

Is my culture there too? – Effects of Turkish EFL learners' identities on their perceptions of culture-themed lessons.

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A decorative network diagram at the top of the slide, consisting of various nodes (circles) connected by lines. A central node is highlighted with a dashed circle and contains a blue double quote icon. The diagram extends across the top of the slide.

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*“Learning transforms who we are
and what we can do, it is an
experience of identity.”*

Etienne Wenger

Research Problem

- ◎ EFL coursebooks and materials "are full of cultural biases" (Jordan & Gray, 2019)
- ◎ Using the source culture in the language classroom may bring novelties into EFL classrooms in terms of increasing learners' interest in the target language and may help learners be less inhibited in speaking. search (Yahya, Ramli, Yusof, & Othman, 2017)
- ◎ Using learners' own culture in foreign language teaching may positively affect learners' identity development

Literature Review

- ◎ The relationship between an individual and members of a particular ethnic group who are considered to share a common history, a common language and similar ways of understanding the world.
- ◎ “Complex, contradictory, and multifaceted”
- ◎ “is “dynamic across time and place”
- ◎ “constructs and is constructed by language”
- ◎ “must be understood with respect to larger social processes, marked by relations of power that can be either coercive or collaborative” (Norton, 1997, p. 419).


Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s category of three identities





Research Questions

The current study aims to answer three research questions as follows:

- 1- Is there any significant difference in terms of EFL learners' preference towards the themes of the lessons used in the classroom?
 - 2- Does learners' cultural identity correlate with their preferences towards the themes of the lessons used in the classroom?
 - 3- How does the cultural background of the EFL learners form their theme preferences?
 - 4- How does their perceived socio-economic status affect their participation in target language community themed lesson?
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Research Design

Participants and Setting

- Private high school in Istanbul
 - 14 10th grade students from the same class: 7 females and 7 males
 - Aged between 15 and 16
 - A2 and B1 level of English
- Foundation university in Istanbul
 - 8 prep-school students: 2 females 6 males
 - Aged between 19 and 35
 - A2 and B1 level of English

Procedure

- ◎ One lesson had the target language society topic – Christmas, and the other lesson had the familiar to their culture topic – New Year. Students were instructed to follow the lesson and participate as usual without the teacher focusing on the difference of the topics. The high-schoolers group had their two lessons via Zoom, and the prep-schoolers - via Perculus.



Data Collection Tools

Quantitative Data

- ⊙ Demographic Information Form
- ⊙ Lesson Feedback Questionnaire

Qualitative Data

- ⊙ Semi-structured Interviews
- ⊙ Field Notes

Results

Table 1 *Paired Samples T-test*

1- Is there any significant difference in terms of EFL learners' preference towards the themes of the lessons used in the classroom?

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	G1L1 - G1L2	-2.57143	4.71845	1.26106	-5.29578	.15292	-2.039	13	.062



Table 2 *Paired Samples T-test*

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	G2L1 - G2L2	1.12500	2.64237	.93422	-1.08408	3.33408	1.204	7	.268



The results of quantitative data

- For both group Shapiro-Wilk Test and Q-Q Plots were conducted to check the normality assumptions. In both groups, statistically significant difference was not found. As the first step of quantitative data analysis procedure, normality assumptions were checked with Shapiro-Wilk Test and Q-Q Plots and the data were found to be normal ($p > .05$).
- There was not a significant difference in the scores of the both groups - Christmas-themes lesson ($M = -56.57$, $SD = 4,0$) and in the scores of Group1L2 – New Year Eve-themed lesson.
- The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between cultural identity and the themes used in the lessons. The results suggest that learners' cultural identities have no effect on their theme preferences.



The results of qualitative data

3- How does the cultural background of the EFL learners form their theme preferences?

Semi-structured Interviews

- **Vocabulary**
- **Participation**
- **Experience**
- **The target culture**
- **The source culture**
- **Intercultural awareness**

4- How does their perceived socio-economic status affect their participation in the target language community themed lesson?

Field Notes

- **Observable attentiveness in the source culture lesson**
- **Increase in the student talking time by sharing personal experiences**
- **Intercultural awareness due to middle-class privileges**



Limitations

- ① The number of participants is limited especially for the quantitative part. The results may be different suggested the research is conducted with other participants in other context.
- ② The researchers being the teachers conducted the lessons might have affected the flow of the lessons and interviews as well as perceptions of the results.



Conclusion

- The current research sheds light specifically on the effect of Turkish EFL learners' identities on their perceptions of the culture themed lessons.
- The research reveals some unpredicted causes of the absence of theme preferences among two different groups of EFL students in two different educational institutions in Istanbul, Turkey. These causes can be connected with the cultural background and identities of the learners.
- One of the most important features of the current study is in the fact that it gives students the opportunity to share their opinion on the matter.
- And at the same time, these opinions can help a teacher design and conduct lessons that cover cultural component in second/foreign language learning and are not only related to the target language culture but their local or any other culture.

What are our take-aways from this research?

- ① Identity having a religious dimension makes it a controversial topic in Turkey. What aroused our interest in the topic was whether ELF learners possess any particular stance towards it.
- ② Identity, being one of the most complex and multi-faceted areas of research, requires deeper attention and integration to teacher education & syllabus.
- ③ Including learners' own culture affects students engagement and helps create more inclusive classroom.



References

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Thanks!

Any questions?

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