that target language that you are teaching and if you don't, it could be very difficult in what you have to follow that would be in films, books and so on". (F, BA)
- "One way of understanding culture is perhaps to satire. What I usually recommend to my students is to understand satire. I think if you can understand satire, you can dig into someone's culture because satires come from a deep concept of the culture. So usually what I recommend to my students is to listen to songs, listen to music and read satires". (M, PHD)
- "If you don't know about the culture and if you don't know about lifestyle and the society, you can't understand that language completely …… you should be able to understand that culture because some kinds of misunderstanding would lead it to lots of problems". (M, MA)
- "Teacher should know some idea of the culture. You should be able to read many cultural differences about different countries. You should come just like flowing river when it comes". (M, BA)
- "Intercultural competence means being aware of that culture and being able to use that language in that culture and be able to understand how the others use the knowledge they have and they've got in culture, being aware of knowledge of the other culture …. Living in a native country would help in a great extent". (F, MA)
- Some topics like going out with friends, going to restaurants, buying, shopping or reserving hotels, in these kinds of topics, there are differences between our culture and their culture so through teaching these things, we are unconsciously making them familiar with the culture, too". (F, M.A)
- "The first concepts come to my mind related to teaching culture are idioms I think, the way people speak there, not directly, using metaphors, the things they say but mean something else, the collocations, phrasal verbs and the way they communicate, teaching communication, how they react in special occasions and how they treat each other". (M, B.A)
- "Yes, culture is incorporated in books and materials but it's up to teachers, if they want to teach the culture, they teach it in the class otherwise no". (F, B.A)
- "Concerning "Intercultural competence", I have knowledge of "competence", my "underlying knowledge" and "inter" means "between two". And "culture" is "culture" ….. The ability of leading your culture to interact with the other culture". (M, BA)
- "I think the interaction among cultures is related to the application and not the theory. With theory, we think that America has the main culture for learning because we try to manipulate the factors inside American cultures through the learners. It's better to analyze the application of culture, and then a language learner can apply the factors skillfully". (M, BA)

Teachers' perceptions of culture and intercultural competence were nearly the same. Almost all of them were willing to teach culture in their classrooms and develop the intercultural competence of their learners, but they mentioned that there was a big lack of available resources in institutes. Teachers' appreciation for teaching various cultural topics was clear; in a few cases, they considered religion and politics a little bit dangerous to talk about in their classrooms. Although teachers showed good attitude toward teaching culture, they stated that timetable was too tight and was not flexible enough to integrate cultural elements in it. "Searching online", "Using cultural experiences", "Making discussions", "Throwing questions for them" and "Explaining in the benefit of the who class" emerged as most common solutions for teachers to deal with cultural questions posed by learners. All in all, in addition to teachers' attitudinal and professional backgrounds, the context of teaching included learners' culture, the institutional culture and curriculum were negotiated as the basic issues in teaching culture and developing intercultural competence in learners. What follows is a brief summary of each 10 interview in accordance with 10 questions asked by the researcher.

Discussion

In the century of population mobility and great change, promoting the acquisition of intercultural competence through English language teaching is a challenge. The researcher concerned with the attitude of Iranian EFL teachers toward teaching culture and developing intercultural competence of their learners in classrooms. As stated in the literature, Kumaravdivelu (2006) maintains pushing teachers towards the world of skill, knowledge and autonomy. Considering teachers as models of behavior and knowledge, investigating the effect of teachers' attitude becomes more important. Concerning this matter, four questions were raised up by the researcher and four hypotheses were predicted related to these research questions. The hypotheses we as follows: Iranian EFL teachers do not believe that language teaching is culture teaching, Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge about the nature and function of cultural elements doesn't have any effect on developing intercultural competence in their learners, Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge about strategies of teaching culture and their abilities of applying these strategies doesn't affect their attitude toward teaching culture and there isn't a significant difference between the attitude of the teachers who believe more and those who believe less in teaching cultural elements.

To answer the research questions and to accept or reject the hypotheses, a survey questionnaire and an interview were prepared. After collecting and analyzing data, using SPSS, all the null hypotheses were rejected. Having all the hypotheses rejected, it was concluded that there is a meaningful relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' attitude and developing intercultural competence in learners, there is a meaningful interrelation between teachers' cultural knowledge and developing intercultural competence in learners and there is also a meaningful interrelation between teachers' knowledge about strategies of teaching culture and their attitude toward teaching culture. Among the teachers who participated in this research study, about half of them were in BA level and the second half were in MA level; and the majority of teachers had the experience of 5-10 years of teaching. Considering these two factors, the participants had a fair knowledge of English language the majority is not experienced enough to have a good view of the effect of incorporating culture into EFL classrooms. Among the teachers who had filled out the questionnaire, 68% have never had the experience of being abroad and only half of them had foreign friends in touch; Therefore, it is obvious why "Poor knowledge of foreign culture" is identified as their greatest difficulty in teaching language and teaching culture by teachers.

In addition to what was concluded from the whole study, going through questions in questionnaire in detail, leaves some logical results. As stated in literature, culture teaching is easier than language teaching. The result in Iran seems different compared with what had been concluded in research by Caroline Mohoney (2008) in Japan. Caroline Mohoney, after interviewing and observing the classes of two non-native speaking teachers, had concluded that teachers view culture teaching easier than language teaching. However, in this study, it is observed that majority believes that culture teaching is not easier than language teaching in Iran. It is clearly coming back to their difficulties in incorporating culture in their classrooms, the top three difficulties, poor knowledge of foreign culture, shortage of suitable recourses and lack of time. In another question in the study, it was concluded that most of the teachers themselves agree that their position with respect to cultural representation of others need to be examined.

There was no observation of classes, therefore the researcher tried to realize the different views of teachers in dealing with cultural questions posed by learners. By inserting this question in the interview, there was also a general question so related to this subject matter; teachers were asked if Iranian EFL teachers know how to deal with cultural questions in the classroom. The whole result was that Iranian EFL teachers don't know exactly how to deal with these kinds of questions. Most of the answers were "Searching", "Searching online". And a few said that they could use their own cultural experience in common situations they had in foreign countries. However, Iranian EFL teachers don't know how to help students to develop necessary skills to locate and organize information about the foreign culture. Although there were few negative question No.42, culture must be taught explicitly, almost half of the teachers gave an affirmative response to this question and they believe in a direct culture-oriented EFL classroom. The majority of teachers believe that to stimulate critical thinking in learners, encourage their intercultural curiosity about foreign culture and motivate them in language learning, English songs, English movies, discussion on different subjects and etc. help learners in functionally language learning.

Comparing with Soraya Rajabi and Saeed Ketabi (2012) who examined the cultural elements in four English language textbooks currently used in Iran in order to determine the most prominent cultural dimensions, the researcher investigates that teachers believe that no single EFL textbook can provide information on foreign culture. The researcher concludes teachers should be more culturally aware to have the ability of applying strategies of teaching culture.

Table 1: *Complexity of Teachers' Role*

Knowledge	**Teachers**	**Resources**
(Knowledge about function and nature of culture, knowledge about cultural elements, knowledge about strategies of teaching culture)	(Attitude, belief, background)	(Policy of language institutes, curriculum, textbook, materials, etc.)

⟷   ↕   ⟷

Learners
(Attitude, belief, background)
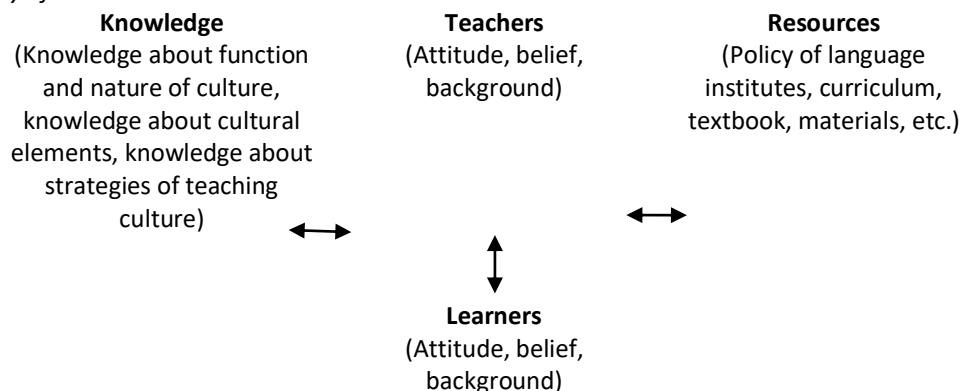
To summarize the discussion, language teachers are very much "cultural workers" (Giroux, 1992), socializing learners into practices that help them to change their attitude toward one's own or another culture and make new intercultural, linguistic, social and affective connections. As a result, language teachers are involved in the transmission of culture and their attitude is as important as the policy and suitable resources which are in their hands. Therefore, how teachers position themselves with respect to the cultural representation of others need to be examined and they should be trained to incorporate strategies of teaching culture.

Conclusion and Implications

The premise of the present study was to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' tendency toward teaching culture and if they are aware of their role in developing intercultural competence in learners. Discovering how teachers think and work – how they conceptualize teaching, intercultural identity and types of knowledge has until recently been neglected in ESL/EFL research what Richards strongly believed. Moreover, teachers' attitude has a great influence on teachers' way of teaching and implementation of intercultural competence in EFL classrooms. However, short-term workshops or training program alone are unlikely to result in profound changes in teachers' cultural awareness because personal beliefs tend to be deeply ingrained. Teachers' attitude and beliefs are as complex as culture is. In this condition, assessment policy needs to be explored more critically in teacher education programs and the way teachers put themselves into cultural representations must be examined in EFL classrooms in Iran.

The present study was an effort to provide a situation in which Iranian EFL teachers express their opinions and discuss their experience in teaching culture. As discussed in previous chapters, teachers had filled out a survey questionnaire based on their ideas about culture, culture teaching and intercultural language learning and their experience in incorporating culture in EFL classrooms. They generally talked about their attitude, beliefs, experience and difficulties in teaching foreign language and culture.

Teachers' behavior and knowledge are the models for their learners so teachers have an important role in developing intercultural competence in learners; they should be prepared to integrate intercultural issues into their teaching; they should know how to deal with cultural questions posed by learners; there should be no fear of discussing cultural beliefs in EFL classrooms and when teachers believe that teaching and learning English is always an intercultural process, then they will adequately prepare their learners for the intercultural world in which they are living. Therefore, they should develop a dynamic view of culture and an integrated approach to culture teaching and learning that engage learners in culture learning cognitively, behaviorally and affectively.

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Appendices

A Survey Questionnaire

The Assessment of Teachers' Attitude towards Expanding Intercultural Competence in English Learners in Iran

Survey questionnaire
by
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This questionnaire form is part of an MA thesis which is distributed to help gather accurate information about Iranian EFL teachers' understanding of intercultural competence and how their attitudes affect the development of intercultural competence in their learners. This information will help me better understand how participants contribute to develop intercultural competence in language learners. The questions you answer should only pertain to your own idea and your understanding of teaching culture and intercultural competence. Please kindly answer the questions as honestly as possible. Thanks for your cooperation.

Survey Questionnaire components:

Part 1. About the respondent

Part 2. Intercultural experience

Part 3. Questionnaire

Part 4. Interview

Some useful information for participants before filling out the survey questionnaire

Instructions: Before filling out the survey questionnaire, please first read carefully this informational form. This form must be returned with the questionnaire in order to include your comments in our study. All information will be kept confidential and no names will be used.

Participation in this study involves the following:

A. You as participants will complete a confidential questionnaire. Your use of the form(s) will contribute data for this study and be of eventual use by future participants.

B the Effect of teachers' attitude on developing intercultural competence in Iranian EFL Leaner' s questionnaire form is a self-evaluation that asks about the development of your intercultural competence and your beliefs about culture teaching.

C. Interview – A percentage of those who complete the questionnaire form will be invited, if they consent, to a semi-structured interview. During the interview you will be asked questions based on the form which concern your experience as teachers.

D. Possible benefits from participation in this project are:
   • You will have an opportunity to reflect on your experiences.
   • You will contribute to knowledge about the development of intercultural
     competence and culture teaching.
   • You will help to improve the program for future participants.

E. Participation is voluntary.

   ➢ I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in this research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.

   Participant's Signature   Date

   ➢ I am willing to be contacted for an interview to discuss my experience further

      Yes   ☐   No   ☐

   ➢ I prefer to be interviewed:

      In person   ☐   by telephone   ☐

   ➢ I am willing to share my journal documents (Teachers' diaries)

   Yes ☐   No   ☐

   ➢ I am also interested in receiving a summary of the research report when available:

   Yes ☐   No   ☐

Part 1. About the respondent

Please complete all questions below:

1. Email address:

2. Telephone (optional):

3. My nationality is

4. My native language is

5. I also speak

6. Gender   Male   ⬜   Female   ⬜

7. How old are you?

8. Educational level:

   BA   ⬜   PHD   ⬜

   MA   ⬜

9. My native language is   Persian   ⬜   other languages   ⬜

10. I know   Only English   ⬜   More foreign languages   ⬜

11. Years of teaching   Less than 5 years   ⬜

      5 – 10   ⬜

      11 – 15   ⬜

      16 and above   ⬜

Part 2. Intercultural language experience

1. Have you ever been abroad?   Yes   ⬜   No   ⬜

    If yes, how long did you stay in the country/countries you visited?

       More than 1 year   ⬜

       Up to 1 year   ⬜

       Up to 6 months   ⬜

       Less than 1 month   ⬜

2. Do you have any foreign friend you keep in touch?

       Yes   ⬜
       No   ⬜

       No more in touch   ⬜

3. your access to foreign culture:

e – Friends ☐	Newspapers ☐	TV ☐
Travel ☐	Radio ☐	Music ☐
Magazines ☐	Web ☐	books ☐
Films ☐	Friends ☐	

4. your expectation for your future learners:

e – Friends ☐	Newspapers ☐	TV ☐
Travel ☐	Radio ☐	Music ☐
Magazines ☐	Web ☐	books ☐
Films ☐	Friends ☐	

5. Is the teaching of culture promoted in foreign language institutes in Iran?

Yes ☐   No ☐

6. Which topics are covered in ELT textbooks for supporting culture teaching:

Eating ☐	Health & welfare ☐	Politics ☐	
Family life ☐	Education ☐	Environment ☐	
Friendship ☐	Workplace ☐	Human rights ☐	
Travel ☐	Religion ☐	Personal life ☐	
Sports ☐	Art ☐	Gender ☐	
Crime ☐	Tradition ☐	Lifestyle ☐	
Employment ☐	Race relations ☐	Literature ☐	
Music ☐	Technology ☐	Love ☐	
Festivals ☐	Social events ☐		

7. The difficulties in teaching culture which are identified most frequently by teachers:

A. Lack of time (The overall planning is too tight) ☐
B. Shortage of suitable resources ☐
C. Lack of training ☐
D. Poor knowledge of foreign culture ☐
E. Teaching culture is forbidden ☐
F. I don't think it is necessary ☐
G. Other teachers don't think it is necessary ☐
H. My learners wouldn't be interested ☐
I. Too difficult to implement ☐
J. Timetable is not flexible enough ☐

Part 3. Questionnaire

Please read the following questions and choose one answer from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

A. Language and Culture

		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Culture consists of ideas, customs and art that are produced by a particular society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	Every culture makes its members believe that some parts of the culture are true and some others are not.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	Language expresses cultural reality which reflects its speakers' experience, attitude and beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	Knowing a foreign language should open windows on the foreign culture as well as on the world at large.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	In order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with culturally appropriate behaviors.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	When we speak the words, the words we use reflect the cultural context we are in.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Intercultural Language Learning

		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
7.	The person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	Learners will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	Cultural competence gives learners an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	Learners must first become familiar with what it means to be part of a culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	Inter-culturally competent learners display respect for others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12.	Intercultural language learners will have the ability to be agent of world peace in an ever-changing society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	Learners who ignore the intercultural aspects of globalization do so at their perils.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	The perception that language learning is responsible for broad intercultural learning outcomes in learners has come to be regarded as 'commonplace' in Iran.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	The "context" of the individual learning experience plays an important role for intercultural learning process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	Despite the recognition of the significance of intercultural learning, there is still a gap between academics and practitioners.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	Intercultural competence as an objective focuses to a large extent on knowledge and attitude.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C. Culture Teaching

		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
18.	Language teaching is culture teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	Teaching foreign language should emphasize on everyday's life of people in foreign country.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	The goal of culture teaching is to develop in learners good attitudes toward other societies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	Critical cultural awareness with respect to one's own country is regarded as a main purpose of language and culture teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	Intercultural language teaching can turn the promises of the communicative approach into practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.	Teaching of culture should make learners aware of speech acts, connotations and etiquette.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	Culture teaching is expected to provide learners with the opportunity to act out being a member of foreign culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
25.	Culture teaching is easier than language teaching.	□	□	□	□	□

D. Teachers' Role

		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
26.	Teachers' behavior and knowledge are the models for their learners.	□	□	□	□	□
27.	A successful implementation of intercultural language teaching requires teachers to become not only learners of language but also 'learners of culture'.	□	□	□	□	□
28.	It is important for teacher to find out the learners' attitude towards foreign culture.	□	□	□	□	□
29.	FL teachers should be familiar with how native speakers think.	□	□	□	□	□
30.	Teachers need an adequate socio-cultural knowledge of the foreign language community.	□	□	□	□	□
31.	Teachers have an important role in developing intercultural competence in learners.	□	□	□	□	□
32.	Teachers' understanding of interculturality in themselves facilitates students' intercultural competence.	□	□	□	□	□
33.	Teachers' past experiences have great impact on how they teach culture.	□	□	□	□	□
34.	Teachers are not prepared to integrate intercultural communication issues into their teaching.	□	□	□	□	□
35.	The way teachers position themselves with respect to the cultural representation of others need to be examined.	□	□	□	□	□
36.	FL teachers feel sufficiently well-equipped for culture teaching as passing on knowledge about foreign culture.	□	□	□	□	□
37.	The strongest influence on a teachers' implementation of intercultural competence is his/her own attitude.	□	□	□	□	□

38.	**Teachers processing intercultural competence need to be willing to teach intercultural competence.**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39.	**EFL teacher has some fear of discussing his/her personal sociopolitical and cultural beliefs.**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40.	**Language teachers should be the teachers of foreign language and intercultural competence (FLIC).**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41.	**Iranian EFL teachers know how to deal with cultural questions posed by learners.**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thanks for Your Time

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