

Attitudes of Parents towards Their Children's Culture Learning in an EFL Setting

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Abstract: Language and culture are inseparable terms and in many researchers' opinions, such as those of Byram (1988), Kramsch (1993), and Brown (2000), they should be integrated during the foreign language teaching process. Many studies have been conducted about the effects of culture teaching on language learning, or the views of both language teachers and learners about target culture teaching while learning a foreign language. However, there is very limited research examining the effects of parents on their children's foreign language learning process about target culture teaching. Based on this gap in the literature, the present paper attempts to find out what parents think about the target culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, and to identify whether there is any difference between the attitudes of parents considering their educational background, whether they know a foreign language, and whether they have been abroad before. One hundred and nine parents participated in this study, and a mixed research design was used. The quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA, and the qualitative data were collected by interviews and analysed by content analysis. As a result, it was found that some parents believe that culture is important and a good way to learn a foreign language; however, some of them do not believe that it is necessary for language learning. The majority of the parents believe that learning about a foreign culture could harm their children's own culture and that they can learn the target language without being exposed to the target culture. The detailed results are discussed.

Keywords: EFL motivation, parental influence, young learners.

Introduction and Literature Review

In educational environments such as that in Turkey, where English is not the language of communication, making learners aware of the importance of learning English or any other foreign language is not so easy. The English course is regarded in the same way as any other course, that is, as one that students must attend whether they like it or not (British Council & TEPAV report, 2013). However,

language learning is not an ordinary process as it is the foundation of human communication. A language is a means for expressing emotional, social, historical, moral and cultural aspects of life. Learning math involves cognitive and linguistic skills while learning a foreign language involves not only linguistic and cognitive skills but also communicative and interpersonal skills.

However, learning a foreign language cannot be limited to a few hours a week if learners are to achieve a high level of language proficiency. This requires an investment of a considerable amount of time and effort. At a young age, learners may not easily grasp this. For this reason, they should be guided by their parents and teachers. Parental influence on motivating learners to make an effort has been reported by various researchers (Akgül, Yazıcı & Akman, 2017; Bartram, 2006; Gardner, 1985).

When learners do not have opportunities to interact in the target language in their daily life, they somehow fail to appreciate the importance of learning it. As long as they believe that learning a language is limited to memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules, they cannot make use of their language knowledge in real interaction, which may be a reason for losing their motivation. One way of overcoming this may be to expose learners not only to language grammar rules but also to some cultural elements which might attract their attention (Lamb, 2004). That is, language teaching should not be isolated from its cultural backdrop (Byram, 1988; Kramsch, 1993; Paige et al., 2003). Moreover, teaching cultural features of the target language has been specifically highlighted in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Byram 1997; Karatepe, 2005).

Another culture-related aspect of language learning is appropriate language use. Without much face-to-face contact in the target language, learners may fail to understand the extent to which certain rules of pragmatics play an essential role in interaction (Karatepe, 2001). Consequently, this can lead to misunderstandings and embarrassing situations. For example, Karatepe (2016) investigated this type of

failure in formal letter writing in the English of EFL teacher trainees. She found that trainees were not able to use modal verbs to indicate what they wished their interactor to do for them. They tended to transfer formulaic Turkish expressions and Turkish formal letter-writing norms which were not appropriate at all from an Anglo-American point of view. She concluded that teacher trainees needed to learn about appropriate language use and norms of formal English use. Jiang et al. (2019) studied requests made by Australian learners of Chinese as a foreign language. They observed learners' development over time and compared and contrasted their performance with that of native speakers of Chinese. While native speakers appeared to choose their request strategies by taking social variables such as power, social distance and rank of imposition into account, learners did not seem to consider the effect of these variables at all. The researchers also found out that learners' pragma linguistic competence developed faster than their sociocultural competence, as the former developed with the increasing language proficiency. That is, it appears that teaching a foreign language requires a specific focus on learners' sociocultural competence as well as on their pragma linguistic competence.

When there is no chance for direct one-to-one contact with the target language community, indirect contact can be made in order to overcome the limitations of EFL environments. Teachers can integrate particular cultural elements into the course program for this purpose. When learners realise that the topic of their English language course is a conversation topic of real people, they can relate seemingly abstract language rules and features to their own life (Karatepe & Yılmaz, 2018a). Moreover, this can also be done at home as well as in the classroom by exposing learners to a wide variety of cultural products. Some examples can be films, videos, published and printed materials, music and products of other audio-visual arts (Korkmaz & Karatepe, 2018).

Perhaps parents do not notice, but their attitude towards learning a foreign language and its cultural elements is very influential. Gardner (1985) points out that parents usually act as a bridge between the cultural environment of the target language and

their child. Parents may not do this consciously, but a parent who listens to classical music and reads novels written by Western writers in a small town in a Middle Eastern country surely gives a message to his/her children. This message is that s/he is interested in the cultural elements of the Western world, which may encourage the child to accompany the parent in this lifestyle. By doing this, parents give the message that they are open to different features of other cultures.

According to Gardner (1985), parents can be active or passive in terms of motivating their children to learn a foreign language. Those parents who play an active role talk about positively learning a language. They may even try to learn a language themselves and share positive learning experiences with their children. These parents also pay close attention to the process of their children's language learning. Besides, they reward success and continue their support in times of their children's failure or struggle.

On the other hand, they can be active in a negative way (Gardner, 1985). Parents who develop a negative active role may deliberately discourage their children. They keep talking about their own unfortunate past experiences. They may adopt a patriotic stance and argue that there is no need to learn a foreign language. The situation of parents' attitudes towards language learning in Turkey has been reported in the British Council's TEPAV (2013) Report, which points out that there is a positive correlation between parents' foreign language proficiency levels and their children's willingness to learn other languages.

Other parents may remain passive in supporting their children's language learning process while supporting their children's school success. However, this may not be sufficient to lead children to put more effort into the language learning process. Gardner (1985) clearly emphasises the role of parents in keeping children on the right track in the process of language learning.

Gardner introduced the concept of 'integrativeness', which he defined simply as learners' wish to learn the target language so that s/he could 'come closer to the other language community' (2001, p.5). Today, the English language has become a global language, and it is used in intercultural communication situations. Similarly, it can be seen in the British Council's TEPAV Report (2013) that most parents choose English as the first foreign language because of its globally acknowledged validity. Therefore, this necessitates young people in our country becoming knowledgeable about its cultural backdrop. Dörnyei and Csizer (2005) summarised the benefits of this for young learners in Hungary as follows:

Students who engage in intercultural encounters involving the L2 and those who receive information on L2 speakers and their cultures from their immediate environment seem to show more interest in the cultural products of L2. This result suggests that in a foreign language setting, both direct and indirect contact have the potential to cause students' interest in using the L2 through L2 cultural products and various means of L2 speaking media (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2005, 178).

Here, indirect contact refers to contact with any type of audio-visual and printed material as products of art and culture.

Clément et al. (1994) carried out a study to find out about different motivational orientations of mainly monolingual Hungarian learners. The results of the study indicated that being familiar with a variety of cultural products in English representing Anglo-American culture influenced learners' attitudes positively. Bartram (2006) reported her study on 411 teenagers from England, Germany and the Netherlands who were learning English, German and Dutch. She investigated the attitudes of the parents of these teenagers. She found that almost all German parents were in favour of their children learning languages. Similarly, the majority of Dutch parents supported their children's language learning, whereas more than half of English parents thought their children did not need to learn a foreign language. Bartram concluded that parents' negative thoughts and discouraging comments

about learning a language influenced their children's orientations in learning a foreign language.

Akpınar-Dellal and Atadere (2015) conducted a different study with parents to elicit their opinions as to whether they would support the idea that their children learn the target language culture as well as the language. The results showed that 54 % of parents agreed while 46 % disagreed. Allehyani et al. (2017) carried out another study on the attitudes and beliefs of Saudi EFL learners towards English / American culture in developing their communicative competence, and unlike other studies, they also investigated the views of learners' parents. They found that most of the learners were eager towards the target language culture. Some of the parents supported their children's wishes. However, a considerable majority of parents did not agree with this idea as they were concerned that children would lose their own cultural identity. In contrast, therefore, the present paper aims to find out what parents think about foreign language culture and culture teaching while their children learn English in Turkey. The study attempts to answer these research questions:

1. What do parents think about their children's learning of English/American culture while learning English?
2. Is there any difference between the attitudes of parents considering
 - a. their educational background,
 - b. whether they know a foreign language, and
 - c. whether they have been abroad before?

The Study

Participants

In total, one hundred and nine parents whose children were enrolled in English courses at state schools in Bursa participated in this study. Out of the one hundred and nine parents, sixty-two (56.9%) of them were mothers, forty-two (38.5) of them were fathers, and five (4.6%) of them were sisters, brothers or grandparents who were responsible for the children's education. The participants were selected using

convenience sampling method. Most of the parents were the parents of children who studied in a private study centre.

The educational backgrounds of the parents are shown in Table 1. 38.5% of the parents were high school graduates, 23.9% of them were university graduates, 20.2% of them were elementary school graduates, and 17.4% of them were primary school graduates.

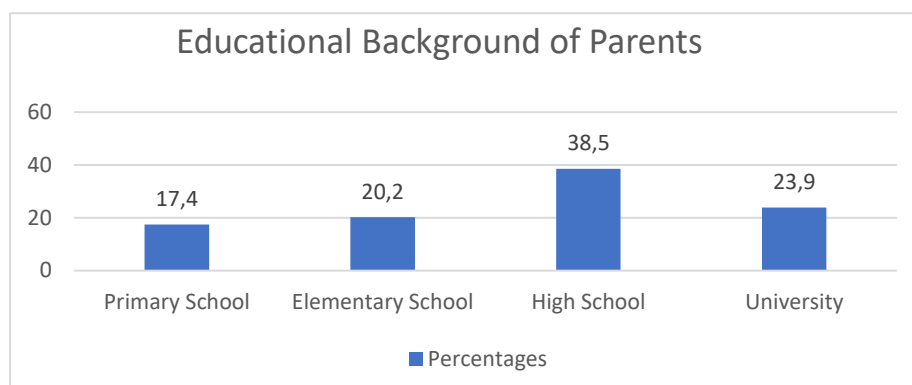


Figure 1. Educational background of parents.

Out of the 109 parents, only 37 of them (33.9%) knew a foreign language, while 72 of them (66.1%) did not know a foreign language. Only 29 (26.6%) parents had been abroad, while 80 of them (73.4%) had not been abroad previously. In sum, around 70% of the parents did not have a university degree, had not travelled abroad and had not learned a foreign language.

Instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data, and an interview protocol which included 13 questions was used to collect qualitative data. The questionnaire was redesigned based on Allehyani, Burnapp and Wilson's (2017) study. It consisted of two parts, namely the demographic information and attitude scale parts. In the demographic information part, the parents were asked to state their kinship and educational level. They were also asked whether they knew a foreign language except for Turkish and whether they had been abroad. In the second part, there was a yes/no question asking if they allowed their children to watch English/American movies. The second part consisted of a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (completely

disagree) to 5 (completely agree). To obtain a clear understanding of the results, options 1 and 2 (completely disagree and disagree) and 4 and 5 (agree and completely agree) are integrated into the results and discussion part.

A pilot study was conducted with twenty-two parents to check the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found as .850. The questionnaire was reliable to collect the main data.

Procedure

As the first step of the data collection, the questionnaire was distributed to the children studying in a private study centre and they were asked to hand in the questionnaires to their parents. Out of 200 questionnaires, 109 of them were retrieved. The data were coded in SPSS version 20 and analysed. The Cronbach' Alpha reliability coefficient was found as .812. Normality tests were performed, and the significance value was found to be higher than .05, so the data were distributed normally. The descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-test and ANOVA were used to analyze the data.

Following this, an interview was designed which included 13 questions about the quantitative data results, and 15 parents, who had initially filled in the questionnaire, were interviewed and interviews were all audio-recorded and then transcribed by one of the researchers.

Results

In order to answer the first research question, the frequencies, means and standard deviations of each item were calculated by using SPSS version 20. Table 2 on the next page presents the statistical data. The reader will be presented with the information gathered from the interview protocol in a blended way with the statistical data.

First of all, the parents were asked what the concept of 'culture' meant for them. This question aimed to find out about their understanding of culture. Almost all of them (14 out of 15 parents) said that culture was the way of living and the things people

shared in a community. One of them commented that culture was wisdom and knowing something about the community. In terms of the relationship between culture and language, 11 parents agreed that culture and language are inseparable parts of the community. One of these parents pointed out, 'We know the culture of our community, and we speak according to our community. If a stranger from abroad comes to our city, and if she/he does not know our culture, she/he can talk inappropriately.'

Table 1. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of parents' responses about learning English/American culture.

Statement	Completely Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Completely Agree		Mean	St.
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%		
1. Learning about English/ American culture is important.	15	13.8	31	28.4	13	11.9	30	27.5	20	18.3	3.08	1.3617
2. Learning about English/ American culture motivates our children to learn English.	16	14.7	28	25.7	13	11.9	39	35.8	13	11.9	3.04	1.3008
3. Learning about English/ American culture helps our children to pronounce English like natives.	12	11.0	32	29.4	15	13.8	34	31.2	16	14.7	3.09	1.2804
4. Learning about English/ American culture increases our children's cultural awareness.	10	9.2	16	14.7	11	10.1	51	46.8	21	19.3	3.52	1.2216
5. Learning about English/ American culture enables our children to communicate with English/ American people successfully.	6	5.5	5	4.6	2	1.8	40	36.7	56	51.4	4.23	1.0792
6. Learning about English/ American culture could harm our children's culture.	10	9.2	11	10.1	27	24.8	45	41.3	16	14.7	3.42	1.1409
7. Learning about English/ American culture makes our children less independent.	18	16.5	30	27.5	12	11.0	36	33.0	13	11.9	2.96	1.3258
8. Learning about English/ American culture is better inside the classroom under the umbrella of the Ministry of National Education.	17	15.6	22	20.2	17	15.6	41	37.6	12	11.0	3.08	1.2847
9. My children learn English just to find a good job.	14	12.8	60	55.0	4	3.7	22	20.2	9	8.3	2.55	1.1897

10. Watching English/ American movies/series is a good way for my children to learn about English/ American culture.	12	11.0	26	23.9	13	11.9	45	41.3	13	11.9	3.19	1.24333
11. Listening to English songs helps my children to learn English better.	4	3.7	8	7.3	12	11.0	60	55.0	25	22.9	3.86	.9762
12. My children can learn English without being exposed to English/ American culture.	9	8.3	25	22.9	13	11.9	51	46.8	11	10.1	3.27	1.1696

However, less than half of the parents (45.8 %) agreed that culture was an important component of language learning (see Table 2 above). Moreover, 11.9 % were neutral. It is possible that what they had in mind was the Turkish language. Only three parents claimed that they did not know the relationship between culture and language. Moreover, one parent argued that there was no relationship between culture and language. Accordingly, more or less two-thirds of the group appeared to have background knowledge about the relationship between culture and language. Regarding the motivating role of cultural elements, 40% of the parents had a more or less negative view. Again, almost 12% appeared not to know what to think. Almost half of the parents (47.7%) agreed that learning about English/American culture motivated their children to learn English while 40.4% of them were inclined to disagree with the idea.

The next statement was about the influence of learning culture on pronunciation. A little less than half of the group (45.9%) indicated that learning about English/American culture helped their children pronounce English like native speakers of English. However, 40.4% of them disagreed while 13.8% of them were neutral. The interview data would confirm this finding. That is, 14 parents thought that watching movies could help in learning new vocabulary, casual and practical English. Besides, this comment appeared to support the results of the fifth statement. Only one father stated that it would not contribute to anything related to language learning.

The fourth statement was about raising learners' cultural awareness. On this issue, a good percentage of the parents (66.1%) supported the idea that learning about English/American culture increased their children's cultural awareness in general, but almost a quarter of the group (23.9%) indicated their disagreement while 10.1% were neutral. In the interview, the parents were asked if watching movies/TV series in English contributed to culture learning. Almost all (14 parents) reported that their children watched movies about any other communities. They agreed that children could learn about how other communities live and that they could understand what they should do when they went abroad. These parents argued that movies/TV series was one of the key sources to obtain information about other cultures. However, one parent claimed that watching English movies/TV series did not contribute to any culture learning. He commented, 'My children watch movies just for fun, not to learn something about a community.'

The fifth statement was about the role of learning about Anglo-Saxon cultural elements in leading to successful communication in English. A considerable number of parents (88.1%) agreed that learning about culture could enable their children to communicate successfully. However, 10.1% of them thought the opposite.

The sixth statement addressed parents' worry that learning Anglo-Saxon culture could influence their children's own identity negatively. That is, 56% of parents thought that learning about English/American culture could harm their children's own culture, while 19.3% of them tended to disagree with this. In the interview, some parents argued that their children were able to protect their Turkish identity. Other parents added that this kind of cultural awareness in their children would not automatically lead to immediate lifestyle change. As a result, it would not affect their children's identity and culture negatively. It is interesting that almost a quarter of them were neutral on this issue.

The seventh statement questioned whether the parents saw any relationship between becoming independent or dependent and learning about American / English culture.

While slightly less than half of the parents (44.9%) indicated their concern that is learning about English/American culture made their children less independent, 44% of them did not appear to have such concerns in this regard. Besides, 11% of them preferred to be neutral.

The eighth statement aimed to gather information about parents' views on the source of information for learning cultural information. Almost half of the group (48.6%) preferred that the Ministry of National Education should be the primary source of cultural information in the teaching of English while 35.8% of the parents appeared to have the opposite view. Moreover, 15.6% preferred not to indicate any views regarding this issue. However, the information gathered in the interview reflected other aspects of this issue. Although quite a lot of the parents preferred that cultural knowledge should be given in the classroom, in the interview all parents claimed that it was unlikely to happen as classroom environments in state schools were far from providing adequate exposure to the language and its culture. They explained the reasons for their negative perspective. Besides, 14 of the 15 parents stated that language education was not adequate in schools in terms of teachers' quality, the number of students in the classroom and the way that teaching was carried out. They added that teachers were not equipped with the necessary teaching techniques and that they were not capable of teaching English.

Moreover, some of them reported that the classrooms were so crowded that the children could not understand anything. One mother suggested that in order to have a satisfying language education, it should be carried out in classes with small numbers of students.

On the other hand, one father claimed that language education in the school that his children attended was adequate because it was a project school specially selected by the National Education Ministry. His children had 15 hours of English lessons per week. As a result, he reported that his children learned English there very well.

One of the parents said, 'Inside the classroom, there are still things from our culture, and the students are also from our community.' Besides, one of them suggested, 'If only, when my children go abroad, it could be possible for them to learn the culture properly. To be able to learn lots of things about a culture, living there is the most important way.'

The next statement questioned whether the parents regarded learning English as only for instrumental purposes. According to a good majority of the parents (67.8%), their children learned English not just to find a good job. However, slightly over a quarter of them (28.5%) thought that their children learned English in order just to find a good job. 3.7% of these parents remained neutral on this topic.

The tenth statement was about the role of watching movies and series in English in improving children's learning of the cultural aspects of English. Slightly more than half of the parents (53.2%) appeared to believe that watching English/American movies/series was a good way for their children to learn about English/American culture while 34.9% of them did not think so. Typically, 11% of them were neutral.

The eleventh statement was about the views of the parents on the role of listening to songs in English in learning English. A majority of parents (77.9%) thought that listening to songs in English would help their children learn English better, while 11% of them did not think so. 11% of the group remained neutral.

The last statement aimed to gather information about the parents' views on the role of learning Anglo-Saxon cultural elements. More than half of them (56.9%) appeared to agree that their children could learn English without being exposed to English/American culture while 31.2% of them seemed to believe that exposure to cultural elements was needed in the process of learning English. 11.9% of them were typically neutral. The detailed results are shown in Table 2.

The second research question set was 'Is there any difference between the attitudes of parents considering a) their educational background: b) whether they have studied a foreign language, and c) whether they have been abroad before?' First of all, statistical information on the educational background of the parents was listed: 38.5% of parents were high school graduates, 23.9% of them were university graduates, 20.2% of them were elementary school graduates, and 17.4% of them were primary school graduates.

In order to find out whether there was a correlation between parents' attitudes and their level of education, one-way ANOVA analysis was used. As a result, for the first nine statements of the scale, no significant difference was found. On the other hand, regarding watching English/American movies/series is a good way for children to learn about English/American culture, [p= .019] p-value was smaller than .05, so there was a significant difference between primary school and elementary school levels [$\bar{X} = 3.78$; $\bar{X} = 2.86$]. Regarding the effect of listening to English songs on children's learning English, there was a significant difference between primary and elementary school levels [p= .023; $\bar{X} = 4.42$; $\bar{X} = 3.54$]. A higher number of primary school graduate parents than elementary school graduate parents thought that listening to songs helped their children to learn the target culture and language better.

The other significant difference was found in the last statement, which was aimed to identify whether or not the parents thought their children could learn English without being exposed to the target culture, and the difference was between the primary school and university levels [p=.040; $\bar{X} = 2.57$; $\bar{X} = 3.46$]. While primary school graduate parents believed that their children could not learn English without being exposed to the target culture, university graduate parents claimed that their children could also learn without exposure to it.

For the second part of the second question, related to having studied a foreign language in the past, Independent samples t-test analysis was used. As a result of the

analysis, a significant difference was found between the attitudes of parents who knew a foreign language and those who did not, regarding positive views about the importance of learning English/American culture [$p=.017$; $\bar{X} = 3.51$; $\bar{X} = 2.86$]. A higher number of parents who knew a foreign language believed that culture was important in language education compared to the ones who did not know any foreign languages.

The other significant difference was related to the second statement which was about the effect of culture learning on the motivation for students' language learning [$p=.017$; $\bar{X} = 3.45$; $\bar{X} = 2.83$]. For the other statements, the p value for each was greater than .05, so there was no significant difference between the attitudes of parents who knew a foreign language and those who did not know any. The detailed results are shown in Table 2.

In order to find out whether there was a difference between the attitudes of parents who had been abroad before and those who had not been abroad before, independent samples t-test analysis was used. The analysis showed that the only difference was in the 8th statement which asserted that teaching cultural elements should be performed under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education [$p=.023$; $\bar{X} = 2.62$; $\bar{X} = 3.25$]. According to the parents who had been abroad before, teaching culture should not be limited to the classroom. For the other statements, p the value was greater than .05, so there was no significant difference.

Qualitative Results

To analyze the qualitative data results, 13 questions formed 6 main questions related to the quantitative results.

1. *What is culture according to you? What is the relationship between culture and language?*

14 of 15 parents say that the culture is the way of living and the things shared in a community. One of them says that the culture is the wisdom and knowing something

about the community. In terms of the relationship between culture and language 11 parents say that the culture and language are the inseparable parts of the community. One of these parents says that 'We know the culture of our community and we speak according to our community. If a stranger from abroad comes to our city, and if she/he doesn't know our cultures, she/he can talk incongruously.' 3 of 15 parents say that they don't know the relationship between culture and language. 1 of 15 parents claims that there is no relationship between culture and language.

2. Is the language education in schools adequate? If so, or not, in terms of what?

14 of 15 parents claim that the language education is not adequate in schools in terms of teachers' quality, the students' numbers in the classroom and the way of teaching. According to these parents, teachers are not equipped with teaching techniques and they are really not capable of teaching English. Additionally, some of them reports that the classrooms are so crowded that the children cannot understand anything. One mother suggests that the language education should be with small number of students, so they can learn the language exactly. According to just 1 father, language education in school is adequate, because his children's school is a pilot school and they have 15 hours English lesson in a week, 'So, my children learn English very well.' he claims.

3. How does the watching movies/TV series affect English learning?

14 of parents claim that watching movies/TV series is a good way to improve English of their children, while one of them claims it is not a way of this. While these 14 parents think watching something can help learning new vocabularies, casual and practical English, one father claims watching something doesn't contribute anything to the language learning.

4. How does the watching movies/TV series affect culture learning?

14 parents report if the children watch something about any other communities, they can encounter with their way of livings and with this, they can understand what they can do in that country if they go to. These parents claim that movies/TV series are

one of the key points to see other cultures. On the other hand, 1 parents claims that watching English movies/TV series doesn't contribute to the culture learning. He says 'My children watch movies just for fun, not to learn something about a community.'

5. Is the classroom adequate for culture learning?

All of the parents report that the culture cannot be done in the classroom, because the cultural elements inside the classroom are not adequate. One of them say 'inside the classroom, there are still the things from our cultures, and the students are also from our community.' Additionally, one of them suggests 'If the children go to a different country, only then they can learn the exact culture. To be able to learn lots of things about a culture, going there is the most important way.'

6. Does the culture learning inside classroom or by watching something affect cultural conscience? Does it contribute to protecting the children's own culture?

All of the parents answer the first part of the question as 'yes', however; in terms of contribution to protection of own culture, the parents have different ideas. Some of them claims the children can protect their own culture if they see something bad about a different culture, or they can claim 'My culture is better than that culture.' Some of them claims that learning about other cultures could really harm their own cultures because the children can emulate the other cultures and try to live like them. Some of them claims that the children can be aware of other culture but it doesn't mean that they learn everything about that cultures, so it doesn't affect their own cultures.

Discussion

The present study aimed firstly to find out what parent though about the place of learning about cultural features while their children learned English. Secondly, it attempted to identify whether parents' views on this issue showed any variation depending on their educational background, their knowledge of a foreign language and their experience of having been abroad.

Parents were initially asked what they understood by the term 'culture' and how they could describe the relationship between culture and language. Most of them defined culture as the way of living, and the things shared in a community while describing the relationship between culture and language as inseparable parts of the community.

However, less than half of the parents agreed that culture was an essential component of language learning. Almost 12% were neutral. This trend repeated itself. This finding appears to contradict the interview data. It is possible that in the interview, what they had in mind was the logical and natural relationship between language and culture outside the context of EFL.

On the other hand, previous studies have reported positive results (Akgül et al., 2017; Quappe & Cantatore, 2005). Abushihab (2016) found that integrating cultural features into language teaching motivated learners. His learners reported that it was more enjoyable. Similarly, Jiang et al. (2009) conducted a study in which they also claimed that learning about culture enabled learners to become highly proficient speakers of the target language.

Similarly, parents seemed to be hesitant and indecisive about the possible benefits of integrating cultural elements into English language teaching/learning in their children's education. That is, less than half of the parents agreed with this. Besides, around 12% of the parents tended to be neutral. This may show that parents had not developed a strong opinion on these issues, which are the role of integrating culture in:

- 1) increasing language learning motivation,
- 2) improving pronunciation, and
- 3) helping children become more independent.

Slightly over half of the parents did not regard learning cultural elements as a threat to their children's identity. The rest of the group was divided. That is, one quarter

was against and the other quarter was neutral. This might indicate that half of the group did not have many ideas about this subject.

On the other hand, some of them believed that if their children learned something about a different culture, the children might emulate that culture and try to change their way of living just like the people of the other culture. A similar result was found in Allehyani, Burnapp and Wilson's (2017) study in which parents gave similar reasons to ours. However, in Akpınar-Dellal and Atadere's (2015) study, the majority of parents claimed that culture learning did not affect their own culture. Half of the parents believed that English/American culture learning would enable their children to be more independent, and the others reported the opposite view. The findings of Akgül et al. (2017) reported a few positive benefits in line with this finding, such as 'having self-confidence and a broad vision' (p.11).

The results of the analysis of the statement about the role of the Ministry of National Education in teaching cultural information indicated that the parents were divided again. However, the interview data revealed that our parents do not seem to have much faith in the quality of English language education in state schools. They also thought that the teachers were not qualified enough. This may be the reason for the high percentage of opposition.

In the age of the internet and global communication, to be integrated into the native culture of any language is relatively more comfortable than before (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei & Csizer, 2005). This enables learners to discover the cultural aspects of languages. However, in our study, a good majority of parents thought that their children learned English for instrumental purposes. Although many agreed on the crucial role of integrating culture into language teaching, which could increase children's cultural awareness and lead to successful communication in English, they still believed that their children were learning English to find a good job. That is, they seemed to believe that a good knowledge of English is an instrument for practical purposes. A similar result was reported in Akgül et al. (2017).

In a global world where American movies and American pop singers are dominating our TV channels, radio programs and the internet media, children's exposure to them is unavoidable. Such audio-visuals can be used to teach English with good results provided that they are selected carefully and used efficiently (Akgül et al., 2017; Korkmaz & Karatepe, 2018a; Karatepe & Yılmaz, 2018b). Dörnyei and Csizer (2005) argued that when there is no one-to-one contact with the target language culture and its community, movies, music and other artistic activities and media will help motivate learners by increasing their interest in learning the language.

A little less than half of the parents did not agree that watching movies could help children's language skills. Perhaps we should keep in mind that many parents were not taught any lessons using audio-visuals. Therefore, they were not aware of their potential benefits. Furthermore, there are many movies which are not suitable for pedagogical purposes and certainly not appropriate for children to watch. It is possible that they had such movies in their mind. However, parents seemed to be more relaxed about listening to songs in English. The idea that good proficiency in English will provide young people with good job opportunities is a widespread view in the globalised world.

Conclusion

Learning English or any other foreign language is not like learning any other lesson. Unlike other lessons, it has a cultural aspect to it. In order to motivate young people, we need to present language not just as a list of grammar rules and vocabulary. It has an exciting aspect which can potentially attract more student attention than grammar rules can do. It increases the efficiency of teaching and learning, mainly where students do not have many opportunities to interact in English (Akgül et al., 2017). However, this should be done carefully in order not to harm students' own identities. When it is done appropriately, it could enable students to feel more integrated into the language (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2005).

The way parents perceive the place of English language learning will be reflected in their children's behaviour. Parental teaching is inscribed in our minds and identities from the early days of our lives. The National Ministry of Education may consider making parents aware of such sensitive issues in order to ensure that their children's national and religious identities will not be harmed when they are taught cultural elements of the English language.

The present study has some limitations. Our participants were the parents of students from just one educational institution. Higher numbers of parents from different parts of the city could have been included. The results of this kind of study could have given us a better picture of the perceptions of parents from different social strata and educational backgrounds.

Indeed, the topic deserves an in-depth study which investigates the opinions of three stakeholders: parents, teachers and students. Only then can we fully understand the place of integrating cultural features into the existing English language education.

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