Intercultural sensitivities: A mixed methods study with pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey

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Understanding pre-service teachers' perceptions on intercultural communication could be considered as a substantial step in syllabus design and curriculum development in the field of English language teaching. To this end, the current study is aimed at identifying the intercultural sensitivities of pre-service English language teachers. The participants were 90 pre-service teachers in the Department of English Language Teaching at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey in the 2017-2018 academic year. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used to collect, analyse and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. The research dataset was obtained from the *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* and two open-ended interview questions. Results showed that pre-service teachers voiced different codes for the concept of cultural sensitivity. This study also sought to find out whether differences in the pre-service teachers' perspectives could be associated with various factors. Voluntary work by pre-service teachers in any non-governmental organisation emerged as a factor increasing their sensitivity. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings that informs foreign language teaching for intercultural competence and communication.

Introduction

In the global village of the 21st century, interactions among people from diverse backgrounds have increased considerably as a result of technological developments and mobility which commonly involves exchanges such as business, travel and entertainment. The rise of communication across cultures has in turn created a vital role for intercultural competence in promoting individuals' effective communication with one another. As Kramsch (2001) pointed out, intercultural communication is a field of study that investigates how people understand each other across group boundaries of various types, for example national, geographical, class or gender.

The concern with intercultural understanding has also been reflected in English language courses where the teaching of culture has become an integral part of the content. Similarly, in the ideal language class within the Turkish EFL context, defining aspects of culture are integrated into ongoing class activities on a regular basis. It becomes clear that one of the basic goals of mainstream English language courses taught at universities involves providing avenues for promoting pre-service teachers' cultural knowledge and awareness. There is much evidence to suggest that language and culture are inseparably bound; hence language is used to convey meaning, but meaning is determined by the culture. Damen (1987) noted that to be meaningful, language must be culture bound and culture specific. It is critical that foreign language teachers, especially, come to value the importance of possessing intercultural competence in order for students to learn to communicate effectively in the target language.

A close examination of the content of foreign language programs reveal that one of the most mentioned of its learning outcomes applies to cultural learning, which can take different forms. The range of these forms that inform cultural learning embodies culture specific knowledge, cultural self-awareness, culture learning skills, and intercultural development. The most favourite of these concepts is intercultural development (Bennett, 1993) that is fundamental in intercultural training. Intercultural development is by definition concerned with possessing the ability to shift perspective to another culture.

As such, it involves acquiring new communication skills, culture learning skills, new cultural knowledge, and ultimately competence in communicating effectively across cultures (Bennett, 1993). Holm et al. (2009) identified that intercultural education should serve to develop one's cognitive, affective and behavioural skills. Deardorff (2007) argued that intercultural competence encompasses elements such as respect and valuing other cultures, openness and curiosity about others, as well as cultural self-awareness and adaptability to adjust to new cultural situations. Bustamante, Skidmore, Nelson and Jones (2016) contended that the development of teachers' intercultural competence must be incorporated into teacher preparation programs, thereby making room for pre-service teachers' understanding of diversity. In the domain of foreign language teaching, there has been much research addressing the need to integrate intercultural aspects into teacher education (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2014; Atay, 2008; Larzen-Östermark, 2009; Erling, 2008; Matsuda, 2006). This line of thought has dominated Europe's well-known language project, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2001) which set out to raise cultural awareness and to promote intercultural competence in foreign language education.

Review of literature

The importance of intercultural relations is well recognised in both global and domestic contexts (Hammer, 1989, 1999). Bhawuk and Brislin (1992, p. 416) argued that to be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behaviour as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures. The implication is that the broad framework of intercultural relations also makes room for the issues surrounding the term "intercultural sensitivity". Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) used the term "intercultural sensitivity" to refer to the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences. Drawing an analogy between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence, they contended that greater intercultural sensitivity is associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence.

Furthermore, Taylor (1994) viewed intercultural sensitivity as an affective domain of intercultural communicative competence, which fundamentally reflected empathy and respect for other peoples and their cultures. Apart from this, Bennett (1986) also related intercultural sensitivity to cognitive and behavioural parts of intercultural communication. Chen & Starosta (1998, p. 367) maintained that the affective domain of intercultural communicative competence was concerned with intercultural sensitivity, which meant "an

active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures". This might suggest that an intercultural sensitive person showing empathy towards other cultures is capable of handling various problems arising from intercultural settings.

The literature suggests that intercultural sensitivity relates to the complexity of perceptions of cultural difference, whereas intercultural competence refers to the potential for enactment of culturally sensitive behaviours in another cultural context (Bennett, 2004; Cubukcu, 2013; Beutel & Tangen, 2018). Intercultural sensitivities acquired through engagement in one cultural setting make it possible to supply interactions with other cultural groups, in an attempt to develop intercultural competence (Cubukcu, 2013). With this line of thought, Bennett (1986, 2004) identified intercultural sensitivity as an individual's attitudes towards understandings of differences specific to their worldview and the worldview of others. Beutel and Tangen (2018) elaborated on this view, illustrating that an individual from a monocultural socialisation is likely to fail to develop intercultural sensitivity towards others, due to having fewer experiences in working with people from other cultures.

Within the fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, there exist several developmental models of intercultural competence. The most commonly referenced of all relates to the *developmental model of intercultural sensitivity* (DMIS) developed by Bennett (1993). This model served as a basic framework to explain students' reactions to cultural differences, derived from making observations over the course of months and even years in intercultural workshops, classes, and graduate programs. Using these observations with an emphasis on concepts from cognitive psychology and constructivism, Bennett created a continuum comprising six different stages. These stages are denial, defense, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 2009). Each stage is indicative of a cognitive structure that is communicated through attitudes and behaviours (Bennett, 2011). Teachers can benefit from the access to DMIS by predetermining the cognitive stage a student is at and helping the student progress into the next stage.

At the theoretical level there are a number of assumptions underlying the DMIS. In this respect, Bennett (1993) treated intercultural sensitivity in developmental terms rather than static terms. As stated above, this is linked with a conceptualisation of intercultural sensitivity as a continuum, ranging from a more ethnocentric to a more ethno relative worldview. In addition, Bennett's model in his view reflected the individual's experience of cultural difference, not objective behaviour. In this respect, the model can be regarded as phenomenological in nature (Çubukçu, 2013). Based on the implications derived from the assumptions of the model, we contend that the more encounters that persons have with diverse cultural norms, the more competent they are likely to become in intercultural relations. Apparently, the six stages in Bennett's model keep moving from ethnocentrism to ethno relativism. While ethnocentrism means that an individual's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way, ethno relativism indicates that an individual's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Bennett 2003, p. 65).

Within the past decade there has been a growing interest in the intercultural dimension of foreign language teaching, and teachers today are expected to teach a foreign language through, so to speak, cultural lenses. Atay et al. (2009, p.124) posited that "the intercultural dimension in the teaching of foreign languages has become one of the most special concerns for teachers and researchers in the field". As Ho (2009) argued, preparing language learners for intercultural communication is a necessity in a multicultural world. This shift in focus on the conceptualisation of foreign language learners brings about fundamental changes in the roles of teachers who are now expected to mediate between the native language and target language culture(s). In this context, Atay et al. (2009) contended that foreign language teachers need additional knowledge, attitudes, competencies and skills directed at the intercultural learning process. Edelhoff (1993) and Willems (2002), as cited in Atay et al. (2009), further formulated that they need to be acquainted with basic insights from cultural anthropology, culture learning theory and intercultural communication, and need to be willing to teach intercultural competence and know how to do so. Georgiadis and Zisimos (2012) investigated the present status and position of the Roma/gypsies in the Greek educational context through intercultural lenses. They argued that Greek primary teachers lacked adequate preparedness for the challenges accompanying contemporary educational multiculturalism. The findings from the study (Georgiadis & Zisimos, 2012) suggested the need to educate and prepare Greek teachers further on specific intercultural issues, as well as methodologies for teaching in multicultural classes.

Among the studies aimed at exploring the role of culture in foreign language teaching, Çubukçu (2013) focused on sixty-five Turkish pre-service English teachers' perceptions of intercultural sensitivity with an emphasis upon the critical role of culture in foreign language teaching. The results revealed that pre-service English teachers integrated language teaching objectives with culture teaching and prioritised attitudinal knowledge, showing tolerance and sympathy for the others. In a similar study, Atay et al. (2009) investigated the opinions and attitudes of Turkish teachers of English concerning intercultural competence teaching, to see how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes were reflected in their classroom applications. Data were collected from 503 EFL teachers by means of a questionnaire that investigated both teachers' views on the role of culture in language teaching, and the extent to which their current teaching practice could be characterised as directed towards the attainment of intercultural competence and a cultural approach. The findings of the study showed that language teachers in general seemed to become aware of the role of the culture in foreign language education. In practice, however, they did not often tend to integrate culture into their teaching in order to develop their learners' intercultural competence.

Recently, a parallel work in a Turkish context has been conducted by Altan (2018) who set out to highlight the impact of intercultural sensitivity on the professional development of pre-service ELT teachers alongside the sociological concerns specific to the Turkish context. Seventy senior ELT major pre-service teachers (fourth-year students) completed an instrument developed for measuring their intercultural sensitivity levels. In general, as the results revealed, the participants in this research possessed high intercultural sensitivity. To illustrate, ELT pre-service teachers had a high respect for cultural

differences. In addition, a high level for interaction enjoyment indicated that participants enjoy interacting with foreigners. High agreement levels also occurred for interaction confidence and intercultural engagement. This showed that the participants felt confident while interacting with foreigners. In addition, the findings revealed that gender did not influence pre-service ELT teachers' intercultural sensitivity.

In a rapidly changing world, interactions among individuals living in different countries have been increasing, with most of this communication being conducted by the widespread use of online technologies. The adoption of online technologies in education is a global phenomenon that has been widely embraced within higher education institutions (Djojosaputro, Nguyen & Peszynski, 2005). Crews and Parker (2017) asserted that over the past few years there has been a rapid growth in online learning in higher education institutions in most of the world's developed countries. Their study (2017) focused on the benefits of using online learning in developing countries, which may assist in bridging the cultural differences gap and maximising international students' success.

On the whole, both institutions and teachers play a vital role in raising individuals' awareness of intercultural sensitivity (Meyer, Sherman & Makinster, 2004). Educators and pre-service teachers are supposed to reflect these qualities in the embodiment of intercultural sensitivity in the direction of social expectations and individual development. From this point of view, it is considered that it would be beneficial to determine the intercultural sensitivity levels of the pre-service teachers who study courses in the Department of English Language. In this context, the following research questions were addressed in the present study:

1. What is the level of intercultural sensitivity of pre-service teachers?
2. Are intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers related to
   a. gender?
   b. maternal educational level?
   c. paternal educational level?
   d. voluntary work in any non-governmental organisation?
3. What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of intercultural sensitivity?
4. What kind of changes in curriculum need to be made in order to raise students' awareness of intercultural sensitivity?

Method

Research design

In this study a mixed methods approach was employed. The mixed methods research is mostly carried out in two dimensions. These are the priority sequence of the principal data and whether the data are concurrent (Morgan, 1998). In this context, a convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used to collect, analyse and interpret data. Drawing on this approach, the qualitative and quantitative data are concurrently collected and analysed (Creswell, 2015).

Participants

The participants were 90 pre-service teachers (60 female, 30 male) who were at their fourth year in the Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Education, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey. As part of the qualitative research design, 16 pre-service teachers (8 female, 8 male) chosen from 90 respondents volunteered for interviews.

Data collection tools

The five-point Likert-type *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* with 24 items developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) was used to obtain research data. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Üstün (2011). The scale's 5-points are "Strongly agree=5"; "Agree=4"; "Partly agree=3"; "Disagree=2"; and "Strongly disagree=1". The scale is composed of 5 sub-factors: "Intercultural engagement" (7 items), "Respect for cultural differences" (6 items), "Interaction confidence" (5 items), "Interaction enjoyment" (3 items) and "Interaction attentiveness" (3 items). To illustrate the content of the items in the scale (Appendix A), the sub-dimension "Intercultural engagement involves, for example, interacting with people from different cultures and being open-minded to people from different cultures. In the scale, the items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20 and 22 were scored by reverse coding. 5-point Likert type scale means were scored as 4.21-5.00 "Strongly agree"; 3.41-4.20 "Agree"; 2.61-3.4 "Partly agree"; 1.81-2.60 "Disagree"; and 1.00-1.80 "Strongly disagree". Üstün (2011) reported that the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was totally   = .88 whilst we found it for the whole scale .85.

The qualitative phase of the study used two semi-structured and non-directive questions (Appendix B). Interview questions were developed based on the theoretical framework and the opinions of two experts in this field. Interviews were conducted taking into account the days and hours when teachers were available. Participants were requested to give permission to audio record the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30-35 minutes. The interview records were transcribed using *MS Word*, and translated into English separately by two members of the Department of English Language Teaching at the Faculty of Education at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Then, these faculty members gathered all the translations as a single text which was translated back into Turkish by two faculty members separately, in order to be satisfied that the English versions were consistent with the original recordings.

Data analysis

Quantitative analysis of the data was conducted with *SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 18.0* software for *Windows*. The scale appeared to have shown a normal distribution because the values of skewness and kurtosis obtained from the overall scale were in the range -0.65 to 0.01 (George & Mallery, 2010). In this context, independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. Furthermore, a Tukey test was carried out to identify groups between which there was a significant difference. In the

analysis of the data, the statistical values were used as frequency (f), percentage (%), mean and standard deviation (SD).

The analysis of the qualitative data was done by two data encoders. The credibility of qualitative data was provided by the theoretical framework, direct quotations and data encoders. The reliability of the qualitative data was grounded on the calculation method proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely "Reliability = (Agreement + Disagreement) x 100", which found approximately 96%. The codes and themes obtained from the analysis of the data were modeled through the *Nvivo* qualitative data analysis program. Findings obtained from the interviews were supported by direct quotations. Each interviewee was coded as $S_1, S_2, S_3, \ldots S_N$.

Findings

Pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivities

Pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivities were examined across five sub-dimensions alongside means and standard deviations with reference to these factors.

Table 1: Pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivities

Factors	Mean	SD
Intercultural engagement	3.47	.37
Respect for cultural differences	3.95	.49
Interaction confidence	3.08	.26
Interaction enjoyment	3.62	1.06
Interaction attentiveness	3.30	.43
Total	3.54	.31

Table 1 shows that pre-service teachers studying in the Department of English language teaching rated the sub-dimensions of "intercultural engagement", "respect for cultural differences", and "interaction enjoyment" as "Agree". However, they perceived the sub-dimensions of "interaction confidence" and "interaction attentiveness" as "Partly agree". In addition, the teacher trainees' perceptions of the whole scale were found to indicate "Agree".

Intercultural sensitivity and gender

An independent sample t-test was employed to determine whether the intercultural sensitivities of pre-service teachers differed with gender. Results from the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Considering the data Table 2, we found that the intercultural sensitivities of the pre-service EFL teachers did not show significant gender differences in the sub-dimensions of "taking part in the intercultural interaction", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction confidence", "interaction enjoyment" and "interaction attentiveness" [t(88) =

-.36, p > .05; t(88) = 2.14, p > .05; t(88) = .67, p > .05; t(88) = .84, p > .05; t(88) = 1.32, p > .05, respectively]. Furthermore, given the overall results of the scale, it became clear that the pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivities did not differ in relation to gender [t(88) = 1.73].

Table 2: Intercultural sensitivities and gender

Factors	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Intercultural engagement	Female	60	3.46	.34	88	-.36	.71
	Male	30	3.50	.43			
Respect for cultural differences	Female	60	4.03	.49	88	2.14	.06
	Male	30	3.90	.43			
Interaction confidence	Female	60	3.09	.23	88	.67	.50
	Male	30	3.05	.31			
Interaction enjoyment	Female	60	3.68	.94	88	.84	.40
	Male	30	3.48	1.27			
Interaction attentiveness	Female	60	3.35	.33	88	1.32	.18
	Male	30	3.22	.59			
Total	Female	60	3.58	.27	88	1.73	.09
	Male	30	3.46	.36			

Intercultural sensitivity and maternal educational status

Table 3: Intercultural sensitivity and maternal educational status

	Variance	Sum of squares	SD	Squares average	F	p
Intercultural engagement	Between groups	2.58	4	.64	5.54	> .05
	Within groups	9.90	85	.11		
	Total	12.49	89			
Respect for cultural differences	Between groups	.08	4	.02	.08	> .05
	Within groups	21.30	85	.25		
	Total	21.39	89			
Interaction confidence	Between groups	.61	4	.15	2.27	> .05
	Within groups	5.69	85	06		
	Total	6.39	89			
Interaction enjoyment	Between groups	5.91	4	1.47	1.33	> .05
	Within groups	94.3	85	1.11		
	Total	100.26	89			
Interaction attentiveness	Between groups	.83	4	.20	1.08	> .05
	Within groups	16.32	85	.19		
	Total	17.15	89			
Total	Between groups	.19	4	.05	.49	> .05
	Within groups	8.52	85	.10		
	Total	8.72	89			

A one-way ANOVA test was used to determine whether the intercultural sensitivities of pre-service teachers showed a significant difference according to maternal educational level. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows we found that intercultural sensitivities did not show significant maternal educational status differences in the sub-dimensions of "taking part in the intercultural interaction", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction confidence", "interaction enjoyment" and "interaction attentiveness" [$F_{(4-85)} = 5.54$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = .08$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 2.27$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 1.33$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 1.08$, $p > .05$, respectively]. Furthermore, given the overall results of the scale, it became clear that intercultural sensitivities did not differ in relation to maternal educational status [$F_{(4-85)} = .49$, $p > .05$].

Intercultural sensitivity and paternal educational status

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to find out whether intercultural sensitivities of pre-service teachers showed significant differences according to paternal educational status (Table 4).

Table 4: Intercultural sensitivity and paternal educational status

Source of variance		Sum of squares	df	Squares average	F	p
Intercultural engagement	Between groups	.60	4	.20	1.46	.23
	Within groups	11.88	85	.13		
	Total	12.49	89			
Respect for cultural differences	Between groups	2.18	4	.72	3.25	.25
	Within groups	19.20	85	.22		
	Total	21.39	89			
Interaction confidence	Between groups	.40	4	.13	1.96	.12
	Within groups	5.90	85	.06		
	Total	6.30	89			
Interaction enjoyment	Between groups	7.31	4	2.43	2.25	.08
	Within groups	92.94	85	1.08		
	Total	100.26	89			
Interaction attentiveness	Between groups	2.30	4	.76	4.44	.06
	Within groups	14.85	85	.17		
	Total	17.15	89			
Total	Between groups	1.33	4	.44	5.16	.09
	Within groups	7.39	85	.08		
	Total	8.72	89			

Table 4 shows that intercultural sensitivities did not show significant paternal educational status differences in the various sub-dimensions [$F_{(4-85)} = 1.46$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 3.25$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 1.96$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 2.25$, $p > .05$; $F_{(4-85)} = 4.44$, $p > .05$]. Overall, paternal educational status was not a significant variable in intercultural sensitivities [$F_{(4-85)} = 5.16$, $p > .05$].

Intercultural sensitivity and volunteering in a non-governmental organisation

In this phase of the research the volunteer teachers who had worked in any non-governmental organisation (NGO) and the teachers who had not worked in such institutions were compared in terms of intercultural sensitivity. The NGOs where teachers worked as volunteers were mainly the most common, effective, non-profit organisations operating in the seven regions of Turkey. These involved environmental groups (Turkish Nature Protection Society; the Wildlife Conservation Society; Foundation of Turkish Environmental Problems; TEMA; etc.), women's associations (Federation of Turkish Women Associations; Women and Democracy Association; etc.), liberal ideas communities, and so on.

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine whether the intercultural sensitivities of pre-service teachers showed a significant difference according to the variable of the work in any non-governmental organisation (Table 5).

Table 5: Intercultural sensitivity and volunteering work in a non-government organisation

Factor	Volunteer status	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Intercultural engagement	Yes	40	3.61	.33	88	3.26	.00
	No	50	3.37	.37			
Respect for cultural differences	Yes	40	4.06	.47	88	1.98	.05
	No	50	3.86	.48			
Interaction confidence	Yes	40	3.02	.26	88	-1.94	.05
	No	50	3.12	.26			
Interaction enjoyment	Yes	40	3.48	1.24	88	-1.11	.04
	No	50	3.73	.88			
Interaction attentiveness	Yes	40	3.09	.53	88	-.27	.04
	No	50	3.32	.34			
Total	Yes	40	3.57	.34	88	.81	.04
	No	50	3.32	.28			

The results displayed in Table 5 reveal that the intercultural sensitivities of the pre-service EFL teachers in the Department of English Language Teaching respectively differed significantly with respect to work in any non-governmental organisation. This difference was in favour of the pre-service teachers who had worked in any non- governmental organisation [$t_{(88)}$ = 3.26, p < .05; $t_{(88)}$ = 1.98, p < .05; $t_{(88)}$ = -1.94, p <.05; $t_{(88)}$ = -1.11, p < .05; $t_{(88)}$ = -2.7; p <.05]. Besides, it was found that given the whole scale, the intercultural sensitivities of the pre-service EFL teachers differed significantly in relation to the variable of the work in any non-governmental organisation and that this difference was similarly in favor of the pre-service teachers who had worked in any non-governmental organisation [$t_{(88)}$ = .81, p < .05].

**Pre-service teachers' views on the concept of intercultural sensitivity**
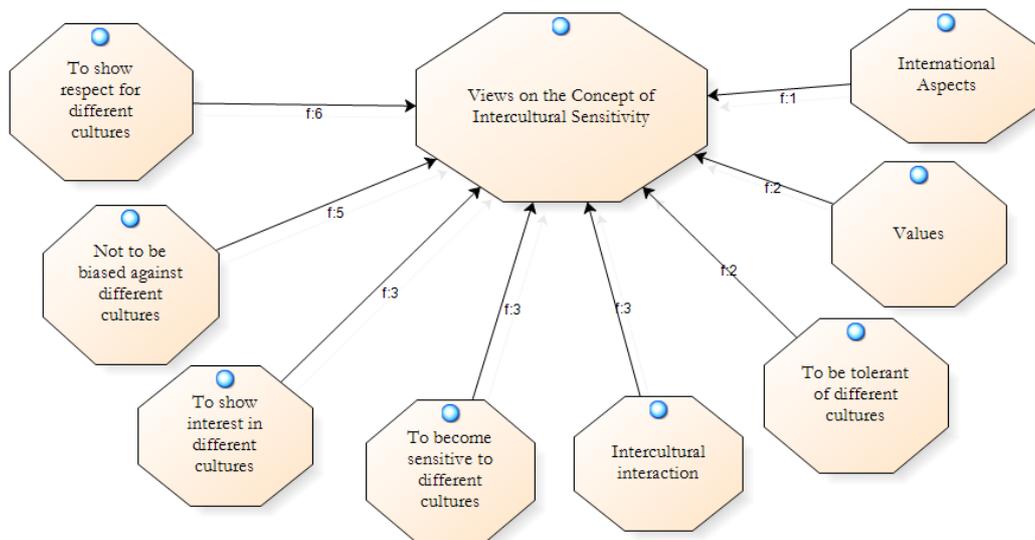
Figure 1: Modeling of pre-service teachers' views on the concept of intercultural sensitivity

Figure 1 illustrates that pre-service teachers in the Department of English have different opinions about the concept of intercultural sensitivity. The codes arising from the opinions expressed by the participants are "international aspects" (f:1), "to be tolerant of different cultures" (f:2), "values" (f:2), "to become sensitive to different cultures" (f:3), "to show interest in different cultures" (f:3). At the same time, some of the pre-service teachers coded as "to show respect for different cultures" (f:6), and "not to be biased against different cultures" (f:5).

The subjects with the codes of S₄, S₈ and S₁₃ expressed views as follows.

> There are many cultural factors in the world. Every language has a culture. In this respect, it is important that we are sensitive to cultures and respectful. In this context, I believe that world peace will be achieved. (S₄).

> People need to internalise the acceptability of intercultural diversity. Our own culture may have similarities with other cultures, and we must understand that there may be differences between our own culture and other cultures. In other words, aware of the existence of other cultures, people from different cultures are supposed to respect the differences of cultures apart from their own culture, tolerate these differences. (S₈)

> To me it means respect for the culture of different nations. It means becoming sensitive about those nations' cuisine, music, words they use without prejudice with respect to their dresses. There are also different languages, religions and races in the world. It involves eliminating the difference of language, religion and race, and approaching all people equally and respectfully. It is to acknowledge different cultures and respect their lifestyles and differences. (S₁₃)

Suggestions about including intercultural sensitivity in the curriculum
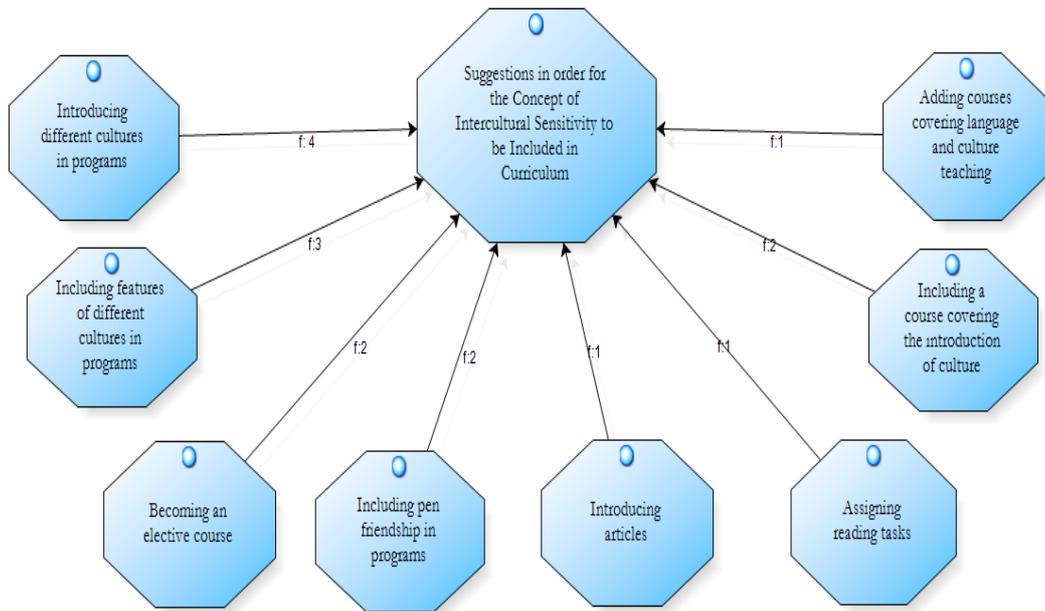
Figure 2: Modeling based upon the suggestions of pre-service teachers
about intercultural sensitivity being included in the curriculum

According to Figure 2, the participants presented various suggestions for curricula that will contribute to increased cultural awareness in students. The codes coming from the views expressed by the participants are "including pen friendship in programs" (f:2), "becoming an elective course (f:2), "introducing different cultures in programs" (f:4). In addition, some of the pre-service teachers found it necessary to introduce articles or reading assignments (f:1). Besides, as we observed, some participants specified that a course should be included covering the introduction of culture or language and culture teaching.

The subjects with the codes of S_1, S_{11} and S_{15} expressed the following opinions in order for the intercultural sensitivity to be more functional in teaching programs.

> A 2-hour course related to this can be included in the curriculum. The aim of this course could be to explain the concept to students and to spread it to the students' own environment. (S_1)

> In order to make this concept more functional within the ELT undergraduate program, culture courses can be included in the program. An additional course can also be useful so as to underline the differences between the diverse cultures of different countries. (S_{11})

> In my view, to learn a language also equals to knowing the culture. It is necessary to integrate culture into language learning in order to facilitate students' general culture and language learning. For example, tools that have turned into the British culture can be exploited in the courses such as authentic materials, films and documentaries. (S15)

Discussion and conclusion

Given the findings from the research, it is seen that the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of the intercultural sensitivities in the Department of English language teaching indicated agreement. In this respect, we can conclude that the pre-service EFL teachers feel at ease with intercultural sensitivity, which involves being sensitive to cultural differences or opinions of individuals with different cultures (Bennett, 1998). In addition, it is emphasised that individuals with this awareness have a positive attitude towards different cultures (Cırık, 2008). In this context, it can be concluded that teacher candidates in this sample are conscious of being able to live together with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, it can be said that teachers acknowledge and respect the values of different cultures.

This is consistent with research findings from studies conducted with pre-service teachers from different departments (Akın, 2016; Gezer ve Şahin, 2017; Polat & Rengi, 2014). Also, it is evident that pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivities were not related to gender. In this framework, there were differences in intercultural sensitivity levels of female and male teacher candidates, but a significant effect of gender on intercultural sensitivity level could not be found. Female and male pre-service teachers try to understand the attitudes and values of students with cultural differences in a similar way. This accords with findings from a number of researchers, including Akın (2016), Bayles (2009, Hammer, Bennett and Wisemann (2003), Polat & Barka (2012), Üstün (2010), and Yılmaz & Göçen (2013).

Another notable result from this study is that maternal and paternal educational status is not related to intercultural sensitivity of pre-service EFL teachers. The education level of the parents does not determine pre-service teachers' perspectives of different cultures. It may be that the level of consciousness or awareness of pre-service teachers regarding different cultures is not affected by the education of their parents.

Intercultural sensitivities of pre-service teachers who have worked voluntarily in any non-governmental organiaation have been found to be higher than those who did not undertake such volunteering. Non-governmental organisations support and develop inter-communal interactions of individuals. Individuals working voluntarily in these institutions have opportunities to communicate and interact with different cultures. Accordingly, individuals become more familiar with the values, motifs and elements of different cultures. From this point of view, it is expected that intercultural awareness of pre-service teachers of English who work voluntarily in non-governmental organisations will be higher.

In the analysis of the qualitative data for this research, it is seen that pre-service teachers in the Department of English Language Education expressed their sense of intercultural sensitivity with different concepts. They offered different solutions for increasing cultural sensitivity among students. These suggestions are mainly in the way that cultural awareness-raising elements are included in curricula, and how this awareness may be developed as a course in programs. In addition, various seminars may be organised to increase cultural awareness among teachers. Different workshops to support the social and individual benefit of cultural awareness can be organised by representatives from non-governmental organisations and researchers in this field. The outcomes of these workshops could shed light on further research in this area. In addition, further studies involving different sample groups can be conducted and in turn compared with the findings of the present research.

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Appendix A: Sample scale items

Intercultural engagement	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
Respect for cultural differences	I respect the values of people from different cultures. I respect the behavior patterns of people from different cultures.
Interaction confidence	I am pretty sure of myself when interacting with people from different cultures. While interacting with people from different cultures I rely on myself.
Interaction enjoyment	I often get discouraged by people from different cultures. I feel nervous when interacting with people from different cultures.
Interaction attentiveness	I make good observation when interacting with people from different cultures. I try to get as much information as possible when interacting with people from different cultures.

Appendix B: Interview questions

1. What are the perceptions of the pre-service teachers with regard to the concept of the intercultural sensitivity?
2. What kind of changes in curriculum need to be made in order to raise students' awareness of intercultural sensitivity?

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