

Perceptions of Students in Turkish Education Department About Folk Culture Course

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ABSTRACT This study aims to analyze the perceptions of students in Turkish Education Department about folk culture classes. The study was conducted among 24 fourth grade students from the Turkish Education Department of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University during the first educational term of 2013-2014. Semi-structured and non-leading interview forms are used as data gathering tools. Data are analyzed using the content analysis technique, and the findings section is constructed under the themes found. At the end of the study, it is revealed that students of Turkish Education Department choose this folk culture subject which is obligatory and given by academicians who are the experts of this field, and contains the elements of this culture (clothes, games, traditions, foods, etc.), as they want to learn about the culture in which they live and also don't want to be alienated from it.

INTRODUCTION

Less than half a century ago, Canadian Sociology Professor Marshall McLuhan (2011) coined the term "global village" in 1962, which is an idea "the new world order," which is at the forefront of the topics Futurists mostly discuss. The terms "globalization," "information age," and "information society" used to describe this period have become lexical symbols referring to much simpler and faster international relations than in the past. Furthermore, the concepts that we once used have been forgotten or changed.

Jacques Charpentreau and René Kaës cited an old Chinese proverb, "If I were a Chinese emperor, I would start by writing a dictionary first because misery arises from conflicts over the meanings of words" in their work titled *La Culture Populaire En France* (1965). They state that the word *culture* has lost its meaning. Although Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn found 164 different definitions of culture gathered from many scientific sources, the fact that the word *culture* has lost its meaning is thought-provoking. However, Gray emphasizes that the word *culture* has more definitions than it should have and none of these definitions is as comprehensive and accurate as it should be (Oguz 2010). Even if *culture* has not fully lost its meaning, many cultural notions are about to lose their

meanings or have already lost it. In the globalizing world, there have emerged many new culture types (Arizpe 2015), namely global culture, popular culture, mass culture, folk culture, sub-culture, and counter-culture (Adorno 2001; Bausinger 1990; Featherstone 1990; Gans 2008; Hebdige 1995; Storey 2006). Culture is also identified in terms such as "rock'n'roll culture, American culture, Turkish Culture, youth culture, modern culture, upper culture, vulgar culture, fine culture (poetry and fine work), coarse culture, tabloid culture, lout culture, Islam culture, and corporate culture. Worse still, some conservative approaches today put not only sports but also whole cultural activities into the same pot together with leisure activities (entertainment, recreation, weekend activities" (Erdogan and Alemdar 2005).

Turkey has been undergoing a rapid cultural change, as is the case for other countries. This is where two concepts come out against folk culture (especially Turkish folk culture): globalization and popular culture (Sakalli 2014).

Harold (2012: 359-360) defines popular culture as follows: the culture which spreads over a wide area and is believed and/or consumed by a significant number of people with ideological, social, or material aspects. This popularity takes the place of distinctness that constitutes the essence of folk culture. As an anthropologist and

folklorist, knowledgeable about the traditions and oral cultures of the natives of the Pacific and French-speaking Canadians, Marie Leach explains this situation in his work titled *Standard Dictionary of Folklore: Mythology and Legend* as follows (Le Utley 2005):

Whenever a lullaby is sung to a child; whenever a tongue twister or a riddle or a counting out time is used in nursery or school; whenever sayings or proverbs are told; whenever a mother shows her daughter how to sew, spin, weave, embroider, bake an old-fashioned pie; whenever a farmer on the ancestral plot trains his son in the ways long familiar; whenever a village craftsman, carpenter, carver, shoemaker, blacksmith trains his apprentice in the use of tools; whenever in many callings the knowledge, experience, wisdom, skill, habits and practices of the past are handed down by examples or spoken world, by the elder to the new generation, without reference to book, print, or school teachers, then we have folklore in its perennial domain... It is old-fashioned, gray or white-headed perhaps, fast receding from its former strongholds under the impact of modern progress and industry; it is the born opponent of the serial number, the stamped product, and the patented standard."

Researchers believe that academicians studying culture education are divided into two groups on the status of folk culture in the face of popular culture. According to the first group, popular culture has a construct that motivates people to consume, or make them want where they cannot. This aspect creates a cultural industry by becoming a means of the industrial market. It offers freedom to people within its own borders by taking hold of them and thusly puts people into deadlock and crisis (Cosgun 2012: 838). This group considers popular culture as a culture type undermining the values of folk culture, standardizing people, and drawing them away from their essences. Their understanding of folk culture education is focused on the fields that need to be revived again against the values demolished by popular culture.

Erdogan (1999) summarizes the perspective of this group, of which he is a member, as follows:

Popular culture today, unfortunately, is another important value usurped within property relations. It takes its capital from the public, reformats it for its own good and offers it to the

public in a new format. Folk culture, which gives the popular culture its classical meaning and which has not yet been usurped by the capitalist market, remains to this lost culture. Folk culture becomes meaningful thanks to its relation to popular and mass culture.

The second group comprises those who adopt a relatively more moderate approach to the notion of popular culture in the face of folk culture (for example, Bigsby 1976; Burke 2009; Williams 1976) and educationists who present this culture in their classes (for example, Cheung 2001; Heron-Hruby and Alvermann 2009; Morrell 2002). This group considers popular culture as the culture of folk due to the fact that the folk determine the popular by asking, "Why is 'the thing' that has been chosen by the folk not their culture?" Because of this, they bring the products of popular culture to their classes. These products constitute the world of the young; this is their culture, namely folk culture. According to this group, folk culture does not belong to the past, and it is not a historical culture. All elements used by the folk constitute their culture. Today, everything that constitutes popular culture is chosen by the folk.

Folk Culture and Education

Gunay (1999) defines folk culture as "a culture which has been formed and kept alive by people's language, culture, feelings, thoughts, and credits of people has extended from past to present and has been shaped by the notions of society, people, and nature." On the other hand, Owen (2005) explains folklore (folk culture in a broader sense) thusly: "It is a group-focused and tradition-based social and individual creation reflecting the expectations of society with expressions in accordance with its social and cultural identity, transfers its patterns and values orally, by imitation or through other means." Sarikaya et al. (2012) say that "the essence of cultural characteristics discriminating a nation from the others is the folk culture." According to them, "the products of folk culture are the best witnesses and conveyers of our cultural structure and our way of living. The diversity of Anatolian culture enriches the products of folk culture." Lastly, Ozdemir (1990) describes folk culture as "a discipline that has been analyzing the cultural elements, traditions, and customs created by a nation, the products of oral tradi-

tion such as folk songs, fairy tales, myths, and rhymes since the moment that particular culture emerges on the land where it lives on."

Based on these definitions of folk culture and from a broad perspective, we can provide the following definition: Folk culture refers to the notion in which folkloric consciousness and lifestyle pass through the filter of time, whose central element is the folk itself, whose creation is undertaken by the same core, and which can be understood in light of geographic, psychological, and sociological factors. Folk culture helps the folk constitute freedom, self-consciousness, diversity, and distinctiveness that already exist in the definition of culture (Canakli 2014).

The analysis of ethnological and folk culture studies shows that

the ethnological activities, which efforts are made to keep alive by limited opportunities of various associations for a long time throughout Turkish republican history have remained fragmented, scattered and irregular since they have not become widespread and been governed by a scientific center due to long-delayed process of institutionalization, and have not been covered by the curricula of formal education institutions. In this process, the folklore has often been misunderstood by extradisciplinary actors and this misconception has gradually been instilled into those interested in the subject. Indeed, it seems that "folklore" reminds people of folk dance and music, the popular extensions of folklore, and a narrow scope concerning their associated performances is prevalent. The notion of "folklorism" as a byproduct of this misconception is -unfortunately- still influential in a wide range of areas ranging from some associations and societies to schools, from public institutions to tourism and related promotions to publicity and media (Kutlu and Sumbul 2009: 2-3).

The topics covered by folk culture are listed as follows (KVTB 2010):

- ♦ General ethnology (folklore)
- ♦ Language
- ♦ Bibliography
- ♦ Minstrel literature
- ♦ Narrations
- ♦ Folk poems (Anonymous)
- ♦ Phrases
- ♦ Milestones in life (traditions and customs)
- ♦ Folklore (daily life – traditional institutions)

- ♦ Feasts, ceremonies, celebrations, special occasions
- ♦ Beliefs
- ♦ Traditional Turkish theatre
- ♦ Games/sports
- ♦ Folk dances
- ♦ Folk songs and other types of music
- ♦ Traditional folk arts (clothes, crafts, folk painting)
- ♦ Architecture (folk art structure)
- ♦ Cuisine (food/drinks)
- ♦ World languages
- ♦ Geography

In the elective Folk Culture course's curricula of the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades of primary school (MEB 2006, 2007, 2008), it is emphasized that culture education has become indispensable for modern men, and the question of "Should we teach folk culture?" is answered as follows:

"The global ignorance towards folk culture education in urban areas has led to probable disappearance of cultural richness and diversity. The activation of a uniform culture imposed by a limited number of multinational corporations dominating especially cultural industry has prompted United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO and in 2003, it has called forth "The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. "Turkey gave its full support to this initiative and inserted it into national law. This convention indicates that the loss of cultural areas such as folk literature, folk music, folk theatre, folk custom and beliefs, and folk arts will be harsh for humanity, and develops countermeasures. The most important prospective measure in question is the protection and transmission of this heritage from generation to generation. First, the convention stipulates that "intangible cultural heritage" course be included in curricula of educational institutions at all level, and then suggests that efforts be spent to promote and keep this tradition alive through mass media. Both the effort to help future generations meet their cultural properties in formal education and the predictions of highly-esteemed institutions like UNESCO which seriously and responsibly share cultural problems in the international milieu clearly demonstrate that this course should be taught in educational institutions."

One of the main objectives of the Turkish National Education is to help young generations

thoroughly learn about the past and the present, turn their faces toward the future, and help them learn about their culture and related cultural environment in order to lead healthier lives (MEB 2008:8). Getting students to know about the place of folk culture education in the face of popular culture or mass culture can be considered one of the cornerstones of this educational need. This is because “while folk culture keeps developing scientifically and pedagogically, its scope expands from rural to urban areas, from oral and written folklore traditions to daily relationships of an industrial culture. It can be said that folklore and folk culture are in a close relationship with modern society and cultural forms produced in this society and have turned into an effort to understand modernity” (Kutlu and Sumbul 2009: 3).

Related Literature

Kaya (2012) carried out research on folk culture and found that folk culture education in geography teaching can possibly make various contributions by raising cultural awareness, listing them as follows: “Creating fun learning environments, boosting motivation to learn through increased attention, and supporting permanent learning.”

Review of other studies on folk culture has revealed that, while Okur (2013) urges upon the use of popular culture elements in texts in Turkish course books, Yilmaz (2012) states that the Folk Culture course should be taught as a compulsory course, and folk culture elements should be predominantly discussed in Social Studies class. On the other hand, in a study conducted on prospective primary education and social studies teachers, Kaya (2012) concluded that geography teaching based on folk culture sets the grounds for “the realization of constructivist learning principles thanks to its advantages, such as rich and diverse stimulant tools and experiential and multisensory learning, existing cultural schemas as a basis for new learning items, (pro) active learners, collaborative-interactive learning, and a practice environment.” However, the literature review has yielded no research on Turkish Language Education students’ expectations and experiences concerning the Folk Culture course and its contribution. The present research is thought to contribute to the efforts to fill the niche in the related literature.

Aims

This research aims to determine the perceptions of students in Turkish Language Education Department about the Folk Culture course. In this sense, following research questions were chosen as the focal point of the research:

1. What are the opinions of the students in Turkish Language Education Department about the definition of folk culture?
2. Do the students in Turkish Language Education consider the Folk Culture course necessary?
3. What are the views of the students in Turkish Language Education about the introduction of the Folk Culture course in the curriculum as an elective course?
4. What do the students in Turkish Language Education think about the Folk Culture course’s contributions to national consciousness in the globalization process?
5. What do the students in Turkish Language Education think are the competencies that lecturers of the Folk Culture course are supposed to hold?
6. What subjects do the students of Turkish Language Education think should be covered by the curriculum of the Folk Culture course?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present research is a case study – a qualitative research design. The main characteristic of a qualitative case study is its capability to thoroughly investigate one or more cases. The variables of a case are investigated from a holistic perspective (Yildirim and Simsek 2008).

Sampling

The sampling of the research consists of students studying in the Department of Turkish Language Education at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University during the academic year 2013-2014. In the research, purposive sampling – a kind of criterion sampling – was used in the interviews with the students. The participants include 24 (12 male and 12 female) fourth-year students in the Department of Turkish Language Education at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University. The in-

fluent criteria in the selection of the sampling are as follows: a) the Folk Culture course is taught by lecturers mostly from the Teacher Training Programs of Turkish Language Education, Turkish Language and Literature, Social Studies Education (Kutlu 2009); b) the majority of the participants attended the Folk Culture course in the third year (of a four-year education).

Data Collection Tools

In the research, a semi-structured and non-directive interview was used as a data collection tool. The main reason for adopting such a technique is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the experiences of the interviewees (Yildirim and Simsek 2008). While preparing the interview questions, the related literature was reviewed and comments were received from experts in relevant fields. In order to determine the reliability of the interview form, three faculty members outside the sample who were experienced with the Folk Culture course were consulted whenever and wherever they were available. The interview form was revised according to the feedback from these faculty members.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used for the analysis of the interview items. The analysis of the interview questions was separately codified by two researchers to form patterns. In the content analysis, encoding was conducted and organized in terms of similar data, certain terms, and themes (Yildirim and Simsek 2008). In the comparison of codes and themes formed separately by the researchers, the reliability formula [Reliability = Consensus / (Consensus + Dissensus)] developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. The reliability of the research was calculated to be 85 percent. Participant students were coded as S1, S2, S3... S10.

RESULTS

Findings and Interpretation Concerning the First Sub-objective

The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching concerning the definition of *Folk Culture* are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Perceptions of students concerning definition of folk culture

Definitions	f	%
Traditions and customs	7	29.1
Material and spiritual values	5	20.8
Consciousness of being a nation	3	12.5
National culture	3	12.5
Maintaining national culture	3	12.5
National values	2	8.3
Folklore	1	4.1
Total	24	100

As shown in Table 1, most of the students define folk culture as traditions (29.1%) and material and spiritual values (20.8%). In addition, some defined folk culture as consciousness of being a nation (12.5%), national culture (12.5%), maintenance of national culture (12.5%), national values (8.3%), and folklore (4.1%).

Remarks of S-5 and S-7 regarding the definition of folk culture are as follows:

“Folk culture is a set of traditions and customs originating from people themselves and their internalized material and spiritual values” (S-5).

“Traditions, customs, and folkloric terms can be defined as folk culture” (S-7).

Findings and Interpretation Concerning the Second Sub-Objective

The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching concerning the necessity of the Folk Culture course are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceptions of students concerning the necessity of the Folk Culture course

The course is necessary for students...	f	%
To know his/her own culture	10	52.6
Not to get alienated to his/her own culture	3	15.7
To bridge past and future	2	10.5
For national unity and integrity	1	5.2
To be better qualified	1	5.2
For world knowledge	1	5.2
To know about social values	1	5.2
Total	19	100

As pointed out in Table 2, most of the students (52.6%) indicate that the Folk Culture course is necessary for an individual to know his/her own culture. In addition, it seems that

students consider the course to be important for an individual not to get alienated from his/her own culture (15.7%) and to be able to bridge past and future (10.5%). Moreover, some students emphasize the significance of the course for national unity and integrity (5.2%), being better qualified (5.2%), to increase world knowledge (5.2%), and to learn about social values (5.2%).

S-2 and S-6 note that the course is necessary for the following reasons:

“Well, Folk Culture is an essential course for a Turkish teacher because a teacher should know about his/her own culture and use it in his/her courses appropriately” (S-2).

“It is necessary. The region, a teacher will be appointed to after the graduation from a Faculty of Education, is not certain. Since the course of folk culture includes contemporary culture as well as the past, it may help teachers adapt to where they are appointed” (S-6).

Findings and Interpretation Concerning the Third Sub-Objective

The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching regarding Folk Culture as an elective course are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Perceptions of students regarding folk culture as an elective course

Views	<i>f</i>	%
It should be compulsory	14	58.3
It should be the student's preference	4	16.6
It should be elective	4	16.6
It should be compulsory from the high school onward	2	8.3
Total	24	100

Table 3 shows that more than half of students (58.3%) think that the Folk Culture course should be compulsory. Some students state that the course should depend on students' preference (16.6%), be elective (16.6%), or be compulsory from high school onward (8.3%).

S-1 and S-10's opinions about Folk Culture as an elective course are as follows:

“Rather than being an elective course, Folk Culture should be one of the compulsory courses in teaching plans” (S-1).

“If a person does not know his/her past, it is difficult for him/her to know where to go. For

this reason, offering this course as an elective is nonsense; to the contrary, I'm of the opinion that it should be compulsory from high school onward” (S-10).

Findings and Interpretation Concerning the Fourth Sub-objective

The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching with respect to the Folk Culture course's contributions to national consciousness in the process of globalization are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Perceptions of students with respect to Folk Culture Course's contributions to national consciousness in the process of globalization

Contributions	<i>f</i>	%
It shapes national identity	6	27.2
It helps students know their own culture	6	27.2
It strengthens social bounds	4	18.1
It prevents assimilation	3	13.6
It promotes respect for his/her country	1	4.5
It shapes characteristics of a nation	1	4.5
It connects past and future	1	4.5
Total	22	100

Table 4 reveals that most of the students express that the Folk Culture course can make great contributions to the development of national identity (27.2%) and national consciousness in the process of globalization (27.2%). It also shows that the course is useful in helping a person to know his/her own culture. Some students indicate that the course can be contributory in creating social connections (18.1%) and preventing assimilation (13.6%). There are also some students predicating that the course can potentially foster one's respect for his/her country (4.5%), shape the characteristics of a nation (4.5%), and connect past and future (4.5%). S-6 and S-9 explains how the course can contribute to the development of national consciousness in the process of globalization as follows:

“Folk culture is our national identity. For this reason, the Folk Culture course plays a significant role in forming national consciousness” (S-6).

“Its contribution would certainly be irrefutable if people were fully committed to it. But nowadays it is not the case due to disconnected relations or the emergence of modern life styles and environments dependent on ready-made products” (S-9).

Findings and Interpretation Concerning the Fifth Sub-objective

The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching regarding the competencies of lecturers teaching the Folk Culture course are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Perceptions of students concerned with competencies of lecturers teaching the Folk Culture Course

Competencies	f	%
Should be specialized	8	36.3
Should be good at communication	4	18.1
Should be able to exemplify the subject	3	13.6
Should be knowledgeable about cultural elements	3	13.6
Should conduct research in the field	2	9.1
Should be knowledgeable about traditions and customs well	1	4.5
Should love folk culture	1	4.5
Total	22	100

As indicated in Table 5, most of the students (36.3%) remark that lecturers should be specialized in their fields. Some students believe that lecturers should be good at communication (18.1%), be able to exemplify the subject (13.6%), and know cultural elements well (13.6%). Moreover, some students emphasize that lecturers should love folk culture (4.5%) and know traditions and customs well (4.5%).

S-12 lists what qualities lecturers teaching this course should have as follows:

“Our teachers teaching this course should not distance themselves from our culture and cannot be undereducated. Firstly, he/she should hold sufficient knowledge in order to teach students” (S-12).

S-17 expresses his opinions on a lecturer’s communicative skills as follows:

“Firstly, he/she should be kind and compassionate. He/she should make students feel his/her sincerity. To sum up, teachers who are good at communication should teach this course, because students can learn nothing from an ignorant teacher” (S-17).

Findings and Interpretations Concerning the Sixth Sub-objective

The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching regard-

ing which subjects the Folk Culture course cover are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Perceptions of students about the content of the Folk Culture Course

Subjects	f	%
Local folk dances	5	20.8
Local cloths	4	16.6
Culinary culture	4	16.6
Traditions and customs	3	12.5
Wedding culture	2	8.2
Architectural works	1	4.1
Fables	1	4.1
Epics	1	4.1
Folk Tales	1	4.1
Handcrafts	1	4.1
Painting	1	4.1
Total	24	100

Table 6 shows that students have different views about the subjects the Folk Culture course should include. Most of the students state that the course should include local folk dances (20.8%), local clothes (16.6%), culinary culture (16.6%), and traditions and customs (12.5%). There are also some students who highlight that the course should cover wedding culture (8.2%), fables (4.1%), epics (4.1%), handcrafts (4.1%), folk tales (4.1%), architectural works (4.1%), and painting (4.1%).

S-6 and S-19’s remarks on which subjects the course should cover are as follows:

“Folk culture should include subjects such as painting, architecture, fable, handcrafts, and wedding culture” (S-19).

“It should cover folk dances, fables, folk tales, and local folk dances” (S-6).

DISCUSSION

Folk culture, which has specific characteristics like all other culture types, is in a close relationship with all other disciplines owing to its human-centered nature and/or the fact that it is a human product. This diversity and richness should be transferred to other humans, especially upcoming generations. Schools and educational institutions are absolutely the most suitable places to fulfil such a duty (Gruenewald and Smith 2014). Relatedly, lecturers and course books are the most efficient tools; according to this viewpoint, the Turkish lecturers hold the greatest responsibility (Okur 2013). In this sense, the results of this research aiming at revealing the

perceptions of students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching about the Folk Culture course are as follows:

The analysis is based on the research question, “What are the opinions of students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching about the definition of the term *Folk Culture*?” has revealed that traditions and customs are prioritized by the participants, which is followed by material and spiritual values. Therefore, students who have volunteered to participate in the research think that the content of this course should include traditions and customs and material and spiritual values, such as local folk dances, local clothes, culinary culture, and wedding culture. The primary reason for such perceptual variables may be that they attended the Folk Culture course during the 3rd year.

Another finding has revealed that most of the 24 participants were of the opinion that Folk Culture should be a compulsory course in undergraduate programs. Other students state that it should be elective in the undergraduate program or depend on students’ preferences. In middle schools of the Ministry of Education, the Folk Culture course should be among the elective courses. According to Kutlu (2009), considering the place and significance of the Folk Culture course in our educational system, it is believed that it might have undesirable results. The Folk Culture course as a part of culture education is a “culture” course that serves as a source of fostering and reflecting ideas, tendencies, manners, and behaviors of Turkish people in social, cultural, and various fields of life. This course should not be equated with other elective courses. Hence, Folk Culture courses should not be elective but compulsory. It can be asserted that the Folk Culture course is important which is taught (or likely to be taught) at undergraduate programs of Department of Turkish Language Teaching, Turkish Language and Literature Education, Social Studies Education because graduates of these departments usually teach these courses in middle/secondary schools. However, the course is compulsory in none of these three undergraduate programs. Prospective teachers from the Department of Turkish Language Teaching, who will probably teach this course in middle/secondary schools, will inevitably encounter practical and content problems. On the other hand, a primary school student might never attend this course if the course is not offered at

the beginning of the academic year by the decision of the teachers’ board under the pretext that it is elective (Yilmaz 2012). In addition, students participating in the research have taken the course (TRO326) during their 3rd year according to the decision of head of the department. In this context, their opinions that the Folk Culture course should be offered as a compulsory course substantiate this result.

With reference to the students’ views and the literature, it seems that there are 3 potential choices regarding the Folk Culture course:

- ♦ Folk Culture as elective
- ♦ Folk Culture as a compulsory course
- ♦ Any course associated with the elements of Folk Culture

In this study, it has been observed that the participants are aware of the first two options and have no idea about another option associated with the elements of folk culture. Although some related courses have been offered in other fields – especially Social Studies Education – Kaya (2012), it can be speculated that students do not have any ideas about such associated fields because of the lack of exact counterparts in Departments of Turkish Language Teaching.

On the other hand, this question comes to the researchers’ minds in consideration of the opinions of most of the students regarding a compulsory Folk Culture course: “Why is this course necessary according to the students?” The participants have expressed their views about the necessity of this course under the category of “to know his/her own culture.” In fact, a contradiction has emerged: “Do they live in a folk culture or in a different dominant culture?” The students associate the course with local folk dances, local clothes, culinary culture, epics, handicrafts, folk tales, and fables. These categories hold very small significance in the culture in which they live now. Thus, it can be said that the participants do not have in-depth knowledge about “cultural variety and content,” the primary cause of which might be that the Folk Culture course (TRO326) they attended during the 3rd year does not cover such subjects as “cultural variety” and “folk culture vs. other cultures”. Moreover, the perceptions of prospective teachers about the content of the Folk Culture course are similar to the results of Deveci’s study (2009). Deveci (2009) revealed that, as students describe their cultures, they mostly referenced culinary elements and associated their cultures with various material and spiritual

elements, such as weddings, a means of livelihood, folk dances, folk music and bards, and accent.

The answers the students gave to the question “(According to the students of Turkish Language Teaching) what competencies should lecturers teaching the Folk Culture course hold?” This is the fifth sub-objective of the research. One-third of the students expressed that lecturers should be specialized in their fields. Other views included that the lecturer should be good at communication, know cultural elements well, do research in the field, hold in-depth knowledge about traditions and customs, and exemplify the subject. The perceptions of the students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching regarding the competencies of lecturers teaching the Folk Culture course are exemplary for prospective lecturers. In addition, it is useful to point out that these features rank among teacher qualifications (Canbulat and Kutluca 2015).

CONCLUSION

Consequently, the students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching having voluntarily participated in the research have demanded a compulsory Folk Culture course covering cultural elements (cloths, dances, traditions, cuisine, and the like) that will be taught by lecturers who are specialized in the Folk Culture course in order to know their own culture and not to get alienated within it. In addition, the participants’ awareness levels regarding the definition of culture and culture types were found to be low in consideration of popular culture and folk culture as discussed in the conceptual framework and findings section.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Various suggestions can be made regarding the findings and discussion of the research:

- ♦ Folk culture across to new culture and its content can be given as a compulsory lesson at various levels of grades.
- ♦ Practical works can be carried out for generating the content of the lesson that will be given.
- ♦ Studies related to folk culture and education in academic contexts can be done in different areas.

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