Intercultural Awareness through English Language in Middle Schools: The Case of Kosovo

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Intercultural Awareness through English Language in Middle Schools:

The case of Kosovo

Leonora Gashi

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in TESOL degree at the SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont.

October 22, 2014

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Abstract

This study sought to understand opportunities for teaching and learning target culture for intercultural awareness. Utilizing Moran’s Knowing Framework and its five cultural dimensions, reviewing curriculum documents and textbook in use for Grade Six as well as survey data from 22 English language teachers in Kosovo, this study finds that there is a misalignment among curriculum documents, textbook in use, and teacher classroom practices regarding teaching culture for cultural understanding. It is noted that while curriculum documents share the goals and objectives for preparing students to become global citizens through language and culture learning in English language, this vision is lost along the way and rarely makes it to the English language classrooms. Teachers in the study complained that they lacked adequate training for teaching culture in their teacher education programs, while a few indicated that they teach culture occasionally as part of their teaching repertoire. I conclude that English teachers, in Kosovo and internationally, need to be more creative in utilizing more authentic cultural materials in their classes to bring to life the culture of the native speakers of the language that students so much desire and spend time and other resources to acquire. Further, I argue that learning another culture and comparing it with own culture helps students to examine their culture from a different, outside perspective, making them culturally-richer individuals in deeper touch with their culture as well as those around them, near and far.
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Teaching Culture
Cultural Awareness
Intercultural Understanding
EFL Teacher Education
EFL Curriculum
L1 and L2 Culture
Classroom Activities
Cultural Background
Cultural Context
Cultural Education
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................................................. 1
The importance of teaching culture to Kosovo students .................................................................................. 4
Motivation for the study ...................................................................................................................................... 6

**Context of the Study: Kosovo** ...................................................................................................................... 7

**Theoretical Framework** ............................................................................................................................... 10

**Literature Review** ......................................................................................................................................... 17

**Data Collection and Methods** ..................................................................................................................... 22

**Results and Discussion** .................................................................................................................................. 25

**Conclusion and Recommendations** .............................................................................................................. 40

**References** ..................................................................................................................................................... 45

**Appendix 1: Kosovo English Teachers Intercultural Awareness Survey** .................................................... 48

**Appendix 2: Exploring English 2 (Kosovar Edition) Contents** ...................................................................... 50

## List of Tables

Table 1 Moran’s Cultural Knowing Framework of Language Use to Learn Culture ................................. 13
Table 2 Key documents analyzed for the study ................................................................................................. 22
Table 3 Background data of English Language Teachers in the study sample, N=22 ................................. 23
Table 4 Examples of cultural dimensions in Chapters 1 & 2 from *Exploring English 2* ........................... 28

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Logic of Rationale for the Study ........................................................................................................ 16
Figure 2 EFL teacher responses on how well university prepared them to teach Target Culture .................. 33
Figure 3 Textbook use for teaching English ................................................................................................. 36
Figure 4 Using sources other than textbook for teaching English ............................................................... 37
Intercultural Awareness Through English Language Teaching in Middle Schools: the Case of Kosovo

Introduction

Teaching English to speakers of other languages is a global phenomenon. As result, there is a growing interest in the field of English language teaching to find effective ways to help teachers maximize student learning. Another less studied component of English language teaching is teaching the culture or elements of it that accompany the English language. Subsequently, this thesis addresses a main question, “How is target culture taught in the Kosovo context?”

The underlying assumption of the importance of teaching target culture is that it increases intercultural awareness. Intercultural awareness is defined as part of the intercultural communication competence, which as such is defined as “the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other’s cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 28). Further, Chen and Starosta (1998) define intercultural awareness as “the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication competence that refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how we think and behave” (p. 28). The core idea behind the intercultural awareness is that it increases citizens’ intercultural understanding in the interconnected globalized world as a result of advancement of technological developments that have made the world a smaller place.

In this thesis, I reviewed the curriculum and textbook of Grade Six English Language in Kosovo and I also collected survey data from 22 English language middle school teachers. I took to explore whether the curriculum, textbook and practitioners address the issue of intercultural awareness through teaching the target culture as part of the English language as a foreign
language. In our hyper-connected world, it is at least technologically possible to increase students’ intercultural awareness and hopefully their intercultural communication by using teaching practices that integrate the target culture that accompanies the foreign language.

When I worked as an English teacher in Kosovo’s middle schools during last part of 2000s, I observed that cultural artifacts of the target language (such as people’s names and geographic locations, products, practices etc.) were removed from the textbooks and most of the names in the stories were Albanian, situated in Kosovo cities and towns. I referred to these experiences often during my graduate course work at SIT in order for me to gain a better understanding of how to make sense of those experiences both as a practitioner and as a professional and researcher of the English language teaching. I didn’t realize it when I was a practitioner in Kosovo, but from the courses that I took at SIT I understood that removing cultural aspects, conventions or practices make language learning dry. As a result, instead of assisting full language acquisition they hinder it. Students miss the chance to acquire a broader understanding of the target language and the culture in which that language is embedded. In addition, they also miss an opportunity to reflect on their own culture by contrasting it with others.

For the purposes of this thesis, I considered Kosovo’s curriculum and textbooks for entire middle school years. Textbook series, *Exploring English 1-4* (Harris & Rowe, 2006) are used for all grades, I focused only on the sixth grade textbook to narrow the scope of the thesis. As noted above, I also collected data from a limited number of middle school English language teachers. In the sections below, I discuss the findings in the light of literature that addresses intercultural awareness and target culture, primarily through language teaching. In addition, I examine the
new Kosovo curriculum framework (MEST, 2011) and sixth grade curriculum and at the end I offer a set of recommendations on how Kosovo middle school textbooks could be revised to better integrate culture for purposes of increasing intercultural awareness into English language practices and methods.

To clarify, this thesis is about teaching the target culture while teaching English as a second or foreign language by teachers who also speak English as a foreign language. I use the terms intercultural understanding and cultural awareness interchangeably as established by literature (Garrido & Álvarez, 2006). Cultural awareness, for example, means becoming aware of cultural values, beliefs or perceptions, be those ours or others’ cultures. Culture itself to me is the broader term that includes these two and a whole lot more that pertains to how people live within a defined space. In addition, I also use English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) interchangeably; aware that there are underlying differences between the two constructs in the way they are used around the world. For example, English is referred to as EFL in Kosovo context, but the US uses ESL to refer to students whose native language is not English in the USA.

Relying on document analysis of key documents, this study addresses the following main questions:

1. What are the gaps in national curriculum, grade six curriculum and textbooks in relation to teaching the target culture?

2. To what extent, if any, is culture taught by Kosovo English middle school teachers?

By addressing these questions, I recommend alternatives as to how the identified gaps policy and curriculum documents and instructional materials could be filled. I also suggest ways English
language teachers could help students develop their intercultural awareness about the target culture using English language textbooks and additional teaching and learning resources.

**The importance of teaching culture to Kosovo students**

Language and culture are tightly knit together. Teaching one without the other makes the language learning vague because the language as means of communication is contextual and imbedded into its culture. Nowadays, with English being the global language or lingua franca and considering dominance of American culture around the world, mainly through movies, music and media in general, language learning without this component is weak. Therefore, it is important that Kosovo students benefit from their English language classes not only in terms of foreign language acquisition but also in terms of the culture in which it is mostly embedded. Also, while British English used to be taught in Kosovo, more and more textbooks written in American English are being introduced. This is the case for middle school grades where the textbooks follow the US convention, while those in the high schools follow the UK convention. Probably this depends on which textbooks the Kosovo’s Ministry of Education decides to use, and then where those textbooks are originally published, i.e. whether publishers originate from US, such as *Pearson*, or from UK, such as *Cambridge University Press*.

There are claims that imperialism is another process that has drawn English to be a global language. The transfer of a dominant language (and aspects of its culture) to speakers of other languages is called imperialism. Linguistic Imperialism assumes the active promotion of the language by the dominant class as the active expression of power of the powerful over the powerless (Phillipson, 1992). However, I assume that this is not the case of Kosovo, even though this in itself could be a useful topic to research. Based on our past history and our good relations
with United States and Great Britain, learning English in Kosovo is not seen as an imperialist effort, rather due to its relevance for educational and job opportunities, English is viewed as a necessary skill or competence that advances one’s career or at least puts available opportunities locally or internationally within reach. In other words, English language mastery is viewed as empowerment of oneself and as a step closer to the Western world.

Furthermore with the presence of many Western organizations and schools in Kosovo, learning how to communicate with English proficiency is the key for Kosovo society. Not only the international organizations but also wherever one applies for a job in the public sector, English is one of the requirements. This issue has been both a blessing and curse for Kosovo’s English education. On one hand, the presence of international organizations opened up more job opportunities and those who spoke English had an advantage in the labor market and it was a blessing for them. What made it a curse was that one of the groups that spoke English were English language teachers and many of them left their poorly-paid jobs in the school system for far better paid jobs for international organizations. In turn, this left hundreds of thousands of students in the hands of inadequate English teachers, with very little English language teaching preparation at best. This situation has improved recently with teacher education schools graduating more English teachers, and just this year, the US sent to Kosovo the first group of 25 English teachers as part of Peace Corps, who will be an excellent addition to Kosovo’s English language teaching force. In particular, this will be influential in having native English language teachers who are fully aware of the culture in which the language is embedded and as a result they will be able to share cultural dimensions with Kosovo students.

Another important element why students’ understanding of the target culture would be beneficial has to do with students’ travelling opportunities to United Kingdom or United States
or other English speaking countries. Even though this is something that doesn’t happen often now because of the economic and visa restrictions, it can have an impact in the future when Kosovo will overcome its current situation. In that sense, having that intercultural awareness makes students more open-minded citizens within the country they live in or abroad, wherever they end up pursuing their life opportunities.

**Motivation for the study**

I lived in the United States for almost three year before starting my Master’s Program at SIT Graduate Institute in 2013. During that period, I learned new things about American culture, norms of communication and intercultural communication. I started to become a much more open-minded person. The culmination of myself as a culture being started when I took the course *Intercultural Communication for Language Teachers* with professor Turpin at my SIT program.

Intercultural communication class has had a big impact on me as a person. It was challenging sometimes but everything we learned through the course has been so beneficial for me as a human being in general and as an English teacher in particular. Now, I have a much more developed intercultural competence and I see and approach situations and people/students differently. I also see this change on me to be easily applied in my classroom wherever I will teach. Culture is what we are. We are so embedded in our culture; whatever we say, dress, act, perform is based on our cultural background. Having in mind that everyone is different and that students might see things differently is a crucial issue in this field. Going to class with this attitude will help me to deal with issues that come up, either conflicts or cultural knowledge in general.
The course helped me also realize many dilemmas that I had about teaching English as a foreign or second language in Kosovo. I started to think of my past teaching context in high and middle schools and how little I as a teacher taught target culture while teaching the target language – English in my case. I also realized that students are the ones who are losing the most in this process. Teachers in Kosovo rely on a textbook to teach English in any given grade in K-12 schools. The textbooks that teachers use in middle schools are a series called *Exploring English* (1-4) by Tim Harris and Allan Rowe (2006). They are adapted for the Kosovo context by a group of local consultants, including Jusuf Berisha, Ilir Krasniqi and Albina Drançolli, and published by the Kosovo’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

**Context of the Study: Kosovo**

Territory- and population-wise, Kosovo is a small country. It has an area of 10 000 km² and a population of 1,815 606 based on a recent census of 2012 (ASK, n.d.). The majority population is Albanian (about 92%), while the other 8% include Serb, Bosnian, Turkish, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Gorani communities. There are two official languages at the national level, Albanian and Serbian. The language of instruction is Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and Bosnian, depending on where these communities live, and it spans from kindergarten to end of high school. Higher education is available only in Albanian and Serbian in the public institutions, and English in some private institutions – such as the American University of Kosovo.

Kosovo is a newly established state – it declared independence in 2008. After the conflict ended in 1999, Kosovo education system was introduced to major changes for the first time after more than a decade of occupation. The changes required hard work from international organizations and local experts to create and introduce a new curriculum, new teaching
methodologies, new assessment techniques, new textbooks, and new professional development opportunities for teachers (Tahirsylaj, 2013). However, there is little research that sheds light to what extent the intended policy changes actually found their way into classrooms. One finding was that teachers did not feel they had ownership over the reforms and that they faced numerous challenges during the implementation (Tahirsylaj, 2013).

Educational change in post-war Kosovo was preceded by development of new curriculum frameworks. The first curriculum framework was called The New Kosovo Curriculum Framework (MEST, 2001). This was the first time when many international experts were involved in the creation of it. The framework states “the education system has been isolated from ongoing international development and as a result the teaching process was isolated from professional innovations such as learner-centered and interactive methodologies” (2011, p.11). The English language teaching was also teacher-centered and far from recent child-centered methods. My whole experience as a student in middle school was based on teacher-centered settings. It was mostly concentrated in reading comprehension or learning words out of context. Students in K-12 schools almost never had a chance to practice English language with a native speaker or stimulate dialogues and situations where they could use it with each other in the classroom. This situation was further aggravated by the fact that there was little or no technology integration in classrooms. For example, even in cases when textbooks included a CD or tape that contained dialogues read or played by native speakers, they were almost never used since there were no CD players or radios in the school to be utilized by teachers for language teaching and learning purposes.

For clarification, in Kosovo middle school is formally referred to as lower secondary school and includes grades 6 through 9, while high school is referred to as upper secondary
school and includes grades 10 through 12. Grade 13 is being phased out. English was now taught from grade 3 compared to grade 5 before the war in 1999. A new curriculum framework was adopted in Kosovo in 2011. This most recent framework called Curriculum Framework for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Kosovo (MEST, 2011) introduced for the first time competency-based education, where English Language is part of Language and Communication learning area. The framework requires introduction of English as a foreign language from grade 1, which is another change from grade 3 as was the case in post-war years. Both Frameworks of 2001 and 2011 highlighted the positive role of English language learning for intercultural awareness and emphasized the importance of learning about other nations and cultures for accessing and sharing information internationally and effectively navigating the interconnected global world.

Another feature of the Kosovo context, especially with regard to ESL learning, is the omnipresence of private English language schools that provide English language classes for entire population but mostly for school-age children. I have had first-hand experience in one of those schools as I worked for more than a year in one of them. Usually, students meet three times a week for an hour and a half to two hours and usually the teachers follow a textbook to teach students in a way that follows a progression from basic to intermediate to advanced levels. The difference with these privately-owned and operated schools, as opposed to publicly-owned formal educational institutions, is that they are technology-rich, where English instructors have access to audio-visual teaching and learning aids that expose students to more authentic experiences. These outside of formal education institutions have been labeled as “shadow education” (Baker, Akiba, LeTendre, & Wiseman, 2001), primarily to refer to the presence of cram schools in some Asian countries, where students usually attend afternoon schools that
include similar curriculum to the one they attend in formal institutions during the morning hours. Kosovo differs from those Asian countries in the sense that only English language schools are prevalent in every town, while the curriculum of other subject matters, if ever, is only covered and provided on short-term basis through private tutors. Examples of these include math classes prior to an important examination, such as those for passing State Matura exam at the end of grade 12 or university entrance exams. Such widespread of these ESL schools might indicate two things: first, students and their parents place value on being able to communicate in English and as a result they are willing to allocate time (in students’ case) and money (in their parents’ case) to learning the language; and second, both students and parents are not satisfied with the quality or amount of English language education provided in formal schooling institutions. The spread of ESL schools is another issue that would be a useful research topic to study in itself and is not explored in depth here.

Theoretical Framework

Before I delve into teaching culture for intercultural awareness, I provide a definition for culture first. While there are many definitions for culture, and as Hinkel (1999) states it may not be an exaggeration to say that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities. Here, I rely primarily on the definition from Patrick Moran (Moran, 2001), who notes that culture includes products, practices, perspectives, communities and persons. In his words,

**Products** are all artifacts such as clothing, written documents, written or spoken language, family, education, politics, economy and religion […] **Practices** include language or other forms communication or of self expression and actions associated with social groups and use of products. […] **Perspectives** represent the perceptions, beliefs, values and attitudes that underlie the products and that guide persons and communities in
the practices of the culture. […] Communities include the specific social contexts, circumstances, and groups in which groups carry out cultural practices […] Persons constitute the individual members who embody the culture and its communities in unique ways. Each person is a distinct mix of communities and experiences, and all persons take on particular cultural identity that both links them to and separates them from other members of the culture. […] (Moran, 2001, p. 25, emphasis in the original)

There are a lot of concepts packed into this extended quote and different authors use different concepts to refer to the same ideas. For example Chen and Starosta (1998) use cultural conventions to incorporate all aspects of a specific culture. However, Moran (2001) provides a more comprehensive overview of each key component of the culture, encompassing products, practices, perspectives, communities and persons of any given culture anywhere in the world. I utilized Moran’s definition of culture as a guiding framework for the data collection and analysis as I studied and analyzed the Grade Six English language textbook used in Kosovo schools.

So what does teaching culture for intercultural awareness mean then? Moran is helpful here too. According to him, each cultural dimension relates to the nature of language and culture. Thus, when cultural dimension of products is in question, the language used in classrooms deals with description and manipulation of cultural products, such as literature, arts, architecture or music, among else. Moran also notes that language is a “cultural product in and of itself,” (Moran, 2001, p. 36) which is understandable considering that all unique languages are embedded within unique cultures in which those languages emerged, developed and continue to be modified and transformed.

The other cultural dimension, the one of practices, relates to the language used to participate in cultural practices (Moran 2001). Indeed, language is the medium that makes possible participation in cultural practices. For example, as Moran notes, participation in a marriage ceremony involves both written and spoken language participation in the form of
sending invitations or welcoming guests, and being able to say the right thing at the right time so that no culturally-inappropriate and insensitive remarks are made. Further, the cultural dimension of perspectives deals with the language used to identify, explain, and justify cultural perspectives. In Moran’s (2001) words, “Through language, we make tacit perspectives explicit. […] Words, phrases, idioms, expressions – when we examine what they mean – reveal values, attitudes, and beliefs intrinsic to the culture” (p. 37). One challenge regarding cultural perspectives has to do with the ability of the outsiders to decipher cultural phrases, idioms and expressions. Unless an outsider is fully aware of and deeply understand the meaning behind those cultural elements, it is difficult, and in cases impossible, to use them appropriately in an ESL classroom. Therefore, the precondition has to be met that ESL teachers are well trained in target culture before they are able to convey the underlying messages of the target cultural perspectives to their students through language learning experiences.

The cultural dimension of communities refers to the language used to participate appropriately in specific cultural communities. Moran (2001) highlights that “Communities develop distinct language to describe and carry out the particular practices and products associated with their group and its activities” (p. 38). For example, linguists, politicians and computer technicians all have specialized language that describes the work that they do, which in turn, fits the activities they are engaged in. This is particularly important in ESL settings where students are focusing their language learning for specific study programs. For example, international students studying to start an education program in business versus the ones planning to study law in a US higher education institution. Each group would have to learn distinct vocabulary to be able to operate within that distinct field of study.
Lastly, the cultural dimension of persons relates to the language individuals use to express their unique identity within the culture. In this sense, both language and culture are not viewed only as collective but also as personal.

“Each of us has a unique manner of self-expression in the language – a tone of voice, a certain pitch, a way of pronouncing, an accent, a writing voice, a communicative style, a preference for certain words, expressions, and idioms. We use our own version of language to describe, understand and respond to our experiences and ourselves” (Moran, 2001, p. 38)

This cultural dimension is very important when examining language and culture at a micro-level perspective, i.e. within-persons perspective. In an ESL classroom, studying this component would require classroom observation in a limited number of classroom settings/schools so that direct data collection tools can be employed. The analysis of those data would produce personal expressions of both language and culture. Due to the lack of data of this nature, this study does not address this cultural dimension very specifically.

Based on the above cultural dimensions, Moran (2001, p. 39) developed his Cultural Knowing Framework, to frame the way of using language to learn culture. In a table form, the framework includes the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>The Nature of Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation:</strong></td>
<td>The language used to participate in the cultural experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowing How</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong></td>
<td>The language used to describe the cultural experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowing About</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation:</strong></td>
<td>The language used to identify, explain, and justify cultural perspectives and to compare and contrast these with perspectives from the individual’s own culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowing Why and other cultures

| Response: Knowing Oneself | The language individuals use to express their thoughts, feelings, questions, decisions, strategies, and plans regarding the cultural experience |

As can be observed from the framework above, it is based on the cultural dimensions that I just addressed in the previous paragraphs. However, the framework here adds some complexity to it in terms of the stages that development of intercultural awareness goes through, starting from participation, to description, interpretation, and to response. Each of these stages reflects one aspect of the Knowing Framework, namely, knowing how, about, why and knowing oneself. Also, the table above highlights the nature of language per each stage, and again, it pertains to the nature of language involved in the five cultural dimensions described above. Moran (2001) further extends the complexity of framework by adding other components, namely the content, language function, activities, outcomes, and teacher role. Each of these components is helpful in translating the framework into teaching and learning practices in the classroom contexts. With regard to teachers’ role, Moran (2001) notes that,

Teachers need to be versatile. They need to be able to present or elicit cultural information, coach and model cultural behaviors, guide and conduct cultural research and analysis. They also need to be able to enter learners’ worlds by listening, empathizing, and sharing their own experiences as culture learners so as to help learners step out of their worlds into another language, another culture. (p. 138).

This framework assumes that teachers are native speakers of the target language and thus authentic representatives of the target culture as well as bilingual and bicultural. This assumption has implications for the countries and schools where target language is not taught by native language speakers. In Kosovo’s case, ESL is taught by local teachers who are not native English speakers and thus also are not authentic representatives of American or English cultures. The
Discussion section below argues whether and to what extent they are trained to teach the target culture.

From the four stages that are represented in the Moran’s Knowing Framework, this study only addresses the first two by examining English curriculum, a textbook, and a survey of ESL teachers, i.e. this study can only make claims whether curricular documents, textbook and teachers provide classroom opportunities for Knowing How and Knowing About of the target culture in ESL contexts in Kosovo. Further, for the specific needs of the study and due to its specific nature, the first two stages are collapsed into one. On the other hand, the reason why the last two stages, namely Knowing Why and Knowing Oneself cannot be addresses here is that our data are limited to textual and survey data. Two address these last two stages I would need first-hand data from the Kosovo classrooms collected through intensive classroom observations or through audio or video recordings of classes as well as interview data with students and teachers. Due to this limitation, the study cannot make claims about how ESL teachers in Kosovo interpret target culture and its pertaining five cultural dimensions or how students experience those cultural dimensions. Also, with regard to cultural dimensions, the study will be able to identify only the presence of the first two, cultural products and practices, and to a less extent of perspectives, communities, and persons due to data limitations described above.

Based on Moran’s Knowing Framework and its pertaining cultural dimensions, as well as the nature of language used along the four stages of the framework, the following figure provides the rationale for the study. The limited data sources allow me only to look for examples of cultural practices and cultural information during the data analysis. Nevertheless, the following rationale assumes that ESL teacher intercultural awareness about the target culture, i.e., American and English culture, in the context of middle schools in Kosovo is affected by
curriculum in place for the Grade six English, English language textbook in use for grade six, and teacher education program that those ESL teachers went through. Further, for students’ intercultural awareness, all three previous components are relevant, plus teachers’ classroom practices in ESL classes.

Another assumption here is that the final goal of teaching culture as part of learning process of another second or foreign language is to have students who develop cultural understanding and intercultural awareness of the target culture. Achieving this goal relies on teachers, who are culturally aware of the target culture in the first place. This precondition has to be met in addition to having curriculum and textbooks that integrate the cultural products and practices of the target language. In teachers’ case, they must have gone through a teacher education program that addressed the target culture component of the language they study in
order to be well enough trained to represent that target culture in their future job. This component is particularly important in cases when ESL teachers, as is the case in this study, are neither native speakers of the language, nor authentic representatives of the culture in which that language is embedded. All these issues are even more complex in the Kosovo context as we will see in the following sections.

**Literature Review**

In the globalized world we live in, teaching culture for intercultural understanding or cultural awareness is an important topic. This is the case, in particular, when considering the position that many educational systems around the world try to educate their students to be “global citizens” in the hyper-interconnected world (Peiser & Jones, 2014). In other words, educational systems try to develop among their students an imagined identity that transcends their physical boundary. The imagined identity relates to individuals imagining being part of imagined communities, which refer to “groups of people, not immediately tangible or accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination” (Norton, 2013, p. 8). In many ways, language learners learning another language that belongs to an imagined community, i.e. another nation far from the immediate context of the learner, experiences that remote nation or the imagined self both through language and culture. In either case, no matter if the goal for students is to become a ‘global citizen’, whatever definition we attach to it, or to develop an imagined identity, or an alter-self, students have to be exposed to both target languages and cultures to be able to achieve those goals for a type of global citizenship.

For small countries such as Kosovo, learning a second or a foreign language is an opportunity to start developing the knowledge, skills and understanding for the language they
learn, which most often is English, and the cultures in which it is embedded. Also, considering the status of lingua franca that English has achieved worldwide, English for Kosovo students, as well as for the entire society, is an opportunity to assist students developing their imagined identities. Being a pro-western and pro-American society, this push is not difficult for education policy-makers, as they know the students and their families place a high value on learning English. In other words, there is no resistance to learning English in Kosovo as it is viewed as a bridge or window to the developed world that students aspire to get to, and society as whole aspires to become as.

However, to be able to successfully operate as a global citizen or as part of the imagined community in case students ever actually immerse in those communities, they need to develop the cultural awareness and intercultural and cross-cultural understanding. “Developing cultural awareness means being aware of members of another cultural group: their behavior, their expectations, their perspectives and values. It also means attempting to understand their reasons for their actions and beliefs” (Cortazzi & Lin, 1999, p. 216). It requires a special classroom environment for students to be able to develop cultural awareness. As Cortazzi and Lin (1999) highlight, having teachers who are reflective about the target culture as well as textbooks that include cultural elements of that culture are the preconditions for students to develop the aspired cultural awareness. In order for learners and teachers to develop intercultural awareness over time, it is important for them to begin understanding the target cultures (and all cultures, including their own) as complex, contested and changing.

Language and culture are inseparable and as such they should have equal weight in second language classrooms (Kramsch, 1991, 1993; Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). Further, Kramsch (1991) considers that the core objective of the second language should be to
teach it within the cultural context of the target culture, and not only focus on the traditions language skills, such as reading, listening, speaking and writing. Cultural awareness and the acquisition of a second culture can assist mastery of the language proficiency (Kramsch, 1993). From this perspective, teaching culture not only serves as an opportunity to gain cultural understanding of ‘the other’ or ‘the imagined community’ but also aids cognitive development and cognitive skills pertaining to the given second or foreign language.

Still, despite the push for integrating the goals for intercultural understanding into the second language curriculum, there is not much research to show that students are able to acquire a second culture similar to, and as a part of, the second language (Lantolf, 1999). There might be a number of plausible explanations as to why that is the case. One could be that ESL teachers, for example, lack the understanding of the target culture in the first place. The second plausible explanation might have to do with the curriculum in place for the second language, which simply cannot accommodate the target culture component due to emphasis on the language topics needing primary attention in an ESL classroom.

The teacher education programs are crucial for preparing language teachers to be able to integrate target culture into classroom activities as cultural learning component is an unknown territory for language teachers (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Byram, 1997). Language teachers are “[...] most often with an education in the literature of the language(s) they teach, and a training in the discipline of the literary criticism and the theory and practice of teaching linguistic knowledge and skills.” (Byram & Morgan, 1994, p. 1). Further, Byram and Morgan (1994) note that in their research they had found that students get some information, but very little knowledge of the foreign culture through the language classes. However, as they highlight, the cultural component is of paramount importance to make students aware of other cultures and
understand others as well as themselves in the interconnected world. In this sense, cultural awareness serves as a connecting point between the individual and the global society they are part of.

Language teaching and learning is not similar to teaching math. There are numerous complexities that pertain to sociocultural and sociolinguistic variables that underlie native speakers’ language (Lenchuk & Ahmed, 2014). In other words, there is no single way of teaching the use of any particular concept – there are multiple ways that native speakers might use a certain concept depending on the context or depending on their own sociocultural and sociolinguistic background. From another perspective, this is also an impossible task for language teachers. How can one expect a language teacher to know all possible ways that a concept may be used by native speakers? What teachers can do though, having an understanding of the use of language by native speakers, is to share with their students the nuances of the language – make them aware of few possible uses of the language so that students are aware of the complexity behind the language, and ultimately of the cultural context that creates the language.

While the cultural component of the language has gained momentum and the idea of teaching language cognitively only is not as strong, there is a mismatch between the language policies that national or cross-national institutions promote and teaching practices of teachers on school contexts (Garrido & Álvarez, 2006). Despite the relevance placed on it, teaching the cultural component remains a discrete choice and option of the individual teachers (Peiser & Jones, 2014). Again, if teachers do not possess the understanding of the target culture, and are not willing to explore the potential of target culture in their language classes, the cultural awareness will never really make it to the classroom. In that case, students are left to their own
devices to explore the culture of the language they learn through other avenues, if they choose to do so. However, if teachers pay more attention to the cultural component, then, they provide opportunities for their students to get more educated insights into the target culture – otherwise students will be exposed to unfiltered conceptions they may get from the out-of-school world.

Another question that relates particularly to EFL and raised by scholars is which English language should students learn? Is it American, British, other? There also seems to be a tendency that different nations promote English as an international language that is not clearly attached to any geographic location or specific culture (Sybing, 2011). However, irrespective of the way that EFL is promoted, it seems students are most interested to get native-fluency, which is most often associated to one of the geographic locations where English has a native language status (Sybing, 2011). Further, along the same lines, it is argued that students’ goal of learning English is to be able to communicate with the native speakers of the language in the first place (Irie, 2003).

The integration of the target culture into ESL learning has also been criticized as an element that disrupts with students’ own schema of their own language and culture (Alptekin, 1993). For example, Alptekin notes that while dog is considered by Anglo-American world as a wonderful pet, Middle East students consider it as dangerous and dirty. While it is valid to note that there are cultural clashes between elements of two different cultures, instead of viewing this as a problem, this could be an opportunity for the learners to open up to the world and make themselves knowledgeable that reality is constructed differently in different locations and cultures. Indeed, that is the only way we can aspire to develop students as global citizens – this is impossible to achieve if students remain constrained with limited or distorted understanding about the rest of the world beyond their immediate reach. Intercultural understanding or cultural awareness might develop open-minded students whose lives get enriched by others’ cultures. Of
course, the intention should not be to change students’ own culture, instead, the goal should be open up students to the world beyond them and to others’ ways of thinking and viewing the world – as a precondition to communicate with and participate in the global interconnected society.

**Data Collection and Methods**

The data for this study comprises of text documents published by Kosovo education authorities, primarily the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and teacher survey data collected through an online survey. The Table below lists the key documents included in the document analysis.

**Table 2 Key documents analyzed for the study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Document</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Source / Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Kosovo Curriculum Framework</td>
<td>MEST (with international technical assistance)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>MEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Framework for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Kosovo</td>
<td>MEST (with international technical assistance)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>MEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Six English Language Curriculum</td>
<td>MEST</td>
<td>(n.d.)</td>
<td>MEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring English 2 (Kosovar Edition)</td>
<td>Tim Harris and Allan Rowe</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Pearson Education, Inc./ Dukagjini / MEST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As per the Table above, the focus was on examining the extent the key documents addressed the issue of teaching culture through teaching English as the first foreign language as is the case in Kosovo’s K-12 curriculum.

The second source of data was collected through an online survey developed by me and distributed to KETNET Facebook page. KETNET stands for Kosovo English Teachers Network established in 2011 with international assistance from the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo and English Language Fellows Program (that included English Language Teachers from the U.S.). KETNET’s mission is to strengthen the abilities of Kosovo’s EFL teachers by providing a network for sharing professional development information (KETNET, n.d.). The survey was made available through Google form on KETNET’s Facebook page for 10 days during August 21-31, 2014. While the KETNET Facebook page had about 1200 fans during the time the survey was shared, presumably most of them English teachers from around Kosovo, only 22 filled out the survey. A number of factors might have contributed to the low number of completed surveys: first this was the period before the school year starts in Kosovo and most teachers might not be available online to complete the survey. School year starts on September 1 in Kosovo. Second, Facebook might have not showed my post on KETNET page to many of those who have liked it because of Facebook’s push to make you pay for your posts so that you reach a larger audience. One technique used to address these issues was to email directly to English teachers I know in Kosovo to let them know about the availability of the survey on KETNET page. The survey, provided in Appendix 1 at the end of the paper, asked ten questions, including background of teachers, multiple choice and text entry items on the topic of teaching target culture in Kosovo. The Table below shows the background data of English teachers who filled out the survey.

Table 3 Background data of English Language Teachers in the study sample, N=22
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Female (73%)</td>
<td>13 Grade 6 (59%)</td>
<td>0-3 Years 11 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Male (27%)</td>
<td>9 Mixed Grades (6-9) (41%)</td>
<td>4-6 years 5 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7-10 years 6 (27%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the gender representation in the sample, this is a good representation of Kosovo English teachers, as well as probably all teachers in middle schools in Kosovo, where female teachers outnumber male teachers. For example, MEST statistics for 2013-2014 school year indicate that there were 51% female teacher in middle schools at Kosovo wide level, but for urban areas the female percentage goes way higher and up to 75% (MEST, 2014). Considering that urban areas in Kosovo have more extensive internet access, I assume that female teachers are the ones far more present online and are also fans of KETNET page and as a result, those are the ones who completed the survey here. It is also worth noting that even though I had a mix of teachers who taught both at Grade 6 (the focus of this study) and others who taught at other grades in middle school, all English teachers use the same textbooks from the same Exploring English series covering Grades 5 through 8. Another note to emphasize is the fact that all English teachers graduate from the public University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo, or from the other public University of Prizren, since MEST has not licensed any teacher education program in other private higher education providers. The variability of teachers in terms of years of teaching was interesting here since the majority belong to the group that just started teaching. Again, this may speak to the bias of the English teachers who are fans of the KETNET page, as a self-selected group, in the sense that younger teachers might be more active on social networks such as Facebook. The findings from the data collected will be shared and discussed mostly qualitatively. For the data collected from the Exploring English 2 textbook, as the main data
source, Moran’s (2001) Knowing framework was used as the guiding data collection protocol relying on the first two dimensions of the framework, referred to as Knowing about and Knowing how, as shown in Figure 2 in the previous section. The textbook was also analyzed to find cultural dimensions as presented by Moran (2001), primarily products and practices, and to a less extent perspectives, communities and persons.

Results and Discussion

Curriculum Frameworks have served as guiding policy documents for subject curriculum development in Kosovo. Frameworks outline the goals and principles of the K-12 education system in Kosovo. That’s why I start this section with findings from my analysis of the two frameworks (MEST, 2001, 2011). The 2001 Framework explicitly emphasize target culture and cultural awareness as key elements of the English language as a first foreign language to be included in pre-university education. It notes that “The acquiring of English language will allow students to get in close contact with the culture and traditions of other nations, to access and share information at an international level and to be part of the today’s interdependencies actively” (MEST, 2001, p. 57). Further, it highlights that “The cultural awareness dimension, which is linked with the studying of English language, will also provide a sound basis for the development of a wider sense of identity and of effective tools for mutual understanding” (MEST, 2001, p.57). More specifically, the overall objectives of studying English in Kosovo were defined as follows:

- to develop understanding (listening and reading), speaking and writing skills at a medium and high levels of performance;
- to develop the capacity to use English as a communication tool in real-life situations and as a working language in different school and out-of-school situations for both reception and production purposes;
- to foster cultural awareness of other cultures and traditions;
• to develop cultural and social attitudes in accordance with the values and principles of an open society;
• to foster integration in the labor market and successful adaptation to new challenges in the social and economic life;
• to foster international relationships and creative and successful engagement in international interconnections of today’s world. (MEST, 2001, p. 58)

The 2001 Framework recognizes the role the target culture should play in studying English in Kosovo context and acknowledges the role of the language in fostering cultural awareness of other cultures and traditions. However, the Framework is not specific about what constitutes the target culture, and there is no specific mentioning of either American or English culture. For more, it emphasizes that English should serve as a window to “other cultures and traditions”. From this perspective, English language has to meet a set of objectives: first, teach students the key linguistic competences, introduce students to the target culture as well as other cultures and traditions, and ultimately prepare students to operate at the international level for today’s interdependent world.

The 2011 Curriculum Framework did not have anything specific related to English language or other foreign languages or the target culture or cultures in which they are embedded. The only references to culture were made as part of the broad aims of education, which among else, include, the development of students’ personal and national identity, statehood and cultural belonging. The 2011 Framework aims to encourage students to cultivate their curiosity and positive attitudes towards difference, in terms of ideas, phenomena, persons and cultures. This is in no way related to English only, however, it highlights the goal for preparing students for being able to live with others and become tolerant to others views and perspectives, including those of other cultures, both locally and internationally.

The Grade Six curriculum for English language was developed immediately after 2001
Framework and thus it was developed based on it, while subject curricula are still being revised to reflect the goals and objectives of 2011 Curriculum Framework. One feature of the Grade Six curriculum is that it is full of references to culture, and shares the aims and objectives for intercultural awareness of 2001 Framework. Specifically, the Grade Six curriculum recognizes that “The development of cultural understanding and linguistic proficiency is a complex process involving a variety of language experiences and exposure to the culture of other people whose language is being studied” (MEST, n.d., p. 32). It also notes that that “[Students] will deepen their understanding of their own culture and other cultures, where English is spoken as a first, second or an international language” (MEST, n.d., p. 32).

One component that is extended in this Grade Six curriculum has to do with the notion that English language goal should be not only to make students aware of other cultures, but also deepen understanding of their own culture. This was a surprise finding as usually the literature on teaching English and its accompanying culture does not include this additional objective of also teaching students of their own culture. In general, this is a task for students’ own language course, such as Albanian, or Serbian, in Kosovo’s case, as well as in other courses such as civic education, history, geography and arts. Further, Grade Six curriculum specifies the key topics that students will study over the year and these are directly taken from the contents of Grade Six textbook for English Language titled Exploring English 2 (Kosovar Edition) (EE2) (see Appendix 2).

The main focus of the EE2 textbook, as highlighted in its Preface, is teaching the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – with an emphasis on oral communication. In addition, it also notes that it combines a strong grammar base with an in-depth coverage of language functions and life skills. Regarding the Kosovar Edition of Exploring
English, it is noted that it:

[P]resents characters and situations in a Kosovar setting with many of the primary characters assuming the identities of members of the local communities. In addition, several characters retain their original identities as Americans or other internationals who are living and working in Kosova. That makes it possible for the local characters to explore the interests and cultures of their foreign guests and the members of the international community are also offered numerous opportunities to discover more about the local culture (Harris & Rowe, 2006, p. x)

As I specify in the following sections, my findings suggest that the EE2 textbook does not live up to the aspirations emphasized here. One of the broad conclusions is that the book promises to do too much and delivers too little – especially with regard to the introduction of students to the target culture(s). For example, the textbook does not have any reference to British culture, as one of the few key cultures in which English is embedded.

In the following section, I first present the main findings in the table form for Chapters 1 and 2, out of the total of 8, and then I elaborate both as well as the remaining 6 as each chapter follows the same format with same characters representing local and international communities. The examples represented here only pertain to the two stages of Moran’s Knowing Framework, namely Knowing About and Knowing How. For the purposes of my discussion here, these two stages are collapsed into one, as it is impossible to differentiate between the two only based on the text entries in the textbook. Table 4 below is a representation of the cultural examples identified in the first two chapters of the EE2 textbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Cultural Dimensions (Moran, 2001)</th>
<th>Examples found in Exploring English 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products</td>
<td>Turkish coffee, yogurt, byrek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Practices
1. Sam always has **byrek** and **yogurt** for breakfast.
2. Mr Belegu: Turkish coffee is my favorite drink.
3. Otis is a vegetarian.
4. Gloria usually has tea, toast, and cheese for breakfast.

### Perspectives
Food…

### Communities
Prishtina, Prizren, City Bank, Grand Hotel, Drini’s Caffe, Fisniku’s garage, Martinoli Restaurant

### Persons
Jeta Hoxha, Sam Brown, Ana, Mr & Mrs. Begu, Mr & Mrs. Limani, Mr & Mrs. Belegu, Jimmy, Linda, Otis, Jeton, Artan, Mentor Hadri, Gloria Cole, Kate, Harry. Marko, Petar, Nada

### Chapter 2

#### Products
International Menu, Prices in Euro, baklava

#### Practices
1. Fisnik’s garage has free coffee for customers, **doughnuts too**.
2. Marko (who drives a local taxi with KS plates) often meets foreign visitors, and he gives them useful information about Prishtina.
3. Faruk (Albanian) and Marko (Serbian) are good friends.

#### Perspectives
Food…

#### Communities
Fisnik’s Garage, School Library in Prishtina, Drini’s Café

#### Persons
Suzi Suzuki, Jimmy Brown, Tino Martinoli, Faruk

**Key:**
*The red items* in the table above refer to local Kosovo cultures, which in this textbook include Albanian, Serbian, and Turkish to represent the multicultural nature of the country.

*The blue items* refers to English culture, which in this textbook primarily pertains to American culture.

*The green items* refer to other international cultures, in this textbook Italian, Spanish, French and Asian.

Burek is a local/regional pastry in the Balkans.

As Table 4 shows, I was able to identify examples for all cultural dimensions from Moran’s (2001) Framework, and as noted under the theoretical framework, these examples concern the first two dimensions of the Knowing Framework, namely: Knowing about and Knowing how. The examples shared in the table above, as well as other cultural elements identified throughout the textbook show some interesting findings. First, in line with the Kosovo
Curriculum Framework (2001) it is clear that students are exposed to a diverse group of international nations (references to American, Italian, French, Asian people, places and food mostly), thus giving them the opportunity to get in touch with cultural products, practices and communities beyond their immediate context.

Second, and this was the most interesting finding from my perspective, the contextualization of most of the events and dialogues in the textbook within Kosovo seems to produce two contradictory outcomes: on one hand, it presents Kosovo as an international place where many international live and share and experience Kosovo culture (e.g. Sam Brown eating byrek), while on the other hand, it also presents a distorted view of what Kosovo is and where it is located (E.g. Characters in the events go swimming in the ocean – while Kosovo is a landlocked country). Further, this second point, limits the opportunities for students to know more places and cultures if the events in the textbook were placed in international countries. In other words, the textbook lacks authenticity.

Third, the local characters in the textbook represent both Albanian (E.g. Jeta, Artan, Mentor) and Serb (E.g. Petar, Nada, Marko) communities. They are shown in the textbook to be good friends with one another and often engage in joint activities. The representation of these two communities is an effort to show Kosovo as a multi-cultural country, while there is no ethnic or religious reference of the two communities presented in the textbook. Further, the events in EE2 with regard to joint activities of Albanians and Serbs represent a policy effort to bring these two communities together through education, knowing that in the ground the situation is completely different, with Albanians and Serbs living completely separate from one another, often under hostile and tense circumstances. The education divide between the two communities is most striking – where Serbs use curriculum and textbooks developed in Serbia, and only
Albanians and non-Serb minorities in Kosovo are exposed to the ESL textbook discussed here.

Fourth, the representation of the target culture is skewed towards the American culture, with only one reference to London, UK, in the whole textbook. Also, there is a representation of other places and cultures other than English ones, so there is no clear sense of one specific target culture. What the textbook tries to do is well in line with the objectives defined for the English language in the 2001 Kosovo Curriculum Framework and in Grade Six Curriculum for English language, where English is viewed as an international language, rather than a language of a specific number of countries. In that spirit, English is promoted as a unifying language of nations, where American, local and other international characters in the events in the textbook communicate with one another in English.

Similar to examples from EE2 Chapters 1 and 2 above, the other six chapters follow the same thread where the same characters interact and create friendships and relationships with one another. Food is mentioned in almost all the chapters. For example in Chapter 3: “Mrs. Brown is a good cook. She can make spaghetti, fried chicken, byrek and baklava and Mr. Brown can eat a whole chicken, a chocolate cake, three hamburgers and mantias”. These two examples again show the mix of American, international and local food that American characters in the textbook can cook or eat. Further, the examples indicate that American are open and have adopted to local Kosovo culture by cooking and eating local foods, thus suggesting to the students that they could do the same if they ever live in another international context. Then, there is a reference to an Italian restaurant in Prishtina, owned by the Martinoli family. They serve Italian food, music and talk about Venice. Further, there is a brief mention of American culture, when Linda wants to go to the Star Cinema (non existent in Kosovo) to watch a western movie called The Last Texan.

If the stories happen in the open environment in Kosovo, the locations include Mother Teresa
Street, Ulpiana or Pishat Street – all references in Prishtina, the Kosovo capital. Regarding weather, Chapter 5 shows examples of use of both Celsius and Fahrenheit degree, and the major cities in Europe and New York are mentioned. Locally, only Celsius degree is used.

Other cultural references are made as characters of the textbook travel around the world. For example, they travel to Europe - mainly Italy, Spain and France - and Sam Brown travels to New York City where he visits some cultural places such as: Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, United Nations and watches a play on Broadway. There is no elaboration or any other additional point made about these places. Further, there is a small conversation between an American from New York and a Kosovar from a small town called Lipian. He says New York is crowded and noisy and the Kosovar replies Lipian is peaceful. Lipjan is the only reference made to a place or location outside Prishtina, in Kosovo.

Overall, the textbook relies heavily on the four language skills and grammar component – a finding that is validated by English teachers through the survey data, as presented in the sections below. Further, the international characters participate in events in the textbook but they don’t share much of their respective cultural background. In a sense, international characters are presented to the students just as one of them – they are shown living in Kosovo, cooking and eating local food, working in Kosovo institutions, and going out and have fun with and similar to local characters. While this is to some extent in line with the goals shared for English language to become global citizens, representing the whole world living and working in the Kosovo context together mutually understanding one another linguistically and culturally, it deprives Kosovo students to experience more of the target culture, something that research shows, students learning a foreign language are interested in (Lenchuk & Ahmed, 2014). Further, the textbook does not introduce students to variations of English language as spoken in several corners of the
world, which might be an intentional decision of those who developed and edited the book, but this might be a misconception that students will develop for English that can be hard to fix at a later grade.

Now, I turn to the results from the English teacher intercultural awareness online survey. The demographic data about the sample who completed the survey was shown in the previous section. Even though I didn’t have a question about gender I was able to identify the gender based on respondents’ names – names in Kosovo take either a feminine or masculine inflection depending on the gender. Here, I present results for questions 5 through 10, as listed in Appendix 1. From these six questions, three were multiple-choice items (Q5, Q7 & Q8), and three were open ended (Q6, Q9 & Q10) where student could insert their written response. More specifically, questions 5 and 6 relate to teacher education programs English teachers went through and how well those programs trained them to teach target culture. Questions 7 and 8 relate to teachers individual practices with regard to textbook use and use of other teaching and learning aids at the classroom. Lastly, questions 9 and 10 asked teachers if they teach culture implicitly, and how they do it, if they do so.

Question 5 asked students: How well did the university prepare you to teach the Target Culture? They could choose one option in a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the best. The following figure shows an histogram of teacher responses and percentages for each one of the options from 1 to 5.

*Figure 2 EFL teacher responses on how well university prepared them to teach Target Culture*
Source: Kosovo Teacher Intercultural Awareness Online Survey (N=22)

As the figure above indicates, the responses were distributed across 4 out of 5 possible answers. None of the teachers gave 1 for this scale, while the largest number of students (7) gave a 3. Based on this graph (if we group together responses of 3, 4 and 5 from the scale), it is obvious that while there were some teachers (roughly 27%) who seem to not be satisfied with the extent to which their teacher education program prepared them to teach target culture, which in this question was defined to mean either British or American culture, the majority indicated either to be satisfied or very satisfied.

Responses teachers gave for Q6 How did your teaching preparation program dealt with the topic of culture in language teaching? were more revealing and to some extent contradict their responses in Q5. This was an open ended question and teachers were asked to insert their input in textual format. First, only 12 out of the 22 teachers answered the question, the majority of them in a brief way, such as “Not much”, inferring that target culture was not part of their
teacher education program. Even among these, only two students noted that they had a course that was targeted to American and British culture. The other 10 either denied that there was any specific training on how to teach target culture or complained about the quality of the provision or professors who taught them courses at their undergraduate studies. For example, a Grade Six teacher emphasized that her teacher education program did not prepare them well for teaching target culture. In her words, “In a very superficial way. I can say that grammar was of the primary focus and culture was something we had to figure out ourselves. But still I believe it depends on professors you happen to have rather than the program design. They have different approaches.” The quote expresses, on one hand, that teacher education program was not very successful in this teacher’s opinion, while on the other hand, reveals the fact that target culture component was more an issue of individual professors rather than a systematic effort to teach prospective English teachers how to integrate target culture in EFL classrooms. Echoing the same concerns, another teacher noted that, “Our teaching preparation program wasn't quite very professional and it wasn't focused too much on culture. […] I hate to say it, but there is too much negligence in our University and there are many professors who don't deserve to be professors.” This quote went beyond rejection of the target culture component as part of the teacher training, rejecting the quality of many professors who teach courses in the EFL program. Again, it is worth noting that written responses are not in line with the responses given in Q5, where most of the teachers indicated their teacher education programs trained them well on average. Here, the responses indicate a darker picture, where current teachers overwhelmingly complain of their teacher education in general, and of the lack of the target culture component in particular.

Question 7 asked English teachers: How often do you rely in your textbook when you teach English? The responses ranged from Rarely, to Sometimes, to Most of the time to Always.
As the figure below shows, none of the respondents noted they rarely use textbook in use for their specific grade.

**Figure 3 Textbook use for teaching English**

Source: Kosovo Teacher Intercultural Awareness Online Survey (N=21)

The data from this question indicate that the vast majority of teachers in the sample either use textbooks most of the time or always. This shows heavy reliance on the textbook as the primary source for teaching and learning English. Considering the limitations the EFL teachers in Kosovo face with the lack of technology integration, reliance on textbook use as a core teaching and learning aid makes sense. From this perspective, students in these classrooms are also limited in their access to both language and culture through limiting learning opportunities provided in the textbook. This indicates the importance of having high quality textbooks in use that appropriately address language and culture components in order that students can benefit from such classroom opportunities. The examples from EE2 textbook above do not guarantee that students studying
English from it will have such quality education experiences for the target culture.

Question 8 asked teachers: If you use other sources for teaching English, what do you use? This was a multiple-choice question, and responses are shown in Figure 4 below.

*Figure 4 Using sources other than textbook for teaching English*

As the graph shows, the majority of teachers in the sample turn to Internet when they look for other sources of teaching and learning materials, while only a few use other sources. This finding is in line with the expectation for the demographic group that participated in the study, since these are most active teachers online. The very fact that they completed an online survey is an indication that they might also use Internet to help their teaching, and the graph in Figure 4 validates this hypothesis, despite the fact that the sample in my study is rather small.

In Question 9, teachers were asked if they teach culture implicitly, and to provide examples if they do so. Only 13 teachers responded to the question, and written responses
indicate that the majority of teachers in the sample either don’t teach culture implicitly or don’t teach it at all. Again, most of the responses were quite brief. One teacher stated, “No, I don’t teach culture”. Another noted that due to the focus of the curriculum on teaching four skills, there is not much time left to spend on culture. She stated: “In grade 6, we don’t teach culture. Most of the lessons are about grammar, so about English culture we don't speak that much.” Another teacher highlighted the reliance on textbooks, stating: “I sometimes teach culture as part of our curriculum. We have to rely on the books and we can't expand too much on other materials due to lack of conditions, especially photocopiers, laptops and projectors.” In this sense, the textbook is both limiting and enabling, depending on its content – the book serve as the main source of teaching and learning opportunities, but if the book is rich with cultural references it enables both teachers and students to expend their understanding of the target culture(s). Another teacher emphasized that,

“Most lessons are designed around everyday conversations or events that take place in different settings like bus station, restaurants, cinema in UK or USA so they always carry with them a sense of culture. Also when talking about a book or a movie or a historical event one cannot avoid teaching culture with it even if one wants to” (Grade Six teacher).

This quote reflects individual approaches that individual teachers share with regard to teaching culture and it echoes the findings of the research that teaching culture is a more teacher-centered rather than system-centered practice (Peiser & Jones, 2014). Therefore, if a teacher is aware of the cultural elements embedded in the textbook content, he/she will be able to open those elements up to students, thus developing their intercultural awareness.

Question 10 is also related to teaching culture and it asked teachers more directly: Do you teach culture while teaching language? Only 12 out of 22 teachers who completed the survey provided some input to the question. Again, most of the teachers said they don’t teach culture,
but some provided meaningful statements that reveal individual differences among teacher when it comes to teaching culture. One Mix Grade teacher said, “I usually explain certain expression and patterns and why they make sense in a cultural context. I try to compare and give examples of their use and connect them with cultural background of native speakers of British English or American English.” This is an example of a teacher being very systematic about teaching specific target cultures, and it would be interesting to have been able to observe her class to see how her strategy plays out in the classroom setting. Another Mix Grade teacher highlighted, “Mostly comparisons in order to describe/make them aware of good things that foreign cultures offer. E.g. Food, How to lead a healthy life, US sports, travel tips in order to avoid "Cultural Shock", etc.” This quote is very particularly in line with the aspirations shared in the 2001 Kosovo Curriculum Framework that calls for preparing students to be part of the interdependent world through English language learning. Another crucial point in the quote above is the positive emphasis of the teacher to make students aware “of the good things that foreign cultures offer.” If implemented in this way, the teacher here would help students to develop positive attitudes towards foreign cultures and project themselves as part of the imagined communities. Another Grade Six teacher said, “Of course, through the language students mostly can come to know about the culture of that nation as well so it is very important that the teacher informs them somehow about culture through language teaching.” This final quote shares the goals of teaching target culture through language teaching by recognizing that the language is embedded in specific cultures. It also restates the goals and principles of 2001 Framework for helping students develop cultural awareness of other nations through studying English.

The overall findings from teacher survey data indicate that English teachers were not specifically trained to teach target culture to their future students. Next, it was shown here that
English teachers primarily rely on textbooks for teaching English to their students, and in cases when they seek other resources, they mostly turn to the Internet. Lastly, the responses on whether they teach culture in their classes indicate a variety among teachers, with only a few stating that they do teach culture as long as cultural references are made in the textbook in use, while most don’t teach culture due to primacy of four language skills and grammar.

As the textbook analysis showed, there are not many rich cultural references made in the EE2 textbook for Grade Six. This leaves teachers who are interested to teach culture either implicitly or explicitly with few resources to do so. The findings here are in line with the literature in the sense that teaching culture, while already occupying decent space in policy documents such as curricula, largely depend on individual teachers’ interest and understanding of the target culture, so that students have opportunities to develop their cultural awareness (Peiser & Jones, 2014). Considering that the sample in the study probably represent the youngest and most engaged English teachers with online resources and international teaching and learning resources, and still they showed that teaching culture is largely not part of their agenda, I can only assume that the rest of teachers follow the same agenda, with the risk of being even less interested or predisposed to integrate culture into their classroom practices.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This case study presented the opportunities for teaching and learning cultural awareness through English language using the Grade Six curriculum, textbook and teachers in Kosovo context. It sought to identify what opportunities Kosovo students in Grade Six have to develop their intercultural competence through studying English language. Further, the study made use of the survey data collected through an online survey with middle school English Language teachers from Kosovo to identify their learning opportunities for teaching culture in their teacher
education programs, sources they use in their current teaching practices and in what way, if any, they teach target culture.

I first laid out some Kosovo background data and how important it is for Kosovo students to learn English as well as its accompanying culture(s). Next, I presented the theoretical framework, namely, Moran’s (2001) Knowing Framework and its five cultural dimensions, including products, practices, perspectives, communities and persons. Then, I provided an in-depth literature review of teaching culture, which offered different views of how target culture is taught, as well as the extent it is currently integrated into language teaching and learning in various contexts. Then, I described my data and methods, and continued with a detailed presentation of results and made a few points as to how the results relate to Kosovo context and back to the literature.

The findings of the study emphasize, in line with the literature claims, that developing students’ cultural awareness is an important component highlighted in Kosovo policy documents (Kosovo Curriculum Frameworks of 2001, and 2011) as well as in the Grade Six English language curriculum. The vision shared in those documents faces challenges when it comes to translating it into specific teaching and learning opportunities for students in the classroom contexts. The analysis of the Grade Six textbook, i.e. Exploring English 2, showed that the cultural references made in the textbook are not particularly embedded in any specific target or cultures. On the contrary, it shows English language as an international language spoken by everyone everywhere, without an authentic cultural component attached to it. In particular, it was interesting to see how almost all events in the textbook are situated in Kosovo and characters of the events, including primarily local, as well as American and other international characters, engage in joint activities and consuming mixed cultural products – mostly related to food, which
is one of the most recurring topic in the textbook. Further, the local characters included in the textbook include both Albanians and Serbs to show the structural multicultural context, and they are involved in joint activities as good friends, while in reality, these two communities continue to be divided along ethnic lines.

Recognizing the data and sampling limitations, the findings from the teacher survey data indicate that there is diversity among them in terms of how they deal with the cultural component of English language. Most of them complained for the lack of learning opportunities for teaching target culture during their undergraduate studies. They further noted that they largely rely on textbook use for teaching English, while most of them emphasized that they either don’t teach culture at all due to primacy of four language skills and grammar or teach it occasionally when time allows or opportunities arise from the textbook in use.

Given the situation identified with English language in Grade Six in Kosovo, with regard to teaching culture for the purpose of developing students’ cultural awareness, I have three main recommendations. First, teaching culture needs to be better represented and integrated in teacher education programs that train English language teachers in Kosovo. Those programs of study need to better reflect the aspirations shared for English language curriculum in the Kosovo Curriculum Frameworks, and English language curricula. Moran’s Framework could be used in these programs to help language teachers explore cultures and compare and contrast with their own so they help their students be reflective about their own culture. Second, the series of textbooks in use for English language need to maintain their emphasis on preparing students for participating and contributing to the interdependent and interconnected world as global citizens, but students would benefit far more if more authentic cultural elements are integrated, especially with specific emphasis on American and UK culture. Third, and this applies not only to Kosovo.
teachers, but to English teachers internationally as well, ESL/EFL teachers need to be more creative in utilizing the textbooks in use as well as other resources available online and offline to introduce students to the target culture(s)’ experiences that help students better understand themselves as well as cultures of those who speak the language they spend a lot of time trying to master. While it is obvious that there is a shortage of materials to teach culture, some of the ways that teacher can employ include critical incidents, experiential activities, cultural simulations, field experiences, role-plays, films, literature, realia, and other authentic materials (Moran, 2001). A deeper exploration of the diversity within the target cultures might give Kosovo learners understanding and skills needed to relate to the diversity within Kosovo. This step could have a better chance to be accomplished if all Kosovo students learnt from the same Kosovo textbooks. The fact that Serb community students learn from textbooks produced in Serbia limits the opportunities for more integrative approaches to teaching and learning for one another in the way that Kosovo curricula and textbooks are intended for. It follows from here that ELS teaching and learning in Kosovo, and integration of intercultural awareness into ESL, could benefit from two major developments: first, better alignment of national curriculum aspirations with ESL textbooks as well as ESL teacher education programs, and second, integrating Serb community into the national education system so that all Kosovo students have a better opportunity to learn both about foreign cultures as well as cultures shared among various Kosovo local communities.

This study has found that there is a misalignment and mismatch between the curricula, teacher education programs, textbook in use, and teachers’ interests to teach target culture. This lack of coherence across different teaching and learning materials and resources affect students’ capacities to develop the cultural awareness so needed and aspired for in the twenty-first century. I contend that students need to develop, what I refer to as, “a culturally-colored outlook” in order
to be able to cope with environments and contexts, near and far, that surround and affect them in so many ways. This culturally-colored outlook requires students to view people and nations not only through their own cultural lenses but through multi-cultural lenses that assist them to consider themselves as well as others part of the same interconnected and highly interdependent world, now and for the years to come.
References


First Draft, Kosovo.


Appendix 1: Kosovo English Teachers Intercultural Awareness Survey

1. What is your name? 

2. What is your email? 

3. Which grade do you teach? 
   - Grade 6
   - Others/ Grades 6-9

4. How long have you been teaching English? 
   - Less than a year
   - 1-3 years
   - 4-6 years
   - 7-10 years
   - More than 10 years

5. How well did the university prepare you to teach the Target Culture? In a scale from 1-5. (5 being the best) 
   Target culture is meant to include the following: American/British culture such as: ways of interactions, greetings, social norms, beliefs, values, holidays, religious celebrations, stereotypes, cultural heritage etc.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

6. How did your teaching preparation program dealt with the topic of culture in language teaching? 

7. How often do you rely in your textbook when you teach English? 
   - Always
   - Most of the time
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely

8. If you use other sources for teaching English, what do you use? 
   - Authentic materials
   - Authentic materials, internet, songs
   - Internet
   - Songs, movies
   - Songs, videos
   - Realia
9. Do you teach culture implicitly? If yes, provide an example: Teaching the target culture implicitly here means teaching culture without being aware that you are teaching it (either English or American culture).

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

10. Do you teach culture while teaching language? If yes, can you describe an example of a lesson when you did so?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 2: Exploring English 2 (Kosovar Edition) Contents
Contents

Chapter One

TOPICS
Daily routines
At the park
Meeting people

GRAMMAR
Simple present tense
Adverbs of frequency

FUNCTIONS
Describing daily habits and routines
Starting a conversation

Chapter Two

TOPICS
Food and drinks
Friends
Clothes

GRAMMAR
Simple present tense vs. present continuous
"Would like"
Possessive pronouns

FUNCTIONS
Offering food
Ordering in a restaurant
Talking about feelings

Chapter Three

TOPICS
Restaurants
Public transportation

GRAMMAR
"Can"
"Have to"

FUNCTIONS
Talking about ability
Talking about obligation
Inviting
Giving explanations

Chapter Four

TOPICS
Locations, where to buy things
Occupations
Daily routines
Clothes

GRAMMAR
Review

FUNCTIONS
Asking about and indicating locations
Borrowing
Taking a bus
Giving explanations
Buying clothes
## Chapter Five

**TOPICS**  
Weather  
Housework  
Your street  

**GRAMMAR**  
Past tense with verb “to be”  
Like to/want to  

**FUNCTIONS**  
Talking about the past  
Describing the weather  
Expressing likes and dislikes  
Giving reasons and explanations  

## Chapter Six

**TOPICS**  
Leisure activities  
Travel  
Parties  
The beach  
Your hometown  

**GRAMMAR**  
Simple past: regular and irregular verbs  
Wh- questions  

**FUNCTIONS**  
Talking about past actions  
Talking about your favorite things  
Agreeing/disagreeing  

## Chapter Seven

**TOPICS**  
Plans for the near future  
Movies  

**GRAMMAR**  
Future with “going to”  
Adverbs of manner  

## Functions

- Expressing intention
- Describing how people do things
- Asking for and giving information
- Giving opinions

## Chapter Eight

**TOPICS**  
Travel  
Department stores  
Physical problems  
Medical appointments  
Job safety  
Telephone communication  
Leisure activities  

**GRAMMAR**  
Review  

**FUNCTIONS**  
Asking about and indicating location  
Talking about daily activities in the present and past  
Expressing intention  
Describing physical problems  
Making appointments  
Writing telephone messages  

## Preview

**GRAMMAR**  
Must  
Future with “will”  
Would  
Should  

## Appendix

- Irregular Verbs
- Tapescript
- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary