



EXPLORING *INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY LEVEL* AT A *STUDY-AT-HOME CONTEXT*

Tuba Demirkolⁱ

School of Foreign Languages,
Social Sciences University of Ankara,
Turkey

Abstract:

Development of intercultural competence is a term that is mostly researched about learners who have experience in study-abroad contexts. Considering that we are living in a globalized world where trade, mass-media, the Internet, and various exchange programs have allowed people to interact with culturally-others without going abroad, we assume that intercultural sensitivity is worth investigating also for learners who have solely studied at their home countries. It is certain that in addition to consumption of foreign products such as movies, songs, and books, university learners have also wide options of enjoying cultural diversity through international teachers, exchange students on campus, or via social media, all of which are channels linked to intercultural sensitivity development. In this study, we questioned the influence of interacting with foreigners on study-home university students by investigating the intercultural sensitivity level of a group of Turkish EFL learners who have never studied abroad. Moreover, in order to research if international teachers make a significant difference in the intercultural sensitivity level of language learners, we compared two groups: one group of students who studied English with only Turkish EFL teachers and another group who studied English with international teachers more than 7 hours weekly. As the data collection tool, both groups were given a questionnaire consisted of two parts: the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale by Chen & Starosta (2000) and study-specific posed open-ended & multiple choice questions. The results showed that both groups achieved high levels of intercultural sensitivity though the participants who have been regularly taught by international instructors achieved higher scores in several subscales of the questionnaire.

Keywords: intercultural sensitivity, EFL learners, foreign EFL instructors, Turkish EFL instructors

ⁱ Correspondence: email tuba.demirkol@asbu.edu.tr

1. Introduction

With the introduction of the Internet and increasing options, the concept of distance has changed substantially since we have virtual and physical access to people and goods available in thousands of miles away. In this rapidly shrinking world, the structures of societies are being highly influenced by rich interaction among the nations around the World and this brings about a need for accomplishing intercultural competence as an objective of education (Deardorff, 2006). As educators, we need to investigate how this kind of competence is fostered and promoted among learners who should carry the identity of world citizenship far beyond their national borders. In relation to language education, these issues are discussed under the broad concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) which should be seen as an essential objective of communicative competence (Alptekin, 2002). Accordingly, intercultural communicative competence entails avoidance of stereotyping by language learners by encouraging them to view people as having multiple identities and to seek common grounds for a successful interaction on the basis of mutual respect (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). Chen & Storasta (1998) argue that intercultural communicative competence contains three interdependent components: intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural adroitness which respectively refer to affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of intercultural communication. The main focus of this study is on intercultural sensitivity which is defined as *“ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behaviour in intercultural communication”* (Chen & Storasta, p.5, 2000). Accordingly, this study seeks out answers related to what extent study-home contexts support the development of intercultural sensitivity and how influential are international instructors in the participants’ affective responses to the idea of interaction with culturally different people.

Many of the existing studies in the literature explored the topic especially in study-abroad contexts to test the assumption that study-abroad experience provides a desired environment for interacting with culturally different people and developing intercultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Engle & Engle, 2004; Cushner & Chang, 2015; Williams, 2005). A study investigating the influence of study abroad contexts was conducted by Williams (2005) who compared two groups of learners, one studying at home campus of a university and one studying abroad for one year. The researcher found higher scores for intercultural sensitivity skills of the study abroad group after their experience. However, the researcher concluded that interaction opportunities of the learners with other cultures were a more decisive factor than the location of the study for the improvement of intercultural communication skills. The campus learners who had enough intercultural exposure, e.g. via different channels such as foreign language courses, close friends, love affairs, or foreign films, also were able to develop their intercultural communication skills as much as the ones who studied abroad. Anderson et al. (2006) also conducted a study with pre-post observation design to evaluate the influence of a 4-week study abroad experience on the

intercultural sensitivity of 16 senior-level management learners. The participants who experienced home-stays with local families displayed significant upward movement in terms of the scales under observation. Similar to William's (2005) findings, the researchers highlighted the interactional exchange, not the location, as a major determinant and called for other studies exploring the development of intercultural sensitivity of participants without overseas component. A more recent study downplaying the overseas experience as a major component of intercultural sensitivity development was conducted by Cushner & Chang (2015). The researchers tracked the development of intercultural sensitivity in a group of participants with an 8-15 week overseas students teaching experience. They found no significant increase between the pre-experience and post-experience scores of the participants. They also suggested that intercultural sensitivity can be developed further only if students are guided carefully to notice the components of the concept and being immersed in a culturally different context does not guarantee desired gains related to intercultural competence.

Bennett (2004) argues that being interculturally sensitive is a gradual process in which individuals move from the situation of ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, going through six stages in total. Accordingly, people mostly start this journey by prioritizing their own culture over the others and if they master intercultural sensitivity, they end up by getting mature enough to *"experience themselves as multicultural beings who are constantly choosing the most appropriate cultural context for their behaviour"* (p.9). Bennett builds his developmental model of intercultural sensitivity on cognitive constructivism and assumes that individuals' interaction with people from different cultures lead significant shifts in their world views. By adopting the same approach and considering the aforementioned literature which discussed the impact of intercultural experience as a major determinant of intercultural sensitivity development, we set out to explore the intercultural sensitivity of a group of stay-at-home Turkish EFL learners. We questioned if regular frequent interaction with international EFL instructors would help a group of EFL learners to score higher than another group of EFL learners who have been taught only by Turkish EFL instructors in terms of intercultural sensitivity.

2. Literature Review

There have been numerous studies exploring language learners' perceptions of being taught by native instructors versus non-native instructors in second language education. While some studies found that their participants stated their preferences for native instructors over non-natives (Alseweeed, 2012; Levis, Sonsaat, Link, & Barriuso, 2016; Javid, 2016), we are aware that language teaching requires much more than being native of a target language and both groups prove to be equally successful instructors on their contexts (Medgyes, 1992; Canagarajah, 1999).

In addition to linguistic dimensions, the influence of native speakers on language learners' intercultural sensitivity has also been addressed in the literature. Byram et al. (2002) argue that being a native speaker of the target language is not a requirement for foreign language instructors to be skilled in promoting intercultural sensitivity in their

classes. They state that non-native instructors can successfully contribute to language learners' intercultural sensitivity development by utilizing factual information sources, by inviting them to compare their cultures with that of a target language, and by employing techniques such as role play and simulations. This is attributed to the fact that the attainment of cultural knowledge is a life-long process for even native members of a given society and non-native speakers also can develop themselves significantly by integrating into this process later than native ones.

A recent study that paved the way for our study was conducted by Küllü-Sülü (2014) in Turkish context. She collected data from 465 EFL learners enrolled in different universities' preparatory programs and she investigated the influence of native and non-native instructors of English on the learners' intercultural sensitivity. She employed Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Storasta, 2000) along with several multiple choice items she developed herself. The findings did not suggest any significant difference in terms of native instructors and non-native instructors' (who were all Turkish) influence on the learners' intercultural sensitivity scores. They found that the participants viewed TV and family comments as influential as native speakers in affecting their attitudes towards cultural variety. The limited interaction of learners with native teachers, which was just 4 hour, was indicated among the limitations of the study.

Regarding these points, we aimed to deepen the scope of the research which compares foreign EFL teachers' influence on learners' intercultural sensitivity with that of Turkish EFL instructors. In order to speculate about the influence of intercultural interaction, we aimed for participants who have frequent interaction with foreign instructors on a regular basis. Here, it may be useful to indicate once more that in this study, the variables are being taught by an international EFL instructor and being taught by a Turkish EFL instructor in a Turkish university. We have opted for the term 'international instructors' to refer to all foreign EFL instructors in our educational context because they are not only from the inner circle but also from other countries such as Iran and Syria. Moreover, intercultural sensitivity does not only cover sensitivity towards English as the target culture. To the contrary, it is a comprehensive term and being interculturally sensitive requires positive emotions towards all other cultures for individuals. As such, we avoid native vs non-native speaker dichotomy in our study and we evaluate the topic from a wider perspective: being an international EFL speaker.

3. Material and Methods

This study can be counted as a case study in that its data was collected from a single university in Turkey. The study has two aims: a) to compare intercultural sensitivity levels of two groups of EFL learners, one of which was frequently and regularly taught by international EFL instructors while the other was taught only by Turkish EFL instructors for a 16-week-period b) to explore the participants' perceptions of Turkish versus international EFL instructors' influence on their intercultural sensitivity. The

participants are all intermediate level EFL learners enrolled in the same state university's preparatory program in the same academic year on the same campus. This way, contextual factors that could influence the nature of the data such as the existence of exchange students in one location and the absence of them in another one have been eliminated. Both groups have been exposed to same syllabus, materials, teaching hours, and social network in the same campus. The only difference was about whether they were taught by international instructors on a regular basis for more than 8 hours weekly or not, which is the independent variable of the study. In this sense, the school's structure and the fact that all the participants were enrolled in the same program allows us to do a sound comparison in terms of intercultural teachers' influence on the participants' intercultural sensitivity.

The participants were grouped into two according to the nationality of instructors who have taught them for the last fall term throughout 16 weeks. The group which consisted of participants who were taught only by Turkish EFL instructors will be referred as Group A (N=53) from now on while the participants who were taught by international EFL teachers for more than 8 hours weekly will be referred as Group B (N=52).

The data was collected by a three-part questionnaire. The first part sought background information about the participants and the second part consisted of Intercultural Sensitivity Questionnaire (ISS) by Chen & Storasta (2000). ISS consisted of 5 sub-scales, namely Interaction Engagement (items 1, 11, 13, 21-24); Respect for Cultural Differences (items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18 and 20); Interaction Confidence (items 3-6 and 10); Interaction Enjoyment (items 9, 12 and 15); Interaction Attentiveness (items 14, 17 and 19). Table 1 below shows Cronbach's Alpha values for the sub-scales of ISS and the overall questionnaire for both group of participants.

Table 1: Reliability Analyses for ISS and Sub-scales

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Groups	Interaction Engagement	Interaction Confidence	Interaction Attentiveness	Interaction Enjoyment	Respect for Cultural Differences	Overall Reliability Score
Group A	.654	.801	.411	.923	.720	.749
Group B	.774	.914	.639	.811	.856	.947

As Table 1 shows, while reliability scores of several subscales in both groups indicated acceptable levels (the ones with a $\geq .07$), several others appeared to have questionable levels (the ones with a $\geq .06$). These low reliability levels may have appeared due to the small sample size, which consisted of a relatively small group of participants in this case study. We will refrain from drawing conclusions especially from the results of Interaction Attentiveness scale, which appeared to have questionable reliability for both groups. After having checked the reliability of each sub-scale, we continued the analysis by checking the mean scores of these scales per group to have an idea about the participants' reported levels of intercultural sensitivity. The third part of the questionnaire contained 2 study-specific open ended questions to inquire the

participants' views of international and Turkish EFL instructors' influence on their intercultural sensitivity development. These questions were designed to encourage learners to reflect on their preference for international or Turkish EFL instructors as well as other sources of intercultural exchange they use. These questions were designated by a review of literature.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. For the quantitative part of the data which was gathered via ISS questionnaire, the descriptive statistics were calculated for the groups separately in terms of overall ISS mean scores and ISS subscales. The overall difference was found to be slightly significant as the mean ISS score of the participants who were taught by international EFL instructors was found to be $\bar{x} = 4,0503$ and of the participants who were taught by Turkish EFL instructors was found to be $\bar{x} = 3,7292$ ($p \geq .05$). Though the overall difference was not statistically significant, mean scores were calculated also for the subscales to get a more concise understanding of the participants' intercultural sensitivity levels.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Interaction Enjoyment Scale for Group A and B

Item Number	Item	Group A*					Group B**				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	S	N	Min	Max	Mean	S
9	I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	3,4423	1,64988	53	2	5	4,4528	,09549
12	I often discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	3,2500	1,29668	53	2	5	4,0566	,11560
15	I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	3,4615	1,39272	53	2	5	4,1321	,12059
Whole Scale					3,3846	1,35342				4,2138	,68903

*Learners who were regularly taught by Turkish EFL instructors

**Learners who were regularly taught by international EFL instructors

Since the items of Interaction Enjoyment Scale indicated discomfort during intercultural communication, the answers collected for these items were reverse coded in order to report the findings in line with other scales and check the overall reliability. As can be understood by the mean scores of two groups showed in Table 2, the participants who had been regularly taught by only Turkish EFL instructors reported lower level of enjoyment from the interaction with foreigners with a group mean value of $\bar{x} = 3,3846$.

However, the learners who had high frequency of interaction with international EFL instructors reported higher enjoyment from intercultural interactions with a group mean value of $\bar{x} = 4,2138$. The difference between the groups were found to be statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Table 3: Mean Scores of Interaction Confidence Scale for Group A and B

Item Number	Item	Group A*					Group B**				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	S	N	Min	Max	Mean	S
3	I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	4,0577	,95821	53	2	5	3,8679	,83292
4	I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.	52	1	5	4,0000	,86319	53	2	5	3,6981	,97241
5	I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	2	5	3,2308	,83114	53	1	5	3,5849	1,04576
6	I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	3,5385	,93853	53	2	5	3,8113	,94170
10	I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	4,0192	,89641	53	2	5	3,9057	,81487
Whole Scale					3,7692	,67025				3,7736	,79811

*Learners who were regularly taught by Turkish EFL instructors

**Learners who were regularly taught by international EFL instructors

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the participants for Interaction Confidence scale in which only item 4 was reverse coded due to its negative wording. As can be understood from the Table 3, the mean scores were similar to each other in terms of both individual items and the Interaction Confidence scale as a whole. The difference between the whole scale means was found to be statistically insignificant ($p > .05$).

Table 4: Mean Scores of Respect for Cultural Differences Scale for Group A and B

Item Number	Item	Group A*					Group B**				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	S	N	Min	Max	Mean	S
2	I think people from other cultures are narrow minded.	52	1	5	3,4038	1,65990	53	1	5	4,3019	,93201
7	I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	3,3462	1,65547	53	2	5	4,4151	,71881
8	I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	2	5	4,5962	,74780	53	2	5	4,4528	,74849
16	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	52	3	5	4,5000	,64169	53	2	5	4,3585	,73627
18	I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	52	1	5	3,3462	1,75884	53	2	5	4,2642	,85824
20	I think my culture is better than other cultures.	52	1	5	2,7500	1,2847	53	1	5	4,0755	,99709
					3,6571	,88217				4,3113	,63971

*Learners who were regularly taught by Turkish EFL instructors

**Learners who were regularly taught by international EFL instructors

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for individual items as well as whole scale means of the participants in both groups. For this calculation, items 2, 7, 18 and 20 were reverse coded. Similar to the results of Interaction Enjoyment scale, Group B which consisted of the participants who were taught only by Turkish instructors got a significantly lower whole scale mean ($p < .001$). Though this difference was not valid for all the items because Group A scored higher in items 8 and 16, whose mean scores were $\bar{X} = 4,5962$ and $\bar{X} = 4,5000$, respectively.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Interaction Engagement Scale for Group A and B

Item Number	Item	Group A*					Group B**				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	S	N	Min	Max	Mean	S
1	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	52	2	5	4,5385	,69906	53	2	5	4,5472	,69520
11	I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally distinct counterparts.	52	2	5	3,7885	,74981	53	1	5	3,9434	1,00795
13	I am open-minded	52	2	5	4,3462	,76401	53	2	5	4,2830	,79366

	to people from different cultures.										
21	I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.	52	2	5	3,8269	,83363	53	1	5	4,0000	,87706
22	I avoid those situations where will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.	52	3	5	2,5385	1,48801	53	1	5	2,6792	1,45144
23	I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal and nonverbal cues.	52	2	5	4,1923	,68709	53	2	5	4,2075	,76858
24	I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.	52	3	5	4,2500	,68241	53	2	5	4,1509	,76952
Whole Scale					3,9258	,46527				3,9730	,61257

*Learners who were regularly taught by Turkish EFL instructors

**Learners who were regularly taught by international EFL instructors

The descriptive statistics, which were found via reverse coding the item 22, for Interaction Engagement scale are given in Table 5 for both groups of the participants. The mean scores for individual items and whole scale were found to be quite similar across the groups without indicating a significant difference ($p > .05$).

Table 6: Mean Scores of Interaction Attentiveness Scale for Group A and B

Item Number	Item	Group A*					Group B**				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	S	N	Min	Max	Mean	S
14	I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	2	5	3,9231	,90415	53	2	5	4,1509	,74411
17	I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	52	1	5	4,1346	1,04841	53	1	5	4,2264	,86916
19	I am sensitive to my culturally distinct	52	1	5	3,0192	1,01923	53	1	5	3,6415	1,02038

counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.										
				3,6923	,67267				4,0063	,67460

*Learners who were regularly taught by Turkish EFL instructors

**Learners who were regularly taught by international EFL instructors

The descriptive statistics given for Interaction Attentiveness scale in Table 6 show that both groups scored similarly though a moderate amount of difference between the whole scale means was detected ($p \geq .05$). Accordingly, the participants who had frequent interaction with international instructors reported being slightly more attentive during intercultural exchanges. Overall, the results did not suggest significant differences in terms of the participants' perceptions of Interaction Engagement and Interaction Confidence scales. However, for the other three subscales the mean scores belonging to the participants taught by international EFL instructors were always higher than the other group, which indicates a significantly positive influence of international EFL instructors on the participants' intercultural sensitivity levels. As the next step, the answers collected for the open-ended questions part of the questionnaire were analysed. Since this part brought in qualitative data, each question was analysed separately. The answers for each question were coded and these codes were grouped according to themes.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

In the open ended questions part that were designed specific to study, there was a question investigating the participants' preferences of Turkish or international EFL instructors. The participants were asked to state whether they prefer Turkish or international EFL instructors as their teachers along with reasons. The first question asked the participants to state whether they preferred to be taught by a Turkish or international EFL teacher and they were asked to state a reason for their choices. The answers will be presented for each group separately. There was a dominant preference for international EFL instructors in both groups. Except 2 students in Group A, all other participants stated that they would prefer international EFL instructors over the Turkish EFL instructors. Among the participants who were taught by just Turkish EFL instructors, 46 out of 53 people preferred international EFL instructors over Turkish EFL instructors. Themes that were detected from reasons the participants gave for their preferences for international versus Turkish instructors are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Categorization of Reasons of the Participants' Preferences for Turkish and International EFL Instructors

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
The Reasons for Preferring International EFL Instructors	Language Proficiency & Avoidance of code switching	Cultural Gains	Teaching Technique
The Reasons for Preferring Turkish EFL Instructors	Easiness of Mother Tongue Use	Empathy with the learners	---

As shown in Table 8, there were concurrent themes that were detected in both groups for their preferences:

A. Language Proficiency was the main theme that emerged from the participants' responses as for their preferences of international EFL instructors over Turkish EFL instructors. The significant majority of the participants believed that international instructors would contribute more to their language proficiency. They believed that interacting with international instructors motivated them to speak English more and be more fluent. A specific aspect highlighted by the participants in terms of language proficiency is correct modelling of pronunciation. Several participants viewed international EFL instructors as better models of pronunciation as can be seen from the following comments of the participants:

Extract 1: *"It is always better to have international instructors. We improve our pronunciation more with them."* (A participant from Group A)

Extract 2: *"I think international instructors have better pronunciation and it may create a significant difference in my learning."* (A participant from Group B)

Parties from both groups expressed their observation of the fact that either learners or teachers themselves may easily switch into Turkish in English lessons, which demotivates the participants to feel obliged to express themselves in English as the target language. The following extracts illustrate the case:

Extract 3: *"The medium of instruction will be English in my major. Thanks to having classes with international instructors, it feels obligatory to keep speaking English and this contributes to my language proficiency a lot"* (A participant from Group A)

Extract 4: *"It is always better to have classes with international instructors. When we chit chat, Turkish teachers continue dialogues in Turkish but international instructors keep speaking English even if we chit-chat."* (A participant from Group A)

Extract 5: *"If I have an international instructor who keeps speaking English all the time, I listen to lessons more attentively because it is more difficult to follow lessons in English."* (A participant from Group B)

Extract 6: *"When I feel difficulty in explaining a case in English, I quickly switch into Turkish if my instructor is Turkish. However, if my instructor is not Turkish, I force myself to speak English despite the difficulties."* (A participant from Group B)

Extract 7: *"Being taught by an international instructor is the most important factor in foreign language education. Turkish instructors may easily switch into Turkish for extra-curricular issues while we have to negotiate every issue in English with an international instructor."* (A participant from Group A)

Extract 8: *"If we had a international instructor, we would feel obliged to speak English in every occasion. However, I easily switch into Turkish when I have difficulty as I know that my teacher can understand me in Turkish."* (A participant from Group B)

B. Cultural Gains was the second most important factor in delineating the participants' tendency to prioritize international EFL instructors. There were participants from both

groups who mentioned cultural variety as an advantage of being taught by international EFL instructors.

Extract 5: *"I believe that native teachers or teachers with a native-like proficiency contribute to my personal development both culturally and socially."* (A participant from Group A)

Extract 6: *"I want to broaden my horizon and gain new perspectives. To me, the only way of achieving is via interaction with people from different cultures."* (A participant from Group B).

C. Teaching technique was another point that was risen by the participants for their tendency to choose international instructors. One of the participants expressed how s/he idealized international instructors as follows.

Extract 11: *"I think foreign instructors have more effective teaching techniques as they do not think the way Turkish teachers do. It should be more enjoyable to be in their classes."*

As stated above, there were fewer participants who opted for being taught mostly by Turkish EFL instructors and their reasons behind their preferences were similar: empathy with the learners and possibility of switching into mother tongue, as explained in the following extracts:

Extract 12: *"Turkish and English are from different language families. Turkish teaches can understand better what is difficult for us while foreign instructors may not understand these points."* (A participant from Group A)

Extract 13: *"I prefer to be taught by Turkish teachers as they can understand what I am trying to say more easily. Foreign instructors generally do not grasp the meaning when I speak but Turkish teachers understand me even if I have grammatical mistakes. Moreover, I sometimes need further explanations in lessons especially when I have problems in understanding some topics. In those cases only Turkish teachers can provide me with the explanations in Turkish."* (A participant from Group B)

For the first open ended questions, several participants mentioned culture among the factors influencing their preferences of the nationality of EFL instructors. The second and third questions directly investigated the participants' views of the teachers' influence on the learners' intercultural sensitivity development. For the second item, the participants evaluated how foreign instructors contributed to their intercultural sensitivity by choosing from related items compiled from the literature by the researcher. The participants made the same evaluation also for Turkish instructors. The items are listed along with the percentages for international and Turkish EFL instructors in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Group Percentages of Individual Items Targeting Intercultural Sensitivity

The Item: <i>My instructor contributes to:</i>	The percentage for international EFL instructors %	The percentage for Turkish EFL instructors %
<i>my knowledge of historical connections between my culture and another one</i>	32	26
<i>my understanding of the ways of making connections with people from different cultures</i>	55	65
<i>my understanding of stereotyping and the ways of avoiding it</i>	55	38
<i>my understanding of the routines/daily life in other specific cultures</i>	93	82
<i>my appreciation of how my culture differs from other cultures in terms of communication methods</i>	84	53
<i>my knowledge of how to have an in-depth understanding about other cultures</i>	72	29
<i>my awareness of details and nuances about my own culture</i>	67	44
<i>my questioning of personal/general prejudices towards other cultures</i>	69	34

According to results displayed in Table 9, the participants' views of the instructors' influence on intercultural sensitivity varied according to the nationality of the instructors. For most of the items, they reported a higher contribution by international instructors and only for one item, they viewed Turkish instructors as being more influential. This item was that *my instructor contributes to my understanding of the ways of making connections with people from different cultures*. In the light of these findings, we have some further comments to make about the participants' main tendency to opt for international EFL instructors not only as better role models of the target language but also as promoters of intercultural sensitivity.

5. Discussion

This study was conducted to explore if being taught by Turkish EFL instructors or international instructors brought in significant differences in intercultural sensitivity levels of Turkish EFL learners. There were significant differences in the observed ISS level of the participants not for the overall questionnaire but for several subscales. The overall ISS mean score indicated slightly higher intercultural sensitivity level for the participants who had frequent classes with international EFL instructors. As such, our findings are in line with those of Küllü-Sülü (2014) who conducted a similar study in Turkish context. In her research, she reported a slightly higher ISS level for the participants thought by natives and she points at interaction with natives as a factor contributing to intercultural sensitivity of learners. In this respect, our findings support these findings and the case of higher interaction frequency with foreigners on regular basis in our study is regarded to be an important variable in explaining significantly

higher ISS scores of our participants. Carrying the findings of Küllü-Sülü one more step, we argue that the key factor that contributes to intercultural sensitivity development is not exposure to only native speakers of a given language. Rather, what promotes intercultural sensitivity of learners is the frequent interaction with international teachers who can be from different nationalities.

Another finding of the study which was revealed via the qualitative data is the participants' strong preferences for international EFL instructors over Turkish EFL instructors. This kind of preference was also confirmed by the study of Mutlu and Dollar (2017) who reported that the majority of their Turkish EFL participants opted for communicating with native English speakers over non-natives. The results showed that half of their participants highlighted the broader cultural knowledge and exposure to better accents of English as reasons underlying their preferences for native speakers of English. However, when we asked our participants to state their motives for preferring international instructors, we saw that they downplayed cultural gains and they pointed at advanced language proficiency of foreign instructors as the main reason shaping their choice. They viewed international instructors as role models for language proficiency and more useful to their language development. Our learners are enrolled in a university where medium of instruction is English. As such, they need a high language proficiency to pass the high-stake proficiency exams administered at the end of their education at preparatory school. Thus, we assume that our participants acted on instrumental motivation while preferring international EFL instructors over Turkish EFL instructors. This finding can also be related to the results of Güven (2015) who reported that the Turkish EFL participants in her study evaluated mastery in English as a tool that can allow them to have better jobs rather than viewing it as a tool to acquire cultural knowledge. Similar to our participants, they acted on instrumental motivation and viewed English as a prerequisite for their future career. This means that contrary to findings of Kahraman (2008) and Mutlu & Dolar (2017), the participants in our study did not indicate noticeable awareness of the importance of intercultural competence or integration of culture as an important concept in their EFL endeavours. This result may be an indicator of the need for raising awareness about the importance of intercultural competence. If EFL learners are guided with specific activities to promote intercultural sensitivity as in the study of Tran & Seepho (2016), their perceptions can be improved significantly towards appreciating role of English or any other foreign language in being interculturally sensitive. This way, reaching more intercultural gains can be a reason for their preferences for international instructors.

One other item that was mentioned to be a decisive element in the participants' preferences of international or Turkish EFL instructors was code switching. There were participants who preferred Turkish EFL instructors over international instructors because they valued the chance of code switching into Turkish when they have difficulty in explaining themselves or comprehending nuances in the target language. Speaking the same mother tongue with the learners is seen as a useful tool teachers can benefit from in foreign language classrooms (Medgyes, 1992; Butzkamm, 2003) and

some students appeared to have noticed this according to what they reported in our study.

As mentioned above, the close scrutiny of the qualitative data showed that the learners prioritized international instructors as good models of the target language. This finding has several implications. Firstly, the students' explanations for their dominant preference for international instructors reveal that our learners view foreigners from other countries as good as native speakers. While they valued the potential of international instructors, they seemed to fail in recognizing how good role models Turkish instructors can be for the target language. Thus, even though the literature contends the idea that native speakers are the only ideal models of a target language, our learners appear to still relying on this native speaker fallacy, which maintains its wide presence in social contexts (Moussu & Llorca, 2008) and they tend to underestimate the language teaching potential of instructors who speak the same mother tongue (Maum, 2002). Moreover, they seem inclined to assume that all foreigners can be viewed as natives of the target language as long as they are not Turkish. This also opens a venue of research for digging deeper into the worldviews of Turkish youth, i.e. how they comprehend their teachers and themselves in the global world, their self-esteem as potential learners of English, their estimation of Turkish teachers' foreign language ability, and their perceptions of other nations' potential of foreign language learning. To conclude, it is possible to comment on this finding in two ways: either the participants are prejudiced and fail to appreciate the Turkish EFL instructors' potential of contributing to both linguistic and cultural competence of learners or Turkish EFL instructors really fall short of proving their potential in addressing different areas of communicative competence. In a study investigating prospective Turkish EFL teachers' preparedness for addressing cultural competence in EFL classes, Atay (2005) reported considerable lack of knowledge on the part of prospective Turkish EFL teachers about the target language and ways of promoting cultural competence. We did not directly investigate the Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of their strengths as foreign language teachers but by relying on Atay's (2005) study, we can conclude that this lack of cultural preparedness was valid also for Turkish teachers of our participants.

The final analysis was about specific skills taught by international and Turkish EFL instructors in relation to promoting intercultural competence, the broader concept which covers intercultural sensitivity as a sub-element. International EFL instructors were reported to touch intercultural competence issues more frequently than Turkish EFL instructors. The huge difference for the item about getting a deeper understanding about other cultures suggests that Turkish EFL instructors fall behind foreign colleagues in promoting ways of cross-cultural understanding in their learners. This may be due to instructors' limited knowledge about the target culture (Atay, 2005) or due to a faulty second language socialization process in which they may have never found enough chance to experience and reflect on their roles as promoters of intercultural communicative competence (Ortaçtepe, 2015). Still, another possibility is that the participants may have underestimated their Turkish EFL teachers' capacity to

boom learners' intercultural sensitivity just because these teachers could not have found suitable ways of transmitting their knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Though this study was conducted with a small group of participants from a single university and it should be counted as a case study, the results were mostly in line with the previous studies which deemphasized study-abroad context as a prerequisite of intercultural sensitivity. Our primary finding is that both group of the participants scored high levels of intercultural sensitivity though the group who had frequent interactions with international EFL instructors on a regular basis scored significantly higher in general. This leads us to the conclusion that study-abroad is not a must for high intercultural sensitivity and study-home contexts can be stages for lively intercultural communication via rich interaction with foreign partners, which found to be a significant contributor of intercultural sensitivity. Moreover, we should be aware that the interaction of learners with culturally different people occurs very naturally by various means the Internet has provided. For example, they interact with foreigners via chat rooms, interactive games and applications of second life or even through readings in English. Thus, in future studies we should increase the depth of analyses by lengthening the list of factors and that can contribute to intercultural sensitivity in different social contexts. One other suggestion for further research in the field is to investigate the views of EFL learners and EFL instructors from the same contexts as it may be fruitful to compare perspectives of both parties.

Acknowledgement

The preliminary findings of this study were previously presented in a conference titled 'The WEI International Academic Conference' in 2018.

References

- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT journal*, 56(1), 57-64.
- Alseweed, M. A. (2012). University Students' Perceptions of the Influence of Native and Non-Native Teachers. *English Language Teaching*, 5(12), 42-53.
- Anderson, P. H., Lawton, L., Rexeisen, R. J., & Hubbard, A. C. (2006). Short-term study abroad and intercultural sensitivity: A pilot study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(4), 457-469.
- Atay, D. (2005). Reflections on the cultural dimension of language teaching. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 5(3&4), 222-236.
- Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J. S. Wurzel (Ed.) *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (pp.62-77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.

- Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: A practical introduction for teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Butzkamm, W. (2003). We only learn language once. The role of the mother tongue in FL classrooms: death of a dogma. *Language learning journal*, 28(1), 29-39.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). Interrogating the "native speaker fallacy": Non-linguistic roots, non-pedagogical results. *Non-native educators in English language teaching*, 7792.
- Chen, G. M. (1997). A review of the concept of intercultural sensitivity. *Human Communication*, 1, 1-16.
- Chen, G. M. & Starosta, W. J. (1998). A review of the concept of intercultural awareness. *Human Communication*, 2, 27-54.
- Chen, G. M. & Starosta, W. J. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale. *Human Communication*, 3(1), 2-14.
- Cushner, K., & Chang, S. C. (2015). Developing intercultural competence through overseas student teaching: Checking our assumptions. *Intercultural Education*, 26(3), 165-178.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Assessing intercultural competence in study abroad students. In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and studying abroad: Research and practice* (pp. 232-256). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Engle, L., & Engle, J. (2004). Assessing language acquisition and intercultural sensitivity development in relation to study abroad program design. *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad*, 10, 219-236.
- Güven, S. (2015). EFL learners' attitudes towards learning intercultural communicative competence. Unpublished Master Thesis, Bilkent University.
- Javid, C. Z. (2016). Teaching effectiveness of native and non-native EFL teachers as perceived by preparatory year students in Saudi context. *Language in India*, 16(1), 98-121.
- Kahraman, A. (2008). A study of Cultural Aspects of English Language with Turkish Learners of English. *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 21, 1-10.
- Küllü-Sülü, A. (2014). The role of native English speaking teachers in promoting intercultural sensitivity. Unpublished Master Thesis. Bilkent, Ankara.
- Levis, J. M., Sonsaat, S., Link, S., & Barriuso, T. A. (2016). Native and nonnative teachers of L2 pronunciation: Effects on learner performance. *Tesol Quarterly*, 50(4), 894-931.
- Maum, R. (2002). Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in the English Teaching Profession. ERIC Digest. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED470982.pdf>
- Medgyes, P. (1992). Native or non-native: who's worth more?. *ELT journal*, 46(4), 340-349.
- Moussu, L., & Llorca, E. (2008). Non-native English-speaking English language teachers: History and research. *Language Teaching*, 41, 315-348.

- Mutlu, A. K., & Dollar, Y. K. (2017). Intercultural communicative competence through the eyes of Turkish university students. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 9(2), 157-178.
- Ortaçtepe, D. (2015). EFL Teachers' Identity (Re)Construction as Teachers of Intercultural Competence: A Language Socialization Approach, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 14(2), 96-112. DOI: 10.1080/15348458.2015.1019785
- Tran, T. Q. & Seepho, S. (2016). EFL Learners' Attitudes toward Intercultural communicative Language Teaching and their Intercultural Communicative Competence Development. *Journal of English Studies*, 11, 1-40.
- Williams, T. R. (2005). Exploring the impact of study abroad on students' intercultural communication skills: Adaptability and sensitivity. *Journal of studies in international education*, 9(4), 356-371.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions, and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of English Language Teaching shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).