Iranian EFL Learners' and Teachers' Attitudes Toward Critical Cultural Awareness Model of Validation

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Abstract

Critical cultural awareness (CCA) as an essential element of intercultural competence has attracted a myriad of scholars in the fields of language teaching, communication studies, cultural studies, gender studies, ethnic studies among others. That is why this study aims to investigate the attitudes of Iranian high school teachers and learners toward critical cultural awareness. The participants of the study included 307 teachers and 359 learners in different high schools in Qazvin. All the participants filled out the Critical Cultural Awareness Questionnaire. The data were then fed into SPSS software and were subjected to Principal Components Analysis. Three factors were extracted and named as CCA in ELT Programs, CCA in ELT Textbooks and Materials, and CCA in General Terms. The participants' responses were analyzed based on these factors. The results of item analysis revealed that both teachers and learners indicated that all cultures should be equally addressed in ELT textbooks and materials. It was also concluded that the teachers' and learners' awareness regarding the integration of culture into mainstream teaching should be raised and they should put more emphasis on culture in their classes. One significant implication for EFL teachers and also syllabus designers is that an intercultural curriculum can enable learners to understand the target materials more efficiently.

Keywords: Critical Cultural Awareness, Culture, EFL Learners, EFL Teachers, Intercultural Communicative Competence

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INTRODUCTION

There is an inseparable relation between learning and teaching a foreign language and a foreign culture. That is, language and culture are linked to each other (Brown, 2000). Indeed, in recent decades, one of the most significant changes in language learning and teaching is the recognition of the cultural dimension. This change has greatly changed the nature of the language teaching experience. The goal of language learning is defined as acquiring foreign language communicative competence, which refers to a person's capability to act in a foreign language in suitable ways (Council of Europe, 2001). Moreover, it is revealed that the objectives of foreign language teaching have shifted from linguistic competence to communicative one and consequently to intercultural competence (Larzén-Östermark, 2008). Studies in the modern foreign language courses promote the intercultural communicative competence frame as an operational way to prepare learners for suitable intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2007; Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Moreover, based on Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence in 1997, it is needed to prepare students with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills in order to join them in the intercultural domain. The reason for an intercultural component in foreign language programs is characterized as a reaction toward the revolution of local and global societies through migration, which forces learners to be prepared better for proper involvement in intercultural discussions (Stewart, 2007). However, as Jedynak (2011) mentioned, some foreign language teachers ignore the fact that effective communication entails intercultural competence, so they tend to disregard intercultural competence in their teaching.

Critical cultural awareness as a constituent component of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997, 2012) has recently received the extensive attention of scholars in such fields of studies as language teaching, cultural research, ethnic investigations, gender, and communication. Textbooks used in the foreign language contexts are principally intended to facilitate language learning, but they may fail to do that because as Derenowski (2011) states, language learning cannot be separated from its cultural context. In addition, "A study of language solely as an abstract system would not support learners in using it in the real world" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 86).

Consistent with Byram's (1997) model, when critical cultural awareness

enhances foreign language acquisition, students try to participate in local and global societies as a result of better cultural awareness. As stated by Osborn (2006), Students become proficient in assessment skills; feel more connected to materials because they can see how the concept of consciousness is connected with real-world problems, and gain experience in practicing critical thinking skills, thus improving the level of intellectual stimulus in foreign language classrooms. So through intercultural communicative competence, the learners will be prepared to communicate properly and successfully with people from various linguistic backgrounds (Fantini, 2007). Consequently, when teachers attend to Critical cultural awareness as a component of intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom, learning tasks must provide opportunities for students to practice the skill of critical evaluation so that they can simplify their ideological perception and engage with others consciously from that perspective (Byram, 1997).

Even though it has been verified that language is interrelated to culture and culture has a significant role in language learning, in general, and foreign language, in particular, the language cannot be learned appropriately without awareness of its cultural dimensions (Byram, 2012). In addition, as stated by Saeidi and Zamanian (2017), for the teachers in Iran, intercultural goals are of the greatest prominence and teachers prefer to obtain communicative competence more through English teaching; nevertheless, their teaching practice has not been based on cultural consciousness and cultural competence improvement yet. They cannot dedicate more teaching time to teach culture, due to the fixed syllabus to be covered during the semester. In addition, the way of teaching the culture of a targeted language was not taken into consideration and instead, their focus was on some limited skills or subskills. In addition, EFL programs and the textbooks offered in Iran do not contain real-life cultural data about English native speakers; therefore, learners who merely get linguistic competence and lack communicative competence will encounter several problems while they want to communicate in English contexts.

Based on the above-mentioned points about the role of culture in the Iranian context and also the significance of cultural awareness and its role in teaching and learning development, the researchers in the current study tried to investigate Iranian high school teachers and learners' attitudes toward critical cultural awareness in foreign language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural Communication

According to Byram (2009a), successful intercultural communication depends on the attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to withdraw judgment and mistrust with respect to others' meanings, beliefs, and behaviors, a willingness to withhold belief in one's own meanings and behaviors and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the addressee. It should be noted that there is no absolute need to hold positive attitudes. As a result, attitudes refer to the capacity to view the world impersonally.

Byram comments on skills of interpreting and relating and refer to "the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and to relate it to documents from one's own" (Byram, 2009b, p. 91). Discovery and interaction are referred to as the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (Byram, 2009b, p. 92). The participants need to be active in intercultural communication for both skills. As a result, intercultural competence includes several domains: *affective* (attitudes), *cognitive* (knowledge), and *skills*. Byram also adds intercultural competence to communicative competence and introduces an intercultural communicative competence model in language teaching. Figure 1 represents Byram's model:
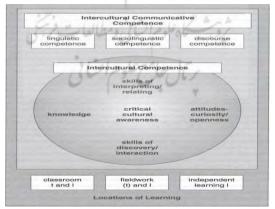

Figure 1: Byram's (1997) Model of the Intercultural Communicative Competence

Barriers in Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication has faced several barriers including seeking similarities, uncertainty reduction, withdrawal, stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism (Samovar & Porter, 2004, pp. 284-300):

First, people try to socialize with others with whom they have some features in common; however, when they meet people with background differences, they may show resistance to join them (Gudykunst, 1993).

Second, although it is hard to lower the level of uncertainty about the speakers of other cultures (Samovar & Porter, 2004), It is possible to do by foretelling their possible behaviors (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

Third, when people see they have nothing in common with other cultures, they may step back from intercultural encounters (Neuliep, 2006; Samovar & Porter, 2004; Sandhu, 1994).

Fourth, stereotyping occurs when people attempt to expect and predict other people's reactions for decreasing the uncertainty of others. This could become a barrier in intercultural communication as it has an "oversimplified, over-generalized, and/or exaggerated nature" (Samovar & Porter, 2004, p. 33).

Fifth, "Prejudice refers to negative attitudes toward other people that are based on faulty and inflexible stereotypes" (Lustig & Koester, 1999, p. 153). "It is the judgments people make about others without sufficient evidence to substantiate the opinions" (Bolgatz, 2005, p. 27) and this may affect developing a sound intercultural competence.

Sixth, Gillborn (1995, p. 5) quotes Barker as viewing racism as "an irrational hatred or fear of another racial group". Racism is referred to defending and protecting one's customs and traditions at encountering people with different cultural backgrounds (Barker as cited in Gillborn, 1995).

Seventh, some people think that their own culture is superior to that of others' (Jandt, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1999) and judge others by the standards of their own culture (Jandt, 2001). One of the characteristics of ethnocentrism that hinders effective intercultural communication is that it tends to magnify differences rather than similarities in other cultures (Lustig & Koester, 1999).

The Importance of Teaching Culture in EFL Classroom

The integration of culture in EFL classes has gained momentum since about two

decades ago. This was due to a shift of focus from the linguistic form to the communicative aspect of ELT when intercultural communication theory developed in the 1990s and a list of educational aims were formulated for the encouragement of tolerance to unfamiliar, promotion of positive attitudes toward others, and reduction in cultural biases (Prodromou, 1992).

In the 1990s, when the integration of cultural factors into the language teaching process became important, content received priority in ELT and as Risager (2007) mentions, the cultural aspect of language teaching became more and more popular since it can promote more opportunities to interact with other cultures. At the beginning of the 1990s, developed by Byram, Zarate, and Neuner (1994), the concept of socio-cultural competence, namely the 'intercultural speaker' also led to a general awareness of cultural differences. This approach helped learners view another culture not as a threat but as something that should be understood, accepted, and tolerated (Larzén-Östermark, 2008).

The issue of teaching second language culture in English teaching has been a bone of contention. Those who believe that L2 culture is something inseparable in language teaching (Jiang, 2006; Jiang, 2009; Lazaraton, 2003; Lessard-Clouston, 1996) offer various reasons including its role in increasing intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Piasecka, 2011; Scarino, 2010; Kramsch, 2004), motivation (Gence & Bada, 2005), knowledge of home culture (McKay, 2003), genuineness (Derenowski, 2011; Kramsch, 1993) and general knowledge (Gence & Bada, 2005), to mention a few. Contrary to them, some warn about the repercussions of culture teaching in English classes (Alptekin, 1993; Byram & Grundy, 2003; Modiano, 2001; McKay, 2003) through expounding on issues related to linguistic and cultural imperialism and colonialism (Pennycook, 1994), globalization of English, and the development of English language as an international language which challenges the ownership of English and the traditional concept of "target culture" (Kachru, 1986; Modiano, 2001; McKay, 2003; Volkmann, 2011).

Not unlike other contexts, the status of culture in English language teaching and its impacts on language teachers and learners have been investigated widely in the Iranian context of English education (Sharifi, Motallebzadeh & Naeini, 2017). For instance, Pishghadam and Sadeghi (2011) investigated the relationship between English teachers' cultural attachment and gender, age, teaching experience, marital status, and being multilingual by using the HCAS questionnaire. The result showed

that participants with different age ranges, or with different languages, and different marital statuses, were significantly different in their cultural attachment. Hassanzadeh and Alizadeh (2018) also reported that teachers' exposure to the English language affects their cultural identity. Of course, this is a two-sided effect and the effect of culturally-based materials has been proved to be effective in EFL learners' affective traits and language learning (e.g., Karimi & Nafissi, 2017).

Some other researchers also investigated the role of native culture in the EFL setting by using the HCAS questionnaire. For example, Tajbakhsh and Ghapanchi (2017) investigated to reveal any significant difference in home-culture attachment between Arabic and English teachers. The results showed that both Arabic and English teachers' attachment to their home culture was at an average level meaning they had no complete attachment either to their native or target culture in their language classes.

Naji Meidani, Pishghadam, and Ghazanfari (2015) compared the attitudes of three groups of instructors, learners, and parents toward the role of native culture in teaching English. In this regard, a questionnaire was given to 425 participants to measure their attitudes toward the three constructions of the domination of English language and culture, the teaching of the culture of English speakers, and the place of home culture in English classes. The results showed that concerning the first construction, teachers had a more critical attitude than the other two groups, while in the case of the second and third constructions, parents had a more critical attitude than instructors and learners.

Critical Cultural Awareness

The intercultural approach aims to boost learners' positive attitudes and avoid stereotypes and prejudices. They should learn about their own culture and behaviors in order to perceive these aspects from an interlocutor's viewpoint (Byram 1997, p. 34). In this way, it is expected that learners will undergo stages of cultural adaptation. This will finally lead to Byram's term, critical cultural awareness, related to relativizing individuals' cultural perspective that means analyzing the products of both cultures on an evaluative basis. Byram and Guilherme (2000) defined critical cultural awareness as the ability to assess critically in line with some obvious principles, viewpoints, practices, and products in an individual's own and other cultures and nations and also as "the ability to

critically analyze one's social and political world on multiple levels" (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 19). As Byram (1997) points out, the purpose of this awareness consists of the ability to classify and understand explicit or implicit beliefs in documents and actions in one's own and other cultures and to cooperate and mediate in intercultural interactions through some clear criteria and based upon one's knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

In their study, Soodmand Afshar and Yousefi (2019) attempted to find out how EFL teachers viewed critical cultural awareness, concluding that their perception was on an average scale, while the Ph.D. participants' perception of cultural awareness was at a higher level than that of the MA and BA participants. They compared private language institute teachers with their state-run school counterparts, revealing that the former had a higher level of perception in critical cultural awareness.

Culture and Attitude

Attitudes are internal states that influence the learners' favorable /unfavorable or positive/negative response to an object. According to Stern (1983, pp. 376-377), there are three types of attitudes in the L2 learning situation: 1) Attitudes toward the target community (group-specific attitudes), 2) Attitudes toward that specific language; and 3) General attitude toward languages and language learning.' These attitudes are under influence of the learners' personality types (E.g.: ethnocentric or authoritarian). The particular social environment in which language learning happens is influential, too (Ellis, 1988).

In addition, Brown (1994) sees attitudes as learners' beliefs toward the target language as well as their culture members. Gardner and Lambert (1972, as cited in Zeinivand, Azizifar, & Gowhary, 2015) maintain that psychological preparation is a crucial step in adopting various behavioral aspects (e.g. ethnocentric tendencies) of another linguistic-cultural group. Further, according to De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2005, p. 72), "teachers, learners, and researchers will all agree that a high motivation and a positive attitude toward a second language and its community help second language learning" (Zeinivand et al., 2015).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Foreign language education is undoubtedly a cross-cultural issue. However, it is only in recent decades that the teaching of culture has been emphasized as a central component of foreign language classrooms. Today, the literature on foreign language teaching is full of works on cultural awareness in English as a foreign language (Yeganeh, & Raeesi, 2015). Critical cultural awareness encourages language teachers to provide learning opportunities to guide students in observing the clear connection between the classroom curriculum and real-world issues when training critical thinking skills throughout the process. Therefore, the improvement of critical cultural awareness as the main objective of Foreign language education is necessary as Phuntsog (1998) stated that the challenge of culturally responsive teaching is to help EFL teachers discover their negative assumptions and stereotypes. And in order to solve these communication difficulties in the EFL classroom, the design of the curriculum must allow students to have a deep understanding of the target language and culture. Although the idea of cultural awareness in the EFL teaching and learning process was the focus of many researchers (Shemshadsara, 2011, Cakir, 2006, Savu, 2006) and they have all agreed on the importance of critical cultural awareness, based on the researchers' knowledge, there is a dearth of studies that investigated the attitudes of both EFL teachers and learners in this domain in Iran. So to achieve the main goals of the study the following research questions were asked:

1. What are Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward critical cultural awareness?
2. What are Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward critical cultural awareness?

METHOD

Participants

To collect data from the male and female EFL teachers about their attitudes toward Critical Cultural Awareness, the researchers consulted 307 teachers (140 males and 167 females) in different senior high schools in Qazvin. They were asked about their attitudes regarding foreign language culture and the extent to which culture was covered in mainstream Iranian senior high school context. They ranged in age

from 26 to 39 years old.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Teachers

	Gender					
	Male			**Female**		
Frequency	140			167		
Education	BA	MA	PhD	BA	MA	PhD
Frequency	101	32	7	117	42	8

The second group of participants included school students who expressed their attitudes toward Critical Cultural Awareness. The researchers consulted 359 students (169 males and 190 females) in different senior high schools in Qazvin. They were all studying in government-run schools. The high schools in Iran follow predetermined syllabi introduced by the Ministry of Education, which normally gives little room for critical thinking and awareness. They ranged in age from 16 to 18 years old and a majority of them had no prior English learning experiences in institutes. All the participants of the study were chosen based on convenient sampling.

Instrumentation

The *Critical Cultural Awareness Questionnaire* developed by Atai, Babaii, and Taghipour (2017) was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contains 37 items covering different cultural perspectives, attitudes toward foreign language culture, ELT textbooks worldwide, and the place of local and national cultures.

The same questionnaire was administered to the student participants of the study. However, for clear understanding, the translated version of the questionnaire was utilized for the students. The translated version was first sent to two experts to make sure that its content represents the same feature in the English version. As we reported above, the reliability of the questionnaire was found acceptable. However, since the translated version of the questionnaire was used for the students, its validity needed to be reassured. To make sure of the validity, confirmatory factor

analysis was done (see the Results section). The results of CFA suggested the exclusion of 8 items, leaving the final questionnaire with 29 items.

The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated to be .75 by Atai et al. (2017). The moderated versions used in this study had Cronbach's ala of .79 for the Persian form and .82 for the English form. These indices are acceptable to good indices, indicating that the questionnaires could be considered a reliable tool for the main study. Ideally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .70 (De Vellis, 2003). The reliability was also estimated for students and teachers separately, and their results were found acceptable, too (Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability Index for Critical Cultural Awareness Questionnaire

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Students (Persian form)	.791	29
Teachers (English form)	.819	29
Total (Persian and English)	.853	29

Data Collection Procedure

This questionnaire was administered to the teachers and the learners to seek their attitudes and awareness regarding the position of culture in the mainstream ELT context in Iranian senior high schools. Both groups were given about 30 minutes to fill in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

After the distributed questionnaires were collected, the data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS (version 24) and AMOS (version 24) software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were presented to delineate the cultural awareness of language teachers and learners at different senior high schools in Qazvin, Iran. The data from the questionnaires were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis through the Maximum Likelihood (ML) extraction model in IBM AMOS to make sure of the construct validity. Then the results were compared between the teachers and students.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

As mentioned in the method section, a translated version of the questionnaire was administered to the students. To make sure that the translated version is equivalent enough to the original version, confirmatory factor analysis was run. The raw data obtained from both teachers and students were included in the analysis. Then, using the measurement invariance test, the two groups' results were compared to makes sure that they are not different at the model level.

Initially, the adequacy of the sample size was checked through Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) criterion. The KMO value turned out .955, which is safely higher than the recommended value of KMO $\geq$.6 (Kaiser, 1974). Moreover, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Next, the confirmatory factor analysis was run in AMOS, using the pattern proposed by Atai et al. (2017). The standardized and unstandardized estimate results are reported in Table 3.

Table 2: Standardized and Unstandardized estimates for the initial CFA model

			Unstandardized				Standardized
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate
Q19	<---	Program	1.000				.821
Q36	<---	Program	.599	.038	15.826	.000	.569
Q34	<---	Program	.683	.037	18.673	.000	.651
Q26	<---	Program	.165	.034	4.789	.000	.187
Q29	<---	Program	.702	.037	18.995	.000	.660
Q12	<---	Program	.704	.031	22.505	.000	.749
Q10	<---	Program	.018	.031	.594	.553	.023
Q14	<---	Program	.846	.035	24.520	.000	.795
Q24	<---	Program	.203	.035	5.817	.000	.226
Q27	<---	Program	.786	.034	22.827	.000	.756
Q20	<---	Program	.012	.033	.357	.721	.014
Q07	<---	Program	.075	.032	2.353	.019	.093
Q21	<---	Program	.743	.038	19.499	.000	.673

			Unstandardized				Standardized
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate
Q11	<---	Program	.694	.031	22.248	.000	.743
Q02	<---	Program	.545	.036	15.284	.000	.553
Q05	<---	Program	.861	.036	24.259	.000	.789
Q09	<---	Program	.640	.030	21.077	.000	.714
Q03	<---	Program	.748	.035	21.083	.000	.714
Q06	<---	Program	.801	.038	21.344	.000	.721
Q04	<---	Program	.789	.035	22.594	.000	.751
Q30	<---	Textbook	1.000				.787
Q18	<---	Textbook	.903	.045	20.213	.000	.723
Q17	<---	Textbook	.860	.044	19.644	.000	.706
Q15	<---	Textbook	.836	.044	18.975	.000	.686
Q25	<---	Textbook	.543	.041	13.108	.000	.497
Q22	<---	Textbook	.813	.043	18.979	.000	.686
Q35	<---	Textbook	.774	.044	17.413	.000	.639
Q31	<---	Textbook	.076	.038	2.016	.044	.080
Q16	<---	Textbook	.307	.043	7.150	.000	.281
Q23	<---	Textbook	.839	.044	18.930	.000	.685
Q28	<---	Textbook	.896	.044	20.409	.000	.728
Q32	<---	Textbook	.806	.044	18.320	.000	.667
Q13	<---	Textbook	.040	.037	1.079	.281	.043
Q37	<---	General	1.000				.602
Q08	<---	General	.961	.062	15.387	.000	.734
Q01	<---	General	7.750	.448	17.292	.000	.877
Q33	<---	General	7.238	.438	17.117	.000	.867

As the results in Table 3 show, 8 items had non-significant unstandardized estimates and/or standardized estimates below 0.4. These items were excluded from the questionnaire as they were endangering the convergent validity. Therefore, the first factor, *CCA in ELT Program,* was left with 15 items; the second factor, *CCA in Textbooks and Material* was left with 10 items, and the third factor *CCA in General Terms*, kept its all four items. The factors, their items, and their average variance explained are:

1) *CCA in ELT Program:* This factor includes 15 items (items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19, 21, 27, 29, 34, and 36) and the items explained 46.81% of the factors' variance;

(2) *CCA in ELT Textbooks and Materials*: This factor includes 10 items (items 15, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 28, 30, 32, and 35) and the items accounted for 51.06% of the factors' variance;

(3) *CCA in General Terms*: This factor included only four items (items 1, 8, 33, and 37) and the items accounted for 60.55% of the factors' variance.

The final questionnaire had acceptable model fit values: $\chi^2/df = 830.895/375 = 2.216$; RMSEA = .058; CFI = .914; and TLI = .907. These results according to Kline (2016) are acceptable to excellent.

Finally, the measurement invariance was inspected to make sure that teachers and students have the same understanding of the questions in the model. The results showed no significant difference ($\Delta\chi^2_{(89)} = 101.11$, p = .171 > .05) between the constrained ($\chi^2_{(750)} = 916.57$) and unconstrained ($\chi^2_{(839)} = 1017.68$). Therefore, the researchers were assured that the two versions of the questionnaire (English and Persian) were equally measuring the same model.

Investigating the Teachers' CCA

Now that the questionnaire enjoyed acceptable reliability and validity indices, it was used to answer the first research question. First, the EFL teachers' awareness regarding each factor is reported.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the 3 Factors for the Teachers

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Factor1	307	3.00	4.60	3.8039	.21494
Factor2	307	3.00	4.60	3.8414	.27927
Factor3	307	1.80	4.55	3.0923	.46512
Total	307	2.94	4.15	3.5792	.21251

This table shows that the EFL teachers' critical awareness toward the second factor which is related to ELT Textbooks and Materials is at the highest level and their awareness toward the third factor, which is critical cultural awareness in general terms, is at the lowest. Their awareness toward the first factor, critical cultural

awareness in ELT programs, is a little lower than that of the second factor. It should be mentioned the teachers' performance on the third factor, compared to the other two factors, is the most heterogeneous (SD= .47).

The mean for the first factor reported in Table 3 was 3.80 and their recorded answers to this factor were fairly homogeneous (SD= .22). The item analysis indicates that the teachers' performances are closer to 4 indicating that they agreed with most of the items in factor 1. It can be concluded that, on average, the teachers' awareness of this factor, Critical cultural awareness in ELT Programs, is fairly high.

The mean for the second factor reported in Table 3 was 3.84, which was the highest, and the performance of the teachers in this factor was fairly homogeneous (SD= .28). The item analysis indicates that the teachers' answers are closer to 4 indicating that they agreed with most of the items in factor 2. It can be concluded that, on average, the teachers' awareness of this factor, critical cultural awareness in ELT Textbooks and Materials, is fairly high, and it is higher than that of the first factor.

The mean for the third factor reported in Table 3 was 3.09, which was the lowest, and the performance of the teachers in this factor was the most heterogeneous (SD= .47). The item analysis indicates that the teachers' answers were heterogeneous and they had different attitudes towards each item.

The results of item analysis revealed the items that received the lowest means by teachers were item 28 (loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 1.29, item 35 (also loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 1.31, and item 24 (loaded under factor 1) with the mean of 1.41. The highest mean values were obtained from item 14 (loaded under factor 1) with the mean of 4.92, item 15 (loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 4.91, item 16 (loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 4.89. In other words, the results show that only items in factor 1 and factor 2 were among the items with the lowest or highest means. The results and the items are presented in Table 4. The table can easily reflect the beliefs, attitudes, and preferences of language teachers regarding culture.

Table 4: The Highest and Lowest Items Selected by the Teachers

No.	Items	Mean	SD	factor
28	The focus of ELT textbooks and materials should be on English cultural issues.	1.29	.46	2
35	The current globally-produced ELT textbooks and materials fail to address English language learners' local culture.	1.31	.46	2
24	To have effective communication, English language learners should forget about their own culture.	1.41	.49	1
14	English language teachers should mistrust the idea that English as a global language is neutral.	4.92	.27	1
15	All cultures (i.e. the cultures of both native and non-native speakers of English) should have an equal status in ELT textbooks and materials.	4.91	.30	2
16	The current globally-produced ELT textbooks and materials promote an American and British ideal lifestyle (i.e., Dream style of life).	4.89	.30	2

Investigating the Learners' CCA

For the second research question, which investigated Iranian EFL) learners' attitudes toward critical cultural awareness, the responses of 359 male and female learners were analyzed. The same procedure was followed for analyzing the learners' responses to the questionnaire. The three factors extracted from CFA were used as a basis to analyze the learners' data. The EFL learners' awareness regarding each factor is reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the 3 Factors for the Learners

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Factor1	359	2.87	4.20	3.6201	.21821
Factor2	359	1.80	3.90	2.6869	.32738
Factor3	359	2.50	4.75	3.8740	.33045
Total	359	2.64	4.03	3.3936	.21009

Table 5 indicates that the EFL learners' critical awareness toward the second factor which is related to ELT Textbooks and Materials is at the lowest level. This was somehow expected since normally students' and learners' knowledge and awareness of teaching materials is limited. The learners' awareness toward the third factor which is critical cultural awareness in general terms is at the highest. This performance is exactly the opposite of the teachers' performance. The learners' awareness regarding the first factor, which is critical cultural awareness in ELT Programs, is a little lower than that of the third factor. It is worth mentioning that the performance of the learners on the three factors is approximately the same and mostly homogeneous indicated by the very low standard deviations.

The mean for the first factor was 3.62 and the answers of the learners in this factor were fairly homogeneous (SD = .22). The item analysis indicates that the learners' performances ranged between 3 and 4 indicating that they either had no idea or agreed with most of the items in factor 1. It can be concluded that, on average, the learners' awareness of this factor, critical cultural awareness in ELT Programs, is average.

The mean for the second factor was 2.69, which was the lowest, and the performance of the learners in this factor was fairly homogeneous (SD= .32). The item analysis indicates that the learners' performances are closer to 2 indicating that they disagreed with most of the items in factor 2. It can be concluded that, on average, the learners' awareness of this factor, critical cultural awareness in ELT Textbooks and Materials, is very low.

The mean for the third factor reported was 3.87, which was the lowest, and the performance of the learners in this factor was fairly homogeneous (SD= .33). The item analysis indicates that the learners' performances are closer to 4 indicating that they mostly agreed with the items in factor 3. It can be concluded that, on average, the Iranian EFL learners' general views and attitudes toward critical cultural awareness, are high.

The results of the item analysis revealed that the lowest items selected by the learners were item 23 (loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 1.32, item 17 (also loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 1.35, and item 18 (also loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 1.44. The highest items chosen by the learners were item 15 (loaded under factor 2) with the mean of 4.70, item 9 (loaded under factor 1) with the mean of 4.04, item 37 (loaded under factor 3) with a mean of 4.56. The results and the items are presented in Table 8. It can be argued that all the lowest items

were loaded under the second factor which also had the lowest mean. It can also be mentioned that both teachers and learners selected item 19 as one of the items with the highest mean. It means that both of them believed that all cultures should be equally addressed in ELT textbooks and materials. Table 6 can easily reflect the beliefs, attitudes, and preferences of language learners regarding culture.

Table 6: The Highest and Lowest Items Selected by the Learners

No.	Items	Mean	SD	factor
23	ELT textbooks and materials should include English language learners' local cultural experiences.	1.32	.47	2
17	Local materials developers are better choices for developing ELT textbooks and materials.	1.35	.47	2
18	As globally-produced ELT textbooks and materials just focus on English culture, English language teachers need to design supplementary materials relevant to their local context	1.44	.56	2
15	All cultures (i.e. the cultures of both native and non-native speakers of English) should have an equal status in ELT textbooks and materials.	4.70	.45	2
37	The spread of English culture around the world is a necessarily beneficial phenomenon.	4.56	.50	3
9 (Reversed)	Learning the cultural norms of native speakers of English is not necessary for English language learners.	4.04	.68	1

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate Iranian language teachers' and learners' attitudes toward critical cultural awareness. In the related literature, it is probable to come across numerous scales, which examine the perception of teachers about Critical Cultural Awareness. Nevertheless, the focus of most of these instruments was merely on language teachers rather than language learners. To achieve this goal, the researchers of this study decided to work on the Critical Cultural Awareness Questionnaire developed by Atai, et al. (2017) and validate its translation for students, as well. As the results of the CFA, the same three

components used by Atai, et al. (2017) made the basis. The extraction of 8 items resulted in an acceptable to excellent goodness of fit which showed measurement invariance for teachers (the modified English version) and students (modified Persian version). These results confirm that the components introduced by Atai et al. (2017) provide a reliable and valid construct for measuring critical cultural awareness. Indeed, in this study, CCA in ELT Programs containing 15 items, CCA in ELT Textbooks containing 10, and CCA in General Terms containing four items. The reliability of the moderated instruments was also acceptable (.79 for students, .82 for teachers, and .85 for both). In fact, by omitting 8 items, our study reached a higher index of reliability for the English version (i.e., 0.82) compared to the one obtained by Atai et al. (i.e., 0.75).

The results of the study regarding EFL teachers' critical awareness toward the ELT Textbooks and Materials is at the highest level while their awareness regarding critical cultural awareness in general terms is at the lowest. It can be stated that the challenge with critical cultural awareness in general terms lies in the fact that values, beliefs, and attitudes are intangible, and therefore cannot be easily introduced by a teacher. Textbooks also rarely contain any information on values, attitudes, and beliefs in L2 culture, making the teacher's task even more challenging. This is in line with Damen's (1987, as cited in Yeganeh, & Raeesi, 2015) view that classroom-based learning can only imitate and incorporate cultural facts rather than the active view of culture. The results are in line with Siddiqi (2011) who stated that the intercultural contents used in the textbooks provide new opportunities to help learners' awareness about the world around them and assist them to target language in real-life circumstances to develop a sense of global social conscience.

In addition, as teachers do not have any freedom in selecting materials and the presented materials are proposed by the schools' or institutes' syllabuses, they stated that cultural contents included in the current textbook are enough at the moment and their focus is still on language teaching more than cultural teaching. Their awareness toward ELT programs is a little lower than that of the ELT Textbooks and Materials. It can be stated that although culture in ELT is still regarded as one of the controversial subjects, today language teachers should act as flag-bearers who have to be sophisticated enough in order to be able to meet the necessities of the learners in today's rapidly changing world. So teacher education programs should be reread and may be revised in a way that can take intercultural

communication into account. As soon as language teachers become more well-informed and experienced in this domain, they will be more able to incorporate cultural practices in their teaching. Concerning critical cultural awareness in ELT Textbooks and Materials, it can be stated most of the time teachers try to teach culture through the textbook and they seldom provide additional materials for culture teaching that can be since teachers have little freedom in selecting their teaching materials by their own due to organizational reasons.

EFL learners' critical awareness toward ELT Textbooks and Materials is at the lowest level while their awareness toward the critical cultural awareness in general terms is at the highest level. The learners' awareness regarding is critical cultural awareness in ELT Programs, is a little lower than that of the general terms. Most of the students favored learning the target culture to communicate with people from other cultures and consequently have better points of view of the target language. Besides, most students stated that presenting cultural elements, in general, enables them to sympathize with the values and provides an understanding of the language patterns as well as the form and style of their languages in which the culture is highly mirrored. When students think of culture, the emphasis on the communicative features, daily lifestyle, food, clothes, art, and traditions got higher preference by the speakers for inclusion in language classrooms. Indeed, as learners now are interested in discovering the contextual meanings through suitable content, realia, pictures, and videos, their perception regarding CCA in General Terms is high while their perception regarding CCA in ELT Textbooks and Materials are low that can be since some aspects of culture such as social, institutional, economic, and political that trigger people's behaviors are not included in their coursebook.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was conducted as an attempt to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes toward Critical Cultural Awareness. The results indicated that the EFL teachers' critical awareness toward ELT Textbooks and Materials was at the highest level and their awareness towards critical cultural awareness in general terms was at the lowest. It was also found that the EFL learners' critical awareness toward ELT Textbooks and Materials was at the lowest level which was somehow expected since normally students and learners' knowledge and awareness in

teaching materials is limited. The learners' awareness toward critical cultural awareness in general terms was at the highest. This performance was exactly the opposite of the teachers' performance. Therefore, it was concluded that the teachers' awareness regarding some aspects should be raised and they should pay more attention to culture in their classes. It can also be concluded that learners should be more familiarized with cultural elements in the textbooks.

Also, the results of item analysis revealed that teachers and learners shared the same opinion regarding the position of culture in ELT textbooks and materials; and they partly shared the view that it is necessary to learn about the source and target cultures as they may complement each other in certain aspects. Through the intercultural curriculum, EFL teachers and syllabus designers can support learners in collecting pieces of evidence about L2 culture. Teachers can also use other materials to supplement the series and provide the learners with appropriate cultural and intercultural information.

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