Intercultural Sensitivity
A Study of Pre-service English Language Teachers

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Abstract

Since societies develop mutual aims and different societies perpetuate developing long-term economic, social and cultural relationships with other cultural groups and the global instability continues hitting the world, developing intercultural sensitivity becomes more and more important at all levels of the education, especially for those who will teach other languages.

One of the major aspects of intercultural communication competence is intercultural sensitivity which has been gaining increasing attention in different disciplines. This paper focuses on the importance of intercultural sensitivity and shares the results of a study on the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish ELT major (English Language Teaching) pre-service teachers. For this purpose, 70 senior ELT major pre-service teachers completed an instrument comprising 5 factors with 24 items developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) for measuring intercultural sensitivity.

Keywords: *Intercultural sensitivity, ELT, pre-service teachers*

Introduction

Common features of virtually all definitions of culture include the notion of a group with shared system of meanings, behaviors, values, and beliefs that are passed from generation to generation. Culture is not synonymous with nationality or race. Therefore, culture is relative, learned, collective, changeable, and includes complex responsive processes (Matsumoto 1996).

Culture is "all those things that people have learned to do, believe, value, and enjoy in their history… the ideals, beliefs, skills, tools, customs, and institutions into which each member of society is born" (Sue 1981: 37).

Individuals can become enculturated in the environments they are born and their enculturation level both develop and evolve during their life time. As a result, this process ends up with viewing other cultures from the perspective of our own. Ethnocentric tendencies we build often result in psychological barriers between cultures and we start viewing cultures different from our own as less desirable and perhaps even threatening. Researchers have undertaken a number of approaches, not only to understanding ethnocentrism, but also to attempting to reduce it (Neuliep & McCroskey 1997; Lin, et.al. 2005).

As pointed out by Stafford, et al. (1997), cultural sensitivity means being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have strong effect on values, learning, and behavior. Cultural sensitivity starts with cognizance that there are differences between cultures and these variations are commonly mirrored in the approaches that different groups communicate and relate to one another. Cultural sensitivity is more than awareness that there are variations in culture in order to have interaction effectively. A culturally

competent individual views all human beings as unique humans and realizes that their experiences, beliefs, values, and language affect their perceptions.

Recognizing differences among cultures is important, but we should also be conscious that variations also exist within cultures. The assumption that a common culture is shared by all members of the society sharing the same race, language and religion is defective. We must apprehend our personal cultural values and draw parallels where possible. We should also identify any prejudices and stereotypes that impede us from communicating effectively with people from various cultures. We should not overlook that, whether we like it or not, we most probably maintain some stereotypes about race, culture, food, customs, religion, body language, dress code, gender, etc.(Barnlund 1998; Holliday, et al. 2004)

Ethnocentrism is usually viewed as lacking acceptance of cultural diversity and intolerance for outgroups (Berry & Kalin 1995). This lack of acceptance of cultural diversity has a strong tendency to lead to negative stereotypes toward other cultural/ethnic groups, negative prejudice and negative behaviors against these group members ((Billiet et al. 1996).

As stated by Berry and Kalin (1995) in multicultural societies one of the key elements to keep the society together is to monitor the present state of relations among the various ethno-cultural groups that make up the society. Although political and economic dimensions of such relations are important, it is perhaps more important to understand the current situation of attitudes towards multiculturalism and of intergroup prejudice and ethnic attitudes (Verkuyten 2006).

As the world becomes a global village and more and more people with diverse cultural backgrounds interact with each other, it becomes very important to investigate what factors could help overcome ethnocentrism and lack of intercultural sensitivity. Reducing ethnocentrism and increasing intercultural sensitivity would immensely help to create a better society of diversity, equality justice and democracy.

Since globalization requires people from diverse cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively, being a global citizen has become one of the fundamental educational goals. As a result, researchers discuss that intercultural sensitivity is quintessential in empowering human beings to live and work with people from unique cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural Communication Competence and Intercultural Sensitivity

The importance of the study of intercultural communication competence has been increasing as a result of the impact of globalization on human society on a large scale. Although majority of countries now follow the obligations and principles agreed upon unanimously in the UNESCO-convention of 2005 and main obligation being the convention's article 10, the topic still continues dealing with various issues like conceptual uncertainty and the lack of valid instruments for measuring the concept, etc. and as a result more and more scholars are making efforts to reduce these problems (e.g., Chen & Starosta 1996; Deardorff 2009). However, more research is still needed.

"Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is conceptualized as an individual's ability to achieve their communication goal while effectively and appropriately utilizing communication behaviors to negotiate between the different identities present within a culturally diverse environment" (Portalla & Chen 2010: 21). ICC is comprised of three dimensions, including intercultural awareness (cognitive aspect), intercultural sensitivity (affective aspect), and intercultural effectiveness (the behavioral aspect) (Chen & Starosta 1996).

They argue that the three are closely related but separate concepts. Where intercultural awareness represents the cognitive process a person goes through in his or her own and others' cultures, intercultural sensitivity represents both the ability of an individual to distinguish between the different behaviors, perceptions, and feelings of a culturally different counterpart and the ability to appreciate and respect

them as well (Chen & Starosta 1997). And finally, intercultural effectiveness deals with the ability to attain communication goals in intercultural interactions.

Academics from different disciplines have tried to conceptualize intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity and develop instruments for measuring these two concepts (e.g., Bennett 1986; Chen & Starosta 1998; Hanvey 1987; Turner 1968).

Although the term intercultural sensitivity has been used in the discussion of cross cultural adjustment, task effectiveness during assignments abroad, and the development and maintenance of good interpersonal relationships with culturally diverse others as discussed by Kapoor, et al.(2000) the definition of intercultural sensitivity is still finding its place in the research world and several researchers within the field of intercultural communications have made essential progress toward a deeper understanding of intercultural sensitivity in order to make the differences among cultural groups less threatening (Bellah, et al. 1985; McMurray, 2007).

Intercultural sensitivity is one of the important dimensions for people who work or live in intercultural workplaces where the cultural differences occur. Bennett (1986) argues that intercultural sensitivity is related to interactants' ability to transform themselves not only affectively but also cognitively and behaviorally from denial stage to integration stage in the development process of intercultural communication in order to have empathic ability to accept and adapt cultural differences as pointed out by Chen & Starosta (2000: 4).

Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) suggest that intercultural sensitivity is an individual's reaction to people from other cultures, which can predetermine that individual's ability to work successfully with those people. They (1992:416) state that "to be effective in other cultures, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences and also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for people of other cultures. A reasonable term that summarizes these qualities of people is intercultural sensitivity".

From the above statement it can be inferred that intercultural sensitivity is a developmental process. To support this notion, for example, Bennett (1993) suggested that intercultural sensitivity is composed of six developmental stages: denial, defense, minimizing, acceptance, adaptation and integration of cultural difference. On the other hand, Hammer, et al. (2003) state that one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated.

Similarly, researchers such as Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) perceived intercultural sensitivity from the perspective of individualism and collectivism and proposed a measure by arguing that intercultural sensitivity consists of three elements, including the understanding of cultural behaviors, open-mindedness towards cultural differences, and behavioral flexibility in host culture.

Chen and Starosta define intercultural sensitivity as the subjects' "active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures" (1998:231). According to Chen and Starosta (2000) intercultural communication sensitivity is a prerequisite for intercultural communication competence. And it is thought that people with higher intercultural sensitivity will become more confident global citizens as their understanding of cultural difference become more sophisticated. As Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) suggest those with high sensitivity are those who interest in, engage, and tend to learn other cultures.

Although the emphasis of intercultural communication and sensitivity seems to be more on behavior, it is clear that no behavior can exist without thought, emotion and attitude. Therefore, the presence of an intercultural mindset is highly important. The mindset refers to "one's awareness of operating in a cultural context. This entails some conscious knowledge of one's own culture (cultural self-awareness), some frameworks for creating useful cultural contrasts (e.g., communication styles, cultural values), and a clear understanding about how to use cultural generalizations avoiding stereotyping" (Bennett& Bennett 2004:149).

The Intercultural Sensitivity Inventories originated through cooperation primarily by Bhawuk and Brislin (1992), Starosta (2000), then Hammer, Bennet and Wiseman (2003) added greatly to its development, and other scientists.

Multiculturalism, Intercultural Sensitivity and Turkey

Anatolian Peninsula hosted a lot of civilizations (Hittites, Phrygians, Lydian, Lycian, Persians, Romans, etc.) and empires (e.g., Byzantines, Seljukian and Ottomans). And although Turkey is considered to be a nation state she is the formal inheritor of Ottoman Empire which makes her a natural multicultural society and Turkey's multicultural environment is shaped by these imperial experiences.

Turkey is located in the multicultural geography as it is a natural bridge between the east and west. Modern Turkey is divided into seven regions, four side regions and three inner regions which are named according to their neighborhood to the four seas surrounding Turkey and their positions in Anatolia. As a result, there are significant differences across the regions of Turkey based on many socioeconomic indicators (Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits 2007). Generally speaking, lower development levels can be found regarding educational, health and economic matters in moving from western to eastern regions (Alacacı and Erbas 2010; Gezici and Hewings 2007; Gezici and Keskin 2005; Gümüş 2012; Ünal 2008). That is, most of the cities in Eastern and Southeastern regions are significantly disadvantaged in terms of many categories including literacy rates and schooling compared to cities in western regions.

Although the governments have spent quite a lot of efforts to narrow the economic and social gaps between the East and West parts of the country especially more intensely since 2002, still a lot need to be done including education. Therefore, most of the newly appointed teachers in last three years mainly serve in both economically and socially disadvantaged regions (Eastern and Southeastern) where there is a great lack of teachers and where most students are culturally and ethnically diverse. For example in 2015, 70% of the newly appointed teachers (circa 52,000) were appointed in schools in the East and South-east parts of Turkey (Kaya, 2015). These teachers, unfortunately, will serve in low-income schools whose students come from different ethnic, cultural and naturally different language groups for whom they are not prepared for! Therefore, it becomes essential that Turkey develops inclusive regional and social policies capable of responding to the emerging needs in order to strengthen economic and social inclusion for nationwide prosperity and welfare.

Increasing foreign student population is another area to take into consideration. Due to the recent developments both in the region and in the foreign student policies of the administration, Turkey is becoming a country of immigrants and a higher education destination for foreign students. As of 2014-2015 academic year, over 72,000 international students from 240 countries enrolled at Turkish universities (72 bin yabancı öğrenci Türk üniversitelerinde, 2016). And the government together with Higher Education Council is planning to bring this number up to 100,000 in the next two years! The refugee policy of the administration is yet another important area to acknowledge. As of 2016, Turkey has spent around $24 billion on humanitarian aid for around 3 million refugees on its soil since the beginning of the conflict in Syria since 2011. Syrian refugees are now in every city and town and sometimes their population overcomes the local inhabitants as in the case of Kilis - a town of 90,000 people located a few miles north of the Syrian border – now welcomes 120,000 Syrians fleeing their war-torn country (Bengin, 2016; Lee, 2016).

It is also estimated that there are around 350,000 refugee children at the age of schooling, however only around 140,000 of these children are able to receive an education (Kolcu, 2014).

This brief information yet alone suggest that many teachers including EFL in Turkish schools are likely to come in contact with students from different cultural backgrounds both in elementary and higher education either as Turkish citizens living in disadvantageous regions or as a foreigner or as a refugee. In order for these teachers to have successful interactions, they require some level of awareness and understanding of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. As discussed in McMurray (2007: 70) "such awareness may influence teachers' behavior, interaction style and their manner of speech, and

produce positive outcomes for all culturally distinct individuals and result in a better and more quality teaching".

As numbers both international students and refugees continue to grow, students, staff and citizens on the streets will increasingly be interacting with those who may not share the same cultural and social norms. This can especially be challenging to teachers with low intercultural competence or limited exposure to cultures other than their own. Therefore, the ability to communicate interculturally and achieve a high level of intercultural sensitivity is not only necessity, but also a must for all professions but especially for teachers.

Are teachers prepared and ready to teach and interact with this culturally and linguistically diverse students? Despite aforementioned realities very little is known about the relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes to multiculturalism and especially to intercultural sensitivity. The issue of preparing teachers for diversity still has an exceptional yet a marginal status in general teacher education programs. As a result, preparing teachers for diversity is not readily present in general teacher education agenda except for individual programs which have intercultural communication courses as in the case of participants of this study who took this course in their sophomore year.

Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Sensitivity

One of the main roles of modern education is to equip students with several types of competences necessary for both their future personal and professional life in this multicultural global world. And one of these competences, communication skills, has a component whose development can mainly be the responsibility of foreign language teachers. During foreign language classes, a certain amount of time should be allocated to increase international understanding by enabling the students to grasp the life, thinking and literature of people who speak it. As Stern (1983) proposes, students should not only study the linguistic and cultural context (language and culture) but also should be made aware of the relationship between language and culture.

To accomplish this vision, intercultural awareness, sensitivity and competence is required if a foreign language learner is to achieve intercultural communication competence and as a result being able to function as competent communicators in possible situations requiring speakers of diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, which are now considered as important goals of foreign language teaching (Dombi 2016; Han 2013).

Therefore, the 21st century Schools in general and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms in particular should provide students with practices and processes focused on acquiring and developing, among other things, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, self-direction, digital competences, entrepreneurial and innovation skills and cross-cultural skills (EU 2006). Since acquiring cross cultural skills is one of the key elements, the focus in language education shifted from grammar, memorization and learning from rote, to using language and cultural knowledge as a means to communicate and connect to others around the globe. As a result, along the other obligations, the obligation of becoming cultural mediators to develop intercultural communication skills among students has been added to the professional list of qualities and standards of foreign language teachers.

Atay, et al. claim that "the intercultural dimension in the teaching of foreign languages has become one of the most special concerns for teachers and researchers in the field" (2009:124). Wiseman & Koster (1993) as cited in Atay, et al. specify that "studies, both in the field of social psychology and intercultural communication provide us insights on linguistic and social skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations" (2009:124).

Intercultural dimension in foreign languages emphasizes effective cross-cultural communication based on the acquisition of a key set of competences as suggested by Byram's (1997) model of intercultural

communicative competence. Being aware of the differences of other cultures is not enough to interact effectively with others. We need to know that both cultural differences and similarities do exist and have an impact on the quality of values, learning and behavior (Stafford, et al. 1997).

Since the central objective of language-learning is described as promoting the favorable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture, developing a language-learner's personality that is capable and willing to participate in intercultural communication can be shaped in carefully designed and taught foreign language classes by teachers who already possess these qualities (Council of Europe 2001). Teachers themselves should definitely have intercultural competence which enables them to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds and multiple identities and be able to develop these qualities in their learners.

Interculturality has many facets for foreign language classrooms and it is clear that foreign language classrooms are the ideal locations where all these facets can be observed and realized. According to Van Baalen, et al. "In the first place there is the teacher with his or her own cultural background and mother tongue. Secondly, there are the students who each have their own cultural baggage and their own level of language proficiency. Thirdly, the language to be taught is full of references regarding culture. And finally, the teaching materials are often written in a different country than that in which they are taught" (2003:12). It is obvious that this situation requires highly critical competences for foreign language teachers. They should not only need to be interculturally competent themselves, but they have to be able to lead and coach their students in becoming interculturally sensitive and competent which are necessary conditions of becoming global citizens to live in peace.

It is clear that well trained and well equipped foreign language teachers can play an important role in making students aware of cultural differences, of the existence of not only individually but to a great extent collectively determined culture-based differences in beliefs, value systems, norms etc. However, there is no scientific theory or standard that prescribes the competences necessary for foreign language teachers (Van Baalen, et.al. 2003). The best basis for composing a list of intercultural competences is the ideas on culture and intercultural communication. For example, Sercu formulates that 'In sum, teachers of intercultural communicative competence also need to be acquainted with basic insights from cultural anthropology, culture learning theory and intercultural communication' (2005:6).

Method

Participants

70 senior ELT major pre-service teachers (Fourth-year students) completed an instrument comprising 5 factors with 24 items developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) for measuring intercultural sensitivity during the last week of 2015-2016 academic year. Out of these 70 participants 54 were female and 16 were male and the age ranged from 21 to 32.

All participants were native speakers of Turkish and had been studying English for thirteen years (9 years (elementary and high school) + 4 years university) and they were all expected to become EFL teachers in September 2015.

All participants completed a course called Intercultural Communication during their junior year. The course covers a wide range of topics so that students become familiar with the basic concepts underlying intercultural communication.

Instrument

The 24-items questionnaire was based on 5-likert scale and the choices were: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=uncertain, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree. The 24 item model consists of five sections: (1) interaction engagement (7 items), (2) respect for cultural differences (6 items), (3) interaction confidence

(5 items), (4) interaction enjoyment (3 items), and (5) interaction attentiveness (3 items). The validity and reliability of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) had been appeared in research on intercultural sensitivity measurement conducted by Nieto (2008). Moreover, the confirmatory of the validity of the model had been evaluated on other research related to intercultural sensitivity measurement (Chen & Starosta 2000; Fritz, et al. 2001). The alpha reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.88.

As for the content of the Five factors: Interaction Engagement, included 7 items which are related to participants' feeling of participation in intercultural communication; Respect for Cultural Differences, included 6 items which are about how participants orient to or tolerate their counterparts' culture and opinion; Interaction Confidence, had 5 items, which are concerned with how confident participants are in the intercultural setting; Interaction Enjoyment, included 3 items, which deal with participants' positive or negative reactions towards communicating with people from different cultures; and Interaction Attentiveness had 3 items, which are concerned with participants' effort to understand what is going on in intercultural interaction. It should be noted that items 2, 4, 7, 9, 23, 25, 28, 30, and 22 should be reverse-coded before summing the 24 items.

The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on intercultural sensitivity with the five-point Likert scale. Paige et al. (2003) noted that the Likert scaling technique scored statement which indicated the degree of agreement. Five-point Likert scale therefore was adapted and summarized in Table1.

Table 1: *Five-Point Likert Scale Agreement Level*

Rating	Mean	Agreement Level
5	4.51-5.00	Very high
4	3.51-4.50	High
3	.51-3.50	Not sure
2	1.51-2.50	Low
1	1.00-1.50	Very low

Results and discussion

Reliability analysis

In this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.861. In addition to the total reliability coefficient score, each of the five constructs that is dependent variables described by the 24 items of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was subjected to reliability analysis. The highest reliability coefficient was identified in the construct "respect for cultural differences" (Cronbach's Alpha=.684), followed by "interaction enjoyment" (Cronbach's Alpha=.622), "interaction confidence" (Cronbach's Alpha=.581), interaction engagement" (Cronbach's Alpha=.406), and finally "interaction attentiveness" (Cronbach's Alpha=.104). Table 2 ranks the constructs from the highest to the lowest reliability. The lower reliability coefficients indicate that the items of the instrument may need revision or new items added to capture the concepts measured. Or at least this group of participants culturally had difficulty in understanding what really meant in statements!

Table 2: *Reliability Statistics for the 5 constructs of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items

Respect for Cultural Differences	.684	6
Interaction Enjoyment	.622	3
Interaction Confidence	.581	5
Interaction Engagement	.406	7
Interaction Attentiveness	.104	3
Total	.861	24

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 summarizes the mean scores for each dimension of this scale. From the five dimensions of intercultural sensitivity, the participants had the highest scores on "Respect for the cultural differences" (4.39) and had the lowest score on "Interaction attentiveness" (3.44). The total mean score on the ISS scale is 3.99. It is worth to note that the agreement level of all constructs except for interaction attentiveness were at "high" category based on the agreement level presented in Table 1.

Table 3: *Mean scores on each dimension of ISS scale*

Dimensions	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Agreement
Int. Eng.	3.57	4.43	3.85	.189	High
Resp. for Cult. Dif.	4.00	5.00	4.39	.302	High
Intr. Conf.	3.80	4.40	4.04	.156	High
Intr. Enj.	4.00	5.00	4.24	.319	High
Intr. Att.	2.67	4.00	3.44	.277	Not Sure
Total	3.60	4.57	3.99	.249	High

Int. Eng. = Intercultural Engagement; Resp. for Cult. Dif. = Respect for Cultural Differences; Intr. Conf. = Interaction Confidence; Intr. Enj. = Interaction Enjoyment; Intr. Att. = Interaction Attentiveness

The data reveal that the participants in this research possess high intercultural sensitivity (3.99). It was evidence that ELT pre-service teachers had a high respect for cultural differences (4.39). In addition, a high level for interaction enjoyment (4.24) indicates that participants enjoy interacting with foreigners. Another high agreement level (4.04) fell in the interaction confidence. This showed that the participants feel confident while interacting with foreigners. The next high agreement level was for intercultural engagement (3.85). This was again evidence indicating that the participants would like to participate and were open-minded with foreigners. Interestingly, the lowest score was for interaction attentiveness (3.44). The result affirms that although the participants are highly sensitive to intercultural issues they fall a bit short in attempting to know more about foreigners and subsequently learn from them during interaction and communication. As pointed out in Pourakbar (2015: 8) "the concept of interaction attentiveness is similar to what Cegala (1981) calls "Interaction Involvement", which according to the author, consists of three concepts that are related to the ability of sensitivity: responsiveness, attentiveness, and perceptiveness". According to Chen & Starosta (2000) people with interaction attentive ability tend to be intercultural sensitive enough with conversational procedure and maintain an appropriate interaction.

Since this category has the lowest scores compared to other dimensions in the instrument, it would be better to analyze the items one by one to get the full picture. Therefore, instead of an exploratory analysis, a confirmatory approach would be used. The confirmatory factor analysis is a method for testing hypotheses on the number of dimensions or factors of a complex construct. It is used to illustrate the interrelations between factors and the relations between factors and their indicators. As opposed to exploratory factor analysis, the confirmatory factor analysis is explicitly based on assumptions about the factor structure and the factor-indicator relationships and aims to test these assumptions. Therefore, it is thought more suitable to test the results of this category with exploratory factor analysis.

Table 4: *Factor Analysis for Interaction Attentiveness*

Item	C5	%	C4	%	C3	%	C2	%	C1	%
14	9	12, 9	55	78, 6	5	7, 1	1	1, 4	-	-
17	11	15, 7	58	82, 9	1	1, 4	-	-	-	-
19	-	-	-	-	15	21, 4	52	74, 3	-	-

C: Choice; %: Per Cent

According to the above results, where a great majority (91, 5% C4+C5) of the participants are "very observant when interacting with people from different cultures" (item 14), even a greater percent of the participants (98, 8 % C4+C5) "try to obtain as much information as they can when interacting with people from different cultures" (item 17). However, none of the participants seems to be "sensitive to their culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during their interaction" (item 19)! This indicates that the great majority of the participants (95, 7% C2+C3) seem to be not attentive and sensitive enough in interaction, so they cannot capture the subtle meanings revealed by their counterparts either verbally or nonverbally.

This result is worth exploring. Item 19 either could not have been understood carefully or it was considered to be inappropriate to go into the details during conversation with foreigners since the current culture which does not see asking personal questions to foreigners during interaction and to know more in details unless the person opens the topic himself or herself and/or is willing to share!

Attempt to learn other culture is a positive way to understand the different cultures (Zimmermann 1995). As seen in the table, the participants have respect for cultural differences, they enjoy interacting with foreign people, they are confident while interacting with foreigners, they are eager and open minded to engage with foreigners but they are a bit concerned with knowing more about foreigners.

Although the numbers of female and male participants were not equal, it is thought that it would be interesting to see if there any significant differences between genders on five categories.

Table: *5 Group Statistics for gender*

Category	Gender N		Mean	SD	Mann Whitney	U Test Sig.
IE	1	54	3, 84	, 183		.300
	2	16	3, 89	, 211		
RCD	1	54	4, 37	, 282		.453
	2	16	4, 46	, 361		

IC	1	54	4, 03	, 144	.299
	2	16	4, 08	, 192	
IENJ	1	54	4, 25	, 329	.872
	2	16	4, 22	, 291	
IA	1	54	3, 44	, 282	.988
	2	16	3, 45	, 268	

1: Females; 2: Males; IE: Intercultural Engagement; RCD: Respect for Cultural Differences; IC: Interaction Confidence; IENJ: Interaction Enjoyment; IA: Interaction Attentiveness

The data reveal that there were no significant differences both in mean scores and Mann-Whitney U Test results between males and females. That is, the gender did not influence pre-service ELT teachers' intercultural sensitivity.

Limitations and Future Directions

A few limitations of the study may provide opportunities for further studies in the future. One limitation is the sample used. Definitely, these ELT pre-service teachers may provide different results compared to the general population. Similar studies should be carried out with other ELT major pre-service teachers to make better generalizations for a bigger picture.

The self-report process, as a known short come, of the survey is another potential limitation for this kind of study. As Chen and Starosta (1996) argued the difficult question here to be asked is: Who is better suited to evaluate an interaction where an individual's ability to be competent in intercultural effectiveness is judged? The other individual involved in the interaction or an observer? Furthermore, different results could be gathered if a qualitative study was conducted where participants answered questions right after the interaction. Different methods could be used for data collection in order to compare and contrast results to measure consistency in future research (Portalla & Chen, 2010).

Conclusions

Intercultural development, being part of the human natural evolution, is many-faceted and deeply interdisciplinary. Therefore, it is necessary that teaching programs aiming at raising cultural sensitivity may build on strengthening the students' own inherent emotional worldview. This could be the most important factor for constructing a broader understanding of the environment each human being is dependent on and any educational institution would thus need to include a comparative perspective of cultural diversity in their programs.

This study aimed to offer insights on the intercultural sensitivity of ELT major pre-service teachers and as presented in previous section, the results of the study are highly satisfactory. These satisfactory results could be related to the impact of the intercultural course participants took during their junior year and the results confirm the benefit of such a course. And since not all teacher education programs offer such a course, it is believed that that the results have strong pedagogical implications for both individual teacher educators and teacher education program designers.

Cultural diversity of the students in regions where teachers will be teaching, refugee and international student policies all together highlight the importance of developing intercultural understanding, awareness and sensitivity for Turkish society and especially for teachers and it is very clear that both in-service and pre-service teachers will be teaching to students whose backgrounds and life experiences very

different from their own and therefore, their teaching will require a great deal of intercultural communication.

There is no doubt that the student population in schools in Turkey will continue to be diverse for the foreseeable future and therefore teacher education programs should start acknowledging the pluralistic preparation of teachers. We know that in classrooms what is communicated, practiced, and perceived greatly affect and have an impact on students and on their academic achievement, it becomes a must that teachers learn how to communicate effectively and cross-culturally in such diverse settings.

Teaching linguistically, culturally and ethnically diverse students surely presents both challenges and exciting learning opportunities for all teachers and teacher educators. However, accomplishing this vision is not an easy process. Teaching diverse students efficaciously needs solid willingness to spend extra effort, to reflect critically, to question our assumptions, to be whole hearted, open minded and try to do things in another way. These efforts will result in attitudinal and teaching style changes. Creating a school and/or classroom environment that is accepting, appreciating differences, and free from stereotypes and prejudgments will benefit all students and as a result the whole nation!

Teacher education curriculum should aim and focus at preparing pre-service teachers in ways that help them view themselves within a culturally diverse society. A similar vision should be accomplished for in-service teachers via professionally designed effective in-service training activities both at local and nationwide (Altan, 2016).

A much closer and serious look at the present situation and long term consequences of intercultural sensitivity in teacher education is now needed. Turkey should be able to graduate successful, not only EFL but also in all subject matters, teachers for cross-cultural settings.

If Turkey wants to be known as a promising and leading country in diversity, equality and democracy, it is expected to have a visionary leading position in appreciating cultural diversity and respecting ethnic/cultural identities. And it is clear that accomplishing this vision starts with preparing teachers with such qualities and placing such quality teachers in schools.

A paradigm shift from a traditional view of dealing culture in curriculum to a proactive intercultural perspective in EFL classrooms will augment students' consciousness of the close relationship between language and culture and teaching culture as a crucial and entwined part of foreign language teaching. This view will also help to assist foreign language teachers' intercultural perspectives and will have an encounter on their beliefs and practices in language teaching methodology and syllabus design.

The results could also be interpreted that promoting intercultural communication sensitivity and multiculturalism might be a possible measure to overcome ethnocentrism and reduce conflicts among intergroup interactions. And I believe that foreign language teachers could manage the paradigm shift and in fact there is no other place than foreign language classroom where cultural sensitivity could be better nurtured and infused!

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