IJELTAL

The Effective Use of Target Culture in Foreign Language Learning Environments: Düzce Case in Türkiye

Samet Türer[1], Filiz Evran Acar[2]

[1] *Düzce Üniversitesi, Turkey, sametturer@gmail.com*
[2] *Düzce Üniversitesi, Turkey, filizacar@duzce.edu.tr*

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: *Foreign Language,* *Target Culture,* *Intercultural-* *Communication,* *Language Acquisition,* *Multiculturalism* *DOI:* http://dx.doi.org/10.210 93/ijeltal.v10i2.2006	*The study aims to determine the current implementations being used in foreign language education programs and to define how to use culture effectively in language learning environments according to the teachers' ideas since language and culture are inseparable. Phenomenology was chosen as the design of the study. 17 English lecturers from the School of Foreign Languages of a government university in Türkiye were selected as the study group using purposive sampling. In the data gathering process, a semi-structured interview form was used, and the interview was carried out through face-to-face interviews. The data was analysed using the content analysis method and then coded and categorized under main themes, which were established based on the sub-questions of the study. In this regard, four main themes and 23 codes have been defined in detail with literature references by the researchers. According to the findings of the study, it is understood that there is a continuous interaction between language and culture. Therefore, one cannot be acquired fully without the other, and especially learning a language without its cultural context may lead to miscommunication. Consequently, culture should be integrated into each the language teaching and learning phase by integrating cultural elements into curriculums.*

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, language education must address more than just linguistic accuracy. Communicating effectively across cultures now demands a solid grasp of the cultural contexts in which languages operate. Societies have historically depended on language and culture to engage in trade, diplomacy, and social exchange, and the advent of technology has only intensified the interconnectedness of global communities.

Foreign language education must evolve to equip learners with not only linguistic competence but also intercultural skills. Consequently, this has pushed educators to rethink what it means to be a competent language user (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Ellis, 2021; Jiang and Paulino, 2024).

Scholars today widely acknowledge that language and culture are intertwined. Rather than treating culture as an add-on, current research presents it as an inseparable part of how meaning is constructed and shared. Byram (1997) further contends that the primary goal of language education should be the development of intercultural competence, which enables learners to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. This perspective is supported by Brown (2000), who uses the iceberg metaphor to highlight that while explicit cultural elements (e.g., traditions, customs) are easily observed, implicit elements (e.g., values, beliefs) require deeper exploration to be understood. Such insights are essential for language learners to navigate cultural subtleties and avoid miscommunication. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) propose a shift in focus: language learning should involve interpreting and mediating across cultures, not just mastering grammar. Likewise, Hwang et.al. (2024) underline the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in helping learners develop the mindset and skills to navigate cultural differences.

Pedagogically, this has led to renewed attention on how cultural content is delivered in the classroom. Moradi and Chen (2019) for instance, find that storytelling using digital tools can build empathy and help students engage with unfamiliar cultural narratives. Similarly, Sugianto and Wirza. (2021) argue that when students learn about culture through language, they not only retain more, but also engage more actively. Barahona et.al. (2021) go as far as to suggest culture should be treated as a fifth skill—just as important as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

That said, implementation is far from perfect. Some institutions still struggle to provide consistent cultural content across curricula. Instructors often lack both time and resources to design lessons that go beyond superficial cultural facts (Kim and Williams, 2021). According to Ushioda (2013) and Yılmaz and Sagan (2023) teachers are frequently left without the frameworks needed to meaningfully integrate intercultural goals into everyday practice. Meanwhile, outdated materials sometimes present cultures through a narrow or even biased lens (Kzmi, 2023; Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw, 2021).

Still, some promising approaches have emerged. Eden et al. (2024) define cultural competence as a multidimensional skill set that enables learners to navigate diverse cultural environments effectively. Their study emphasizes the importance of equipping teachers with training and resources which can help them to address cultural topics in the classroom. Similarly, Guilherme (2002) underlines the need for a more standardized approach to embedding cultural elements into language education and claims that consistent practices can enhance teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. Other researchers, such as Peterson and Coltrane (2003), advocate for the inclusion of cultural analysis tasks, such as comparing cultural norms or examining historical contexts, as a means of deepening students' understanding of the interplay between language and culture. Digital projects such as collaborative storytelling or online exchanges allow students to interact with peers across borders, gaining perspective in the process (Humairoh, 2023; Hrebacková and Stefl, 2022; Korosidou and Griva, 2024; O'Dowd, 2022). These methods are not only engaging but also help students see language as a tool for real-world interaction. Yet, as Ellis (2021) notes, real

progress depends on structural support. Without it, efforts to teach culture through language risk remaining isolated or inconsistent.

In short, integrating culture in language education is no longer optional. To truly prepare learners for global citizenship, educational systems must move beyond traditional models and embrace culture as central to language learning. This calls for clear strategies, updated materials, and, perhaps most importantly, a commitment to teaching language as both communication and cultural practice. Despite the progress in research, gaps remain in understanding how to implement cultural integration effectively across diverse educational contexts. Few studies provide detailed, actionable strategies for educators, and even fewer explore the perspectives of instructors on the challenges and opportunities of cultural integration. These gaps highlight the need for research that bridges theoretical insights with practical applications.

In this context, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining foreign language lecturers' perspectives on integrating cultural elements into language instruction. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 17 English lecturers from a Turkish university, the research aims to uncover effective strategies for embedding culture into language teaching across the four core skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—as well as vocabulary and grammar. By evaluating current practices and identifying challenges, the study aims to offer actionable recommendations for enhancing cultural competence and fostering meaningful communication in foreign language education. Specifically, the research aims to:

1. What are foreign language lecturers' perspectives on the role of culture in language learning?
2. What cultural challenges do students face when learning a foreign language?
3. How is culture currently integrated into the teaching of the four basic skills, grammar, and vocabulary in existing foreign language programs?
4. How should cultural elements be integrated into the teaching of the four basic skills, grammar, and vocabulary in foreign language programs?
5. What are the characteristics of the physical learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom, that support effective cultural integration?
6. How should the physical learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom, be designed to incorporate cultural elements effectively?

The study aspires to contribute to the growing body of research on cultural integration in foreign language education by addressing these objectives. It aims to provide actionable recommendations for educators and institutions, thereby fostering both linguistic competence and intercultural understanding in learners.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically grounded in phenomenology, to explore how cultural elements are integrated into foreign language education from the perspective of English lecturers. Phenomenology is particularly well-suited for examining lived experiences, allowing researchers to delve deeply into participants' perceptions and teaching practices (Creswell, 2007). This approach aligns with the study's aim to uncover effective strategies and challenges in embedding culture into language instruction.

2.2 Participants

The selection of participants was completed using purposive sampling as it best fulfills the research objectives by enabling the selection of the most relevant participants. For this specific study, 17 English lecturers from the Government University of the Foreign Languages Faculty in Turkey were chosen to take part in the research study. This method is beneficial in qualitative studies as it allows for the collection of rich, detailed data from knowledgeable field specialists (Patton, 2002; Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, the relevant participants were balanced in terms of gender, academic and teaching experiences to provide multiple perspectives needed to address the study adequately.

2.3 Instruments

The information was gathered using semi-structured interviews, which facilitated the exploration of lecturers' perspectives and experiences in detail. The interviews were designed based on a thorough review of available literature, expert consultation, and reliable sources which guided the development of the questions to be covered in the interviews. The interviews were guided by 35 questions organized into five thematic groups including integration into the culture, strategies for cultures embedding, cultural learning, and the effect physical learning environments have on culture among others. A total of 247 minutes of recordings captured across two weeks of face-to-face interviews were obtained. These recordings were transcribed word for word, yielding a 68-page document of 19,673 words. The use of semi-structured interviews in phenomenological research is important because these types of interviews provide a controlled environment while enabling participants to share their views freely (Langdridge, 2007). More information regarding the participants and the interviews conducted is available in Table 1.

Table 1. Duration of interviews with participants

Participant No	Gender	Interview Date	Interview Duration (min.)
P1	F	06.05.2017	14.39
P2	M	06.05.2017	14.02
P3	F	06.05.2017	11.57
P4	M	07.05.2017	19.35
P5	M	07.05.2017	13.57
P6	M	09.05.2017	20.57
P7	F	10.05.2017	23.3
P8	M	10.05.2017	15.56
P9	M	11.05.2017	18.2
P10	F	11.05.2017	10.49
P11	F	13.05.2017	11.38
P12	M	13.05.2017	15.08
P13	F	13.05.2017	12.2
P14	M	14.05.2017	11.13
P15	M	14.05.2017	9.43
P16	F	15.05.2017	10.34
P17	F	15.05.2017	16.5
TOTAL	17		247.08

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative data collecting method was content analysis which focuses on finding and examining the responsive themes or patterns within the transcripts. Content analysis works in recursive stages which means there isn't a singular approach to it. One of the earliest steps consists of going over transcripts several times, creating a mental imprint of the information being presented. In addition, focusing on particular concepts within the data guides code creation. These initial attempts at coding designed with the gaps in literature offered at least some hope for data constant comparison method. From that point onward, those codes became broader themes that captured the essential ideas of the study. The guiding questions for the study supported the coding approach applied and the work was done collectively to maintain credibility and reliability.

Regarding internal validity, there was a wide-ranging literature review done not only to assess prior knowledge on the topic, but also to ensure the design of the questions for the semi-structured interview aligned with prior academic research. Participant consent was obtained prior to the word-for-word transcription of the interviews and extensive readings and consultations with field experts made sure that codes and themes were accurate. In addition to that, the substantiation of the themes given from literature was just as important as these themes were compared with existing literature. Internal validity was attained through the extensive detailing of the research design, characteristics of the participants that took part in the study, and the procedures that were used to collect and analyse the data. Step-by-step explanations were offered to enhance transparency, and the findings were compared with those of other studies.

The semi-structured interview form underwent refinement through pre-interviews and literature reviews to enhance internal reliability. The research objectives and interview purposes were clearly communicated to participants. Detailed documentation of the data collection, pre-reading, coding, and theming processes was maintained. For reliability, the researchers and an external expert analysed the qualitative data simultaneously, employing Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula: R = [Na (Consensus) / Na (Consensus) + Nd (Disagreement)] x 100. The analysis revealed 23 consensuses out of 25 items, resulting in a reliability score of 92%. The findings were further validated using direct quotations from the data.

External reliability was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the research design and methodology. Interview records were shared with a consultant and other relevant authorities, while interviews were conducted face-to-face in consistent settings. The analysis procedures were meticulously explained in the methodology section, supplemented with illustrative examples to ensure replicability. By following these rigorous procedures, the study ensured the validity and reliability of its findings, thereby strengthening the credibility and reproducibility of the research.

3. Results

In this section, the findings from the data analysis were systematically coded and organized into thematic tables corresponding to the six sub-problems addressed by the researchers. Each code and main theme in the tables was interpreted individually for each sub-problem.

Sample statements from participant interviews conducted within the research framework were used.

The following coding and identification techniques were used to analyse the data obtained from the interview form:

- A1, A2: Questions posed by the researchers
- P1, P2, P3...: Participants who provided their opinions

3.1. What Are the Perspectives of Foreign Language Lecturers on the Role of Culture in Language Learning?

The perspectives of foreign language lecturers on the role of culture in language learning were examined under the overarching theme of the language–culture relationship, as illustrated in Figure 1.
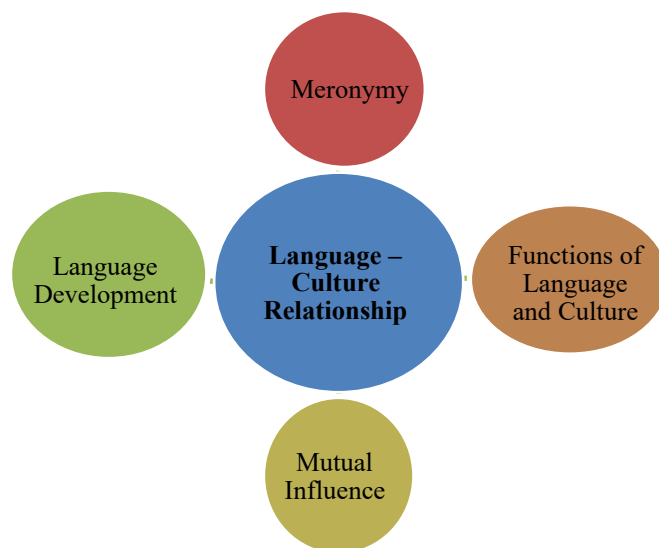

Figure 1. Codes Representing Foreign Language Lecturers' Perspectives on Culture

This illustration presents four interconnected codes obtained from the data: meronymy, functions of language and culture, mutual influence, and language development. Most lecturers noted that culture is part of language and language is culture, which illustrates the idea of meronymy, where culture is not an addition, but rather an integral part of linguistic expression. Also, like Baker (2022), they pointed out the practical and symbolic functions of language and culture, which serve to order social life and identity. Mutual influence was an idea frequently mentioned by participants as they discussed the ways in which language and culture impact each other in constant interaction (Risager, 2018; Kramsch, 2020). Finally, a lot of lecturers emphasized the role of cultural knowledge in language development, arguing that knowledge of cultural practices, references, and values enhances learners' understanding of language use and their pragmatic skills. These findings correspond with literature where there is overwhelming emphasis regarding the relationship between culture and language, showing their relationship is intricate and dynamic, therefore neither is comprehensively understandable on its own. Several participants captured such sentiments:

P4: "I believe language and culture are inseparable. They are deeply interconnected, with culture forming the essence of language."

P7: "Language is fundamental to human life and plays a crucial role in conveying daily life and culture. It holds a key position in cultural transmission."

P14: "Language reflects culture. A nation's cultural elements are revealed and enriched through language."

The participants describe the relationship between language and culture as mutually reinforcing, indicating that neither can fully function without the other. This view aligns with the idea that language serves as a communication tool that reflects the culture of the society in which it is used, while culture is, in turn, shaped by the unique structures of the language over time (Rivers, 1981; Brown, 1994; Liddicoat et al., 2003).

3.1.1. Meronymy

When looking at the structures of languages worldwide, culture can be seen as a foundational element that shapes language. Liddicoat et al. (2003) argues that language carries cultural traces at every structural level. However, some linguists offer different views. For example, Gladstone (1972) views language as a cultural product that both shapes and reflects cultural identity and values. Despite these differing perspectives, language and culture share an interconnected relationship. The participant statements below exemplify this relationship.

P11: Language is a reflection of a society and its culture. Culture and language are in mutual communication. A person who learns a language also learns the culture of which that language is a part.

P16: Language and culture are in constant interaction with each other. The language people speak has affected their culture, and the culture they live in has affected their language.

3.1.2. Functions of Language and Culture

Language is a key tool for transmitting culture across generations. Societies convey their beliefs, practices, and lifestyles through written and spoken language (Tektigul et al., 2023). If a society loses its language, it will sever its connection to its past, gradually eroding habits, customs, traditions, and, ultimately, its cultural identity and heritage. Although language is often seen primarily as a means of communication, it also serves as a bridge that connects foundational elements, thought structures, beliefs, traditions, and moral codes from the past to the present. In this role, language is a conduit for cultural transmission (Charles-Zalakoro, 2019). Kramsch (1998) argues that the words people use reflect their mindset, beliefs, and characteristics, thereby embodying their cultural reality. Some of the participants expressed this situation as follows:

P15: Language, like other social values, is a value that undertakes the task of transmitting culture in society.

P2: Now, language is a mirror of a culture for me. If a culture is what it is, language is one of the parts that best reflects it, and it is the most important part for the expression and transmission of culture.

P11: Culture is the totality of common beliefs, behaviours, and values of a certain group or society.

P14: These are the values that a country, nation, or community has. These values bring people together and bind them more to the community they belong to.

P17: Culture is the totality of all material and spiritual values and knowledge that have been passed down from the past to the present and serve as a bridge between generations.

3.1.3. Mutual Influence

Language and culture are interdependent, influencing each other at every stage. Jiang (2000) argues that language is a fundamental part of culture, and culture cannot exist without it. He suggests that language reflects culture while also being shaped by it. This bidirectional relationship is evident in the development and use of both language and culture and in the formation and transmission of cultural values across generations. Emphasizing this dynamic interaction between culture and language is crucial. In the interviews, the participants stated that language and culture are complementary structures and therefore directly affect each other at every stage.

P2: One of the parts that best reflects what culture means is the language which is the most important part for both transferring and explaining culture.

P16: Language and culture are in constant interaction with each other. The language people speak has affected their culture, and the culture they live in has affected their language.

P5: Well, the events and thought processes that occur in culture are all reflected in language. I believe that it is reflected in language and from language to language, and I do not think that it is independent of language. Well, it is possible for language to affect culture, but when we think about it more, we see that culture affects language more.

3.1.4. Language Development

The research participants believe that language is shaped by culture. As a society's culture evolves and transforms, its language undergoes corresponding changes. Kuo and Lai (2006) emphasize that societal culture and language evolve over time, noting that "New words emerge as they become associated with particular cultural activities. The slang words used by our parents were likely different from those we use today." According to Charles-Zalakoro (2019), culture encompasses the entirety of material and spiritual achievements created throughout human history. Its formation is closely tied to language, and as culture evolves, language development may also change accordingly. Therefore, it can be concluded that language development is, at least in part, directly influenced by cultural changes.

In summary, the complex relationship between language and culture is marked by ongoing, reciprocal influence, which shapes both linguistic and cultural evolution. This interaction highlights the importance of incorporating cultural knowledge into language education to achieve comprehensive linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding. Some of the participant views given below support this situation.

P17: As the years go by, the mass in the culture increases, each generation has a fuller cultural heritage, which increases the richness of the language.

P13: Language is an important part of the culture that changes and develops with the culture and helps people convey their feelings and thoughts.

3.2. What Culture-Related Challenges Do Students Encounter While Learning a Foreign Language?

The culture-related challenges faced by students in foreign language acquisition were identified as transfer errors, intercultural differences of opinion, and misinterpretation and

lack of knowledge about the relevant culture(s). These challenges were grouped under the broader theme of "language-culture problems" (Figure 2).
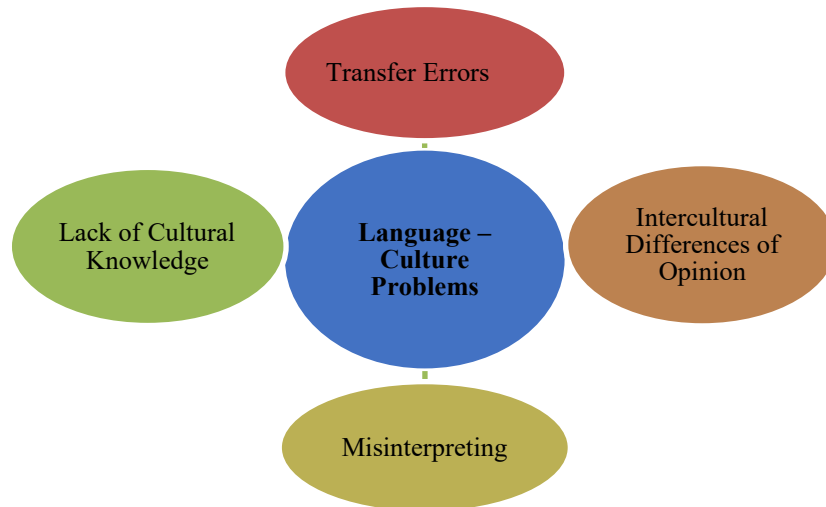
Transfer Errors

Lack of Cultural Knowledge

Language – Culture Problems

Intercultural Differences of Opinion

Misinterpreting

Figure 2. Codes and Main Theme of Culture-Related Challenges Faced by Students in Foreign Language Learning

This theme includes four language and culture related problems: transfer errors, misinterpretation, lack of cultural knowledge, and intercultural differences of opinion. Transfer errors occur when learners translate cultural presumptions or language usage patterns from their native tongue into the target language frequently leading to inappropriate or unexpected meanings. Misinterpretation usually happens when students do not understand the pragmatic or contextual meaning of expressions because they are not familiar with communicative norms or cultural references. Lack of cultural knowledge is another typical barrier that prevents learners from comprehending culturally specific behaviors idioms or interaction styles that are ingrained in the target language. Confusion or even conflict in communication can also result from intercultural differences of opinion which can reflect different social values worldviews or discourse conventions. This is particularly true when learners are not aware of how these viewpoints affect language use. Although they are separate categories these four show how cultural differences can impair students' capacity for appropriate and successful communication. As many participants pointed out sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which language functions is necessary for a meaningful understanding of language use simply mastering vocabulary and grammar is insufficient. Ignoring the culture-specific frameworks of expressions and meanings can cause communication breakdowns. These observations are consistent with current language education debates that emphasize how crucial it is to incorporate cultural sensitivity into language instruction to equip students for genuine and situationally relevant communication in multilingual environments (Liddicoat 2020 Baker 2022).

3.2.1. Transfer Errors

The points mentioned highlight the importance of integrating culture into the teaching and learning foreign languages. Without cultural transfer, learners cannot fully understand the cognitive framework of the target language or its varied expressions. This gap can lead to difficulties in using and translating the target language into their native language. Leontjeva (2023) suggests that a well-developed cognitive system allows individuals to perceive foreign

cultural codes more clearly, minimizing the risk of misinterpreting them through their cultural biases. Conversely, a poorly developed cognitive system may view foreign cultures as hostile, leading to misunderstandings or a complete lack of perception. Therefore, a society well-versed in other cultures is less likely to make errors in understanding and can better appreciate cultural uniqueness.

Learners who interpret events through the perspective of their native language may struggle to express these thoughts in the target language accurately. This issue is especially common with idioms, proverbs, and jokes. Transfer problems also occur when certain expressions have no direct equivalents in the learner's culture. When constructing sentences in the target language, individuals align the concept with their mental representation before translating it. If there is no equivalent in the target culture, the learner's native cultural meaning is often applied, leading to misunderstandings. For example, the Turkish phrase "geçmiş olsun" translates literally to "let it be passed," but culturally, it conveys sympathy, like saying "I am sorry to hear this" in English. Some of the participants illustrated this point as follows:

P1: Likewise, they want to use a proverb, we say "cut one's coat according to one's cloth", but when we translate it word by word, we say that it is meaningless, then we try to explain what expression is used in this culture and we explain why those words or terms are used.

P16: Proverbs and idioms are not independent of the culture in which people speaking a language live. Each culture, and therefore each language, has named a certain situation differently. Therefore, students have difficulty because proverbs and idioms do not have a one-to-one equivalent in their own language.

P17: Students have difficulty with words, phrases or sentence groups that are not common in the target language and the mother tongue and sometimes exist in one language but have no equivalent in the other.

3.2.2. Intercultural Differences of Opinion

Mastering the structure and vocabulary of a foreign language alone is often not enough for effective understanding and communication in the target language. Proper comprehension of what one reads or hears requires adequate contextual knowledge. Intercultural differences in opinions can further complicate understanding and communication. If a topic is absent or viewed negatively in the learner's native culture, they may resist engaging with it. For instance, the differing perspectives of a Spaniard and a Hindu on bullfighting can significantly affect how they communicate about the subject. One of the participants explains this situation as follows:

P13: If the subject in writing or speaking skills is not very important in their own culture, the student cannot speak or write in great detail.

Another participant stated that:

P11: If something that is very important in one culture is not very important in another culture, the transition is not very effective. Culturally specific special days (e.g. Halloween) cannot be covered in a very comprehensive manner. Cultural differences can prevent the subject from being examined in depth.

3.2.3. Misinterpretation

Due to the distinct cultural contexts of languages, words can carry very different connotations. Each language has its own unique structure and system, with cultural influences shaping the meanings of words. This can create challenges for foreign language learners, especially when the target language lacks an equivalent structure, word, or expression in their native culture. Foreign language teaching materials often present cultural themes in broad terms, which may not be enough to fully understand certain concepts. As a result, direct translations relying on basic dictionary definitions can lead to misunderstandings and confusion. This can distort the intended meaning of a sentence, leading to communication difficulties.

P4: I make comparisons while explaining cultural themes, I compare Turkish culture with the counterculture, and I think children will understand better this way. I try to state that there is something that we do not have or that a cultural situation that we have is expressed differently in the opposite culture.

As it is mentioned in the example above, to avoid this, the teacher can compare the native culture(s) and target culture(s).

3.2.4. Lack of Cultural Knowledge

Effective mastery of a foreign language, especially in communication, requires a deep understanding of the target culture(s). Learners often rely on references from their own culture to make sense of the realities of the target culture. Achieving cultural proficiency begins with understanding one's own culture. Kramsch (1998) suggests that comparing the target culture with one's own is crucial for understanding a foreign culture. Özil (1991), as cited in Özışık (2004), asserts that recognizing cultural differences and similarities enhances self-awareness and a deeper understanding of existence.

This issue goes beyond just words and expressions and extends to a language's syntactic structure, which mirrors its speakers' cognitive patterns. A learner who does not fully grasp the mindset and system of the target language may make errors during language transfer. For instance, Turkish permits "null subject" sentences, while English requires explicit subjects. Therefore, the Turkish equivalent of "I am a doctor" can omit the subject, whereas it must be explicitly included in English. This structural difference can lead to transfer problems, as explained by a participant:

P3: For example, here is the third singular person "O" for example, but when you look at English, they have 3 different "O"; They can say "He", "She" and "It" in three different ways. While talking, we can mix "He" and "She" at any level, no matter who is at what level, and I think that language has a connection with culture.

3.3. How Is Culture Integrated into The Teaching of The Four Basic Skills, Grammar, And Vocabulary in Existing Foreign Language Programs? How Should It Be?

The ways in which culture is incorporated into the instruction of reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary in foreign language programs were examined under the overarching theme of *application–language interaction*, as presented in Figure 3.
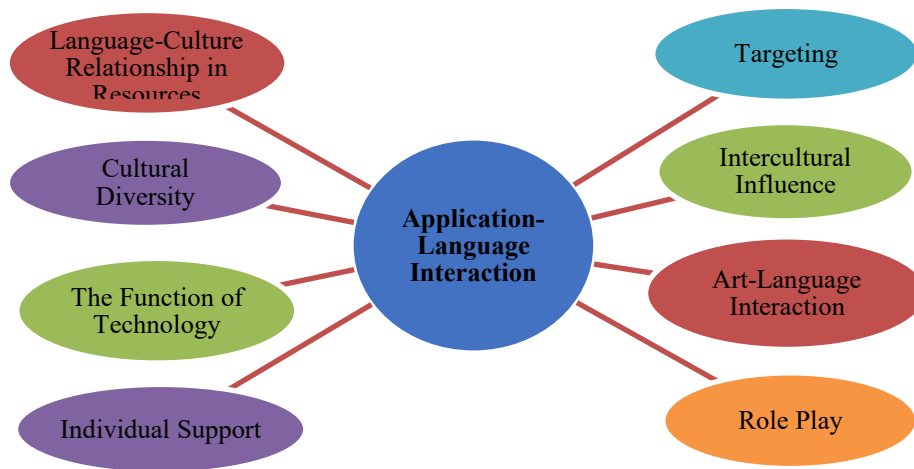
Figure 3. The codes and main theme related to the current and ideal cultural practices in teaching the four basic skills, grammar, and vocabulary in foreign language programs.

This theme consists of eight specific areas: the integration of language–culture relationships in resources, attention to cultural diversity, the role of technology, individual learner support, targeted instruction, intercultural influence, the intersection of art and language, and role play. According to the lecturers interviewed, effective cultural integration begins with materials that reflect not only the target culture but also a broader range of global contexts. This inclusive approach allows learners to build a richer understanding of language use in real-world communication settings. While teaching the rules of grammar may seem more mechanical or based on rules, the cultural side becomes very strong in growing reading, listening, and writing skills where understanding context is key. The meanings of many metaphorical and idiomatic languages are deeply attached to cultural backgrounds; they cannot be understood just by having linguistic knowledge (Taguchi, 2022). Likewise, the participants pointed out that digital media and educational technologies play a great role in bringing cultural content to learners more easily and interactively. Such instruments offer real, many-sided showing of cultural actions and speaking rules (Liu and Moeller, 2019). Role-play and creative arts-based activities were identified as mostly effective in stimulating students to consider cultural views along with using the language in a meaningful way related to emotions (Porto, 2022). The need for individualized support and differentiated instruction was underlined for learners who might not be accustomed to the target culture. Taken together, these results indicate that infusing culture throughout multiple pedagogical approaches and media increases both language learning and intercultural awareness. As one participant remarked:

P10: "I do not think that it will be effective to use culture in language teaching, but I think the patterns and their meanings will be useful in teaching basic skills such as reading, writing and listening."

Effectively incorporating cultural elements into foreign language learning environments is essential for comprehensive language acquisition. Instruction that combines cultural context with language structures, vocabulary, and basic skills leads to more lasting and natural learning. Kramsch (1993) described the role of culture in language teaching as follows:

"Culture in language learning is not just an additional fifth skill added to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always present, from the very beginning, often catching good language learners off guard when they least expect it, revealing the limits of their hard-earned communicative competence and challenging their understanding of the world around them."

Kramsch's view highlights that language learning without cultural context is incomplete. Excluding culture, especially in the communicative aspects of language, can result in significant misunderstandings. Fully grasping the cultural nuances within language structures and vocabulary requires a deep understanding of the cultural background.

3.3.1. The Language-Culture Relationship in Resources

The significant influence of culture on language learning makes it essential to incorporate cultural elements into foreign language instruction. Language is inherently tied to the culture it comes from, so fully learning and using the language requires understanding its cultural components. Separating language teaching resources from the culture(s) of the target language limits the learning process, making it mechanical. Thus, effective language learning necessitates resources that include the target language's cultural aspects. Choosing primary textbooks and supplementary materials that feature texts, listening exercises, and activities centred on themes from various cultures is beneficial and crucial. When some of the opinions received from the participants are examined, it is seen that some of the existing resources in use have been prepared with this sensitivity, and some do not consider this.

P1: Some books include culture in the textbooks I have used until today, and some books do not. Some books are all based on British culture, for example, one of the books we used last year. However, in the book I use in professional English, both British culture and other cultural elements are also included.

P7: Of course, the books we follow are the most important in this, and we introduce various items of popular culture to our students. We try to guide our students through different TV series and movies to familiarize them with foreign culture.

3.3.2. Cultural Diversity

Technological advancements, along with progress in tourism, trade, education, and healthcare, have led to increased human migration. As a result, interactions and communication among people from diverse linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds have become more frequent. This shift has added a new layer to communication, highlighting the need for cultural education to reduce potential misunderstandings. Exposure to diverse cultural knowledge is vital for effective global communication, as words, expressions, and discourses can differ greatly across cultures. It is understood from the terms obtained from the participants that language is a means of cultural transfer. Thanks to this feature, language creates a bridge between people belonging to different cultures, and the more and more different cultural information is transferred, the more and various bridges can be created. This can be seen in this statement:

P11: Language is the most crucial tool for learning culture. For this reason, speaking, which consists of words only, should not be seen as a means of communication but as a means of transmitting cultures to other individuals and trying to convey as much cultural information as possible.

Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) emphasize that understanding the relationships between different cultures is crucial for overcoming cultural differences. Seelye (1997) argues that learning without cultural context impedes individuals' ability to integrate and socialize within a society. Moreover, individuals who have a positive attitude towards the culture(s) associated with the target language tend to be more successful in language learning (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

3.3.3. The Function of Technology

Technological tools are used at every stage in increasing amounts by foreign language education programs. These resources sometimes come in the form of audio and video CDs and digital platforms. Many applications can now be found that are conducive to creating a more dynamic, efficient, and effective language teaching process. For example, some institutions offer interactive online language courses that include videos, podcasts, books, articles, and exercises for students. All such high-tech resources are actively considered by language teachers in their programs through material selection and teaching processes. Aysu (2020) has also affirmed that while integrating technology into the foreign language classroom several benefits it brings there would also engaging authentic materials that would serve to motivate learners as well as facilitating the development of each skill of the target language in learning as well as teaching context. This can be seen in the opinion of a participant below:

P11: Since we live in the age of the internet and technology, I try to teach as effectively as possible by using technological equipment and online materials, as well as visual materials such as video, as well as course materials such as books.

3.3.4. Individual Support

Language learners can struggle to grasp culture-specific situations, structures, words, and expressions. Basic and supplementary resources may not always fully address these challenges. In such cases, instructors can support learners by sharing relevant personal experiences to enhance their interpretive processes. Connecting new learning scenarios to familiar cultural contexts can help reduce negative attitudes toward learning. Similarly, drawing parallels between the learners' own culture and the target culture while teaching basic skills can lead to positive results. Offering real-life examples from the target culture can greatly enrich the learning experience.

P6: When students are going to write something, they may have difficulty, some specific culture-related things, at that time it is useful to talk about, like look at the culture, this is different, this is similar, you need to write like this.

As can be understood from the participant's opinion above, the support that the teacher will provide in difficult subjects will increase the learner's perception and positively affect learning.

3.3.5. Targeting

Effective communication requires competence in various areas, including grammar, phonology, vocabulary, and culture. Culture is a crucial element of international communication, influencing all aspects of life and leaving a profound impact. Brdarić (2016) suggests that culture determines who communicates with whom, about what, and in what

manner, thereby playing a vital role in encoding, interpreting, and conveying messages. Thanasoulas (2001) argues that culture is inseparable from communication, as it shapes the way individuals perceive and interpret messages. Incorporating comparative cultural themes into foreign language lessons can promote natural and effective language acquisition. Some of the participants expressed this as follows:

P10: The target language should be taught without isolating it from the culture it belongs to. They are items that complement each other.

P13: I think students learn and remember more easily when cultural themes are used. Therefore, I believe more cultural themes should be used.

3.3.6. Intercultural Influence

The study consistently highlights the influence of intercultural interaction on language learning. It stresses that teaching foreign language structures, words, and skills must recognize the inseparability of language and culture, as this relationship deeply influences the language acquisition process. Offering cultural equivalents from the learners' native culture can aid in better understanding and interpretation. Designing language programs that incorporate comparative cultural themes can enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Participant statements support this approach:

P7: "The basic skills such as writing, speaking and reading can be taught by including various activities and giving equivalents of idioms, proverbs, and jokes, along with information about their usage and contexts."

P12: "It can be used in a comparative way by mentioning both our own culture and other cultures, mainly the target culture, and by showing similarities and differences."

3.3.7. Art-Language Interaction

Cultural elements are vividly expressed in a society's artistic creations, making art a powerful tool for cultural transmission. Using art forms such as paintings, stories, poetry, novels, and films in language teaching brings authentic language and cultural contexts into the classroom. The natural, lively language found in these materials fosters genuine learning experiences. Integrating authentic materials with structured reading texts and listening exercises enhances the natural flow of the target language. This can be seen in the following lines:

P1: So, you memorize words and structures, and you try to use them as often as possible in the writing material in structures, but it goes by rote. After a while, when you start watching movies and TV series or moving to the more professional production part of it in university undergraduate education, you realize that you have misused some things. And when you learn cultural differences, you stop using some things or start to use some more logically.

3.3.8. Role-Play

Role-play is a common technique in foreign language teaching, allowing students to practice language use in culturally specific scenarios. This method enables learners to simulate situations unique to the target culture, deepening their understanding of cultural behaviours and thought patterns through empathy. Role-playing helps identify and resolve communication challenges that arise from intercultural differences (Frank, 2013). By enacting specific scenarios in the classroom, students are encouraged to use the target language

spontaneously, while observing and practicing culturally appropriate gestures, postures, intonations, and reactions. This approach strengthens communication skills and makes learning more natural. Some of the faculty members who participated in the interviews conducted within the scope of the research have the following views on the above-mentioned issues:

P2: At the same time, we can benefit from cultural elements in "role-plays" such as how children should behave in certain situations. For example, when you go to England, you will not be able to talk about Müslüm Gürses, but when you go there, you can talk about Iron Maden, you can talk about Oprah. We need to know these so that we can have a dialogue with an English person there or I can have a dialogue with a Latin American, and this is how it is taught.

P16: Especially in "role-plays", I expect students to use expressions from the target language culture. I observe that students also enjoy using these expressions.

3.4. What Are the Characteristics of The Physical Learning Environment, Both Inside and Outside the Classroom, Designed for The Effective Incorporation of Culture? How Should It Be?

The physical environment plays a pivotal role in how effectively cultural components are integrated into language education. As illustrated in Figure 4, the theme *physical environment–language relationship* encompasses six interrelated elements: cross-cultural interaction, technology integration, the function of the physical environment, teacher–learner interaction, and media–learner interaction. It was deemed appropriate for the researchers to interpret the similar codes (cross-cultural interaction) among the obtained codes under a single subtitle.
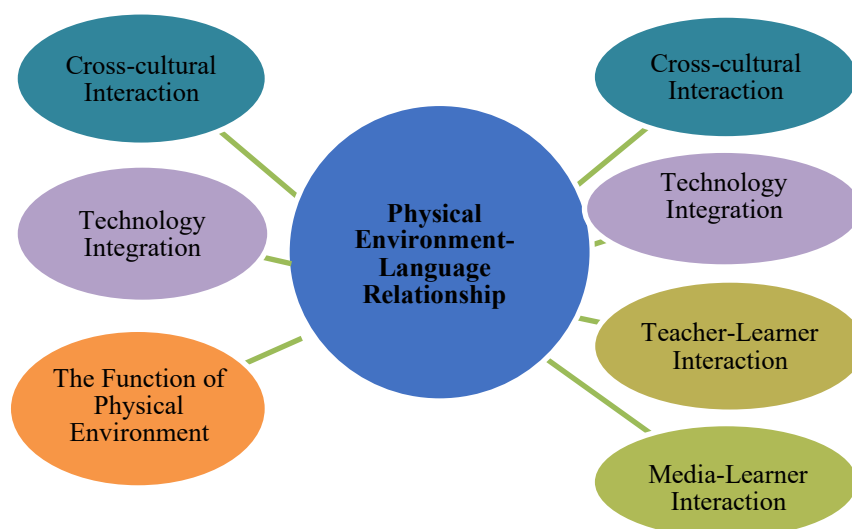

Figure 4. The codes and main theme related to the current design and ideal design of the in-class and out-of-class physical environment for the effective incorporation of culture.

Lecturers emphasized that both classroom and extracurricular spaces should be designed to foster natural exposure to cultural elements. Physical settings that support intercultural dialogue and collaborative learning enhance learners' engagement and cultural sensitivity (Zhang, 2022). Classrooms equipped with culturally rich materials—such as multilingual displays, global media, and authentic visual texts—can provide an immersive experience that

links language input with cultural meaning. Moreover, outdoor and digital environments, such as language labs, cultural exhibitions, or virtual exchanges, were viewed as complementary spaces that extend cultural learning beyond formal instruction (D'warte, 2021). Integrating interactive technologies—like multimedia platforms, video conferencing tools, and online discussion forums—further strengthens the potential for meaningful cultural contact, especially when learners engage with diverse content creators or peers from different backgrounds (Godwin-Jones, 2021). Teacher–learner and media–learner interactions are also essential components of a culturally responsive physical setting, where both direct instruction and mediated experiences foster intercultural competence. As such, the physical environment should not merely serve logistical functions but act as an active contributor to learners' cultural awareness and communicative fluency. Without this cultural embedding, learners may achieve only superficial language competence, prolonging the language acquisition process and weakening communicative effectiveness (Yeganeh & Raeesi, 2023).

3.4.1. Cross-cultural Interaction

A common challenge in advanced foreign language instruction is learners' difficulty in accurately translating expressions between their native and target languages, even when they have sufficient grammar and vocabulary knowledge. This problem often arises from the cultural themes inherent in these expressions. Words can carry different figurative meanings depending on their cultural context. Without understanding these cultural backgrounds, learners will likely make language translation mistakes. According to the interviews conducted within the scope of the research, it was understood that the instructors solved this problem by explaining and comparing the meaning of the expression in the target culture with its equivalent in our own culture when necessary. Some participants expressed this situation as follows:

P1: The student wants to write a paragraph or wants to use an expression, but we compare it with the expression in Turkish, for example, the student wants to use the expression "afiyet olsun" and asks me the exact English equivalent, but "afiyet olsun" is not a very common expression in American culture, so we first convey it to them as a culture. They do not have a wide food culture like us, they do not eat for long hours. Therefore, since they consume fast food, they do not use the expression "afiyet olsun", so we first explain it and then give them an expression that they can use the closest.

P4: I try to explain what the multiple meanings of words are in the target culture and compare it with Turkish in this regard. I try to explain that the limited meaning of a word in Turkish, for example, the exact equivalent of the word may be different.

3.4.2. Technology Integration

Technology is essential in modern language teaching. Today's textbooks, which are key resources in language education, now include digital platforms, audio and video recordings, and online applications. These features enrich the learning experience, making it more effective and enjoyable, while also facilitating the ongoing transfer of learning from the classroom to other areas of life.

P11: Since we live in the age of the internet and technology, I try to teach as effectively as possible by using technological equipment and online materials, as well as visual materials such as videos, in addition to course materials such as books.

P12: I use internet applications that are widely used in our school when necessary.

P4: I try to have technological equipment in the classroom that can use videos and texts that we can access digitally.

From the above participant views, it is understood that technological resources such as the internet, videos, etc. are widely used in and out of the classroom to make language acquisition stronger by facilitating the understanding of cultural themes.

3.4.3. The Function of Physical Environment

Learning a foreign language is like swimming in the sea at night; having a clear path is crucial to avoid getting lost. It's also comparable to trying unfamiliar food, where an unappealing appearance might prevent one from tasting it. Therefore, creating a guiding and engaging atmosphere in language learning environments is essential for an effective teaching-learning process.

Classrooms, where the target language is taught as a foreign language, serve as the primary environments for language exposure. The classroom functions as a simulated world, reflecting the target language and its cultural context. Well-designed language classrooms not only capture learners' interest but also enhance the learning process through peripheral learning. Lozanov (1998) emphasizes the effectiveness of the "Suggestopedia" method, noting that students absorb more information from their surroundings than they consciously recognize. For example, information displayed on posters about the target language, even if not directly taught, is gradually learned subconsciously over time.

3.4.4. Teacher-Learner Interaction

Language teaching resources may sometimes fall short in conveying cultural themes. In such instances, learners need more detailed explanations to understand cultural nuances. Teachers can effectively address these challenges by providing comparative and illustrative explanations based on their cultural knowledge and insights. The following participant statements highlight the importance of this type of interaction in the class.

P7: we also introduce various elements of the popular culture to our students; we try to guide our students through different series and movies to familiarize them with foreign culture.

P12: When required, I give a few examples like "this is used in the spoken language or their culture in this way".

3.4.5. Media-Learner Interaction

Relying exclusively on textbooks in foreign language education can hinder learners' full understanding of the target language, especially its semantic aspects. Textbooks often miss the nuanced meanings of words, expressions, and patterns that are common in everyday language. This gap can cause communication issues in real-life situations, as spoken language often differs from formal written language. Using "authentic materials" in language teaching can help address these challenges. Media tools offer easy access to authentic materials, providing genuine interaction with the target language and culture. Seelye (1993) suggests

that mass media are valuable sources of current language data, offering a richer experience than the simplified language of edited texts and helping learners develop coping skills (as cited in Tezcan, 2008).

Participants share the following views on the use of media in learning environments.

P7: … we also introduce various elements of popular culture to our students; we try to guide our students through various TV series and movies to familiarize them with foreign culture.

P4: I use these in connection with food. Again, I bring examples from movies and series where this theme is told, where special days and holidays in different cultures are told. Because it is possible to find plenty of such examples.

P16: I usually use visual tools such as videos and pictures.

P17: Videos, songs, movies, in short, visual and auditory tools.

P14: Images and the internet. TV series and movies. There may be reading and watching activities outside of class. It could be listening to songs or watching videos and doing activities.

In the answers given by the participants to some questions asked by the researchers above, it is understood that they use media tools as real sources in the language teaching process, especially in teaching culture-related subjects. Because the language used in tools such as movies, series, videos, newspapers and magazines are more up-to-date and real, unlike in source books, and this reality positively affects the learner's attitude towards the language and increases the person's language use skills.

4. Discussion

The lecturers in this study consistently emphasized the intrinsic bond between language and culture, asserting that one cannot meaningfully exist without the other. According to their accounts, culture serves as the vessel for transmitting a society's values, beliefs, traditions, and collective memory, while language is the principal tool for conveying these elements across generations. This conceptualization aligns with Kramsch's view that word choice reflects a speaker's worldview, social identity, and cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998). Similarly, Scarino and Liddicoat (2020) argue that language embodies a system of culturally informed meanings, making linguistic interaction inseparable from cultural interpretation.

Participants noted that fostering learners' awareness of both their native and target cultures contribute significantly to language acquisition. Stress in foreign language use the importance of clearly communicating the socioeconomic and geopolitical realities of the foreign culture that informs the foreign language (Kramsch, 1998), and—replicating Kramsch's (1998) work—the study of host culture is required if meaningful use of foreign language is to occur (usually by means of cross-cultural comparison). This view is supported by Hwang et al. (2024), who discovered that both cultural media exposure and out-of-class interpersonal contact had an impact on the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among learners of Asian languages. They also associated communication breakdowns with 'alternative cultural worldviews'; a similar pattern is reported by Kim and Penry Williams (2021) for whom value and discourse systems represent common sources of intercultural miscommunication.

The participants thought it was vital to integrate cultural content in all aspects of language education, especially in teaching vocabulary and foundational skills, but they noted culturally

related issues in grammar instruction are often disregarded too easily. Jiying (2004) further argued not only does vocabulary include more cultural significance than grammar, but misunderstandings take place due to misused words. His argument has been further reinforced by the work of Sun and Yang (2020), who argued that a learner's cultural context of vocabulary motivates a deeper engagement with the meaning. Additionally, Sugianto and Wirza (2021) demonstrated that cultural representation in textbooks varies widely, affecting the effectiveness learners can have with learning word meanings in new contexts. Globalization today is more than just a buzzword and coupled with more mobility, tourism, and educational exchanges, more multilingual, multicultural societies are commonplace. The lecturers believe this is the reason why language educators should expose students to different cultures, than just the prevalent/default culture or the target culture. They believed this exposes students to an alternate way to view the world and can foster empathy. This idea has been supported by Yilmaz and Sahan (2023), stated that cultural motivation is an important form of educational engagement motivation, particularly in higher education. Learners are often trying to compare the numerous unfamiliar linguistic elements they encounter with the structures from their first language, and without noticing cultural context, this process of comparison is problematic. Kramsch (2004) mentioned intercultural preparation may be even more imperative in the context of immigrant and globalized sociolinguistic settings where proficiency alone will not suffice.

The role of technology in integrating culture into language instruction was widely discussed by the lecturers. They emphasized its ability to bring authentic cultural experiences into the classroom. In alignment with this view, Moradi and Chen (2019) advocate for digital storytelling as a means of promoting cultural awareness and enhancing language skills. Participants in the current study echoed this by pointing out the value of films, literature, and other artistic forms in presenting language as it is naturally used. Ribeiro (2016) further illustrates how creating digital narratives allows students to reflect critically on their own and others' cultural experiences, leading to deeper learning.

The lecturers also mentioned that role-play activities are effective for vocabulary and speaking development, as they simulate real-world interaction and cultural reasoning. Frank (2013) previously argued for such methods as tools to overcome intercultural barriers. Likewise, Hrebacková and Stefl (2022) show that collaborative digital storytelling in multicultural teams reduces discomfort and enhances intercultural competence through repeated interaction. Their findings validate the current participants' belief in learning-by-doing strategies for cultural integration.

Classroom design was also considered a facilitator of unconscious cultural learning. Visual stimuli such as posters, cultural artifacts, and realia help create immersive environments. Media use—ranging from newspapers and podcasts to digital visuals—was seen as a bridge between formal language study and real-world application. This resonates with Seelye's (1997) argument that media reflects the evolving, living nature of language. Moreover, Korosidou and Griva (2024) provide empirical evidence that combining digital storytelling with L2 instruction improves both writing skills and intercultural awareness in young learners, reinforcing the role of media in dynamic learning settings.

The participants stressed the importance of cultural content being diverse and not simply represent the norms of the target language's dominant culture. Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw

(2021) found that EFL materials containing limited and skewed cultural representations may impede learners' awareness of cultural norms and practices. They underscored the point made by the lecturers about the importance of including a variety of world cultures in the curriculum. Kazmi et al. (2023) further showed that visual and thematic stereotyping of cultures may impact cultural learning, even if it is subtle. This emphasizes the need for careful critical selection of materials.

To conclude, the perspectives provided by the lecturers are consistent with a body of research that understands language learning to be a socially and culturally embedded process (Ellis, 2021). Ellis (2021) emphasized that meaningful language education does not only involve language learners simply expressing themselves fluently, but approaching, thinking, understanding, and acting in globally multicultural ways with respect and consideration. Authentic, cultural, materials, digital storytelling, and a reflective approach to learning all contribute towards this end.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the inextricable ties between language and culture and that they are two inseparable entities. The participants all strongly underlined the importance of culture in the transmission of societal values, beliefs and tradition, with language being the most important tool in such transmission. Accordingly, integration of cultural education into language learning process is crucial for students to develop cultural understanding and communicative skills.

Participants suggested that a deep knowledge of the native and the target culture is central for learning languages, in line with Kramsch's (1998) statement that "effective use of a foreign language requires awareness of the cultural context" (p. 6). Cultural knowledge fosters language learning and sympathy and cross-cultural communication, which are more and more important in our globalized world. The research observed discrepancy between level of incorporation of cultural aspects, more precisely of grammar, in the teaching of English and of the very rich cultural base of the vocabulary, since each word has cultural aspects as connotations. The use of authentic materials reflecting everyday life and cultural realities was recognized as enhancing the relatability and comprehension of the language.

Technology and digital resources proved to be effective tools for language learning, especially when it comes to immersing students in cultural content. This approach makes the learning experience much more engaging and interactive. For instance, audio-visual materials like movies, music, and multimedia resources are fantastic for introducing learners to the target culture. Authentic materials—think films, TV shows, songs, and books—are highly valued for their ability to facilitate natural language acquisition and cultural understanding. Additionally, role-plays are recognized as a great way to enhance vocabulary and speaking skills in contexts that are culturally relevant. The way learning environments are designed, incorporating cultural artifacts, media elements, and real-life objects, is also crucial for supporting both language and cultural education, encouraging ongoing learning beyond the classroom.

In conclusion, this research underscores the vital importance of culture in language education. By promoting cultural awareness and using genuine cultural materials, language teachers can significantly boost their students' language skills and intercultural competence.

As globalization accelerates and cross-cultural communication becomes more prevalent, the need for culturally responsive language teaching is more important than ever.

6.1. Recommendations for Practice

For Curriculum Developers:

Curriculum developers should ensure that cultural content is infused into foreign language teaching and not viewed as auxiliary or optional. This means cultural perspectives should be incorporated consistently and in all language levels and skills. A balanced approach should enable learners to experience the target culture in-depth, while also allowing for an experience of a variety of global cultural perspectives, so learners are prepared to communicate in the variety of international contexts. It is also important to adopt or develop teaching materials, such as textbooks and classroom materials, that feature authentic cultural content. Authentic cultural content should be derived from real-world written texts, multimodal texts, and everyday culturally situated practices, so that learners are provided with realistic and contextualized input.

For Policymakers:

Policy makers hold an important place in the advancement of intercultural competence in the foreign language education sector. It is necessary that the national educational criterion incorporates the intercultural elements as the principal objectives of learning. To achieve this, teachers should be trained through funding, with the implementation of the generic model alone as the instrument to instill in them capacity and knowledge in cross-cultural teaching. Additionally, promoting partnerships between the different schools, universities, and teacher-education institutions can constitute the environment for sharing the most efficient methods, as well as innovations in the context of the respect for diversity in a global world.

For Teacher Educators and Trainers:

Teacher trainers should see to it that both pre-service and in-service courses provide a clear path that will help teachers to integrate cultural contents into the language teaching – that is, to cover grammar, vocabulary, and communication. Training can give examples of real-life materials like films, songs, literature, and digital media to illustrate both past and present the culture of the target area. Using comparative cultural analysis and reflection discussions teachers can help the students to think critically, show empathy, and to build more confidence in real-world interactions. EFL teachers play a major part in the connection between language and culture, introducing cultural parts throughout and giving practice in different language skills through appealing content such as media and social platforms. The ability to look at cultural similarities and differences from a critical perspective can boost the awareness of the ability to interact with people of other cultures. Presentation of norms, gestures, and politeness strategies can act as voice in the development of the intercultural communicative competence. An inclusive classroom in which students not only accept but also challenge stereotypes is favorable for interactions and the acquisition of knowledge. Both teachers and learners can actively engage in a more meaningful and engaging class through intercultural pedagogy and culture-oriented virtual exchanges, to name only a few of the digital tools that they might find helpful.

6.2. Suggestions for Future Research

This study is beneficial not only because it provides us with useful information on cultural content and how it is integrated in foreign language education, but it also reveals the gaps in the research area. If we had comparative research which was carried out in different countries, we might see how educational systems manage the cultural integration and thus also we could find the universal patterns and the context-specific problems. The study of learners' attitudes toward cultural content may be useful to the field in terms of the ways students are affected by their own culture being the basis of their interaction with and use of the culturally richer instruction. Furthermore, there is a debatable process of carrying out experimental studies and particularly those with a quantitative or mixed-methods design that can identify the specific teaching strategies, such as training with film material or conducting culturally immersive simulations, that will engage most of the students. Moreover, research that focuses on the digital tools, mobile applications, and AI-powered platforms which are instrumental in promoting cultural awareness is a very welcome feature of the present-day constantly changing educational landscape.

Conflict of interests
The authors ensure that they have no conflict of interest.

References
Aysu, S. (2020). The use of technology and its effects on language learning motivation. *Journal of Language Research (JLR), 4*(1), 86-100.

Baker, W., & Fang, F. (2022). Intercultural citizenship and the internationalisation of higher education: the role of English language teaching. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca, 11*(1), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2022-2067

Barahona, M., Delaporte-Raurich, C., & Ibaceta-Quijanes, X. (2021). "It is impossible to teach English in English": Preservice teachers' struggles to facilitate L2 comprehensibility in English. *Tesol Journal, 12*(2), e578. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.578

Brdarić, H. (2016). *The importance of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom*. Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku Filozofski fakultet.

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Teaching by principles*. Pearson ESL.

Byram, M. (1997). The intercultural dimension in "language learning for European citizenship." In M. Byram and G. Zarate (Eds.), *The sociocultural and intercultural dimension of language learning and teaching* (pp. 57–84). Council of Europe Publishing.

Celce-Murcia, M. (2007). Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching. *Intercultural language use and language learning*, 41-57. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3

Charles-Zalakoro DL (2019). Language as a Tool for Cultural Transition. *International Journal of English Literature and Culture* 7(9): 312-316 DOI: 10.14662/IJELC2019.220

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publishers.

D'warte, J. (2021). Facilitating agency and engagement: Visual methodologies and pedagogical interventions for working with culturally and linguistically diverse young people. *Language Teaching Research, 25*(1), 12-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820938826

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *Modern Language Journal, 78*(3), 273-284. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02042.x

Eden, C. A., Chisom, O. N., & Adeniyi, I. S. (2024). Cultural competence in education: strategies for fostering inclusivity and diversity awareness. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences, 6*(3), 383-392. https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i3.895

Ellis, R. (2021). *Task-based language teaching* (pp. 133-136). Springer International Publishing.

Frank, J. (2013). Raising Cultural Awareness in the English Language Classroom. In *English teaching forum* (Vol. 51, No. 4, p. 2). US Department of State. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs, SA-5, 2200 C Street NW 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.

Gardner, R., and Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Newbury House.

Gladstone, J. R. (1972). Language and culture. In H. B. Allen & R. N. Campbell (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second language* (pp. 192–195). McGraw-Hill.

Guilherme, M. (2002). *Critical citizens for an intercultural world: Foreign language education as cultural politics* (Vol. 3). Multilingual Matters. ISBN: 978-1-85359-609-4

Humairoh, M. F. N. (2023). Building undergraduate students' cultural identity through digital storytelling. *Communication Teacher*, *37*(3), 235-245. https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2022.2127820

Hwang, J., Sato, E., & He, A. W. (2024). From intercultural engagement to intercultural communicative competence: The case of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. *Foreign Language Annals*, *57*(1), 67-92. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12738

Jiang, W. (2000). The relationship between culture and language. *ELT Journal, 54*(4), 328–334. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/54.4.328

Jiang, L., & Paulino, F. B. (2024). Rethinking communicative language teaching in college English teaching: strategies and lesson plan. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *15*(2), 607-616. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1502.29

Jiying, Z. (2004). *Cultural connotation in English vocabulary teaching*. http://www.elt-china.org/pastversion/lw/pdf/zhangjiying.pdf

Kazmi, S. A. H., Khalique, S., & Kazmi, S. S. A. (2023). Gender representation and stereotyping in EFL textbooks: a critical discourse analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, *9*(2), 304-318.

Kim, H., & Penry Williams, C. (2021). Barriers in intercultural communication. *Discovering intercultural communication: From language users to language use*, 47-67. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76595-8?nosfx=y

Korosidou, E., & Griva, E. (2024). Fostering Students' L2 Writing Skills and Intercultural Awareness through Digital Storytelling in Elementary Education. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, *16*(5), 585-597. https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2024.355

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2004). The language teacher as go-between. *Utbildning & Demokrati, 13*(3), 37-60.

Kramsch, C. (2020). *Language as symbolic power*. Cambridge University Press.

Kuo, M., and Lai, C. (2006). Linguistics across cultures: The impact of culture on second language learning. *Journal of Foreign Language, 1*(1), 2-10.

Langdridge, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and method*. Pearson Education.

Leontjeva, O. (2023). Transfer of Cultural Codes in Intercultural Communication: Information and Semantic Errors. *Półrocznik Językoznawczy Tertium. 7.* 33-57. https://doi.org/10.7592/Tertium.2022.7.2.226

Liddicoat, A. J., Papademetre, L., Scarino, A., & Kohler, M. (2003). *Report on intercultural language learning*. Commonwealth of Australia.

Liu, X. & Moeller, A. J. (2019). Promoting learner engagement through interactive digital tools. *Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education.* 310.

Lozanov, G. (1978). *Suggestology and outlines of suggestopedia*. Gordon and Breach.

Mitchell, R., and Myles, F. (2004). *Second language learning theories* (2nd ed.). Arnold.

Hrebacková, M., & Stefl, M. (2022). Challenging intercultural discomforts: Intercultural communicative competence through digital storytelling. *Training, Language and Culture, 6*(3), 78–88. doi: 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-78-88

Moradi, H., & Chen, H. (2019). Digital storytelling in language education. *Behavioral sciences, 9*(12), 147. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs9120147

O'Dowd, R. (2022). *Internationalising higher education and the role of virtual exchange*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315393704

Özil, Ş. (1991). Dil ve kültür. In *Çağdaş kültürümüz olgular-sorunlar*. Cem Yayınevi.

Özışık, C. (2004). *Yabancı dil öğretiminde kültürel farkındalık: New Headway ders kitaplarının kültür aktarımı açısından incelenmesi ve değerlendirilmesi* [Master's thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi]. İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research, 42*, 533-544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Peterson, E., & Coltrane, B. (2003). Culture in second language teaching. In *Culture in second language teaching* (Vol. EDO-FL-03-09). (ERIC Clearing House on Languages and Linguistics). Center for Applied Linguistics.

PM Ribeiro, S. (2016). Developing intercultural awareness using digital storytelling. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 16*(1), 69-82. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2015.1113752

Porto, M. (2023). Intercultural citizenship as CLIL in foreign language education. In *The Routledge handbook of content and language integrated learning* (pp. 141-159). Routledge.

Risager, K. (2018). *Representations of the world in language textbooks* (Vol. 34). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783099566

Rivers, W. M. (1981). *Teaching foreign-language skills*. University of Chicago Press.

Scarino, A., and Liddicoat, J. A. (2009). *Teaching and learning languages: A guide*. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Seelye, H. N. (1997). *Teaching culture: Strategies for intercultural communication*. National Textbook Company.

Sugianto, A., & Wirza, Y. (2021). Cultural Contents of an EFL Textbook. In *Thirteenth Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2020)* (pp. 1-6). Atlantis Press.

Taguchi, N. (2022). Second Language Pragmatics: A Historical Overview and Future Directions. In N. Halenko & J. Wang (Eds.), *Pragmatics in English Language Learning* (pp. 7–26). Cambridge University Press.

Thanasoulas, D. (2001). The importance of teaching culture in foreign language classroom. *Radical Pedagogy ICCAP, 1-25*.

Tektigul, Z., Bayadilova-Altybayev, A., Sadykova, S., Iskindirova, S., Kushkimbayeva, A., & Zhumagul, D. (2023). Language is a symbol system that carries culture. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *11*(1), 203-214. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2022.562756.2781

Tanriverdi, B., & Apak, Ö. (2008, September 2–6). *Culture and language teaching through media* [Conference presentation]. 13th World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) World Conference in Education, Antalya, Turkey. ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED504866

Ushioda, E. (2013). Motivation and ELT: Global issues and local concerns. In *International perspectives on motivation: Language learning and professional challenges* (pp. 1-17). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Xiang, R., & Yenika-Agbaw, V. (2021). EFL textbooks, culture and power: A critical content analysis of EFL textbooks for ethnic Mongols in China. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, *42*(4), 327-341. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1692024

Yilmaz, O., & Sahan, G. (2023). A study on the motivation levels and problems in the language learning for the higher education learners. *World Journal of Education*, *13*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v13n1p1

Zhang, Q. (2022). The role of teachers' interpersonal behaviors in learners' academic achievements. *Frontiers in psychology*, *13*, 921832. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.921832