

The Importance of Teaching Culture in German as an International Language Classroom in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of the importance of culture in teaching German as an international language in secondary schools in Malaysia based on the interrelationship between language and culture which are closely related. The quantitative method through questionnaires was conducted to collect data. A total of 66 Malaysian secondary school German teachers were involved in this study. The results show that teachers agreed on the involvement of German culture in the German language curriculum. They are generally aware of the importance of teaching and integrating culture in the foreign language classroom and they often conducted cultural language activities in their teaching practice. Based on the results, some implications are obtained from the study on the importance of integrating culture in the German language classroom and recommendations are made for future studies.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the body of knowledge, educators, and all other stakeholders involved in teaching learning GIL in Malaysia. The results provide implications for GIL education in Malaysia and future studies researching the importance of culture in teaching GIL in terms of research methodology and focus.

1. Introduction

Most students today have the opportunity to travel abroad for educational purposes and to experience various cultures. As a result, learning foreign languages has become common in the globalised world. Foreign language learning or known as international language learning is an added value to the Malaysian education curriculum. International language learning gives students the chance to compete globally as well as the chance to communicate in different languages (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2005). The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has taken a number of measures to guarantee that

this objective is accomplished as the nation develops toward becoming a developed one while attempting to be competitive in trade and commerce. One of the efforts is to increase the number of Malaysian students who acquire other foreign languages in order to stay competitive when they enter the labour market and to enhance human capital through the implementation of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 aims to increase the availability of additional language education (third language) in order to increase students' proficiency in a variety of languages (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Students are actively encouraged to learn various languages in addition to Malay and English in order to raise the next generation of competitors, both nationally and internationally.

The establishment of international language classes such as German, French, Arabic, Mandarin and Korean at some selected secondary schools nationwide demonstrates how seriously the MOE is encouraging the students to study other foreign languages. German as an international language (GIL) has long found a place in secondary schools in Malaysia. The proof is that GIL is offered in 78 selected secondary schools as an elective subject since 1995. This situation shows that the learning of GIL is growing in all corners of the country.

The importance of culture in the teaching of a foreign language (FL) or second language (L2) has long been a topic of discussion (Kramersch, 2013). In FL or L2 education, there is no clear perspective on cultural integration. Teachers and students are getting more opportunities to interact with people from other countries as a result of the globalisation of the economy and of science. As a result, in addition to comprehending more about the different cultures of various nations, teachers and students must also be able to communicate effectively using various cultural expressions (Zhan, 2016).

Salim (2017) also argued that understanding the culture associated with the language being taught is necessary for successful language learning. The reason for this is that language and culture are inextricably linked. Without taking into account the culture of the society that speaks the language, a language cannot be taught (Celik & Yıldız, 2019). This implies that both components cannot be taught independently and must be blended. Mumu (2017) argued that it is also impossible to acquire a language without utilizing the correct meaning, which depends on the usage of relevant cultural aspects.

Therefore, GIL teaching must therefore be combined with the integration of German culture. GIL teachers must ensure that the elements of German culture that are taught in tandem can enable students in learning more about the language and helping them fully master it.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Integrating culture into FL or L2 teaching is an area in language research that attracted the attention of many scholars and researchers during the last decades (Byram & Kramersch, 2008; Farooq et al., 2018; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2016; Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022). The application or involvement of cultural aspects in teaching foreign languages has long been debated by scholars. Scholars acknowledge that language and culture are closely related and cannot be separated (Liddicoat & Kohler, 2012; Liton & Madanat, 2013; Purba, 2011; Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022; Stockwell, 2018). Cultural aspects cannot be neglected especially in foreign language teaching because learners who

learn this language do not have access to the language environment and native speakers (Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997). Mumu (2017) also asserted that it is impossible to learn a language completely without involving cultural knowledge because the exact meaning is highly dependent on the culture underlying a language. This places the cultural aspect as an important aspect that needs to be integrated into the teaching of foreign languages.

However, the application of cultural aspects in language teaching is not an easy thing. Culture is a broad concept that includes all aspects of human life such as beliefs, behaviour patterns, habits, religion and others related to human life (Ahmed A.Hamza, 2018; Brooks, 1968; Kramersch, 2013; Mumu, 2017; Zhan, 2016). This situation raises questions about the cultural aspects that need to be integrated with language teaching, especially GIL.

Nonetheless, a large majority of the studies were conducted in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. There is no study to date that has focused on the importance of teaching culture in GIL classrooms in the Malaysian context by previous researchers. The current study attempts to address this gap. The teachers are thought to be the most significant influence on the success of GIL teaching. However, much research has not been done on Malaysian secondary school teachers' perceptions regarding how to teach cultural aspects in GIL classes. Thus, the present study needs to be conducted to get a clear picture of teachers' perceptions of the importance of teaching culture in the GIL classroom.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the perceptions of Malaysian secondary school GIL teachers regarding the importance of teaching German culture in GIL classrooms?
- ii. To what extent do Malaysian secondary school GIL teachers teach culture in GIL classrooms?

1.2. Research Objective

This study was conducted to examine aspects of German culture that are applied in the process of teaching GIL. There are two study objectives, namely:

- i. To investigate Malaysian secondary school teachers' perceptions about the importance of teaching German culture in their GIL classrooms.
- ii. To investigate Malaysian secondary school teachers' practices in teaching culture in GIL classrooms.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Culture in Language Teaching

Bennett (1993) describes someone who learns a language without cultural context as a "fluent fool." A fool who speaks an FL fluently does not comprehend that language's social and philosophical implications. As a result, the importance of FL teachers has increased since they can teach a foreign country's language and culture.

Language and culture are closely related and cannot be separated (Liddicoat & Kohler, 2012; Liton & Madanat, 2013; Purba, 2011; Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022; Stockwell, 2018). Brown (2007) states that "A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language: the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (p.171). Although language and

culture appear as two different fields, however, both have a close relationship and influence each other (Kaça, 2015). According to Li (2013), this relationship can be seen clearly because language is the carrier of culture and reflects the culture of a society and is shaped and influenced by culture.

Krashen (1982) claims that learning a language or a culture should not take place in a classroom context. He believed that the classroom should only be used to teach language norms. Robinson and Nocon (1996) emphasise the significance of interacting with the target culture and claims that learning about it in the classroom primarily involves “cognitive border crossing,” which ignores and undervalues the students’ prior experiences. In some other views, the FL classroom cannot be a setting where culture can be taught effectively because it undervalues what the students are familiar with and believe. However, there are also arguments in favour of incorporating cultural aspects into language teaching (Celik & Yıldız, 2019; Shirazi, 2017; Solgi & Tafazoli, 2018; Stockwell, 2018; Zhan, 2016).

In the context of language teaching and learning, especially foreign languages, language needs to be taught along with culture. Losing one component will cause another component to be lacking, especially when it comes to language learning. Language and culture, according to Stockwell (2018), are intricately intertwined, and learners cannot fully understand a language without also understanding its culture. The production and interpretation of meaning are completed within the cultural context since language is a product of its cultural foundation. Only those who comprehend the language’s culture will be able to interpret it correctly.

Learners can only interpret the language accurately if they understand the culture of the language. According to Zhan (2016), comprehending language required not only a comprehension of grammar, phonology, and vocabulary but also of culture. To learn a language more thoroughly, students need to comprehend the culture of the country they are studying.

Furthermore, Shirazi (2017) claimed that cultural considerations need to be made when teaching and learning a language because they play a significant influence. This is so because cultural factors might increase students’ motivation and enthusiasm for learning the language (Celik & Yıldız, 2019). According to Solgi and Tafazoli (2018), the benefits of incorporating cultural elements in language teaching are well known and established, and one such benefit is that it can help students develop a positive attitude toward language learning, enhance language learning, and speed up the process of mastering the language. This illustrates how including cultural elements into language instruction can benefit students in a variety of ways. When cultural aspects are incorporated, students are also not just more driven to learn the language; in fact, it can speed up the learning process and help them achieve language proficiency.

Therefore, the understanding of culture cannot be neglected in language teaching. The integration of cultural aspects in language teaching needs to be used at the heart to ensure the success of students’ language mastery.

2.2. Previous Studies

In general, studies that examine the importance of culture in foreign language teaching are more focused on English as a foreign language (EFL). The previous study of Gil or

German as a foreign language (GFL) is more focused on grammar and translation aspects (Berahim & Amin, 2018; Daud, 2016; Sanusi, 2016; Ying et al., 2018; Yusuf et al., 2020). Studies that explain aspects of German culture that are applied in teaching GIL or GFL are still few, among them, is the study conducted by Petravić and Golub (2016).

The study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2016) that focused on the EFL and culture is one of the studies which could be discussed. This research seeks to investigate 15 Vietnamese EFL instructors' views on the relationship between language and culture as well as their methods for teaching culture. Interviews were used to acquire the data for this investigation. The information gathered through semi-structured interviews suggested that there were still few possibilities for culture to be incorporated into EFL classroom instruction. Teaching linguistic knowledge and skills came first, with culture playing a secondary role.

Mumu (2017) investigated the opinions of five EFL instructors from Minahasa, an area on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island that is in the north. Students in junior high school attended English classes from these Minahasan EFL instructors. Three research tools were used in the study: classroom observations, semi-structured and stimulated-recall interviews. It was shown that the participants agreed that cultures played an important part in their EFL classes. The American cultures were highlighted by these five teachers despite their multilingual and ethnic backgrounds and the fact that English is a global language. Additionally, a number of factors affecting their actual delivery of cultural features in EFL classrooms were exposed. These elements included curriculum, information technology, exposure restrictions, and intercultural competence skills.

Al-Amir (2017) used a three-point Likert scale survey to examine 25 teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in EFL classes. The study's findings showed that non-native EFL teachers at the University of Jeddah supported and positively viewed the study of the target culture, showing a growing understanding of the significance of fostering students' cultural competency in relation to their language proficiency.

Putra and Musigrungsi (2022) utilised an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to reveal the opinions of 68 Indonesian EFL teachers regarding integrating cultural elements into their multilingual and multicultural EFL classrooms. The data revealed how important the participants thought culture was to foreign language education. The introduction of target language culture improved learners' competencies, knowledge, and ability to communicate successfully in a foreign language, and target language culture was seen as a source of motivation for language learning. In other words, foreign language education as a whole was seen to correspond to native speaker customs. To preserve the nation's multilingualism and multiculturalism, participants emphasised the incorporation of Indonesian cultures in English classes. International cultures were also desired to educate students for more extensive cross-national communications.

Based on the studies that have been carried out, the focus of the study is on EFL teachers' perceptions of the importance of culture in EFL classrooms. Further research on cultural aspects applied in teaching GIL in Malaysia is still untouched. This issue needs to be highlighted in order to get a true picture of the aspects of German culture that are applied in GIL teaching abroad that lack direct exposure to aspects of the German language and culture.

3. Methodology

This study used a quantitative design (survey method) to collect research data. Only one instrument is used in the study, which is a questionnaire instrument. This questionnaire instrument was adapted and modified based on the instrument built by [Farooq et al. \(2018\)](#). It consisted of three sections: (A) the background information of the respondent: GIL secondary school teachers' personal information, educational background and teaching experience of the respondent, (B) 15 items about the GIL secondary school teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of teaching German culture in GIL classroom, and (C) 14 items about GIL secondary school teachers' classroom activities. The questionnaire includes questions designed on a Likert five-point scale with 1 – strongly agree, 2 – agree, 3 – neutral, 4 – disagree, and 5 – strongly disagree for section B. Section C used a Likert five-point scale with 1 - never, 2 – rarely, 3 - sometimes, 4 - often, 5 - always. Reliability analysis was carried out and the statistics indicate Cronbach's alpha of 0.834, therefore this questionnaire confirms its high reliability.

4. Results and Discussion

Data collection for the study was done by distributing questionnaires to GIL teachers through WhatsApp and Email. The respondents were from 66 Malaysian secondary schools that offered GIL. The total population of the secondary schools that offered GIL in Malaysia are 78. The collected questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. This study used descriptive analysis involving frequency, percentage and mean to discuss the data obtained through the questionnaire.

Table 1 below shows the demographic information of the respondents. The study respondents consisted of 66 GIL teachers, namely 14 male (21.2%) and 52 female (78.8%) teachers who teach GIL in Malaysian secondary schools. More than half of the respondents (59.1%) have teaching experience for 6 years or more than 6 years. This was followed by 40.9% of the respondents having teaching experiences for 5 years or less than 5 years.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Category		Frequency	Proportion
Gender	Male	14	21.2%
	Female	52	78.8%
Teaching Experience	5 years or less than 5 years	27	40.9%
	6 years or more than 6 years	39	29.1%
Duration of studied in Germany	6 months or less	32	48.5%
	More than 6 months, but less than 2 years	28	42.4%
	2 years or more but less than 5 years	2	3.0%
	5 years or more than 5 years	4	6.1%
Professional Qualifications	Certificate/Diploma of Education	4	6.1%
	Bachelor's Degree in Languages and Linguistics German with Education	60	90.9%
	Other Degree	2	3.0%

Respondents were given the opportunity to participate in a special programme organised by the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the Goethe-Institut in Germany. During the course in Germany, they learnt about German language methodology, pedagogy, phonetics, phonetics and German culture. They were 32 respondents (48.5%) have been studied in Germany for 6 months or less. 28 respondents (42.4%) studied for more than 6 months, but less than 2 years, 2 respondents (3.0%) studied 2 years or more, but less than 5 years and 4 respondents (6.1%) studied 5 years or more than 5 years in Germany. Out of the total of 66 teachers, 4 teachers (6.1%) hold a Certificate or Diploma of Education, 60 teachers (90.9%) hold a Bachelor's Degree in Languages and Linguistics German with Education and 2 teachers (3.0%) have other professional qualifications.

Descriptive statistical analysis is used to answer a research question, which is to determine the teachers' perceptions of the importance of culture in teaching GIL in Malaysian secondary schools.

The mean score obtained was interpreted based on the interpretation presented by [Khumsikiew et al. \(2015\)](#) as shown in [Table 2](#) the interpretation of the mean score.

Table 2: Interpretation of mean score

Mean Score	Mean Score
4.21 to 5.00	Highest
3.41 to 4.20	High
2.61 to 3.40	Medium
1.81 to 2.60	Low
1.00 to 1.80	Lowest

4.1. Teachers' Perceptions on the Importance of Teaching Culture in GIL Classroom

To investigate what teachers think about the importance of culture in teaching GIL, 15 questions were asked to the GIL teachers. Descriptive results regarding teachers' perceptions about the importance of culture in teaching GIL are presented in [Table 3](#) below.

Table 3: Results Related to Teachers' Perceptions about the Importance of Culture in Teaching GIL

Items of the Questionnaire	Likert scale frequency					Mean	Level
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)		
It is important that the German language culture may be part of the language learning programme.	0	0	0	27.3	72.7	4.73	Highest
Teaching German culture motivates students.	0	0	4.5	34.9	60.6	4.56	Highest
It is important to teach German language and German culture in an integrated way.	0	1.5	3.0	37.9	57.6	4.52	Highest
Students will be more tolerant if they are	0	1.5	3.0	40.9	54.6	4.48	Highest

introduced to the culture of the German language.								
Understanding German culture may help students in creating critical thinking regarding German and local cultures.	0	0	6.1	48.5	45.5	4.39	Highest	
German language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.	0	0	13.6	39.4	47.0	4.33	Highest	
The cultural elements may be expanded in a German language classroom.	0	0	7.6	53.0	39.4	4.32	Highest	
Language skills of students may improve by integrating German language and German culture.	1.5	0	15.2	33.3	50.0	4.30	Highest	
Students' own culture is at risk while teaching them a German culture.	62.1	24.2	3.0	3.0	7.6	4.30	Highest	
"How to teach culture" should be emphasised in any course dealing with Teaching German as a Foreign Language.	1.5	3.0	10.6	33.3	51.5	4.30	Highest	
Culture needs to be treated as a language "skill" like listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the German language classroom.	0	4.5	10.6	37.9	47.0	4.27	Highest	
Learning about a German culture can change the student's attitude towards her/ his own culture.	4.5	1.5	21.2	31.8	40.9	4.03	High	
The German culture should only be introduced and taught at advanced level only.	45.5	24.2	18.2	6.1	6.1	3.97	High	
Introducing German culture in a German language classroom may hinder the German language learning process.	37.9	21.2	19.7	7.6	13.6	3.62	High	
In German language class, teaching other language skills and grammar is more important than teaching culture.	4.5	18.2	40.9	25.8	10.6	3.20	Medium	

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

As can be seen, [Table 3](#) shows results related to teachers' perceptions about the importance of culture in teaching GIL, 72.7% of the GIL teachers strongly agree and 27.3% agree that it is important that the German language culture may be part of the language learning programme (mean=4.73). This supports the results of studies conducted by [Al-](#)

Amir (2017), Mumu (2017), Putra and Musigrungsi (2022) that culture plays an important role in their EFL classes.

This result stands in contrast to Krashen's (1982) arguments regarding the inclusion of culture in language teaching. He argues that culture should be learned in its natural environment rather than in a classroom. Therefore, no matter what the teachers accomplish, the classroom cannot represent the features of the natural setting. However, the majority of the teachers in the current study think that culture could also be taught in the classroom as a component of teaching a foreign language. The study's outcomes are consistent with those made by Byram (1988), and Byram and Kramsch (2008), who are in accordance with the opinion of incorporating culture into language teaching.

The motivational strength of culture is accepted by respondents (66.6% strongly agree, 34.9% agree, mean=4.56) and they with the idea that it is important to teach the German language and the German culture in an integrated way. This is in line with the findings of Celik and Yıldız (2019), and Putra and Musigrungsi (2022) that target language culture was seen as a source of motivation for language learning.

Respondents with the idea that the more students know about the German culture, the more tolerant they are (95.5% agree and strongly agree, mean=4.48). 48.5% of respondents supported the notion that understanding German culture may help students in creating critical thinking regarding German and local cultures, and 45.5% entirely went along with it. It made up 94% of solid admittance to this item. While for item German language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity received 39.4% of agreement and 47% strong agreement, which made up 86.4% acknowledged the importance of delivering cultural aspects in GIL education. The idea of expanding cultural dimension in foreign language classes has received agreement from a high percentage (92.4% agree and strongly agree, mean=4.32).

What is more, 83.3% of the GIL teachers think that the language skills of students may improve by integrating the German language and German culture (mean=4.30). Regarding "How to teach culture" should be emphasised in any course dealing with teaching German as a foreign language (mean=4.30), most respondents agreed with a high percentage of 84.8%. This high value was derived from the combination between 33.3% of agreement and 51.5% of strong agreement. 86.3% of GIL teachers disagree (mean=4.30) with the idea that emphasising the study of German language culture may cause students to lose their cultural identity. 37.9% of respondents generally stayed undecided that culture needs to be treated as a language "skill" like listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the German language classroom (mean=4.27). As for the influence of German culture over changing students' attitudes towards their own culture (mean=4.03), 72.7% of the GIL teachers agree and strongly agree with this idea.

In addition, a total of 40.9% of respondents accorded neutral the idea of in a German language class, teaching other language skills and grammar is more important than teaching culture (mean=3.20). 59.1% of the respondents disagree (mean=3.62) with the idea that the study of German culture in German language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy. That is, for GIL teachers, culture is not a barrier to progress in the language.

A high percentage of respondents (69.7% disagree and strongly disagree, mean=3.97) do not agree with the idea that the development of cultural awareness should be reserved

only for advanced levels where students have a high level of language proficiency. This result is different from the study of [Nguyen et al. \(2016\)](#) that the low level of students' target language proficiency is the main obstacle to integrating culture into EFL teaching practice. As a result, teachers may have a tendency to incorporate cultural themes and topics into advanced levels since they believe that these students will be able to handle them more easily given their skills with the target language. However, according to the teachers in this study, cultural teaching should be available to students at all proficiency levels and should not just be restricted to advanced-level classes.

4.2. Teachers' Practices Regarding Culture-Teaching

To find out about teachers' cultural teaching activities, the respondents were asked to indicate how often they practised these activities in their classrooms. [Table 4](#) below shows the teachers' self-reports regarding how they practised each activity type.

Table 4: Results Related to the Culture Teaching Activities Teachers Practice

Items in section C	Likert scale frequency					Mean	SD	Level
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)			
Q1. I include cultural information about German-speaking countries in my classes.	0	0	1.5	53.0	45.5	4.44	.53	Highest
Q2. I intentionally include cultural elements in my German language lessons.	0	1.5	10.6	50.0	37.9	4.24	.70	Highest
Q3. I focus on specific elements of cultural points which are different in Malaysia and Germany.	0	0	13.6	60.6	25.8	4.12	.62	High
Q4. I discuss in detail various elements of cultural differences in my class.	1.5	3.0	27.3	51.5	16.7	3.79	.81	High
Q5. I consider students' culture in my teaching style.	0	0	7.6	63.6	28.8	4.21	.57	Highest
Q6. I introduce the students to the German culture as presented and discussed in the textbook.	0	1.5	16.7	47.0	34.8	4.15	.75	High
Q7. I share with my students about the cultural shocks.	0	1.5	12.	47.0	39.4	4.24	.73	Highest
Q8. I ask students to explore on their own certain elements or aspects of German culture.	0	4.5	16.7	40.9	37.9	4.12	.85	High
Q9. I talk to my students about my own experiences in German culture.	0	0	1.5	30.3	68.2	4.67	.51	Highest
Q10. I ask my students to describe an aspect of their own culture in the German language.	1.5	1.5	22.7	36.4	37.9	4.08	.90	High

Q11. I introduce real-life German culture objects in my classroom.	0	3.0	16.7	39.4	40.9	4.18	.82	High
Q12. I involve students in discussion while comparing different elements of German culture with the local culture.	0	1.5	9.1	43.9	45.5	4.33	.71	Highest
Q13. I comment on the way in which the German culture is represented in the classroom materials.	0	6.1	16.7	54.5	22.7	3.94	.80	High
Q14. I discuss negatively specific elements or aspects of the German culture.	24.2	13.6	22.7	31.8	7.6	2.85	1.32	Medium

Scale: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always

In [table 4](#) shows how often the GIL teachers practised the possible culture-teaching activities in their GIL classrooms. The results show that teachers successfully include relevant parts of the target culture to speed up students' acquisition of the target language while not devoting extra time to teaching culture. The results of this study are parallel with [Farooq et al. \(2018\)](#) study, which discovered that teachers occasionally include activities that promote cultural awareness in their classroom practices.

In [Table 4](#) shows that GIL teachers practice Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12 and Q13 more often than other culture-teaching activities in their classrooms. Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q9 and Q11 are cognitive, teacher-centred activities, where the teachers define the cultural contents. Q8, Q10 and Q12 are more student-centred activities, where the teacher takes the initiative to engage the class in a culture different to demonstrate to them how both their own culture and German culture have beliefs, values, and customs that affect how they live. These activities might encourage students to have positive views regarding German culture. In these activities, the teachers encourage the students to compare elements of their own culture with German culture. By comparing and contrasting their own culture with German culture, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of their own culture and a greater sense of empathy for the target culture.

As for the activity that teachers practice the least frequently, only 39.4% of GIL teachers discuss negatively specific elements or aspects of the German culture with the students (Q14). This finding is in accordance with [Farooq et al.'s \(2018\)](#) study where the teachers being aware of Arabic culture, rarely discuss negatively specific elements of the target culture.

The activities performed most frequently in the classroom share the traits of being teacher-centred and addressing the learning outcome. In other words, teachers' main objective is to expose students to various elements of the target culture that may help in the process of learning the target language.

5. Conclusion

This study tried to shed light on how teachers in a Malaysian GIL context deal with various aspects of the German culture and what importance they place on the culture as a whole.

Based on the study's findings, GIL teachers are typically aware of how crucial it is to incorporate culture into German language teaching. The significance of teachers'

perceptions of teaching culture as a component of GIL education is highlighted by this research. The primary goal of GIL classes for students is to foster tolerance and openness toward German culture. They believe that exposing students to German daily life may help them to comprehend the German way of life, including its traditions, values, and customs. Related knowledge is also seen to be a means of enabling students to examine the variations of their own culture and the diversity within it. This view reflects what teachers who practise cultural awareness perform in the classroom. The distinctions and similarities between various cultures and their speakers are emphasised using the culture as a tool.

This finding has several implications, one of which is that teachers should be given more chances to discuss German culture in depth in their own classes. The students may gain more from exposure to German culture if they are more adaptable to integrating culture. The teacher plays a significant role in assisting the students to learn and comprehend how Germans act, behave and communicate. How to teach culture should receive particular focus. In this regard, offering diverse materials on German culture would be highly beneficial for them to develop into more successful students who converse fluently with those who share their culture. To educate students about German culture, various exercises and assignments can be created, and existing textbooks can be enhanced with more cultural and intercultural elements. Furthermore, the finding of the study shows that culture should be included in language learning rather than being considered a distinct entity on its own. Without exposure to and knowledge of German culture, students could find it difficult to interact with people from different cultures, they might not learn to be critical of both their own and other cultures. By employing specialised approaches like ethnographic interviews, students understanding of other cultures, as well as their awareness of their own culture, can be increased. Therefore, including various tasks and strategies in students' lives both inside and outside of the classroom can aid in promoting cultural awareness.

As a result, students need to improve their ability to interact with individuals from different cultures in today's evolving and globalised society. Further research is needed to investigate the actual cultural teaching techniques employed by GIL teachers in their classrooms through interviews and observations. Additionally, it is important to consider students' perspectives in order to better understand how they perceive culture in the context of learning GIL, how prepared they feel to deal with the difficulties of a more globally connected world, and how well they comprehend intercultural communication. Studies that investigate how teachers and students perceive culture could offer important insights into how to teach about and handle culture in the context of GIL in order to reap the effectiveness for the students.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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