

Incorporating culture-related activities in foreign language teaching

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The importance of gaining communicative competence through language learning has long been widely accepted by the language teaching profession in Europe. The incorporation of elements of the target language culture(s) in foreign language instruction has also received more attention in the region in recent years. Many professionals agree that grammatical and lexical competence alone will not help non-native speakers of English to successfully socialize, negotiate or complain in the foreign language. On the other hand, communicative competence alone will not necessarily help native or non-native speakers of English or any other language to successfully communicate with one another either. However, the status of intercultural communicative competence in language education, as described by such significant guidelines as the Common European Framework, has not been extensively researched yet (see Lázár, 2003 and Sercu, 2005 and more about research in this area in **Theoretical Background**). Therefore, at the outset of this research project it was important to find out how much and what kind of cultural competence is transmitted through classes of English. Is culture-teaching an integral part of the English as a foreign language curriculum or is it “the neglected element” in the classroom (Holló and Lázár 2000a)? A questionnaire study presented here is an attempt to investigate this issue. At the same time, it serves as a basis for the follow-up qualitative analysis of case studies.

The detailed description of the research methods of the statistical study (Section 1) is followed by the presentation of the results of the statistical analysis (Section 2) and the discussion of what the figures probably mean for language education (Section 3). Interviews with five language teachers, also focusing on the role of culture-related activities in the English lesson, are presented and analyzed (Sections 4 and 5) before an answer to the two research questions of this article is attempted (Section 6) on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

1 Research methods used in the statistical study

The following sections give a detailed description of the research methodology used to find answers to the first two research questions of the present study:

1. How often and in what ways do teachers incorporate culture-related activities in EFL teaching?
2. What factors does the frequency of culture-related activities depend on?

The first section of the description of research methods used in the statistical study establishes the context and explains the rationale behind the applied approach (1.1). This leads to the research questions of the statistical study itself (1.2), a description of the population,

including the applied selection procedures (1.3), and a detailed explanation of the research tool itself (1.4). Issues of reliability and validity are addressed (1.5) and the methods of analysis are explained (1.6) before the results are presented in Section 2 and discussed and evaluated in Section 3.

The qualitative analysis of case studies of five Hungarian secondary school teachers of English described in the second part of this article was also meant to help answer research questions 1 and 2 of the present study. The research methods applied in the set of case studies are described in Section 4.

1.1 Context and rationale for the statistical study

In order for this study to shed light on how much and what type of cultural content English lessons generally have, a statistical analysis of a large sample of questionnaires had to be carried out. The research presented in this article originated from a workshop held at the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz in 1999. As a follow up to this workshop our team of four educators-researchers from four different countries decided to study the intercultural dimension in EFL education. Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich (Poland), Rafn Kjartansson (Iceland), and Liljana Skopinskaja (Estonia) gave their expert opinion to help revise my original questionnaire, and they carried out data collection in their home countries. The data analysis for all four countries and the discussion and evaluation of the results were done by the author of this article.

1.2 The research questions of the statistical study

The aim of this quantitative study was to find out what elements of culture EFL teachers incorporate in their language lessons and how often they do this in the four examined European countries. It was also examined whether this frequency was influenced by the teachers' former training and their immersion in foreign cultures. Accordingly, the following four research questions were formulated:

1. How often do teachers of English do activities related to the civilization of the target-cultures in their EFL classes?
2. How often do teachers of English do little 'c' culture-related activities in their EFL classes?
3. Does the frequency of culture-related activities depend on how much time the teacher has spent abroad?

4. Does the frequency of culture-related activities depend on the teacher's former cultural awareness or intercultural communication training?

With regard to the first two research questions, I hypothesized that teachers would not often spend class time with activities on any elements of culture, but that they would incorporate civilization-related activities a little more often than tasks focusing on little 'c' culture. This hypothesis was based on the results of the pilot study and previous experience with pre- and in-service teachers. I also assumed that training and amount of time spent abroad will positively influence the frequency of all culture-related activities. On the other hand, no predictions were made about differences between the impact of training and the impact of time spent abroad.

1.3 Data collection

In the pilot stage of the research project, the focus was only on the presence of activities relating to the civilization of English speaking countries in the English classroom in Estonia, Hungary and Poland. The pilot-study, the results of which were published in Poland, was the first phase of the quantitative study (Aleksandrowicz-Pedich, Lázár, and Skopinskaja, 2000). Subsequently, the enlarged and revised questionnaire (see validation procedure in 1.5) was filled in by 393 English teachers in four European countries: Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and Poland. Therefore, the statistical analysis of the revised questionnaires filled in by this large sample of teachers in the year 2000 allowed the author to map out the current status of culture teaching in the English language classroom.

1.4 The research tool: a questionnaire

The definitions of culture given by Kramersch (1993), Byram (1997), Fantini (2000), Holló and Lázár (2000b) and many other language teaching professionals (see **Theoretical Background**) all seem to emphasize that culture has multiple components and therefore numerous implications for classroom use. The definition of culture used during the preparation of the questionnaire and all through this research project, however, divides culture into two well-known categories: big 'C' Culture (civilization) and little 'c' culture (behavior, practices, values and discourse structures) following Halverson's classification (1985). The questionnaire was based on this simple division because the aim was to find out whether language teachers spend class time with the civilization elements of culture that would deepen their students' background knowledge, and whether they raise the students' awareness of all

the other facets of culture that would help them to better communicate in intercultural settings.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was divided into three sections and took approximately 15 minutes to fill in. Table 1 shows how the questionnaire was divided into three sections.

Section 1	6 questions about the frequency of big ‘C’ culture-related activities in the English lesson
Section 2	7 questions about the frequency of little ‘c’ culture-related activities in the English lesson
Section 3	5 sets of questions about country focus, level and age of students, coursebooks, the respondents’ age, qualification, sex, place of residence, mother tongue, stay abroad, previous cultural training

Table 1 The structure of the questionnaire

The first section consisted of questions where respondents were asked to rate the frequency of big ‘C’ culture-oriented activities in their lessons. Frequency was measured by the adverbs ‘never’, ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘often,’ and the questions concerned types of activities that usually entail teaching about the civilization of the target cultures. The option ‘often’ was defined in the questionnaire as every third class or more often. The activities listed in this section were chosen on the basis of what teachers had told the author about their favorite cultural activities in previous pilot interviews as well as on an analysis of the topics covered in some currently used coursebooks.

Section 2 of the questionnaire consisted of seven questions trying to elicit whether teachers ‘always,’ ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ treat some of the most important components of little ‘c’ culture in their English classes. Only three options were given for frequency in this section of the questionnaire because it is believed that these topics do not necessarily have to be covered in detail many times during a course, but it is considered important to discuss them at least once with each group of students. This section included questions on functions, nonverbal communication, culture shock and stereotypes among others. Although the seven items in this section are not exhaustive, the author believes that they are good representatives of some of the most important discussion topics that help develop students’ cultural awareness

and intercultural communicative competence. In addition, when talking about some of these topics, it is practically inevitable to develop at least some of the skills and attitudes necessary for intercultural competence.

In section 3 of the questionnaire the aim was to elicit information about which countries are given the most attention in culture-related activities, which coursebooks are used, and what is the teachers' opinion about their usefulness for teaching the components of culture listed in sections 1 and 2 of the questionnaire. Finally, there were questions about the respondents' age, qualification, sex, residence, mother tongue, training, and experience abroad.

The questionnaire was written in English to ensure that responses filled in by English teachers in Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and Poland can be compared.

1.5 Population and selection procedures

The respondents were teachers of English in public education at primary, secondary or tertiary level. Altogether 393 questionnaires were collected - 100 from Estonia, 106 from Hungary, 86 from Iceland and 101 from Poland. Some of the questionnaires were given out to teachers personally by the team. Subsequently colleagues and acquaintances were asked to take the rest of the questionnaires to their own schools and have them filled in by as many colleagues as possible. This way not only was the return rate relatively high, but we ensured that a larger percentage of those teachers who do not care about teaching culture, and would not have responded to a mailed questionnaire, did fill it in and send it back to us because it was for the colleague of a colleague. In this sense, it was convenience sampling. At the same time, even if it was beyond the scope of this project to survey what is officially called a representative sample of the population, we aimed at a varied sample in terms of age, qualifications, place of residence, sex, mother tongue, experience abroad and former cultural training.

Although the respondents represented a variety of age groups, qualifications, professional experience and attitudes to culture-teaching in all of the four countries, there were some differences in the composition of the samples. For example, while in Hungary and in Estonia, 37% and 36.8% of the respondents were under 30 years of age respectively, in Poland this figure was 71% while in Iceland only 9%. Concerning qualifications, 94% of the participating Estonian teachers had a B.A. or B.Ed. degree and only 6% had the equivalent of an M.A. or an M.Ed. degree. In the remaining three countries the proportion of teachers with an M.A. or an M.Ed. degree was much higher. As for the gender of the respondents, only 4%

of the Estonian teachers were male, while 44% of the participating Icelandic teachers were men (17% in Hungary, 14% in Poland). Another major difference was detected between the proportions of those who had spent a month or more abroad: 84% of the Icelandic teachers had lived abroad for at least a month, while only 44% of the participating Estonian teachers had had the chance to spend a longer period in a foreign country. In this category, Hungarian teachers participating in the study came right after Iceland, with 73% of them having lived abroad for at least a month, while this proportion was 63% among the Polish teachers. There were no significant differences between the sampled populations as regards the proportion of native speaker teachers, the types of settlement they came from, and the number of previous cultural awareness course or intercultural communication training workshops they had attended. Table 2 shows the categories where the most significant differences occurred between the participants according to their country of residence.

	Estonia N=100	Hungary N=106	Iceland N=86	Poland N=101	Total N=393
Aged: between 20-30 years	37%	36.8%	9.3%	71.3%	39.7%
Qualification: B.A. or B.Ed.	94%	49.1%	62.8%	64.4%	67.4%
Residence: in a city	55%	78.3%	43%	69%	62.3%
Sex: Female	96%	83%	48%	86%	79.6%
Non-native speaker of L2	99%	93.4%	87.2%	96%	94.1%
Has stayed abroad for a month or longer	44%	73.6%	83.7%	63.3%	63.3%
Has had some cultural training	52%	68.9%	62.8%	67%	62.8%

Table 2 Characteristics of the population by country

1.6 Validity and reliability

The first version of the questionnaire was preceded by pilot interviews to help decide about the activities to be listed in the two sections. Two experts' opinion had been requested before the first version of the questionnaire was sent out to respondents. That first version of the present questionnaire had been piloted in three countries before it was revised and refined. The new enlarged version was tested and retested with a group of ten teachers in Hungary with a 5-week interval. The retesting showed that 96% of the data were stable. However, as with all questionnaires there may be some threats to validity because subject expectancy probably resulted in teachers' answering more positively than their actual classroom practice would normally have allowed.

1.7 Data analysis

The data were recorded, processed and analyzed with SPSS for Windows (SPSS, 1989-2003). Descriptive statistics were used to establish frequencies of activities with a cultural focus in the EFL classroom. Cross-tabulations with chi-square analysis were used to see whether there is a statistically significant difference in the use of cultural activities between those who had participated in some type of cultural awareness or intercultural communication training prior to filling in the questionnaire and those who had not. Respondents who had spent at least a month abroad were similarly compared to those who had not. The significance level was set at 0.05.

To counter the effects of subject expectancy, only the categories 'often' and 'always' were used in the cross-tabulations. The rationale behind this decision is that, for example, when respondents had to decide whether they discuss *culture shock* with their classes, they might have marked 'sometimes' even if they had only done this once and only with one class. The category 'sometimes' might have attracted all the checks that would have gone to the categories 'rarely', 'practically never' and 'I don't know' if those had appeared on the questionnaire. However, it is believed that respondents who claimed that they 'always' made sure to discuss *culture shock*, *negative stereotyping*, *non-verbal communication* or any of the other items listed in section 2 of the questionnaire, more certainly did so in the great majority of their classes. Therefore, when analyzing the data of the second section of the questionnaire, the author decided to primarily focus on the proportions of those respondents who checked the option 'always' in response to the questions about little 'c' culture-related activities. The categories of 'sometimes' and 'never' were merged under the label 'rarely or never.' For

similar reasons, in the analysis of the responses to the first section of the questionnaire focusing on big 'C' culture-related activities, the cross-tabulations with chi-square analysis examine those who claimed that they 'often' do these activities.

Differences between the responses given according to the respondents' country of origin are not analyzed in this study. The reasons for this decision are that, on the one hand, I was not interested as much in the differences between countries as in the general profile of a European English teacher. Furthermore, a sample of approximately 100 questionnaires per country would have been too small for statistical analysis, especially for cross-tabulations.

2 Results of the statistical study

The results of the statistical analysis are presented according to the frequency of civilization-related activities (2.1), the frequency of little 'c' culture-related activities (2.2), the effects of a longer stay abroad on the frequency of culture-related activities (2.3), the impact of previous training on the frequency of culture-related activities (2.4), the country focus of the participants' English lessons and their evaluation of the coursebooks they use (2.5). Finally, the answers to the research questions of the questionnaire study are summarized in Section 3.

2.1 Frequency of civilization-related activities in the English lesson

Section 1 of the questionnaire investigated how often teachers do culture-related activities that may provide students with knowledge about the target countries' civilizations and perhaps also encourage openness towards and curiosity about other cultures in general. The descriptive statistics of these results are summed up in Table 3.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
Discussions on cultural differences (social habits...)	2 0.5 %	50 12.8 %	232 59.2 %	108 27.6 %	392 100 %
Videos or photos of famous sights and people	20 5.1 %	107 27.2 %	211 53.7 %	55 14.0 %	393 100 %
Songs with information on singer and lyrics	34 8.7 %	158 40.3 %	143 36.2 %	58 14.8 %	393 100 %
Art (pictures of paintings and sculptures)	90 23.0 %	197 50.3 %	96 24.2 %	10 2.6 %	393 100 %
Current events (social or political issues)	32 8.2 %	127 32.1 %	163 41.6 %	71 18.1 %	393 100 %
Literature (short stories, poems or other works)	17 4.3 %	87 22.2 %	160 40.6 %	129 32.9 %	393 100 %

Table 3 Frequency of civilization-related activities in the English lesson

It can be seen in Table 3 that the two most popular activities center around *discussions on cultural differences* and the use of *literature*. While *discussions on cultural differences* (social habits, values, lifestyles, etc.) are ‘often’ conducted by 27.6% and ‘sometimes’ by 59.2% of the respondents, and activities based on *literature* are often done by 32.9% and ‘sometimes’ by 40.6% of the teachers, the remaining four activities seem to be far less popular. Looking at the same proportions from the other end of the frequency scale, it can be seen that 13.3% of the respondents ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ engage in *discussions about cultural differences*, 52.3% ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ use *videos or photos of famous sights and people* from the target cultures, 49% ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ use *songs*, 73.3% ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ talk about *art*, 40.3% ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ discuss *current issues* relevant in the target cultures, and 26.5% ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ use *literature* in their English lessons. It is interesting to note that the most frequently chosen answer to *discussions about cultural differences*, *videos or photos of famous sights and people*, *current events* and *literature* was the response ‘sometimes,’ meaning that the majority of teachers only do even these fairly popular activities two or three times in a term or course.

2.2 Frequency of little ‘c’ culture-related activities in the English lesson

Section 2 of the questionnaire intended to find out how often teachers do culture-related activities that may teach students some of the little ‘c’ cultural background knowledge

and develop some of the skills and attitudes that help construct intercultural communicative competence. The results are summed up in Table 4.

	Never	Sometimes	Always	Total
Discussions on appropriate conversation topics	53 13.5%	267 67.9%	71 18.1%	391 100 %
Rituals of greeting and leave-taking	17 4.3%	161 40.8%	214 54.6%	392 100 %
Appropriate ways of complaining/criticizing	21 5.4%	204 52.0%	167 42.3%	392 100 %
Expressing gratitude non-verbally	148 37.8%	184 46.7%	61 15.6%	393 100 %
Differences in personal space	144 36.5%	178 45.4%	70 17.9%	392 100 %
Dangers of negative stereotyping	44 11.2%	225 57.1%	124 31.6%	393 100 %
Discussions on culture shock	83 21.2%	232 58.9%	78 19.9%	393 100 %

Table 4 Frequency of little ‘c’ culture-related activities in the English lesson

While the speech acts of *greetings* and *complaints* are ‘always’ discussed by 54.6% and 42.3% of the respondents respectively with each class of language learners, the remaining five activities receive very little attention in the English-language classroom. Only 18.1% of the teachers responded that they ‘always’ discussed *appropriate conversation topics* with every group, 15.6% ‘always’ talk about *nonverbal communication*, 17.9% ‘always’ mention differences in *personal space* and only 19.9% of the respondents make sure they tell their students about *culture shock*. Interestingly, discussing the *dangers of negative stereotyping* comes up slightly more often: 31.6% of the teachers marked the answer ‘always.’ However, except for the *rituals of greeting and leave-taking*, by far the most popular answer in this section was the neutral ‘sometimes’ option.

If we accept that teachers who responded by marking the answer ‘sometimes’ in this section include those who would have marked the categories ‘rarely,’ ‘practically never’ and ‘I don’t know’ if those had appeared on the questionnaire, we can conclude that the likelihood of students being exposed to these topics in their English lessons is very small. 81.4% of the respondents ‘sometimes’ (perhaps once or twice during a course, but also meaning ‘rarely’

and ‘practically never’) or simply ‘never’ (not once in a course) call students’ attention to the differences in *appropriate conversation topics* between people coming from different cultures. 44.1% of the respondents ‘sometimes’ (also meaning ‘rarely’ and ‘practically never’) or ‘never’ discuss differences in *greeting and leave-taking*. 57.4% of the participating teachers ‘sometimes’ (also meaning ‘rarely’ and ‘practically never’) or ‘never’ point out the *appropriate ways of complaining and criticizing* in the target cultures. 84.5% of the respondents ‘sometimes’ (‘rarely’ and ‘practically never’) or simply ‘never’ teach the students how to *express gratitude non-verbally* in the target cultures. 81.9% of the respondents ‘sometimes’ (or ‘rarely’ and ‘practically never’) or ‘never’ talk about *differences in personal space*. 68.3% of the teachers ‘sometimes’ (also meaning ‘rarely’ and ‘practically never’) or ‘never’ bring up the topic of *negative stereotyping*. Finally, 80.2% of the respondents ‘sometimes’ (also meaning ‘rarely’ and ‘practically never’) or ‘never’ tell their students about *culture shock*.

2.3 The effects of a longer stay abroad on the frequency of cultural activities

The results of the frequency analysis were cross-tabulated with the independent variable of length of stay abroad. It was examined whether the teachers in the study who had spent a month or more abroad (63.2%) did the listed activities any more often than those who had not had the chance to live abroad (36.8%). There were no statistically significant differences between people who had stayed abroad for a month or longer and those who had not in the frequency of the following activities: *videos or photos, songs, art, literature, discussion topics, greetings, complaints, nonverbal communication, and personal space*. As for the use of *videos and photos* teachers who had spent a longer time abroad and those who had not did not differ ($\chi=2.503$; $p=0.475$). As regards the use of *songs*, the two categories of people did not differ significantly ($\chi=1.843$; $p=0.606$). *Art* was the least favored topic, but the differences are not significant here either ($\chi=5.198$; $p=0.158$). Although *literature* seems to be quite popular with teachers, those who had spent a longer time abroad and those who had not did not differ significantly ($\chi=5.392$; $p=0.145$). There was no significant difference in the frequency of covering *appropriate discussion topics* either ($\chi=3.018$; $p=0.389$). Although *greetings* and *complaints* seem to be a little more frequently discussed by teachers, the differences between the two categories of teachers were statistically not significant ($\chi=4.032$; $p=0.258$ and $\chi=5.847$; $p=0.119$). It also seems from this analysis that a longer stay abroad

does not influence the class time spent with discussing issues of *nonverbal communication* and *personal space* either ($\chi=5.297$; $p=0.071$ and $\chi=3.851$; $p=0.278$).

However, there were statistically significant differences between respondents in the frequency of the following four activities: *discussions about cultural differences*, *current events*, *negative stereotypes*, and *culture shock*. Among the teachers who had spent a longer period of time abroad, nearly twice as many discuss *cultural differences* and *current events* as among the teachers who had not stayed abroad for a month or longer. Table 5 shows all the statistically significant differences in the frequency of these four activities in the English classroom. *Discussions on cultural differences* and *current events* are twice as likely to ‘often’ take place in the classrooms of teachers who have spent at least a month abroad. *Stereotypes* also come up more often, but the difference is even larger when it comes to discussing *culture shock* (see Diagrams 1a and 1b for a visual representation of the proportion of teachers who often/always do the activities according to length of previous stay abroad).

	Teachers who have not spent a month or more abroad (count, expected, raw %, std. residual)*				Teachers who have spent a month or more abroad (count, expected, raw %, std. residual)*			
	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often
Discussions on cultural differences (social habits, values, lifestyles, etc.) ($\chi=18.406$; $p<0.01$)	0 0.7 0% -0.9	28 18.4 19.4% 2.2	91 85.1 63.2% 0.6	25 39.8 17,36% -2.3	2 1.3 0.8% 0.7	22 31.6 8.9% 0.7	140 145.9 56.7% -0.5	83 68.2 33,60% 1.8
Current events (social or political issues) ($\chi=14.008$; $p=0.003$)	15 11.8 10.4% 0.9	59 46.3 41% 1.9	54 59.9 37.5% -0.8	16 26.1 11,11% -2.0	17 20.2 6.9% -0.7	67 79.7 27.0% -1.4	109 103.1 44.0% 1.5	55 44.9 22,18% 1.5
	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always		
Dangers of negative stereotyping ($\chi=6.876$; $p=0.032$)	19 16.2 13.2% 0.7	91 82.3 63.2% 1.0	34 45.6 23,61% -1.7	25 27.8 10.1% -0.5	133 141.7 53.6% -0.7	90 78.4 36,29% 1.3		
Discussions about culture shock ($\chi=20.044$; $p<0.00$)	43 30.5 29.9% 2.3	87 84.9 60.4% 0.2	14 28.7 9,72% -2.7	40 52.5 16.1% -1.7	144 146.1 58.1% -0.2	64 49.3 25,81% 2.1		

Table 5 The effects of a long stay abroad on the frequency of cultural activities.

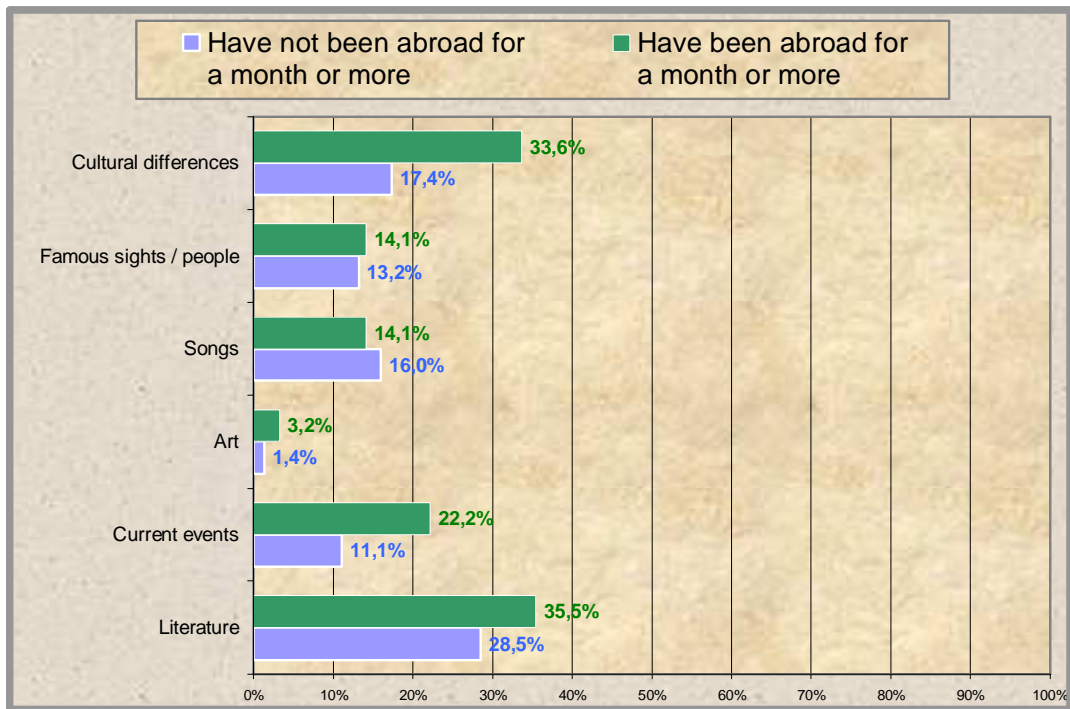


Diagram 1a Proportion of teachers who 'often' do the activities according to length of previous stay abroad

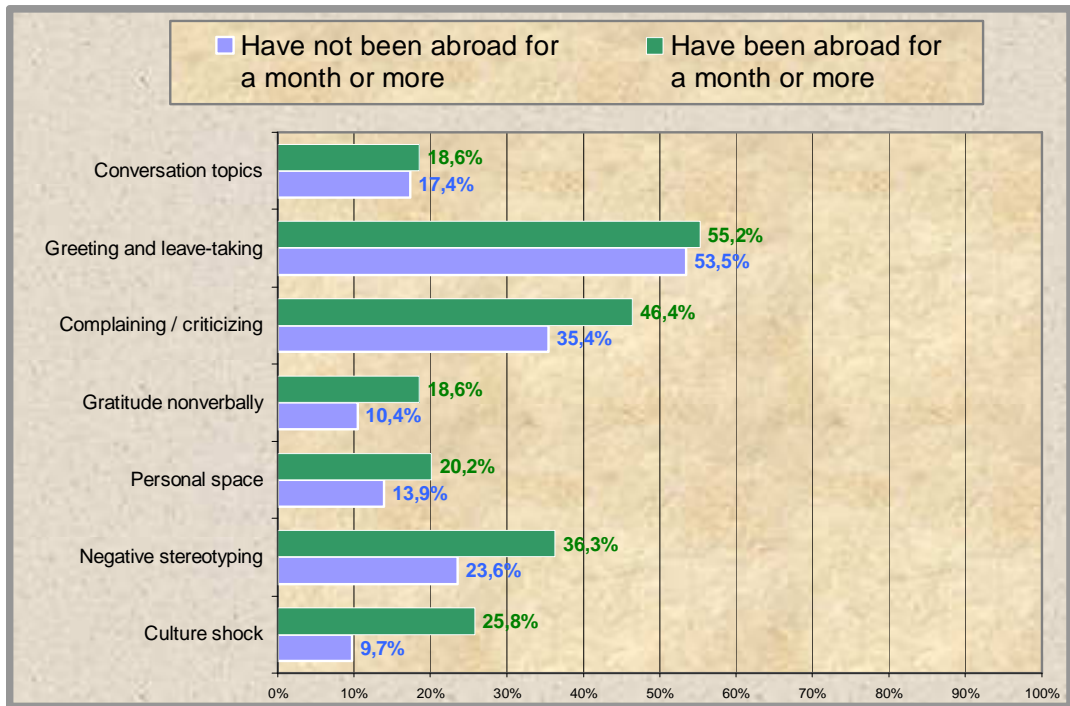


Diagram 1b Proportion of teachers who 'always' do the activities according to length of previous stay abroad

2.4 The impact of previous training on the frequency of cultural activities

The results of the frequency analysis were also cross-tabulated with the independent variable of training experience. It was examined whether the teachers in the study who had received some cultural awareness or intercultural communication training (62.8%) did the listed activities any more often than those who had not participated in any cultural training (37.2%). Tables 6 and 7 show the activities where there was a statistically significant difference between respondents who had received training and those who had not. It is clear from the two tables that those respondents who had received some form of cultural awareness or intercultural communication training do most of the activities significantly more often. This is especially true for *discussions on cultural differences*, where the ratio of those who often lead such discussions nearly doubled (from 17.8% to 33.5%), but since two of the cells had less than the minimum expected count, this difference cannot be considered statistically significant despite the statistical information ($\chi=16.118$, $p=0.001$). There was a similar problem with *art (pictures of paintings and sculptures)*, which is by far the least popular activity anyway, but the remaining four activities of Section 1 of the questionnaire show significant differences (see Table 6).

Types of activities	Teachers who have not attended any cultural awareness or intercultural communication training (146, 37.3%) (count, expected, raw %, std. residual)				Teachers who have attended some cultural awareness or intercultural communication training (245, 62.7%) (count, expected, raw %, std. residual)			
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Videos or photos of famous people and sights ($\chi=25.143$, $p<0.001$)	16 7.4 11.0% 3.1	47 39.9 32.2% 1.1	72 78.6 49.3% -0.7	11 20.1 7.5% -2.0	4 12.6 1.6% -2.4	60 67.1 24.4% -0.9	139 132.4 56.5% 0.6	43 33.9 17.5% 1.6
Songs and explanations of lyrics ... ($\chi=15.189$, $p=0.002$)	19 12.7 13.0% 1.8	70 58.8 47.9% 1.5	39 52.9 26.7% -1.9	18 21.6 12.3% -0.8	15 21.3 6.1% -1.4	88 99.2 35.8% -1.1	103 89.1 41.9% 1.5	40 36.4 16.3% 0.6
Current events (social or political issues) ($\chi=27.756$; $p<0.001$)	24 11.9 16.4% 3.5	49 46.9 33.6% 0.3	58 60.7 39.7% -0.3	15 26.4 10.3% -2.2	8 20.1 3.3% -2.7	77 79.1 31.3% -0.2	105 102.3 42.7% 0.3	56 44.6 22.8% 1.7
Short stories, poems or other literary works ($\chi=11.636$; $p=0.009$)	8 6.3 5.5% 0.7	45 32.4 30.8% 2.2	50 59.2 34.2% -1.2	43 48.0 29.5% -0.7	9 10.7 3.7% -0.5	42 54.6 17.1% -1.7	109 99.8 44.3% 0.9	86 81.0 35.0% 0.6

Table 6 The impact of training on the frequency of civilization-related activities

Table 7 shows the statistically significant differences in the answers given to Section 2 of the questionnaire. Although the difference between teachers who had been trained in cultural awareness or intercultural communication and those who had not seems to be very large when it comes to *discussions about appropriate conversation topics*, two cells had less than the minimum expected count, so the difference cannot be considered significant despite the statistical information ($\chi=9.216$, $p=0.027$). It is worth noting that there are over twice as many trained teachers who always discuss *differences in personal space* and the effects of *negative stereotyping* as teachers without any cultural awareness or intercultural communication training. Furthermore, three times as many trained teachers said they ‘always’ told their students about *culture shock* as teachers with no previous cultural training. (For a

visual representation of the distribution of teachers who often/always do the activities according to previous raining, refer to Diagrams 2a and 2b).

All these statistically significant differences are the results of training that perhaps only consisted of one workshop. In the original questionnaire the question eliciting information about the respondent's former training in cultural awareness or intercultural communication provided four options to choose from: 'no training,' 'one or two workshops,' 'a university course,' and 'other.' In order for all the cells in the statistical analysis to contain more than five respondents, the author had to collapse categories. As a result, respondents now either fall into the category of 'no training' or into the category of 'some cultural training.' Furthermore, it was revealed only after all the questionnaires had been filled in and all the data had been processed that some of the teachers (especially in Estonia) might have considered the British or American cultural studies or civilization courses they had attended during their university studies as intercultural communication training. With this in mind, it is remarkable that despite the very broad category of 'some cultural training,' the differences in the frequencies of culture-related activities between those teachers who had received 'some cultural training' and those who had not are rather large.

Types of activities	Teachers who have not attended any cultural awareness or intercultural communication training 146 (37.3%) (count, expected, raw %, std. residual)			Teachers who have attended some cultural awareness or intercultural communication training 245 (62.7%) (count, expected, raw %, std. residual)		
	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always
The rituals of greetings... ($\chi^2=12.200$; $p=0.007$)	11 6.3 7.5% 1.9	69 59.6 47.3% 1.2	66 79.7 45.2% -1.5	6 10.7 2.4% -1.4	91 100.4 37.0% -0.9	148 134.3 60.2% 1.2
Complaints and criticism ($\chi^2=16.093$; $p=0.001$)	15 7.8 10.3% 2.6	82 76.0 56.2% 0.7	49 61.8 33.6% -1.6	6 13.2 2.4% -2.0	122 128.0 49.6% -0.5	117 104.2 47.6% 1.3
Expressing gratitude nonverbally ($\chi^2=17.392$; $p<0.001$)	74 55.1 50.7% 2.5	57 68.2 39.0% -1.4	15 22.7 10.3% -1.6	74 92.9 30.1% -2.0	126 114.8 51.2% 1.0	46 38.3 18.7% 1.2
Personal space ($\chi^2=25.659$; $p<0.001$)	75 53.3 51.4% 3.0	54 66.3 37.0% -1.5	16 26.1 11.0% -2.0	68 89.7 27.6% -2.3	124 111.7 50.4% 1.2	54 43.9 22.0% 1.5
Dangers of negative stereotyping ($\chi^2=35.235$; $p<0.001$)	32 16.4 21.9% 3.9	86 83.4 58.9% 0.3	28 46.2 19.2% -2.7	12 27.6 4.9% -3.0	138 140.6 56.1% -0.2	96 77.8 39.0% 2.1
Discussions about culture shock ($\chi^2=46.770$; $p<0.001$)	55 30.9 37.7% 4.3	79 86.0 54.1% -0.8	12 29.1 8.2% -3.2	28 52.1 11.4% -3.3	152 145.0 61.8% 0.6	66 48.9 26.8% 2.4

Table 7 The impact of training on the frequency of little 'c' culture-related activities

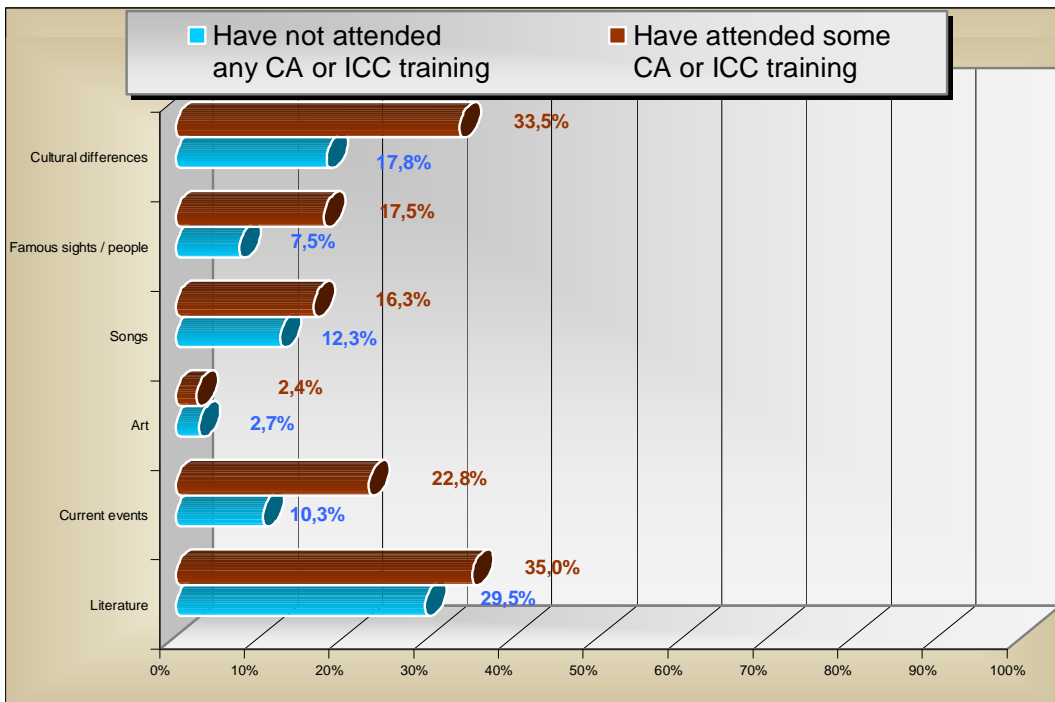


Diagram 2a Proportion of teachers who 'often' do the activities according to previous cultural training

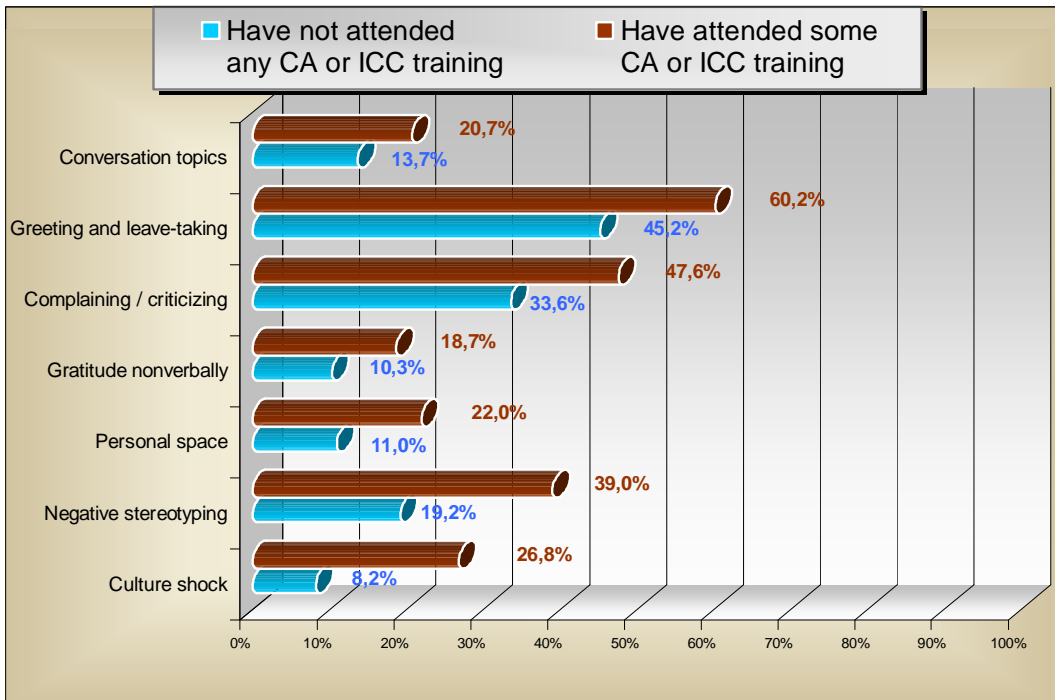


Diagram 2b Proportion of teachers who 'always' do the activities according to previous cultural training

2.5 Country focus and coursebook evaluation

It seems that on average the participating 393 teachers spend 48.2% of the cultural activities with a focus on Britain, 29.17% on North America, 14.16% on the students' home country, 4% on other countries and 3.84% on Australia (see Diagram 3 below). What does not come through from the answers to the questionnaire is what type of cultural content this means, why the ratio of countries is distributed as it is, and what role coursebooks play in this distribution. Although the present questionnaire included questions on the coursebooks used and asked for the teachers' evaluation of these books, the 393 respondents in the four examined countries seem to use so many different teaching materials that no statistically significant differences could be established among them. However, it can be noted here that regardless of the particular coursebook the teachers use in their teaching, only 9.5% of the respondents claimed that their coursebook helped them 'very much' in teaching civilization-related activities. Finally, the proportion of teachers who claimed that their coursebook helped them 'very much' in teaching little 'c' culture-related activities is even smaller (8.4%).

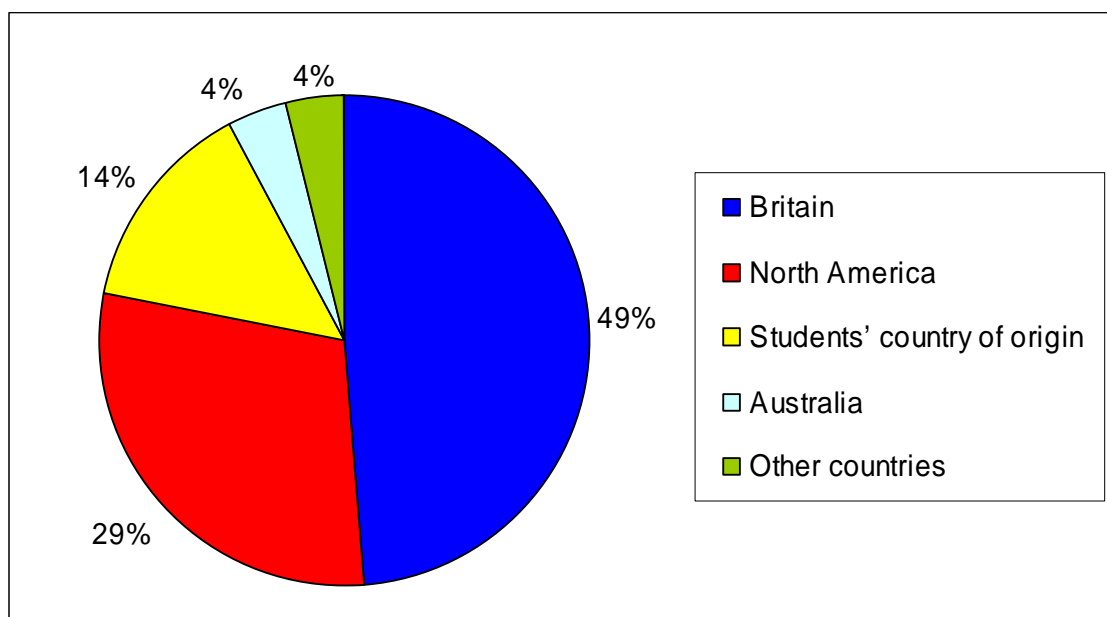


Diagram 3 Proportion of time spent talking about different countries during cultural activities

3 Summarizing the answers to the research questions of the statistical study

The above figures, proportions and cross-tabulations indicate that the following answers can be given to the research questions put forward at the outset of this statistical study (see 1.2):

- 1. Civilization-related activities are conducted sometimes or rarely during English lessons by the great majority of the participating teachers;**
- 2. Little ‘c’ culture-related activities that may lead to the development of intercultural communicative competence are done even less frequently than civilization-related ones;**
- 3. A longer stay abroad does have a beneficial impact and prompts the teacher to increase the frequency of some culture-related activities;**
4. Training, even a short workshop session, seems to have an even more significant effect on the frequency of nearly all of the culture-related activities in the EFL classroom than long stays in a foreign country.

The first three points – printed in bold – also inform research questions 1 and 2 of this study. The detailed evaluation of the results of the questionnaire study is presented together with the discussion of the qualitative study at the end of this article, when answering the two research questions of the present article (Section 7).

4 Research methods of the case studies of secondary school English teachers

Interviews with five Hungarian in-service English teachers in the academic year 2000/2001 were meant to help better understand the possible reasons behind the results of the quantitative analysis described above. The questionnaires provided a large quantity of data, but I was also interested in the thought processes behind the respondents' selections. The interviews added a worthwhile dimension to the project because discovering people's perceptions and feelings about a given topic always adds depth to a research project.

I decided to complement the questionnaire study with case studies based on semi-structured interviews with five secondary school teachers of English. The initial interviews were followed by a short training session, and subsequently a follow-up discussion with each participant with the original idea to learn more about the participating teachers' perception of culture in the language classroom and at the same time, to see if their perceptions can be influenced. The interviews and the training session took place in Budapest between December 2000 and March 2001. Similar follow-up interviews were conducted in Poland and Iceland (see article published in Poland: Aleksandrowicz-Pedich and Kjartansson, 2002).

The following sections give a detailed description of the qualitative research methodology used to complement the answers obtained from the statistical analysis to the first two research questions of the present study:

1. How often and in what ways do teachers incorporate culture-related activities in EFL teaching?
2. What factors does the frequency of culture-related activities depend on?

In order to answer the research questions, examining the data collected during interviews with secondary school English teachers seems to provide further insight into the matter and thus complements the results of the questionnaire study. Following the detailed description of the research methodology used in these case studies (4), the results of the qualitative research will be presented (5) and discussed and evaluated (6) before the two research questions of the present study are answered in the final section of this chapter (7).

4.1 Research questions and data collection

On the basis of the above, the research questions formulated were the following:

1. How often do the participants use seven of the examined culture-related activities of the questionnaire study in their teaching?
2. How do these secondary school teachers of English see the role of culture in the English language classroom?
3. What works against the incorporation of culture-related activities in the EFL syllabus according to the participants?
4. How does a 90-minute intercultural communication training session influence teachers' perception of teaching culture in EFL?

Data were collected from transcripts of the initial semi-structured interviews, the observations during the training session and the transcripts of the follow-up interviews. Verbatim quotes from the interview are italicized and in quotation marks in the descriptions.

4.2 The initial semi-structured interviews

As Patton (2002) suggests, the in-depth semi-structured interview seemed to be the best interviewing technique in this study because the interview schedule ensured that the same basic questions were asked from each participant for comparability, but the interviewees were free to elaborate on any of the subject areas in a conversational style that is appropriate and natural between colleagues (p. 347). For similar reasons the interviews were conducted in Hungarian.

The initial interviews followed the structure of the second and third sections of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1), that is to say they inquired about the frequency of little 'c' culture-related activities and the participants' background, but they were also supplemented by additional questions to elicit more information about the teachers' reasons for the frequency of culture-related activities in the EFL classroom and their general attitudes towards culture-teaching (see Appendix 2). The teachers were briefly asked whether they incorporated big 'C' culture-related activities in their English lessons before the interview focused on the following little 'c' culture-related topics, which were as follows:

1. Appropriate choices for conversation topics
2. Rituals of greeting and leave-taking
3. Appropriate ways of complaining and criticizing
4. The non-verbal expression of gratitude
5. How personal space varies from one culture to another
6. The dangers of negative stereotyping
7. Culture shock

The seven topics (identical to Section 2 of the questionnaire described in section 1.4) had been chosen so that a variety of skills, knowledge and attitudes that help develop intercultural communicative competence are covered. The individual interviews lasted half an hour to an hour, and they were conducted in Hungarian, the shared mother tongue of the interviewer and the interviewees. The detailed transcripts were translated into English. The translations of the interviews were then presented to the interviewees for confirmation of content and style.

4.3 The training session

A one and a half hour training session on intercultural communication was held in order to raise the participants' awareness of the importance of the intercultural dimension of language teaching and to show them examples of how it can be incorporated into instruction. The training session was held for the five teachers at Eötvös Loránd University on February 6th 2001. The session was conducted in English, and consisted of three parts.

As the trainer of the workshop, I introduced the topic and summarized the results of the questionnaire study, illustrating the importance of intercultural communicative competence with accounts of critical incidents taken as examples from my own experience.

The aim of the second part of the training session was to show the trainees with the help of some activities how the seven culture-related topics discussed in the initial interviews can be dealt with in the language classroom effectively. The three activities we tried out were an awareness raising role-play entitled 'Cultural Encounters' (Holló and Lázár, 2000a), 'What did they have for breakfast?' (Holló and Lázár, 2000a), a picture description with the aim of refuting stereotypes and discussing the consequences of judgmental thinking, and 'Universal, Cultural or Personal' (Coverdell, 1999) an activity based on a list of statements where the trainees had to discuss whether certain habits or customs were personal, cultural or universal (see the detailed descriptions of all three activities in Appendix 3).

The third part of the training session was a discussion on how these activities could be used in the classroom and in what ways they would help raise intercultural awareness. At the end of the session the teachers were given readings and descriptions of further intercultural communication activities. The readings consisted of the first chapter of Hofstede's *Cultures and Organizations* (1994), Fenner's chapter entitled Cultural Awareness (2000), four critical incidents taken from Cushner and Brislin's *Intercultural Interactions* (1996), detailed descriptions of the activities that we tried out during the training session together as well as some descriptions of further activities. The teachers were asked to read the materials and try out some of the activities with their classes within the next month.

4.4 The follow-up interviews

The training session was followed up by another set of interviews with the five secondary school English teachers. The aim of the follow-up interviews was to find out whether the training session and the readings had changed the teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in the EFL classroom. To allow time for the training and the readings to sink in and in order to give the teachers time to experiment with culture teaching in the classroom if they so chose, The follow-up interviews took place approximately a month after the training session, and they consisted of the following five core questions:

1. Do you think the presented activities can be used in your classes to teach intercultural communication?
2. Have you tried out any of the activities? How did they work? / If not, why not?
3. Did you find the reading useful? Can some of the ideas be used in your teaching in any way?
4. Has your perception of teaching culture in EFL classes changed since the initial interview in any way?
5. How important do you think it would be to incorporate intercultural communication training in language teacher education?

I conducted the interviews in Hungarian and the teachers confirmed the English translation of the transcripts.

4.5 The participants

The participants were selected so that a variety of age groups, contexts, and attitudes to teaching culture were represented. An additional restriction was that the teachers should not have attended any intercultural training sessions prior to their involvement in this project. I invited the teachers personally to take part in this research project by writing to them via e-mail or calling them on the telephone as they are all former colleagues or acquaintances. Their background, age, personality and teaching contexts are so different that they can be considered as individual cases. Table 8 shows a summary of the participants' characteristics.

	Bori	Gitta	Anna	Zsóka	Erika
Age	25	27	35	40	45
Type of school	Elite high school in the Buda hills	Vocational secondary school in Pest	High school with a good reputation downtown Pest	An excellent secondary practice school in Pest	High school with a good reputation in a small country town
Teaching experience	1 year	3 years	8 years	15 years	Russian 15 years, English 5 years
Time spent abroad	1 month in UK	Six weeks in UK	Several months both in UK and US	Several short visits to UK	One short visit to UK

Table 8 The secondary school English teachers participating in the study

In what follows there is a detailed description of each participant. Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Bori was 25 at the time of the interviews and she had been teaching English for a year at a high school in Buda where the majority of the students come from well off families. She had the typical beginner's difficulties with discipline problems in her classes. She was not very self-confident in her teaching but her attitude to teaching culture was firmly negative. She had spent a little more than a month in England for the first time in her life the previous summer, but otherwise she had not traveled extensively.

Gitta was 27 and she had been teaching English for three years at a vocational secondary school in Pest where the majority of the students come from families that have never traveled abroad and are, according to Gitta, full of prejudice. This fact always bothered Gitta, but she did not think she had enough experience and authority to discuss these issues in class. She worried a lot about gaining enough respect from her classes of male teenagers. She had spent more than a month in an English-speaking country on one occasion.

Anna was 35 and she had had about eight years of teaching experience. In the last five years she had been teaching English at a secondary school with a good reputation in the center of Budapest. She had always thought culture was an integral part of language teaching, but expressed the need to learn more about ways in which it can be more effectively incorporated in the language lesson. Anna had traveled a lot and spent longer periods of time in the United States and in England.

Zsóka was 40 at the time of the interviews and she had been working as an English teacher and mentor at one of the secondary schools with the best reputation for academic excellence in Budapest for fifteen years. Her feelings about her involvement in this project were mixed, because she said she thought that culture was just another trendy topic and she did not really look forward to another project which would try to influence her well established mixture of favorite teaching styles. Zsóka had been to England several times, but only on short visits. She had never lived abroad for more than a month.

Erika was 45 and she had been teaching English for five years at an exam-centered secondary school in a small town. Originally she was a Russian teacher, and she had participated in the Russian Teacher Retraining Program for two years before she graduated as an English teacher. When I asked her to participate she proved to be very open and enthusiastic about teaching culture. Erika had not traveled too much and she had never stayed in a foreign country for more than a month. She went to England once for a short visit.

In conclusion, Bori, Gitta, Anna, Zsóka and Erika represent five very different cases of English teachers working in Hungary.

4.6 Validity, credibility and limitations of this qualitative study

Although the interview questions and the training session were approved of by two experts and the interview schedules were piloted, the lessons learnt from this research design were the following: the choice of interview questions was perhaps not broad enough, the training session was obviously too short to have long-lasting effects, and several follow-up interviews complemented by lesson observations during a longer period of time would have revealed more than the short follow-up interview. However, the intensive engagement with the five participants made sure that their perceptions were recorded meticulously and could inform research questions 1 and 2, thus supplementing the statistical survey by probing further into the areas examined by the questionnaire study.

As for credibility, some of the teachers appeared to feel that that the quality of their teaching was being assessed. Consequently, it was made clear at the beginning of the interview that the questions were in no way intended as a test. The interview was not prescriptive but exploratory, i.e. attempting to find out how the respondents felt about including cultural elements in their teaching. However, the participants sometimes indicated that they included a certain activity in their teaching, but found it hard to explain how. Some respondents may have felt that by saying “I never do that” they were displaying a hostile attitude to the interviewer. In the light of the above, it may be reasonable to conclude that the

results of the case studies may err in a certain direction. As a result, the responses might have indicated a higher level and frequency of culture teaching in the classroom than was actually the reality.

The interpretation of the results of the case studies is certainly influenced by the researcher's own values and her impressions of the participants during the interviews and the training session. However, to assure the reader that the research is credible and reliable, and that the findings are valid and may be transferable, here is the summary of the steps that have been taken according to the principles of naturalistic investigations as recommended by Lazaraton (2003): Data collection aimed at exploring the participating teachers' own ideas, attitudes, and interpretations. The data collection meant a fairly long engagement with the participants to build trust and better understand their beliefs. In addition, data analysis followed an on-going cyclical approach, and the emerging concepts were always incorporated into the next phase of the data collection procedure. In reporting the data, thick descriptions and a large number of quotations are provided in order to allow readers to determine whether the results of this research project may be transferable to other contexts.

The limitations of this study are obvious, because it only explores the formation of the views of five in-service teachers during a relatively short period of about two months. Other limitations might include unrevealed influences that may strongly affect teachers' views and beliefs. Despite the researcher's efforts to discuss the participants' English teaching practices, influences other than the training session cannot always be traced, but their possible existence cannot be dismissed either. However, the insights gained through these case studies may still help discover and better understand those pedagogic variables that can facilitate the incorporation of cultural elements in language lessons and in language teacher education.

4.7 Data analysis

According to Creswell (1994) the analysis in a qualitative study has to be based on data reduction to discover patterns in the transcription of the interviews (p.154). This is followed by the reporting of the data and the interpretation of the results. In this study, preliminary analysis started in the data collection phase and also helped to refine the form and focus of the training session and the follow-up interview. An attempt has been made to separate the presentation of the data from the researcher's interpretation.

From a research methodological point of view, the idea to analyze the impact of such a short training session was misconceived. Therefore, it is only the data collected during the

two long interviews with each of the five teachers that the author decided to thoroughly analyze. The plan to measure the impact of the training session was abandoned, which does not decrease the value of the insights gained from the interviews.

5 Results of the case studies with secondary school teachers of English

The findings of the case studies conducted in 2001 are presented in the order they help answer the four research questions of the study (Sections 5.1 to 5.4). A sample interview transcript is included in Appendix 4 to provide a wider context for the presentation of the results. The researcher's evaluation of the case studies is presented in a separate section (6).

5.1 How do the participants use culture-related activities in their teaching?

In general, it can be stated that there was agreement among the participants as to the usefulness and general educational value of increasing students' knowledge of the target culture(s). All of the participating teachers claimed that they 'sometimes' or 'rarely' did civilization-related activities. They mentioned discussions about cultural differences in lifestyle, an occasional song or poem, famous sights and recipes. The frequency depended primarily on the coursebook and their familiarity with the topic the coursebook offered. One participant also mentioned the general proficiency of the class as a determining factor when she made decisions about whether to cover a given cultural unit, passage or activity in a coursebook, or to omit it from the syllabus. The responses received about the frequency of little 'c' culture-related activities are presented in detail below.

5.1.1. Appropriate choices for conversation topics

Bori does not think conversation topics are really different in English and Hungarian, so she never brings this up in her teaching. Gitta and Erika talk about this sometimes, but from what they say it largely depends on the coursebook how often and in how much detail they discuss appropriate conversation topics in the foreign language. Gitta's class often starts giggling when the conversations in the book are about the weather and are very polite and indirect, and this is when she sometimes feels she has to explain that people in other cultures talk about different topics in different ways from us. Anna and Zsóka said they always made sure they discussed this with every class, because even the classroom is a social setting as Zsóka put it. Anna also added that she often tells her students funny stories about what the

English would think of them if they said this or that, and this usually makes them see the point of paying attention to possible cultural differences in the choice of conversation topics.

5.1.2 Rituals of greeting and leave-taking

Bori believes that it is enough to teach students the correct expressions of saying hello and goodbye, but otherwise there is no need to talk about this, because “*there are no differences really.*” Gitta does not place emphasis on greetings either unless there is a task concerning this in the coursebook. Erika sometimes makes her students “*role-play situations because there is a good unit in the coursebook*” she uses about greetings. Anna said she always made sure to show her students different types of greeting customs through American, English, Swedish and Turkish examples, because these are the ones she is familiar with. This usually takes the form of a discussion and then a role-play on the basis of pictures. She added that her beginners often giggle when they first try to use the expressions “How do you do?” and “Pleased to meet you.” Zsóka said she had just told her class “*for the 85th time that ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’ are not interchangeable in English and that you can spoil a relationship right at the start if you do not greet someone properly.*” She often talks about this with her students, and makes them act out situations to practice greetings.

5.1.3 Appropriate ways of complaining and criticizing

Ways of complaining and criticizing are more often incorporated by all five teachers, because as Zsóka put it, these are always there in every coursebook these days. They usually use role-plays and act out situations on the basis of pictures. However, two of the teachers pointed out that whenever they wanted to scold the students for some reason, or when their students want to complain about homework or a bad grade, this always happens in Hungarian. Zsóka said that her students take her more seriously if she “*scolds them bluntly in Hungarian than in polite and indirect English.*”

5.1.4 The non-verbal expression of gratitude

All teachers admitted that they never taught anything about non-verbal expressions to express gratitude or any other feelings for that matter. The reasons they listed for not teaching anything about non-verbal communication vary from “*because they are teenagers and it*

would be awkward” (Gitta) to “*it’s not in the book*” (Erika) and to “*I don’t know how to do it*” (Anna) or “*Never... because I don’t have the faintest idea about nonverbal things*” (Bori).

5.1.5 How personal space varies from one culture to another

With the exception of Anna, all teachers said they never taught their students about differences in personal space. Their reasons for this varied from “*it’s not the English teacher’s task*” (Zsóka) to “*first we have to prepare for the exam, and then in terms of teaching culture I think it’s more important to talk about Christmas traditions*” (Gitta) and “*I don’t know how far the English stand, and it’s not important, my students will figure these things out when they’re there in England*” (Bori).

5.1.6 The dangers of negative stereotyping

All five teachers said they sometimes discussed the dangers of negative stereotyping, but that they either “*don’t feel at ease with this topic, because secondary school students are quite negative*” (Bori) or “*everything in the coursebook is about the English, and it’s usually quite a stereotypical picture*” (Zsóka). Zsóka sometimes uses this coursebook to compare typical English and Hungarian things, but she says this is more to wake up students’ curiosity about the world. Anna only talks about prejudices when there is a racist remark from one of the students, but she makes her students do projects about ethnic groups, Hungarian Americans or the Holocaust (the students can choose the topic) and when they discuss the presentations, there are sometimes negative stereotypes coming from the students to which she reacts promptly.

5.1.7 Culture shock

From what the respondents said it seems that only Anna and perhaps Gitta had real culture shock, which means that the other three teachers do not have first-hand experience of this phenomenon. Bori was surprised at a couple things in England, but she said the students would “*have to figure out how to solve their problems themselves when they are abroad.*” Gitta’s students have not traveled yet, and when there was a unit about this in the coursebook, she felt the students could not relate to this. Zsóka believes that “*someone learning a foreign language is in a constant state of culture shock,*” but she admits that her astonishment at

things in England when she was there on short tourist trips was probably not the same as culture shock.

Bori and Gitta try to make their students not worry so much about speaking in English and taking the exams, but as far as cultural differences are concerned they have never felt they had to explain to their students not to worry too much about different cultural norms and habits. Erika usually tells her students how to behave in an English home before they go on an exchange trip, but otherwise she focuses on exam preparations, “*because these cultural things are not included in the syllabus.*” Zsóka sometimes asks her students how they would have reacted to a situation described in the book, but she never relates this to reactions to cultural differences.

5.2 How do these secondary school teachers of English see the role of culture in the English language classroom?

As it can be seen from the presentation of most of the previous answers to the initial semi-structured interviews, the participants’ perception of the role of culture in the language classroom varies to a large extent.

Bori does not think there are so many differences between, for example, British and Hungarian cultures, and she does not think it is her job to talk about cultural issues in the classroom. She claims that

what the teacher says in an all-Hungarian classroom is just material to be learnt, it’s not worth pretending it is more. No one had ever told me not to be stressed if the English offer me tea with milk. And quite honestly it’s disgusting, the land lady brought it to my room every morning last summer, and I had to force it down. [...] The students will have to figure out what to do and how to solve their problems [...] otherwise if something comes through the language, I talk about it, if not, I don’t. I don’t think it’s relevant. (Bori)

Gitta believes that cultural issues are important, but she does not think she has enough experience and authority to discuss them in class. She claims

I have some groups that are very hard to discipline, and if we close the books and I give them situational cards, they start misbehaving. And discussing non-verbal communication or personal space seems “awkward.” Students come from families that have never traveled abroad and are full of prejudice towards people who are different in any way from the mainstream Hungarian norm. This fact has always bothered me, and I believe it would be important to teach students to view other people less judgmentally. Still, I think culture-related activities are supplementary material only. (Gitta)

Anna is the participant who incorporates culture-related activities in English classes the most often in this group of five teachers. This is probably at least in part because she has had a lot of personal experience of cultural clashes and other difficulties abroad, and she has been using coursebooks that have been helpful from the intercultural perspective. She also realized that when she talks about her own difficulties abroad, the students listen very attentively and really appreciate the information as well as the honesty. She has received some very positive feedback from her students:

The coursebook I chose to use contains a fair amount of cultural activities. [...] Occasionally there is a student who comes back to school in September and says 'you said this and that about English customs and it was so hard to believe, but it's true, I just experienced the same there'. (Anna)

Zsóka is a very experienced English teacher and mentor, but her initial attitude to the interviews and the training session was very negative:

The truth is that I'm fed up with all these new trends in EFL. By the time you finally find your own mix of teaching styles and your favorite coursebook, there's yet another new trend in EFL methodology, a new challenge, and these new trends are all over the place, so you can't avoid them and this makes me sick. When you first asked me if I would participate in this project, I thought you were just another trainer to interview me about the Brits and the Americans, and that you'd give us a workshop to show us how great those cultures are... (Zsóka)

Despite these feelings she agreed to the interview, and already when she was answering the second question (about the rituals of greeting and leave-taking), she claimed that

You can spoil a relationship right at the start if you don't know how to properly greet someone. When we were taught English, this was not part of the lesson and that was bad, because I've always had problems with this myself. (Zsóka)

Erika is an experienced language teacher and she thinks culture should be an integral part of the language course, but in her answers she often says that she only covers certain activities when they come up in the coursebook, which they rarely do. Another reason why she does not incorporate cultural activities any more often is that in her school it seems to be a priority to prepare students for internal and external language exams where intercultural competence is not assessed.

5.3 What works against the incorporation of culture-related activities in the EFL syllabus according to the participants?

Common reasons in the answers given by the five teachers for not including cultural issues in EFL were a lack of material in the coursebooks, preoccupation with the exams, and a lack of appropriate training and experience abroad.

Aside from these factors working against the incorporation of culture-related activities, Bori also mentioned her lack of confidence to talk about topics like prejudices. In addition, she showed a lack of awareness of possible differences in, for example, appropriate choices for conversation topics and non-verbal communication.

Gitta's main concern is discipline when she holds discussions or role-plays. She also said that with some of her lower-intermediate groups it was too early to talk about cultural issues, because *"first they have to understand what the categories 'countable' and 'uncountable' mean."* She believes that when there is time at the end of the term, when they do not have to concentrate on exam preparations anymore, she will be able to use *"supplementary materials like these cultural activities."* Gitta expressed her disappointment when she said the students only wanted things that were of immediate use, that they were not interested in the news, they did not read anything except computer magazines, and that the majority of them came from families where there was very little stimulus.

Anna only mentioned a few obstacles in the way of teaching the listed culture-related activities. Aside from a lack of such focus in some of the coursebooks, when it came to non-verbal communication and personal space she said she was not sure how to do it because students at this age would laugh at her if she wanted to talk about such issues.

Zsóka sometimes wondered if teaching about these issues was the task of the English teacher. Another reason for her to feel uncertain about culture-related activities seemed to be that she often feels her students have more first-hand experience of English and American everyday life than she does. Furthermore, the coursebook she uses does not include any of the culture-related topics listed in the initial interview.

Erika follows the coursebook very closely, so she often mentioned that she did not usually do certain activities because they never came up in the coursebook. Another reason for her to push culture in the background is that her school is even more exam-centered than the average. She also complained about her lack of experience abroad. She claimed that she would be more eager to talk about culture-related topics if she had more first-hand experience.

5.4 How did the 90-minute intercultural communication training session change the teachers' perception of teaching culture in EFL?

As it was mentioned in the description of the research methodology, the idea to measure the impact of such a short training event was misconceived. In addition, the available amount of data does not allow the researcher to draw conclusions about changes in the participating teachers' perception of teaching culture in English lessons. However, from the answers given to the questions in the follow-up interviews it seems that the training session did result in some cultural awareness raising. Some of these issues had never occurred to the participants, and this was already becoming obvious in the initial interviews. In fact, the first interview itself also served as an eye-opener for most of the participating teachers. At one point, when we were talking about culture shock, Bori, who had expressed strong reservations about teaching these *"touchy-feely things,"* said *"I guess you are right in that it is good to know that is culture shock and there is no need to get scared."* Zsóka, who had never really experienced culture shock, seemed to learn what exactly the term actually covers during the initial interview. In addition, when asked about whether she tells her students about cultural differences in personal space, she first said it was not the task of the English teacher, but then she added that it was true that she also taught her students about biology and environment protection in the English class and *"so why not personal space."* Several of the participants also came to the conclusion that if there were more cultural materials and good activities in the coursebooks they use, they would probably be happy to teach more about culture.

The follow-up interviews revealed two important consequences of the training session. On the one hand, although the participating teachers seemed to enjoy the discussion and benefit from the activities, a month later it was only Gitta who had tried out two of the four or five suggested activities and Anna who had done a variation on one. Reasons given by the other three teachers for not incorporating any of the activities included lack of time, focus on grammar, difficulties in *"embedding the activities in the lesson plan,"* failure at finding the right pictures, feeling of insecurity because of a *"lack of competence in this field,"* fear of discipline problems when it came to *"unusual role-plays,"* and so on. In addition, none of the teachers read all of the assigned reading material, because they all said most of it was too theoretical and they had too little time.

On the other hand, the beneficial awareness raising aspect of the training session was obvious from several remarks during the follow-up interviews. Bori, whose attitude to teaching culture was clearly negative at the beginning of the project, claimed that

I guess it would be necessary to teach about these things, but my circumstances (the coursebook, the exams, and lack of experience) make it difficult. [...] I guess it would be much easier if the coursebooks we use contained more material (and teacher-friendly material!) about cultural issues. [...] But I think it would be even more important to send future language teachers to the target country for six months or a year. Because it's not enough to talk about these things, you have to live through them to really learn about cultural differences.

Gitta thought that her perception of teaching culture had changed as a result of the training session, but she found it difficult to explain how or why. She said she had always thought that, for example, tolerance was important, but “*I didn't know the ways in which I could talk about it in class.*” She claimed that the activities we had tried out together were all very useful and that they would make her task much easier. She also expressed the need for workshops and courses like this because “*we need practical tips and ideas on how to do things in the classroom.*”

Anna claimed that her perception of teaching culture in EFL had not really changed as a result of the training session, because she had always thought culture was an integral component of language teaching. However, she found the activities and the discussion very useful. She said that

the critical incident you told us about the Hungarian woman working in Germany, the one who almost lost her job because she spoke fluent English, but she spoke it with too much Hungarian bluntness and straightforwardness, was very revealing to me. Becoming aware of such differences actually helped me solve a personal conflict with an American acquaintance just last week. [...] It would be important to include such stories and discussion starters in coursebooks because it is very demanding for teachers to come up with such awareness raising incidents and matching activities even if they are aware of the importance of intercultural competence. And many are not.

Zsóka admitted that after her initial aversion about the topic of the interviews and the training session, she was very pleasantly surprised. She enjoyed the activities and the discussion and she acknowledged that

it is very important to include intercultural communication training in language teaching because through these activities and critical incidents as well as through cultural information about other countries, we help prevent our students from getting lost in this jungle where we live. Talking about these issues is good for their grammar as well as for their relationships with people and their communication skills. I think the workshop was a real eye-opener for me. [...] This should be part of the Methodology seminars for future teachers.

Despite the fact that Erika did not try out any of the activities, she said the training session was useful and she would certainly incorporate more activities with a cultural focus if there were not so many constraints imposed on her by her exam-centered school and the coursebooks she follows. She claimed that

the English language is first of all a medium for us, and I like to use this medium for serious discussions much more than for the typical coursebook topics like housework and disco music.

6 Evaluation of the case studies of secondary school English teachers

Culture-related activities are not very frequent in the English lessons of the five participating teachers. They claimed that they ‘rarely’ or ‘sometimes’ do big ‘C’ cultural activities, and they rarely or never discuss the majority of topics in connection with little ‘c’ culture. The most often emerging concepts during these interviews were centering around the poor cultural content of coursebooks, the dominance of grammar at language exams, the participating teachers’ perceptions of their own knowledge and skills as well as their beliefs about a language teacher’s role in teaching language and culture together.

As far as expectations from coursebooks are concerned, participants described in this study seemed to expect more cultural content as well as more instances of helpful guidance for the teacher in conducting culture-related activities in the English lesson. In all five cases, it was interesting to learn that coursebooks have the major decisive role in what happens during the lessons.

Another obvious obstacle to including culture-related activities was some of the teachers’ preoccupation with exams that are, to a large extent, focusing on the students’ accurate use of the foreign language. As long as it is only linguistic competence that is assessed at final examinations in secondary schools and at language exams in general, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to incorporate the development of intercultural competence into their teaching in a systematic manner.

Finally, some of the teachers participating in this project expressed uncertainty about their own knowledge and skills regarding language-and-culture teaching. One reason seemed to be a fairly common lack of first-hand experience in other cultures. In addition, some of the teachers blamed teacher education programs for not incorporating the methodology of developing intercultural competence in their curricula. They claimed they had never been taught how to proceed and what methods to use when intercultural communicative

competence should be one of the most important aims of second language acquisition instead of mere linguistic competence. Another argument, perhaps logically following from the previous one, was that according to some of the participating teachers it is not the language teacher's task to develop intercultural competence.

Teaching intercultural communicative competence is a new idea for the majority of language teachers in Hungary. Although in this study it seemed that even those teachers accepted its importance who initially showed a negative attitude to this concept, a statement of new attitudes does not necessarily correspond to expected behavior associated with those attitudes. Some of the input of the training session has been lost and some of it has seemingly been reinterpreted by the teachers to fit their own beliefs and contexts. Nevertheless, it is clear that the interviews and the short training session served an important awareness raising purpose and gave some concrete ideas and ready-to-use culture-related activities to the participating five teachers.

Perhaps the most important finding of this series of interviews was that both the participants' circumstances and their perceptions of the role of culture in the language classroom vary to a large extent, and that although a 90-minute training session is too short to have a lasting impact on teaching practice, together with the interviews conducted before and a month after the training event, it does seem to serve as an awareness raising eye-opener for teachers, and it can give them at least some theoretical foundations as well as practical tools for incorporating culture-related activities in their language lessons.

It would probably be useful to hold subsequent follow-up workshops or courses, because the enthusiasm and stimulus the teachers gained by participating in this study probably fades away under the everyday pressure of exams, lack of materials and time, discipline problems and so on. Furthermore, it seems that it would be useful to hold intercultural communication training workshops and courses for in-service teachers in general, because teachers in this project acknowledged its significance for foreign language acquisition when they were made aware of some of the most important difficulties of functioning effectively in another culture.

7 Conclusions and answers to the research questions

To answer the two research questions of the present study, I summarize and evaluate the findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies described in the present article. How teachers incorporate culture-related activities in the English lesson and what factors the

frequency of culture-related activities depend on (Sections 2, 3, 5 and 6) are significant questions to answer before issues of the role and the status of intercultural communication training in language teacher education can be addressed.

7.1 How often and in what ways do teachers incorporate culture-related activities in EFL teaching?

It is clear from the results of the questionnaire study described in Section 2 that the three activities teachers do most often from the items listed in Section 1 of the questionnaire are based on *literature*, *discussions on cultural differences* and *current events*. But even these are ‘often’ included in the language lesson by only 32.9%, 27.6% and 18.1% of the teachers respectively. *Songs, videos or photos* and *art* from the target-language cultures are even less frequently incorporated into the English lesson (only 14.8%, 14% and 2.6% of the teachers do these three activities often). We must remember here that ‘often’ was defined in the questionnaire as every third class or more often, ‘sometimes’ meant about three or four times in a term or course, and ‘rarely’ indicated perhaps once in a term or course. This means that activities that may lead to a better knowledge of the target cultures’ civilization are only ‘sometimes’ or ‘rarely’ done by the great majority of the participating English teachers.

Considering activities leading towards intercultural communicative competence as sampled in Section 2 of the questionnaire, the results are even more mixed. As the figures show in Table 2 above, it is clear that aside from functions (*greetings* and *complaints*), activities in this section are even less popular with teachers. Only 18.1% of the teachers said they always made sure to discuss the issue of *appropriate conversation topics* with their students. Only 15.6% and 17.9% of the teachers said they always discussed differences in *nonverbal communication* and *personal space* with their groups. This means that students of the remaining over 80% of the teachers are not very likely to learn anything about these issues from during their English lessons. As a result, they may end up learning about the importance of differences in conversation topics, gestures, facial expressions and personal space through, perhaps unpleasant, personal experience if they learn about them at all. The same seems to hold true for *culture shock*, a basic phenomenon in the process of learning about a second or foreign culture that can cause a lot of trouble and loss of self-confidence. Only 19.9% of the total sample said they always made sure they told their students about culture shock.

It also became clear from the results of the questionnaire study that teachers mostly focus on Britain and the United States, and rarely include tasks focusing on other cultures, or

the students' own country. Unfortunately, teachers do not really find helpful tasks and guidance in their coursebooks either when it comes to culture-related topics.

Findings of the case studies support the results of the questionnaire. The five participating teachers 'sometimes' or 'rarely' incorporate big 'C' culture-related activities, and it is even less frequent that they discuss any of the little 'c' cultural activities listed in the questionnaire and in the interview schedule. Additional insights gained from the interviews about the manner in which cultural activities are done when they are present in the lesson include the following: whole class discussions were mentioned several times by all of the teachers, acting out situations on the basis of a coursebook unit or activity was mentioned by three of the teachers in connection with *greetings* and *complaints*, and the use of pictures and projects that end in mini-presentations are only applied by one of the participating teachers.

To summarize the answer to the first research question, it can be stated that the occurrence of culture-related activities in the English language classroom is not significant and not systematic. In addition, it seems that language teachers' repertoire of methods to develop intercultural communicative competence is relatively poor and it is largely influenced by their own cultural awareness, their own personal experience with other cultures, the aims and the content of the coursebook they use and their own personal belief about the role of culture in communication and the role of the teacher in developing linguistic and/or intercultural communicative competence.

7.2 What factors does the frequency of culture-related activities depend on?

From the statistical analysis of the questionnaires it seems that the majority of teachers incorporate very few activities with a cultural focus in the language classroom. Nevertheless, as it can be seen from Tables 4, 5 and 6, both staying abroad and training do make a significant difference in the frequency of culture-related activities. It is interesting to observe that according to length of stay abroad there were statistically significant differences between respondents in the frequency of just four activities: *discussions about cultural differences*, *current events*, *negative stereotypes*, and *culture shock*. However, the differences here doubled and sometimes tripled in favor of the teachers who had spent a longer period of time abroad.

Furthermore, it can be concluded from the data in Table 5 and Table 6 that those respondents who had received some form of cultural awareness or intercultural communication training do nearly all of the activities significantly more often. The percentage of teachers who often discuss *cultural differences* and *current events*, use *videos and photos of*

famous people and sights, and always discuss *appropriate conversation topics*, *personal space* and *the dangers of negative stereotyping* approximately doubled among the teachers who had some previous training in this field. The differences are also significant in favor of teachers with some cultural training experience in all the other activities except for *art*. Furthermore, the ratio of teachers who always discuss *culture shock* with their students tripled among the respondents with some previous cultural training.

The case studies presented above give further insight into the factors that may influence the frequency of culture-related activities in the English classroom. Aside from the participating teachers' relatively poor repertoire of activities with a cultural focus, the difficulties they had using ("*embedding*") the ones they had learned at the training session, and their coursebooks' apparent deficiencies, several other decisive obstacles were mentioned by the respondents. These include some of the participating teachers' lack of first-hand experience or knowledge of other cultures, others' strong grammar orientation as well as their (or their school's) exam-centeredness, some of the teachers' feelings of incompetence due to lack of training in the given area, younger teachers' preoccupation with discipline and motivation problems, some teachers' reservations about whether developing intercultural competence was the task of the language teacher and a perceived lack of time in general.

Although the scope of these investigations is limited, it seems both from the questionnaire study and the interviews that culture-related activities are often pushed into the background, and only pulled out when the coursebook prescribes them, or the teacher feels that the lesson should be spiced up a little. On a cynical note, it could be remarked that in addition to their coursebook's often limited cultural content, the majority of EFL students can perhaps read a passage by Oscar Wilde, listen to a pop song once or twice a year and learn about the English Christmas pudding every December. This certainly does not widen their cultural horizon too much, and it definitely does not help them to better communicate with people who have different values, beliefs and customs.

However, the results of this study indicate that even short workshops or training courses raise teachers' awareness of the importance of a variety of culture-related activities even more significantly than a longer stay abroad. This may suggest that instead of waiting for exchange and immersion programs to become easily available for all future English teachers, it is probably more beneficial to reconsider the role of culture-related activities in language teaching and to redesign language teacher education programs accordingly.

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QUESTIONNAIRE**2000****Dear English Teacher,**

We are an international team supported by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, the British Council and Ministries of Education. We are conducting research in several European countries to find out how much and what exactly language teachers teach their students about culture. We are interested in your experience at primary, secondary or tertiary level. The information you provide will be a very useful contribution to our research into the ways culture can be taught in language classes.

The questionnaire consists of three sections and it will take you about ten minutes to fill in all three. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Please return the questionnaire to the address below.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Lázár Ildikó

SECTION I

How often do you include activities based on the following in your English lessons?

1. discussions on cultural differences (social habits, values, lifestyles)
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| never | rarely | sometimes | often |
| | (perhaps once in | (about three or four | (every third class a |
| | term or course) | times in a course) | or more often) |

2. videos or photos of famous sights and people

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
never	rarely	sometimes	often

3. songs with information on singer or band and explanations of lyrics

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
never	rarely	sometimes	often

4. art (eg. Photos of sculptures and paintings)

never rarely sometimes often

5. current events (either social or political issues)

never rarely sometimes often

6. short stories, poems or any other literary work

never rarely sometimes often

SECTION II

Please answer the following questions.

1. Do you discuss with your students the appropriate choices for conversation topics in the foreign language?

Never Sometimes Always

2. Do you tell your students that the rituals of greeting and leave-taking can be different in each culture?

Never Sometimes Always

3. Do you teach your students the appropriate ways of complaining and criticizing in the target language?

Never Sometimes Always

4. Do you teach your students how to express gratitude non-verbally in the target culture(s)?

Never Sometimes Always

5. Do you tell your students that personal space (e.g. how far you stand from people when you talk) varies in each culture?

Never Sometimes Always

6. Do you discuss the dangers of negative stereotyping (prejudices) with your students?

Never Sometimes Always

7. Do you tell your students about culture shock?

Never Sometimes Always

SECTION III

1. When you do the activities in sections I and II above, which country or countries do you mostly focus on? Please indicate in what proportions the following countries are treated in your language lessons.

Australia %
 Britain %
 United States %
 Students' country of origin %
 other countries % Please specify _____

2. Who do you teach English to? Please check the appropriate boxes in the columns below.

<u>Level:</u>		<u>Age group:</u>
(false) beginner	<input type="checkbox"/>	10-14 <input type="checkbox"/>
lower-intermediate	<input type="checkbox"/>	14-18 <input type="checkbox"/>
intermediate	<input type="checkbox"/>	18-25 <input type="checkbox"/>
advanced	<input type="checkbox"/>	adults <input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which coursebook(s) do you most frequently use?

a, _____ (title of first book)

Does this book help you teach the issues listed in section I above?
 not at all very little to some extent very much

Does this book help you teach the issues listed in section II above?
 not at all very little to some extent very much

b, _____ (indicate another coursebook here if applicable)

Does this book help you teach the issues listed in section I above?
 not at all very little to some extent very much

Does this book help you teach the issues listed in section II above?
 not at all very little to some extent very much

4. How much do you think your students are aware of cultural differences?

not at all very little to some extent very much

5. Please answer the following questions about yourself.

a) Your age:

20-30 31-40 41-50 51 +

b) Your highest qualifications:

B.A, B. Ed. or equivalent

M.A, M.Ed. or equivalent

Ph.D.

other (please specify) _____

c) Sex:

female male

d) Residence:

city

small town

village

other

country: _____

e) Mother tongue:

native speaker of English

non-native speaker of English

f) Have you ever lived in a foreign country for a month or more?

No

Yes

g) Have you attended a workshop or course on cultural awareness and/or intercultural communication?

No

One or two conference workshops

A course at university/college

Other Please specify _____

Thank you.

2000

The semi-structured interview

I am conducting research in several European countries to find out how much and what exactly language teachers teach their students about culture. If you have not received formal training in cultural awareness and/or intercultural communication, I would like to ask you if you would consider a short interview followed by one training session and a feedback discussion with me.

The interview would take about half an hour of your time whenever it is convenient for you. The training session will last about 90 minutes and the reading will consist of about 15 pages of practical and theoretical ideas. And finally, the feedback session will not take more than half an hour.

The information you provide will be a very useful contribution to the research into the ways culture can be taught in language classes.

Ildikó Lázár
 ELTE SEAS Dept. of English Applied Linguistics
 1146 Budapest, Ajtósi Dürer sor 19-21.
 Fax: 343-6801 Phone: 343-4063
 e-mail: lazar@isis.elte.hu

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**1. Who do you teach English to?**

<u>Level:</u>	<u>Age group:</u>
(false) beginner <input type="checkbox"/>	10-14 <input type="checkbox"/>
lower-intermediate <input type="checkbox"/>	14-18 <input type="checkbox"/>
intermediate <input type="checkbox"/>	18-25 <input type="checkbox"/>
advanced <input type="checkbox"/>	adults <input type="checkbox"/>

2. Personal information

a) Age: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51 +

b) Highest qualifications:

B.A., B.Ed. or equivalent

M.A, M.Ed. or equivalent

Ph.D.

other (please specify) _____

c) Sex: female male

d) Residence: city small town village other

country: _____

e) Mother tongue:

native speaker of English

non-native speaker of English

f) Have you ever lived in a foreign country for a month or more? If yes, where and for how long?

No

Yes

3. Please answer the following questions.

a, Do you discuss with your students the appropriate choices for conversation topics in the foreign language?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

b, Do you tell your students that the rituals of greeting and leave-taking can be different in each culture?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

c, Do you teach your students the appropriate ways of complaining and criticizing in the target language?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

d, Do you teach your students how to express gratitude non-verbally in the target culture(s)?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

e, Do you tell your students that personal space (e.g. how far you stand from people when you talk) varies in each culture?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

f, Do you discuss the dangers of negative stereotyping (prejudices) with your students?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

g, Do you usually tell your students about culture shock?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

h, Do you encourage your students to try to react to unexpected or ambiguous situations without excessive discomfort?

Never

Sometimes

Always

Why (not)? If yes, how?

4. When you do the activities in section 3 above, which country or countries do you mostly focus on? Please indicate in what proportions the following countries are treated in your language lessons.

Australia

%

Britain

%

United States %

Students' country of origin %

other countries % Please specify _____

Why do you think you focus on the countries mentioned in the proportions mentioned?

5. How much do you think your students are aware of cultural differences?

not at all	very little	to some extent	very much
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What makes you think they are aware to _____ extent?

6. Which coursebook(s) do you most frequently use?

a, _____ (title of first book)

Does this book help you teach the issues listed in section 3 above?

not at all	very little	to some extent	very much
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b, _____ (indicate another coursebook here if applicable)

Does this book help you teach the issues listed in section 3 above?

not at all	very little	to some extent	very much
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Can you elaborate on the quality of the coursebooks you use? How would you evaluate them from a cultural perspective?

Thank you.

Activities used in the training session

1. Cultural Encounters (published in Holló & Lázár, 2000a)

Cultural focus	Observing features of other cultures, experiencing different social customs and recognising underlying values
Language focus	Functions: socialising; Vocabulary: talking about set topics; Grammar: narrating past events; Speaking skills: discussion, etc.
Level	Lower-intermediate and up for role play, intermediate and up for discussion
Group size	3-15 (others can be observers)
Age group	From young teenagers to adults
Preparation	Make or copy role-cards, buy ribbons, copy set of questions (see below)
Accessories	Role-cards, blue, red and white ribbons, questions
Room arrangement	Enough room in the middle for walking around
Time	8-12 minutes (plus 15-20 minutes for the follow-up discussion)

Procedure:

1. Explain that students will arrive from three different countries according to their roles to participate at a reception (or a freshmen's party, a business meeting or a prom depending on your students' interests and age).
2. All they have to do is get to know one another a little by talking briefly to as many people as possible.
3. Students without role cards should be asked to observe the players closely so they can even eavesdrop on some of the conversations. (You can prepare role cards for the observers, too.)
4. Distribute role cards and matching ribbons and let students stand up, walk around and get to know one other. (The red, blue and white ribbons worn as ties or necklaces help students identify who is from which country during and after the game.)
5. After about 8-12 minutes of partying (less if you have few students), they should be asked to sit down in groups of four or five, preferably so that there are people from Blueland, Whiteland and Redland in each group as well as one or two observers.
6. Distribute the set of questions (see below) for the discussion and let them answer the questions and discuss the issues in their groups.
7. Bring the whole class together and elicit some of their answers and final conclusions so you can evaluate the experience of cultural encounters together. This is probably a good time to ask your students if they have ever had intercultural misunderstandings with people from other cultures or tell them about your own similar experiences. You could also ask them whether they have ever been excluded from anywhere and how that felt. Another, perhaps more difficult issue that can be

discussed here is whether your students avoid or exclude any group of people on any basis.

Steps 6 and 7 can be done together as a whole class activity if you think that the whole discussion should be controlled or if the group is too small to split up.

Role cards:

You come from Redland. You like to meet foreigners, but you really dislike being touched by strangers. In your country you rarely look into each other's eyes, and you always avoid eye contact when you first meet someone.

You've got four brothers and live in great poverty. You'd like to attend a training course so you can get a better job. You're interested in possibilities abroad.

You're from Blueland. In your country, people gently, but consistently touch each other's arms when they talk. You like to meet foreigners, but you avoid people from Whiteland.

You've got three brothers and sisters and you live in poverty. You'd like to get a job as a waiter/waitress so you can make more money.

You come from Whiteland. You love to meet people and express your enthusiasm with a lot of gestures. When you meet someone, you touch your earlobes and bow a little to say hello politely.

You've got three children and you can hardly make a living. You're attending a course to become a waitress. There are still vacancies in the course.

Questions for follow-up discussion

What did we learn about the three different cultures?

Redland
Blueland
Whiteland

What is the role of physical contact?

What caused (or could have caused) conflicts?

How did participants avoid/solve conflicts?

Are there any similarities between your culture and any of these three cultures?

What are some of the differences?

Which culture did you find the strangest of all?

What else would you like to learn about these cultures?

How did you feel while you were participating in the game?
 What did you notice when you were observing the role play?

2. What did they have for breakfast? (published in Holló & Lázár, 2000a)

Cultural focus	Making judgments, evaluating stereotypes, learning about different cultures in the world
Language focus	Grammar: tenses, conditionals; Vocabulary: describing people and situations; Speaking and listening skills: discussion
Level	Lower-intermediate and up
Group size	Any
Age group	Any
Preparation	Collect 4-5 pictures of people from different continents, write questions
Accessories	Pictures, blutack, questions (on handout, poster or transparency)
Room arrangement	Any
Time	15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Explain to your students that you will display photos of people from all over the world and they will have to guess who these people are.
2. Put the pictures up on the wall, hand out the questions or display them on the blackboard or OHP.
3. Tell students to work in pairs or small groups, to choose one picture and answer the questions on the basis of that one picture.
4. Let them think about and discuss their answers for about 2-3 minutes.
5. Elicit and compare each pair's or group's answers.
6. If you have photos of people whose stories are documented, let your students read the original texts that accompany the pictures.
7. Discuss the positive and negative effects of making judgments and stereotyping.

Comments: Collect portraits or pictures of several people in different situations in Africa, Asia, Australia, etc. If possible, collect photos of people whose stories are documented. This is especially useful for comparison with the stories and descriptions invented by the students at the end of the activity. (Particularly if you think that your students may call the most elegantly dressed Indian ladies or African politicians, beggars.)

Sample questions:

1. What did s/he have for breakfast?
2. What do you think this person's job is?
3. What sort of house does s/he live in?
4. What is s/he going to have for dinner?
5. What does s/he think about pollution?
6. Does s/he pollute the environment in any way? If yes, how?

Variations: You can obviously change the questions, especially the last two, to suit your students' interests or the vocabulary you want them to practice.

Another question you may wish to ask your students at the end of the activity is whether they would know what to say to the person in the picture. What would they talk about if they met without being judgmental about the person's beliefs, values and social habits?

3. Universal, Cultural or Personal (Coverdell, 1999)

Decide individually and then discuss in groups whether the following statements are universal, cultural or personal:

- Sleeping with a bedroom window open.
- Running from a dangerous animal.
- Considering snakes to be evil.
- Men opening doors for women.
- Respecting older people.
- Liking spicy food.
- Preferring playing soccer to reading a book.
- Eating regularly.
- Eating with knife, fork, and spoon.
- Being wary of strangers.
- Calling a waiter with a hissing sound.
- Regretting being the cause of an accident.
- Feeling sad at the death of a close relative.
- Wearing white mourning robes for 30 days after the death of a close relative.
- Not liking wearing mourning robes after the death of a close relative