

The Comparative Study of EFL Teachers and Learners' Perceptions on the Importance of Teaching Culture

Bahman Gorjian^{1,*}, Farshad Aghvami²

¹Department of TEFL, Abadan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Abadan, Iran

²Department of TEFL, Semnan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Semnan, Iran

Abstract The present study aimed at investigating the teachers and learners' perceptions toward the importance of English culture and its needs in reading comprehension classes. Accordingly, following study planned to compare teachers and learners' perception about the importance of teaching culture and their view points on reading materials. As the requirements of the study, two groups of EFL teachers (n=24) and learners (n=40) were selected based on convenience sampling method at Abadan Azad University. The instruments were two attitude questionnaire extracted from Karabinar and Guler (2012) and Pishvaei and Kasaian (2013). The participants filled in the questionnaires of 5-point Likert scale and data were analyzed through independent samples t-test to assess the teachers and learners' perceptions on the importance of culture in teaching reading skill. Two types of textbooks (i.e., native and non-native) were also used in two classes to evaluate their culture richness. Results showed that there was not a significant difference on the teachers and learners' perception on the use of culture and English native materials in the classroom. Results also indicated that the learners in the reading class in which English native textbook was used outperformed the class with non-native reading textbook at the significant level ($p < 0.05$). Implications of the study suggest that English language teachers should be aware of English language culture and put it in their teaching process. Cultural aspects in EFL teaching context believed as a vital necessity for many students to learn and improve their language knowledge, communicative skills, and comprehensions in same ways as native speakers do.

Keywords Culture, Perception, Teaching culture, English language

1. Introduction

Language teaching and learning are not separated from culture. In other words, culture is carrying language and its elements (Rajaeenia, 2015). These elements are presented in interpersonal communication among people in the society. Thus habits, behaviors, gestures, postures and beliefs can be transferred from one society to the other society. According to Genc and Bada (2005), teaching a language means teaching culture. They noted that the classes in language and culture aim at improving one understands of the language and the people who speak it. Trained to be prospective teachers of English, for students of ELT, studying English culture is not an arbitrary but a necessary activity. The findings of the study suggest that a culture class is significantly beneficial in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target societies, and contribution to the teaching profession. The participants in this study emphasized some kind of transformation in their thinking and listed six points as

potential contribution of a culture class they received (Razi, 2012).

Teachers as well as practitioners in the process of language acquisition are always paid special attention to the importance of culture; it is also attract researchers' attention in the process of second or foreign language learning since they have more limited access to the authentic language (Shirzadi, 2015). Commonly it is agreed that culture is part of teaching and learning process. Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have claimed that having knowledge about a foreign culture provided during reading facilitates the acquisition process. According to Pishvaei, Kasaian (2013), foreign language teachers should pay more attentions to the diversities of cultures, recognize key cultural items in every aspect when they design a language curriculum, and apply appropriate teaching strategies to learning activities in order to help students to bridge the culture gaps. different dimensions of ideas, customs, skills and arts can be found in a culture; culture also include our way of life, beliefs, values, and material objects (Nasrabadi & Biria, 2011). A context of cognitive and affective behavior for each person is formed by culture. It influences individual estimation and attitudes, and can also have an effect on practical aspects of life. Reading as tools of learning can provide such a sense that facilitates culture learning.

* Corresponding author:

b.gorjian@iauabadan.ac.ir (Bahman Gorjian)

Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/jalll>

Copyright © 2017 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved

Culture as an essential component of foreign language learning and teaching must be incorporated with language learning. Culture is an inherent part of the language and students can be successful in their target language only after cultural issues become a curriculum and instruction (Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012). On the surface language and culture appear to be two distinct fields, but they have an intertwined relationship in deep and affect each other mutually. The inseparability of culture and language propose ways of implementing instructional strategies for teaching foreign language through culture to enhance students' reading comprehension. People who live in different areas of the world have different cultural backgrounds and use different languages.

One of the most important skills learned by students is the ability to understand a foreign culture of the language they have intended to learn. The difference between national and foreign culture sometimes is problematic, since the existence of cultural discrimination is not ignorable. Reading comprehension is a tool that paves the path for this challenge. The final goal of reading comprehension is to understand text's information and also the author's meaning. To comprehend larger units of text such as register, ideas and even culture stories, many students face difficulty comprehending English texts, but through new proposed methodology and novel strategies by teachers and researchers, they are better able to learn, retain, and correctly comprehend culture in context. We can address cultural aspects in any type of teaching-ware like, textbooks, pictures, dialogues, films, and so on.

Local government normally takes the time to reflect upon their own cultural values but for students it is not like that. They experience it every day but they rarely take the time to think about. Even in the foreign language classroom, which seems to be a natural place for culture to be thought about and discussed, instructors often find it difficult to balance this along with. Culture is incorporated in different skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is often then only limited to the target culture, and taught through the target language and through textbooks. Thus, the present study attempted to fill the gap of the literature of teaching English language since the pool of research has worked on linguistic elements rather than cultural issues.

2. Literature Review

Culture defining is not an easy job. "Culture" is supposed to be one of the most complicated words in English language and receive a precise definition. Chastain (1988) indicated that "culture may mean different things to different people" (p. 302). In the anthropology sense, culture is defined as the way people live. He also argues that, this definition incorporates the types of information that would seem to be of most interest and importance to the typical student enrolled in a language class. Another definition, which Chastain (1988) announces, focuses on the major products and contributions of a society in general or of outstanding

individuals in that society.

The effect of teaching culture on motivation was proposed in the study of Gardner and Lambert (1972). In achieving high motivation, teachers and learners need to know the target culture and acknowledge the English culture as an effective component in EFL classes. This plays a great role in teaching and learning EFL since learners like culturally based activities such as singing, dancing, role playing, doing research on countries and peoples, etc. (Nasrabadi & Bira, 2013).

The study of culture increases learners' curiosity about English language and makes them interested in target countries which raise their motivation. For example, when some professor introduced the cultures of English language they taught, the learners' interests in those classes increased a lot and the classes based on culture became to be preferred more highly than traditional classes. In an age of post-modernism, in an age of tolerance towards different ideologies, religions, sub-cultures, we need to understand not only the other culture but also our own culture. Most people espouse ethnocentric views due to being culture bound which leads to major problems when they confront a different culture. Being culture bound, they just try to reject or ignore the new culture (Ansary & Babaii, 2003). As if it is possible to make a hierarchy of cultures they begin to talk about the supremacy of their culture. This is because they have difficulty understanding or accepting people with points of view based on other views of the world.

According to Genc and Bada (2005), people who identify themselves as members of a social group (family, neighborhood, professional or ethnic affiliation, and nation) acquire common ways of viewing the world through their interactions with other members of the same group. These views are reinforced through institutions like the family, the school, the workplace, the church, the government, and other sites of socialization through their lives. Common attitudes, beliefs and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language-for example, what they choose to say or not to say and how they say it. Besides these benefits, studying culture gives learners a liking for the native speakers of the target language. Studying culture also plays a useful role in general education; studying culture, we could also learn about the geography, history, etc. of the target culture.

Dehghan and Sedighi (2011) note that effective language teachers have been described in the literature as having not only a profound competence in the target language but a set of personal qualities like sensitivity, warmth and tolerance. Both language teachers and learners counted command of the target language and teaching comprehensibility as the most important characteristics to be possessed by an effective foreign language teacher. Moreover, the teachers gave more weight to items related to developing motivation and research orientation, whereas the students counted items relating to treating students fairly and making lessons interesting more important as compared with the teachers' ideas on these very issues (Erfani, 2014).

McKay (2003) contends that culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. Linguistically, it affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language. Pedagogically, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration while deciding upon the language materials. For example, while some textbooks provide examples from the target culture, some others use source culture materials.

The social-psychological factors of attitude and motivation have been thought to have important bearing on language learning success. As Prodromou (1992) states, the learner's attitude toward the target culture has an impact upon the acquisition of the language. A positive attitude toward the target language culture, i.e. respecting other people and their way of life, is a factor in language learning that leads to cross cultural understanding. Before students can learn about culture they must be receptive to the concept of learning about cultures other than their own. According to Karimpour (2000), negative attitude, i.e. viewing everything through the eyes of our own culture and its values, usually emerges either through false stereotyping or undue ethnocentrism. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' negative attitudes toward second language (L2) culture may lead to decreased motivation and interaction, and because of decreased L2 input and interaction it may lead to unsuccessful attainment of L2 proficiency (Aliakbari, 2004).

Dahmardeh and Wray (2011) stated that, "two extreme evaluations of ELT exist on the agenda. On the one hand English, as a school subject, which is seen as representing and introducing western culture to Iranian students. On the other hand there are some voices postulating that English as it is presently taught in Iran is nothing but a representation of Persian or Islamic ideology" (p. 277). Finally, they pointed out that two factors that are crucial within Iranian society are: culture and religion. The findings of this research suggest that apparently, many of the policy makers as well as course planners are very concerned with these issues and are trying to preserve Islamic and Iranian culture and religious values.

Ansary and Babaii (2003) attempted to explore the status of sexism in current ESL/EFL textbooks. They state that language (usage) is essentially a neutral vehicle of communication which can be used to convey a range of attitudes and values. However, "language usage plays a major role in strengthening the sexist attitudes and values which seem to be less widely understood and acknowledged" (p. 1). In this investigation, they examined the manifestation of sexist attitudes and values in two textbooks (Right Path to English I & II) that are locally designed to cater for and respond to the English language needs of Iranian students at secondary schools. The findings of the study were quite disappointing because, the examination of the treatment of women in currently used ESL/EFL textbooks revealed that in every category of this study, women often appeared less visible than men. They also found that English was basically taught through the presentation of male-orientated topics;

and a much closer look at the data demonstrated that male priority (firstness) was prevalent. Females were more visible in indoor passive activities, and were placed in traditional stereotypical roles.

Jamalvandi (2014) states that textbooks hold a paramount status as an indispensable ingredient of language teaching profession; therefore, appraising and evaluating them seems to be imperative to assure their efficiency and consistency with the objectives defined and expected of the course. The current study was an effort to evaluate suitability of the English textbook developed by Iranian Education Ministry for pre-university course. On the basis of participant responses, it can be concluded that, except for cultural element, Iranian pre-university teachers hold the view that the ELT textbook developed for Iranian pre-university students, moderately if not fully, is able to cater for the criteria relying on which the textbook was evaluated. As to gender coverage in frequency, the participants thought that it is fairly equal throughout the textbook. Likewise, the course book, as the participants assessed, holds features enabling pre-university students to bolster their communicative abilities.

Rajaeenia (2015), the present article is to give an account of the important place that culture holds in foreign and second language education. Further, it investigates the way culture is dealt with in ELT in Iran in general and the place of culture in ELT textbooks at the high school level in particular. Throughout the study, this issue was examined with reference to the relevant theoretical background, and the content analysis results of previous textbook evaluation studies carried out in the Iranian context. The research findings make it clear that the current ELT textbooks in Iran appear to be short of the goal of broadening students' cultural understanding.

In conclusion, the cultural focus of Iranian textbooks is the local culture or the 'localized culture'. However, while the cultural orientation of these textbooks is based on the source culture, there is no direct and explicit inclusion of local culture through passages dealing with cultural values and local cultural events. Moreover, there are no traces of the target culture or the international culture of English as an international language. Textbooks are expected not only to use local characters, places, and issues as the content for textbooks by using learners' experiences, but they should also be subtly interspersed with intercultural communication contexts and settings. The teaching of culture should become an integral part of foreign language instruction. The context of teaching and the level of teachers' cultural understanding are important due to the fact that first language programs often concentrate on developing the four language skills, or rather the skills that are assessed at the national examinations. In line with the pedagogical objectives of the study, the researcher has attempted to investigate the following research questions:

- 1) What is the difference between EFL teachers and learners' perception toward teaching target culture in reading comprehension courses?

- 2) What is the difference between EFL teachers and learners' perception toward teaching authentic materials conveying target culture in reading comprehension courses?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

The present research is a descriptive study which compares the teachers and learners' concepts on the importance and availability of having Western culture as a pedagogical element in teaching reading comprehension course. The comparative style of the investigation make this work to be a kind of "descriptive research" and, using attitude questionnaire also brings a "survey study" label with itself into the design. Furthermore, the data were quantified for the sake of using parametric statistics on the questionnaire items.

3.2. Participants

The research sample included 24 male and female university teachers were selected at Abadan Azad University, Iran. They had been teaching English passages for at least five years were selected non-randomly based on convenient random sampling method. Their age was ranging from 28 to 55 years old. The students were first year students who enrolled in Reading Course and their age was ranging from 18 to 36 years old. Forty were selected in two intact classes. The participants' characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants

Participants	Minimum age	Maximum age	N
Teachers	28	55	24
Students	18	36	40
Learners	20	33	60

3.3. Instrumentation

For the purpose of data collection, a number of instruments were utilized as mentioned below:

Teachers and learners' Attitude Survey Questionnaire:

Were used to measure the teachers and learners' perception about the importance of using target culture in Iranian EFL classrooms. In order to find a significance relation between both groups and answering the research questions, a combination of two available questionnaires which related to the purpose of the study, were selected and modified from the previous researches. Both surveys designed based on five-point Likert Scale questions, which the alternatives arranged from [Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD)]. The score for each is in ranging from 5 to 1 to quantify data. This questionnaire includes three parts:

Part one refers to the demographic questions (age, sex, and years of teaching English). The 24 items of the questionnaire included different statements about teaching culture and the

next is a-16 item questionnaire included the main parts of materials which carry cultural elements. Both questionnaires were adopted from the investigation of Karabinar and Guler (2012) and Pishvaei & Kasaian (2013). All of these items were designed, constructed, and validated in order to developing a Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire that could be used to evaluate Iranian ELT community's critical attitude towards ELT industry. The developed questionnaires were validated by administering it among 10 English professors and institutes. They also investigated the internal consistency and the construct validity of the instrument which both indicated acceptable results. The internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha indicated the reliability of both questionnaires as 0.932 and .825 which are acceptable and strong in educational research.

Table 2. Reliability of Questionnaires

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Teachers and Learners' Culture Perception	.932	24
Teachers and Learners' Native English Materials	.825	16

Finally, a final term reading comprehension test of Reading Course was designed based on the 12 units of the books. It was used by the teachers in two classes to assess the role of Native and Non-native textbooks. They compared the cultural effect of each material in the classes. It included 50 items and allocated time to answer the items was 50 minutes. The reliability of the test was calculated through Conbach Alpha as ($\alpha = 0.79$).

3.4. Procedure

The procedure followed some phases which included the selection of the participants, preparing the research instruments, administering the questionnaires, and giving the final term reading comprehension test.

Phase one: based on comparative design of the study, teachers and learners' perceptions and attitudes toward using target culture in EFL courses of study, participants of this investigation divided in two groups, namely: teachers group and learners group.

Phase two: the second step of the study was sampling procedure, which was applied to collect two groups of teachers and learners separately. The priority in sampling procedure was based on those teachers and learners who had reading comprehension course in their current semester. Because of different nature of each group participants, it decided to use a special procedure of sampling for each group. The difficulty in gathering and finding all the suitable subject teachers in one place led us to use snowball sampling in addition to convenience sampling system. Finally, 30 TEFL teachers were selected as the participants of the study. They were selected based on convenient sampling method.

Phase three: for learners group using of cluster sampling procedure was performed to make the process easier. 40 learners and 24 teachers majoring in Teaching EFL were non-randomly selected based on convenience sampling method. The learners were in two intact classes of Reading

Comprehension I.

Phase four: Reading comprehension materials: as a source for a reading course, mixed of two related text-books including a Native and Non-native one (i.e., *Active skills for reading 1* (Anderson, 2013) and *A General English Course for University Students* (Birjandi, 2001). Thus two native and non-native textbooks were used in two classes to assess the role of culture in teaching these materials. At the same time the selected teachers received all the necessary instruction to apply in their classes. Then, the explicit instructions were done during one academic in the first semester, 2016 including 12 sessions of reading comprehension skill.

Phase five: the most challenging part of the study refers to the process of preparing attitude survey questionnaires which used as the instruments of data collection in the study. They were two questionnaires of 24 and 16 items on teaching target culture and using native materials. They were designed by (Karabinar & Guler, 2012; Pishvaei & Kasaian, 2013). Since there were not any standard questionnaires exactly related to the purposes of the study, the available questionnaires were modified by the researchers and 10 experts in the field of teaching EFL to prepare an appropriate attitude questionnaire based on both reliability and validity factors.

Instead of time consuming process of test designing, some useful items adapted from the previous studies and surveys respectively (Karabinar & Guler, 2012; Pishvaei & Kasaian, 2013). The first draft of the questionnaire were include 96 items (24 statements, 44 attitude questions) about the attitudes toward teaching target culture and strategies in reading comprehension text-books, and the other ELT materials (Abdollahzadeh & Baniasad, 2010; Erfani, 2014; Karabinar & Guler, 2012; Pishvaei & Kasaian, 2013). By the help and consultation of the assigned supervisor, and the advisor of the study, the final draft turned to have 40 items in total.

Validity and reliability of the teachers' attitude survey were adopted from the original source of the questionnaire. But the final draft of learners' questionnaire was reviewed by three experts and confirmed its content validity because of the slight changes which made.

Phase six: Because no translated version of the surveys was distributed, in sessions 11 of the semester, some clarification was given to all participants in order to how answering the questionnaire items. They also got noticed about the confidentiality of the collected data and their

personal information. At 11th session the attitude surveys were distributed among all respondents personally to pay more respect and further clarification if needed. All of the distributed questionnaires collected at the same day.

Phase seven: data analysis started right after data collection. Gathered data computed into SPSS, version 17 and the outcomes were reported through descriptive statistics, K-S of normality test and independent samples t-test. Finally, the results were reported and discussed about what were the teachers and learners' perceptions about teaching target culture and using native materials in the reading comprehension classes.

3.5. Data Analysis

The gathered quantitative data were non-parametric, and after getting computed and fed into SPSS software, Version. 17. Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics to find significant differences between the teachers and learners' perceptions about using target culture and materials in the classroom. The results of comparing the teachers and learners' perception was confirmed at the significant level of ($p < 0.05$).

4. Results

The university teachers ($n=24$) and first university students ($n=24$) participated in the study and filled in the questionnaire of the importance of teaching culture in the passages of reading comprehension courses. The responses ranged from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The average of each item was calculated to show the instructors and participants' perception on each item. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers and Learners' Perception on the Importance of Culture

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teachers	24	2.6125	1.33687	.27289
Students	24	2.8958	1.24149	.25342

Table 3 shows that the teachers and learners' perception on the 24 items gained the mean of 2.61 and 2.89 respectively. To examine the significant difference between their perceptions, independent samples t-test was run in Table 4.

Table 4

Importance of Teaching Culture		t-test for Equality of Means					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	-.761	46	.451	-.28	.37	-1.0	.46
Equal variances not assumed	-.761	45.7	.451	-.28	.37	-1.0	.46

Table 5

t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
						Lower Upper
Equal variances assumed	-1.030	30	.311	-.318	.30	-.95 .31
Equal variances not assumed	-1.030	28.2	.312	-.318	.30	-.95 .31

Table 4 shows that the teachers and learners' perceptions on using culture in reading comprehension classes are not significantly different ($p < 0.05$). In other words, both groups believe that the use of cultural elements is important in teaching reading comprehension.

Table 5. shows that the difference between the teachers and learners' perceptions on the need for English native materials for teaching reading comprehension to university students is not significant ($p < 0.05$). In other words, there is a significant difference between the learners who receive English native and non-native materials ($p < 0.05$). In other words, the learners who received native textbook reading passages performed better than the ones who received non-native passages although both materials were at the same level of proficiency (i.e., pre-intermediate level).

5. Discussion

Findings of the present research revealed that the teachers and learners' perceptions on the importance of culture and culture-based materials were positive. Moreover, there was not any significant difference between their attitudes towards the need of authentic and native English materials in teaching reading comprehension. The results also confirmed that the use of native English materials can be more effective than non-native ones in teaching reading comprehension to university students. The statistical analysis tested the null hypotheses and answered the research questions as follows:

The first research question was:

RQ1. What is the difference between EFL teachers and learners' perception toward teaching target culture in reading comprehension courses?

The response to this research question was confirmed through the rejection of the null hypothesis one which claimed that the EFL teachers and learners' perceptions toward teaching target culture in reading comprehension courses are not different. This result may be due to the availability of international mass media, technology and the Internet which present English language in an authentic manner. Teachers and learners use these issues in their daily life and work with computerized facilities in the general and academic contexts. In order to find out about teachers' attitude and perception on the importance of teaching culture the questionnaire was run for the teachers and another for the

learners. Based on the analysis of their responses to the items of the attitude questionnaire on the need to teach, it was revealed that the respondents had a positive view toward using cultural values in teaching reading comprehension courses focusing on the English or target culture in their classes. The findings of the present research on the first research questions are in line with several scholars (e.g., Erfani, 2014; Razi, 2012; Shirzadi, 2014) who note that teaching language cannot be separated from the target culture. The various items of the questionnaire eliciting both teachers and learners' opinions regarding teaching foreign culture, items straightly addressed their reaction to the insertion of culture in reading comprehension language classes.

The teachers and learners agreed with each other regarding the use of culture in the reading comprehension classes since they gave high average of responses to the questionnaire items. The participants agreed on English should only be taught through English learning authentic English can help the learners discover and compare their culture to find similarities and differences between the nations. The results of the study matched with Mahboudi and Javadnia (2012) who emphasized that the teachers and learners should trust the materials designed by native speakers. This can make a confirmation for the teachers' positive attitude toward teaching foreign culture-based books on the one hand and the acceptance of the EFL learners on the other. The second question is as follows:

RQ2. What is the difference between EFL teachers and learners' perception toward teaching authentic materials conveying target culture in reading comprehension courses?

The response to the second research question is also positive since the teachers and learners' perception in the second part of the questionnaire addressed the need for authentic and English-materials in the reading comprehension classes. This can help the teachers and learners to discover English culture and know native English structures concerned with new areas of interests including customs, ceremonies, etc. These results also confirmed by several figures (e.g., Nasrabadi & Bira, 2011; Dehghan & Sedighi, 2011; Yi-Chun, 2014) supported the ideas proposed in the questionnaire. These items of the attitude questionnaire gained above average score in the two parts of questionnaire (i. e., teachers and learners' perceptions).

Analyzing the teachers and learners' perceptions on the 16

items of the second part of the questionnaires revealed their positive view points on the facilities which make the teaching of cultural values possible. Through examining teachers and learners' responses, their perceptions in learning the foreign culture in teaching EFL were explored. It was found that both teachers and learners had a positive outlook about learning language through foreign culture-based materials. The participants admitted a close relationship between language and culture and strong agreement between the teachers and learners. They agreed to have authentic and culture-based materials as valuable and significant tools for effective teaching in reading classes. The third research question is:

RQ3. How do English native and non-native reading textbooks teachers have a different effect on EFL learners' reading achievement?

Research question three was answered through the testing of the third null hypothesis which notes that English native and non-native reading textbooks are not different significantly regarding their effect on EFL learners' reading achievement. Two textbooks, i. e., *Active skills for reading 1* (Anderson, 2013) and *A General English Course for University Students* (Birjandi, 2001) were used in two classes of reading comprehension I. Results of the data analysis showed that the native textbook affected the learners significantly. In other word, the learners in the class with using native textbook outperformed the learners in the class with non-native textbook. They could outperform the learners who received non-native textbook. Results revealed that the native textbook could highlight over the native cultural issues. Active Skills for Reading 1 introduced the source culture which means that this textbook has been basically designed with the aim of providing the EFL learners with enough cultural competence.

Results are in line with Rajaenia (2015) who believes in the use of culture as the main point in teaching EFL. The comparison of two groups' scores revealed that the difference was significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. Final reading comprehension exam included some cultural values including life style and current cultural values which were responded by the learners in the native class better than the non-native one. This result confirmed that the learners who used native textbook could perform significantly in the reading comprehension exam.

6. Conclusions

The main problem that the Iranian learners face is the lack of appropriate cultural exposure in the English language textbooks in English courses. Language learners need to be aware of the culturally appreciated ways for addressing people, greeting, expressing needs and how to agree or disagree with someone. In some points of view, some authors believe that there are real differences between groups

and cultures. It can be stated that language cannot be separated from the culture since they are part-whole phenomena. In other words, language is a part of culture and it is deeply rooted in culture; therefore, language teachers cannot ignore the role of culture in teaching language skills. This study implied that it could be used by the teacher for learning culture to develop and improve the students' language skills with any other activity and style based on the students' interest. Through findings of the present study, teachers can stop taking the full responsibility of teaching and engage the learners in the process of learning and bring up independent and autonomous language learners. The advantages of using these perceptions to teach English culture have been proved can improved students' motivation. In fact, through this, the classes become more learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. Teachers should try to make known their students with innovative teaching native materials.

When EFL teachers engage students in learning target culture activities, they capture an opportunity to maximize the process. Put it simply, employing these activities allows the individual teacher to assign various dynamic roles in the classroom and social setting. Another important consideration regarding the use of this knowledge in general should be regarded as complementary materials and cannot replace the methodology of classroom discourse. Indeed, our findings put stress on the fact that culture and technologically-based activities such as Web sites should be further highlighted that can add spice to the classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, teaching culture helps teachers to diminish anxiety and stress in the classroom. This offers two advantages. First, it functions to strengthen students' motivation and students, as a result, display enormous interest in speaking activities. Second, teachers can capitalize on this and offer a range of open-ended topics for

As the focus was on culture teaching culture in EFL classes was the focus in this research study, it is suggested to explore the effect of teaching culture on other language skills (listening, speaking, and writing) and language component (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling). To get further reliable and valid findings, it is necessary to conduct the present study in other settings with more participants. Last but not least, it seems quite necessary to reveal how native textbooks lead to knowing the target culture in learning EFL. Results of the present study showed that native culture and its teaching should allow learners to increase their knowledge of the target culture in terms of people's life style, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and how these manifest themselves or are couched in linguistic categories and forms. More specifically, the teaching of culture should make learners aware of speech acts, connotations, etiquette, that is, appropriate or inappropriate behavior, as well as provide them with the opportunity to act out being a member of the target culture.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdollahzadeh, E., & Baniasad, S. (2010). Ideologies in the imported English textbooks: EFL learners and teachers' awareness and attitude. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 53(217), 1-17.
- [2] Aliakbari, M. (2004). The place of culture in the Iranian ELT textbooks in high school level. *Pan-pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 8(1), 1-14.
- [3] Anderson, N. J. (2013). *Active skills for reading 3*. New York: Cen Gage Learning, Inc.
- [4] Ansary, H., & Babaii, E. (2003). Subliminal sexism in current ESL/EFL textbooks.
- [5] Birjandi, P. (2001). A general English course for university students. Tehran. Shahid Madavi Publication.
- [6] Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing second-language skills*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace.
- [7] Dahmardeh, M., & Wray, D. (2011). Culture and English language teaching in Iran. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 7(5), 264 – 281.
- [8] Dehghan, F., & Sedighi, F. (2011). On the Cultural Schema and Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Performance: A Case of Local and Global Items. *Pan Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 97-108.
- [9] Erfani, S. M. (2014). Source Culture, Target Culture or Interculture? Iranian English Language Teachers' Perception of Culture. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World - IJLLALW*, 6(1), 317-337.
- [10] Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitudes and motivation in second language learning. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- [11] Genc, B., & Bada, E. (2005). Culture in language learning and teaching. *The Reading Matrix*, 5(1), 73-84.
- [12] Jamalvandi, B. (2014). ELT Textbook Evaluation in Iran, New Insights. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 1068-1078.
- [13] Karabinar, S., & Guler, C. Y. (2012). The Attitudes of EFL Teachers towards Teaching Culture and Their Classroom Practices. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2(2), 113-126.
- [14] Karimpour, A. (2000). Iranian EFL Learners' Attitudes towards British and American English and their Effect on Their Listening Comprehension. *Iranian EFL Journal*.
- [15] McKay, S. L. (2003). The Cultural Basis of Teaching English as an International Language. Online Documents at URL <http://www.tesol.org/pubs/articles/2003/tm13-4-01.html>.
- [16] Mahboudi, H. R., & Javdani, F. (2012). The teaching of English in Iran: the place of culture. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 3(5), 87-95.
- [17] Nasrabad, A. N., & Bira, R. (2011). Persian EFL learners' cross-cultural understanding and their L2 proficiency. *Komunikacija i kultura online*, 132-159.
- [18] Pishvaei, V., & Kasaian, S. A. (2013). Design, Construction, and Validation of a Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire in Iran. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 59-74.
- [19] Prodromou, L. (1992). What Culture? Which Culture? Cross-cultural Factors in Language Learning. *ELT Journal*, 46(1), 39-50.
- [20] Rajaenia, M. (2015). Integrating culture into EFL textbooks: The case of Iranian high school English textbooks. *ROSHD FLT*, 30(2), 34-47.
- [21] Razi, S. (2012). Developing inventory of cultural component to assess perception in language learning. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 6(2), 169-186.
- [22] Shirzadi, D. (2015). The effects of cultural knowledge on Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension across male and female learners. *Journal of Languages and Culture*, 6(4), 24-29.
- [23] Yi-Chun, L. (2014). The Use of Target-Language Cultural Contents in EFL Teaching. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 6(1), 243-247.