

A Comparative Study of Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions towards the Role of Culture in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

The general principal is that the way people perceive something positively or negatively would influence their behavior toward that thing. Given the fact that English is the dominant foreign language taught in Iran, it is of enormous use to investigate the possible contributions of teachers' and learners' attitudes toward teaching the target culture. This study was an attempt to uncover the Iranian English teachers' and learners' perceptions of teaching culture. Alongside, the possible differences between the teachers' and learners' perceptions of teaching culture in language classrooms were also inspected. The participants of the study included 8 language teachers and 30 language learners from Iranian institutes. Teachers' and learners' perceptions toward teaching target culture in language classes were collected through attitude questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis revealed that both language teachers and learners held positive attitudes toward teaching culture and the statistical test of independent samples t-test also indicated that there was no significant difference between language teachers and learners in terms of perceptions toward teaching culture in language classes. Moreover, language learners expressed that they preferred dialogue-based learning of culture rather than using other channels such as reading about culture.

Keywords: Culture, Perceptions, Teaching Culture, Foreign Culture.

Introduction

Learning a new language is concerned with more than structures manipulations and lexicon enrichment. In the words of Bada (2000, P. 101): “The need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.” Moreover, today second language culture is considered as an interdisciplinary concept in many foreign and second language curricula designs and textbooks (Sysoyev & Donelson, 2002). Playing an important role in society, the domain of culture is so broad that it influences almost all aspects of human's life such as education. Language learning texts, in particular, is one of these aspects which by itself, serves as a medium of culture to the learners. Accordingly, today English language is the dominant second language taught in different countries as this language is today considered as an international language. The English language incorporates a variety of English cultural norms.

On the other hand, as language and culture are inseparable, the language teaching programs need to include the culture in their programs. Some scholars believe that a language learning program without culture cannot lead to acceptable level of proficiency. For example, in her book *Context and Culture in language Teaching*, Kramersch (1993) states that cultural awareness and the learning of a second culture can only aid the attaining of second language proficiency. She also indicates that the teaching of culture implicitly or explicitly permeates the teaching of social interaction, and the spoken and the written language. A question of great importance is how language teachers perceive culture as well as its integration in language classes. For example, can culture be effectively taught in the language classrooms today?

Some teachers may have some reservations regarding the inclusion of culture in language classroom. Some believe that culture is not amenable to being taught in the context of the classrooms. According to Kramersch (1993) the teaching of culture should instead be about the search for, and the development of a “third place”. The concept of a third place is best described as a creation of a state in the classroom in which polyphonic communication is made possible. All students should be provided with the opportunities to reflect on culture at the class. How teacher views culture teaching can serve as one of these opportunities thereby students will come in contact with the cultural norms of second language. To this end, this study aims to investigate the Iranian English teachers and learners’ perceptions concerning culture teaching and its contributions to successful language learning.

Literature Review

Cortazzi and Jin, (1999) refer to culture as a tool thereby one monitors his own daily life and identifies the significance of various experiences one may have during the life. Given the above definitions, it follows that culture sometimes is considered as a body of beliefs and knowledge that people hold regarding a particular group of people or society. A question of interest for all those engaged in language studies and learning is what the relationship between language and culture is? Historically the practitioners and teachers considered teaching as a way of translating one language into another one. In the earlier part of this century, second language learning took place in order for learners to gain “access to the great literary masterpieces of civilization” (Allen, 1985).

This view was challenged as this approach couldn't pave the way for acquisition of an inclusive language in particular its cultural component. "This is because culture is always open to variability and differences and is likely to be a source of conflict when two cultures come into contact with one another" (Tornberg,2000, p. 63). It is believed that teaching language by itself will involve teaching culture unconsciously as well. Along the same lines, Kramersch (1993) holds that teaching of culture implicitly or explicitly permeates the teaching of social interaction, and the spoken and the written language.

Given the role of culture in language, it is necessary to include the cultural component in language learning programs. Stern (1983) proposes the inclusion of cultural elements of second language and foreign language in his three-level framework. The first level is comprised of anthropology, educational sociology, and linguistics and sociolinguistics theories. Ethnographic or cultural description of the target language is the essence of the second level which involves the cultural description of the foreign language and the third level is concerned with socio-cultural component of the second language.

Kramersch (1993) believes that culture cannot be added as a fifth skill to the other four language skills: speaking, talking, writing and reading. This is because culture is ubiquitous at the outset of learning a new language. Raising the same point, Gagnestam (2003) also advocates this view of language learning, believing the main purpose of language education is to open doors to the world and its various cultures (p. 11). Gagnestam (2003) says that it is vital to learn about one's own culture before one begins the study of other cultures. The foundation of the ability to reflect on similarities and differences between cultures is made up of the awareness of your own culture and cultural heritage. Knowledge of other cultures is viewed as something that can motivate students' when they are learning languages (Gagnestam, 2003).

Reviewing the literature on the teachers' perceptions concerning the inclusion of culture in language classes, one can find that research on such perceptions has received little attention. As Arikani (2011, p.232) states:

"Atkinson's (1999) thorough analysis revealed that research on culture received minimal consideration in literature although we know by experience that PTs need to have an accurate knowledge and a positive perception of the TLC so that they work perform with this knowledge in their classrooms comfortably. This is especially important in foreign language teaching".

Along the same lines, Kramersch (2004) argues that second language teacher in today's world is considered as a specialist in both linguistics and culture, knowing the interactions occurring between language and culture and manages to deliver both efficiently accordingly. The literature shows that teachers' view and impressions of target language culture are influenced by several factors the most notable of which are social, educational, cultural and social-economic ones. Teachers' expectations regarding cultures are shaped in early stages of childhood under the influence of parents and peers (Brown, 2000; Brown and Ratcliff, 1998; Kelleher, 1987).

Non-native teachers seem to miss the opportunities of naturally experiencing authentic culture of target language while studies indicate that engaging in cultural immersion programs leads to viewing the world differently (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The teachers' perception of the culture of target language and culture teaching is also immensely influenced by educational forces. This is because as studies by Akl (2007) and Seelye, (1984) show; many teachers consider language and culture to be inseparable. That is, there is a continuous interaction between language acquisition

and identity shaping (Benveniste, 1971; Canale and Swain, 1980). The literature and research have not delved enough into the impact of socio-economic on teachers' expectations of target culture. According to Arikan(2011, p. 233) "It has also been shown that social class, housing, and access to resources have considerable impact on acquisition of value systems as much as on academic achievement".

In the same context, Hill and Sandfort (1995 p. 106) state that those teachers having lower socio-economic status are more likely to run into obstacles on their way to cognitive as well as socio-economic development. Studies drawing on the questionnaires tapping the expectations about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) devised by Horwitz (1985, 1988) have given insights regarding what learners conceive of the nature of second and foreign language learning. The studies conducted by Siebert (2003), and Horwitz, (1988) in the contexts including American students learning French, Japanese and German languages show that these students are inclined to unanimously agree that the most important sections of language learning programs are grammar and vocabulary findings consistently indicate that almost one thirds of subjects in these studies do not believe that being aware of the foreign culture matters , implying that cultural knowledge is not considered as a requirement for language learning and teaching.

Hadley (2001) argues that such perceptions held by learners and teachers toward culture are the reasons why teachers might turn a blind eye to teaching culture in language classes. A study conducted by Chavez (2002) on the perceptions of German learners toward the inclusion of culture in foreign and second language classes can provide more insights as the study consists of qualitative components as well. Administering a combination of a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire, Chavez (2002) found that learners are attracted to learning about products and practices rather than perspectives. Moreover, the qualitative data obtained in this study indicated the students' ambivalent position to the status of culture in a foreign language classes. That is, some participants considered the relation between language and culture as an interconnected one while other learners demanding it to be thoroughly separated as shown by the quote: "this is a course on language not culture" (p. 136). Norrizan (1993) conducted a study to examine the effect of various cultural components in ESL texts in Malaysia. She made use of a combined cultural unit which is comprised of culturally suggestive topics such as forms of the houses, studying abroad, salary, financial loans, travels etc. She concluded that the textbooks were inclined towards middle-class values and lifestyles with meaningful interactions among the learners in these classrooms. She recommended that teachers should take a more selective approach in selecting appropriate items by taking account of the learners' culture.

Purpose of the Study

This study intended to explore Iranian EFL teachers' and Learners' perceptions of teaching culture in English classes. In addition, it was investigated how teachers' and learners' perceptions of teaching culture was related. The general principal is that the way people perceive something positively or negatively would influence their behavior toward that thing. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), attitude is one of the main factors determining intention and consequently behavior. Given the fact that English is the dominant foreign language taught in Iran, it is of enormous use to investigate the possible contributions of teachers' and learners' attitude toward teaching target culture. Bada (2000) argues that becoming aware of cultural values related to other societies doesn't necessarily mean that the second language learner will accept and adopt such values, since they are there to "refine the self so that it can take a more universal and less

egoistic form” (p.100). To realize the above-mentioned purposes, following research questions were formulated:

Q1: What are Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions toward teaching culture?

Q2: What are Iranian EFL learners' perceptions toward teaching culture?

Q3: Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions toward teaching culture

Methods

Participants

The participants of the study comprised of 8 English language teachers and 30 English language learners from 4 language institutes in Iran. Through general enquiry, language teachers with minimum experience of 4 years were selected while the maximum experience was found 10 years of teaching English. The students were studying at intermediate level of language proficiency based on the institutes' progress test reports and all were female with age range of 16 to 22. No reliable information was available regarding the socio-economic status and education background of the students and researcher was not allowed to have such kind of inspection.

Instruments

The study's focus was on perceptions and attitudes which made researcher not to limit herself to self-report procedure. Accordingly, two instruments, namely questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilized to elicit the most reliable information on teachers and learners' attitude toward teaching culture. Questionnaires were designed in two different versions which made them suitable for both language teachers and learners.

Attitude Questionnaire (Teacher's Version)

In order to tap teachers' perceptions of culture, an attitude questionnaire was devised based on Sercu (2005). It consisted of five parts, each dealing with different aspects of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. Section A comprised statements asking teachers to state their thoughts and ideas on the role of culture in the learning and teaching a foreign language. Section B comprised statements exploring the importance teachers attach to possible objectives of culture teaching. Part C consisted of statements which ask teachers to self-report how often they practiced different activities related to target language culture during their teaching time. Section D and E focused on teachers' familiarity and the extent to which they deal with different cultural aspects in the foreign language classroom. The validity of the questionnaire was sought through seeking confirmation of the content validity by making reference to a panel of experts' judgment. The panel of expert comprised of three PhD holders in the field of applied linguistics. Based on experts' comments and subsequent changes to the initial drafting researcher managed to attain the positive appeal of experts on the capacity of the questionnaire to tap teachers' attitude toward teaching culture. Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire, internal consistency of the questionnaire was estimated through employing Cronbach's Alpha. To this end the questionnaire was piloted on sample of 20 language teachers and Cronbach's Alpha was found 0.72. Table 1 shows the statistics of the attitude questionnaire (teachers' version).

Table 1
Results of Cronbach's on Teachers' Attitude Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.720	.727	15

Attitude Questionnaire (Learner's Version)

In order to tap learners' perceptions of culture, another questionnaire was devised based on Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2007) discussion on questionnaire design. This questionnaire was divided into two sections. Part one focused on the personal information about the participants and Part Two asked for the learner's responses concerning the teaching of different aspects of target culture in language classroom. The second part was further divided into different aspects pertaining to learners' responses to cultural beliefs, customs, social organizations, speech acts, gestures, notions of personal space and arts. Each of these cultural entities was arranged in sub-categories each of which was supported by at least two or more questions. Every question was an "attitude statement" (Oppenheim, 1998, p. 178) which referred to learners' attitude towards an aspect of culture and all the statements were close ended. The same procedure as for teachers' version, was adopted to determine the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Initially the first draft of the questionnaire was given to a panel of expert (the same PhD holders) and after the changes recommended by the panel, content validity of the questionnaire to seek learners' attitude toward teaching culture was supported by expert's appeal. The questionnaire was piloted on a sample of 20 language learners and reliability index of the questionnaire was determined (0.77) through utilizing Cronbach's Alpha procedure. Table 2 shows the statistics of the attitude questionnaire (learners' version)

Table 2
Results of Cronbach's on Learners' Attitude Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.771	.775	20

Semi-structure interview

A set of semi-structured interview questions was also prepared. This set included 5 open-ended questions which sought information on the teachers' perceptions regarding teaching culture and its contribution to improving language learning. Each session of the interview lasted thirty minutes and exploratory content analysis approach recommended by Auerback and Silverstein (2003) was used to analyze and report the interview results. In order to observe consistency in terms of content areas to be covered and for the purpose of achieving minimal convergence between the information obtained through questionnaires and interviews, enough care was taken in formulation of the interview questions to target the same components comprising attitude questionnaires. As the name speaks, the questions were opening ended so that participants could clarify their purposes and add complementary information.

Data Collection

The study was an attempt to uncover the Iranian English teachers' and learners' perceptions of teaching culture. Alongside, the possible differences between the teachers' and learners'

perceptions of teaching culture in language classrooms were also inspected. The necessary data collected through carrying out the interviews with teachers and learners and also administering the attitude questionnaires to them. The starting point of data collection was administration of the attitude questionnaire which was performed at the time participants were comfortable. Each teacher was contacted and arrangement was made for a session for taking part in an interview and completing an attitude questionnaire. At the predetermined time teachers were met and kindly asked to complete the questionnaires and attend in interviews. Regarding the interviews, each participant was interviewed separately and each session lasted approximately 30 minutes. During the interview, after warming up which performed through friendly dialogue to create friendly and low anxious climate, participants were requested to respond to each question based on their true feelings and honestly. They were assured that interview was just for mere research purposes and all the names and private information would remain confidential. They were also told that they could elaborate on their opinions and in case participants could not well express their opinions researcher helped them with providing choices and alternatives. After the interview was over the same questioner competed by the interviewee was given to her again and asked to review the items and make necessary change if needed. The same procedure was adopted for the learners except that questioners were handed out among the learners in one of the class hours and afterward an interview arrangement was set for each learner based on their availability.

Results

Teachers' and learners' perception of the teaching culture in EFL classes was uncovered through analyzing teachers and learners responses to each item of the attitude questionnaires as well as interview questions. What follows is a detailed analysis of the teachers' and learners' responses to the questionnaire items and interview questions.

Teachers' perceptions

Teachers' responses to each item of the attitude questionnaire revealed that on the whole teachers were viewing positively the teaching of culture in foreign language classes. Among the various items seeking teachers opinions regarding teaching culture, item #1 and #6 directly addressed their reaction to the inclusion of culture in language classes. It was found that 62.5% of teachers agreed with item #1 which stated that "In a FL classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the FL" and 50 % agreed with item #6 which stated that "The cultural dimension in foreign language classes should be expanded". Among the teachers' agreement responses, the highest ones were given to item #1, #4, #14. Item #4 dealt with misunderstandings arising equally often from linguistic as well as cultural differences and item #14 dealt with culture teaching as a motivating factor. All these responses are evidence for the teachers' positive attitude toward teaching culture in foreign language classes. Table 3 shows the items of the attitude questionnaire (teachers' version) with the percentage of teachers' responses to each item.

Table 3

Percentage of Teachers' Responses to Each item of the Attitude Questionnaire toward Teaching Culture

		Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
1	In a FL classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the FL.	62.4	37.5	0
2	It is impossible to teach the foreign language and the foreign culture in an integrated way.	0	50	50
3	The more students know about the foreign culture, the more tolerant they are.	37.5	37.5)	25
4	When speakers of different languages meet, misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic as from cultural differences.	62.5	37.5	0
5	Foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.	50	37.5	12.5
6	The cultural dimension in foreign language classes should be expanded.	50	25	25
7	European and global identities of the student/ citizen should be fostered in foreign language/ culture classes.	12.5	25	62.4
8	All the English-speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an English syllabus.	50	37.5	12.5
9	The study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy.	25	37.5	37.5
10	Learning about a foreign culture can change the student's attitude towards her/ his own culture.	50	25	25
11	An emphasis on the study of foreign cultures can contribute to the student's loss of cultural identity.	37.5	37.5	25
12	The most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is to develop a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures.	50	25	25
13	The development of cultural awareness should be kept only for the most advanced levels.	25	50	25
14	Teaching culture motivates students.	62.5	37.5	0
15	Combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills.	37.5	37.5	25

Based on Sercu's (2005)'s model

On the other hand teachers did not totally agree with items that were against teaching of culture in language classes. For instance, 25% of the teachers agreed that the study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy while 37.5 % disagree and 37.5% expressed undecidedness. Similarly, 25% of the teachers agreed that the development of cultural awareness

should be kept only for the most advanced levels while 50% were undecided and 25% expressed disagreement.

Content analysis of the teachers' responses to interview questions was quite in line with their responses to questionnaire items. Analysis led to the emergence of two main themes regarding teaching culture in foreign language classes. These themes were (1) the importance of culture in language teaching, and that (2) cultural heritage of native people should be preserved. Relatively, all teachers expressed that culture is part of language and the appropriate way of communicating in a foreign language requires adherence to the cultural norms of their speakers. For instance, they stated that even a simple greeting such as saying hello to a female acquaintance is quite different in an English speaking country from Iran. In Iran it may even be ok or even best action to ignore the female acquaintance while this may cause confusion or negative attitude in a country like the US. However, teachers' concern regarding preserving Iranian cultural heritage was also evident. For instance, they maintained that culture is inseparable form language but enough care must be taken into account not to express value judgment about the cultural norms of either English or Persian. It was observed that they prefer descriptive account of English culture rather than prescriptive one. This observation was also evident in their responses to questionnaire item #7 stating that European and global identities of the student/ citizen should be fostered in foreign language. 62.5% of teachers disagreed with this statement, 12.5% agreed and 25% expressed undecidedness.

Learners' Perceptions

Learners' perceptions of the teaching culture in foreign language classes were also explored through examining their responses to the attitude questionnaire items and also interview questions. What was found was that learners were also positive about teaching culture in language classes although in practice they did not seem very reluctant to learn about culture. For instance, they admitted that there is close relationship between language and culture (33.33% strong agreement and 16.66% agreement) or that they see cultural component as an inseparable part of language teaching program (33.33% strongly agreed, 23.33% agreed, 20% neutral, 13.33% disagree and 10% strongly disagreed). Items #1, #3, #4, #6, and #9 which are directly related to attitude toward culture received positive answers but when answering item #2 which stated that I spend long time studying about customs of target culture 43.33% disagreed and 16.66% strongly disagreed in comparison to 23.33% strong agreement and 6.66% agreement. Similarly items which dealt with learners' attempts to learn culture did not receive as much positive response as items mentioned above did. These items are items #2, #10, #14, and #15. But, on the whole, learners were positive about teaching culture in foreign language classes. Table 4 shows the items of the attitude questionnaire (learners' version) with the percentage of learners' responses to each item.

Table 4

Percentage of students' Responses to Each item of the Attitude Questionnaire toward Teaching Culture

		Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1	There is close relation between language and culture.	33.33	16.66	30	16.66	3.33
2	I spend long time studying about customs of target culture.	23.33	6.66	10	43.33	16.66

3	My classmates are eager to receive cultural instruction.	30	26.66	23.33	16.66	3.33
4	I see social manners of culture of great importance.	26.66	33.33	16.66	16.66	6.66
5	Learning some aspects of culture is challenging.	16.66	16.66	30	23.33	10
6	I see cultural component as an inseparable part of language teaching program.	33.33	23.33	20	13.33	10
7	We should get familiar with all aspects of target culture.	16.66	23.33	36.66	10	13.33
8	The Institute where I learn English is supportive regarding inclusion of target culture in the class.	13.33	13.33	43.33	20	10
9	My classmates find culture teaching very boring and irrelevant.	10	16.66	26.66	33.33	13.33
10	I try to learn about the art masterpieces created by target culture artists	10	13.33	26.66	13.33	20
11	When I struggle in learning cultural aspects in class, I receive help from my teacher and classmates.	16.66	6.66	30	26.66	20
12	I use many cultural materials such as magazines and realia for learning culture.	16.66	23.33	23.33	26.66	10
13	We give feedbacks on our awareness of target culture	20	10	30	23.33	16.66
14	I encourage my classmates to explore target culture outside of the classroom.	10	6.66	20	30	33.33
15	I keep myself updated new developments of target culture.	6.66	13.33	46.66	16.66	16.66
16	My teacher and classmates are a source of encouragement for me.	13.33	30	26.66	20	10
17	I know my own cultural interests and goals.	20	23.33	26.66	16.66	13.33
18	I can share my problems and concerns with culture teaching with my institute managers.	3.33	3.33	10	43.13	40
19	I know there are some sensitivities to target culture in Iran.	26.66	30	16.66	16.66	10
20	My Institutes managers provide us with the cultural resources	3.33	6.66	20	50	20

To further probe learners' attitude toward teaching culture in foreign language classes, each of students were interviewed. Their responses positively confirmed their positive attitudes toward teaching culture as was reflected in the questionnaire. This time they even put more force in supporting culture teaching. They expressed their enthusiasm about learning about other people and their life style.

Based on their responses to interview questions three main themes were discovered; (1) importance of culture in language teaching; (2) their preference for dialogue for learning culture, and (3) lack of emphasis on culture by institutes. The first theme (importance of culture in language teaching) is quite in line with their responses to questionnaire item #1, #3, #4, #6, and #9 supporting teaching of culture. As was mentioned above, they did not seem very reluctant to learn about culture for which possible explanation was found during interviews. The second theme was that students preferred dialogue based learning of culture which might explain why 16.66% of students strongly disagreed, 16.66% disagreed, and 46.66% were neutral in responding to the statement *I keep myself updated new developments of target culture*. Or they expressed 16.66% strong disagreement, 43.33% disagreement, 10% neutral, 6.66% agreement, and 23.33% strong agreement with statement *I spend long time studying about customs of target culture*. Similarly, they noted that institutes do not make any attempts to highlight the role of culture in teaching language. It seems that administrators of the institutes are not in good contact with the students as they maintained that the teachers are the main source of contact and learning. The third theme which was that institutes do not put emphasis on culture might explain students' responses to item #18 and #20 in the attitude questionnaire. In response to the statement *I can share my problems and concerns with culture teaching with my institute managers* (item#18) 40% of students strongly disagreed, 43.13% disagreed, 10% were neutral, 3.33% agreed, and 3.33% strongly agreed. Or they expressed strong disagreement, 50% disagreement, 20# neutral, 6.66% agreement, and 3.33 % strong agreement in response to item 20# (My Institutes managers provide us with the cultural resources).

Difference between Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions

Research question three of the study dealt with statistical differences between the teachers and learners in terms of perceptions toward teaching culture in foreign language classes. To this end, it deemed necessary to adjust the teachers' scores so that teachers' scores and learners' scores could be comparable. As it was noted in the instrument section, teachers' and learner' attitude questionnaires were not the same and calculating the total attitude scores would not lead to comparable results between teachers and learners as each questionnaire had different maximum score likelihood. It was decided to adjust teachers' scores because learners' questionnaire had higher maximum score likelihood and therefore, adjusting teachers' scores would lead to higher scores and better psychological effect. After adjusting teachers' scores, the attitude scores sounded as follows.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers' and Learners' Perception Scores

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total2	learners	30	60.0000	21.28461	3.88602
	teachers	8	73.0556	22.86183	8.08288

As Table 4 shows learners had mean score of 60 (SD=21.28) and teachers had mean score of 22.86 (SD=22.86). To statistically determine the difference between the teachers and learners

in terms of attitude scores, first normality of the scores was established and afterward independent samples t-test was run. Table 6 shows the results of normality test and table 7 shows the results of independent samples t test.

Table 6

Results of Tests of Normality On Teachers' and Learners' Perception Scores

	Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total2	learners	.072	30	.200*	.965	30	.417
	teachers	.187	8	.200*	.898	8	.279

As Table 6 illustrates, both Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk test of normality indicated significant levels higher than the confidence interval of 0.05 for teachers' and learners' scores. Therefore, teachers' and learners' scores proved normally distributed and accordingly parametric test of independent samples t test was chosen to detect the possible differences between teachers and learners statistically.

Table 7

Results of Independent Samples T-test On Teachers' and Learners' Perception Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Total2	Equal variances assumed	.176	.677	1.519	36	.138	-13.05556
	Equal variances not assumed			1.456	10.475	.175	-13.05556

Based on the output of the independent samples t test (table 7) Levene's test indicated that the two groups (teachers and learners) had equal variances ($F=0.17$, $p>0.67$) and accordingly t value was considered 1.51 with significant value of 0.13 ($P>0.05$). Consequently, it was found that the teachers and learners were not significantly different from each other in terms of perceptions (attitude) toward teaching culture.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study intended to explore the way Iranian foreign language teachers and learners perceive of teaching the target culture in foreign language classrooms. In other words, researcher was interested in knowing the ways language teachers and learners view teaching culture in language classes. For this purpose, two attitude questionnaires (learners' version and teachers' version) were devised and semi-structural interviews were arranged to probe Iranian language teachers and learners' perceptions of teaching culture. The analysis of teachers and learners' responses to the attitude questionnaire revealed their positive attitudes towards teaching culture in language classes. For getting a richer idea of the way language teachers and learners think of teaching culture, responses to interview questions were content analyzed and were compared with the findings of the questionnaires. Teachers' responses indicated that culture is considered important for language teachers, but they also have concerns for preserving the native culture of Iranians. On the other hand, learners' responses revealed that they also considered culture an

important element in teaching language but they prefer to learn about target culture through dialogues and communication rather than through other channels such as reading about it. Moreover, they expressed that managers and administrators of the institutes are not that much interested to encourage learning the target culture or being involved with teaching culture. Statistical analysis also revealed that teachers and learners were not significantly different from each other in terms of attitudes toward teaching culture in language classes.

With respect to the positive attitude regarding target culture and its teaching, previous studies in the same Iranian context (e.g Pishghadam & Sabouri, 2011) and also some non-Iranian contexts (e.g Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002) support the present findings. Ambivalent views (e.g. Chavez, 2002) has also been observed regarding the attitudes towards target culture. The qualitative data in Chavez's (2002) study showed the students' ambivalent stance to the status of culture in a foreign language classes. More specifically, some participants believed in the interconnection between language and culture while some others maintained that the two are quite separated.

Based on the previous studies and present findings on the status of the English culture in our case, it can be generally assumed that Iranians are inclined toward learning about English and western culture. For instance Pishghadam and Sabouri (2011) found that their study's participants believed that American accent is quite superior to the other accents of English. Participants also thought that people with American accent are better teachers. The researchers argue that these results reveal "the fact that Iranian English learners still believe in the existence of a World English rather than World Englishes" (p. 86).

However, enough care should be taken into account in interpreting the results of the this and previous studies on the status of English culture among Iranian teachers and learners because this inclination toward English or western culture can also be construed as sign of fulfilling international posture rather than attachment or integration toward English or western culture. As Ushioda (2006.p. 150) points out, because it is a global community, it may not be meaningful to think of integrative orientation as attachment toward 'external' reference group, and instead it would be better to think of it as part of one's internal representation of oneself as a de facto member of that global community. Norton (2000) maintains that SLA theorists have failed to produce a comprehensive theory of identity which relates the language learner and the language learning context. She developed the motivational concept of 'investment' to capture the 'socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it' (Norton, 2000.p. 10). When learners make an investment in a language, they realize that by this investment they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources promoting their cultural capital, their identity and their desires for the future (Norton, 2000).

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