

## Enhancing Students' Ability to Comprehend Intercultural Concepts in EFL Classes

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### Abstract

Intercultural language learning has become an important focus of modern language education recently. Learners may encounter cultural barriers as well as linguistic barriers in classrooms. Therefore, teachers should follow some strategies to help them cope with these intercultural encounters by raising their cultural awareness and engaging them in culture learning. The study introduces the project called "Let's learn about other cultures" carried out during the fall semester of 2014-2015 academic year in the English preparatory school of a state university in Turkey with a group of 40 students. The project aimed at enhancing students' intercultural concept learning performance using weekly student-designed bulletins that provide information on the words, phrases, and sentences indicative of intercultural elements or concepts they encountered in their classes. The data consisted of 15 students' responses to the semi-structured interview questions on the efficiency of the project, their scores on the test on the words, and expressions practiced in the bulletins administered at the end of the semester. The results showed that most of the students were able to learn the intercultural words, phrases, and sentences studied as part of the project and they had positive views on the efficiency of the project.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communicative competence, intercultural language learning, prospective English teachers, student-designed bulletins.

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# Öğrencilerin Yabancı Dil Sınıflarında Karşılaştıkları Kültürlerarası Kavramları Öğrenme Becerilerinin Geliştirilmesi

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## Öz

Kültürlerarası dil öğreniminin yakın zamanda modern dil eğitiminin önemli bir odak noktası haline geldiği bilinmektedir. Öğrenciler, sınıf ortamında dilbilimsel engellerin yanı sıra kültürel engellerle de karşılaşabilmektedir. Bu nedenle, öğretmenler, öğrencilerin kültürel farkındalıklarını artırarak ve kültür öğrenimiyle alakadar olmalarını sağlayarak öğrencilerin yabancı dil sınıflarında karşılaşılan kültürlerarası kavramlarla başa çıkabilmeleri için bazı stratejiler takip etmelidir. Bu çalışma, 2014 – 2015 akademik yılı güz dönemi boyunca Türkiye’deki bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık sınıfında 40 kişilik bir öğrenci grubuyla uygulanan “Diğer kültürleri tanıyalım (Let’s learn about other cultures)” projesini ele almaktadır. Proje, öğrencilerin derslerde karşılaştıkları kültürel unsurları ve kavramları içinde barındıran kelime, ifade ve cümlelerle ilgili bilgi içeren ve kendileri tarafından haftalık olarak hazırlanan bültenlerin kullanılması yoluyla, öğrencilerin kültürlerarası kavramları öğrenme performanslarını geliştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada veriler, 15 öğrencinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme ve dönem sonunda bültende bulunan kültürlerarası kelime ve ifadeleri ölçen kısa sınav sonuçlarından elde edilmiştir. Dönemin sonunda öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğu, proje kapsamında çalışılan kültürlerarası kelime, ifade ve cümleleri öğrenebilmiş ve projenin etkililiği konusunda olumlu görüş belirtmişlerdir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Kültürlerarası kavramlar, kültürel engeller, kültürlerarası farkındalık, gelenek ve görenekler.

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## **1. Introduction**

It is well known that intercultural language learning has become an important focus of modern language education. The inseparability of language and culture and the need to prepare language learners for intercultural communication have been emphasized in foreign language education for a long time. Learners may encounter cultural barriers as well as linguistic barriers in classroom environments. Therefore, foreign language teachers should follow some strategies to cope with these intercultural encounters in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes to raise 'learners' cultural awareness and to engage them cognitively, behaviorally and affectively in culture learning' (Kiet Ho, 2009, p. 63).

Language teaching is related to introducing a target culture to learners, or, language learning is related to learning about another culture and acquiring knowledge of a target culture and an ability to communicate with native speakers. In other words, learning a language does not merely mean learning grammatical, lexical and phonological features of that language. It certainly has a much wider scope, entailing the ability to use language in appropriate contexts and situations. Foreign language teachers are thus expected to help learners equip themselves with what would be required of them in the course of real communication. This expected competence is called communicative competence as defined by Hymes in 1972. Hymes (1972) states that communicative competence is the ability to use language in a variety of communicative situations. In order to be communicatively competent users of language in these communicative situations, language learners should have adequate target culture knowledge and have access to the conceptual world of native speakers. Sharifian (2011) states that the extent to which individuals can participate in target groups' conceptual world is an indication of the extent to which they are the members of those groups. The interaction between individuals or members in different societies with different cultural concepts shows how much they are aware of the target cultural elements in the course of communication in target language. Sharifian (2011) maintains that;

Cultural conceptualizations are developed through interactions between the members of a cultural group and enable them to think as if in one mind, somehow more or less in a similar fashion. These conceptualizations are negotiated and renegotiated through time and across generations (p. 5).

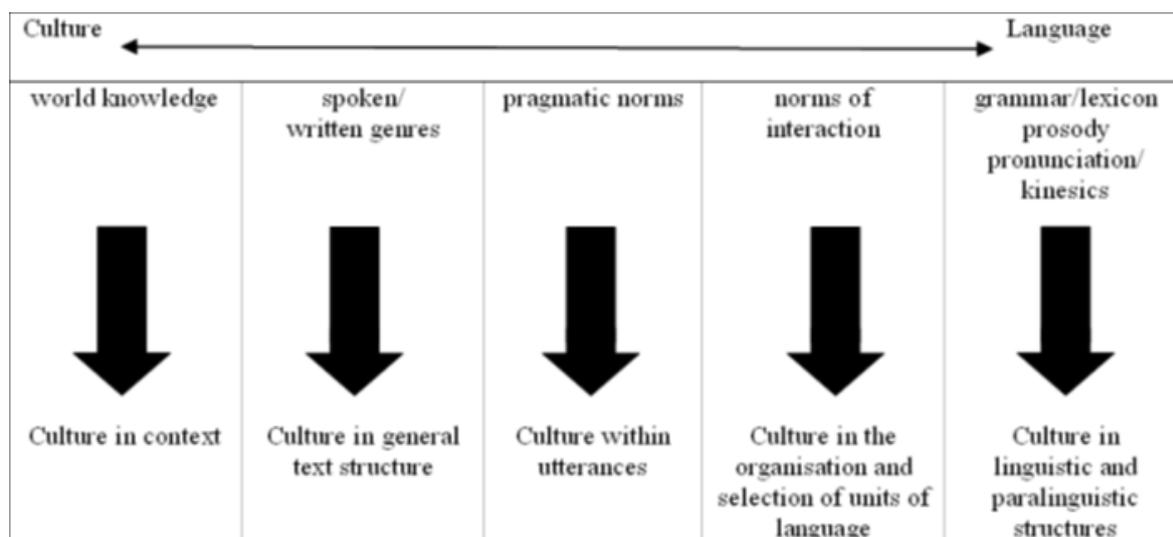
It is obvious that if the cultural conceptualizations mentioned by Sharifian are not developed enough, there is a risk of miscommunication between the speakers. This means that if language learners are not competent enough in the target language in terms of target culture-related concepts, it causes communication failure.

As Brown (1994) states, second language learning is often second culture learning. Traditionally, foreign language teaching has long focused on the acquisition and on teaching techniques rather than on the teaching of culture. However, Stern (1992) asserts that linguistic competence has fewer effects on communication failure compared with cross-cultural competence. Irving (1986) also states that mistakes regarding pronunciation and grammar can be tolerated by native-speakers, however violations concerning the routines and rules of communication are considered to be impolite and are not tolerated.

The relationship between language and culture was expressed in three statements in 1960 as (as cited in Stern, 1992);

- (1) Language is a part of culture, and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole;
- (2) Language conveys culture, so that the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of a culture; and,
- (3) Language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the classroom (p.251).

This strict and inevitable relationship between language and culture has been frequently emphasized in the literature. For instance, Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003) point out that all language structures and usage are in constant interaction with the elements of culture and no level of language is independent of them. This interaction and relationship between language and culture are illustrated in the following figure.



**Figure 1. Points of Articulation between Culture and Language (Liddicoat et al., 2003, p.9)**

As it is obvious from Figure 1, the components of linguistic competence and expression denote a representation of culture realized in versatile ways, and aspects of culture and language interact at various points on the culture-language spectrum.

### **Culture as a Fifth Language Skill in EFL Classes**

Reading, writing, listening, and speaking, four essential components of language education, are traditionally taught and practiced in EFL classes. However, the question is whether these skills can really enhance students' communicative competence, which is one of the most important goals of the current language learning and teaching approaches. The question can be expanded as 'What do we need, as language teachers, to make our students communicatively competent learners who are able to use language appropriately in all circumstances?' The answers to these questions have already been discussed extensively in the field. Bachman (1990), Brown (1994), Byram(1997), and Celce-Murcia (1995), among others, emphasize that apart from the four basic language skills, other elements regarding language use such as pragmatics, context, authentic language, target culture, or fluency should be taken into consideration. In other words, foreign language education cannot be regarded as helping students improve merely four basic language skills. It is more than that.

For a more elaborate consideration of such aspects of language use, one needs to admit that language learning is culture learning in a way (Byram, 1997; Damen, 1997). Brown (1994) states

that when we teach a language, we teach customs, traditions, and ways of thinking, feeling and acting at the same time. Damen (1997) points out that culture learning can be regarded as an additional fifth skill to four traditional skills in language education. However, teaching culture as a skill, compared with reading, writing, speaking, and listening, has been undermined in language instruction. Language instructors and practitioners may think that teaching four basic skills is sufficient since students can gain some insights into the target culture during the process. In contrast, Kramersch (2003) states that culture should not be considered as an additional fifth skill to reading, writing, listening, and speaking; it should be at the center of language teaching if language is to be regarded as social practice.

### **Intercultural Communicative Competence**

The idea behind the concept of intercultural communicative competence is that people having different social identities and cultures interact with each other; therefore, EFL learners should be competent enough both in the native and target cultures to maintain this interaction. Alptekin (2002) questions the validity of native speaker-based communicative competence and states that this kind of communicative competence model is unrealistic particularly for EFL learners considering the lingua franca status of English language. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence should be aimed in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Alptekin also refers to Hyde (1998) stating that intercultural communicative competence should be developed among English as an International Language (EIL) learners through both linguistic and cultural training to enable them to communicate effectively with others.

With the advent of the concept of intercultural communicative competence, culture teaching in foreign language education has gained importance. Students are expected to update their behaviors, beliefs, and values based on the incoming information regarding those of the target culture, and be tolerant to other cultures. Byram (2006) enumerates affective, behavioral and cognitive capacities which an interculturally competent learner needs to possess as follows;

Attitudes/Affective Capacities: Acknowledgement of the identities of others, respect for otherness, tolerance for ambiguity, empathy;

Behaviour Capacities: Flexibility, communicative awareness;

Cognitive Capacities: Knowledge, knowledge discovery, interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness (pp. 22-26).

In line with this framework, in intercultural language learning, students are expected to reach a level of competence in which they can interpret the behaviors, beliefs, and values of target language speakers and interact with them accordingly. EFL learners are regarded as intercultural speakers who have knowledge of one or more cultures and social identities, and who enjoy discovering and maintaining relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds (Byram, 2006; Kramersch, 2003).

Singhal (1998) asserts that foreign language teachers are expected to present the target culture in a systematic way with an accurate picture or representation of the target culture and language. Likewise, Seelye (1993) states that foreign language teachers should try to accomplish the following seven goals (as cited in Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993) and help their students;

(1) Develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours;

- (2) Develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave;
- (3) Become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture;
- (4) Increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language;
- (5) Develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence;
- (6) Develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture;
- (7) [Develop] intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and empathy towards its people (pp. 7-8).

It is clear from what Seelye emphasizes in these seven goals that culture is an inevitable part of language teaching. The question is whether language teachers and learners, especially in EFL contexts, are aware of the importance of culture and its integration in the language learning process. When the related literature is reviewed in Turkey as an example of EFL context, it can be realized that various studies have been conducted on the role of culture and intercultural instruction in classes. For example, Atay et al. (2009) investigated the opinions and attitudes of Turkish teachers of English on intercultural competence teaching and aimed to reveal how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes were reflected in their classroom applications. They concluded that teachers were aware of the role of culture, but they did not often integrate it into their teaching. Atay (2005), in another study, discussed the opinions of the prospective teachers of English on the cultural dimension of language teaching. She stated that the objectives put forward in the Foreign Language Education curriculum prepared by the Council of Higher Education in Turkey, which emphasizes the role of culture teaching, do not go far from the theory. Similarly, Yeşil and Demiröz (2017) analyzed the instructor perceptions and opinions about the integration of target culture into foreign language courses. They reported that the instructors believed it was essential to integrate target culture, but they complained about lack of time, suggesting these two components be presented separately in language classes. Other studies (Aydemir and Mede, 2014; Gonen and Sağlam, 2012; Kahraman, 2016; Önalın, 2005; Sarıgöl and Ashton-Hay, 2005) conducted in the Turkish EFL context also yielded positive results with regard to integration of culture in ELT from the learners and teachers' perspectives.

In addition, Tuna and Razi (2016) investigated how pre- and in-service teachers of English consider the integration of culture into language teaching. They concluded that both pre- and in-service teachers gave positive responses with regard to the integration of various culture-related elements into language courses. When it comes to culture-based instruction in ELT, Bada (2000) and Genç and Bada (2005) reported on the effectiveness of culture classes in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target societies, and their contribution to the teaching profession. Likewise, Sarıçoban and Çalışkan (2011) investigated the types of cultural activities which should be included in the courses and identified students' attitudes towards cultural components.

All these studies indicate that the integration of culture in foreign language classes is attached great importance. For this reason, teachers should have the ability of acting interculturally in the course of intercultural encounters in the classroom. This means that teachers should be well-equipped with the necessary intercultural knowledge, strategies and skills so that they can guide students to help them cope with the intercultural encounters during the lessons. The students are expected to take responsibility for communication beyond the borders of their own cultural

ties in order to understand and interact with foreign or target culture and language. That will also prevent cultural misunderstandings and promote mutual understanding. In addition, having intercultural communicative competence enables students to analyze and see how different cultures relate to each other in terms of differences and similarities, thus empathize with the target values, beliefs, and behaviors. The current study, therefore, investigates the effects of explicit intercultural training on EFL students' attitudes and opinions about intercultural encounters and concepts in the foreign language learning process. In line with these considerations, the following research questions were addressed in this study;

1. What are the EFL students' opinions and attitudes about explicit intercultural training provided through the project "Let's learn about other cultures"?
2. Does the Project "Let's learn about other cultures" help students remember the intercultural elements they have learnt during the semester?

## **2. Method**

The study has a mix-method research design. Dörnyei (2007, p. 163) states that 'a mixed-methods study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process.' The participants of the study, the qualitative and quantitative data collection tools, procedure, and the materials used in the study have been explained in detail below.

### **2.1. Participants**

The participants consisted of 40 prospective English language teachers attending a preparatory class offered in a state university in Turkey. The students were attending the compulsory English preparatory class prior to their under-graduate education in the Faculty of Education. They were placed into two homogenous classes at the beginning of the academic year 2014-2015. They were offered 26-hour intensive English course on four skills on a weekly basis.

### **2.2. Procedure and Data Collection**

At the beginning of the fall semester of 2014-2015 academic year, 40 students were asked to note down all intercultural words, phrases, and sentences regarding traditions and customs they encountered in their main course, reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar classes. The researcher and students came together once a week working cooperatively so as to prepare a bulletin based on the intercultural elements of the week. Then, the bulletin named as "Let's learn about other cultures" including the explanation part was kept on display on the notice board of the school each week. At the end of the semester, the researcher interviewed fifteen randomly selected students about the efficiency of the project with respect to intercultural competence development. As the qualitative data collection tool, semi-structured interview was employed. As Dörnyei (2007, p.136) states, during the semi-structured interview the interviewer guides and directs the interviewees and lets them elaborate on certain issues. For this reason, these types of interviews are suitable for cases when the researchers do not want to limit the depth and breadth of the respondents' ideas. In the semi-structured interview the students were posed five questions and their answers were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed data were coded and categorized. Finally, additional quantitative data were

collected regarding student performance in learning intercultural elements via a 30-item test on the words and expressions they practiced through bulletins over the course of the study.

### **2.3. Materials**

#### **2.3.1. Bulletins**

The students participating in the study noted down all the intercultural words, phrases, sentences, sayings, and proverbs concerning traditions and customs they practiced during one semester. Their findings as to intercultural encounters fell into five categories as food/drink, sayings/proverbs/idioms, festivals, national holidays, and others. Some of these intercultural elements or concepts which the students selected and displayed in the bulletin board as part of the project are presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Sample Findings Displayed in the Project**

<b>Intercultural Element</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Haggis	food/drink	It is made from lamb's offal and served with mashed potatoes
Gumbo	food/drink	soup made in south Louisiana
One man's meat is another man's poison	sayings/proverbs/idioms	Something that one person likes may be distasteful to someone else.
Engage brain before mouth	sayings/proverbs/idioms	It means 'think about what you will say before you say it.'
Bonfire Night	festivals	a story remembered each 5th November when 'Guys' are burned in a celebration known as "Bonfire Night"
Harvest Festival	festivals	a celebration of the food grown on the land, reminds Christians of all the good things God gives them
St Patrick's Day	national holidays	17 March - The national day of Northern Ireland is St Patrick's Day
Halloween	national holidays	on October 31st, English celebrate Halloween, thought to be the one night of the year when ghosts, witches, and fairies are especially active.
Golden worms	other	traditional cure
Mahatma	other	Great Soul (Gandhi)

These intercultural elements and concepts categorized and explained by the students themselves as part of the bulletin design project were on display on the school bulletin board and the board content was updated weekly (See Appendix 1 for a more comprehensive set of items).

#### **2.3.2. Interview Questions**

In order to understand the depth of students' opinions about the efficiency of the project, the following five questions have been asked respectively in the semi-structured interview.

*Question 1: Do you think "Let's learn about other cultures" project has helped you internalize the intercultural elements you have encountered during classes? Why – Why not?*

*Question 2: How would you rate the project considering the pro and con sides? (Rate from 1 to 5) Why do you rate so?*

*Question 3: How would you rate your improvement as to intercultural elements at the end of the semester compared with your initial intercultural knowledge prior to the project? Why do you rate so?*

*Question 4: Would you use the same project as part of your future classes as a teacher? Why-Why not?*

*Question 5: In what aspects has the project improved your intercultural knowledge?*

### 2.3.3. Test on Intercultural Elements

Subsequent to the semi-structured interviews, the students took a test about the meanings of the intercultural elements studied during the semester. The test had 30 questions covering randomly selected elements from the five categories in Table 1 above, and the students were required to remember their meanings and write an explanation for each.

## 3. Results

Subsequent to the project, the researcher interviewed randomly selected 15 students regarding their views about the efficiency of project. The findings with regard to the five questions in the interview are presented below. In question 1 (Q1) and question 4 (Q4), the students were expected to answer either positively or negatively, if not remained neutral.

**Q1:** Do you think "Let's learn about other cultures" project has helped you internalize the intercultural elements you have encountered during classes? Why – Why not?

**Q4:** Would you use the same project as part of your future classes as a teacher? Why-Why not?

**Table 2. Students' Views on the Efficiency of the Project**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Frequency</i>			<i>Percentage (%)</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Neutral</i>
<b>Q1</b>	12	1	2	80	7	13
<b>Q4</b>	11	3	1	73	20	7

As the table above makes it clear, 80% of students stated that the project helped them internalize the intercultural elements they encountered during classes. Only 7% found the project to be ineffective. Likewise, 73% of the students reported that they would use the same project in their future classes as a teacher while 20% stated that they would not. This high percentage in favor of the project indicates that students have positive attitudes towards explicit intercultural training. In other words, 11 out of 15 students declared that they would use the same project as part of their future classes as teachers. This result is important in that the project seemed to raise prospective English language teachers' awareness about intercultural language learning. Some excerpts from students' responses for Q1 and Q4 in the semi-structured interview are as follows;

Student A (Q1): Yes, I can say that the project really helped me learn the new intercultural words. Thanks to the project, I started to pay more attention to these concepts in the lessons in order to note down and display them on the bulletins.

Student B (Q1): I think it did not help me at all. I would learn and internalize them without the project.

Student C (Q4): Absolutely Yes. This project is really so fun. I hope my students in the future will like it.

Student D (Q4): I would not use it in my class. Instead, I would assign my students to memorize the concepts.

**Q2:** How would you rate the project considering the pro and con sides? (Rate from 1 to 5) Why do you rate so?

**Q3:** How would you rate your improvement as to intercultural elements at the end of the semester compared with your initial intercultural knowledge prior to the project? Why do you rate so?

**Table 3. Student Ratings Concerning the Pros and Cons of the Project and Their Improvement in Terms of Intercultural Elements**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Frequency</i>					<i>Percentage (%)</i>				
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<b>Q2</b>	1	1	2	2	9	7	7	13	13	60
<b>Q3</b>	0	1	1	3	10	0	6	7	20	67

In Q2 and Q3, students were instructed to rate from one to five. The students were informed that they would rate one as the lowest and five as the highest scores. As it is clear from Table 3, 60 % of the students were totally in favor of the project. Only two students thought that the project deserved just one or two points. Similarly, the responses to the third question indicated that 67 % of the students thought the project improved their intercultural knowledge. 10 students rated the project as five out of five as to intercultural improvement. There were no students who thought that the project was totally pointless. Some opinions of the students in the interview are as follows;

Student A (Q2): I rated it highly and gave five points, because I think the project deserves it with its funny and informative aspects.

Student B (Q2): I would give two points for the project, because it takes time to prepare the bulletins weekly and I think it is not practical.

Student C (Q3): When I compare my initial intercultural knowledge with what I know now, I can say that I have really improved myself, and I feel more self-confident.

Student D (Q4) In my opinion, the project helped me remember some of the intercultural elements after the class, that is why I gave three points.

**Q5:** In what aspects has the project improved your intercultural knowledge?

The fifth question aimed to find out in what aspects the project has improved students' intercultural knowledge.

**Table 4: Students' Opinions about the Contribution of the Project**

<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Self-confidence	5	33

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Interaction with other cultures	4	27
World knowledge	4	27
Empathy	2	13

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As Table 4 makes it clear, 33 % of the students stated that the project enhanced their self-confidence as to intercultural encounters. Eight students thought that the project helped them interact with other cultures better and improve their world knowledge. According to two students, they were able to empathize with the target culture thanks to the outcomes of the project.

#### **Intercultural Elements Test Results**

In order to determine to what extent the students could remember and define the intercultural elements they identified during the semester, the teacher selected 30 intercultural elements from the five different categories and asked their meanings. Four students answered all questions correctly. The number of correct answers as to intercultural element questions ranged from 20 to 30. In other words, all students answered minimum 20 intercultural elements correctly. The average score was found to be 25.8 out of 30 points, and 86 % of the questions were answered correctly.

#### **4. Conclusion and Discussion**

The study investigated the EFL students' opinions and attitudes about explicit intercultural training provided through the project "Let's learn about other cultures" and to what extent they could remember the intercultural information they gained as part of the project in the context of an English preparatory school at a state university. To this end, the researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data. As the qualitative data collection tool, semi-structured interviews containing five open-ended questions were employed. As for the quantitative data, a mini test on intercultural elements was used. The participants consisted of 40 prospective English language teachers attending a preparatory class offered in a state university in Turkey. Randomly selected 15 students out of 40 participated in the semi-structured interview and in the mini test conducted at the end of the semester. The results indicated that most of the students (n: 12) stated the project helped them internalize the intercultural elements. In addition, 11 students (73%) reported that the project had more pros than cons, and they focused on its contribution to their intercultural improvement. It is also noteworthy that as prospective English language teachers they declared that they would use the project as part of their future classes. Having self-confidence, interacting with other cultures, fostering world knowledge, and increasing empathy were among the contributions of the project in the eyes of the students. Besides, mini test results showed that the project could help students with the retention of intercultural elements they learnt in the classes.

The findings of the study are also in line with what Byram (2006) suggested as to the needs of interculturally competent learners. As affective capacities, Byram emphasized the acknowledgement of the identities of others and empathy. In our study, students made a remark as to the importance of the project since it resulted in increased feelings of empathy with people from various cultures, which further indicates an increased level of awareness as to different

cultural identities. Byram's behavior and cognitive capacities are also reflected through students' responses in the interview in terms of cultural awareness and world knowledge.

In the light of the findings of the study, it can be discussed whether such a training is worthwhile or not. From a broader perspective, with respect to intercultural training, English language teachers are considered to be the main source for students in EFL classes as the expert knower of the language (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). Therefore, teachers must be competent enough in the target culture to support students in the improvement of their intercultural communicative competence. Developing intercultural communicative competence of the students requires the incorporation of some teaching strategies and materials such as intercultural code-switching, acting interculturally and using intercultural materials in the classroom. In addition, the objective of teaching modern languages is to help to overcome both the linguistic and cultural barriers the students may encounter in course books or during interaction with people from other cultures. These cultural barriers are generally related to target cultural traditions and customs as they reflect people's way of life, beliefs, values and attitudes. For this reason, teachers should program the classroom language in such a way that students can efficiently cope with the difficulties in terms of cultural elements.

It is also clear from what students have identified as intercultural elements that not only the intercultural concepts and elements of English speaking communities but also those of various communities in the world can be encountered in the courses. The type and range of intercultural elements identified by the students in the project validate what Alptekin (2002) and Sharifian (2011) put forward as to the importance of intercultural training and cultural conceptualization.

As a matter of fact, the study is limited to the Turkish EFL context with a limited group of participants. However, the results of the study can drop a strong hint that English language learners in similar EFL contexts where there is limited access to authentic language enriched with the presence of intercultural concepts might benefit from these kinds of projects highlighting the significance of explicit intercultural training. The study also employed a mini test to assess the retention of intercultural concepts. Further studies may utilize more comprehensive assessment techniques with more students in number.

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**Appendix 1****Sample Findings Displayed in the Project**

<b>Intercultural Element</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Shaolin Kung Fu	other	one of the oldest institutionalized styles of Chinese martial arts
Shaolin Temple	other	It is a Chan Buddhist temple in Dengfeng County, Henan Province, China.
Ming Dynasty	other	the rulers of China from 1368 to 1644
Shaolm	food/drink	brand tea and soap
Maasai	other	an ethnic group that lives in Kenya
The legend of Ngong Hills	other	It is a Maasai folk tale.
Cataphiles	other	people who love Paris underground and who spend time below ground in secret
Crypt	other	underground rooms, usually under a church or cathedral, that are used for burning people
Mantra	other	a saying that can be repeated over and over
Golden worms	other	traditional cure
Gumbo	food/drink	soup made in south Louisiana
Cajun	other	related to people who moved from Aradia in (Canada) to Louisiana in 1755
Pretzel	food/drink	a snack made of flour
Taco	food/drink	a Mexican dish consisting of a torrilla wrapped around a mixture
Mahatma	other	Great Soul (Gandhi)
Rome wasn't built a day	sayings/proverbs/idioms	It is said to emphasize that you cannot expect to do important things in a short period of time

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Don't make a mountain out of a molehill	sayings/proverbs/idioms	It refers to over-reactive, histrionic behaviour where a person makes too much of a minor issue. It seems to have come into existence in the 16th century.
Once bitten, twice shy	sayings/proverbs/idioms	When something or someone has hurt you once, you tend to avoid that thing or person.
One man's meat is another man's poison	sayings/proverbs/idioms	Something that one person likes may be distasteful to someone else.
Engage brain before mouth	sayings/proverbs/idioms	It means 'think about what you will say before you say it.'
Horses for courses	sayings/proverbs/idioms	Different people are suited for different jobs or situations; what is fitting in one case may not be fitting in another.
Why have a dog and bark yourself	sayings/proverbs/idioms	It is said when you want to know why someone would do something himself or herself when that person already pays someone else to do it
If you fly with the crows, you get shot with the crows	sayings/proverbs/idioms	If you wish to be associated with a particular high risk and/or high profile situation and benefit from the rewards of that association, you have to accept the consequences if things go wrong - you cannot dissociate yourself
She'll be apples	sayings/proverbs/idioms	Australian expression which means 'Don't worry, everything will be OK!'
Thai curries	food/drink	Thai Curry is a staple dish of Thailand and in many Thai homes it is eaten on a daily basis. Using ingredients commonly found growing around the home and very little meat, curry is an economical and healthy

Hutong	other	Hutongs are a type of narrow streets or alleys, commonly associated with northern Chinese cities, most prominently Beijing.
Bob's your uncle	sayings/proverbs/idioms	it is added to the end of sentences to mean that something will be successful.
St Patrick's Day	national holidays	17 March - The national day of Northern Ireland is St Patrick's Day
Halloween	national holidays	on October 31st, English celebrate Halloween, thought to be the one night of the year when ghosts, witches, and fairies are especially active.
Harvest Festival	festivals	a celebration of the food grown on the land, reminds Christians of all the good things God gives them
Birds of a feather flock together	sayings/proverbs/idioms	birds of a feather means birds of the same type. The whole proverb means that people of the same type or sort stay together. They don't mix with people of another type
Stone the crows	sayings/proverbs/idioms	An exclamation of annoyance.
Don't look a gift horse in the mouth	sayings/proverbs/idioms	don't question good luck
Tie the Knot	sayings/proverbs/idioms	get married
Haggis	food/drink	It is made from lamb's offal and served with mashed potatoes
Bonfire Night	festival	a story remembered each 5th November when 'Guys' are burned in a celebration known as "Bonfire Night"