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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

There is a close two-way relationship between language and culture and this symbiotic relationship shows that culture has an indispensable place in language teaching. In addition, in our world, which is described as a global village with great developments in information, communication and transportation technologies, it has become a normal situation for individuals with different cultural backgrounds to come together and communicate for different reasons, and this reality has turned intercultural communication into a skill that needs to be acquired. This study aims to examine the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and cultural components (CC) perspectives of pre-service teachers of English language studying in the first year and fourth year in a Turkish university setting during the 2014-2015 academic year spring term and looking for any difference between the test scores and variables of grade, gender, and GPA (Grade Point Average). The required data were collected from 85 participants with the ICC Questionnaire (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013) and the Inventory of CC (Razi, 2012). The results indicated that participants performed high scores in the ICC questionnaire and CC inventory. Moreover, the t-test results indicated that there was a significant difference between different genders and GPA groups and no significant difference between participants in the first year and fourth year of the university. According to the correlation results, high and moderate positive correlations were found between ICC, its components, and CC scores of pre-service teachers of the English language. It can be concluded that the participants had high levels of ICC and CC as well as ICC and CC scores differed regarding the gender and GPA variables, and ICC levels and CC levels had a positive correlation.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, culture, pre-service teacher of English language.

INTRODUCTION

Culture has a significant place in language teaching and learning, as it shapes linguistic competence and communicative competence, and fosters a deeper understanding of the context in which language is used. The fact that there is a two-way and close relationship between the phenomena of language and culture makes it necessary to use these two concepts together and to mention the other when one of these two concepts is used. Culture profoundly influences language by shaping vocabulary, expressions, and communication norms. For instance, cultural values affect the preference for direct or indirect communication. On the other hand, language affects culture by acting as a means of transferring traditions, values, beliefs, and social norms, contributing to the preservation and development of cultural identities.

As a manifestation of the two-way relationship that naturally exists between language and culture, the concept of culture inherently has an important place in language teaching. The relationship between English language teaching (ELT) and culture is described as a complex and symbiotic bond. Many scholars emphasized the profound interconnection between ELT and culture. To illustrate, Kramersch (1993) emphasizes that vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and communication norms are all inherently linked to cultural contexts and it is difficult to separate them from culture and cultural norms. At that point, ELT becomes a medium for cultural transmission. Regarding the role of language as a medium for communication, Hall (1976) emphasizes that language serves as a powerful tool for sharing social values and shaping cultural identities. According to Byram (1997), ELT is not only concerned with language proficiency or communicative competence but also encompasses intercultural communicative competence, enabling learners to navigate cultural differences effectively. As Alptekin (2002) points out, educators enable students to better understand the different contexts in which English is used by incorporating culture into ELT. This inherent relationship enables ELT not only to impart language skills but also, as supported by Lazar (2003), to train culturally aware and effective communicators and ultimately prepare students for intercultural interactions in our globalized age. As a result of all discussions on the interaction of culture and language teaching processes, the effective integration of culture into ELT is profoundly recommended (Kramersch, 1993).

Today we are living in an interconnected and globalized world that is described as a global village (Modiano, 1999), and intercultural communication has become a critical competence (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Nations and communities become increasingly multicultural, borders blur, and the place of culture in communication becomes more distinct and essential (Chua, 2018). In such a context, ELT plays an important role in developing intercultural communication competence by enabling language users to interact effectively with different cultures through language. ELT inherently comprises cultural components and prepares learners for successful interactions in a multicultural setting. With the integration of intercultural communication into language teaching, ELT has moved beyond communicative competence and grammatical competence. Intercultural communication encompasses the understanding and exchange of ideas between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Samovar et al., 2014), and ELT endeavors to bring individuals to a level of intercultural

communicative competence within the language learning process. ELT fosters intercultural competence by facilitating discussions on cultural diversity, encouraging empathy, and incorporating materials that highlight global perspectives (Fantini, 2015) and encompasses the understanding and exchange of ideas between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Samovar et al., 2014). Incorporating intercultural communication into ELT empowers learners to navigate real-world situations and develop intercultural competence.

With globalization and its outcomes, individuals from different cultures have started to contact different people from different cultures and feel a huge need to communicate in an intercultural context (Khawaja et al., 2014). The symbiotic relationship between intercultural communication and ELT has become inevitable, and the role of ELT in developing intercultural communicative competence has become increasingly essential.

Following the importance of culture and communicative competence, intercultural communicative competence, and studies about it have started to gain more importance. In this respect, intercultural communicative competence and cultural perspectives of the pre-service teachers of the English language are discussed in this study, and it is aimed to contribute to the related literature.

Literature Review

With the advancements in technology and outcomes of globalization, so as the needs of language users, studies, study topics and principles about language teaching and learning have started to change naturally. More researchers concentrated on recent topics such as culture, discourse, communication, etc. One of these significant scholars, Hymes (1972) studied language, sociolinguistics, and discourse. He argued that studying only the structure and rules of a language is not enough to explain the process of language and language functions in contrast to the ideas of Chomsky (1957, 1965). By developing the linguistic competence of Chomsky, he came up with the idea of communicative competence (CC). Hymes viewed communicative competence not as having the ability to possess good knowledge of grammar and grammar rules but as the ability to have the knowledge of language and use it in a way that is appropriate to the context of subjects. The communicative competency model helped sociolinguistic studies gain great importance in a short time. Communicative competence theory has gained popularity swiftly and it was studied by more scholars (Celce-Murcia, 2008; Van Ek, 1986; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). Upon the studies of Hymes, certain classifications for CC were constructed. Canale and Swain tried to group the components of CC under three headings: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Later, sociolinguistic competence was studied again by Canale, and two subtitles of sociocultural competence and discourse competence were derived. However, the CC model of Canale and Swain received strict criticism from some other scholars. Bachman (1990) stated that great variations occurred in the correlation results when analyzing the constructs of the CC model and it was an important problem for the design of the model. He also found the discourse competence definition of Canale insufficient as it was dealing only with formal and functional sides of language discourse. Schachter (1990), another scholar

criticizing the CC model, found it difficult to understand and stated that it was explained inadequately. Her main critics were about the validity problem of components in a similar way to the views of Bachman and about the improper integration of pragmatics into the model. Similarly, Alptekin (2002, p. 57) interrogated the pedagogical model of communicative competence and charged it “to be utopian, unrealistic, and constraining in relation to English as an International Language (EIL).” The standardized nature and the native speaker idealization of CC forced Alptekin to state this idea and focus heavily on the cultural and intercultural dimensions. Despite these kinds of critics, CC has become one of the most popular topics in language and communication studies.

Upon the extensive studies on communicative competence, some new variables and points started to be much more significant. It is considered that learning English and other languages as a foreign language, second language or native language possess great importance in the language teaching-learning process. Because English is not learned by many people as a native language, the division between “native” and “native-like” became less important (Savignon, 2007). Additionally, it was remarked by Guilherme (2000) that multi-dimensional cultural awareness and admission of self and self-culture and others and others’ culture are crucially required for real communication.

With the great focus on communicative competence, integration of culture into language teaching learning context, and interactions with people from different cultures, the term intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has started to gain importance.

Different definitions were derived for ICC focusing on different aspects of the term. Fantini (2006, p. 1) defines ICC as “the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself.” Rathje (2007) makes one of the well-known definitions and states that ICC is the ability to comprehend and admit how others feel, think, and behave and to achieve successful communication with others. Byram (1997) and Kramsch (2013) studied ICC and underlined the importance of teaching language in a way that allows communication and interaction beyond boundaries.

The number of national and international studies focusing on culture, communication and intercultural communication is increasing exponentially every day. Nowadays, the concept of culture is studied in relation to different disciplines and this situation can be briefly exemplified as follows; culture and education (Özkan, 2006), culture and politics (Ersoy, 2018), culture and art (Cengiz, 2010), culture and media (Kocadaş, 2005), culture and art design (Tokgöz Gün, 2020), culture and music (Polat, 2020) culture and health (Kaplan, 2010), culture and language (Reinhardt et al.), and this list can be extended much more. Since the word culture is an umbrella term with a very broad meaning, it is narrowed down to communication and education and current studies related to intercultural communication and English language education are examined.

In her study emphasizing the importance of successful communication between multiple cultures, Sevimeş-Şahin (2020) examined the ICC skills of pre-service English teachers. The study showed that pre-service English teachers have a high level of ICC and that mastering in English skills improves ICC skills positively. Akayoğlu et al. (2021),

who stated that intercultural communicative skills can be developed through telecollaboration projects using technology as an alternative to the overseas experience option in the development of intercultural communication skills, focused on the concept of virtual intercultural exchange and designed some tasks and activities in which students can interact synchronously or asynchronously with their peers in other contexts. Kanat-Mutluoğlu (2016) examined the relationship between intercultural communication and willingness to communicate in a second/foreign language of university-level learners of English. She revealed that intercultural communication and willingness to communicate in a second/foreign language had a positive interaction with each other, and they had interdependency on one another. Gedik Bal and Savaş (2022) studied the perceptions and practices of state school teachers of English in Turkey regarding the relationship between intercultural issues and intercultural language learning and teaching. They reported that certain teacher practices contribute to students' intercultural competence development, however, the teachers of English were in need of professional guidance and resources on intercultural competence.

Apart from the studies conducted with the participants, Demirbaş (2013) investigated the intercultural elements in English language textbooks used for English language instruction in Turkish primary schools. According to the results of the study, it was determined that the written and visual contents of the books under investigation included target culture-specific items more than the intercultural ones, and, intercultural items were mostly related to cultures of hegemonic countries like Japanese, French and German. In a similar study analyzing the textbooks used in English language teaching, Ulum and Bada (2016) examined state-recommended English textbooks used in educational institutions of the Turkish Ministry of Education by focusing on the inner and outer circle cultural elements. They found that outer circle elements occupied a significant place in the content of course materials with two folds frequency compared to inner circle elements. Additionally, in another study, Köksal and Ulum (2021) analyzed culture in another English language textbook series published by an international publishing house. They reported that the inner circle hegemony was dominant in the investigated textbook series and inner, outer, and expanding circle hegemonic elements were presented in different groups and sub-groups.

Research Problem

When the academic studies regarding the intercultural communication were examined in the Turkish context, it is seen that most of the studies were conducted with the participation of teachers or instructors (Gedik Bal & Savaş, 2022; Çırpan, 2021; Kaya, 2021; Özışık, et al., 2019; Cansever & Mede, 2016; Köroğlu, 2016; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Atay et al, 2009; Bayyurt, 2006), and EFL learners (Özdemir, 2023; Varol, 2023; Kuluşaklı, 2022; Nazlı, 2022; Gün, 2021; Köşker, 2020, Korkmaz-Aslan et al., 2019; Ögüt & Olkun, 2018; Güneş & Mede, 2019; Çelik, 2018; Ekmekçi, 2017; Güven, 2015). Few of the studies focused on pre-service teachers (Eren, 2023; Gökberk, 2021; Sevime-sahin, 2020; Hismanoglu, 2011). Since there are fewer studies on pre-service ELT teachers' ICC in the existing literature, this study serves to fill this gap.

This study was basically designed to define ICC and CC levels of pre-service teachers of English language studying in the first and fourth years at the university. By examining the scores obtained from ICC and CC surveys, descriptive results and main tendencies were calculated with a statistical analysis program, and any correlation between the scores was searched if there was any. In conjunction with this aim, the research questions were conducted below:

RQ 1 – What are the intercultural communicative competence and cultural component levels of pre-service teachers of English language?

RQ 2 – Is there any significant difference between the intercultural communicative competence scores and variables of gender, study year, and GPA scores of the participants?

RQ 3 – Is there any significant difference between the cultural components scores and variables of gender, study year, and GPA scores of the participants?

RQ 4 – Is there any correlation between the scores of the intercultural communicative competence and the cultural components of the participants?

METHOD

Model of the Study

This study is a descriptive survey study in a quantitative research manner, and required data were collected with a questionnaire of ICC and an inventory of CC which were administrated to pre-service English language teachers. Quantitative research is “explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods” (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2000). The descriptive survey model is “a research approach that aims to describe a past or current situation as it exists in order to make a general judgment about the current situation” (Karasar, 2012).

Study Group of the Research

This research was conducted at the English language teaching department of the Faculty of Education at a Turkish state university in southwest Turkey during the 2014-2015 academic year spring term. A total of 85 pre-service English teachers voluntarily participated in the study. Participants took place in two groups: 54 participants in first year and 31 participants in fourth year. Of the 54 participants at first year, there were 39 females (72.22%) and 15 males (27.78%). Of the 31 participants in fourth year, there were 21 females (67.74%) and 10 males (32.26%). When all participants were assumed as a single group, 60 females (70.59%) and 25 males (29.41 %) form the sample of the study. The average age of the 54 participants in the first year was 19.33 (SD = .64, range = 18~21, median = 19). The average age of the 31 participants in the fourth year was 23.06 (SD = 1.44, range = 21~28, median = 23). Also, at the single group assumption, the average age of the 85 participants was 20.69 (SD = 2.06, range = 18~28, median = 20). All participants started at the university with the results of a general ability test and an English language test. After being registered at the university, all participants were required to pass

an English proficiency test administrated by the School of Foreign Languages at the university and they attend nearly the same courses offered by the department therefore participants are assumed approximately similar to each other except for their individual attempts to expose to target language and foreign culture. 10 students from fourth year stated to visit an abroad country for a short period and 10 for a long period. Also, one male participant from first year and one female participant from fourth year were international students with a foreign nationality.

Data Collection Tools

In line with the aims of the research Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) questionnaire was administered to evaluate the participants' ICC levels, and the inventory of Cultural Components (CC) was administered to collect information about their ideas toward the cultural components. ICC questionnaire was a five-point Likert-type scale developed by Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013) based on Deardorff (2006). After constructing the framework, Delphi process, expert ideas, and piloting several times, Mirzaei and Forouzandeh formed the last version of the questionnaire with the acceptable reliability Cronbach's alpha rate ($\alpha = .71$) and the questionnaire was composed of 22 items (Min = 22 and Max = 110) points. In the ICC questionnaire, 12 items were related to the knowledge dimension about "cultural self-awareness, culture-related information, linguistic knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness", and five items in the skills dimension were related to assessing the individuals' "ability to communicate across cultures", and five items in attitude dimension for evaluating the individuals' "respect for and openness to different cultures as well as their ambiguity tolerance" (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013; Sariçoban, & Öz, 2014, p. 526). Higher scores on the questionnaire are the indicators of higher ICC levels while the lower scores for lower ICC levels. CC inventory developed by Razi (2012) contained 45 items that are related to the components of culture in nine components, and it was designed as a 5-point Likert-type scale. Razi found high internal validity after analysis of Cronbach's alpha coefficients ($\alpha = .94$) and factor analysis. The names of the nine components were stated as "intellectual values, lifestyles, media, artistic values, family, minor values, major values, and formal values". A high correlation was found between the components in the ICC by conducting Pearson correlation analysis.

Data Collection

All participants who agreed to participate in the study reflected their ideas and preferences by answering the 22 items at ICC questionnaire and 45 items at CC inventory both of which were designed on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Also, some demographic information like gender, age group, and GPA score for the ICC questionnaire and department, year, gender, age, nationality, mother tongue, foreign languages, and abroad experience for ICC were required to be answered before the items of the scales. Besides these demographic data, there is one more item at ICC part with two options of yes or no that look for the idea of whether curriculums of language teaching should include cultural elements from other cultures or not. If participants give a negative answer to this

question, they need to leave the following 45 items of CC inventory untouched but if they give the answer of yes, they need to state ideas about the items.

Data Analysis

In the study, two surveys were administered face-to-face by the researcher and the collected data were analyzed by using the SPSS 25 software program. Before the analysis of the data, the requirements of statistical assumptions of quantitative data were tested. The collected data were coded and analyzed. To fulfill the assumptions and search for a normal distribution of data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, histogram, normal Q-Q plots, box plots demonstrations, and the skewness and kurtosis measures were estimated. The results of all these tests and analyses indicated that data were distributed normally, and parametric tests can be used with the collected data. Additionally, the Spearman (Rho) correlation coefficient test was used to look for the relation between the results of the ICC questionnaire and the CC inventory. Then, descriptive analysis was performed to reveal frequency (n), percentage (%), arithmetic mean (X), standard deviation (SD), minimum score (Min) and maximum score (Max), t-test (t), and correlation rate (p) results obtained from the ICC questionnaire and CC inventory (Büyükoztürk et al., 2017).

To determine the ICC levels of the participants according to their mean scores obtained from the ICC questionnaire and to describe the quantitative data with qualitative expressions, cut-off points were defined to judge participants' ICC levels by Sariçoban, & Öz (2014). As the ICC questionnaire was administrated in a 5-point Likert type, the mean scores were categorized under three groups for five options from totally agree to totally disagree. The mean scores between 3.5 and 5.0 referred to a high level of ICC that corresponded to the 'totally agree' and 'agree' options on the ICC questionnaire. The mean scores between 2.5 and 3.4 showed a moderate level of ICC that corresponded to the 'neither agree nor disagree' option on the ICC questionnaire. Lastly, the mean scores between 2.4 and 1.0 demonstrated to low level of ICC. In the data analysis part of this study, these mentioned criteria were used to describe the ICC levels of the participants.

FINDINGS

Intercultural Communicative Competence and Cultural Components Levels

The first research question of the research was related to revealing the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and cultural components (CC) scores of the pre-service English teachers. The ICC and CC scores were analyzed separately for the scores of the participants at the first year and fourth year of the university in order to see any difference that could signal the effect of university training on ICC and CC levels.

To find the ICC and CC test scores of participants at different levels, descriptive statistical analyses were performed, and the values of mean and standard deviation were calculated with the other values, and they were tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for ICC

Component	n	Min	Max	M	SD
ICC Knowledge	85	2.33	4.83	3.83	.41
ICC Skill	85	2.20	5	3.80	.58
ICC Attitude	85	1.50	5	3.87	.52
ICC Total	85	2.50	4.68	3.81	.41

As it was illustrated in Table 1, the collected data were analyzed according to the responses of the participants obtained from the ICC questionnaire. There were 85 participants and the mean score of the participants in the “ICC Knowledge” component ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .41$) was found high. The mean score of the participants in the “ICC Skills” component ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .58$) was found to be high. The mean score of the “ICC Attitude” component ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .52$) indicated again a high level of ICC attitude. When the total scores of the participants were analyzed, the overall mean score in ICC ($M = 3.81$, $SD = .41$) corresponded to a high level of ICC.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for CC Scores

Components	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Intellectual Values	85	2.71	5.00	4.17	.63
Lifestyles	85	2.13	5.00	3.59	.74
Behaviours	85	2.80	5.00	4.32	.63
Media	85	1.67	5.00	3.88	.77
Artistic values	85	2.25	5.00	4.33	.77
Family	85	1.00	5.00	4.24	.75
Minor values	85	1.25	5.00	3.69	1.00
Major values	85	2.50	5.00	4.20	.69
Formal values	85	1.33	5.00	4.02	.92
Total	85	2.82	5.00	4.02	.52

The analysis of the scores of the participants obtained from the CC inventory indicated that the mean CC score of the participants was high level ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .52$) for all 85 pre-service teachers of English language in Table 2. Together with the analysis of total mean scores, the mean scores were calculated for each nine components with minimum, maximum, and standard deviation scores. When the mean scores of the components of the CC inventory were ranked from the highest mean component score to the lowest one, the following ranking emerged: for the ‘artistic values’ component high level of CC score ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .77$), ‘behaviours’ component high level of CC score ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .63$), for ‘family’ component high level of CC score ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .75$), for ‘major values’ component high level of CC score ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .69$), for ‘intellectual values’ component high level of CC score ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .63$), for ‘formal values’ component high level of CC score ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .92$), for ‘media’ component high level of CC score ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .77$), for ‘minor values’ component high level of CC score ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.00$), for ‘lifestyles’ component high level of CC score ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .74$).

Examination of ICC scores regarding certain variables

The second research question was based on the examination of the ICC level of the participants in relation to certain variables. Therefore, the scores of the participants in the ICC questionnaire were analyzed according to

three variables gender, study year, and GPA in order to see whether there was any possible relation between the ICC mean scores and these three variables. As there were two grouping variables at gender and study year, an independent samples t-test was used, but although there were four groups at GPA variable, all participants took place in two groups (2.01-3.0, 3.01-4.0), and the independent samples t-test was also used for the analysis of GPA variable.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-test for ICC Scores and Gender

Components	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
ICC Knowledge	Female	60	3.91	.39	83	2.61	.011*
	Male	25	3.64	.52			
ICC Skill	Female	60	3.87	.61	83	1.88	.063
	Male	25	3.61	.48			
ICC Attitude	Female	60	3.94	.57	83	1.86	.067
	Male	25	3.71	.36			
ICC Total	Female	60	3.88	.38	83	2.72	.008*
	Male	25	3.63	.42			

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

As illustrated in Table 3, a significant difference between ICC knowledge component scores of female participants ($M = 3.91, SD = .39$) and male participants ($M = 3.64, SD = .52$) was found ($t(83) = 2.61, p < .05$) and the ICC mean score of female was higher than the ICC mean score of male participants. For the second component of ICC Skills, the ICC mean score of female participants ($M = 3.87, SD = .61$) was higher than the ICC mean score of the male participants ($M = 3.61, SD = .48$), but no significant difference was found between the mean score of female and male participants in ICC skills component ($t(83) = 1.88, p > .05$). The third component was ICC attitude component, and the ICC mean score of female participants ($M = 3.94, SD = .57$) was higher than the ICC mean score of male participants ($M = 3.71, SD = .36$). When the mean scores were compared, no significant difference was reported in ICC attitude component ($t(83) = 1.8, p > .05$). Lastly, the total ICC scores of all participants were compared, and the mean ICC score of females ($M = 3.88, SD = .38$) was higher than the mean ICC score of males ($M = 3.63, SD = .42$). There was a significant difference between the total ICC scores of females and males ($t(83) = 2.72, p < .05$).

Table 4. Independent Samples t-test for ICC Scores and Study Year

Components	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
ICC Knowledge	First-year participants	54	3.85	.45	83	.61	.545
	Fourth-year participants	31	3.79	.45			
ICC Skill	First-year participants	54	3.77	.60	83	-.57	.572
	Fourth-year participants	31	3.85	.56			
ICC Attitude	First-year participants	54	3.83	.57	83	.53	.596
	Fourth-year participants	31	3.81	.45			
ICC Total	First-year participants	54	3.80	.40	83	.20	.840
	Fourth-year participants	31	3.80	.41			

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

In the second research question, the study year of the participants was another variable, so the ICC total scores and ICC component scores were analyzed and illustrated in Table 4. The mean ICC knowledge score of the first-

year participants ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .45$) was higher than the mean ICC knowledge score of the fourth-year participants ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .45$), and no significant difference was found ($t(83) = .61$, $p > .05$). For ICC skill component, the mean score of the first-year participants ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .60$) was lower than the mean score of the fourth-year participants ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .56$), and no significant difference was found ($t(83) = -.57$, $p > .05$). For ICC attitude component, the mean score of the first-year participants ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .57$) was higher than the mean ICC knowledge score of the fourth-year participants ($M = 3.81$, $SD = .45$), and no significant difference was found ($t(83) = .53$, $p > .05$). For the total ICC scores, the mean ICC score of the first-year participants ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .40$) was the same with the mean ICC score of the fourth-year participants ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .41$), and no significant difference was found ($t(83) = .20$, $p > .840$) normally.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-test for ICC Scores and GPA

Components	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
ICC Knowledge	Between 2.01 and 3.00	33	3.75	.38	83	-1.310	.194
	Between 3.01 and 4.00	52	3.88	.48			
ICC Skill	Between 2.01 and 3.00	33	3.62	.56	83	-2.320	.023*
	Between 3.01 and 4.00	52	3.91	.57			
ICC Attitude	Between 2.01 and 3.00	33	3.72	.59	83	-2.166	.033*
	Between 3.01 and 4.00	52	3.97	.45			
ICC Total	Between 2.01 and 3.00	33	3.67	.32	83	-2.204	.030*
	Between 3.01 and 4.00	52	3.88	.44			

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

In the second research question, the third variable was the GPA scores of the participants. The ICC total scores and ICC component scores were analyzed and presented in Table 5. The mean 'ICC knowledge' score of the participants with GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .38$) was lower than the mean 'ICC knowledge' score of the participants with GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00 ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .48$), and no significant difference was found ($t(83) = -1.310$, $p > .05$).

The mean 'ICC skill' score of the participants with the GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .56$) was lower than the mean 'ICC skill' score of the participants with the GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00 ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .57$), and a significant difference was found ($t(83) = -2.320$, $p < .05$).

The mean 'ICC attitude' score of the participants with GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .59$) was lower than the mean 'ICC attitude' score of the participants with GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00 ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .45$), and a significant difference was found ($t(83) = -2.166$, $p < .05$).

Lastly, the mean ICC score of the participants with the GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .32$) was lower than the mean ICC score of the participants with the GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00 ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .44$), and a significant difference was found ($t(83) = -2.204$, $p < .05$).

Examination of CC scores regarding certain variables

The third research question was based on the examination of CC scores regarding certain variables in detail. In order to find an answer to the third research question, CC scores were examined again in relation to three variables of gender, study year, and GPA score. All variables were composed of two sub-dimensions and independent samples t-tests were used to analyze the data.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-test for CC Scores and Gender

Component	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
CC Total	Female	60	4.11	.52	83	2.765	.007*
	Male	25	3.78	.45			

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Regarding the CC instruments test results in Table 6, the mean score of female participants ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .52$) was higher than the mean score of male participants ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .45$), and a statistically significant difference was found between two groups of participants according to their gender ($t(83) = 2.765$, $p < .05$).

Table 7. Independent Samples t-test for CC Scores and Grade

Component	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
CC Total	First-year participants	54	4.01	.47	83	-.178	.859
	Fourth-year participants	31	4.03	.61			

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

In Table 7, the mean scores of the participants in the CC test were reported regarding the group variable of the participants. It was indicated that there was no significant difference between the CC mean scores of the first-year participants ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .47$) and the fourth-year participants ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .61$), ($t(83) = -.178$, $p > .05$).

Table 8. Independent Samples t-test for CC Scores and GPA

Component	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
CC Total	Between 2.01 and 3.00	33	3.86	.54	83	-2.175	.032*
	Between 3.01 and 4.00	52	4.11	.49			

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

When Table 8 was examined, a significant difference was reported between the score of the participants with GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .54$) and the mean score of the participants with GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00 ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .49$), ($t(83) = -2.175$, $p < .05$).

The possible relationship between ICC and CC scores

The fourth research question of the study was about any possible relation between the scores of participants obtained from the ICC questionnaire and CC inventory. Any possible correlation between the participants' ICC and CC mean scores was questioned and analyzed statistically by using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. To see the possible relation, the analysis was extended and three sub-dimensions of ICC were included in the analysis process, therefore the correlations between ICC, knowledge component (first sub-

dimension), skills component (second sub-dimension), attitude component (third sub-dimension) and CC mean scores were computed and presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Correlation Between ICC and CC scores

Component		ICC Total	1	2	3	CC
ICC Total	r					
	p					
	N					
1 - Knowledge	r	.908**				
	p	.000				
	N	85				
2 - Skills	r	.716**	.465**			
	p	.000	.000			
	N	85	85			
3 - Attitude	r	.732**	.521**	.484**		
	p	.000	.000	.000		
	N	85	85	85		
CC	r	.379**	.331**	.288**	.359**	
	p	.000	.002	.007	.001	
	N	85	85	85	85	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***Correlation Coefficient: 0<r<0.30: Weak; 0.31<r<0.70: Moderate; 0.71<r<1.0: Strong.

When the relation between ICC scores and other results was examined in Table 9, it was found that there was a positive strong correlation between ICC and knowledge component $r(85) = .908, p < .001$, a positive strong correlation between ICC and skills $r(85) = .716, p < .001$, a positive strong correlation between ICC and attitude $r(85) = .732, p < .001$, a positive moderate correlation between ICC and CC scores $r(85) = .379, p < .001$. Additionally, among the ICC components, it was estimated that there was a positive moderate correlation between knowledge and skills components $r(85) = .465, p < .001$, a positive moderate correlation between knowledge and attitude components $r(85) = .521, p < .001$, and again a positive moderate correlation between skills and attitude components $r(85) = .484, p < .001$. When the relation between CC scores and ICC components was examined, it was found that there was a positive moderate correlation between CC scores and ICC knowledge component scores $r(85) = .331, p < .005$, a positive weak correlation between CC scores and ICC skills component scores $r(85) = .288, p < .05$, and lastly a positive moderate correlation between CC scores and ICC attitude component scores $r(85) = .359, p = .001$.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

This study focused on the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and cultural components (CC) scores of the first-year and fourth-year pre-service teachers of the English language who were studying at the Faculty of Education at a state University in Turkey and tried to define the participants' scores, examine them in relation to some variables and look for the correlation between the results of two data sets and their sub-components.

Firstly, descriptive analysis results of ICC and CC instruments were computed and presented separately for total scores of ICC, ICC components, total CC, and CC components with mean, standard deviation, minimum, and

maximum scores. The ICC and CC scores of the participants were found to be above half of the total point. The mean score for the “ICC knowledge” dimension, “ICC skills” dimension, and “ICC attitude” dimension was high, so the overall ICC score was high. Therefore, it can be said that pre-service teachers of English had a high level of ICC in general. When the scores of CC were examined, it was revealed that participants had high scores for all components of ‘artistic values’, ‘behaviours’, ‘family’, ‘major values’, ‘intellectual values’, ‘formal values’ ‘media’, ‘minor values’, and ‘lifestyles’ as ranked from the component with the highest score to the lowest one. The overall CC score was normally reported as high level. This finding showed that pre-service teachers paid a high level of attention to the culture, cultural elements, and integration of cultural elements in language.

Secondly, the ICC scores of the participants were analyzed according to three variables of gender, study year, and GPA score. For the gender variable, the mean scores of the female participants were higher than the mean scores of the male participants in all three components of ICC knowledge, ICC skills, and ICC attitude. For total ICC scores, the mean score of females was again higher than the mean score of males with a significant difference. It showed that the ICC level of the female pre-service teachers of English was higher than the ICC level of the male pre-service teachers.

For study year variable, the mean ICC knowledge component score of the first-year participants was higher than the mean ICC knowledge component score of the fourth-year participants, the mean ICC skill component score of the first-year participants was lower than the mean ICC skill component score of the fourth-year participants, the mean ICC attitude component score of the first-year participants was slightly higher than the mean ICC knowledge component score of the fourth-year participants. For the total ICC, the mean ICC component score of the first-year participants was the same with the mean ICC component score of the fourth-year participants.

In the same way, ICC and ICC component scores were analyzed in relation to the GPA scores. The mean ‘ICC knowledge’ score of the participants with the GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 was lower than the mean ‘ICC knowledge’ score of the participants with the GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00. The mean ‘ICC skill’ score of the participants with the GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 was lower than the mean ‘ICC skill’ score of the participants with the GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00. The mean ‘ICC attitude’ score of the participants with the GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 was lower than the mean ‘ICC attitude’ score of the participants with the GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00. For ICC total scores, the mean ICC score of the participants with the GPA score between 2.01 and 3.00 was lower than the mean ICC score of the participants with the GPA score between 3.01 and 4.00.

Thirdly, the CC scores of the participants were analyzed statistically again concerning gender, study year, and GPA score variables. Female participants gained higher scores than male participants at CC inventory and this difference was reported as significant. The mean scores of the first-year participants in the CC test were slightly lower than the mean score of the fourth-year participants with no significant difference. Also, the CC scores of

the participants with GPA scores between 2.01 and 3.00 were significantly lower than the scores of the participants with GPA scores between 3.01 and 4.00.

Fourthly, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was applied to find any possible correlations between the scores of ICC, its sub-components (knowledge, skills, and attitude), and CC. According to the results of the analysis, the findings could be stated as follows: a positive strong correlation between ICC and knowledge, a positive strong correlation between ICC and skills, a positive strong correlation between ICC and attitude, and a positive moderate correlation between ICC and CC score. For the ICC components, the correlation was reported as a positive moderate correlation between knowledge and skills components, a positive moderate correlation between knowledge and attitude components, and a positive moderate correlation between skills and attitude components. Lastly for CC scores and ICC components scores, a positive moderate correlation between CC scores and ICC knowledge component scores, a positive weak correlation between CC scores and ICC skills component scores, and a positive moderate correlation between CC scores and ICC attitude component scores. The correlation between the pairs indicates that any increase or decrease in one member of the pair will probably affect the others and cause them to increase or decrease in the same direction.

To sum up all the findings and discussion, pre-service teachers of English had high levels both in competence of ICC and competence of CC. The total ICC level of pre-service teachers of English language was high, and this was regarded to be positive as it is a desired and expected aspect for teacher candidates to have a positive attitude toward ICC. This finding supports the results of the previous studies conducted to determine the ICC levels of pre-service teachers of the English language. Sariçoban and Öz (2014) found that the overall pre-service ELT teacher had a good ICC level, and similarly, in her study, Sevime Sahin (2020) reported high levels of ICC for nearly the whole sample. Moreover, Gökberk (2021) stated that the level of ICC of pre-service ELT teachers was high. The finding of the present study about the overall ICC level of pre-service teachers of English was in line with the previous studies.

The pre-service teachers of the English language also performed high scores in the CC inventory which indicated that they hold positive attitudes towards culture and integration of cultural elements in ELT which was again a positive situation. Similar to this finding, Razi and Tekin (2017) expressed the importance of the connection between language and culture in their study and found that trainee teachers in language teaching departments had high expectations regarding the integration of cultural elements into the language teaching process and language teaching curriculums. Also, Ulum (2016: 231) used the CC inventory to examine the cultural preferences of foreign language teachers and reported that “cultural elements from other cultures such as lifestyle, behavior, media, artistic values, family and major values should often be included in language teaching curriculums while cultural elements like intellectual values, major and formal values should sometimes be included.” This situation signals the positive attitude toward most of the cultural elements by foreign language learners.

The ICC levels of the pre-service teachers of English were examined in detail to reveal the underpinning relation among the components and certain variables. The ICC level of female pre-service teachers of English was higher than the ICC level of male pre-service teachers of English. This result about gender variable in ICC supports the findings of previous studies by Kobayashi (2007), Pan (2007), Warriner (2007), Kim and Goldstein (2005), Kouritzin (2000), Sung and Padilla (1998), Tannen (1994) and Clark and Trafford (1995) as mentioned in Sarıçoban and Öz (2014) because all these studies reported a significant difference between the ICC levels of female and male participants. On the other hand, the same results about the difference between ICC levels of both genders conflict with the findings of the studies by Eren (2023), Gün (2021), Sarıçoban and Öz (2014), Matveev (2002); Patricia (2005); Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013) as they found no relationship between the ICC levels of female and male participants of their studies.

The ICC level of first year participants was the same as the level of fourth year participants. This finding does not support the result of the study by Sevimele-sahin (2020) as she reported that the last-year ELT students had slightly higher ICC levels than the first-year ELT students and the ELT program had a role in the improvement of the participants' ICC levels. However, as stated by Sevimele, the difference between the two groups is slightly different from each other.

The ICC level of the pre-service teachers of English with GPA scores between 3.01 and 4.00 was higher than the ICC level of the pre-service teachers of English with GPA scores of 2.01 and 3.00. Although Sarıçoban and Öz (2014) reported no relationship between ICC Levels and the Achievement of pre-service teachers of English, this study asserted that the achievement level of pre-service teachers of English could be an indicator of a high level of ICC in line with the previous studies conducted by Hişmanoğlu (2011), Koike (1996), Trosborg (1995), and Carrell (1984).

Following the investigation of the participants' ICC levels in detail, the CC levels of the pre-service teachers of English were examined in relation to the variables of gender, study year, and GPA scores. The CC level of female pre-service teachers of English was higher than the CC level of male pre-service teachers of English. The CC level of first year participants was nearly the same as the CC level of fourth-year participants. On the other hand, the CC level of the pre-service teachers of English with GPA scores between 3.01 and 4.00 was higher than the CC level of the pre-service teachers of English with GPA scores 2.01 and 3.00.

When the possible relation between ICC levels, ICC components levels, and CC levels was searched, it was reported that there was a positive correlation between all pairs of ICC and CC given as; between ICC and ICC knowledge component, between ICC and ICC skills component, between ICC and ICC attitude component, between ICC and CC, between ICC knowledge and ICC skills components, between ICC knowledge and ICC attitude components, between ICC skills and ICC attitude components, between CC and ICC knowledge component, between CC and ICC skills component, between CC and ICC attitude component. Similarly, Sarıçoban

and Öz (2014, p. 529) talked about “a strong, positive relationship between the pre-service teachers’ ICC level and all three components” and “ICC components were strongly and positively correlated with each other”. This finding was supported by the present study and developed as a correlation was found between all ICC components and CC levels. The correlation supports the reliability of the assessment and may signal the integration of cultural elements into language teaching to develop the ICC level of language learners.

SUGGESTIONS

As suggestions, in light of the related studies in the literature and the findings of this study, although the ICC levels of pre-service English language teachers are generally found to be high, there is still a potential to increase their ICC levels. This will be possible by including ICC courses in English language teaching programs or ICC topics and tasks in existing courses. In this way, it should not be left to their own personal experiences, luck, or individual opportunities in life to raise their ICC levels. For this reason, while preparing English language curricula, textbooks, lesson plans, and activities that will enable the acquisition of ICC should be included in the process, and it is recommended that teachers, administrators, curriculum and material developers should develop positive attitudes towards ICC and give importance to ICC through pre-service and in-service training. It is critical to remember that acquiring ICC is a lifelong process (Zheng, 2014) and any deficiency at the ICC level has the potential to cause miscommunication, frustration and conflict (Bennett, 2009). On the other hand, individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds bring with them their understanding of both their own and other people's cultural contexts when they interface socially, and this leads to ICC (Byram, 1997, Kramsch, 2013).

When the effects of basic variables such as gender, academic achievement, and the year of study at the university are examined in the studies on ICC, it is seen that some studies have found that these variables affect ICC levels and some studies have found that they do not affect ICC levels. For this reason, it is recommended to conduct more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative studies with different participant groups at different times with these basic variables and similar variables such as self-culture attitude, experience abroad, attitude towards different cultures, and upbringing style.

This study was limited to the voluntary participation and sincere answers of the pre-service teachers of the English language in the first year and fourth year in a Turkish university setting during the 2014-2015 academic year spring term.

ETHICAL TEXT

In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, and journal ethics rules were followed. Responsibility for any violations that may arise regarding the article belongs to the author. This study is mainly based on data collected during the 2014-2015 academic year spring term with relevant participants based on voluntary participation. Therefore, this study does not require ethics committee approval.

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