



Perspectives and Preferences towards Teaching Culture in EFL Classroom: Senior High School Context in Indonesia

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Abstract

Language and culture are two things that cannot be separated; therefore, while learning or teaching a language, there is a high possibility of also understanding the culture of the learned/target language. Despite the inseparable bond between language and culture, the inclusion of culture in teaching English as the mandatory foreign language in Indonesian schools is scarce. Most English teaching and learning processes focus on developing the student's understanding and mastery of language skills. Misunderstandings might happen during communication with people from different cultural backgrounds since English is served as a foreign language in Indonesia. Hence, teaching culture in an EFL classroom is required in this case. This case study investigated senior high school EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of the notion of culture and its significance in English classrooms. Moreover, the source of culture and the cultural themes were additionally examined. Six English teachers and seventeen students around Central Java joined in this research. The researchers used close-ended questionnaires and interviews to collect the data. The findings revealed that the teachers and students had varied views towards the definition of culture. They also believed that culture was a crucial part of English teaching, and they preferred some themes such as daily life, music, values and beliefs to learn in their EFL classroom. The research implies that the cultural teaching aspects in EFL classrooms are integral to linguistic elements.

Keywords: *Culture; Culture Themes; EFL; Teaching Culture*

Introduction

Despite their familiarity with English, most Indonesians find it challenging to learn this foreign language. Moreover, according to the data obtained from EF EPI (Education First English Proficiency Index) in 2022 on English proficiency, Indonesia is ranked eighty-first out of one hundred and eleven countries. The survey also revealed that the lowest proficiency level was at eighteen to twenty years old or during the senior high school level. Toward this, in Indonesian, it is known that the English senior high school context emphasises grammar mastery and reading comprehension. It means that the teaching commonly focused on the linguistic aspects and ignored the need to help students be language-competent speakers in the language they learn. Whereas to be competent speakers who are successful in communication, it is insufficient for English students to be only competent in linguistics. They also need

to be aware of culturally appropriate behaviour. For this reason, language and culture have a strong relationship; they are bound by each other.

Brown (2007) stated, "Culture is the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterise a given group of people in a given time." Furthermore, He added that culture is a "way of life" where people live, share thoughts and feelings, and relate to others. In addition, in 2012, Ting-Toomey & Chung viewed culture as a system of learned meaning consisting of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meaning, and symbols transmitted from one generation to the next and shared through the interaction among the members of the community. Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990) characterised culture as aesthetic, sociological, semantic, and pragmatic. Then, culture is often distinguished into culture with capital C and small c (Peterson, 2004; Thu, 2010) or also known as "Big C and little c" (Choudhury, 2013; Kramsch, 2013; Sadeghi, 2017). Big C Culture represents history, literature or arts; small c culture refers to daily life, including habits, beliefs, customs or norms, and festivals. Furthermore, culture is also classified into three sources (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). The teachers' and students' own culture is called source culture. In this case, the source culture is Indonesian culture. The target culture belongs to the culture of English-speaking countries, such as England, the US, Canada, Australia, *etc.* International culture means a culture that is not a part of the source or target culture.

While language, according to Kramsch (1998), is used to express cultural reality, such as facts, concepts, or experiences, in order to share information with others whose perspectives are different. Language also represents the cultural reality of how they interact and creates meaningful and understandable communication with others, as such: by using verbal or non-verbal language to make others understand what they express. Besides that, language can be said as the symbol of cultural reality since language represents cultural value in the form of signs. These theories highlight that culture has a strong relation and an essential role in understanding and utilising a language, and *vice versa*. Liddicoat (2002) argued that culture is the way how people use language and a necessary part of how we live our lives.

Dealing with teaching and learning, language teaching is believed to be cultural teaching in the chorus (Gao, 2006). Bennett (1997) categorized someone to be "a fluent fool" if they learn a language with adequate knowledge in linguistics (grammar, vocabulary, *etc.*) but have a limited understanding of culture. To avoid it, Indonesian teachers and students must know the significance of incorporating culture in their foreign language teaching and learning process, such as EFL teaching. Baltaci and Tanis (2018) argued that through learning the target language culture, the possibility of communicating appropriately under the target language's culture was considered high since the comprehension of the target language culture was accomplished. Formerly, Seelye (1993) asserted that culture was an integral part of language in the context of communication. Besides, speakers and listeners should possess a similar level of cultural knowledge so that the messages are well-delivered in communication (Tosuncoglu, 2019). Considering the advantages of including culture in a language class, teachers are encouraged to prepare students with cultural comprehension. Therefore, once they interact with people from different backgrounds, cultural misunderstanding can be minimised.

It is obviously known that English teachers in the context of EFL settings need to introduce culture into their teaching (Giyatmi, 2019). First, it helps their students increase their cultural awareness of their own and other cultures. Then, it can help them avoid misunderstanding and culture shock during the English communication or interaction process. Teaching culture helps students avoid misunderstanding or misinterpreting during communication (Kuo & Lai, 2006; Choudhury & Kakati, 2017; Dabou *et al.*, 2021). Onalan (2005) also supported that teaching culture assists the students in having better communication. Finally, it builds the students' tolerance towards other cultures (Giyatmi, 2019).

Some research about the inclusion of culture in English teaching has been conducted in various contexts. In 2016, Nguyen, Harvey and Grant conducted a study to investigate EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam towards their beliefs about the role of culture in their classroom. The interview results showed that teaching culture was allocated in small numbers. They also said it was not language teachers' responsibility to teach culture; otherwise, language teachers should focus on language learning. In comparison, teaching culture was the responsibility of the teacher of culture. In a different year, Al-Amir (2017) investigated female teachers at the University of Jeddah about their perception towards teaching culture in EFL classrooms. The three-point Likert scale questionnaire revealed that most female teachers supported the teaching culture in their EFL classrooms. Ghavamnia (2020) studied Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and perspectives toward incorporating culture into their EFL teaching. In this case, the researchers aimed to investigate what they thought about culture, what cultural information they focused on in their class, and what obstacles they might face while incorporating culture in their class by distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews. Then, the study revealed that the teachers preferred incorporating culture into their classes. On the contrary, the obstacles like limited time allocation prevented teachers from teaching culture in their classes.

Some studies only investigated teachers' perspectives, either in- or pre-service teachers at the university level; little study has been carried out in the context of senior high school. Only a few were investigating senior high teachers' and students' thoughts and preferences towards cultures in their EFL classrooms. The preference towards the culture in their English classroom was worthy of investigation to know whether it aligned with the student's preferences. Then, it can be used for the teachers' following English teaching where culture needs to be included. Hence, in this study, the researchers conducted a case study research to investigate how several senior high school EFL teachers and students defined culture, what they thought about teaching culture in their EFL classrooms, and what cultural themes they preferred to include or learned in their EFL classrooms were investigated.

Research Methodology

In this case study, the researchers attempted to examine how both teachers and students, especially those who were in the senior high school level of education in Indonesia, defined cultures, how they viewed the importance of teaching culture in their English classroom, and which cultures and which cultural themes they wanted to bring in their English classroom.

Participants

The participants of this study were English teachers and students in Indonesia. The participants were from state senior high schools in Central Java. The researchers used purposive sampling to select the participants. The criteria for determining the participants in this study were (1) the teachers had at least three years of teaching experience at the senior high school level and (2) the students were in the age around eighteen years old, considering the EF EPI result about the least proficient age in learning English. At first, the researchers contacted the English teachers to ask if they consented to participate in this study with their students. Out of ten English teachers, only six senior high school English teachers and their students agreed to participate voluntarily in this study.

Research Instrument

To collect the data, the researchers used online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The researchers divided the questionnaires into two, a questionnaire for teachers and a questionnaire for students. In the questionnaires, some aspects related to the teaching and learning process of culture in English subjects from the senior high school teachers and students were inquired about. The aspects included in both the students' and teachers' questionnaires were the demographic information of the students (such as name, age and grade or teaching experience), their views related to the definition of

culture, and their views related to teaching culture and the cultural themes taught in an English subject. Some aspects of the questionnaire were adapted from Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017) and Merrouch (2006). The researchers also conducted an interview session with the participants in order to confirm the participant's responses to the questionnaires. For convenience, the interview questions were delivered through WhatsApp voice notes. Some interview questions were the definition of culture, the importance of teaching culture, and the practice of teaching culture and their preferences towards cultural themes and sources. All items and questions from the questionnaires and interview were delivered in *Bahasa Indonesia* to ease the understanding.

The Procedure of Data Collection

The participants were asked to fill out the close-ended questionnaire that had been arranged following the theories of teaching culture and distributed by the researchers in the form of Google Forms on an online communication platform, WhatsApp (groups). First, the researchers explained the purpose of this study to the participants. Each item in the questionnaire was presented with options they had to answer based on their perceptions. Six of ten participants of senior high school teachers were willingly filling out the questionnaire. Then, the researchers also asked permission from the teachers to invite their students to join this study. After permission, the researchers shared the link to complete the questionnaires with their students. There were seventeen students filling out the questionnaires.

The interview session was conducted after the participants had filled out the questionnaire forms. Four teachers and five students voluntarily participated in the interview session. The participants were contacted through WhatsApp numbers they put in the form. Most semi-structured interviews were carried out in ten to fifteen minutes. Only several questions were asked to the participants as confirmation related to the questionnaire they had filled out earlier. For ethical considerations, the participants' identities were abbreviated. The informed consent form has also been distributed to inform the participants that this research is used only for academic purposes.

Data Analysis

The data of this study were analysed using the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014). First, the data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The information from the semi-structured interviews was transcribed and translated into English from Indonesian. After the data from the questionnaire were presented in percentages and the data from the interview were categorised into some big themes during the data display step, the data were selected and categorised into more specific themes during the data condensation stage. Once the data were deemed sufficient, the researchers drew a conclusion from these data. Related to the cultural themes and sources in their class, the researchers coded the themes as follows:

Table 1. Sources of Culture (adapted from Cortazzi and Jin in 1999)

Cultures	Explanation
The Source Culture	The teachers' and students' own culture (<i>In this case, the Indonesian culture</i>)
The Target Culture	The culture where English is used as their native language (culture of English-speaking countries, such as England, the US, Australia, Etc.)
The International Culture	The culture that does not belong to the source or target culture.

Table 2. Codings of Cultural Topic (adapted from Chen in 2004)

Themes/ Topic	Explanation
Value and Belief	The ideas of what is good, right, fair, and just and what is valued in life.
Daily Life	The way an individual or community lives and works. Things that individuals do every day as a part of everyday life.
Food	Things that persons or creatures eat or drink.
Customs/ Norms	Norm is the standard of social behaviour typical of society—telling something, using words, talking about some topics or wearing clothes at the right time, place and occasion.
Music	Harmonious vocal or instrumental sounds that people sing or play.
History	All past events that still connected to someone or something. The events in the past related to a particular place or subject.
Geography	Natural features and places.
Economy	Productions and consumptions, industry and the wealth development of a country, an area or society.
Art	Creativity in expressing ideas or feelings in visual forms such as painting, drawing or sculpture.
Government/ Politics	Government: people who have responsibility for managing a country by conducting activities or manners that are used in controlling the country.

Findings

3.1. Teachers' and Students' Views of Culture and Teaching Culture

The Teachers' Definition of Culture

The findings and results of this study were extracted from the data analysis phase. The researchers categorised them into several themes as follows:

Table 3. Teachers' definition of culture

Definition of Culture	n = 6	
	Frequency	Frequency per cent
A set of behaviours, customs, rituals, patterned ways of living	3	50 %
A system of thoughts, assumptions, values and norms	2	33%
Literature and fine arts	1	17%

Table 3 above showed that most senior high school teachers viewed culture as a set of behaviours, customs, rituals, and patterned ways of living (50%). Then, culture as a system of thoughts, assumptions, values and norms is in second place with 33%. Only a teacher (17%) chose culture as literature and fine arts. The teachers' statements supported these findings during the interview sessions.

Most teachers agreed that culture refers to behaviours, customs, rituals, and ways of living done by people in a community, shared with others, and transmitted to the next generations. *“For me, culture is how people habitually do in their societies, for example, a tradition to wear Kebaya for Indonesian Hindu*

women during their rituals.” (TL). Another teacher supported the statement from TL by saying, “*In my view, culture is something related to the traditions and habits that have been stuck to the people's behaviours as the members of a cultural group, and it influences their ways of life.*”(TT)

While another teacher said that culture was defined as a system of values or norms, including a set of cultural community rules towards bad, good, fair, or what is valued in life, she then explained, “*Culture itself is not always about the product. I mean, it does not always relate to literature or arts. It is true. Nevertheless, it is more something I can say about values, morals, or ways of thinking. The way we think and value this life is based on what is believed good or bad in our societies.*” (TI). TA also tried to give his view about what culture was and said, “*Folklore or folktale is also culture. So, culture can be defined as arts or literary forms.*”

The results highlighted that English teachers had wide-ranging understandings related to the definition of culture. They were able to describe what culture is based on some definitions proposed by some theories. The teachers' understanding of the definition of culture varied based on their beliefs. To know if their students also captured the definition of culture, the researchers also asked the same question to their students about what they knew about culture. The results of the questionnaire for the students regarding the definition of culture are presented in Table 4.

Students' Definition of Culture

Table 4. Students' definition of culture

Definition of Culture	n = 17	
	Frequency	Frequency per cent
A set of behaviours, customs, rituals, patterned ways of living	7	41%
A system of thoughts, assumptions, values and norms	6	35%
Literature and fine arts	4	24%

There was no difference in the data from the teachers' and students' questionnaires related to the definition of culture. From Table 6 above, about 41% of students from the total of 17 students who filled out the questionnaire defined cultures as a set of behaviours, customs, rituals, and patterned ways of living. It was the most chosen definition of culture by the students. In the second rank, students chose a system of thoughts, assumptions, values and norms (35%). Moreover, the rest of the students, about 24%, students defined culture as literature and fine arts. Some students were also interviewed.

“I think culture is more like a tradition. I can say it is a tradition because it is similar to what Javanese people mostly do in my hometown. As a Javanese family, my family used to have Tedak Sinten when their children could walk for the first time. It was what happened to my younger sister at that time when she was nine months old. Also, this tradition is still held by mostly Javanese people nowadays and still come into other generation.” (SRS)

SRS perceived culture as a tradition that they held from generation to generation. She said that *Tedak Sinten* was a culture that Javanese people still do and hold. She explained that this tradition was still held in her family since it was what her ancestor did in the past. Then, it was passed down to the next generation like her family usually does till now.

While the interview with two other students was done, the result showed that culture was a norm. In this case, both said that culture was related to what is good and what is evil. One of these two students added that it might be a kind of unwritten rule that society dealt with it.

In the interview, SDS said:

“If I were asked what culture is, I could say that it is a rule to behave in our society; it is good or bad. As Javanese, my parents or my teachers always teach me to be polite to older people by using Krama during an interaction. If people see or hear me when I do not speak Javanese using Krama, they will think I am impolite. If I call someone by their name, it is also an impolite thing. It is different with people from Western countries who can call someone by their name, and their societies do not think it is impolite.

SUF then supported the statement that culture was a norm by giving another example. She said:

“Shaking hands when meeting other people or bowing when walking in front of older people are two examples of culture. It is a set of rules for behaving when we meet others. We should shake hands and bow. It is what common Indonesian do. It is a good habit we have. However, we can do this in another country, and they may have a different style.

Another student defined culture as art products such as sculpture and traditional musical instruments. She said, *“Indonesia has so many kinds of art products. Each ethnic or culture has its typical arts. One example is when you go to Bali, you will find lots of sculptures there. Another one is Sundanese has Angklung. That is what I defined as culture.*

3.2. Teachers’ and Students’ Opinions of the Importance of Teaching Culture

Teachers’ Opinion of the Importance of Teaching Culture

The teachers believed that culture was an integral part of language teaching, mainly when they taught English as a foreign language. The teachers understood that teaching culture was undistinguishable from language teaching. They needed to teach culture to their students since it was needed when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

All teachers agreed that incorporating culture into their teaching was needed and essential. Two out of six teachers reasoned that it was crucial since the context of culture was needed during communication and interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds. The other two teachers also stated that cultural knowledge helped them to foster their students' empathy and tolerance towards other people from other cultures. The other reasons were that they thought culture could motivate students to learn English, and culture was given to widen students' general knowledge.

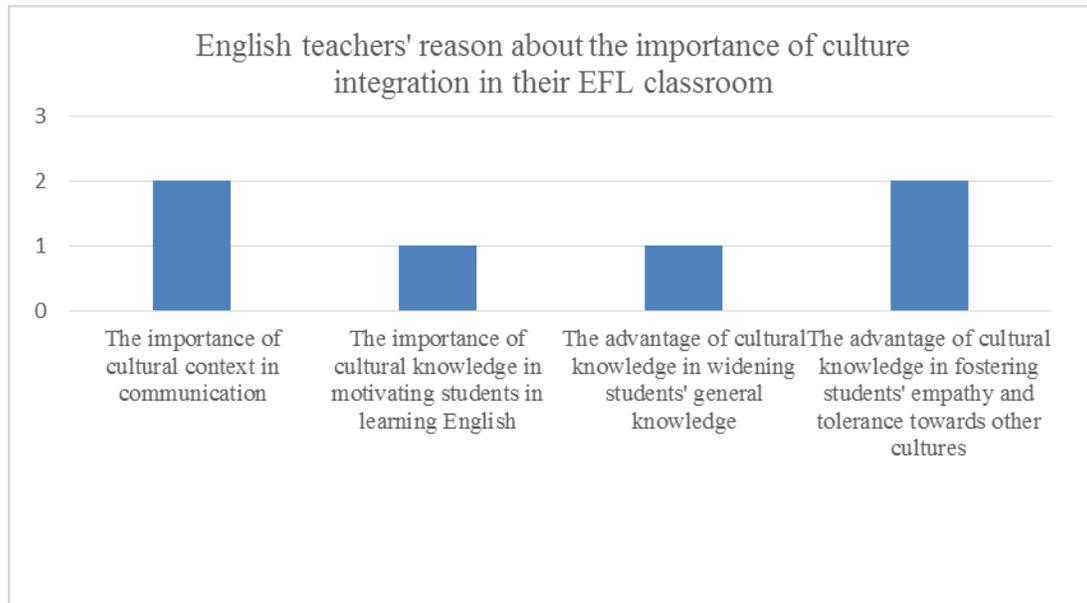


Figure 1. Teachers' Reasons for the Importance of Culture in EFL Classroom

TT argued that culture was essential in the teaching-learning process since giving cultural knowledge to the students could raise their empathy and tolerance towards other people from different backgrounds of culture. Also, it increased their familiarity with their own culture. TT briefly enlightened:

"Teaching culture is needed for students since it helps them to be more familiar or feel comfortable with their own culture. While for other cultures, it develops students' tolerance and tells them that cultural differences exist. We have to be respectful of those differences. Additionally, knowing other cultures and their differences deepens our own culture, and we filter which cultures that appropriate to ours. It is a difficult job for an English teacher, but I love seeing my students are more empathic and tolerant to others."

Another teacher also strengthened the statement above by telling another reason why teaching culture was essential to be applied in English classrooms as it gave students a context of the target language. Context was needed in their communication. By giving context, students could experience any cultural situation and assist them in avoiding misunderstanding. TI reasoned:

"Why teaching culture is important is that I need to give cultural context in my language classroom. Giving context related to culture helps students understand any cultural situation they can experience. For example, we know that native speakers mostly use idioms. I give my students examples to avoid miscommunication or culture shock when communicating with foreigners. It seems quite hard to do, but I try my best since I do want my students not only succeed in their linguistic skills but in their communication as well."

Although some teachers thought it was not easy to teach culture, they were still willing to teach culture in their English classes. They believed that teaching culture helped their students communicate with others by experiencing them with cultural context. In addition, it helps the students to be more aware of the differences. Thus, they could be more respectful to others. Their students also uttered the importance of teaching culture. Their opinions were stated as follows.

Students' Opinion of the Importance of Teaching Culture

The senior high school students also considered the importance of teaching culture in EFL classrooms. Students felt that culture was essential to learn as they believed it was a way to understand the language they learned. Giving it an example, students assumed that they constantly faced difficulties and misunderstandings during their communication or interaction with people from different cultures. It might be an effect of the lack of information or knowledge of culture with the people they interacted with.

"I have international friends I met when I played games or chatted from any communication platform using English, but I used to have misunderstandings. I think it was because we have different cultural backgrounds. As an example, we always made a joke or had justification towards each other, but then I could not understand or got hurt. Therefore, I need my English teachers to teach culture since it helps me communicate with my international friends. It will be more applicable for real interaction rather than learning grammar." (SST)

Another student opined:

"We know that there are many differences between our own and other cultures. We have different habits, we have different points of view, and we have different norms. Those differences can be good or bad. So, teaching culture is vital to prevent us from following nasty or negative cultures. Understanding our cultures without losing our own culture." (SVD)

Those statements during the interview highlighted that the teachers and the students mostly believed that teaching culture was crucial in the English classroom. By employing culture in their teaching and learning process, they thought that it helped them in communication and getting to know the cultures of others.

3.3. Teachers' and Students' Preferences of Culture Integration

Teachers' Preferences for Culture Integration

Table 5. Prioritised culture themes based on teachers' preferences

Themes of Culture	n = 6	
	Frequency	Frequency per cent
Daily life and routines	4	66%
Customs/ norms	1	17%
Beliefs and values	1	17%

Regarding the preferences of cultural topics/themes teachers wanted to teach in their EFL classrooms, they were asked to rank the most preferred cultural themes. The results of the questionnaires showed that there were three dominant cultural themes. As mentioned in Table 5, with a percentage of 66%, daily life and routines were the most preferred. Then, about 17% of teachers chose the cultural themes of beliefs and values they wanted to teach in their English classroom. Still, with a percentage of 17%, history was also the third theme they preferred to introduce to their English students.

Students' Preferences for Culture Integration

Table 6. Prioritised culture themes based on students' preferences (Questionnaires)

Themes of Culture	n = 17	
	Frequency	Frequency per cent
Daily life and routines	6	35%
Music	4	23%
Beliefs and values	2	12%

From the students' side, similar to the teachers' preference, most students chose the themes of daily life and routines with a percentage of 35%. Then, it was followed by music themes, about 23%. In third place, the most preferred theme is the theme of beliefs and values (12%). The rest five students (30%) chose customs/ norms, food, history, geography, and economy themes.

Regarding the preference between senior high school teachers and students in cultural themes to teach and learn in their English class, the English teachers and students were asked to rank the cultural themes they wanted in their classroom. From the questionnaire results in Tables 5 and 6, the teachers and the students mostly had similarities in the chosen themes they wanted to learn in their English classroom. As mentioned before, the first rank was themes of daily life and routines. In the second rank, some teachers chose the theme of customs/norms, while their students chose the theme of music as what they preferred to learn. For the third prioritised cultural theme, again, they had the same choices. Both chose "beliefs and values" themes.

The teachers were asked related to the reasons why they wanted to have those themes to be applied in their English classroom. TT said, *"I think my students will be excited over the daily life topic. They can differentiate between what other people from different cultural backgrounds do in their normal life, whether or not it differs from their daily life"*. She told the researchers that the daily life themes attracted their students to the learning culture in their EFL classroom. At the same time, TI argued why she chose themes of values and beliefs to be taught in her classroom since she wanted her students to have good characters. TI said, *"Since I expect my students to have a good and critical character, I teach culture about values and beliefs. Telling them which is good or bad so they can behave appropriately."*

Another teacher, TA, uttered his opinion towards the preference of cultural themes. He said that his students sometimes were easy to get bored.

For this reason, he said that giving a long explanation about cultural differences makes his students unmotivated. Therefore, he believed that experiencing students with music themes in learning culture was one of the ways. He said, *"When I teach English in the class, I want my students to be energised. Therefore, sometimes I made the class fun by playing or providing them with any genre of music. From that music, I can teach grammar and culture to my students."*

From these themes or topics of culture, the researchers also asked their English teachers which culture they wanted to have in their classroom, *source culture*, *target culture* or *international culture*. Source culture is defined as someone's own culture, in this case, Indonesian culture. Target culture refers to English native speakers' culture. At the same time, international culture does not belong to both source and target cultures. Two teachers gave their opinion on this matter.

"I do not focus on the culture only from the target language. I try to give examples or knowledge about culture as far as I know, from our culture, native-speaker culture, or maybe cultures from other countries. If we have any capabilities or knowledge about culture, why we do not share it with our"

students. It helps them think globally, which I also want from my students. It also makes them not think their own culture is the best. As I said, they know other cultures to make them more understand theirs." (TT)

Another teacher supported the statement above. He said:

"I try to experience my students with the target language's culture, but I also want them to know cultures from any country and familiarise themselves with their own culture. I can say that I want them to understand all cultures, but mainly from the target language." (TA)

Those two teachers claimed they wanted to incorporate culture in their English classroom without focusing on one culture. They wanted their students to understand cultures mainly from target, their own, and international cultures. Their purpose was to give their students a global perspective without forgetting their culture.

Discussion

The researchers' findings during her study show that culture cannot be separated from language learning. From three research questions, it can be concluded that (1) Senior high school English teachers and students possessed various views about culture as traditions or customs, ways of living; values and norms; also arts and literature; (2) Senior high school English teachers were willing to teach culture in their classroom since it could help their students to communicate and raise tolerance and empathy; (3) Students thought that culture was needed to learn since it helped them in communication or interaction using English, as through learning culture they could minimise the misunderstanding and familiarised themselves with their own culture.; (4) Teachers and students had similar thoughts towards what cultural themes they wanted to teach and learn, such as daily life, values and norms, and music; (5) Teachers incorporated cultures in their teaching, not only focusing on the target culture but also on the source and international cultures.

There is no precise definition of culture. Dabou et al. (2021) said, *"Defining culture is never clear-cut"*. It could happen since culture is a complex system. Therefore, people define culture based on how they perceive those conceptions. The same thing also happened in the case of English teachers and students of senior high school. They said defining culture was complex (Bayyurt, 2006), so there would be various definitions of culture based on how they perceived it. According to English senior high school teachers' and students' definitions of culture, they mostly perceived culture as a set of behaviour such as traditions or customs/habits and thoughts such as values or norms that ruled them in their society. In addition, a small number of teachers and students defined cultures as arts and literature. Shiraev & Levey (2004) supported these definitions of culture. The culture was a system in a given society in which the members learned about knowledge, norms, values, beliefs, language, art, customs, habits and skills. The above definitions of culture by students and teachers focus on the sociological and aesthetic sense proposed by Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi (1990). The sociological refers to traditions, living traditions, and values. The aesthetic sense refers to literature, fiction or arts.

Furthermore, the importance of teaching culture has been delivered by both teachers and students. From the teachers' side, they believed that teaching culture to the students was essential in helping their students to have better communication (Onalan, 2005) and nurture tolerance and empathy towards others from different cultural backgrounds. It also to gives context to their teaching and attracts their students' interest (Byram et al., 1991). At the same time, their students supported their teachers and believed that culture was needed since it helped them avoid misunderstanding or misinterpreting during communication (Kuo & Lai, 2006; Choudhury & Kakati, 2017; Dabou et al., 2021). Both believed that culture has significance in communication using English. Additionally, culture assisted the students in becoming

more familiar with their culture. Byram (1997), as cited by Choudhury (2013), not only the target language culture, teachers and students of English also need to be aware of their own culture during the culture learning process. The comparison of their own and target cultures is hoped not to focus since it will affect the students to have an us-them/binary view rather than understand similarities and differences (Holliday, 2009).

Concerning the preferred culture themes, it is clearly stated that teachers and students at least had two similarities in the prioritised cultural themes, daily life and value/ beliefs themes. The first rank of the preferred cultural themes was daily life. Sadeghi & Sepahi (2018) had the same result related to the first rank of cultural themes. In their research, the daily life theme was also ranked first. The teachers opined that by telling culture related to daily life, students could familiarise how and what other cultures do in their everyday life. It aided them to be ready for real interaction as Wintergest & McVeigh (2010) said that effective interaction among cross-cultural people can be achieved through understanding their daily life, living styles and customs. In addition, music was also one of the preferred cultures of the students. Understanding music, it is believed it can help students to have cultural awareness. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) argued that awareness towards culture could come from a direct experience of visiting culture or an indirect experience such as films, music or literature.

In summary, the present study offers new insight into how teachers and students define cultures and its significances towards their English classrooms. First, the participants described varied definitions of culture. They associated cultures with behaviours (tradition and habits or customs), mental processes (values, morals, and ways of thinking), and the least was products (kinds of literature and arts). In defining culture, only a few participants associated language with culture, and it was only about politeness (how to use language adequately based on the cultures). Second, the teachers and students were aware of the importance of addressing culture in their English classroom even though it was limited in developing cultural knowledge and attitude, which helped them respect and communicate with people from different cultures. It was said that teachers did not specify which cultures they wanted to introduce to the students. However, during the interview, they reflected on the difference between local and target cultures. Third, teachers and students similarly chose the themes of culture they need to bring to their class. The themes came only from small c culture, daily life and beliefs. They ignored other critical cultural themes.

The present study's findings align with the earlier studies by Nguyen, Harvey and Grant (2016) and Ghavamnia (2020). It was found that culture is not yet treated as a core element in English language classrooms. In this study, the participants incorporated culture into the English classroom and emphasised only giving context to their language teaching. Both teachers and students still believed that language skill is the most crucial aspect of the English classroom. This might be because the final National Examination is the ultimate goal in senior high school education. These findings cannot be generalised and represent the perception and preferences of all senior high school English teachers and students in Indonesia since the researchers conducted this study on a small scale with few participants. Therefore, future studies on culture teaching in EFL classrooms, especially in senior high schools, need to be conducted—the future study to be conducted on a larger scale or in a different country or context.

Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate senior high school English teachers and their students' voices towards teaching culture in EFL classrooms. The definitions of culture voiced by EFL teachers and students indicate they understand the notion of culture. The teachers and students of English also believed that understanding culture can help them communicate better, develop their tolerance and empathy, prevent misunderstanding, and be familiar with their own culture. There are many ways to insert culture into their English teaching; one way is by providing the students with cultural themes. At this point,

teachers should understand what cultural themes they can apply in their class, meeting the themes preferred by the students. In this research, the teachers and students had similarities in choosing the most preferred cultural themes.

In conclusion, culture is an intricate system to be defined. Even so, regarding EFL teaching, people still consider it to be incorporated. Incorporating culture in teaching learning has many positive impacts, mainly in communication. The teachers can teach many cultural themes to experience their students with various cultures. Grounded on the results of this research, the researchers hope there will be more research related to teaching culture in the future. Future research can examine some problems related to teaching culture or the strategies that can be used in teaching culture in EFL classrooms. Implementing teaching culture to young learners is also encouraged to be investigated.

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