A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF ELT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: GAINS OF STUDY ABROAD AND PERCEPTIONS OF ICC

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ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF ELT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: GAINS OF STUDY ABROAD AND PERCEPTIONS OF ICC

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This study investigated perceived gains of study abroad experiences and perceptions of ICC and interculturally competent speaker of pre-service English teachers with previous short-term Erasmus+ experiences. The cohort consisted of seven senior prospective teachers at METU who were in their last semester in the FLE program taking their practicum course. The researcher collected multiple forms of data via qualitative means: a background questionnaire, an online sharing platform (WhatsApp), two semi-structured interview protocols, written and performed practices of the participants' practicum course documents such as assignments, observation tasks, lesson plans, and a video-teaching observation protocol. Their authentic work for this traineeship was used to triangulate the findings as it could further help to compare and contrast their self-reported perceptions of ICC and gains of studying abroad. The prospective teachers' perceptions of ICC and interculturally competent speaker and their perceptions of developing ICC in Turkish settings were explored in-depth. The analysis of self-reported views further revealed that the participant prospective ELT teachers with Erasmus+ mobility experience perceived many contributions of this program to their life and multidimensional development.

As common patterns among the individual accounts were sought, the analysis of their self-reported gains could be gathered under four sub-themes as in the following: (1) personal, (2) language, (3) intercultural and (4) academic and professional gains. Discrepancies between their perceived gains could be explained by their individual differences and the uniqueness of their study abroad experience, motivation, interest and/or efforts of engagement in intercultural communication during their time abroad.

Keywords: Study Abroad, Erasmus+, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Interculturally Competent Speaker, Pre-service English Teachers

ÖZ

HİZMET ÖNCESİ İNGİLİZ DİLİ ÖĞRETMENİ ADAYLARININ NİTEL BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI: YURTDIŞI EĞİTİM KAZANIMLARI VE KÜLTÜRLERARASI İLETİŞİM YETİSİ ALGILARI

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Bu çalışma, daha önce kısa dönem Erasmus+ deneyimleri olan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının yurtdışı eğitim deneyimlerinden edinmiş oldukları kazanımları ve kültürlerarası iletişim yetisine (KİY) dair algılarını araştırdı. Araştırma grubu, son yarıyıllarında uygulama derslerini alan ODTÜ Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü'ndeki yedi son sınıf öğretmen adayından oluşmaktadır. Araştırmacı nitel yollarla birden fazla türde veri toplamıştır: bir anket, bir çevrimiçi paylaşım platformu (WhatsApp), iki yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşme protokolleri, katılımcıların ödevleri, gözlem görevleri, ders planları gibi uygulamalı ya da yazılı staj dersi dokümanları ve bir video-ders öğretim gözlem protokolü. Katılımcıların bu stajyerlik için yapmış olduğu özgün çalışmaları, bireysel görüşme protokollerinde paylaştıkları algılarını karşılaştırmaya yardımcı olabileceğinden araştırma bulgularının doğruluğunu sağlamlaştırmak amacıyla kullanıldı. Öğretmen adaylarının KİY ve kültürlerarası yetkin konuşmacıyla ilgili algıları ve Türkiye bağlamlarında kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi gelişimine yönelik algıları derinlemesine incelendi. Ayrıca, kendi beyan ettikleri görüşlerin analizi Erasmus+ deneyimine sahip katılımcı İngiliz dili

öğretmen adaylarının bu programın yaşamlarına ve çok boyutlu gelişimlerine birçok katkısını hissettiklerini ortaya koydu. Bireyler arasında ortak örüntüler arandığından, kendileri tarafından rapor edilen kazanımların analizi aşağıdaki gibi dört alt tema altında toplanabildi: (1) kişisel, (2) dil, (3) kültürlerarası ve (4) akademik ve mesleki kazanımlar. Algılanan kazanımlar arasındaki farklılıklar, öğretmen adaylarının bireysel farklılıkları ve yurtdışı eğitim deneyimlerinin benzersizliği, motivasyonları, ilgileri ve/veya yurtdışında geçirdikleri süre boyunca kültürlerarası iletişime katılma çabaları ile açıklanabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yurtdışında Eğitim, Erasmus+, Kültürlerarası İletişim Yetisi, Kültürlerarası Yetkin Konuşmacı, İngilizce Öğretmeni Adayları

To My Parents

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
EIL	English as an International Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
FLE	Foreign Language Education
CoHE	Council of Higher Education
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
EBA	Eğitim Bilişim Ağı - Educational Content Network
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a brief background to the study, then the purpose and significance of the study, research questions, definition of key terms and concepts are presented afterwards.

1.1. Background to the Study

Before explaining the purpose and the significance of this study, this section gives a background on the intercultural shift in the field of foreign language education and the relationship between international education experience and ICC.

1.1.1. Towards Intercultural Communicative Competence

Today, English is a language not only spoken in “inner circle” countries as Kachru (1992) once described, where it is the native tongue of its inhabitants (e.g. England, The USA, Australia etc.) and countries in “outer circle” where it functions as a second or an official language (e.g. India, Kenya, Singapore etc.), but also is predominantly preferred as the medium of communication in the “expanding circle” where people learn English as a foreign language such as Turkey, Brazil, China, Egypt, Russia and Japan. As these circles are dynamic, in practice, this means now millions of people use English as a medium of communication around the globe. Since English is currently used as an international language (EIL), native speakers are outnumbered by non-native speakers (Crystal, 2003). What is more, paralleled with the advent of new technologies and increased mobility, more and more individuals find themselves in situations where they come in contact and need to negotiate meaning with people from diverse language and culture backgrounds. This

has brought out the need to educate global-minded, interculturally competent, culturally responsive, globally competent individuals (Cushner, 2011; Gay & Howard, 2000; Marx & Moss, 2011).

In terms of foreign language learning and teaching, it became evident that knowledge of mere linguistic properties of a language does not warrant successful communications in that language. Realizing the shortcomings of the Chomskyan notion of linguistic competence in acquiring a foreign language, Hymes (1972) was the first to coin the term communicative competence, and others (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990) followed him by broadening the conception and adding more components to the influential model; namely grammatical/linguistic competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and pragmatic competence. However, due to the current lingua franca status of English (ELF), most interactions occur between nonnative and nonnative speakers of the language. Consequently, this has led to a need to adopt new pedagogical models that accommodate English as a way of international and intercultural communication and equip its learners with competencies that will enable them to communicate efficiently in local and international settings (Alptekin, 2002, p.63). Therefore, learners of the 21st century, who now live in a "*global village*" (McLuhan, 1964) that has become our world, are required to have one more competence, which is put forward as ICC (Byram & Wagner, 2018).

According to Byram (1997), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) can be defined as "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (p. 71). Byram's (1997) Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence, which has prevailed to date (Hoff, 2020), indicates five crucial dimensions, known as *saviors*, to ICC: "attitudes (savoir-être)", "knowledge (savoirs)", "skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)", "skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)" and "critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager), respectively. Later, Byram (2008) recapitulates the definitions of these components of intercultural communicative competence as:

> • *Attitudes*: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (*savoir être*).
>
> • *Knowledge*: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction (*savoirs*).
>
> • *Skills of interpreting and relating*: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own (*savoir comprendre*).
>
> • *Skills of discovery and interaction*: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*).
>
> • *Critical cultural awareness/political education:* an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (*savoir s'engager*).
>
> (Byram, 2008, p.69)

Above components indicate affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions are involved in the development of ICC. In the field of foreign language teaching and learning, his specification of the kinds of attitudes, knowledge and skills are viewed as necessary qualities a language learner should have in order to be an "interculturally competent speaker" who can interact effectively in cross-cultural situations (Corbett, 2003; Kaçar, 2019). ICC has become such an influential model among scholars all around the globe that today it has even provided the basis for the intercultural competence component of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of the Council of Europe (Kaçar, 2019, p.12). Intercultural communicative competence has gained much attention by the researchers and practitioners in the field of foreign language education to promote learners' use of English as an international language (Hoff, 2020, p.55-56). As developing skills, attitudes and awareness of values emerge as the role of the modern language teacher, Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) states the goals of ICC are:

> Thus, developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognising that the aims are: to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence; to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from other

> cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience (p.6).

Given that, it has been argued that language teachers and their intercultural communicative competence developments will indicate their ICC teaching (Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014). In the same vein, Sercu (2005) underscores that "all foreign language educators are now expected to exploit this potential, and promote the acquisition of intercultural competence in their learners" (p.1). Teachers should step away from the restricting and utopian views and practices of communicative competence in communicative language teaching pedagogies which are found problematic in the sense that it ignores the international status of English and aims at an unattainable goal of native speakership rather than helping foreign language learners to become intercultural speakers (Alptekin, 2002; Byram & Zarate 1994; Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002, Sercu, 2006). As the issue grows in importance, inquiring language teachers' or teacher candidate's ICC has surely been deemed a worthy endeavor.

1.1.2. International Education Experience and Intercultural Communicative Competence

Study abroad experiences are often commonly associated with the development of this competence as such sojourning experiences provide opportunities for experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Students who join international exchange programs might benefit greatly from the unique settings of the experiences can offer, including the facilitation and cultivation of intercultural awareness, global-mindedness, in addition to language and communication skills (Cushner, 2011; Fang & Baker, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Tütüncü, 2014; Walters et al., 2009).

In study abroad opportunities, Erasmus+ European Mobility Program (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is regarded as one of the most favored exchange programs among students. Within the scope of Erasmus+, growing number of people in the fields of education and training, sport and youth are supported (European Commission, 2018). Students and trainees from

all cycles of higher education, in bachelor, master and doctoral levels of study, can benefit from Erasmus exchanges ranging from 3 to 12 months of study abroad period in each cycle. For the estimated 2 million students in the period of 2014-2020, the budget of Erasmus+ was €14.7 billion, and now for the consecutive term, 2021-2027, the proposed budget is €30 billion (European Commission, 2020). This huge increase in financial investment is of course parallel with the aims and the needs of the program as every year the scope gets bigger in volume.

According to latest statistics, in Erasmus+ higher education, the total number of outgoing students in 33 program countries was 340.100 in the 2017-2018 academic year. The number of Turkish outgoing students in the same year was 17.957; thus, making Turkey as one of the top five student sending countries in the program following France, Germany, Spain and Italy, respectively. Even though Turkey joined the program in 2004 as one of the few non-European program countries, based on the information in The Erasmus+ Annual Report (2018), it is evident that the participants and the budgets kept escalating over the years. Together with cooperation projects, learning abroad grants summed up to € 111.03 million for Turkey just for the term of 2017-2018. Considering the volume of efforts and investments on study abroad opportunities, there is no surprise that the amount of research related to these exchanges has also increased respectively in recent years.

For the sake of improving the quality of these exchanges and their outcomes, many from around the world deemed worthy to study the relationship between stays abroad and ICC. Jackson (2018) calls attention to *multifariousness* of study abroad as she highlights the many elements affecting the study abroad experiences such as the variety of host institutions and their locations, the host cultures, duration of the programs and languages used in the sojourn environment. In other words, she asserts that "there is no such thing as '*the* study abroad context'" (p.161). Likewise, review of the literature points out that individual factors like personality traits, initial motivations, engagement and involvement during mobility and others also seem to influence the learning outcomes and developmental trajectories of the participants. Taken together, one might also argue that there is no such thing as "*the* study abroad

experience" (p.82). For this reason, there will always be a need for each case to be the subject of close scrutiny separately.

1.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

By many prominent scholars and educators in our field, ICC is viewed as an ultimate goal in teaching a second or a foreign language, and a vital competence for language learners to function in the world with success in cross-cultural communication (Alptekin, 2002; Baker 2015; Byram 1997, 2008; Deardoff 2006, 2009; Fantini; 2009; Sercu et al., 2005; Sercu 2006), and teaching techniques should be employed in order to promote the acquisitions of attitudes, skills and knowledge- the *saviors* which Byram (1997) put forward (Sercu, 2005, p.156). The critical role of teachers is underscored by Cushner and Mahon (2009) as they reminds us:

> Developing the intercultural competence of young people, both in the domestic context as well as in the international sphere, requires a core of teachers and teacher educators who have not only attained this sensitivity and skill themselves but are also able to transmit this to the young people in their charge (p.304).

Consequently, the researcher directed her attention to the period of teacher's training. Although abundant studies revolve around intercultural communicative competence, study abroad exchanges, language and teacher education, there is still a need for in-depth research to explore the perceptions and experiences of pre-service English language teachers in the Turkish context.

Each year and every academic term, just like any other state, foundation, or private university in Turkey, Middle East Technical University sends many Turkish students to various higher education institutions in the European context within the scope of the Erasmus+ exchange program. Prospective English language teachers in the Department of Foreign Language Education (FLE) are amongst those students who strive to participate in this prestigious credit mobility exchange program. As the literature points out the positive impacts of abroad experiences on individuals' ICC knowledge and development along with many other benefits to participants' lives,

pre-service English teachers who had Erasmus+ study abroad experiences were selected for the in-depth inquiry.

To this end, the present study drew on a qualitative case study approach to reveal the experiences and perceptions of a cohort of teacher trainees in METU, a state university in Turkey, who had returned from their short-term sojourns about their perceptions related to ICC and self-reported outcomes of the study abroad experiences regarding their personal and academic development, practicum and future practices. The results of qualitative case studies are inherently not to be generalized but may significantly contribute to the literature by providing a holistic understanding for others to interpret similar cases. They open room for further research on disparate settings with different individuals, institutions, and programs.

1.3. Research Questions

Informed by the literature, this thesis study was set out to gain better insights to the experiences and perceptions of Turkish language teacher-trainees of English who utilized study abroad opportunities granted by Erasmus+ and returned from their mobility in order to finish their on-going teacher education degrees at Middle East Technical University, regarding ICC and their gains from study abroad exchanges.

With the aim of discovering the inferences of having a credit mobility experience on pre-service language teachers' multidimensional development, perceptions of ICC, and perceptions they hold in relation to ICC in English language teaching, findings of the current study carry the potential to suggest in-depth insights and pedagogical implications on the study abroad exchanges, the intercultural knowledge or training of ELT majoring students and (potential) integration of interculturality in English language classrooms in Turkey. In light of the literature, research questions that guided the present study were as follows:

1. How do prospective English language teachers with study abroad experience conceptualize "intercultural communicative competence (ICC)" and "interculturally competent speaker"?

2. What are the perceived gains of studying abroad that have contributed to them as a person and as a prospective language teacher?

1.4. Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

In what follows, the key terms and concepts that are central to the rest of the study are defined and explained to help the reader.

1.4.1. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Micheal Byram (1997), who coined the term and put forward a model of ICC from a language education perspective, defines intercultural communicative competence as "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (p.71). In this study, his conceptualization of ICC was used as a theoretical basis because of its relevance on learning and teaching foreign languages. The components- the *savaoirs* of this framework are defined as attitudes, knowledge, skils of integrating and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

1.4.2. Intercultural or Interculturally Competent Speaker

Competent communicators need to employ linguistic forms flexibly and reflexively when using English to interact with people from different linguacultural backgrounds (Baker, 2015, p.132-133). Intercultural speaker or interculturally competent speaker is "someone who is aware of cultural similarities and differences, and is able to act as mediator between two or more cultures, two or more sets of beliefs, values and behaviours" (Byram, 2008, p.75). Thus, it can also be referred to as an intercultural mediator (p. 68). The goal of foreign language teaching is to assist learners in becoming intercultural speakers, which is not an unrealistic and unattainable aim like trying to become like native speakers, incongruent with the situation of the global use of English (Alptekin, 2002; Baker, 2015; Byram & Zarate, 1994; Byram, 1997, 2002, 2008).

1.4.3. Study abroad

Study abroad can vary in terms of the type of program, duration, context, and the participants, hence leading to a diversity of experiences and outcomes for all parties involved. The students who participate in study abroad opportunities such as the Erasmus+ program are widely referred as exchange students, sojourners, and outgoing or incoming students in study abroad research. In this study, this terminology is also used interchangeably when appropriate. It is good to note that all participants of this study were former Erasmus+ students that had spent one semester of their higher education abroad, so they were basically defined as pre-service teachers with short-term study abroad experiences.

1.4.4. Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is an umbrella term for the framework supporting youth, sport, adult education, training and vocational education, school education inclusive of early childhood education and higher education. In the context of the study, it is referred as the Erasmus+ European mobility program which grants higher education students to spend one or two whole semesters in another European country and while earning credits. Hence, it is sometimes referred as credit-mobility experience, study abroad experience, or sojourn experience. All the pre-service language teachers in this study had spent one semester abroad within the scope of Erasmus+ program prior to the study. Thus, it is also often expressed as they all had short-term abroad experiences.

1.4.5. Pre-service Language Teacher

Pre-service language teachers or prospective language teachers refer to students studying at foreign language education programs in higher education institutions preparing to become professional English teachers to work in various levels. In Turkey, all FLE programs have been operating under the control of CoHE since 1981. Students need to study in these programs for four years to be qualified. Since they are not teachers until so, they are often referred to as teacher trainees or teacher candidates as well.

1.4.6. Practicum

Teacher candidates or, in other words, pre-service language teachers are required to take two mandatory courses to obtain hands-on experience in their field in Turkey. These courses are also referred as “Practicum” courses and offered to students at their 4th year in a teacher preparation program. In the context of the study, namely “School Experience” and “Practice Teaching” courses are given in the FLE program; however, the study took place at the final semester of the participants’ training, so practicum particularly refers to “Practice Teaching” course and the collected practicum data belongs to that course.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The second chapter is reserved for a review of literature revolving around intercultural communicative competence, interculturally competent speakers, study abroad, in-service and pre-service language teachers, and ICC.

2.1. ICC and Intercultural Speaker

Intercultural dimension has taken its place amongst the aims of language teaching (Byram, 2021; Byram et al., 2002; Council of Europe, 2001; Tian, 2016). The essence of this dimension lies in helping the learners interact successfully with speakers of other languages and to raise learners that are aware of their identities and their interlocutors' in those interactions in the hopeful outcome of they become intercultural speakers who can develop human relationships with people from different linguacultural backgrounds (Baker, 2015; Byram, 2008).

Built on top of communicative competence (CC) and intertwined with all components, Byram's (1997) model stands out as an integrative model which influenced intercultural pedagogy profoundly (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009; Deardorff, 2004, 2006, 2009; Fantini, 2009; Sercu, 2006). His model, shown in *Figure 1*, aspires an interculturally competent speaker with attitudes (*savoir être*), awareness (*savoir s'engager*), knowledge (*savoirs)* and the skills which comprises skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) and skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*) (Byram, 1997, 2008).

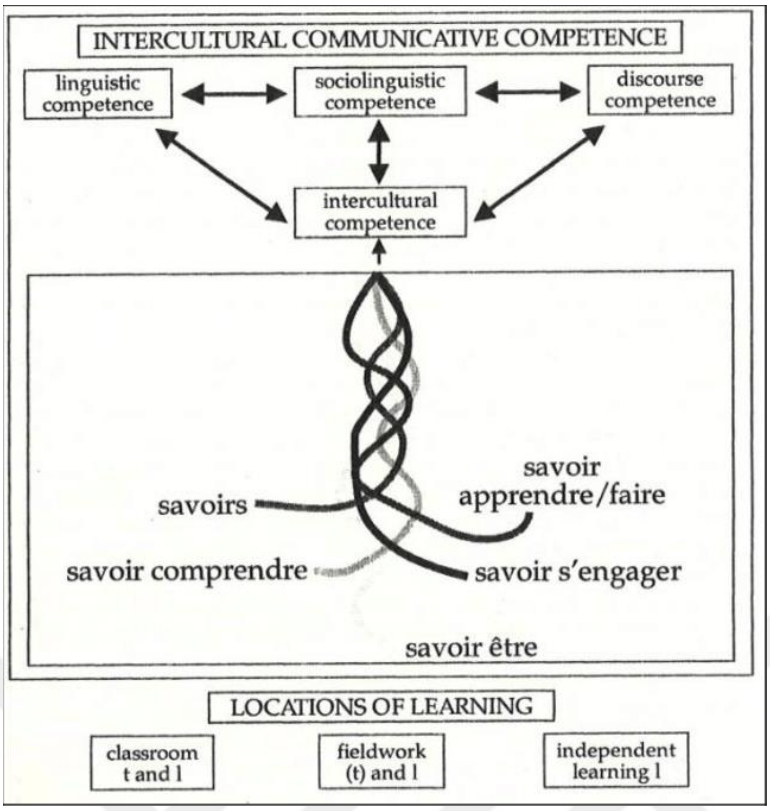


Figure 1. Representation of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997, p.73)

Similar conceptualizations and frameworks of intercultural communicative competence have been asserted by many scholars in the field, including Fantini (2009) and Deardorff (2004, 2006). Language proficiency or linguistic competence are amongst core elements in Fantini's and Byram's framework as being proficient at any level in a second language "enhances all other aspects of intercultural competence in quantitative and qualitative ways" (Fantini, 2009, p.459), and lacking proficiency can have constraining effects that limit to thinking about the world and acting in it in an ethnocentric way. Intertwined dimensions of attitudes, knowledge and skills can be enhanced through intercultural awareness and reflection to foster the development of other components in the model of ICC and increase the degree of intercultural competence (Jackson, 2018). In like manner, according to Fantini (2000), attributes of "respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, a sense of humor, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment" describe the intercultural speaker (p. 28).

Being approached from various angles in diverse areas of study, a variety of kindred terminology have been used deal with similar concepts. In some studies, while some make clear distinctions according to the context, they can and have been even used interchangeably in most. As can be seen in Figure 2, Fantini (2007) put together a list of such alternative terms.

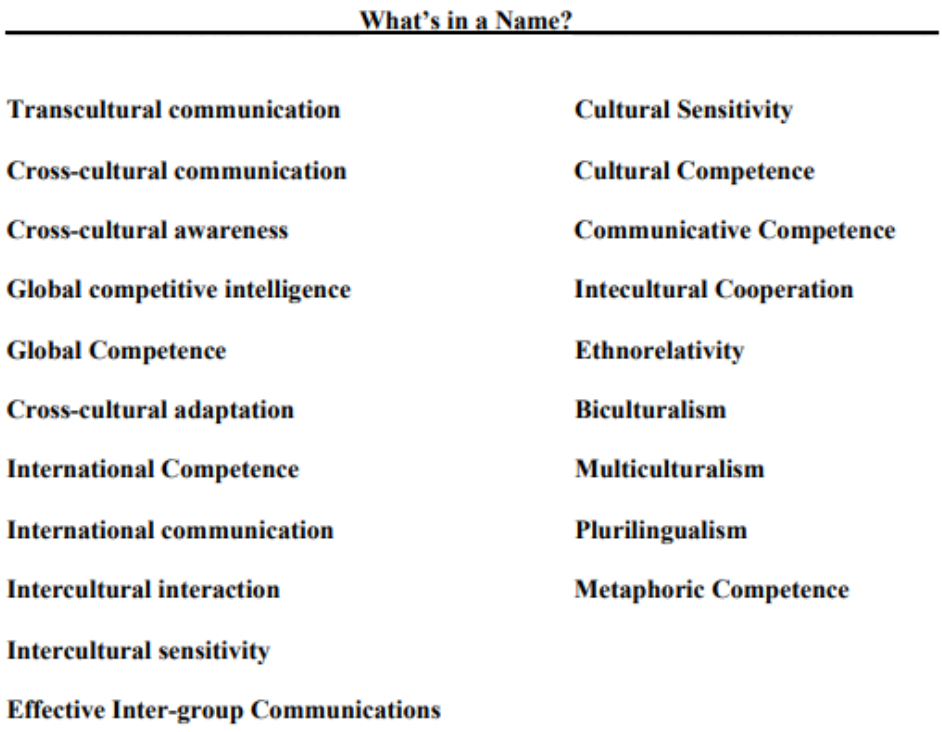


Figure 2. Alternative terms used for ICC in different fields (Fantini, 2007)

Deardorff (2006) attempted to scrutinize the definitions of ICC and arrived at the conclusion that Byram's conceptualization was the most accepted in education, intercultural research and study abroad. The surveyed experts underscored the importance of "the attitudes of openness, respect (valuing all cultures), curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity)" as essential for becoming interculturally competent (p.193). Concurrent views and explanations of intercultural communicate competence define the development of this competence as longitudinal and ongoing process (Baker, 2015; Deardorff, 2006; Dervin & Gross, 2016). The acquisition of this competence is "never complete and perfect" nor does it require the intercultural speakers to be perfectly competent as being intercultural is never a complete process (Byram et al., 2002, p.7). A person who has "some or all of the five saviors of

intercultural competence to a degree" (Byram, 2009, p.327) can be considered as an intercultural speaker.

Due to its importance, ICC emerges as a construct highly researched from various viewpoints in different fields of study. However, Byram's (1997) conceptual framework was adopted within the scope of this study because of its relations to teaching and learning settings and research, taking its prevailing impact (Hoff, 2020) on research and practice in the teaching and learning of other languages, international and intercultural dialogue into account (Deardorff, 2006). It is clear that ICC stands as a construct hard to measure, but most important to understand in today's globalized word.

2.2. Study Abroad and ICC

As a result of intensified efforts of internationalization across the globe, participation in study abroad programs has become a must for institutions of higher education. In an attempt to help language teachers develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC), theory alone is not sufficient; experiential learning opportunities should be seized (Zhao, 2010). Language education programs around the world continuously seek ways to integrate cultural immersion opportunities into their program, pursue and encourage such efforts (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019).

Short-term study abroad opportunities are excellent ways for tertiary level students to have an international education experience that creates cultural immersion chances for its participants to take advantage of the academic and socio-cultural experiences. This temporary period spent outside their own country allows the sojourn students to experience otherness and can enable them to confront their worldviews and stereotyped beliefs (Bennett, 1993). From the perspective of sociocultural approach to learning, it has been understood that learning can occur as a social process by co-constructing knowledge through participating in different communities of practice (Lave &Wenger, 1991). International education can help sojourn students make sense of cultural differences and improve the quality of their learning experiences (Jackson, 2011, p.92).

This notion also resonates with the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1994) which suggests that people who face a momentous event in their lives, for instance studying abroad in an unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environment, might experience a significant personal growth on condition that they engage in critical reflection and self-analysis (Taylor, 2015, as cited in Jackson 2018, p.52). As Bennett (1977) noted "it takes an intense intercultural experience to force self-reflectiveness and self-awareness" (as cited in Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009). Discomfort of being a sojourn can lead to more understanding and raised awareness of both *Self* and *Other* (Jackson, 2018, p.52; Jackson 2015). Critical reflection can ease and promote the individuals' acquisition of the knowledge and skills that are needed to recognize and accommodate differences in a multicultural environment (Jackson, 2018, p.136-137).

Erasmus+ program is an outstanding international education experience for tertiary level students that creates cultural immersion opportunities for participants to become familiarized with themselves and the cultures of others, develop attitudes and skills that will help them to become intercultural citizens of the global world (Byram, 2008). However, mere participation in such programs does not warrant intercultural growth alone (Cushner & Chang, 2015; He et al., 2017), rather the growing literature on interculturality shows that intercultural development is highly dependent on many internal and external factors such as the uniqueness of individual sojourners; their prior experiences to mobility, backgrounds, motivation levels, different country contexts and the host environment (Jackson, 2018). Idiosyncratic nature of study abroad experiences can naturally lead to various results in research from different contexts and participants.

More recently in study abroad reseach, "the immersion myth is being debunked and questions are being raised about what participants actually gain from stays abroad when there is no intervention" (Jackson, 2018, p.6) More and more higher education institutions and decision makers call for more comprehensive and systematic research to document the intercultural learning of student sojourners and investigate their intercultural development (p.7). These studies might be especially valuable for the field of English language teaching to help second language learners, teachers,

and teacher educators by giving an ear to program participants' experiences and their perceptions of the important concept of intercultural communicative competence.

2.3. Language Teachers and ICC

Following the recognition of the importance of this needed competence in 21st century's English language teaching as aforementioned, a lot of studies has brought the language teachers into scope and examined their beliefs and practices regarding ICC. For instance, to name a few from the Turkish context, Kılıç's (2013) study conducted with 368 lecturers who teach English in tertiary level aimed to investigate these language teachers' beliefs regarding intercultural communicative competence and the actuality of ICC in higher education institutions in Turkey. The findings from her work indicated that for the participant English lectures culture learning is not viewed among the primary objectives of language teaching and culture teaching is thought to be an attitude development process. Furthermore, the study implied that although the teachers' confusion of when to introduce intercultural teaching was an issue, their beliefs favored adding intercultural competence in the language classes. It was also concluded from her findings that the language teachers believed in themselves and thought they were knowledgable to provide information to their pupils about different foreign cultures (Kılıç, 2013, p.57).

In a comparable study, Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersin and Kaslıoğlu (2009) gathered survey data from 503 EFL teachers, when investigating their attitudes and opinions on the role of ICC in language teaching. Despite the reported positive attitudes towards ICC, the teachers in the inquiry seemed to be not integrating intercultural communicative competence into their practice. In that regard, their study seems to correlate with the study of Castro, Sercu and García (2004) who found out the the teachers in Spanish secondary schools did not put emphasis on intercultural objectives to facilitate the acquisition of intercultural skills important. Together these studies depict the picture of the instruction of language serving as the primary goal in classrooms, whereas intercultural objectives are often minimized (Liddicoat &Scarino, 2013).

In her qualitative case study, Tütüncü (2014) looked for the definitions of ICC and interculturally competent speaker through the eyes of English preparatory program teachers working in a Turkish university as well as inquiring about their beliefs and practices of ICC in their institution. Her cohort was comprised of in-service teachers who had Comenius or Erasmus study abroad experiences as part of pre-service teacher education. In congruence with many studies drawing attention to study abroad, all participant instructors reported favorable changes in themselves in terms of personal, social, language, and professional development, and they asserted that they were more independent, confident, open-minded, and sociable people with more cultural insights out of their prior study abroad experiences. However, their ideas on implementing ICC in language classrooms were reportedly challenged by the course materials or the curriculum. The implementation of ICC in classrooms were found as complex as how to raise intercultural speakers were not quite grasped by many EFL teachers according to Eken's (2015) and Bayyurt's(2006) similar qualitative reseach findings. Understanding and teaching of intercultural competence was also found problematic due to unfamiliarity of the term in foreign contexts such as that of Ghanem (2017) who analyzed American language teachers of German on the importance and the integration of intercultural communicative competence.

Overall, the results of previous findings in relevant literature point out that language instructors mostly experience confusion in comprehending the term and its incorporation to language teaching settings. Even when they recognize the significance of developing this competence, they report facing challenges in implementing ICC in their practice. This situation may have resulted from teachers' own IC competence or intercultural training they receive in pre-service education, or lack thereof. As teacher preparation is a needed step that must be given emphasis in language teacher education research to integrate interculturality into foreign language education (Byram, 2014), the present study aimed at bringing prospective language teachers into scope. Thus, the following review of literature will steer its direction on this issue, and studies on those prospective teachers will be put under the scope.

2.4. Pre-service Language Teachers and ICC

It is not possible for a teacher to stay neutral on cultural issues as one naturally responds to other cultures as a human being, not just as a teacher. Teachers, therefore, need to be mindful of "how their own stereotypes and prejudices may influence their teaching subconsciously, and what the effects of this may be on learners" also "reflect upon how they respond to and challenge their learners' prejudices" as human beings who are touched by their experiences of *otherness* (Byram et al., 2002, p.30).

Studies on pre-service language teachers to date that have looked into the variables affecting the ICC signaled study-abroad experiences as an influential factor on the intercultural communication competences of student-teachers. It has been claimed by many scholars that short-term overseas experiences can promote language teachers' multidimensional development (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019). In a similar vein, Allport's (1954) Contact Theory suggests that contacts are among the most effective ways to reduce stereotyping, prejudice and other negative attitudes between groups (Allport, 1954). By the same token, participating in exchange programs can help participants review their ethnocentric lenses and can lead them towards having more ethnorelative worldviews (Bennett, 1993). Çiftçi and Karaman (2019), in their meta-synthesis of 25 qualitative research analyzing the role of international experiential learning in the multidimensional development of pre-and in-service teachers, synthesized the outcomes that emerged from these findings. The revealed main outcomes of study abroad experiences for both teachers and teacher candidates were categorized under three headings as professional, linguistic, and intercultural outcomes.

In one recent study, Dewan Türüdü and Gürbüz (2020) investigated the impact of the year abroad on 4th year pre-service TEFL dual degree students' development using a qualitative approach. Differing from an Erasmus+ experience, these students had spent noticeably more time abroad due to the agreement with the State University of New York (SUNY), and also had to take fieldwork courses at a local school there along with other courses on a variety of subjects to earn a BA degree in Liberal Arts from SUNY in addition to a TEFL degree from their institution in

Turkey. The researchers used questionnaires and interviews and relied on the self-reports of the SUNY students while triangulating their data by interviewing three faculty teachers at the home institution. They presented their findings as divided into four impacts of the year abroad on students. The results revealed overall positive impacts on students' personal, linguistic, academic and intercultural development, mostly corroborating findings in the literature (Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020, p.655).

Nevertheless, the reports of students and faculty members somewhat conflicted over the students' language development, teachers arguing the students could have taken more advantage of the experience (p.656). On students' intercultural development specifically, eight out of eleven participants stated that meeting new people and learning about a new culture was the most valuable aspect of their study abroad experience (p.652). While only the half agreed that there had been a change in their views about the host (American) culture, one participant strongly pointed out her views have changed, and she became aware of her prejudices (p.652). One of the essential conclusions they drew was that *"students gained knowledge and skills that will help them become global citizens"* (Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020, p.656).

There are a number of studies that found the pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey had inadequate levels of intercultural competence (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Börkan, 2012; Kaçar, 2019). This situation seems to stay resilient as even more recent studies continue to report this problem in language teacher education programs in the Turkish context meanwhile explaining the reason for it might be connected to the absence of specific and systematic training for ICC. One mixed-methods study employing an explanatory sequential design examining the issue in a well-known major state university in central Turkey the was that of Şen's (2020). Although the participants in her research revealed high levels ICC, it was reported that the conceptualization of ICC was not quite clear as the respondents had a hard time defining the term, which was attributed to the teacher training program where they received no specific training on ICC, no course to provide theoretical knowledge (Şen, 2020, p.77). Another implication that can be referred to the inadequacy of the teacher training programs for raising students' ICC was when comparing the senior

and freshman ELT teacher candidates, Şen (2020) did not detect any significant differences in terms of their perceived ICC levels and thus concluded that the teacher preparation program did not contribute and affect prospective language teachers' ICC levels (p.73). On the other hand, Erasmus+ was among the factors found to be helpful for prospective teachers' ICC development (p.84).

To date, through many investigations in the pertinent literature, much research has revealed the benefits of study abroad experiences of pre-service teachers' on their ICC development (Soria & Trois, 2014; Williams, 2005; Hişmanoğlu, 2011; Aydın, 2012). For instance, in Önen's (2017) study, pre-service teachers believed the mobility program mainly contributed to their cultural accumulation, personal and social development (p.277). On the other hand, some research has found contradictory findings that revealed no significant differences between the ones who had study abroad experiences and the ones who stayed at home institutions throughout their undergraduate education (Bean & Boffy-Ramirez, 2017; Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Karakaş, 2013). Walters, Garii and Walters (2009) draw attention to the issue that "too often, prospective teachers returning from their international experience are left alone to process what they have done and what they feel" (p. 156). Byram (2008) even suggested that the outgoing students may come back with reinforced negative impressions of the host cultures. If their awareness were not raised prior to the exchange period or they were not prepared beforehand, they may not experience the benefits of the potentially rich intercultural experience and see the programs as a "sponsored vacation" (Juvan & Lesjak, 2011). To avoid that and maximize the potential positive contributions, it is suggested that sojourners could be guided before, during or after their mobility periods (Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Çiftçi & Gürbüz, 2019) and encouraged for reflecting on their trans-cultural communication and intercultural activities on their way to develop an ethnorelative mindset (Jackson, 2018).

2.4.1. Practicum in Pre-service Teacher Education

The rationale behind inquiring the pre-service teachers in *practicum* in this study lies in the role and value of practicum courses in a pre-service language teacher

education. Practicum is a momentous step taken before delving into the professional life. The practicum courses in the senior year prepare the teacher candidates for what lies ahead.

In a practicum course, they reflect on their past knowledge and experience and think about ways to incorporate their skills into their teaching; they think about learner profiles, materials, and methods of teaching, planning, and implementing lessons in a real classroom. In other words, practicum has a copulative effect as it binds theory, research, and practice accumulated over the years. Therefore, it was assumed that data obtained from them during this period of time in their pre-service teacher education would better reflect and help the researcher to capture their perceptions and views regarding the aims of the present study. Their authentic work for this traineeship was also used to triangulate the findings as it could help to compare and support their self-reported perceptions of ICC and gains of studying abroad.

Walters, Garii and Walters (2009) in the United States indicate that an international practicum experience for prospective teachers enhances global-mindedness, personal development, and intellectual growth and that teaching activities abroad makes more significant and long lasting changes in future clasroom practices (p.152).

Even without the practicum opportunities the sojourners may not access during the mobility period in a study abroad, the international education experience can still have positive influence on the participants' interculturality. For instance, in Poland Czura (2018) conducted a study investigating pre-service teachers who are taking a teaching course in their home university similarly to the participants of the present thesis study. She looked for their previous international experience and inquired their beliefs about ICC. Using Sercu's (2005) instrument after adapting it to the Polish context as a primary elicitation tool, open-ended items gathered the teacher candidates' definition of ICC while Likert-scale statements were to elicit opinions in relation to developing ICC in the classrooms (Czura, 2018, p.333). As she compared four groups based on their duration of stay, one of her findings revealed the ones with longer periods of stays abroad were able to define ICC more readily (Czura,

2018, p.339). So, it can be inferred that even studying abroad without a specific chance to take a practicum there can still be beneficial for intercultural awareness. However, it is important to underscore that the findings of the study also showed the participants' confusion on how to develop the concept in the classrooms, implying pre-service teacher education should have included ICC. Similar to the reports from the Turkish ELT context (Kaçar, 2019; Şen, 2020), throughout their studies in the teacher education program, the teacher trainees mentioned the lack of instruction or inclusion of ICC-related topics and intercultural language teaching (Czura, 2018, p.332-333). Therefore, their confusion could be linked to the education they have received.

All in all, there is no doubt that undertaking practicum courses in an authentic foreign educational context would enrich the teacher candidates' repertoire and introduced them to new perspectives of their profession. However, taking such courses or courses that have components to enable practice teaching in authentic contexts is either not available or not desirable for outgoing Turkish pre-service teachers in the host institutions because of equivalency and accreditation problems upon return.

To sum up the chapter, conceptualizing and gaining ICC is claimed to be especially significant for foreign language education. Valuable opportunities for fostering ICC knowledge and development emerged as study abroad and international exchange programs. The following chapter will deal with the details of study design, setting, participants, data collection tools and procedures that have been conducted.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The third chapter of the thesis presents the details of study design, setting, participants, data collection tools and step by step procedures that have been conducted by the researcher. Furthermore, the ethical considerations and data analysis are explained.

3.1. Qualitative Case Study Approach

The present research drew on a qualitative case study approach as it was aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of a cohort of teacher-trainees who had been sojourners abroad for a period in their pre-service teacher education about their conceptions of ICC and their perceived ICC development and outcomes of the study abroad experiences regarding their personal and academic development, practicum and future practices. The participants were comprised of students who were taking their practicum course in the 2019-2020 spring semester (namely FLE 404: Practice Teaching) since one of the aims of the study is to understand the effects of their study abroad experiences on their anticipated teaching profession and perceptions they hold in relation to ICC in English language teaching. The choice of methodology is in line with the identification by John W. Creswell (2013) as he defines:

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (**a case**) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving **multiple sources of information** (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports **a case description** and **case themes** (Creswell 2013, p.97).

Due to the idiosyncratic nature of abroad experiences and interculturality development, quantitative research tools such as surveys and their analysis fall short to reveal individual trajectories (Coleman, 2013; Dörnyei, 2007; Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Jackson, 2018). Therefore, the researcher utilized qualitative data collection tools as the aim of the research is not to quantitatively measure ICC or gains of studying abroad but to develop an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants (Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

While interviews preserve their importance as the most preferred and relied on instruments employed by the qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2013; Dörnyei, 2007; Seidman, 2006), several lines of evidence suggest that collecting and scrutinizing multiple sources of data reinforce the reliability of qualitative research endeavors (Wellington, 2015). Therefore, triangulation in qualitative studies is inevitable for reliable and valid results (Deardorff, 2006).

The present study adheres to the common characteristics of qualitative research as the researcher collected multiple forms of data (a background questionnaire, an online sharing platform (WhatsApp), semi-structured interview protocols, written and performed practices of the participants' practicum course documents such as assignments, observation tasks, lesson plans, and a video-teaching observation protocol), and rather than relying on questionnaires developed by others, the tools are designed by her using open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013, p.45). This stems from the fact that qualitative researchers are seen as the "*key instrument*" as they interview participants, examine documents and observe behavior (p.45). That is why the research instruments were developed by the researcher, and the practicum data (personal documents of the trainees) is the only exception since the participants are studied in their *"natural settings"* in qualitative approaches. Hence, the researcher only needed to observe what they had done within the natural process of the course by collecting and observing their authentic work.

3.2 Setting

Turkey is one of the few non-European countries that is involved in Erasmus+ 33 program countries; nonetheless, it was one of the top five countries which send higher education students in the exchange program in the 2017-2018 academic year (European Commission, 2020). Moreover, the top three higher education student receiving countries from Turkey are Poland, Germany and Italy, respectively. Currently, there are 11 universities from 6 different countries (Italy, Spain, Croatia, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands) that accept sojourners from the foreign language education department at Middle East Technical University (METU), the research setting.

With respect to the research questions of the study, participants were purposefully selected utilizing criterion sampling to derive extensive data, which was considered useful for quality assurance (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.28). The cohort of students were comprised of English language teacher candidates at METU who had had Erasmus+ student exchange experiences and were also enrolled in "FLE 404: Practice Teaching" course in the 2019-2020 Spring term since the students would also be asked to reflect on the gains from their Erasmus+ participation to their prospective language teacher education. As mentioned earlier, this was due to the place of practicum in a pre-service teachers' education as practicum is considered as a period where pre-service teachers think, reflect and link their beliefs,skills and knowledge and work towards practice.

Practicum courses such as "FLE:404" are mandatory for all education faculties in Turkey. Students need to gain authentic school experiences with these courses in their 4th year for two semesters before they can graduate. In Middle East Technical University (METU), prospective English language teachers are required to take these courses which are named in the catalog as "FLE 425: School Experience" and "FLE 404: Practice Teaching". The latter is offered in the final semester of the undergraduate program in the Department of Foreign Language Education and is 5 METU Credits that equates to 13.5 ECTS. This course has the highest weight in the

prospective teachers' education, and its content is described in the university course catalog as:

> Consolidating the skills necessary for teaching English as a foreign language at primary and secondary schools through observation and teaching practice in pre-determined secondary schools under staff supervision; critically analyzing the previously acquired teaching related knowledge and skills through further reading, research and in class activities in order to develop a professional view of the ELT field. (METU Academic Catalog, 2017, p.514)

In the light of the profound role of this course in a pre-service language teachers' journey to become a qualified professional, this course is believed to be relevant to the aims of the study as the participants would get a better chance to answer the interview questions by reflecting on the contributions of their study abroad experiences on their academic and professional development while taking this course.

To describe the practicum context in the study more precisely it should be noted that the trainee students go to an assigned cooperating school in Ankara 6 hours per week for total of 12 weeks. The students have to complete this duty for 72 hours till the end of the semester; otherwise, they cannot be graded for their final teaching performances, resulting in failing the course. Apart from their presence in the practicum schools, the trainees also need to participate in classroom sessions in the department throughout the term every week for 2 hours with their course instructors and fellow trainees to discuss assigned articles and debate over observations and tasks. In addition to that, they need to perform 4 teaching tasks with planned lessons, the last one to be observed and evaluated by both their supervising mentor teacher at the cooperating school and their course instructor at METU.

However, towards the end of March, 2020, with the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic, the instructors at METU were forced to made shifts to compensate for the rest of the term in their syllabi. After the announcement of the CoHE (2020, April 7), which disclosed the decision "*uygulama çalışmalarındaki eksikliklerin "ders, ödev ve dosya hazırlığı" ile telafi edebilmesine"* meaning that the lack of practice can be compensated by lecture, homework, and file preparation, every teacher educator

acted on their initiatives. This resulted in changing the practicum experiences of the participants. Teacher educators requested from pre-service teachers enrolled in different sections to submit different assignments and practices to evaluate them at the end of the term. Table 3 in section 3.4. presents the participants' experiences and the data obtained from them.

3.3. Participants

A cohort of prospective teachers with study abroad experiences was taken as the focus of the study as the literature suggests having a study abroad experience is said to increase knowledge and levels of ICC and contributes to the students' multidimensional development. In order to answer these research questions, the participants had to have Erasmus+ experiences at one point in their undergraduate teacher education. In addition to that criteria, the students also needed to be enrolled in the practicum course in their 4th and final year of pre-service education. These criterion defined and set the limits of this bounded the case study to one particular cohort of participants.

Table 1.

Overview of the participants

Pseudonyms	**Host Country**	**Duration of Stay**	**Semester Abroad**	**Practicum**
Burcu	Spain	5 months	2017-2018 Fall	High School
Mine	Italy	5 months	2018-2019 Spring	Middle School
Lara	Sweden	4 months	2017-2018 Fall	Middle School
Gizem	Poland	4.5 months	2018-2019 Fall	High School
Irmak	Spain	6 months	2018-2019 Fall	Middle School
Defne	Spain	5.5 months	2018-2019 Fall	High School
Melis	Poland	4 months	2018-2019 Spring	High School

As can be seen from Table 1, all seven prospective English language teachers who participated in the research from METU were females, and they all had spent only

one semester abroad within the scope of Erasmus+ student exchange program prior to the timeline of this study. Before their one-semester study abroad experiences, only Mine and Gizem had been abroad before. In high school, while Mine went to Poland with a Comenius student exchange project, Gizem went to Germany. The duration of these projects were only 1-week, and they had no other abroad experiences.

During the data collection period, while four of the senior prospective teachers went to a cooperating high school for the practicum course in the spring semester of 2019-2020, three went to middle schools to gain teaching experience in the last semester of their ongoing English language teacher education. Mine and Lara were the only participants in the group enrolled in the same FLE 404 section. On the other hand, Irmak and Defne had shared the same study abroad experience in Spain since they went together as best friends in the first term of their 3rd year at the department, the fall of 2018-2019.

Table 2.

Semester spent abroad

Participants	**Semester Spent Abroad**
Burcu	Sophomore 1st term
Mine	Junior 2nd term
Lara	Sophomore 2nd term
Gizem	Junior 1st term
Irmak	Junior 1st term
Defne	Junior 1st term
Melis	Junior 2nd term

Table 2 above shows which semester each participant chose to study abroad. While Mine, Gizem, Irmak, Defne, and Melis went on their sojourn during their junior year at the department, Burcu and Lara were the only ones who chose to study abroad when they were sophomores. The reason for which they explained was to leave ample time to finish the rest of their courses upon return so as to prevent the

prolongation of their graduation. Pseudonyms given to the pre-service teachers were used here and henceforth to refer to the participants in attempts to securing their anonymity.

3.4. Data Collection Tools and Procedures

After carefully reading and reviewing the related works of literature and deciding on ways to collect data conforming to the aims of this study, the instruments: the background questionnaire, the semi-structured interview protocols, and the observation protocol sheet were formed by the researcher herself according to the research the aims of the present study. Then before utilization, they were reviewed and edited many times with the help of the thesis supervisor. The Human Subjects Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University also approved the final versions of the prepared instruments and the planned data collection strategies (see Appendix A for approval).

The first step of the data collection procedures was reaching out to the participants. The researcher compared the list of pre-service English language teachers at METU FLE department who had study abroad experiences with the students enrolled in the Practice Teaching course. Then, the researcher made contact with eligible participants by sending an e-mail to the teacher trainees who fit the criterion, introducing herself, the aims and procedures of her research study, and kindly asked their participation. Seven out of nine potential participants agreed to take part in the study and signed the informed consent form (see Appendix B).

The consenting participants were then asked to fill a short background questionnaire (see Appendix C), which was estimated to take around 10 minutes to complete. Meanwhile, the researcher created a communication platform, a WhatsApp group, for the participants. Throughout the data collection process, they were engaged in this online group where they could share their experiences in a free and an informal way with the researcher and the other participants. This sharing platform aimed to help to keep the communication channel open between the researcher and the participants. Exploiting different formats of online data collection when designing

qualitative inquiries such as instant messaging, text-based chat rooms, observing via examining videotapes along with others have been encouraged because of their many benefits (Creswell, 2013, p.159). In this research, instant messaging was especially beneficial for the researcher to keep track of each participant and their practicum course experiences amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

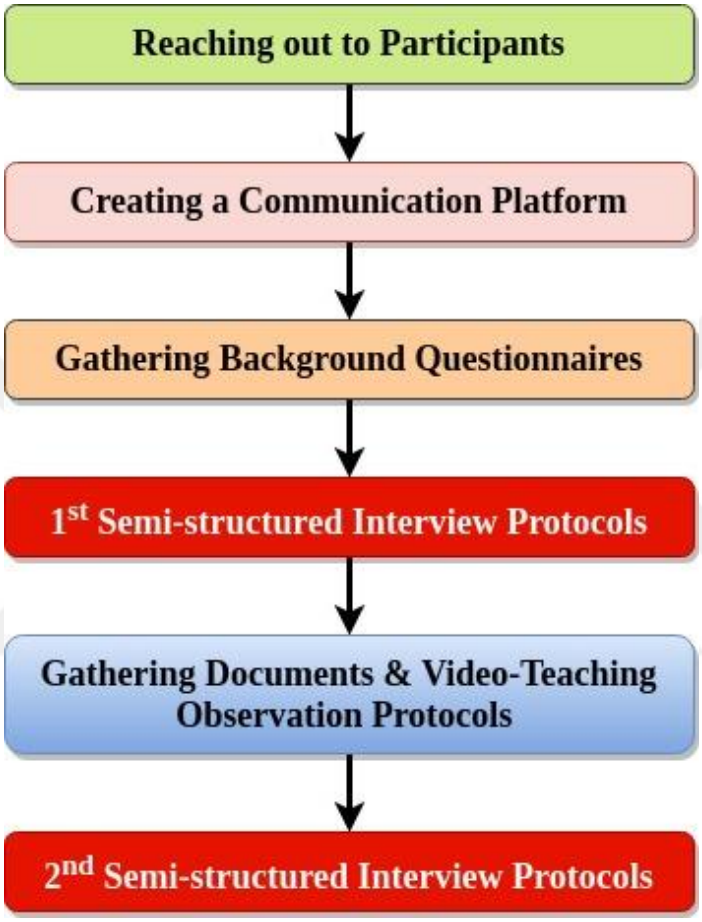


Figure 3. Overview of the data collection steps

After gathering background data, the researcher conducted the first semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) with each participant individually. Due to the global pandemic, all interview data gathered throughout the project was conducted via ZOOM to eliminate any risks of the coronavirus threat. All ZOOM meetings were recorded both as a video and audio, and then were transcribed verbatim later to be coded systematically for qualitative analysis to increase the credibility and reliability of the data.

After the first set of interviews, the researcher began to collect and analyze any document assignments such as observations, reflections, lesson plans, and video-teachings of the participants that they had completed for the Practice Teaching course. Video observation protocol (see Appendix E) was utilized to observe the participants' video-teaching practices if they have had any. Otherwise, the researcher analyzed and took notes on the final lesson plans prepared by the trainees. The researcher took the role of a *nonparticipant observer* since she recorded the data as an outsider without direct involvement by just watching and taking notes from a distance (Creswell, 2013, p.167). The duration of the videos observed was around 125 minutes in total. Table 3 summarizes the practicum data gathered from each participant.

Table 3.

Summary of the Practicum data obtained by each participant

Participant	**Practicum data**
Burcu	10 documents in total: 4 article discussions, 2 observation tasks, 1 EBA observation task, teaching task 1 (post-teaching self-evaluation form (performed at the school with a peer), final lesson plan (online/distance), final feedback form & video teaching duration of **29:36.**
Mine	2 observation tasks, 2 article reflection/discussion tasks, 1 EBA reflection on 3 different EBA videos, a lesson plan, online lesson plan presentation via Zoom around **10** minutes
Lara	2 observation tasks, 2 article reflection/discussion tasks, 1 EBA reflection on 3 different EBA videos, a lesson plan, online lesson plan presentation via Zoom around **10** minutes
Gizem	2 observation tasks, 1 task on distance learning from the perspective of ELT (5 pages), 4 lesson plans focusing on different language skills & **4:26** minute video-teaching of one of the lesson plans.

Table 3 (continued)	
Irmak	8 written tasks in total consisting of 4 classroom observation and article reflection tasks; and 2 video observation and reflection tasks; 1 article reflection task; 1 research proposal task, in addition to a final lesson plan & a video-teaching duration of **15:50**.
Defne	2 observation tasks, 4 EBA observation and reflection tasks, one lesson plan. Only participant who did not have a video task.
Melis	Task 1 *Who are you professionally?*- a video recording(**11:10**)- about herself as a student and a teacher, observation task about giving instructions, 4 EBA observation and reflection/discussion tasks (Task 6 also involves observation of a classmate's Eba video), 1 teaching philosophy statement document, 3 lesson plans & 2 video teachings that last 25:46 and 21:34, total of **47:20**.

A few weeks after the first interviews, after the researcher examined all their practicum data and when the participants learned their final grades and got feedback from their professor, if any, then the second interviews (see Appendix E) were conducted. Information about the duration of all 14 interviews can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4.

Summary of semi-structured online interview data

Participants	**1st Interview**	**2nd Interview**	**Total duration of two interviews**	**Total duration of all interviews**
Burcu	31 mins	39 mins	70 mins	
Mine	25 mins	26 mins	51 mins	
Lara	19 mins	29 mins	48 mins	
Gizem	24 mins	32 mins	56 mins	449 mins

Table 4 (continued)			
Irmak	43 mins	41 mins	84 mins
Defne	51 mins	29 mins	80 mins
Melis	31 mins	29 mins	60 mins

3.5. Ethical Considerations

During all stages of the data collection, the participants were continuously reminded and assured that any form of data they share will only be used by the researcher for the purposes of this research study. Building rapport helped the researcher collect necessary personal data when for instance, they were sharing their homework and telling personal stories. Recording and securing of the research data was approached with diligence. Anonymity was assured and pseudonyms were used to report findings from the consenting participants. Ethical approval to conduct this study was also obtained from the Human Subjects Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University.

3.6. Data Analysis

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) remind us that "Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3). As a qualitative case study, the analyses of the results are expected to uncover the personal experiences of pre-service English language teacher candidates at METU with study abroad experiences on the self-reported gains of such programs and reveal their perceptions about intercultural communicative competence. Results might reveal in what ways Erasmus+ experience affects prospective language teachers' perceptions and teaching practices.

The data analysis process of a qualitative inquiry might become complex and messy; however with diligence, can be dealt with if a cyclical process of data analysis is

followed by the researcher step by step, starting with the immersion of the self with the data, then reflecting, taking apart, and analyzing, recombining, relating and locating her data (Wellington, 2015, p.267). Figure 4 displays the steps of making sense of qualitative data.

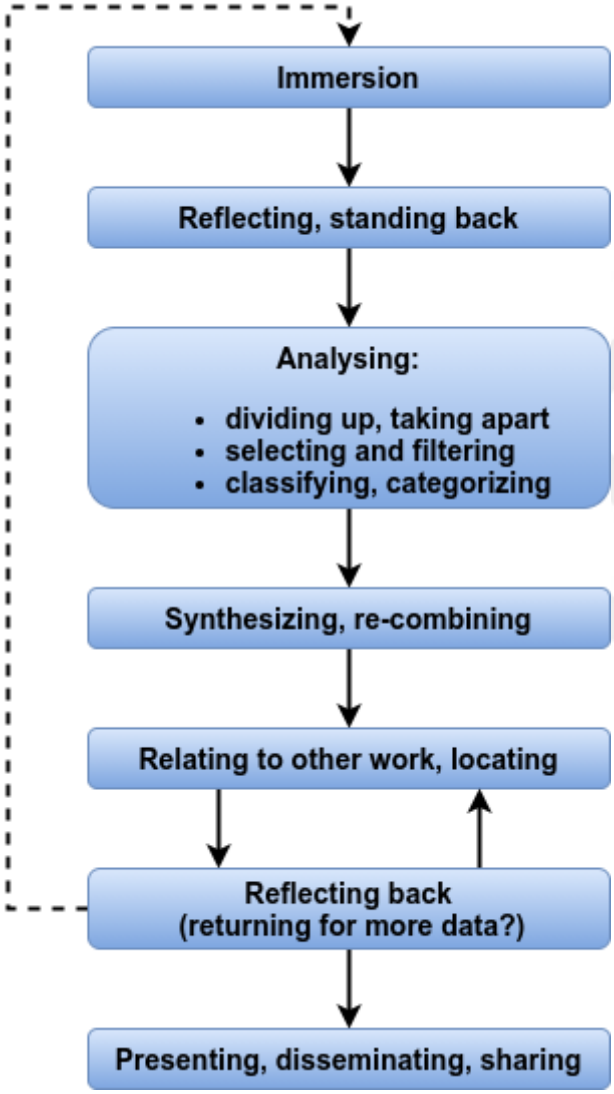


Figure 4. Cyclical process of making sense of qualitative data (Adapted from Wellington, 2015, p.141)

To that end, the researcher gave great importance to meticulously transcribe all fourteen interviews for accurate analysis and account for each participant of the study. When analyzing the data, the researcher formed separate folders for each

participant containing every form of data obtained from them so that the analysis of interview data would be merged with other data sources to validate findings and create detailed descriptions. Under each participant's folder, the researcher began the process of intensive reading, immersing herself with the data, going back to recordings when necessary. Using both inductive and deductive reasoning, the researcher began the process of building codes, categories, and themes emerging from the data. Constant readings and re-watchings of the recordings, moving back and forth between the data helps the researcher to present rich findings for each case and across the cases in reporting qualitative inquiries. To increase the validation of qualitative data analysis, the researcher also showed her initial codes and categories of the first three cases to a colleague who held an MA degree in ELT and was a former Fulbright foreign language teaching assistant in the U.S. and a former Erasmus+ grantee in Germany.

Figure 5 in the next page displays the breakdown of the main themes which resulted after cycles of analyzing each case. The participants' exclusive Erasmus+ journeys and perceived gains out of their experience composed the first main theme. The second main theme aided to interpret their conceptualization of ICC. Finally, the third main theme and its subthemes helped to explore more and explain how and in what ways the participants benefited from their experience as a prospective teacher especially in terms of academic and professional gains. These themes were recombined and synthetized to answer research questions of this qualitative inquiry in chapter 4.

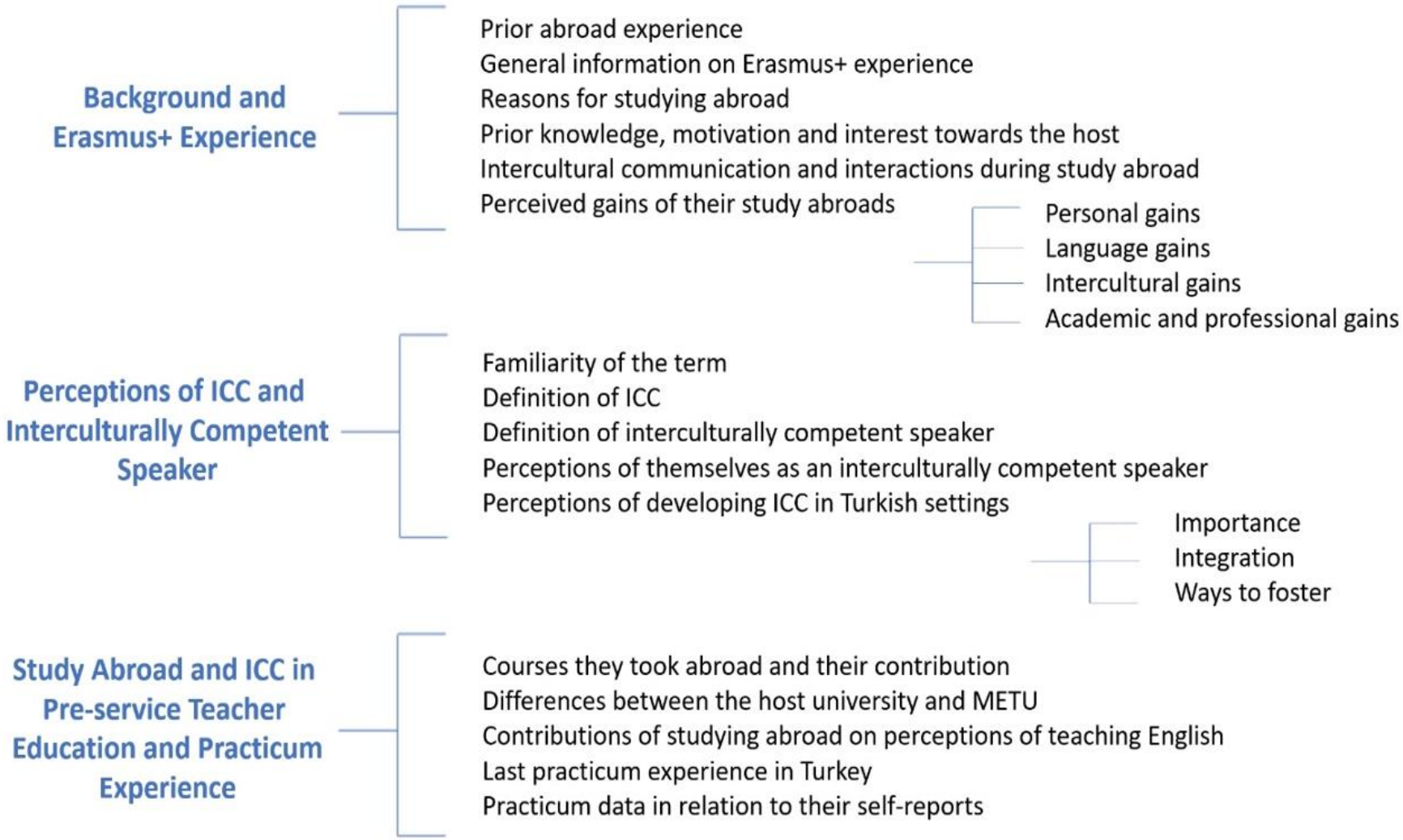


Figure 5. Breakdown of main themes

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Synthetizing the findings from their questionnaire, self-reports and data reflecting their language teacher education and practicum experience unveiled the perceptions of prospective English language teachers with study abroad experiences. This chapter begins with depiction of individual cases. Research questions are then answered by explaining and discussing the findings with the help of direct self-reports and illustrations from the cases.

4.1. Overview of the Individual Accounts

Due to the *multifariousness* of study abroad, one must be attentive to various elements such as the host culture, the host institution itself, its location, duration of the exchange, languages used in the sojourn environment, personal motivations of the participants prior to the experience, their engagement and involvement during mobility which might influence the learning outcomes, developmental projectories of the participants and interpretations of their perceptions (Jackson, 2018). For the interpretation of this case study, it was important to analyze each participants' background, study abroad experiences including their motivation for the experience, prior interest and knowledge of the host, intercultural communication and interactions during their stay and finally, depict their pre-service language teacher education and detailed practicum experiences at Turkey.

In what follows, individual accounts are reported including their Erasmus+ and practicum experiences. How their experiences relate and help to explain the research questions of the study are further discussed in section 4.2 and section 4.3 later in this chapter.

4.1.1. Burcu's Case

Burcu is a 22-year-old prospective English language teacher who went to Spain as an Erasmus+ grantee when she was in her second year and third term at Middle East Technical University. Before her mobility, she had no abroad experiences; however, she heard about Erasmus+ while still in high school and was determined to be an exchange student. In fact, in her first interview, she revealed that once she saw the opportunities METU has for Erasmus+, this affected her decision to choose and enroll in this department for her undergraduate education. As Burcu was eager to learn about the exchange program very early on, she was only planning to get some information about the application period from an assistant in the department when she was advised to apply for that semester because of her existing good GPA score. Going abroad in her only second year at METU would also help her finish her pre-service education on time, considering she would have more time to complete the remaining course load. Although it was not her initial plan to go abroad so early, she applied in three days. She made her choice based on the country because she felt sympathetic to Spain, Spanish culture, and the Spanish language. She expressed that she had no knowledge about the culture prior to application but really was interested to learn; also no knowledge of Spanish, but had sympathy towards the country, the culture, and the language, so she was very positive before going there. Later in her first interview, she stated she indeed learned daily Spanish, Spanish culture, and way of life.

Behind her motivation to studying abroad, Burcu wrote on her background questionnaire that it is important for language teachers to experience living in a different culture. In her first interview, she continued to hold the opinion that it would be easier to teach *culture* to students if she had an Erasmus+ experience as she elaborated on her reasoning:

> Because I personally believe that when you are exposed to a different culture, you feel more like understanding against the others. So, and also, we are teaching another culture, we are teaching a language but while we are teaching a language, we are also teaching culture. I think it should be easy for us to understand a different culture, understand the English culture. So, I

> thought that if I have an experience of living in another culture, it would be better for me to understand the teaching a culture thing.

Burcu did not have any practicum courses and did not have any practice teaching during Erasmus, but she did take *"Developmental Psychology", "Didactics of Fictionality in a Foreign Language", "Communicative Competence in the English Foreign Language", "English Foreign Language Teaching and Learning", and "Didactic of the Culture of the Foreign Language English"* in the host university and substituted them for "*FLE 147 Spoken English", "FLE 235 Modern Fiction I"* and *"FLE 285 Language and Culture"* upon return to the home institution. Overall, she found these courses were easier when compared to the requirements of METU courses.

As for her practicum experience in her senior year back in her home institution, Burcu completed her practicum journey at METU by attending a cooperating high school to which she was assigned as a trainee, and her classroom sessions in the department until the outbreak of the global pandemic interrupted face-to-face education at all levels in Turkey. As explained in the third chapter, she continued her practicum experience remotely with the decision of the Higher Education Council. Before the pandemic, she had begun observing two language classrooms; prep-schoolers and 9th graders. For her first observation task in the practicum, she filled out a form based on her observations of the mentor teacher and the interaction patterns used in the two lessons. While the first lesson was about tourism which her mentor teacher taught in preparatory class, the second one was with 9th graders in a speaking lesson where they learned to describe photos. The second observation task also required her to fill out a given observation template sheet by the course instructor at METU. The focus of observation was on the techniques of giving instructions and responses of students in two lessons. On the other hand, she had four article discussion tasks written by her after classroom sessions with her fellow trainees and instructor from METU. Of course, most of these sessions had to be held online due to the pandemic. She also had to remotely observe one EBA (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı- Educational Content Network, the digital remote education platform founded by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey) task and reflect on the EBA teacher's lesson. Her final teaching was a grammar lesson on passive

voice which she recorded herself like an EBA teacher, imagining she was lecturing actual students from her practicum classes. However, the choice of material and activities in her video-lesson were restricted by the mentor teacher who assigned her to follow the MoNE book and its activities as it would normally be used in the classroom.

Participants' perceptions of ICC and intercultural speaker, views on developing ICC, and perceived gains from their study abroad experiences were the main focus when analyzing their practicum experiences and the gathered practicum data conforming to the aims of the present study. Therefore, the researcher searched for relevant data to find supporting evidence of participants' self-reports obtained from interviews. All in all, none of Burcu's documents revealed direct evidence in which she touched upon the concepts related to intercultural communicative competence and her abroad experience.

4.1.2. Mine' Case

Mine had her study abroad experience in Italy in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, which meant she was away for her sixth semester (third year) from the department at METU. Prior to her Erasmus+ experience, she had been abroad only once for a week when she went to Poland with a Comenius project in high school. Regarding her motivation to have a study abroad experience, she thought it would be a great chance and an interesting experience to live abroad for months as a student since she was eager to see different places, cultures and meet new people. Similar to Burcu, she also wanted to go to Erasmus+ ever since she was in high school:

> How would I get the chance to go abroad and live there for five months if I do not do it when I was a student? So, I've always wanted that, I mean even if when I was in high school, I was thinking of going to Erasmus when I go to university. So, I mean being abroad, the idea, I liked it a lot, to see new places.

Mine also said she was highly interested in Italy because of its culture and history, although she did not know their language. She informed the researcher that she did

not regret her choice even once, although some people were surprised by her choice to study in Italy when she could not speak the language and asked her why she did not go to England to improve her English. Mine announced that the whole experience was beautiful for her and overall was so satisfied just like any other participant in this study.

As for her pre-service education, Mine clarified that she did not take any practicum course abroad, and her host university did not have a faculty of education, thus her credit mobility courses were elective courses on subjects such as the history of English, Russian history, or cognitive philosophy. Reviewing the courses she took both in the host and home institution throughout her pre-service English language teacher education, she also asserted that she had never taken any course related to intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

At METU, Mine's practicum journey in the final semester of her senior year in the teacher education program began with observations of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students and the mentor teachers' practices. The two observation tasks were on the usage of technology and classroom management, respectively, as these were chosen as the focus from the weekly discussion articles. After the coronavirus, she also handed in an EBA observation task where she watched and reflected on three video-lessons for 8th, 2nd, and 5th graders. These EBA lessons were selected on purpose for reflection by their university course instructor. On the other hand, trainees chose the articles for discussion sessions held online, and since they could not observe their mentor teacher in their cooperating school anymore, they only wrote reflections on them which were on the subjects of dealing with student misbehavior and time management of the teachers. For final evaluation, Mine prepared a vocabulary lesson plan on household chores, imagining her teaching audience prior to Covid. She presented this lesson plan to her peers and instructor via Zoom while the researcher joined the meeting as well, as a non-participant observant.

One interesting revelation from Mine was that she wanted to practice teaching abroad. If she had a practicum experience in Erasmus, she imagined it could have been more different as she would have to speak only in English even to the lower

level students who might have trouble understanding her. However, she believed although this would be a bit difficult, it could also be fun and contribute to her as an English teacher. That is why, she actually applied for an Erasmus+ practice abroad and was going to go to Prague for an Erasmus+ internship for the summer of 2020, until, of course, it was canceled due to the spread of Coronavirus cases worldwide.

4.1.3. Lara's Case

Going Sweden to study abroad as an Erasmus+ sojourn student was Lara's first opportunity to leave her country and travel alone. With similar concerns Burcu had about the duration of her ongoing pre-service education here in Turkey, Lara was the only other participant who chose to study abroad early as in her second year in the program:

> Studying abroad in my 4th semester was based on my will to have as much time as possible to complete any courses left from that semester, and two years would give me ample time to do so.

There were a few reasons behind her choice to do an Erasmus+ and study specifically in Linköping, Sweden. In the first interview, she explained her main motivations with the following statements below:

> First of all I was not really confident in my speaking and listening abilities ever since high school. So I wanted to, I think the best way to improve upon that is to be in a situation that you have to use it all the time. And that was one. Another one was that um it's one of the few chances I would get, most of the Turkish people would get, to go to Europe in a long-term process and stay there on my own, so I wanted to do that and, I wanted to travel generally.

Although she had always wanted to experience studying abroad and see Europe specifically, according to her background questionnaire, her priority was a country where she would not have much trouble speaking English only. In our first interview, she later claimed that she was able to develop herself in that dimension and gain confidence in listening and speaking abilities. Sweden was her first choice as she was also curious about Nordic/Scandinavian cultures, so she went abroad as a motivated sojourner.

While she also did not take any practicum course in her study abroad experience, Lara listed *"Artistic Methods in Education", "Sweden & the Swedes", "Academic English",* and *"Philosophy & Film"* as courses she took in the host university. Thanks to the course *"Teaching English to Young Learners"* she took in the FLE program at METU, she had one exposure to the concept of ICC unlike Mine and Lara. However, this introduction to the concept was limited to one class session where a guest speaker was invited for discussion.

Finally, Lara's practicum experience was the same as Mine' since they were both enrolled in the same section, so they shared their journey in the same cooperating school, completing the same observational and reflectional tasks under the supervision of the same teacher educator. For the final evaluation of course, Lara also individually prepared a grammar lesson for 5th graders that she planned accordingly to the sixth unit of MoNE's coursebook "Movies". She presented her lesson plan in the same way Mine did in the same online meeting. There were no assignments related to ICC or culture teaching.

4.1.4. Gizem' Case

Gizem was another pre-service teacher who had a prior abroad experience via an exchange project in high school like Mine. Gizem stated in her background questionnaire that she had been to Germany with a 7-day student exchange program when she was a senior high school student. She was highly curious about observing the way of living of people from other countries and but actually her main goal of participating Erasmus+ was to be able to *"travel"* as easily as possible. Initially, she had not considered any academic or professional contributions that might come out of this experience. The following statement summarizes Gizem's reasoning behind her strong motivation explaining why she wanted to have an Erasmus+ experience:

> Because it was the I think easiest way to travel, because that was my first goal first of all, because I wasn't aiming to achieve some academical stuff to be honest. Otherwise, I wouldn't go to Poland because we all know that the universities are not that hard and I mean the courses are not that hard to pass in Poland. So, my main goal was to travel cheaply let's say and easily because I didn't need another visa to go to another country, that was my first aim. And

> then secondly, I wanted to know how people from other countries live actually because there weren't only students from Poland but also in other countries from Europe that was my goal.

Gizem admitted she would have liked to go to Germany since German was her second foreign language, and she wished to improve it; however, she stressed that it was not cheap to live there as a student from Turkey. So, her main reason for choosing Poland was based purely on *"financial concerns"*, and she did not have any prior motivation or interest towards the Polish language and/or culture. She was genuinely interested in living in a multicultural environment, which studying in a host university in Krakow provided Gizem with that opportunity.

In Poland, Gizem took six courses in total as the substitutions for the following courses at home: *"FLE 241 English Literature II", "FLE 325 Selections from the English Novel I", "FLE 326 Selections from the English Novel II", "FLE 315 Novel Analysis", "FLE 308 Teaching English to Young Learner"s* and *"FLE 304 ELT Methodology II",* namely. Although her coursework may seem much, the assessment of the courses was done with either one final paper evaluation or in the form of portfolios. Moreover, she reported she had an easy time in the semester abroad because of how they were treated as Erasmus+ exchange students. In Poland, she commented, instructors were being too easy on the exchange students, giving more freedom in terms of attendance and workload. Although the expectations from international exchange students were undemanding, she tried to do better to represent her country and Turkish students in the best way possible as someone with a *"METU soul"* nonetheless.

Gizem did not have any teaching practice during her sojourn like the rest of the participants in this study. As for her practicum experiences in Turkey, she started with in-class observations of her mentor teacher in the cooperating high school to which she was assigned as a trainee. The first tasks she completed were on L1 and L2 use in language classrooms and giving instructions. After the schools were closed due to the life-threatening virus, Gizem was asked to write a 5-pages long paper on how to proceed in an English class in terms of the advantages and challenges of distance learning. Also, to complete her pre-service practicum experience, she

prepared four lesson plans on different language skills which she could not have implemented with real students due to the pandemic. Instead, she chose her lesson plan which focused on speaking skills, and recorded herself for a 5-minute demo. In this video-teaching, Gizem used her brother at home as a student and taught him the first five minutes of her lesson as if she was in the practicum school with 11th graders. None of her practicum data included the components of intercultural communicative competence or intercultural communication.

4.1.5. Irmak's Case

Irmak went to Spain for nearly six months in her third year of undergraduate studies. She had never been abroad before. There were a few reasons that motivated her to study abroad. First of all, in the background questionnaire, she stated her belief that Erasmus+ experience would be helpful for her life after graduation. Secondly, she expressed her sympathy for the Spanish culture and interest in learning Spanish. She expounded on her prior motivation and interest saying that she was *"in love with the their culture and their music Raggeaton,"* which she had been listening for 5 years. She also believed Spanish people, their culture and food were also *"Mediterranean culture"* . However, she divulged that at first she considered going to Germany because her uncle who resided there could help her adapt to life and culture in Germany. Defne, another participant in this present study, was another reason why she finally decided to go to Spain to study abroad as she realized that it would be more fun to travel and enjoy her study abroad period with her best friend.

Irmak, who also did not have a practicum experience during her education abroad, was the most knowledgeable participant in the cohort as she not only heard about the term ICC in the communicative competence course she took at the host institution but also in her last practicum course in Turkey. She reported that the courses she had taken in Spain, *"Teaching English to Young Learners", "Communicative Competence", "Literature in ELT"* benefitted her as a pre-service English teacher preparing for her future profession. Of course, she admitted that these courses would have benefitted her too if she had taken them METU, but the fact that taking these courses in a different learning environment brought her *"a different perspective on*

teaching" because she got exposed to European teaching methods or other forms of assessments like preparing portfolios, which are different from the ways she was assessed back home. (See further details in 4.3.1.4)

Irmak's practicum journey at METU consisted of similar tasks of observation and reflections on subjects like giving instructions, teachers' use of technology, giving homework, group dynamics, generational differences; however, there was one particular week where they reflected on an article about raising cultural awareness in language classrooms (Frank, 2013) and made observations. With this task, they focused on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and integrating culture in language classrooms. Therefore, this assignment helped the researcher to support her findings of Irmak since her written reflections showed parallelism with her self-reported perceptions during her interviews. The excerpts below supported her views on ICC and perceived gains of her study abroad experience:

> …One important point of culture learning is that one should be aware of his/her own culture. That's how one can differentiate and become inter-culturally competent.

> …The way of thinking, acting and producing may show differences among languages. When I went to Spain, I saw the differences between Turkish and Spanish culture. I had the process of 'acculturation' to survive. I experienced all of the adaptation stages through time. That was how I became aware of intercultural phenomena. I have learnt about that culture by living there and I think that exposure is the best tool to learn a culture (Practicum data, Reflection and Observation Task 6)

The other tasks, namely her final lesson plan, video-teaching, and the research proposal task she prepared, did not reveal further relevant findings.

4.1.6. Defne's Case

Defne studied abroad in Spain with Irmak, her best friend from the department, who was also a participant in this study. She thought having an Erasmus+ study abroad experience would be advantageous for future job applications. But most importantly, with this scholarship, she could have experienced how it was like to be abroad, live

and study there as she had been wondering for many years. Again, a highly shared pattern amongst the participants.

Not surprisingly, like Irmak, Defne had been highly interested in Raggeaton music and Spanish culture; she also thought they resembled Turkish people, she wanted to learn much more about their culture, get familiar with Spanish people, and travel. Concerning the choice of the host country and the city, she added that the weather and location of Granada were also appealing for her, and hearing about Burcu's positive experiences, good memories, easy credit transfer was also a contributing factor that motivated her to study in Spain. It is understandable that hearing good words and factoring the weather and location of the host institution were a contributing element to Defne's choice of study abroad since travelling around and living in Europe was amongst the most frequently stated reasons in this study.

Since Defne and Irmak shared the same study abroad journey as best friends at the time, they also took the same courses during their mobility. As for the practicum experience she had at METU, after the coronavirus break, Defne stated her practicum mostly continued with observational EBA tasks. For her final task, in the task-based language teaching lesson plan, she prepared a game that included celebrities and some culturally prominent figures from various countries from different backgrounds, so it was seen that she tried to integrate cultural elements in her teaching. All in all, her reports from the interviews were in line with what she reflected on her practicum data, which will be explained and discussed later in the chapter. EBA Observation Task 4 was her only assignment related to expanding the intercultural knowledge of learners and integrating language and culture teaching. Her views in the document reflected the earlier findings she reported in her interviews about ICC.

4.1.7. Melis' s Case

Melis spent her study abroad experience in Krakow, one of Poland's most touristic cities. Having no prior abroad experiences, Melis was very motivated for the adventure of studying abroad. She listed her reasons for wanting to participate in this

exchange program as to improve her English, to travel around the world, to learn different cultures, and meet with different people. One of her expectations from the study abroad experience was to improve her speaking skills and gain fluency because she thought it was impossible for her to improve her English without exposing herself to the language in an abroad context.

Despite having no prior knowledge, motivation, or interest in Poland and the Polish, her motivation to study there was high because she reported that there would be many other international exchange students like her on the campus where she could practice her English and travel.

Melis took *"International awareness", "Sentence structure analysis", "Teaching English in early-school education", "Introduction to Polish culture and History with field trips and Museum workshops, "Remedial pronunciation practice for Erasmus students", "Varieties in Contemporary English"* courses in Poland which two of them were somehow related to cultural awareness. However, she reported that she did not remember the content of the "*International Awareness"* course, but she stated they were discussing different languages, different meanings of gestures, and understanding of other cultures. And in the other class, they were learning about some songs, clothes, and religious traditions such as painting an easter egg. For this course, they also visited historical museums on field trips.

Regarding her pre-service teacher education journey, she reported her tiredness and candid views on the education she received at METU, in the video assignment for her practicum course about herself as a student and a teacher. Describing the last 4-years of undergraduate teacher education in the department, she expressed her complaints about how she was tired from the heavy expectations, courseload, and unnecessary reflection tasks she had to complete over the years.

Moreover, in the same assignment, she stressed *"the lack of practice"* in her pre-service teacher education. She also did not have any practicum courses at the host university. She wished she had more chances to practice teaching before graduating:

> We had a lack of practice in these four years because we are always taught the knowledge. We memorize them before the exams, and then we forget them. That's why we need to practice more actually, but we didn't have a chance like that.

Unfortunately, in her final semester of prospective teacher education, she had even less face-to-face practice due to Covid-19. Even though she had to prepare three lesson plans for the 9th and 10th graders in her cooperating high school for her practicum, she could not teach those plans to real students in her practicum because of distance education.

4.2. Discussion on the Findings for RQ1

It was important to investigate how prospective English language teachers with study abroad experience conceptualize intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and interculturally competent speaker because "teachers' ability to select effective teaching techniques and resources aiming to develop their learners' interculturality is dependent on their understanding of the notion of culture and of ICC" (Czuro, 2016, p.85). Their awareness and perception of the term were sought out via qualitative means. To this end, seven senior pre-service ELT teachers who had Erasmus+ experience in Italy, Sweden, Spain and Poland respectively were questioned whether they had heard about these concepts in their pre-service teacher education at METU or their host university and asked for a definition. Based on their understanding of the term, their perception of an intercultural speaker and their views of themselves as an intercultural competent speaker were elicited and elucidated with evidence from the participants under this section.

In what follows, the researcher presents and discusses the findings from their questionnaire, self-reports and data reflecting their language teacher education and practicum experience under major themes to reveal the case. Their (un)familiarity of the term, definitions they gave for ICC and interculturally competent speaker, whether they view themselves as an interculturally competent speaker based on their conceptualizations of the notions, perceptions of developing ICC in Turkish education settings were explored.

4.2.1. Perceptions of ICC and Interculturally Competent Speaker

One striking revelation from the findings was that most of the participants were not familiar with the term ICC, reporting they might have heard of it once or twice yet were not sure what it entailed. While Melis was straightforward in admitting that she had never heard of the term ICC and had no idea what it meant, Gizem remembered it was once mentioned in a methodology course at METU. Unlike Burcu and Mine who were also unfamiliar with the term, Lara had one exposure to the concept of ICC thanks to one of the course instructors in the FLE program at METU. For the *"Teaching English to Young Learners"* class, there was a discussion on the topic, and a guest speaker was invited who explained the term, and they prepared a demo lesson on breakfast from all around the world, which was themed around Children's Day on 23rd of April. Irmak was the most knowledgeable participant in the cohort as she not only heard about the term ICC in the *"Communicative Competence"* course she took at the host institution in Spain but also in her last practicum course in Turkey because she worked on ICC in one of her practicum's weekly article reflection and observation tasks. These reports of limited encounters with ICC in their teacher preparation education correlate with previous research findings pointing the lack of targeted training on intercultural communicative competence and raising intercultural speakers/teachers in pre-service English teacher preparation in the Turkish higher education context (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Börkan, 2012; Czura, 2016; Eken, 2015; Kaçar 2019; Şen, 2020).

Despite having almost no background in the theoretical knowledge of the term, however, all of the participants were able to define ICC mostly in accord with the conceptualizations of the term in the literature (Byram, 1997; Czura, 2016; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009). This finding can be linked to participants' previous study abroad experiences since previous research pertinently argues that experiential learning opportunities such as Erasmus+ student mobility program enhance the development of ICC and raise pre-service teachers' awareness on ICC (Aydın, 2012; Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014; Soria &Trois, 2014).

In accord with the components of ICC defined in literature, most of the prospective language teachers in this study were able to defined the term as being able to communicate with the ability to understand people from other cultures by aiming for *mutually* effective conversations. So, the ability to express one's own culture to others and compare diverse perspectives and products of others, being respectful and tolerant to other views, and adapting their language to communicate accordingly are considered a part of this competence resonating with Byram's (2008) conceptualizations of intertwining attitudes, knowledge, critical cultural awareness, and skills. To give evidence to these findings, analysis from the cases are illustrated below;

Burcu was one of the participants who shared hearing the term intercultural communicative competence (ICC) before, but was unsure what it meant. According to hear comprehension, ICC could be defined as being able to understand other cultures, their values and how people react in specific situations, knowing the cultural differences, and being able to behave accordingly. Based on this perception, her definition of an interculturally competent speaker indicated:

> …the ability to understand the differences, not sticking on your own values and your own truths, trying to understand the person next to- like in front of you- and accordingly, to find a common ground in which you can communicate.

As can be understood, she put emphasis to awareness of values and finding common ground to engage in effective communications in a similar conceptualization of Byram's (1997, 2008) intertwined saviors. Moreover, she had stated always being a *tolerant* person throughout her life who believed that difference is a good thing which studying abroad enhanced these features in her. Contrary to what she had stated earlier about her experience and the effects it had on her, Burcu was hesitant to call herself an interculturally competent speaker and felt that she needed especially more *knowledge* about different environments and other cultures such as Chinese and Russian. The ability to compare just *some* cultures was not enough for being an intercultural speaker:

> I wouldn't say that I guess because I mean I had some experiences, like I had lots of friends from different cultures than me, and like had nice conversations, but it was generally all like "wow, do you do this in your country, we don't". We were just like comparing our countries. I think I need more experience to identify myself as an interculturally competent speaker because we were just like comparing our cultures, and I think as I said, I need more confidence, more experience on that.

Her views above actually could be traced back to the "never-ending process" of developing intercultural competence (Baker, 2015; Byram et al., 2002; Dervin & Gross, 2016; Jackson, 2018) as it was also suggested by Byram (2008) himself that knowing all of the cultures one might encounter is simply an unrealistic task; therefore, *knowledge* as a savior does not refer to knowing all cultures it is "learning is never complete" but one should *be open to new knowledge and discover new perspectives and practice*s. With this conceptualization, Burcu actually did not need to worry about having knowledge about every culture out there.

Another participant, Mine was unfamiliar with the term, so while trying to define ICC, she broke down the term into its parts: intercultural-communicative-competence and interpreted it as the ability to "*understand people from different countries and all their cultures behind their personalities".* As for an interculturally competent speaker, she could make a guess:

> Maybe after you have been to a country and lived for a long time you get anything about this culture, so maybe this person can be called an interculturally competent person because in terms of, apart from the language they speak, you could understand their expressions, facial expressions, gestures or for instance like when we were in Italy, Italians and the Turkish people had so high energy all the time, and we were speaking so loudly while the Germans were not like that or the other country people. And they were saying like we are always speaking like we are having a fight. So maybe this can be given as an example for this internationally competent people. I mean they have become more internationally competent that *they could understand us and we could understand their cultures and what the culture brings with them***.**

This except signals her understanding of the awareness of values and ability to interact with others from different linguacultural backgrounds (Baker, 2015, p.132). With this understanding, she was unsure if she could believe she was an

interculturally competent speaker. She added that with Erasmus+ experience, she was able to see different cultures and meet people from different countries, so she got a little bit of their attitudes, but she could develop herself more, associating her competence with her study abroad experience.

Unlike Mine and Burcu, Lara had one exposure to the concept of ICC thanks to one of the course instructors in the FLE program at METU. For the *"Teaching English to Young Learners"* class, there was a discussion on the topic, and a guest speaker was invited who explained the term, and they prepared a demo lesson on breakfast from all around the world, which was themed around Children's Day on 23rd of April. What she recalled and understood from the definition of the term was incorporating the idea that one language does not equal one culture and that there are many cultures we can talk about while teaching languages, so *comparing and or discussing multiple cultures* at times in the classroom.

She inferred then an intercultural speaker is someone tolerant, open-minded, who asks a lot of questions but not questions that are intrusive or unkind, but questions that are more open to letting the other people speak and explain their cultures, and someone who is good at explaining their own culture too. Therefore, her views resonated with all five components of ICC. But with a similar misconception to Burcu, she had some concerns about if she had this competence herself as she commented below:

> I am not sure. First of all, I don't think that I am very *knowledgeable* about my own culture as a whole because I wouldn't be able to speak about I don't know Karadeniz cuisine, for example. And my own experiences on my words and explanations would be rather incorrect. Um I also don't think that I can speak for most of the people from my culture, which because that would be a bit misjudging, overgeneralizing. But I think I am fairly tolerant and open-minded about other cultures, soo I don't know 50-50.

Above except implies that she puts importance of *knowledge*, however, it could also be seen that she is also highly aware of the diversity of cultures even in one's own culture since culture should not be associated with a nation or a country. Monolithic

views should be abandoned (Alptekin, 2002). In that regard, she in fact could be considered as an intercultural speaker contrary to her skepticism.

Gizem on the other hand, remembered hearing the term ICC mentioned in one of her former methodology classes at METU. With hesitation, she defined it as integrating the culture of the target language into the classes or having communication not only with linguistic aspects but also the cultural aspect. While defining interculturally competent speaker:

> Probably it would mean that like I am speaking Turkish but I am also a learner of English, so I could integrate my culture into English, then that would define that maybe?

She suggested that second language learners should not only be stuck on their own culture. Drawing attention to the link between a language and a culture, she argued that learning a language meant integrating ourselves into another culture, so language learners should have the *ability to compare and integrate* their culture to the target language's culture. Differing from the hesitant views of Burcu, Mine, and Lara, Gizem asserted that she was an interculturally competent speaker, as she explained her judgment in the following except:

> I think so, yes. Because I like some parts of our culture and I like to talk about that, but I like to learn cultures of other languages also. And I can, when I see something like, when I was on Erasmus, when I see something that my friends do, I could I was able to compare that, if we were in Turkey. I would do that, or if I were him, I would do that, hm, they are doing that in this country in bla bla like that. So, I think so.

With this view, she highlighted *the skills of interpreting and relating* in the definition of an intercultural speaker. Furthermore, during Erasmus+, she was able to observe friends from other counties in class, in an academic environment and recognized how her thinking was different from their way of thinking when answering questions the professors asked, so she came to understand that *"the culture we live in defines the way we think"*. Hence, she believed study abroad experience contributed to her development of intercultural communicative competence.

The most knowledgeable participant in the cohort was Irmak because she not only heard about the term ICC in the communicative competence course she took at the host institution but also in her last practicum course in Turkey as her practicum data also supported. Irmak simply defined ICC as a skill that enables language speakers who understand the other cultures and express their own cultural elements to them for *mutually effective conversations*. She claimed ICC is needed to be competent in a language; otherwise, she wondered how we would successfully communicate meaningfully with others that are foreigners to our culture. She argued when we are learning or when we are teaching, for instance, how to greet or how to ask for food, how to ask something nicely more officially or informal ways, we adapt our langugae according to our contacts in cultures, and that is the case with all languages. Not just English and Turkish. Therefore, in her opinion, an intercultural speaker is someone who understands the importance of *knowing* cultural elements in communication.

Considering her views on the matter, Irmak continued to explain why she thinks she can be considered as an interculturally competent speaker, although she thought there is always room for improvement:

> … It is hard to say really because we don't have that much contact with other you know international students but I can say that I am an interculturally competent speaker because I went Spain and I survived there for six months without you know having big troubles at all. Yes, I adapted myself to their cultures, I started to think in that in the way that they think also cause how would they response if I say this or what would I do if I, how can I say, if I am a really you know native Spanish speaker. So, I thought in that way so I think I survived there very well.

Her best friend Defne's knowledge about the term was not as clear as Irmak, as they had different practicum experiences in Turkey, Defne did not have any assignment on the subject. However, from her previous knowledge on communicative competence, she had some ideas, although she admitted she did not know exactly what it is and what subsets it has. Knowing there are a lot of cultures and their values are different from each other, paying attention to the social environment, the culture, the cultural values while speaking, she stated, could define intercultural communicative competence. Furthermore, by linking her previous statements on World Englishes, the interculturally competent speaker she defined was *"patient"*,

"open-minded", and *"a good listener"* who can understand people from different linguacultural backgrounds (Baker, 2015):

> If he or she is interculturally competent enough to speak with other people, he or she must be patient and also open-minded, and also I think the most important point was he or she must be a good listener. Because we talked about word Englishes, I used the word the term World Englishes, you know that some people in Turkey like Erasmus students from Pakistan, Arabistan, other Arabic countries and from Azerbaijan for example; even the Azeri people, we couldn't understand the way they speak English because they used different accent and different I mean idiolect or etc. Maybe, interculturally competent speaker can understand them.

As a learner and as a prospective language teacher, she firmly expressed her views:

> I don't believe in speaking like native speakers. I mean what if you can't speak like native speakers, I mean we are not native speakers, but we can understand each other, we can talk, we can discuss something. The important thing is *transmitting the message and understanding it*.

Thus, with the excerpt above, it could be argued that she denied the norms of native-speakership and was of the opinion that it should not be an aim for second language teaching or learning (Alptekin, 2002), supporting the intercultural shift in education (Hoff, 2020).

Like Irmak, Defne also drew attention to the importance of being aware of cultural nuances, knowing or learning about different cultural practices. For instance, because she was exposed to the life in Spain, she learned that you could not start to drink your beer when they serve you, you have to cheer first, or you have to wait until everybodys' "tapas" is served before you can start to eat them. While she thought she gained a lot through study abroad experience in terms of ICC, she was still a little hesitant like most of the participants in the study to call herself competent:

> I can't describe myself I can't say I'm interculturally competent enough to speak with other people but I know that I'm a good learner, I mean I'm a good learner and at least I put my effort, and I put my motivation, and I put myself, I dedicate myself to *learn to get to know other knowledge or other people* I try my best. Even though I can't label myself like that, I will try my best.

A complete stranger to the term, Melis defined ICC as understanding and knowing different cultures and communicating with people accordingly based on the word

"*inter*-cultural". To give an example, she added that if she is not so familiar with Polish culture, she cannot share much with Polish people, or she could make some mistakes and have a communication breakdown because of *misunderstandings* in her interactions.

Moreover, she thought bilingual people, for instance, could have this competence and be called interculturally competent as they know two different cultures because of their parents and could communicate much more easily. Overall, it was observed that she emphasized *"knowledge"* of the other culture as a necessity for an interculturally competent speaker. Melis added she did not feel like an interculturally competent speaker because she was not exposed to Polish much and did not learn the language because she had no motivation or interest as explained in section 4.1.7; however, she could be partially competent as she was able to get along with them and other international students. According to her, being good at grammar and having a good vocabulary was just as important as being open-minded, tolerant, and less judgmental.

To summarize all the participants views and conceptualizations, according to their responses, ICC could be defined as the ability to understand that there are different cultures and values of people and know communication includes not only linguistic aspects but also cultural aspects, and communicate by paying attention to cultural differences among people for mutually effective conversations. It includes being aware of your own culture and the ability to compare and express your own cultural elements to others.

Based on the participants' views, an intercultural or interculturally competent speaker can be defined as someone who is aware of the diversity of cultures and can interpret and relate cultural knowledge and practices of others and their own culture; therefore, can successfully communicate by adapting their language to negotiate meaning in their intercultural interactions. They also have good grammar and vocabulary, good listening skills, and can understand different accents and non-verbal language such as facial expressions and gestures of people from different cultural backgrounds. An intercultural speaker is also viewed as someone who is

open-minded and tolerant to others and their way of thinking, does not stick to her own values, is aware of prejudices against their own cultures, is patient, flexible, and less judgemental.

As for their perceptions of themselves as an interculturally competent speaker, 5 out of 7 participants were initially hesitant to call themselves interculturally competent speakers. Circumspectly, they approached with caution to label themselves as competent since they viewed *"knowledge"* of the other culture as an important component of ICC, almost all of them believed there were more cultures to learn, and they could always develop themselves. Some noted that a person's own culture is important as well, but there can be even cultural differences among people who share the same nationality that they are not knowledgeable. All in all, they thought they still could be interculturally competent speakers. As they reported many times, thanks to their study abroad experiences, they successfully survived in another culture, adapted themselves, and formed relationships with people with whom they did not share a native language or culture. According to the participants, being able to make lots of friends from different cultures was in a way an indicator of their competence.

4.2.2. Perceptions of Developing ICC in Turkish Settings

All participants unanimously agreed on the necessity and importance of developing ICC for Turkish students and their English teachers. To exemplify, Gizem stressed her opinion that having intercultural communicative competence (ICC) was important for *all* second language teachers and learners with the following comment:

> …not only in Turkey but also all around the world students also need to have this competence, and I think that as long as they learn a language, they attend language courses, they will develop this competence without realizing it. I mean, they don't need to force themselves, but when they learn a language, they also learn the culture.

Dwelling more on the necessity and importance of intercultural communicative competence, the comment below illustrates how Irmak stressed the ever-growing

need for ICC in today's world for both foreign language learners and teachers to connect us globally (Cushner, 2011):

> …Everything is shared and you know people know everything today and there is no borders anymore between countries, languages, religious, cultures in general and we have friends all over the world, we use language to communicate with them and sometimes, we have some, you know difficulties to that maybe technological equipment, problems or anything else; but ICC makes it easier, makes easier for us to connect with other people all around the world and share.

Another participant, Melis demonstrated her views on the need for intercultural communicative competence and why the teachers or the students should be developing this competence:

> Because if you are teaching English, you should know their language, their culture or even their music, maybe their history sometimes. I think it's necessary for them.
>
> …Yes, it's necessary because they are learning English. It's another country's culture and another country's language. So they should be exposed to it if they wanted to learn their cultures because it's not our culture. They should know the features or vocabularies or foods maybe, if they want to communicate with a stranger foreigner.

Lara underscored the inextricable link between language and culture (Kramsch 1993, 2014) similar to Gizem's views above and that the Turkish teachers should sometimes make comparisons, show similarities, and connect two cultures, and most of the time not only two but many, since English is currently worldwide. For that reason, she stressed the importance of ICC for language teachers and learners in Turkey.

Nevertheless, what she observed from Turkish educational settings showed her a different picture. She found the MoNE books, the materials used in language classrooms in Turkey, were too restricting as she distinctly remembered one time they talked about Nasrettin Hoca, a comic figure in Turkish history, for two whole weeks. She thought the students would very gladly accept other information about other cultures because most of them dream of going abroad one day and traveling the world. So, the learner profile was suitable for integration cultures. Yet she

believed the school agenda was too focused on Turkish culture and discouraged students to learn about other cultures, also it was unmotivating for them to tell Nasrettin Hoca jokes in English since they saw no need for it. As an alternative scenario, she believed the mentor teacher could have integrated a foreign figure in the second week on the same subject and made the discussions culturally enriching.

Similar observations were made by other participants with a common understanding that ICC was not adequately addressed in foreign language classrooms they had the change observe. These findings can be explained by multiple studies from the literature which revealed "a mismatch between EFL teachers' perceptions and their teaching practices" (Castro et al., 2004; Taşdemir & Gürbüz, 2021; Taşkın, 2020; Tütüncü, 2014). This situation is often rationalized with time concerns and exam-oriented practices when teaching the target language (Ghanem, 2017; Young & Sachev, 2011; Tütüncü; 2014), and teachers' confusion as to how exactly implement and foster the development of the learners' ICC (Kılıç, 2013).

Understandably then, encouragement from the teachers or the school management could help develop learners' ICC if materials and activities were adjusted. For instance, making students create culture-related posters to hang in the hallways or bringing authentic materials such as children's stories or movies could be among the ways to foster this competence, according to Lara.

A dominant view among the participants was that integrating and fostering this competence mostly falls on to *teachers*. Burcu as a strong believer of this idea argued that first and foremost, teachers should themselves be motivated; unfortunately, she thinks this was not the case for the mentor teachers she observed in her practicum school, where they primarily focused on students preparing for important exams. Teachers should create an environment where they can speak about daily lives of people not just tenses and rules of grammar. Burcu believed this would be easier with lower levels than six, seven, eighth-graders, or high schoolers because of those students' resistant prejudices, as she mentioned earlier. She recommended ways to change this situation and foster intercultural communicative competence in Turkish language education settings. She suggested teachers stress the concrete outcomes of

learning the language (e.g. understanding Netflix shows), create example scenarios and environments to expose them to different cultures and customs, teach living habits of English people, utilize comparative activities with Turkish habits, and show *"their way of life is not far from us"*. In a broader perspective, she asserted that recruiting native teachers in the institution, having projects like Erasmus+, or arranging pen pals around the world would be beneficial actions to integrate and foster the development of ICC.

For that, Burcu believes in suggesting students to watch videos, films, trying to learn their favorite singers in an attempt to get them motivated and love English, not as a subject but a language and something like a way of life. She underscored their need for English as she was aware of the current position of English holds in our expanding multicultural and multilingual world. Therefore, language teachers should try to break students' prejudice of viewing English as a *"boring subject matter"* and incorporate cultural concepts. She emphasized the need for developing ICC of Turkish learners because students need to change their views on English, and their perspectives would change if they become aware that they can actually use it in future when going abroad, watching some movies, understanding what is going on in English-speaking countries or the worldwide. Their attitudes would change, and they would feel good about learning English.

In line with Burcu's perceptions, Mine believed developing ICC might be necessary for English teachers. In her explanation, she mentioned that maybe English is for communicating with others that we do not share a common language, so as an English teacher we should make sure the students understand it as a language that should be communicated. In her internship, she observed that students saw English *"like a material",* but *"understanding and making them understand it is the language for international communication would help them be interactive in the world."*. Thinking of the Turkish students, she adds:

> I think they need to have this awareness because they will eventually I think encounter with people from different countries in their work life or as a university student. So I think it's important for them to understand their cultures and develop an awareness about it.

However, she remarked that the curriculum could be something that restrains the teacher (Tütüncü; 2014) as she never encountered any instances of talking about different cultures in Turkish settings she observed. She referred back to her first practicum experience from the last semester when she prepared a lesson plan, which she only prepared as a written form and never implemented in a class, about the habits in Korea. She learned some things and enjoyed even preparing the lesson. Moreover, she reflected on another previous course she took in the department where one of her friends integrated the Ramadan festival in Turkey to festivals abroad like Thanksgiving and compared the two. She thought ICC could be integrated to all levels, but students of higher levels such as high school students could integrate this awareness and differences much more easily. Using videos of other cultures could be helpful too. Last but not least, she envisaged that she could use the advantage of being a teacher with a study abroad background as she could integrate her memories from her experience while practicing speaking, or she could introduce them to some of the other cultures she had seen there, and she would try to encourage her students for study abroad via Erasmus+.

Similarly, Melis suggested that teachers could use materials to include culture, such as using songs, technology, videos, or even cooking to integrate ICC into lessons and develop Turkish learners' competence. However, first of all, she asserted that every school in Turkey, whether state or private, should be equal in terms of having technological opportunities and a staff of professional teachers. In addition, she stated that every school should prepare and increase the number of study abroad projects like Erasmus+ exchange programs to send their students to another country.

In order to foster the development of this competence, Irmak also drew attention to technology and its crucial importance, so strongly argued that it is the government's responsibility to provide equal access to technology for every school in Turkey. Even in institutions with limited sources or opportunities, she believed that *teachers* should be motivated to integrate or adapt materials that consider culture in learning as well. Byram and Masuhara (2013) asserted that optimal materials, syllabus, and methodology need to be explored for intercultural language education (p.156). As observed by teacher trainees of this study, as much as it should be the teachers'

responsibility to foster ICC, they reported that Turkish teachers in their mentoring schools were not trying to find ways of integrating ICC and the materials, curriculum and the institution were not very helpful in that regard as well.

The *institution*, therefore was the second most dominant view which they thought influenced the developing ICC in Turkish settings. Drawing from her practicum experience, Gizem argued that developing and fostering ICC would depend on the institution's quality and opportunities. For instance, her practicum school was among the best high schools not only in Ankara but also in Turkey, and it offered six different languages for students to choose as a second foreign language. She saw this as an extraordinary opportunity for the learners since most schools in Turkey can offer only one second foreign language. In addition, she advocated the number of international projects, "youth projects", should be increased and extended to other schools, not just a few privileged institutions. If exchange projects are limited or unavailable, Gizem also put forth pen pals as a way to foster students' ICC. Expanding on Burcu's view, she asserted that even WhatsApp could be used to improve learners' intercultural communicative competence as now the technology allows pen pals or letter-friends to communicate instantly via a simple and widespread app. What is more, preparing and hanging posters about cultures and traditions would be a beneficial activity that teachers could encourage. These posters, she added, should not be only about English culture but could be about any culture such as Moroccan culture or Spanish culture. She claimed that even Turkish culture should be added as students would need to share their native culture in intercultural interactions.

Defne was another supporter of the *"profound effect"* of institutions have on intercultural communicative competence. She rooted this belief to her own experience as a university student. To clarify, she gave an example from her life by comparing her little monocultural hometown and METU, saying that she had never had the opportunity to meet an Indian person before she came to study at the university. Furthermore, in accord with most common perceptions, she asserted that language teachers should learn about intercultural competence and about *respect*, as they need to improve this competence in their learners. To do that, they can change

or adapt their materials to include diverse groups of people and diverse accents to raise their learners' awareness of *other* people.

To conclude, the pre-service teachers' perceptions revealed that developing ICC is necessary for Turkish students and their English teachers. Most of them believed raising students' awareness and developing their intercultural competence mostly falls on teachers as similar arguments pointed and highlighted the language teachers' responsibilities (Byram & Wagner, 2018, p.147). First of all, the participants argued that teachers should be making students understand that English is the language for international communication that will help them interact with the world. They should be adapting the materials, curriculum, and activities to incorporate ICC in their lessons. Some participants observed that current materials used in English classrooms in Turkey fall short of including diverse cultures and promoting interculturality. Comparative activities showing the similarities and differences between different cultures around the world, their traditions, and habits were suggested to develop students' competence. The activities can involve songs, videos, documentaries, preparing posters about cultures, creating scenarios, or role-playing, similar to what have been suggested in literature (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). Most participants believed one should be exposed to different cultures and engaged in genuine communication, so they were in consensus that study abroad opportunities would be the best way for fostering ICC of learners or English teachers. Some participants stated if English teachers have study abroad experiences, they might become *"role models"* or a *"source of inspiration"* encouraging their learners to travel or participate in exchange projects. Two participants recommended arranging pen pals from different cultural backgrounds to foster ICC, which could also be virtual and instant communication thanks to technology. Some participants stressed that developing and fostering ICC would depend on the institution's quality and opportunities. Their perceptions revealed that not every institution in Turkey has equal opportunities in terms of technology, study abroad projects, international staff, or interculturally competent teachers who can integrate ICC in their lessons effectively.

4.3. Discussion on the Findings for RQ2

The second research question which aimed to discover ELT pre-service teachers' perceived gains of study abroad is answered in this section.

4.3.1. Perceived Gains of Study Abroad

Congruent with previous body of research, the analysis of self-reported views of each individual revealed that the participant prospective ELT teachers with Erasmus+ mobility experience noticed many contributions of this program to their life as a person and as a prospective language teacher (Byram, 2008; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020; Tütüncü, 2014; Önen, 2017). According to former Erasmus+ participants, there had been many contributions of having a study abroad experience on their lives as they reported they benefited from this short-term student mobility in various ways. As common patterns among the individual accounts were sought, the analysis of their self-reported gains was aggregated under four sub-themes as in the following: (1) personal, (2) language, (3) intercultural and (4) academic and professional gains. Discrepancies between their perceived gains could be explained by their individual differences and the uniqueness of their study abroad experience, motivation, interest and/or efforts of engagement in intercultural communication during their time abroad (Jackson, 2018).

4.3.1.1. Personal Gains

The most frequently reported personal gain as perceived by the participants in this study was *self-confidence*. This was followed by being able to *travel* alone, learning to *survive* in another county, and *socializing/meeting* with people from other cultures boosted their confidence in themselves. Describing their personal growth, many of them shared that they *gained matureness* as they had to manage their money, cook for themselves, solve their problems on their own. One participant stated she became more of an initiator than a shy person following her sojourn. Some participants reported they became calmer or individualistic like the people were in their host culture, noticing some changes in their personalities.

To begin with the most salient theme, increased *self-confidence* following their short-term Erasmus+ was perceived by all prospective language teachers in this study. Reflecting back on her study abroad experience, Lara indeed thought that studying a semester abroad made differences in her as a person and as an English language teacher candidate. Boost of confidence was a dominant theme in her answers too, as she elaborated on how this became so and how study abroad experience in the Swedish context:

> Personally, it helped me boost my confidence because I was really alone, most of the time. Not only because Swedish people are independent and individual but because the general exchange community was not really you know, it didn't click with me. So apart from a handful of people who were there as foreigners, I didn't have many Swedish people who knew their way around Sweden, so I had to figure that all on my own and that helped me boost my confidence a lot in that I could see I was you know doing things.

Similarly, Burcu vocalized the most important benefit she gained was, in her own words, *"learning to survive in a totally new environment"*. Surviving in every circumstance, learning a new language and a new culture, and getting accustomed to living in it made her say upon return: "*yes, I can live whereever I want, I can live everywhere in the world*" signaling her boosted self-confidence.

According to Mine's view, one of the most explicit and positive outcomes of her Erasmus+ experience in Italy was *confidence*, just like it was a similar picture for others too:

> Actually, actually I could feel like I could do anything when I was there. For instance. I went to different countries with my friends. I had Turkish friends as well, and we arranged some trips to other countries, and I mean it was soo, it was like so amazing. When I was there, I always felt like "okay we can go there, we can go there," and we were just took our bags and going from there to there, but when I was in Pavia, I also learned to keep money because "Euro çok yüksek olduğu için"(Euro was too high as currency). I always had to cook in the dormitory, and I was trying to arrange everything, so I felt a little bit more mature and I tried to keep everything in a good way.

The above except also elucidates the other personal contributions of studying abroad she perceived as an exchange student as she gained matureness because she had to cook and manage her money while living in Italy.

The *confidence* gained out of this abroad experience she reported could be extended to her personality as well. This change was evident in her statements from her first interview when she revealed that normally she was a shy person, but in Erasmus, she did not know anyone; hence she had to become friends with people there where she *"learned to be more open to communication,"* and she became *"more of an initiator than a shy person".* Also, she felt slightly less stressed when speaking in another language because having friends from different countries reduced her speaking anxiety.

Irmak carried on with further details of this effect of study abroad on her personality as she believed she was influenced by Spanish people's outlook on life:

> Now if I was Irmak before Erasmus, I would be crying over my homeworks, trying to do my best actually when I couldn't do anything else. But now, I think that it is me that all matters. You know, I can do it if I want, I can't do it if I can, this is my you know how can I say, *motto* for now. After Erasmus I have learned this. I cannot torture myself over something that I cannot do.

In addition to her changed mindset, she asserted she *"became a real adult"* because of her study abroad experience. She emphasized like most participants that learning how to survive in a new culture, a new place without knowing their language and having little money, having to negotiate with her Italian and Chilian roommates and navigate life in Spain brought her *survival skills* and gave her *confidence* that she *"can survive anywhere at any age"*. She felt she became *more tolerant* to people and could adapt herself to any other culture. All in all, she described studying abroad was a life-changing experience for her in line with previous perceptions of many sojourn students (Teichler, 2004).

One striking comment came from Gizem when she was being interviewed on the benefits of Erasmus+ experience. As a Turkish exchange student, she expressed her realization that the period she spent studying abroad became as a relaxing time for her with a therapeutic effect. In her exact words, she reported:

> …I saw that we in Turkey as young people, we have lots of problems that we carry wherever we go. I'm 22 years old and I have to think about the war going around in our neighbor, or the children in our streets, or the poority or everything. But what I saw in there was people at my age they don't need to carry any of those. It was heartbreaking actually. And when I was there, I didn't need to think of any of them again. But, when I came back, it all came to my mind.

In addition, the study abroad experience also contributed to her confidence immensely in terms of gaining encouragement to travel alone or living with people she did not know.

4.3.1.2. Language Gains

While 3 of the participants did not experience remarkable gains as much as they hoped in English, they still reported they have benefited from using the language outside the academia in daily conversations or while traveling. The rest of the participants, Burcu, Mine, Lara, and Gizem reported the positive outcomes of the study abroad experiences on their English as they gained confidence in speaking and listening, gained fluency, improved writing skills, started to think in English, and understand non-verbal language. On the other hand, all participants except Lara, Gizem, and Melis learned the host language to a degree. Given their reports in 4.1.3, 4.1.4 and 4.1.7, about their motivation and interest towards the Swedish language and Polish, this was an anticipated outcome.

To exemplify, studying abroad in the Swedish context pushed Lara to improve herself in terms of using English:

> …it helped me tremendously in terms of my English. They were really fluent. I often felt that I was a bit below their level too. It was almost as if I was speaking to you know people form Britain or USA. So I had to be careful there, and that changed my speech and listening too.

She alleged with further details from her experience that not only her pronunciation and fluency of English were improved but also her writing skills developed dramatically since assessment in the Swedish education lied heavily on take-home

essays instead of in-class examinations. A course called *"Academic English"* in the host university aid her writing development during her student mobility. In summary, gaining confidence, being more individualistic like Swedish people, improving her spoken and written English were among the areas she felt change in as a person. Money management was something she gained from her study abroad experience as well, similar to what other participants also put forward about themselves as previously discussed.

More on perceived language gains, Burcu found it exciting to learn a new language through immersing in daily activities such as shopping for food. However, this development was limited in grammar since she started as a beginner there with no prior Spanish background which could be viewed as an understandable outcome since pertinent literature suggests improving a foreign language competence depends on the initial level of competence one possesses (Kaplan, 1989). Burcu mainly used English during her mobility, even in her dormitory since the two of her roommates were Irish. This had also positive effects on her as she explained:

> So, I started to think English more. English became more important for me and also I started to understand how people, what people are going to say with their hands and gestures. And also I learned Spanish a bit but not in like its grammar but the basic everyday words.

Mine also reported having good relationships with Italians, Germans, and other student sojourns from various countries in terms of intercultural interaction during her sojourn. However, to her surprise, on her second day of Erasmus, she met about ten Turkish students, so she was hanging out with them as well. On top of that, she was staying in a dormitory for two people, and the other person turned out to be Turkish, although she did not expect this arrangement. She tried to refrain from hanging out with her ethnic group only, in the end, she felt slightly less stressed when speaking in another language because having friends from different countries reduced her speaking anxiety.

Furthermore, similar to what Mine and Burcu reported about their language development, Gizem observed the most change in her speaking skills, as she gained

fluency and started to think in English as well. In her honesty, she noted that she had had no intention of improving her Polish, and she only learned a few words and basic expressions (See section 4.1.4). On the other hand, considering her English, she was the first to report any downside in terms of language gains. Because she made many international friends who were careless on their grammar during her mobility she argued as a prospective English language teacher, this had affected her *negatively*:

> But there are people didn't pay attention to grammar, and I do because I will teach grammar, so I have to pay attention to my language but because they didn't pay attention, and I was spending all of my day with them, so, I started to lose my grammar also. Like they were saying "did you said, did you went there" and I started to say that also and when I came back to Turkey, I still sometimes caught myself saying that unfortunately.

On the other hand, Irmak's expectations regarding the improvement of her English did not turn out as she expected since she came to realize that English was not widely spoken in Granada and even the pre-service teachers she studied together in the host institution were not very good at English, she explained. However, she thought living in Spain contributed to her Spanish as she needed the language for her daily needs such as shopping, eating and navigating in the city.

Irmak's perception was validated as in terms of language, Defne was also a bit disappointed that she could not practice her English as much as she did at METU, supporting what Irmak also stated earlier in the same study abroad context. Although she learned some words and phrases in Spanish, she also pointed out that doing a study abroad experience with her best friend limited her international interactions. It was when they were traveling she said they found the chance to practice their English in a meaningful way.

Contrary to her peers in the study, Melis was insecure and anxious when it comes to her language abilities. Although regarding personal changes she experienced due to her student mobility, she divulged that after some adaptation period around one month, she felt *"less shy and abstaining"* yet still, when there were Turks around, she added that she continued to feel shy to speak in English. Offering an explanation to this phenomenon, she pointed to Turkish education, which she believed made her

a *"perfectionist"*. She believed Turkish students were always judging her speech, so she felt insecure when speaking and kept withholding herself. She admitted she did not observe any major improvement in her English as she had expected, and implied that hanging out with Turkish students during her stay might have hindered her development in that regard.

In terms of her interactions with native Polish in the host environment, she revealed she found them a bit *"cold and distanced",* and they were not being so *"friendly".* Most of the time during her stay, she communicated with other Turkish students and international exchange students from her dormitory. Melis also mentioned the other international students also tended to hang out with people from their own country. This unfortunately, also have been an observed activity by some research into the impacts of international education (Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020). Finally, Melis candidly expressed since she had no intention of learning Polish, she did nothing to improve this language (See section 4.1.7). She only benefitted from using English in daily activities such as at the supermarket or on the bus because it was different from the academic usage of the language she could practice at METU.

4.3.1.3. Intercultural Gains

Some participants stated they were already curious, tolerant, and open-minded people before their short-term sojourn experience, so studying abroad did not change their attitudes drastically; however, most of them reported they became more tolerant, more patient, more flexible, more open-minded, less judgemental, and less shy communicating with people from other cultures thanks to their semester spend abroad. They felt the most change in terms of knowledge, which was gained through their interactions with various cultures, observing how they live, think, and behave. Some participants also stated that some courses in the host university also improved their cultural knowledge about English in better detail than any other course taken at home. While Melis and Gizem reported they did not gain much knowledge or positive attitudes towards the Polish during their stay because of their unwelcoming and cold personalities, Gizem was careful not to stereotype or generalize all Polish people. Overall, all participants believed their study abroad period contributed to

their intercultural development. They were able to observe people from different cultures first-hand and learn many cultural habits and behaviors that they said they would not be able to learn if they had not participated in the program and studied abroad. They were also able to observe cultural differences and prejudices among intercultural communications. Some participants revealed that this made them aware of their own prejudices and overcame them. Moreover, by immersing themselves in the study abroad environment, Irmak and Lara changed their mindset and embraced the Spanish and Swedish way of life.

Defne asserted that *"the Erasmus+ experience is a perfect opportunity to be patient and to be open-minded people,"* because she was meeting new people and cultures, learning to be in harmony with them so as to be able to live with them, her responses hinted at perceived gains in terms of her intercultural competence development. Her realization yields further support to the perceptions of the study abroad programs as being propitious for the development of ICC since they can offer affordances for intercultural growth (Jackson, 2018; Zhao, 2010). However, Irmak's opinions also drew attention to the warnings made in the relevant literature that intercultural growth and the development of this competence is not an automatic byproduct of mere participations in such exchange programs (Cushner & Chang, 2015; He et al., 2017; Jackson, 2009).

On this matter, Irmak commented her awareness that she could have further benefitted from the study abroad experience if she had engaged in more international and intercultural communications. She hinted that her sojourn journey with her best friend Defne might have limited her multilingual and multicultural interactions. Sometimes they were missing out on some gatherings or parties because they were travelling so often as much to 19 cities and 9 countries during their time abroad. But she also observed that other international exchange students were mostly hanging out with their own ethnic groups from their own native countries in the university. In fact, she counted herself as one of the luckiest Erasmus+ students in Granada because she had a team there so that she could become a part of a Spanish community. Since she had been playing ultimate frisbee for the last five years in METU, she got in the frisbee team and played with them during her sojourn. In their

training, she needed to understand her teammates and learn frisbee terms, so the situation motivated her to adapt herself and negotiate meaning with Spanish people, contributing to her intercultural development. Irmak and Defne also took the mission to introduce their county to others who are generally biased against Turkey to change their prejudices about their county and Turkish culture during their short-term Erasmus+ experience in Spain:

> …You learn to be patient and also you learn not to be prejudiced against something. Actually you get much more open minded when you do Erasmus because people are different… you notice that yeah, diversity is necessary and diversity is actually not a bad thing, it's a good thing to see different perspectives and different understanding of people so that you can adjust yourself with others much more easily.

Similary, Melis could see that being in contact with other citizens of the world during Erasmus+ she believed could contribute to the developing ICC:

> Everyone's life is similar somehow. We can see these commonalities, and we can go and chat about them, we can learn something new from them by asking questions, and they can learn from you too. This can help intercultural communicative competence.

Similar to what other participants in this study had stated earlier, the *"confidence"* she gained to survive on her own alone in another country was among the most obvious contributions of the study abroad exchange period. Since she met and was able to become friends with many different people from diverse cultural backgrounds, she thought this might imply that she *"became more open-minded, more tolerant, and less judgy"* after her student mobility experience. Nevertheless, she reported she did not gain much knowledge or positive attitudes towards the Polish since she did not mingle with them very often. Although her interactions were minimal, she stated she had still learned some cultural behaviors of them which are similar to practices in Turkey, such as giving seats to older people in a bus.

Overall, Burcu recalled her good interactions in intercultural communication as well, yet there were few occasions she had interesting encounters due to cultural differences during her Erasmus+ period. For instance, she found Spanish people "so touchy" and "intimate" and thus a bit uncomfortable for her to get used to them, but

she did not see this situation as problematic and understood their friendly intentions soon. Her sympathy increased as she had understood their way of life and how they are different from *us:*

> I learned that I can communicate with everyone, I can find a topic in which I can communicate, I can have a good time with everybody. and also, I believe that they you saw different things a lot you get used to them. So when I saw lots of things, I understand that they exist and I became more tolerant.

Discovering other views that exist by engaging in many intercultural interactions developed her attitudes as she became a more tolerant person. Such perceptions are consistent with the posits that cultural immersion opportunities lead to awareness of the *other* and *self*, thus stimulating skills and attitudes to become intercultural (Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009; Bennet 1997; Byram, 2008; Jackson, 2015). In addition to this immersion opportunity studying abroad brought her, Burcu also reported that her cultural knowledge, not only other cultures but English culture in particular, was increased thanks to a course she attended during her sojourn. She commented that while back home, she did not learn about English culture in that detail, which this course taught her, including the history of England, other parts of Britain, and people's way of life. Together these were her explanations of how studying abroad contributed to her ICC development.

During her sojourn, Mine stated that she learned about how Italian people behaved in some situations and how they were relaxed about everything, which also made her more relaxed in some ways. She found Italian people talkative, smiling, friendly and helpful as she hoped and expected. So, she did not feel much change about her attitudes. However, she admitted that sometimes as Turkish exchange students, she and others had to limit some social activities to save money for future travels because of the escalating currency rates. They did not feel as free as the other students in the host institution who could attend every event they wished. She mentioned that this might have affected her socialization and interaction chances with people, thus challenging her ICC development in the study abroad context.

Before her student mobility, Lara's preconceptions of Swedish people were that they were cold, individualistic people who were independent from their families and other people and were really good at English. She stated in her sojourn that these impressions of her did not change. Lara's most interactions were with foreigner or Swedish students, so she had the chance to observe cultural differences and prejudices among intercultural communications. This made her become aware of her *prejudices* and overcome them, as the next excerpt illustrates:

> In terms of accents, I was really, before I went there, I had a big trouble understanding some accents like Chinese accents or Indian accents, and I had both in my life all the time. So, I am very not proud to say that but I was really, a bit you know, prejudiced against their speaking skills but I realized that I can understand them just fine.

Furthermore, she revealed that she used to find speaking about culture-specific topics a bit too *political* at times. She worried that either she would be too political or the person across her would be very rude, so she was avoiding conversations on politics, money, or even food and travel before her sojourn experience. However, she reported that she *gained a new perspective* that now she does not feel bad about asking questions kindly since she developed an *awareness of underlying cultural perspectives* of different interlocutors in line with Byram's (1997) fifth savior (savoir s'engager).

Finally, Gizem's self-reports revealed that she had become aware of *prejudices* could be impediments to successful intercultural interactions. Gizem have built strong relationships with international students from her study abroad experience that still last and they still keep in touch. However, her interaction and communication with the locals and the Polish students were not very healthy, according to her. She believed this stemmed from the *attitudes* of Polish people she and her other friends observed about during they stay. Although she wanted to avoid stereotyping and generalizing all Polish people, she described in her experience, this was the case she encountered: *"if you are black, they don't like you, if you are Muslim, they don't like you, they don't like different people in there"*. Even in the classrooms, when they needed to work together in groups, Polish students were reluctant and not welcoming. Their attitude and behavior only confirmed her former thoughts about

the Polish. She was at least expecting young people to be welcoming to foreigners and be open to strangers. Gizem herself described her general personality as an understanding to everyone. Therefore, she did not think studying abroad changed her own attitudes a lot. She also added that she gained knowledge about different cultures through studying abroad because she was able to observe people from different cultures first-hand and learn many cultural habits and behaviors that she would not be able to learn if she did not participate in the program and study abroad.

4.3.1.4. Academic and Professional Gains

As prospective English language teachers, the participants believed studying abroad also contributed to them academically and professionally in some ways and to some extent. The most apparent contribution was *"gaining a different vision"*. Almost all participants felt that being in a different academic environment brought them a different perspective on teaching and learning. After having a chance to observe their professors in the host university, their European teaching methods, and communication with them as learners, some of them stated these affected them as prospective teachers, and they might benefit from these different strategies in their future.

Lara argued since the Swedish education system promoted learner autonomy, she realized studying individually brought her more success. In like manner, Mine, Irmak and Defne drew attention to the differences they noticed in terms of assessment methods between the host institution and their home. Irmak and Defne for instance, stated they thought preparing portfolios would be more beneficial for their future students too, as they would be involved in their own learning during the whole term and gain autonomy.

Some participants also envisioned themselves as they emphasized, they could be more confident in their future classrooms since they believed they could teach culture to their students and introduce them to a variety of cultures, share their experiences of abroad education, use their Erasmus+ memories to motivate their students and encourage them to learn new cultures and see life abroad. These findings actually

provide more evidence to previous studies which claim that when teachers have intercultural experience themselves, their practice tend to include more topics on interculturality, comparisons and discussions on culture in their classrooms creating space for sharing opinions (Göbel & Helmke, 2010).

While none of the participants had a chance to take practicum courses during their study abroad, almost half the participants expressed the need for more practice component in their teacher preparation back home. One participant, Mine, emphasized her desire to practice teaching abroad via another mobility program Erasmus+ internship, believing it would have contributed to her even more as a future English teacher corroborating with earlier arguments (Walters et. al, 2009).

Uncovering the listed perceptions above starting from Defne, "*gaining a different vision"* was reported as another significant gain from studying abroad via Erasmus+ program. This *vision*, she further argued, also helped her pre-service teacher education in Turkey as a prospective language teacher referring back to her experience abroad detailed in section 4.1.6:

> I applied what I had learned in my Erasmus when I came back…I mean we learned about Common European Framework, Communicative Competence, and other stuff and I was thinking that I hadn't learned anything in my Erasmus and it was easy and it was in vain, I thought at first. But when I came back to Turkey and we talked with our teachers in lectures and courses, I have noticed that I learned a lot of things actually. But you don't notice that you have learned something until you use it.

Moreover, Defne noted that she benefited from this experience as a prospective language teacher because of the different educational practices she observed as a learner there, and that helped Defne get to know herself better professionally. Two instances she especially found the most helpful was when the Spanish instructor of "Teaching English to Young Learnes", who was also one of the members of eTwinning program, made them read Turkish MEB-curriculum and design a lesson plan according to it; and made them fill out EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages) as a self-assessment tool to reflect and assess her own

knowledge and skills. Defne added that after this, she decided she was sure that she must be a teacher.

As mentioned earlier, for the practicum experience she had at METU, after the coronavirus break, Defne stated her practicum mostly continued with observational EBA tasks. For her final task, in the task-based language teaching lesson plan, she prepared a game that included celebrities and some culturally prominent figures from various countries from different backgrounds, so it was seen that she tried to integrate cultural elements in her teaching. Moreover, her earlier beliefs from the first interview connected with her ideas on her teaching practices at practicum:

> …So when you think about it also Turkish people we have different backgrounds, right? Even if we're Turkish we still have some differences. So when you go to Erasmus, you learn that difference is not a bad thing actually, it's a wealth- wealth of the country, right? So after my Erasmus experience, I learned to be more patient, to be more understanding, to be more, much more flexible actually. That's why ,I'm trying to find a middle ground for every student, every different student.

As a teacher with an Erasmus+ experience, she believed she would not be shy or feel *incompetent* if she had some foreign students in the classroom. Or even with just Turkish students, she envisioned herself as being *a role model*, *a source of inspiration* for her future students, thanks to her Erasmus+ background:

> …those [teachers] who went to Erasmus tend to be much more, how can I say, inspiring because students want to learn much more about abroad, how is Spain, how is Spanish culture, where do you live, how long have you been there. They try to learn more about you and other people so their, how can I say, their goal their aim becomes higher. They put themselves higher goals, higher aims.

On a further note, she mentioned the current case in Turkey, saying there are more to Turkish students and Turkish culture, such as Syrian refugees. She believed we need to *"teach our students to live together in harmony"*, embrace all people and teach students examples from many different cultures.

As reported earlier, she was against the idea of aiming for the native speakership, and with her study abroad experience, she became more aware and sensitive towards

other cultures and how to communicate successfully according to people whom you are communicating with. All in all, her reports from the interviews were found in line with what she reflected on her practicum data. EBA Observation Task 4 was her only assignment related to expanding the intercultural knowledge of learners and integrating language and culture teaching. Her views in the document reflected the earlier findings she reported in her interviews about ICC.

With similar ideas, Irmak also admitted that taking courses in a different learning environment brought her *"a different perspective on teaching"* because she got exposed to European teaching methods or other forms of assessments like preparing portfolios, which are different from the ways she was assessed back home. Especially she thought portfolios changed her view on teaching because she realized language learning is a process and students should be involved in their teaching throughout the term, not just a few times when they cram around certain deadlines and exams. She expressed that seeing other learning environments in her study abroad experience made her *"more open to trying new things"* in the classroom and showing students different perspectives on language learning as a prospective teacher.

Furthermore, the excerpts below demonstrated her ideas about the differences between the host university and her home university on pre-service language teacher education:

> Actually to be honest, education, you know learning, is more easier there because it was Spain and people and teachers are more relaxed, not like in METU we are like in a race every time, we are trying to do so much things with courses and oh my God, I'm so stressed here. But in Spain, you know, they're more understanding and they're more like not trying to teach everything in theory. They want us to practice everything, see everything. They are not trying to yes um how can I say, equip us with everything in theory but they try to give as much as possible to us, so that we can use them in our teachings later.

Therefore, Irmak believed practice component in her home university should have been more dominant and there should be more practicum courses to improve them as future teachers. Although at METU they have demos, mini teachings and extra

presentations, she expressed they cannot understand a real classroom environment without getting their hands dirty. So, she thought at least three semesters of practicum are required for language teachers because she viewed language teaching as different from teaching Maths or science, believing a pre-service ELT teacher needs more experience.

Continuing with the reports from Spain, the same Erasmus+ context Irmak and Defne have experienced together one year later, Burcu's perceptions revealed she viewed pre-service teacher education at METU was more challenging than what she experienced during a semester abroad. She only found the methodology course she took in Spain helpful in preparing her for methodology courses such as *"ELT Methodology II"* and *"Instructional Methods"* after returning to her home institution. When comparing the level of students in Spain and the education they offer at the host institution, she reported that this had a significant positive effect on her self-confidence in terms of English. Furthermore, she also implied that she had gained more confidence in her pre-service teacher education and the future profession because she compared her academic and professional repertoire with the students in the host institution. The following statements summarize her view:

> At first, I was really shocked because like they are not learning all the information that we get. For example, I was like at some points way above their levels, while I was just like a second-year student in METU. So, I can totally say that we are learning a lot of things like, we are learning more when we compare.
>
> …In general, I can say that it's not like something bragging but like anyone who goes there, who goes to Spain from our department would be one of the best students because they think that we know a lot of stuff. I mean in terms of, for example, everything like we learned literature, we learned linguistics, we learned methods. Yes, they [students in the host university] are learning methods, but not as deep as we learn.

Mine on the other hand, like Irmak and Defne, noticed differences mostly in terms of assessment considering the educational practices of the host and the home environment. While at METU, the students are generally required to hand in many written assignments, homework, give presentations, and have two exams in order to pass a course. In Italy, she stated one of their exams was in the form of speaking with

the course instructor at the end of the term, which she found very different and stressful since she had never been assessed in such a format in Turkish education. Comparing the academic environment in her sojourn experience, Mine observed a different scenario where students were given more freedom that made them study under less stress. After her abroad experience, she did not feel like her perceptions of teaching English changed a lot, but as a prospective teacher, she thought about giving her future students some freedom as well by assigning less homework.

Lara had revealed that the *"Academic English"* course had contributed to her as it developed her writing skills, which was important for her as a learner there and a prospective language teacher overall, as mentioned earlier. On the other hand, *"Artistic Methods in Education"* course she took in Sweden affected her perspectives on using drama and roleplays and taught about the ways of integrating them into practice, especially with young learners, which she could apply to her Turkish students in the future. Moreover, Lara reported the Swedish education system promoted learner autonomy more, studying abroad where she observed different practices in the host university during her mobility as a pre-service student also affected her academic success and professional perspectives as she alleged:

> We had seminars/lectures, and assignments that were more like individual study. Meeting for lectures/seminars was not based on a fixed schedule. I had a lot of individual study.
>
> …I think it significantly developed my academic success because the Swedish educational system was more relying on the individual… um effort, and then I carried it back home, and so I realized working on my own, individually doing work was helpful.

As reported earlier, the confidence she gained out of her Erasmus+ experience also contributed to her in English classrooms as she explained more on how she noticed some differences between herself and other pre-service teachers without any study abroad experiences in the excerpt below:

> We were going with a friend to the practicum, what I observed was that my partners were always people who had not have an Erasmus or abroad experience, so I think they somehow had trouble keeping up with English. So, they would sometimes want to slip back to Turkish and I didn't really feel

> comfortable doing that because I know that it doesn't help slipping back to Turkish. I also don't have a hard time just going along with English and explaining very very basically because that's what I had to do when I was abroad…I also think that my peers maybe um I don't know maybe they think too much Turkish, what they learned in Turkish educational context, and that's not their fault. I don't think they have any minuses or they have any disadvantage, they are working in a Turkish context, so why not keep up with that, but I think knowing how to you know, integrate I don't know Swedish or Nordic or Scandinavian educational experience is some kind of helpful. I don't think my friends would be very comfortable with that in students working on their own, individually, outside class with homework for example. I feel very comfortable, and I think it works very well.

But still, she did not think she would be a very different English teacher than the others without any experience because at some point, she was aware that she had to adhere to the Turkish standards and the Turkish context since teachers here are expected to act in a strict way. However, if she had the chance, she would want to reverse that role because similar to Swedish education, she expressed that she was *"more for student activity than the teacher being the center of attention"* after her time abroad.

In the Polish context, as Gizem commented, instructors were being too easy on the exchange students, giving more freedom in terms of attendance and workload. Although the expectations from international exchange students were undemanding, she tried to do better to represent her country and Turkish students in the best way possible as someone with a *"METU soul"* nonetheless. Being in a different academic environment for a semester, she argued, made her gain a sense of their educational behaviors. For instance, she observed that the university students in the host institution were participating and vocalizing their ideas about a topic without hesitating if they would make a mistake, and this got her to thinking she should push her future students to *"share their ideas even if they think it is stupid"*.

Furthermore, she commented that she believed study abroad experience contributed to her as a prospective language teacher:

> It helped me to improve myself in an academic way because we had the chance to observe the professors studying at the university there and maybe

> compare in some ways, I mean their teaching method and the way they communicated with the students as well.

To give more detail, the young learners course she took at the host university did not have any contribution to her practicum experience in Turkey according to Gizem because her profile in practicum was high school students. However, since she wanted to work in public schools after graduation, she thought this course somewhat contributed to her professional repertoire as well.

Interestingly, in both of her interviews, Melis commented that she had no educational benefits from her sojourn experience, and studying in Poland did not affect her *"professionally or academically".* She echoed Gizem's reports on the easy time she had in her courses, as the instructors there were not forcing Erasmus+ students and the course requirements were not so difficult to fulfill. Melis also noted that most of the courses she took in Poland were much easier for her to pass since she had already taken some of them before in the department at METU. The courses she thought were not demanding, and the lectures were short and concise in the sense that teachers were not giving too much information and assignments as they do in METU. Nonetheless, she believed having an Erasmus+ experience as a prospective English teacher would help in the future as she stated:

> I think that I can be more open-minded and more encouraging to my students, I can motivate them go abroad or learn someone, be tolerant to others, to other cultures. And of course, I will also mention about my culture but they should exposed to other cultures too if they are learning English.

Furthermore, the metaphor she used in her teaching philosophy statement assignment at the practicum, in which she saw teachers as gardeners and students as flowers, was in accord with what she stated in her interviews in terms of how it is the teachers' responsibility to *"orchestrate nourishing activities".* This also gave support to her views on the importance of teachers and their efforts to adjust materials for the learners for intercultural learning which she linked to her abroad experience.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study mainly investigated perceived gains of study abroad experiences and perceptions of ICC and interculturally competent speaker of pre-service English teachers with previous Erasmus+ experiences. Current understanding of ICC knowledge and perceptions of its possible integration in Turkish settings were sought out. In addition, the perceived gains of study abroad on pre-service language teachers and their future profession were explored. In the final chapter of this thesis, the summary of the findings is followed by the limitations of the present study along with suggestions for future research, and finally, the implications and recommendations.

5.1. Summary of the Study

One of the main aims of this thesis study was to investigate how prospective English language teachers with study abroad experience conceptualize intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and interculturally competent speaker. To this end, the senior pre-service ELT teachers were questioned whether they had heard about these concepts in their pre-service teacher education at METU or their host university and asked for a definition in the first interviews. They were further interrogated about their perceptions on the development of this competence in Turkish educational settings in the second interviews. It was assumed that data obtained from them during this period of time in their pre-service teacher education would better reflect and help the researcher to capture their perceptions and views regarding the aims of the present study. Their authentic work for this traineeship was also utilized to triangulate the findings as it could help to compare and support their self-reported perceptions of ICC and gains of studying abroad.

As the case revealed, most of the participants were not familiar with the term ICC, reporting they might have heard of it once or twice yet were not sure what it entailed. While Gizem remembered it was once mentioned in a methodology course at METU, Lara was informed about it in one of the sessions of teaching English to young learners course at METU with an activity carried out by a guest speaker. Irmak was lucky to be familiar with the term thanks to a course she took abroad and because she had worked on ICC in one of her practicum's weekly article reflection and observation tasks. These reports of limited encounters with ICC in their teacher preparation education correlated with previous research findings pointing the lack of targeted training on intercultural communicative competence and raising intercultural speakers/teachers in pre-service English teacher preparation in the Turkish higher education context (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Börkan, 2012; Czura, 2016; Eken, 2015; Kaçar 2019; Şen, 2020). For this reason, this finding implied a need for explicit instruction and practical training on ICC at METU FLE (Taşkın, 2021).

Even without almost no background regarding the theoretical knowledge of the term, however, all of the participants were able to define ICC mostly in accord with the conceptualizations of the term in the literature (Byram, 1997; Czura, 2016; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009). This finding could be linked to participants previous study abroad experiences since previous research argues that experiential learning opportunities such as Erasmus+ student mobility program enhance the development of ICC and raise pre-service teachers' awareness on ICC (Aydın, 2012; Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014; Soria &Trois, 2014). The participants of the study repeatedly made this link as well, by giving credit to their participation in the program for contributing their ICC.

As for their understanding of the concept of ICC, most of the prospective language teachers in this study defined the term as being able to communicate with the ability to understand people from other cultures by aiming for mutually effective conversations. So, the ability to express one's own culture to others and compare diverse perspectives and products of others, being respectful and tolerant to other views, and adapting their language to communicate accordingly are considered a part of this competence resonating with Byram's (2008) conceptualizations of

intertwining attitudes, knowledge, critical cultural awareness, and skills. Similarly, the participants defined an intercultural speaker as someone aware of the diversity of cultures who can interpret and relate cultural knowledge and practices of others and their own culture; therefore, can successfully communicate without making mistakes that can cause communication breakdown because of misunderstandings. Having an open mindset, showing culture-sensitive behaviors (Jackson, 2011, p.82), being a tolerant, flexible, patient, and less judgmental person (Fantini, 2000, p.28) are listed among attributes of an interculturally competent speaker in line with the literature. In addition, corroborating the ideas of Byram (1997, 2008) and Fantini (2009), who recognize proficiency and linguistic competence in developing ICC, most participants in this case study also mentioned having good grammar and vocabulary, good listening skills, understanding different accents, and non-verbal language such as gestures, mannerisms, and facial expressions as part of being an interculturally competent speaker.

Based on their perception of ICC and intercultural speaker, the pre-service teachers with study abroad experiences were further interrogated if they view themselves as interculturally competent speakers. Albeit with some hesitation, all participants believed they can be referred to as interculturally competent speakers since they were able to survive in another culture by establishing positive relationships with people from different cultures (Byram, 2009). Their circumspection was mostly stemmed from their thoughts on developing ICC and becoming an intercultural competent speaker, believing there are more cultures to be learned and is room for more development. On this matter, their view on developing this competence and becoming an intercultural speaker is in agreement with the perceptions regarding gaining this competence in the literature as a "never-ending", "ongoing", "lifelong learning process" (Baker, 2015; Byram, 2008; Dervin & Gross, 2016; Jackson, 2018).

Another important finding of this study was that all participants unanimously agreed on the necessity and importance of developing ICC for Turkish students and their English teachers. Since Britzman (2003) reminds us practicum "is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach -like teaching

itself- is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one become" (p.31), the second interviews were conducted after pre-service teachers' practicum experiences to reveal their perceptions related to the development of ICC and perceived contributions of previous Erasmus+ experiences on themselves as a prospective language teacher. So, based on their practicum experience in Turkey and drawing on their past study abroad experience, the participants believed Turkish students should be exposed to different cultures and engage in genuine intercultural communications. Therefore, they frequently suggested that study abroad projects should be increased throughout Turkey, and learners should be promoted and motivated for participation. Having this experience themselves, they believed they could be a source of inspiration for their future pupils who can provide guidance and encouragement, further supporting what similar reports revealed in the literature (Göbel & Helmke, 2010).

Moreover, Byram and Masuhara (2013) assert that optimal materials, syllabus, and methodology need to be explored for intercultural language education (p.156). In the language teaching settings they observed, the ELT pre-service teachers of this study did not find the materials, curriculum, and institution helpful and reported that teachers were not trying to find ways of integrating ICC.

In relation to the second research question, when the cohorts' experiences were examined regarding why they chose to have a study abroad experience via Erasmus+, it was understood that most of the participants were determined to participate in Erasmus+ student mobility program ever since they were in high school. The most stated reasons for studying abroad were traveling around Europe, experiencing living abroad, seeing new places, seeing new cultures, meeting new people, and learning how people live (Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019). Improving their English speaking skills and gaining fluency was another motivation for pre-service English teachers to participate in this international exchange. Moreover, Irmak and Defne believed an Erasmus+ experience would be helpful after graduation and advantageous in future job applications. In addition, Burcu asserted that it is important for language teachers to experience living in a different culture to teach culture to their students, thus believing study abroad would be beneficial for her as an English teacher.

All participants were highly motivated to study in a European country prior to their mobility. The majority of the participants revealed their genuine interest in the host culture and the language, which affected their choice of the host university. Gizem and Melis were the only exceptions as they stated they never had a desire to learn Polish and were not knowledgeable about the Polish culture before their mobility. Their motivation to study in Poland was mainly based on financial concerns and travel opportunities.

The participants in the study reported that they were able to communicate and build relationships with people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They mostly used English in their interactions and engaged in multilingual and multicultural communications. In the Spanish and Polish context, there was a tendency among the local and international students to hang out with their ethnic groups mostly. Irmak and Defne had the comfort of the presence of each other, and Melis made many Turkish friends. Mine also reported that she had to cut back on some social activities with international students to save money for her travels. Financial concerns were among the challenges that somewhat may have limited Turkish sojourners Erasmus+ experiences or affected some of their choices such as the host institution or their time of mobility, similar to what prior studies revealed related to Turkish economics (Önen, 2017, p.274). While a European sojourner may not have concerns over financial or visa problems, these concerns might be generic to Turkey (Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019, p.720-721).

The present case study yielded further important findings contributing to the growing body of research regarding the impacts of studying abroad on pre-service English language teachers' life and multidimensional development. The participant prospective ELT teachers with Erasmus+ experience reported many contributions, and their perceived gains out of this study abroad experience were given in detail in the previous section and aggregated under four areas: personal, language, intercultural, and academic and professional gains, which are parallel with several studies in the literature (Byram, 2008; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020; Tütüncü, 2014; Önen, 2017). Discrepancies between their perceived gains could be explained by their individual differences and the uniqueness of their

study abroad experience, motivation, interest and/or efforts of engagement in intercultural communication during their time abroad (Jackson, 2018).

Comprehensive analysis of the participants' self-reports implied that during their one-semester mobility experiences, the pre-service teachers gained new knowledge about various cultures, developed skills that facilitate their intercultural interaction, developed or modified their attitudes towards members of the host culture and others and developed critical cultural awareness after studying abroad (Byram, 2008). However, immersion may not always lead to intercultural growth if one does not engage in activities in the host culture (He et al., 2017; Teichler, 2004), and program participants may come back with negative attitudes (Byram, 2008). This warning could be observed in Melis's case as she did not connect with Polish students and attempted to learn their culture, but she mostly interacted with other Turkish students during her stay, which she admitted also hindered her potential language development, wasting multilingual and intercultural communication opportunities.

As for the participants' perceived language gains, the findings of this study are highly consisted with previous reports on ELT pre-service teachers' short-term study abroad experience outcomes (Aydın, 2012; Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020) since the majority of the participants, Burcu, Mine, Lara and Gizem, reported positive outcomes on their English in terms of gaining fluency and confidence in speaking and listening, improving writing skills, starting to think in English and understanding different accents and non-verbal language. They found beneficial to use the language while travelling or outside the academia in daily conversations. Contrary to the prospective teachers' language gains in Aydın's (2012) study however, not all participants learned the host language in this case (p.9). Because of their lack of will, Lara, Melis and Gizem did not learn or make efforts to improve their Swedish and Polish.

Mizikaci and Arslan (2019) underscore the essential role of the study abroad programs in developing "multiple perspectives in student's future professional decisions. In the minds of the students, professional career may be a projection limited to national or local scope until they meet other prospects" (p.178). Similarly,

the participants stated they gained a different vision and felt that being in a different academic environment brought them a different perspective on teaching and learning.

For the participants of this study, the purpose of language is communication. When learning a language, the goal is to be able to communicate in an efficient way to transmit messages and negotiate meanings. Having studied in an international environment, they were aware that in the case of the English language, English is not the native language of both interlocutors but rather spoken between a nonnative and another nonnative individual (Crystal, 2003), in accord with the posits of the EIL and ELF status of it (Alptekin, 2002; Hoff, 2020). Therefore, it involves not just the culture of the target language but the culture of its many speakers. Thus, they acknowledged the significance of gaining ICC, developing this competence in learners and in themselves.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A note of caution is due here since these findings cannot be extrapolated to pre-service language teachers all around, not even in Turkey or the same institution. Even in the same university as the study shows, individuals can have diverse experiences and develop in disparate ways due to the multifariousness (Jackson, 2018) of study abroad.

Another limitation of this study might be related to the sample size. There were only 7 participants agreed to take part in the study amidst Covid-19 out of 9 eligible participants. Study abroad opportunities still cannot be utilized by all those who wish to participate. Students need good GPA records and compete in English exams for their placement in the program. In Turkey, it is getting hard for students to keep up with the financial issues to participate in longer study abroad experiences. All of the participants of the study at hand had spent only one semester abroad.

In addition, the cohort of participants merely consisted of females. Although Sarıçoban and Öz (2014) found no significant differences between Turkish female

and male pre-service EFL teachers' ICC levels employing a quantitative approach (p.523), male experiences and thought patterns might offer different insights when scrutinized with more qualitative tools. Therefore, it would be better to include gender diversity in future endeavors.

Moreover, due to the pandemic, the practicum experiences of senior ELT students all over Turkey and at METU were afflicted, and fewer in-class observations and hands-on teachings with real interaction with students were not able to be observed by the researcher. Less exposure to authentic classroom implementations may have limited prospective language teachers' perceptions as well.

Future studies can also be longitudinal so that they can track the students starting from their decisions to embark on such a journey and hold interviews prior to their sojourns. The researchers can also keep in touch with the participants and ask them to reflect on their experiences while they are still abroad in the host environment. It was impossible for this study to gather data before each participant student's Erasmus+ mobilities.

5.3. Implications and Recommendations

This study contributed to the existing literature regarding the many benefits of study abroad perceived by pre-service ELT teachers on their multidimensional development, including ICC.

Pre-service teachers who cannot participate and benefit from one or two semester-long study abroad opportunities can choose and apply to do a traineeship abroad during their summer vacation without delaying their graduation and gaining further skills and knowledge to add their repertories. Erasmus+ traineeship would be a valuable option where prospective ELT teachers practice teaching in a variety of international context and gain more in terms of professional and intercultural growth. Pre-service language teachers especially need to be encouraged and promoted to exploit these experiential opportunities because their role in educating the future

generations who can interact and survive in the new world is vital (Cushner, 2011; Sercu, 2005).

If neither of the options above is available or attainable for the pre-service teachers, then the institution, in this case METU, should find ways to promote interculturality in the campus and increase intercultural interactions between international students, exchange students, and Turkish students. In lieu of going abroad to meet people from different cultures, Tandem partnerships can be another way to discover a new culture by negotiating meaning in another language. METU started ODTÜ-TANDEM Language Learning Program under the supervision of two faculty members at the Department of Modern Languages, however the program ended shortly after a few years due to administrative reasons. The program should start again because it can help not just the pre-service teachers but all students from various departments and levels no matter if they are freshman, sophomores, juniors or seniors. According to Wang (2018), as part of their internalization agenda Queens University, Belfast benefits from tandem partnerships and finds it valuable complementing formal language education. Learning a foreign language can be reinforced with a tandem partnership may yield better outcomes and experience in language, culture, and intercultural learning. Face-to-face tandem partnership can particularly nourish the development of speaking skills (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008, p.164), which is most commonly viewed as a problematic area for Turkish EFL learners.

Last but not least, many studies point to a lack of training in pre-service education when it comes to implementation of interculturality and fostering students' competence similar to the findings of this case study. Therefore, Taşkın (2021) recommends that "intercultural dimension in language teaching should be presented to pre-service language teachers from the very beginning and the curriculum of the programs should aim to develop language teachers as interculturally sensitive individuals" (p.171). In the same vein, at METU FLE, there seems to be a need for a course devoted to spare time and effort to raise pre-service ELT teachers' awareness of ICC, educate them with its components and prepare students for its facilitation in their future classrooms.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Sayı: 28620816 / 245

04 AĞUSTOS 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç. Dr. Betil ERÖZ

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız **Büşra TEMEL'in "An Exploratory case study of ELT pre-service teachers: Gains of Study Abroad and Perceptions of ICC"** başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **245 ODTU 2020** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
Başkan

Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN
Üye

Doç.Dr. Pınar KAYGAN
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL
Üye

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

My name is Büşra Temel and I am a Master's student from the Department of English Language Teaching. This study is conducted as a thesis project for the ELT program and supervised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Betil Eröz. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of pre-service English language teachers at METU with study abroad experiences on the contributions of such programs on their personal, academic and professional development and reveal the perceptions about intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Findings of present study carry the potential to suggest in-depth insights and pedagogical implications on the gains of study abroad exchanges and in what ways it affects prospective language teachers' perceptions and teaching practices, the intercultural training of ELT students and trainees and integration of interculturality in English language classrooms in Turkey.

Participation in the study must be on a voluntary basis. If you agree to take part in the project, first you will be asked to fill a background questionnaire which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Later on, the researcher will conduct 2 individual interviews with you via ZOOM. Each interview is estimated to last around half an hour. The interviews will be recorded both as a video and audio separately and will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher before analysis. After the first interview you will be requested to share any assignment and video-teaching you completed for the Practice Teaching course with the researcher. During the data collection process, you will also be involved in a WhatsApp group with the other participants and the researcher where you can find the opportunity to share your experiences and views in a free way with them. After the preliminary analysis of the data, if need be, all participants will be asked to come together in a ZOOM group meeting for a focus group interview in order for researcher to share and confirm some initial findings and give you a chance to clarify or elaborate on some aspects from the former interviews.

Be assured that personal identification and any data you provide for this study will be protected and kept strictly confidential by the researcher. The obtained data will only be used for scientific purposes. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your privacy. Although the study does not contain any risks or questions that may cause discomfort, the participants are free to quit anytime.

We would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this study. For further information about the study, you can contact Büşra Temel (E-mail: **********@metu.edu.tr).

I am participating in this study totally on my own will and am aware that I can quit participating at any time I want. I give my consent for the use of the information I provide for scientific purposes.

Name Surname Date Signature

----/----/-----

C. BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Personal Background Information

Full Name: Phone Number:

Age: Gender:

Where are you from? Where did you grow up?

Have you been abroad prior to your Erasmus experience? If yes, please write the name of the country/ countries along with the duration and purpose/s of your visit/s.

Please state the languages you can speak as well as your proficiency level in each one in the following table:

Language	Level of Proficiency

Erasmus Experience Information

Name of the Host Country	**Name of the Host Institution**	**Duration of Stay (in months)**	**Year (e.g. 2019-2020/ Fall)**	**It was my ….th year ….th term at METU**

Where did you stay during your mobility and with whom?

What was the reason of your choice for this particular study abroad context? What motivated you to study abroad? Please try to explain in detail.

Which courses did you take during your education abroad? Did you take any practicum courses or have the chance to practice teaching in any other way?

What was the medium of instruction of the host institution and languages you spoke in your lessons?

What is your career plan following graduation from the department? Do you plan on working as a teacher?

Which courses did you take so far?

a) Please highlight only the courses you **haven't taken** so far in your undergraduate education at METU in the curriculum below.

FIRST YEAR	
First Semester	**Second Semester**
FLE 133 Contextual Grammar I	FLE 134 Contextual Grammar II
FLE 135 Advanced Reading and Writing I	FLE 136 Advanced Reading and Writing II
FLE 137 Listening and Pronunciation	FLE 138 Oral Communication Skills
FLE 129 Introduction to Literature	FLE 140 English Literature I
EDS 200 Introduction to Education	FLE 146 Linguistics I
TURK 103 Written Communication	FLE 178 Second Foreign Language II
FLE 177 Second Foreign Language I	TURK 104 Oral Communication
IS 100 Introduction to Information Technologies and Applications	
SECOND YEAR	
Third Semester	**Fourth Semester**
FLE 241 English Literature II	FLE 221 Drama Analysis
FLE 261 Linguistics II	FLE 280 Oral Expression & Public Speaking
FLE 238 Approaches to ELT	FLE 262 ELT Methodology I
FLE 277 Second Foreign Language III	Departmental Elective I
EDS 220 Educational Psychology	FLE 270 Contrastive Turkish-English
CEIT 319 Instructional Technology & Materials Development	FLE 200 Instructional Principles & Methods
THIRD YEAR	
Fifth Semester	**Sixth Semester**
FLE 307 Language Acquisition	FLE 308 Teaching English to Young Learners
FLE 304 ELT Methodology II	FLE 324 Teaching Language Skills
FLE 311 Advanced Writing & Research Skills	HIST 2202 Principles of Kemal Atatürk II
Departmental Elective II	EDS 304 Classroom Management
HIST 2201 Principles of Kemal Atatürk I	FLE 352 Community Service
FLE 352 Community Service	EDS 416 Turkish Educational System & School Management
FLE 315 Novel Analysis	Non-Departmental Elective II
Non-Departmental Elective I	
FOURTH YEAR	
Seventh Semester	**Eighth Semester**
FLE 405 Materials Adaptation and Development	FLE 404 Practice Teaching
FLE 413 English Language Testing & Evaluation	FLE 426 English Lexicon
FLE 425 School Experience	EDS 424 Guidance
FLE 423 Translation	Departmental Elective IV
Departmental Elective III	

b) Please highlight the elective courses **you took** so far in your undergraduate education at METU in the list below and add if there are others not on the list.

FLE Electives

FLE 120 History of Ideas I	FLE 276 Modern Language Use II
FLE 131 History of Ideas II	FLE 279 Introduction to Comparative Linguistics
FLE 130 The Short Story	FLE 281 General Linguistics I
FLE 141 English Grammar and Composition I	FLE 282 General Linguistics II
FLE 142 English Grammar and Composition II	FLE 285 Language and Culture
FLE 143 Reading Skills	FLE 286 Language and Society I
FLE 144 Developing Reading And Speaking Skills	FLE 287 Beginner Italian
FLE 147 Spoken English	FLE 288 Elementary Italian
FLE 227 Masterpieces of World Literature I	FLE 289 Language and Society II
FLE 228 Masterpieces of World Literature II	FLE 291 Comparative English-French Language Structure I
FLE 229 Shakespeare I	FLE 292 Comparative English-French Language Structure II
FLE 230 Shakespeare II	FLE 293 Reading Comprehension and Writing in French I
FLE 231 Modern Drama I	FLE 294 Reading Comprehension and Writing in French II
FLE 232 Modern Drama II	FLE 295 Post-Colonial and the Third World Literature
FLE 233 Literature and Society I	FLE 305 The English Renaissance
FLE 234 Literature and Society II	FLE 312 19th Century English Literature
FLE 235 Modern Fiction I	FLE 313 Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers
FLE 236 Modern Fiction II	FLE 314 History of the English
FLE 239 From the Epic to the Novel I	FLE 315 Practical Applications in Language Testing
FLE 240 From the Epic to the Novel II	FLE 316 Seminar in Advanced Composition
FLE 245 Turkish Phonetics and Morphology	FLE 317 Error Analysis in ELT
FLE 246 Turkish Syntax and Semantics	FLE 318 Audio-Visual Aids in ELT
FLE 251 Creative Reading	FLE 319 Discourse Analysis for Translation
FLE 253 Modern Poetry I	FLE 320 Phonetics for Learners of English
FLE 254 Modern Poetry II	FLE 325 Selections from the English Novel I
FLE 255 Selections from American Literature I	FLE 326 Selections from the English Novel II
FLE 256 Selections from American Literature II	FLE 327 World Mythology
FLE 257 Psychological Trends in Literature I	
FLE 258 Psychological Trends in Literature II	
FLE 259 Moral and Social Aspects in Children's Literature I	

FLE 260 Moral and Social Aspects in Children's Literature II FLE 263 History of the Theatre I FLE 264 History of the Theatre II FLE 267 The Short Story in World Literature I FLE 268 The Short Story in World Literature II FLE 271 Comparative English-German Language Structure I FLE 272 Comparative English-German Language Structure II FLE 273 Reading Comprehension and Writing in German I FLE 274 Reading Comprehension and Writing in German II FLE 275 Modern Language Use I	FLE 329 Structure and Content in Prose Narrative Literature FLE 332 The Restoration and the Enlightenment FLE 376 Development of Communicative Competence in German FLE 379 Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics FLE 396 Development of Communicative Competence in French FLE 406 Poetry Analysis FLE 407 The Novel: Analysis II FLE 411 The 20th Century English Novel FLE 476 Lexical Structure and Word Formation in German FLE 496 Lexical Structure and Word Formation in French

c) Non-departmental courses you took:

D. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
Set 1

1. Can you talk about your Erasmus experience? (Where did you go? How long did you stay?)

2. Why did you choose to have an Erasmus experience?
   a. Were you knowledgeable about the language and/or the culture of the host institution?
   b. How was the level of motivation and interest you had towards the host culture before your mobility?

3. What did this experience bring you? How did you benefit from this experience?

4. How can you describe your sojourn experience in terms of personal development?

5. How can you describe your sojourn experience in terms of language development?

6. How was your interaction with the people from the host culture and with other international student sojourners?

7. Do you remember a time when you experience a breakdown in an intercultural encounter? What happened? How did you overcome it? How did you feel?

8. Did you notice any changes in your attitudes towards the host culture after your mobility experience?

9. Did you notice other changes in yourself such as being more tolerant to others or understanding people from different cultures better and so on.?

10. Are you familiar with the term ICC (intercultural communicative/communication competence)?
    a. If yes, could you define it in your own words? If not, what do you think it is?

11. Could you define an interculturally competent speaker? Which skills indicate ICC and intercultural speaker? Which skills are the indicators of an intercultural speaker/person and ICC?

12. Do you think you are an interculturally competent speaker?

13. Do you think your study abroad experience contributed to your ICC development? If yes, how?
    a. For instance, did you take any courses related to intercultural education during the study abroad period?
    b. Were there any aspects of your experience that challenged your intercultural development?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Set 2

Prompt: In our first interview, you mentioned that the Erasmus+ experience helped you in some ways…

1. Do you think your study abroad experience contributed to your academic success and professional development?

2. Can you walk me through what you did in your practicum course? (Please explain the assignments, tasks, observations, lesson plans, EBAs observations, video teachings)

3. Do you think having an Erasmus+ experience benefited you as a trainee in practicum?
   a. Do you think you can integrate the gains from your study abroad experience into your teaching? Did you integrate it into your practicum teaching? If so, in what ways?
   b. In Practicum, did you notice any differences between you and your friends who don't have study abroad experience? What do/did you do differently?

4. In your study abroad experience, what did you notice as different considering the educational context, the people you observed, and the teaching practices of the instructors there?

5. How do you think this experience (Erasmus+) will help you in your future? Considering you have studied abroad with Erasmus+, how different do you see yourself as an English teacher in the future?

6. Did studying abroad have an influence on your teaching philosophy?

7. Considering the English language education and teaching settings in Turkey, do you think developing ICC is necessary for language teachers? If yes, please clarify why.

8. Considering the English language education and teaching settings in Turkey, do you think developing ICC is necessary for language learners? If yes, please clarify why.

9. Do you think it is possible to foster the ICC of the language learners in Turkish educational settings such as the ones you observed by taking these into account:
    a. Profile of the students
    b. The curriculum and the teaching institution
    c. The materials and activities used

10. What can be done to integrate and develop ICC in Turkish educational settings?

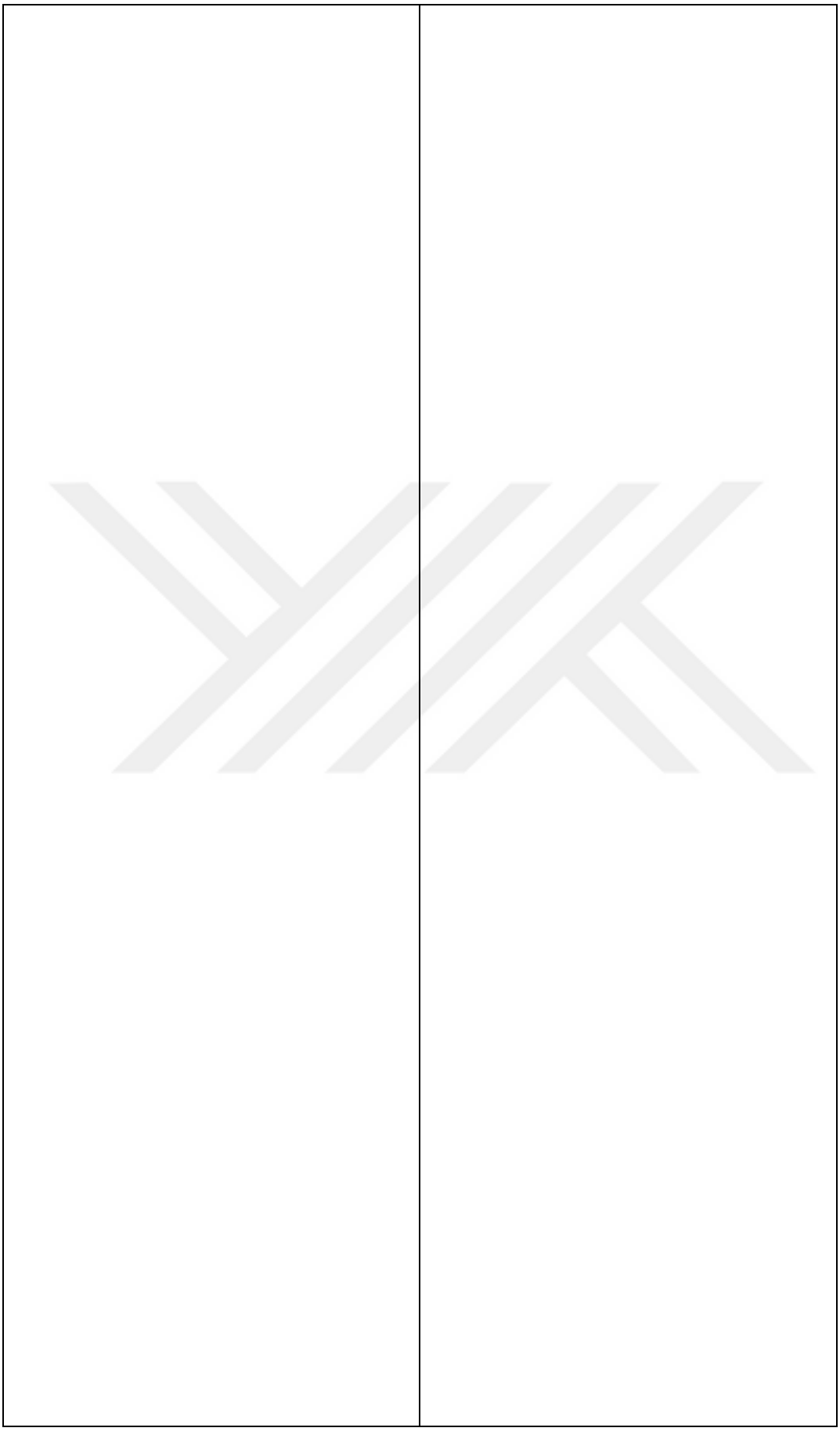
11. This semester you finished practicum with less classroom practice than usual because of Covid-19, how would you picture this semester before it began? If you had more face-to-face experience in your practicum school, what would you like to do in the classroom? What would you bring to class? What kind of activities and materials would you use? What would you like to share with the students or what would you want to teach students?

E. VIDEO OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Name of the Prospective Teacher:
Imagined Audience:
Duration of the Video:
Student Profile (proficiency):
Topic of the Lesson:
Materials Used:
Activities Used:

Researcher's Notes on the Observed Teaching Practice:

Reflections of the researcher	*Questions of the researcher*



F. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

HİZMET ÖNCESİ İNGİLİZ DİLİ ÖĞRETMENİ ADAYLARININ NİTEL BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI: YURTDIŞI EĞİTİM KAZANIMLARI VE KÜLTÜRLERARASI İLETİŞİM YETİSİ ALGILARI

GİRİŞ

Günümüzde yeni teknolojilerin ortaya çıkışına ve artan hareketliliğe paralel olarak, giderek daha fazla sayıda birey, kendilerini farklı dil ve kültür geçmişlerinden gelen insanlarla temasa geçtikleri ve birbirlerini anlamaya çalışmaları gereken durumlarda bulmakta, milyonlarca insan ortak bir iletişim aracı olarak İngiliz dilini kullanmaktadır. Bu durum, kültürel olarak duyarlı ve kültürlerarası yetkin bireyler yetiştirme ihtiyacını ortaya çıkarmıştır (Cushner, 2011; Gay & Howard, 2000; Marx & Moss, 2011). Yabancı dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi alanında, bir dilin salt dilsel özelliklerinin bilinmesinin, o dilde başarılı bir iletişimi garanti etmediği anlaşılmıştır. Hymes (1972) iletişimsel yeterlilik terimini ilk kullanan kişi olmuş ve diğerleri (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990) onu takip ederek bu kavram ve modele daha fazla bileşen ekleyip geliştirmiştir. Zamanla artık “küresel bir köy” (McLuhan, 1964) haline gelen dünyamızda yaşayan 21.yüzyıl öğrenenlerinin KİY olarak ortaya konan bir yeterliliğe daha sahip olmaları gerekmektedir. Byram'a (1997) göre Kültürlerarası İletişim Yeterliliği (KİY), “başka bir ülke ve kültürden insanlarla yabancı dilde etkileşim kurma yeteneği” olarak tanımlanabilir (s. 71). Byram'ın (1997) bugüne kadar etkisini sürdüren Çok Boyutlu Kültürlerarası Yetkinlik Modeli (Hoff, 2020), beş önemli bileşen içermektedir: "tutumlar (savoir être)", "bilgi (savoirs)", "yorumlama ve ilişkilendirme becerileri (savoir comprendre)", "keşif ve etkileşim becerileri (savoir apprendre/faire)" ve "eleştirel kültürel farkındalık (savoir s'engager)".

Dil öğretiminde kültürlerarası boyutla, öğrenenlerin diğer dilleri konuşanlarla başarılı bir şekilde etkileşime girmelerine yardımcı olmak ve bu etkileşimlerde kendi kimliklerinin ve muhataplarının farkında olan öğrenciler yetiştirmek ve bu etkileşimlerde insani ilişkiler geliştirebilen kültürlerarası konuşmacılar olmalarını sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır (Byram, 2008). Bahsedilen tutumlar, farkındalık, bilgi ve becerilere sahip kültürlerarası yetkin bir konuşmacıyı hedeflemektedir (Byram, 2009). Benzer şekilde, Fantini'ye (2000) göre, "saygı, empati, esneklik, sabır, ilgi, merak, açık olma, motivasyon, mizah anlayışı, belirsizliğe tolerans ve yargılamadan kaçınma isteklilığı" özellikleri kültürlerarası konuşmacının özellikleri arasında olmalıdır (s. 28). Ancak bu yetkinliğin kazanılması "asla tam ve mükemmel değildir" ve kültürlerarası konuşmacıların tam yetkin olmasını gerektirmez, çünkü kültürlerarası olmak hiçbir zaman tamamlanmış bir süreç değildir (Byram vd., 2002, s.7). "Kültürlerarası yeterliliğin beş bileşeninden bir kısmına veya tamamına bir dereceye kadar" sahip olan bir kişi (Byram, 2009, s.327) kültürlerarası konuşmacı olarak kabul edilebilir.

Kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi (KİY) kazanımı literatürde genellikle yurtdışı eğitim deneyimleriyle ilişkilendirilmiştir çünkü bu tür kısa süreli deneyimler, deneyimsel öğrenme için fırsatlar sağlar (Kolb, 1984). Uluslararası değişim programlarına katılan öğrenciler, dil ve iletişim becerilerine ek olarak kültürlerarası farkındalığın, küresel düşüncenin kolaylaştırılması ve geliştirilmesi de dahil olmak üzere bu deneyimlerin sunabileceği benzersiz ortamlardan büyük ölçüde yararlanabilir (Cushner, 2011; Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2021; Fang & Baker, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Tütüncü, 2014; Walters vd., 2009). Erasmus+ Avrupa Hareketlilik Programı yurtdışı eğitim fırsatları arasında öğrenciler tarafından en çok tercih edilen değişim programlarından biri olarak kabul edilmektedir.

Bu değişim hareketliliklerinin kalitesini ve sonuçlarını iyileştirmek adına, dünyanın dört bir yanından pek çok kişi yurtdışında kalışlar ve KİY arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeye değer bulmuştur. Jackson (2018), ev sahibi kurumların çeşitliliği ve lokasyonları, ev sahibi kültürler, programların süresi ve konaklama ortamında kullanılan diller gibi yurtdışında eğitim deneyimlerini etkileyen birçok unsuru vurgulayarak bu eğitim deneyimlerinin çok yönlülüğüne dikkat çekiyor. Başka bir

deyişle, "'yurtdışında tek bir eğitim bağlamı diye bir şey olmadığını" iddia ediyor (s.161). Benzer şekilde, ilgili literatürün gözden geçirilmesi, kişilik özellikleri, ilk motivasyonlar, hareketlilik sırasında kültürlerarası etkileşimlere katılım gibi bireysel faktörlerin de katılımcıların öğrenme sonuçlarını ve gelişimlerini etkilediğine işaret etmektedir. Bu nedenle her bir vakanın ayrı ayrı yakından incelemeye tabi tutulmasına her zaman ihtiyaç duyulacağı aşikardır.

YÖNTEM

Bu tez çalışmasında, daha önce kısa dönem Erasmus+ deneyimleri olan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının yurtdışı eğitim deneyimlerinden edinmiş oldukları kazanımları ve kültürlerarası iletişim yetisine (KİY) dair algıları araştırılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, ICC'yi veya yurtdışında eğitim almanın kazanımlarını nicel olarak ölçmek değil, katılımcıların algılarını ve yaşanmış deneyimlerini derinlemesine anlamaktır (Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Yurtdışı deneyimlerinin ve kültürlerarası gelişimin kendine özgü doğası nedeniyle, nicel araştırma araçları yetersiz kalmaktadır (Coleman, 2013; Jackson, 2018), bu nedenle araştırmacı nitel veri toplama yöntemleri kullanmış ve analizlerini gerçekleştirmiştir. Literatür ışığında, bu çalışmaya rehberlik eden araştırma soruları aşağıdaki gibidir:

1. Yurtdışında eğitim görmüş İngilizce öğretmen adayları "kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi (KİY)" ve "kültürlerarası yetkin konuşmacı" kavramlarını nasıl algılıyorlar?

2. Yurtdışında eğitim almanın kendilerine bir birey ve bir dil öğretmeni adayı olarak katkı sağlayan kazanımların neler olduğunu düşünüyorlar?

Araştırma grubu, son yarıyıllarında uygulama derslerini alan ODTÜ Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü'ndeki yedi son sınıf öğretmen adayından oluşmuştur. Bu çalışmada uygulamalı öğretmen adaylarının sorgulanmasının gerekçesi, hizmet öncesi dil öğretmenliği eğitiminde uygulamalı derslerin rolü ve değerinde yatmaktadır. Staj dersi, profesyonel hayata girmeden önce atılan çok önemli bir adımdır. Son sınıftaki uygulamalı dersler, öğretmen adaylarını geleceklerine hazırlamaktadır. Bu

uygulamalarda geçmiş bilgi, deneyimler ve becerilerini öğretimlerine dahil etmenin yollarını düşünürler; gerçek bir sınıfta öğrenci profilleri, materyaller ve öğretme, planlama ve dersleri uygulama yöntemleri üzerine düşünürler. Başka bir deyişle, stajyerlik onlar için yıllar boyunca biriken teori, araştırma ve uygulamayı birleştirici bir etkiye sahiptir. Bu nedenle, hizmet öncesi öğretmenlik eğitimlerinde bu süre zarfında onlardan elde edilen verilerin daha iyi yansıtılacağı ve araştırmacının bu çalışmanın amaçlarına ilişkin algı ve görüşleri yakalamasına yardımcı olacağı düşünüldü. Katılımcıların FLE 404 Uygulamalı Öğretim dersi için yapmış olduğu özgün çalışmalarının incelenmesi ve analizi, araştırma bulgularının doğruluğunu farklı yollardan karşılaştırmaya yardım etti.

2019-2020 bahar döneminde FLE 404 Uygulamalı Öğretim dersi alan katılımcılar, daha önce Erasmus+ programı çerçevesinde İtalya, İspanya, İsveç ve Polonya gibi ülkelerde bir akademik dönem tecrübe etmişlerdir. Katılımcılarla yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşmeler, nitel araştırmacılar tarafından kullanılan en çok tercih edilen ve güvenilen araçlar olarak önemini korurken (Creswell, 2013; Dörnyei, 2007; Seidman, 2006), birçok çalışma, birden fazla veri kaynağının toplanması ve incelenmesinin nitel araştırmaların güvenilirliğini güçlendirdiğini göstermektedir (Wellington, 2015). Bu çalışmada da araştırmacı yukarıda bahsedildiği gibi birçok yolla: bir anket, bir çevrimiçi paylaşım platformu (WhatsApp), iki yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşme protokolleri, katılımcıların ödevleri, gözlem görevleri, ders planları gibi uygulamalı ya da yazılı staj dersi dokümanları ve bir video-ders öğretim gözlem protokolü ile veri toplamıştır. Toplamda yürütülen 14 bireysel görüşme 449 dakika sürerken, 125 dakika video-ders öğretimi gözlemlenmiştir. Covid-19 pandemisi nedeniyle öğretmen adaylarının staj deneyimleri çeşitlilik gösterdiğinden adaylardan farklı türlerde ve değişen sayılarda staj verisi toplanmıştır. Katılımcıların KİY ve kültürlerarası konuşmacı algıları, KİY geliştirmeye ilişkin görüşleri ve yurtdışında eğitim deneyimlerinden algıladıkları kazanımlar, staj deneyimlerini ve bu çalışmanın amaçlarına uygun olarak toplanan staj verilerini analiz ederken ana odak noktası olmuştur. Bu nedenle araştırmacı, görüşmelerden elde edilen katılımcıların kendi beyanlarına ilişkin destekleyici kanıtlar bulmak için ilgili verileri irdelemiştir.

Küresel salgın nedeniyle, araştırma boyunca toplanan tüm görüşme verileri, Covid-19 riskini ortadan kaldırmak için ZOOM üzerinden gerçekleştirildi. Tüm ZOOM toplantıları hem video hem de ses olarak kaydedildi ve daha sonra verilerin ve nitel analizin güvenilirliğini artırmak için sistematik olarak kodlanmak üzere kelimesi kelimesine yazıya döküldü. Nitel bir araştırmanın veri analizi süreci karmaşık ve dağınık hale gelebilir; bu nedenle nitel verileri anlamlandırma adımları takip edilerek döngüsel bir veri analizi süreci izlendi (Wellington, 2015). Araştırmacı, verileri analiz ederken, görüşme verilerinin analizinin bulgularını doğrulamak, ayrıntılı açıklamalar oluşturmak ve diğer veri kaynaklarıyla birleştirilebilmesi için, her bir katılımcı için onlardan elde edilen her türlü veriyi içeren ayrı klasörler oluşturdu. Araştırmacı, her katılımcının dosyasının altında yoğun bir okuma süreci başlatmış, verilerle bütünleşerek, gerektiğinde kayıtlara geri dönmüştür. Kodlar, kategoriler ve temalar oluşturmuştur. Ortaya çıkan ana temalar bu nitel çalışmanın araştırma sorularını yanıtlamak için yeniden birleştirilip ve sentezlenmiştir. Bulgular ışığında araştırma soruları yanıtlanmış ve ilgili literatür ile tartışılmıştır.

BULGULAR, TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Bu tez çalışmasının temel amaçlarından biri, yurtdışında eğitim deneyimi olan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi ve kültürlerarası yetkin konuşmacıyı nasıl algıladıklarını araştırmaktı çünkü "öğretmenlerin öğrencilerinin kültürlerarasılığını geliştirmeyi amaçlayan etkili öğretim teknikleri ve kaynakları seçme yetenekleri, KİY kavramını anlamalarına bağlıdır" (Czuro, 2016, s.85). Bu amaçla, İngilizce Öğretmenliği son sınıf öğretmen adaylarına, ODTÜ'de veya misafir oldukları üniversitede aldıkları hizmet öncesi öğretmenlik eğitimlerinde bu kavramları duyup duymadıkları sorulmuş ve ilk görüşmelerde bunları tanımlamaları istenmiştir. İkinci görüşmelerde, Türkiye'deki eğitim ortamlarında bu yeterliliğin gelişimine ilişkin algıları hakkında daha fazla sorgulanmışlardır. Özetlemek gerekirse, terime aşinalıkları, KİY ve kültürlerarası yetkin konuşmacı için yaptıkları tanımlar, kavramları anlamayışlarına dayalı olarak kendilerini kültürler arası yetkin bir konuşmacı olarak görüp görmedikleri, Türk eğitim ortamlarında KİY'i geliştirme algıları araştırılmıştır.

Bulgulardan çarpıcı bir sonuç ortaya çıkmıştır; katılımcıların çoğu KİY terimine aşina olmadıklarını, bir veya iki kez duymuş olabileceklerini ancak ne anlama geldiğinden emin olmadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Melis, KİY terimini hiç duymadığını ve ne anlama geldiğini bilmediğini açıkça itiraf ederken, Gizem bir zamanlar ODTÜ'de bir metodoloji dersinde bahsedildiğini hatırlamıştır. Bu terime yabancı olan Burcu ve Mine'nin aksine Lara, ODTÜ'de genç öğrencilere İngilizce öğretimi dersinin oturumlarından birinde misafir bir konuşmacının gerçekleştirdiği bir etkinlikle bu konuda bilgilendirilmişti. Irmak, yurtdışında aldığı bir ders sayesinde terime aşina olduğu için şanslıydı ve stajının haftalık görevlerinden birinde de KİY üzerinde çalışmıştı. Öğretmen yetiştirme eğitimlerinde KİY ile karşılaşmaların sınırlı olduğu yansıtan bu deneyimler, kültürlerarası iletişim yeterliliği konusunda hedeflenen eğitimin eksikliğine işaret eden önceki araştırma bulgularıyla ve Türk yüksek öğretimi kurumları bağlamında hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmeni hazırlığında kültürlerarası konuşmacılar/öğretmenler yetiştirmekle ilgili bulgularla bağlantılı bulunmuştur (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Börkan, 2012; Czura, 2016; Eken, 2015; Kaçar 2019; Şen, 2020). Bu nedenle bu bulgu, ODTÜ FLE'de de KİY konusunda açıkça bir öğretim ve uygulamalı eğitime ihtiyaç olduğunu ima etmiştir (Taşkın, 2021).

Katılımcılar terimin teorik bilgisi ile ilgili neredeyse hiçbir altyapıya sahip olmasa da, çoğunlukla terimin literatürdeki kavramsallaştırmalarına uygun olarak tanımlayabilmiştir (Byram, 1997; Czura, 2016; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009). Önceki araştırmalar, Erasmus+ öğrenci hareketliliği programı gibi deneyimsel öğrenme fırsatlarının kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi edinimini geliştirdiğini ve öğretmen adaylarının KİY hakkında farkındalıklarını artırdığını iddia ettiğinden, bu bulgu katılımcıların daha önce yurtdışında eğitim deneyimleri yaşamış olmasına bağlanabilir (Aydın, 2012; Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014; Soria & Trois, 2014). Çalışmanın katılımcıları da Erasmus+ deneyimlerine değinerek bu bağlantıyı birçok kez vurgulamışlardır.

Literatürde tanımlanan KİY'in bileşenleriyle uyumlu olarak, bu çalışmadaki dil öğretmen adaylarının çoğu da, terimi karşılıklı etkin konuşmaları hedefleyerek diğer kültürlerden insanları anlama yeteneği ile iletişim kurabilme olarak tanımlamışlardır.

Bu nedenle, kendi kültürünü başkalarına ifade edebilme ve başkalarının farklı bakış açılarını ve kültürlerini karşılaştırabilme, diğer görüşlere saygılı ve hoşgörülü olma ve dilini buna göre iletişim kuracak şekilde uyarlama yeteneği, Byram'ın (2008) iç içe geçmiş tutumlar, bilgiler, eleştirel kültürel farkındalık ve beceriler olarak sunduğu bu yetinin bileşenleriyle örtüşmüştür.

Katılımcıların görüşlerine dayanarak, kültürlerarası veya kültürlerarası yetkin bir konuşmacı, kültürlerin çeşitliliğinin farkında olan ve başkalarının kültürel bilgi ve uygulamalarını ve kendi kültürlerini yorumlayabilen ve ilişkilendirebilen biri olarak tanımlanabilir; bu nedenle, kültürlerarası etkileşimlerinde anlamı müzakere etmek için dillerini uyarlayarak başarılı bir şekilde iletişim kurabilirler. Ayrıca iyi bir gramer ve kelime bilgisine, iyi dinleme becerilerine sahiptirler ve farklı kültürel geçmişlerden gelen insanların yüz ifadeleri ve jestleri gibi farklı aksanları ve sözlü olmayan dilleri anlayabilirler. Kültürlerarası bir konuşmacı aynı zamanda açık fikirli ve başkalarına ve onların düşünce tarzlarına karşı hoşgörülü, kendi değerlerine bağlı kalmayan, kendi kültürlerine karşı önyargıların farkında olan, sabırlı, esnek ve daha az yargılayıcı biri olarak görülür. Literatürde de bu çalışmanın bulgularına paralel olarak açık fikirli olmak, kültüre duyarlı davranışlar sergilemek (Jackson, 2011, s.82), hoşgörülü, esnek, sabırlı ve daha az yargılayıcı bir insan olmak (Fantini, 2000, s.28) kültürler arası yetkin bir konuşmacının özellikleri arasında sayılmaktadır.

Kendilerini kültürlerarası yetkin bir konuşmacı olarak algılamalarına gelince, yedi katılımcıdan beşi başlangıçta kendilerini kültürlerarası yetkin konuşmacılar olarak adlandırmakta tereddüt ettiler. İhtiyatlı bir şekilde, diğer kültürün “bilgisini” KİY'in önemli bir bileşeni olarak gördüklerinden, neredeyse hepsi öğrenilecek daha fazla kültür olduğuna ve her zaman kendilerini geliştirebileceklerine inandıklarından, kendilerini yetkin olarak etiketleme konusunda temkinli yaklaştılar. Bazıları, bir kişinin kendi kültürünün de önemli olduğunu, ancak aynı milliyeti paylaşan insanlar arasında bile bilgi sahibi olmadıkları kültürel farklılıklar olabileceğini belirtti. Sonuç olarak, yine de kültürler arası yetkin konuşmacılar olabileceklerini düşündüler. Pek çok kez paylaştıkları gibi, yurtdışı eğitim deneyimleri sayesinde başka bir kültürde başarılı bir şekilde hayatta kalmışlar, kendilerini adapte etmişler ve ana dili veya kültürü paylaşmadıkları insanlarla ilişkiler kurmuşlardı. Buna göre farklı

kültürlerden çok sayıda arkadaş edinebilmek bir nevi yeterliliklerinin bir göstergesiydi (Byram, 2009). Sonuç olarak bu yetkinliği geliştirme ve kültürlerarası bir konuşmacı olma konusundaki görüşleri, bu yetkinliğin "hiç bitmeyen", "devam eden", "yaşam boyu öğrenme süreci" olarak görülen alan yazındaki algılarıyla örtüşmektedir (Baker, 2015; Byram, 2008; Dervin & Gross, 2016; Jackson, 2018).

Bu çalışmanın bir diğer önemli bulgusu, tüm katılımcıların Türk öğrenciler ve onların İngilizce öğretmenleri için kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi geliştirmenin gerekliliği ve önemi konusunda hemfikir olmalarıdır. Katılımcılar, Türkiye'deki uygulama deneyimlerine ve yurtdışındaki geçmiş eğitim deneyimlerine dayanarak, Türk öğrencilerin farklı kültürlerle tanışmaları ve gerçekten kültürler arası iletişim kurmaları gerektiğine inandılar. Bu nedenle, yurtdışında eğitim projelerinin Türkiye genelinde arttırılması ve öğrenicilerin katılım için teşvik edilmesi ve motive edilmesi gerektiğini sıklıkla önerdiler. Kendileri bu deneyime sahip olarak, gelecekteki öğrencileri için rehberlik ve teşvik sağlayabilecek bir ilham kaynağı olabileceklerine inandılar ve literatürde ortaya konan benzer raporları daha da destekliediler (Göbel & Helmke, 2010). Ayrıca, bu çalışmanın İngilizce öğretimi öğretmen adayları, gözlemledikleri dil öğretimi ortamlarında materyalleri, müfredatı ve kurumu yararlı bulmadıklarını ve öğretmenlerin KİY'i entegre etmenin yollarını bulmaya çalışmadıklarını bildirdiler. Çoğu, benzer argümanların dil öğretmenlerinin sorumluluklarını vurguladığı gibi, öğrencilerin farkındalığını artırmanın ve kültürlerarası yeterliliklerini geliştirmenin çoğunlukla öğretmenlere düştüğünü savundular (Byram & Wagner, 2018, s.147). Bazı katılımcılar, KİY'i geliştirmenin ve teşvik etmenin kurumun kalitesine ve fırsatlarına bağlı olacağını vurguladı. Algıları, Türkiye'deki her kurumun teknoloji, yurtdışı eğitim projeleri, uluslararası personel veya KİY'i derslerine etkin bir şekilde entegre edebilen kültürlerarası yetkin öğretmenler açısından eşit fırsatlara sahip olmadığını ortaya koydu.

İkinci araştırma sorusuyla beraber mevcut çalışma, yurtdışında eğitim almanın İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının yaşamları ve çok boyutlu gelişimi üzerindeki etkilerine ilişkin artan araştırmalara katkıda bulunan başka önemli bulgular sağlamıştır. Kendi beyan ettikleri görüşlerin analizi Erasmus+ deneyimine sahip katılımcı İngiliz dili öğretmen adaylarının bu programın yaşamlarına ve çok boyutlu

gelişimlerine birçok katkısını hissettiklerini ortaya koydu. Bireyler arasında ortak örüntüler arandığından, kendileri tarafından rapor edilen kazanımların analizi sırasıyla dört alt tema altında toplanabildi: (1) kişisel, (2) dil, (3) kültürlerarası ve (4) akademik ve mesleki kazanımlar. Algılanan kazanımlar arasındaki farklılıklar, öğretmen adaylarının bireysel farklılıkları ve yurtdışı eğitim deneyimlerinin benzersizliği, motivasyonları, ilgileri ve/veya yurtdışında geçirdikleri süre boyunca kültürlerarası iletişime katılma çabaları ile açıklanabildi (Jackson, 2018).

Bu çalışmaya katılanların algılarına göre en sık bildirilen kişisel kazanım özgüven olmuştur. Tek başına seyahat edebilmek, başka bir ülkede yaşamayı öğrenmek ve başka kültürlerden insanlarla sosyalleşmek ve tanışmanın kendilerine olan güvenlerini artırdığını hissettiler. Kişisel gelişimlerini anlatırken birçoğu, paralarını yönetmek, kendi yemeklerini pişirmek, sorunlarını kendi başlarına çözmek zorunda kaldıkları için olgunluk kazandıklarını da paylaştılar. Bazı katılımcılar, kişiliklerinde bazı değişiklikleri fark ederek, ev sahibi kültürdeki insanlar gibi daha sakin veya bireysel hale geldiklerini bildirdi.

Katılımcıların algılanan dil kazanımlarına ilişkin olarak, bu çalışmanın bulguları yüksek oranda İngilizce Öğretmenliği öğretmen adaylarının yurtdışında kısa süreli eğitim deneyimlerinin çıktılarına ilişkin önceki raporlarla uyuşmaktadır (Aydın, 2012; Dewan Türüdü & Gürbüz, 2020). Katılımcılardan Burcu, Mine, Lara ve Gizem, konuşma ve dinlemede akıcılık ve güven kazanma, yazma becerilerini geliştirme, İngilizce düşünmeye başlama ve farklı aksanları ve sözlü olmayan dili anlama açısından İngilizcelerinde olumlu sonuçlar bildirmişlerdir. Dili seyahat ederken veya akademi dışında günlük konuşmalarda kullanmayı faydalı bulmuşlardır. Ancak, Aydın'ın (2012) çalışmasındaki öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dil kazanımlarının aksine, bu tez çalışmasındaki tüm katılımcılar misafir ülkenin ana dilini öğrenmemiştir (s.9). Lara, Melis ve Gizem isteksizlikleri nedeniyle İsveççe ve Lehçe dillerini öğrenmemiş ve geliştirmek için çaba sarf etmemişlerdir.

Katılımcıların kendi raporlarının kapsamlı analizi, bir dönemlik hareketlilik deneyimleri sırasında, öğretmen adaylarının çeşitli kültürler hakkında yeni bilgiler edindiklerini, kültürlerarası etkileşimlerini kolaylaştıran beceriler geliştirdiklerini,

ev sahibi kültürün üyelerine karşı tutumlarını geliştirdiğini veya değiştirdiğini ima etmiştir (Byram, 2008). Ancak, ev sahibi kültürde faaliyetlerde bulunulmazsa, sadece yurtdışında bulunmak her zaman kültürlerarası büyümeye yol açmayabilir (He vd., 2017; Teichler, 2004) ve program katılımcıları olumsuz tutumlarla geri dönebilir (Byram, 2008). Bu uyarı özellikle Melis'in deneyiminde Polonyalı öğrencilerle bağlantı kurmaması ve onların dil ve kültürlerini öğrenmeye çalışmaması nedeniyle gözlemlenebilir. Melis kaldığı süre boyunca daha çok diğer Türk öğrencilerle etkileşime girdiğini, bunun da potansiyel dil gelişimini engellediğini, çok dilli ve kültürlerarası iletişimi boşa harcadığını kabul etmiştir.

İngilizce öğretmeni adayları olarak, katılımcılar yurtdışında eğitim almanın kendilerine akademik ve mesleki olarak da bir şekilde ve bir ölçüde katkıda bulunduğuna inanmışlardır. En belirgin katkı "farklı bir vizyon kazanmak" olmuştur. Hemen hemen tüm katılımcılar, farklı bir akademik ortamda bulunmanın kendilerine öğretme ve öğrenmeye farklı bir bakış açısı getirdiğini vurgulamışlardır. Ev sahibi üniversitedeki hocalarını, Avrupa'daki öğretim yöntemlerini ve öğrenen olarak onlarla iletişimlerini gözlemleme şansı bulduktan sonra, bazıları öğretmen adayı olarak kendilerini etkilediklerini ve gelecekte bu farklı stratejilerden faydalanabileceklerini belirtmişlerdir. Örneğin İsveç eğitim sistemi öğrenci özerkliğini desteklediğinden, Lara bireysel çalışmanın kendisine daha fazla başarı getirdiğini fark etmiştir. Aynı şekilde Mine, Irmak ve Defne de gittikleri kurum ile ODTÜ arasında değerlendirme yöntemleri açısından fark ettikleri değişikliklere dikkat çekti. Örneğin Irmak ve Defne, portfolyo hazırlamanın gelecekteki öğrencileri için de daha faydalı olabileceğini düşünmeye başlamışlardır. Bazı katılımcılar da öğrencilerine dilin yanı sıra kültür öğretebileceklerine ve onları farklı kültürlerle tanıştırabileceklerine, yurtdışı eğitim deneyimlerini paylaşabileceklerine, Erasmus+ anılarını motive etmek için kullanabileceklerine inandıkları için gelecekteki sınıflarında daha özgüvenli olabileceklerini öngördüler. Bu bulgular aslında öğretmenlerin kültürlerarası deneyime sahip olduklarında, uygulamalarının kültürlerarasılık hakkında daha fazla konuyu, kültürle ilgili karşılaştırmaları ve tartışmaları sınıflarında paylaşma eğiliminde olduklarını iddia eden önceki çalışmalara daha fazla kanıt sağlamaktadır (Göbel & Helmke, 2010).

Bu çalışmadaki katılımcıların hiçbiri yurtdışında eğitimleri sırasında uygulamalı öğretim deneyimi şansını yakalayamazken, katılımcıların neredeyse yarısı ODTÜ'de aldıkları öğretmen hazırlığında daha fazla uygulama bileşenine ihtiyaç olduğunu dile getirdi. Katılımcılardan Mine, başka bir hareketlilik programı olan Erasmus+ stajı aracılığıyla yurtdışında öğretmenlik yapma arzusunu vurguladı ve daha önceki argümanları destekleyerek gelecekteki bir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak bu deneyimin kendisine daha da fazla katkıda bulunabileceğine inandı (Walters vd., 2009).

Özetlemek gerekirse, katılımcılar farklı bir vizyon kazandıklarını ve farklı bir akademik ortamda bulunmanın kendilerine öğretme ve öğrenmeye farklı bir bakış açısı kazandırdığını hissettiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Uluslararası bir ortamda birer dönem okuduktan sonra, İngilizce söz konusu olduğunda, İngilizcenin EIL ve ELF durumunun daha da farkına varmışlardır (Alptekin, 2002; Hoff, 2020). Bu sebeple, yalnızca hedef dilin kültürünü değil, aynı zamanda birçok konuşmacının kültürünün de önemli olduğunu kavramışlardır. Böylece, kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi kazanmanın, bu yetkinliği öğrencilerinde ve kendilerinde geliştirmenin önemini kabul etmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmen adayları tarafından yurtdışında eğitim almanın KİY de dahil olmak üzere çok boyutlu gelişimlerinde birçok faydasına ilişkin mevcut literatürdeki çalışmalara katkıda bulunmuştur.

Bu çalışmanın da gösterdiği gibi aynı üniversitede bile, bireyler yurtdışında eğitimin çok yönlülüğü (Jackson, 2018) nedeniyle farklı deneyimlere sahip olabilir ve farklı şekillerde gelişebilir. Örneklem sayısı bu araştırmanın kısıtlarından biri olarak gösterilebilir. Yurtdışında eğitim fırsatları, katılmak isteyen herkes tarafından hala faydalanılamamaktadır. Öğrencilerin programa yerleştirilmeleri için İngilizce sınavlarına girmelerine ve iyi ders notlarına ihtiyaçları vardır. Özellikle Türkiye'de ekonomik nedenlerden ötürü öğrencilerin daha uzun süreli yurtdışı eğitim deneyimlerine katılabilmeleri için finansal konulara ayak uydurmaları giderek zorlaşıyor. Mevcut çalışmanın tüm katılımcıları yurtdışında sadece bir dönem geçirebilmişti. Ayrıca, katılımcı grubu sadece kadınlardan oluşuyordu. Sarıçoban ve Öz (2014) nicel bir yaklaşım kullanarak Türk kadın ve erkek İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının KİY seviyeleri arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulamasa da (s.523), daha nitel araçlarla incelendiğinde erkek deneyimleri ve düşünce kalıpları farklı iç görüler

sunabilir. Bu nedenle, gelecekteki çalışmalarda cinsiyet çeşitliliğini dahil etmek daha iyi olacaktır. Ayrıca, pandemi nedeniyle Türkiye genelinde ve ODTÜ'de son sınıf öğrencilerinin uygulamalı deneyimleri etkilenmişti. Otantik sınıf uygulamalarına daha az maruz kalmak, dil öğretmeni adaylarının algılarını sınırlamış olabilir.

Finansal kaygılar, daha önceki çalışmaların ortaya koyduğuna benzer şekilde, Türk katılımcıların Erasmus+ deneyimlerini bir şekilde sınırlayan veya ülke, kurum veya hareketlilik süreleri gibi bazı seçimlerini etkileyen zorluklar arasındaydı (Önen, 2017, s.274). Avrupalı bir değişim öğrencisinin mali veya vize sorunlarıyla ilgili endişeleri bu denli etken olmasa da, bu endişeler Türkiye bağlamından kaynaklı olarak Türk öğrencilere özgü olabilir (Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019, s.720-721). Çeşitli nedenlerden, bir veya iki yarıyıl yurt dışı eğitim imkanlarına katılamayan ve yararlanamayan öğretmen adayları, yaz tatillerinde mezuniyetlerini geciktirmeden repertuarlarını genişletebilecekleri, daha fazla bilgi ve beceri kazanabilecekleri yurtdışında staj yapma seçeneğini tercih edip başvurabilirler. Erasmus+ stajı, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının çeşitli uluslararası bağlamlarda öğretim pratiği yaptıkları, mesleki ve kültürlerarası gelişim açısından kazanımlar elde edebilecekleri değerli bir seçenek olacaktır. Özellikle dil öğretmeni adaylarının bu deneyimsel fırsatlardan yararlanmaları için teşvik edilmeleri gerekmektedir çünkü onların yeni dünyada etkileşim kurabilecek ve hayatta kalabilecek gelecek nesilleri yetiştirmedeki rolleri hayati önem taşımaktadır (Cushner, 2011; Sercu, 2005).

Öğretmen adayları için yukarıdaki seçeneklerden hiçbiri mevcut veya ulaşılabilir değilse, eğitim gördükleri yüksek öğretim kurumu, bu durumda ODTÜ, kampüste kültürlerarasılığı teşvik etmenin ve uluslararası öğrenciler, değişim öğrencileri ve Türk öğrenciler arasındaki kültürlerarası etkileşimi artırmanın yollarını bulmalıdır. Tandem ortaklıkları, farklı kültürlerden insanlarla tanışmak için yurtdışına gitmek yerine, başka bir dilde anlam müzakere ederek yeni bir kültürü keşfetmenin başka bir yolu olabilir. ODTÜ, Modern Diller Bölümü'nde iki öğretim üyesinin gözetiminde ODTÜ-TANDEM Dil Öğrenim Programı'na başlamış ancak birkaç yıl sonra idari nedenlerle program sona ermiştir. Programın yeniden başlatılması faydalı olacaktır çünkü sadece öğretmen adaylarına değil, üniversite çapında birinci, ikinci, üçüncü veya son sınıf öğrencisi fark etmeksizin çeşitli bölüm ve seviyelerdeki tüm

öğrencilere yardımcı olabilir. Wang'a (2018) göre, Belfast'ta Queens Üniversitesi'nin uluslarasılaşma gündeminin bir parçası olarak, tandem ortaklıklarından yararlanılıyor ve örgün dil eğitimini tamamlayıcı bir unsur olarak değerli bulunuyor. Bir yabancı dil öğrenmek, ikili bir ortaklıkla pekiştirilebilir ve bu ortaklık dil, kültür ve kültürlerarası öğrenmede daha iyi sonuçlar ve deneyimler sağlayabilir. Yüz yüze gerçekleştirilen tandem dil ortaklığı, özellikle bizim de ülkemizde İngilizce öğrenenler arasında yaygın olarak sorunlu bir alan olduğu düşünülen konuşma becerilerinin gelişimini besleyip destekleyebilir (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008, s.164).

Son olarak, bu tez çalışması birçok çalışmanın bulgularına benzer şekilde, kültürlerarasılığın uygulanması ve öğrencilerin yetkinliğinin geliştirilmesi söz konusu olduğunda hizmet öncesi eğitimde eğitim ve pratik eksikliğine işaret etmektedir. Bu nedenle Taşkın (2021), "dil öğretiminde kültürlerarası boyutun dil öğretmen adaylarına en baştan sunulması ve programların müfredatının dil öğretmenlerini kültürlerarası duyarlı bireyler olarak yetiştirmeyi hedeflemesi gerektiğini" önermektedir (s.171). Bu bağlamda, ODTÜ'de, İngilizce Öğretmenliği öğretmen adaylarının KİY'e ilişkin farkındalıklarını artırmak, bileşenleriyle eğitmek ve öğrencileri gelecekteki sınıf-içi uygulamalarına hazırlamak için zaman ve emek ayıracak bir derse ihtiyaç olduğu görülmektedir.

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