

## Turkish Language Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity

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### ABSTRACT

This study involved qualitative research in the form of a case study to examine the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish language teachers. In the study, criterion sampling was selected and an interview form consisting of seven open-ended questions was applied to 20 Turkish language teachers. Participants working in secondary schools, which are basic education institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education, and in units related to assignment in different provinces of Turkey. The research questions were prepared by considering the five following dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000): interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction self-confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. Content analysis, a qualitative data analysis method, was used. As a result of the study, it was seen that most of the participants exhibited a generally appropriate attitude in terms of having intercultural sensitivity. Some of these participants who exhibited an appropriate attitude had deficiencies in terms of some dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. On the other hand, a significant portion of the participants did not exhibit an appropriate attitude in terms of having intercultural sensitivity in general. At the rest of the paper, some suggestions are made in order to improve teachers' intercultural sensitivity and to overcome their deficiencies.

**Key words:** Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication, Turkish Language Teacher, Education

### INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, communication and interactions between people from different cultures has increased through many developments. During this process, it has become even more important for different cultures to live in harmony and to realize productive cooperation. All these processes bring the concept of intercultural communication competence to the forefront.

Wiseman (2002) defined intercultural communication competence as the motivation, knowledge, and skills required to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures (as cited in Aksoy, 2016). Intercultural communication competence is of great importance for different cultures to live and interact in harmony.

Based on the importance of intercultural communication competence in today's world, it is important to understand this competence in all its dimensions and to provide individuals in the society with the skills required for it. Chen and Starosta (1997) stated that intercultural communicative competence has three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The affective dimension of intercultural communication competence is intercultural sensitivity, the cognitive dimension is intercultural awareness, and the behavioral

dimension is intercultural resourcefulness (Chen & Starosta, 1998).

It is thought that examining the concept of intercultural communicative competence with all its dimensions may exceed this study in terms of scope. For this reason, one of the dimensions that make up the concept is discussed. Within the scope of the study, the concept of intercultural sensitivity, which constitutes the affective dimension of intercultural communicative competence, is discussed.

Some of the definitions in the literature on the concept of intercultural sensitivity are given below.

Intercultural sensitivity is defined by Chen as "*the ability to develop a positive sense of understanding and appreciation of cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication*" (1997, p. 5).

Bhawuk and Brislin (1992, p. 414) stated that intercultural sensitivity is defined as sensitivity to the importance of cultural differences and the perspectives of people from other cultures.

Intercultural sensitivity skills involve knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of other cultures and cultural identities; the ability of an individual to analyze the characteristics of other cultures and their potential impact on others and to act

with sensitivity; and the ability of an individual to develop a sense of understanding and recognition of cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication (TMV, 2022).

One of the important studies on the subject is the Intercultural Development Sensitivity Model developed by Bennett (1993). In the Intercultural Sensitivity Development Model, there is a developmental process related to intercultural sensitivity. The model is examined in two stages. In the first stage (ethnocentric stage), the individual puts his own culture in the center and evaluates other cultures by looking at his environment. In the second stage (ethnic relative), the individual accepts cultural differences and begins to evaluate his own culture in other cultural contexts. In the first stage, there are the steps of denial cultural difference, defending against cultural difference, and minimization. The second stage consists of acceptance of cultural difference, adaptation to cultural difference, and integration in cultural difference.

In the Intercultural Development Sensitivity Model developed by Bennett, individuals either completely ignore different cultures in the ethnocentric period; he either perceives differences as a threat and takes the defensive, or he thinks that his worldview is universal despite accepting the differences. In the ethnic relative period, individuals enjoy cultural differences, can change their behaviors to adapt to different cultural environments, and look from a broad cultural framework when evaluating a behavior (Üstün, 2011).

Snicrope et al. (2007) states that Bennett does not explicitly describe the role of communication in intercultural sensitivity (as cited in Çetin Koroğlu, 2016). In this study, the intercultural sensitivity scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) was used. Five dimensions of intercultural sensitivity emerged in the scale. These dimensions are: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction self-confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness.

The content of these dimensions is explained by Taşkın (2020) as follows:

Interaction engagement is an individual's willingness to communicate, open-mindedness, positive responses, and understanding through verbal or non-verbal cues in intercultural exchange. Respect for cultural differences is how participants are tolerant or oriented towards the cultures and ideas of individuals from different cultures and consists of respecting the behavior and values of people from different cultures, accepting their ideas, being able to express their feelings during an interaction, and not overvaluing their own culture. Self-confidence in interaction expresses how confident students are in intercultural environments, while enjoying interaction is the pleasure they get from communicating with individuals from different cultures. Attention in interaction refers to the effort students make to understand what is going on during intercultural communication. In order to be interculturally attentive individuals, one should be an observer, try to gain knowledge and be sensitive in intercultural interaction.

Chen and Starosta (1997) identified self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and suspending judgment as the elements that interculturally sensitive individuals should possess.

Individuals with intercultural sensitivity will try to understand different cultures instead of judging them and will approach cultures with more tolerance. This will contribute to living in harmony with different cultures and establishing successful communication.

A significant part of individuals' childhood and youth are spent in formal education. This education plays an important role in the acquisition of skills related to intercultural sensitivity and their reflection in relevant communication processes.

As a result of the increasing importance of the concept of intercultural communication competence or intercultural competence in today's world, it is seen that the content related to this issue is included in the curricula in this country. In the Turkish curriculum currently used, intercultural competencies are also included in the section of competencies that students are expected to have (MEB, 2019). At this point, the teacher factor is of great importance. It appears that the success of the curriculum and other elements in teaching directly depends on teacher competencies (TED, 2009).

Based on the above, it is clearly important to determine the intercultural sensitivity of teachers at the point of providing students with skills related to intercultural sensitivity, because, as pointed out in various studies, it is vital to determine to what extent these skills, which are expected to be gained by students, are present in teachers (Üstün, 2011; Çam, 2021). The fact that a teacher has intercultural sensitivity will have a positive effect on the students' acquisition of intercultural sensitivity skills. Again, the level of intercultural sensitivity of teachers can be reflected in their actions and discourses when faced with a situation related to the subject in the school or classroom environment. Students regard their teachers as role models in many subjects. Therefore, teachers' approaches to this issue will have an impact on their students' acquisition of intercultural sensitivity skills. It is thought that the development of teachers' intercultural sensitivity skills will also contribute to the development of teachers' cultural literacy skills. Because cultural literacy is considered important in terms of the general competence of the teaching profession (Demir & Kingir, 2022). From this point of view, in the present study the aim was to examine the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish language teachers.

When we look at the studies in the field, it is seen that there are various studies aimed at determining the intercultural sensitivity of teachers or pre-service teachers. Yiğit (2020) explored the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and the empathy level of pre-service teachers with participants from different branches, including pre-service Turkish teachers. Çam (2021) examined the intercultural sensitivity of pre-service social studies teachers in terms of various variables. Yılmaz and Göçen (2013) studied pre-service classroom teachers' views on intercultural sensitivity according to different variables. Üstün (2011) examined the factors affecting pre-service teachers' intercultural

sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels. Erdoğan (2018) investigated the intercultural sensitivity of classroom teachers and their attitudes towards children's rights. Kürkçüoğlu (2021) examined the intercultural sensitivity of students of the German Language Teaching Program at the Faculty of Education. Akın (2016) explored the intercultural sensitivity of prospective Turkish teachers in terms of various variables. Çetin Köroğlu (2016) aims to investigate the intercultural sensitivity levels of English language teacher candidates in her study. Westrick and Yuen (2007) conducted a study on the intercultural sensitivity of secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. Yuen and Grossman (2009) tried to determine the intercultural sensitivity of pre-service teachers in three cities in Hong Kong. Bayles (2009) evaluated the Cross-Cultural Sensitivity of Elementary Teachers in Bilingual Schools in the Texas School District. Segura-Robles and Parra-González (2019) analyzed the levels of intercultural sensitivity of teachers in multicultural contexts. There is no study on the subject in which only the Turkish language teaching branch is addressed. Therefore, the present study is important in terms of examining the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish teachers who are currently working. Again, it is seen that quantitative analysis is mostly used in the studies on the subject. The present study, in which the qualitative method is used, will enable Turkish teachers to reveal their views and attitudes on the subject in more detail. It is thought that the results of the study will contribute to the organization of pre-service and in-service activities for teacher training. For this, the following research questions regarding Turkish teachers were posed:

1. What are Turkish Language Teachers' thoughts about individuals with different cultural characteristics living around them or in this country?
2. How do Turkish Language Teachers feel about interacting with people from different cultures?
3. What are Turkish Language Teachers' thoughts about collaborating work with people from different cultures?
4. What are Turkish Language Teachers' thoughts on sharing living spaces (workplace, residential complex/building) with people from different cultures?
5. How do Turkish Language Teachers react when someone from a different culture behaves outside the norms they are used to in their own culture?
6. How do Turkish Language Teachers rate themselves in terms of having the necessary competencies to communicate successfully with people from different cultures?
7. What are Turkish Language Teachers' thoughts on whether their attitudes towards their counterparts from different cultures at the beginning of the intercultural interaction process vary from culture to culture?

## METHOD

### Research Model

The aim in the present study was to examine the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish language teachers working for the Ministry of National Education. In this context, it was aimed to collect, analyze, and interpret the data in order to

reveal the teachers' views on the subject more holistically and in depth. For this reason, the research was conducted using the qualitative method and designed as a case study. In a case study, which is a design reflecting the characteristics of the qualitative research method, the researcher focuses on a situation or situations. This situation ranges from the individual to entire communities, societies, and institutions. Data are collected in their natural environment and reflect the perspectives of the researchers and participants (Gall et al., 1999).

### Study Group

Criterion sampling, a type of purposive sampling, was used in the study. In this sampling, criteria that are considered important for selection are determined and the sample selected according to these criteria is thought to represent the research population with all its qualities (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001).

In order to determine the study group within the framework of the research, the criteria for the teachers to be interviewed were that their undergraduate graduation field was a Turkish language teaching undergraduate program and that they were working as Turkish language teachers for the Ministry of National Education. Accordingly, the study group of the research consisted of 20 Turkish language teachers working in secondary schools, which are basic education institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education, and in units related to assignment. In the study group, demographic information such as gender, years of service, and provinces of duty were obtained. 1 of the participants is male and 19 of them are female. 3 of the participants in their 1<sup>st</sup> year, 3 in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2 in their 4<sup>th</sup> year, 6 in their 5<sup>th</sup> year, 1 in their 6<sup>th</sup> year, 2 in their 8<sup>th</sup> year, 1 in their 9<sup>th</sup> year, 1 of them is in their 10<sup>th</sup> year and 1 of them is in their 16<sup>th</sup> year as a Turkish teacher. Van, Gaziantep, Ankara, Kars, Kayseri, Ağrı, Istanbul, Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Burdur, Şırnak, Mardin provinces are the places where they work.

### Data Collection Tool

The aim was to examine the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish language teachers. In this context, the semi-structured interview method was used to obtain teachers' views on the subject in detail. In order to examine the intercultural sensitivity of the teachers, the interview method was chosen so as to understand their thoughts on the subject and to get their views from them personally and in their own words (Jones, 1985, as cited in Punch, 2005).

The teacher semi-structured interview form consisting of seven open-ended questions was developed by the researcher and an assessment and evaluation specialist. The research questions were prepared by considering the five dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000): interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction self-confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. The research questions in the studies conducted by Taşkın (2020) and Kürkçüoğlu (2021) were also utilized to formulate the questions. Afterwards, the interview questions were finalized by

obtaining the opinions of three experts, one of whom is specialized in the field of measurement and evaluation and the other two have PhDs on intercultural sensitivity. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview questions, a preliminary application was made with four Turkish teachers. By examining the feedbacks that the questions were understandable and the answers given by the teachers, it was decided that the questions were appropriate and the main practice was started.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained as a result of the interviews conducted within the scope of the research. Content analysis allows for a more in-depth analysis of the collected data, as well as revealing themes and dimensions that were not previously known. The basic process in content analysis is to bring together similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In the content analysis process, firstly, open coding was done separately for all participants, and then these codes were brought together (Merriam, 2013). Then the codes obtained were grouped and themes, categories, and special subareas were created. By obtaining expert opinions concerning measurement and evaluation, the coding process was carried out by reviewing the data again and categories were formed. Thus, the data were reviewed at least 3 times. Semi-structured interview forms were sent via e-mail after one-on-one interviews with Turkish teachers, and they were filled by Turkish language teachers and returned. In terms of transferability, the findings of the study were written in detail in the light of participant quotations. The coding of 4 random participants was examined by both the researcher and an expert in the field of measurement and evaluation and the consistency rate was determined. The evaluations of the researcher and the expert were checked and if the answer to the question was determined to be the same or similar, it was accepted as consensus, and if different codes were determined, it was accepted as disagreement. The interobserver reliability rate was 84%. During the analysis, direct quotations were used from some of the teachers' opinions. When quoting the teachers' opinions, the sequence numbers were written and codes were given, i.e., P1, P2, etc.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Teachers' Views on Individuals with Different Cultural Characteristics Living in Their Neighborhood or in This Country

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, subthemes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question "What are your thoughts about individuals with different cultural characteristics living in your environment or in this country?" are given in Table 1.

In Table 1 the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview were grouped under three subthemes, namely "Positive", "Negative", and "Provided the Necessary Conditions are Provided".

**Table 1.** Distribution and frequency of themes, subthemes, and codes related to teachers' thoughts on individuals with different cultural characteristics living in their environment or in this country

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	f
Viewing Individuals with Different Cultures	Positive	Differences are wealth	5
		I am tolerant	2
		I respect them	3
		Focusing on commonalities	2
		I respected them over time	1
		Learning new things	5
		The Importance of coexistence with different cultures	1
	Negative	I am interested in differences	4
		Provides different perspectives	2
		Backwardness	2
		Damage to demographics	1
		When shown respect	3
		Cultural values	2
		As long as it's not inconvenient	
Provided the Necessary Conditions are Met			

Teachers' responses regarding their opinions about individuals living in their environment or in this country and having different cultural characteristics were mostly gathered under the subtheme "Positive" ( $f=25$ ). In this subtheme, teachers stated that if individuals living in the same society have different cultures, this situation enlivens the cultural texture of the society and this diversity is a source of richness ( $f=5$ ), and if there are individuals from different cultures around them, they treat them with tolerance ( $f=2$ ); that they approach cultural differences with respect ( $f=3$ ); that it is more meaningful and important to focus on the common points rather than the differences of people from different cultures ( $f=2$ ); that they initially had difficulties and felt alienated towards cultural differences, but that they respected this situation over time ( $f=1$ ); that it is a good feeling to interact with individuals from different cultures and learn new things about that culture; that they enjoy getting to know differences ( $f=5$ ); that behaviors such as ignoring people from different cultures or making them feel bad are not right; that living together with different cultures is important for the continuation of our nation's existence and increasing its prestige abroad ( $f=1$ ); that they are interested in different cultures and have a sense of curiosity about them ( $f=4$ ); and that people with different cultural characteristics provide different perspectives ( $f=2$ ).

In the second subtheme, "Negative" ( $f=3$ ), teachers think that individuals with different cultural characteristics living in their environment have immigrated to this country in recent years, especially from countries characterized as underdeveloped, and that they cannot reflect their cultures

well ( $f=2$ ), and that these immigrants harm our demographic structure due to these characteristics ( $f=1$ ).

In the third subtheme, "Providing the Necessary Conditions" ( $f=5$ ), the teachers stated that it is of great importance for these individuals to respect their own lives in shaping their thoughts about individuals with different cultural characteristics, and that the existence of individuals from different cultures can be characterized as richness ( $f=3$ ) after they respect their own lifestyles and value judgments. Again, the participants stated that as long as individuals from different cultures do not exhibit an approach such as harming or opposing their national, religious, and moral values, they will not find the existence of these individuals strange and that they can be considered as richness ( $f=2$ ).

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*I have met people from many different cultures and had the opportunity to live together. Learning different things from each of them has added a lot to me. That is why I respect them all individually and I see this as a rich heritage. [P1]*

*I wanted to meet people with these characteristics. As a person who is open to innovations and differences, I have always been interested in getting to know people from different cultures, asking and learning about their culture. [P4]*

*As long as these people respect my values and culture, it does not matter whether they have a different culture or not. This is the most important part I consider when dealing with someone from a different culture. At the same time, I have always encountered people who are understanding and respectful of my culture. [P14]*

*The number of people from different cultures in our country has increased excessively in recent years. Since the majority of these people come from low socio-economic classes of underdeveloped countries, they harm the demographic structure of the country. I observe many adaptation problems. [P20]*

## 2. Teachers' Feelings about Interacting with People from Different Cultures

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, sub-themes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question "How are your feelings about interacting with people from different cultures, how do you feel?" are given in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview were gathered under the theme of "Emotions/Feelings in Interaction with People from Different Cultures" ( $f=32$ ).

In this theme, the teachers stated that interacting with different cultures and getting to know them excited them ( $f=7$ ); that they interacted with different cultures and that this process enriched them and therefore they felt lucky ( $f=1$ ); they might feel uneasy if they interacted with an individual from a different culture ( $f=1$ ); interacting with a new individual from a different culture and learning new things in this context would make them happy ( $f=7$ ); they might feel awkward

**Table 2.** Distribution and frequency of themes, subthemes, and codes related to teachers' thoughts on their feelings about interacting with people from different cultures

Theme	Codes	f
Emotions/Feelings in Interaction with People from Different Cultures	Exciting	7
	Lucky	1
	Agitated	1
	Happy	7
	Timid	1
	Curiosity	6
	Positive/Negative	3
	Willing	4
	Respect	1
	Failure to be Understood	1

and shy at the beginning of the interaction ( $f=1$ ) and meeting a new individual from a different culture would arouse a sense of curiosity in them ( $f=6$ ), the emotions to be felt according to the culture and people can be positive or negative and factors such as the perception of the country or society to which the different culture belongs, the environment, and the knowledge of the people with whom one is in contact are effective here ( $f=3$ ); when getting to know new individuals from different cultures, they may show willingness to learn new things about that culture ( $f=4$ ); and they approach the interlocutor with respect when interacting with individuals from different cultures ( $f=1$ ) and the process may be negatively affected due to the feeling of not being understood after a certain period when interacting with those individuals ( $f=1$ ).

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*I have always been curious. When I see someone from a different culture, I immediately ask questions, maybe wrongly, to learn about their culture and lifestyle. Therefore, getting to know people from different cultures has always been exciting for me. [P4]*

*People from different cultures attract my attention and their cultures arouse my curiosity. Therefore, I am eager to get to know and communicate with different cultures. [P9]*

*I actually feel strange at first. I am a bit shy. Even though I am curious and want to get to know them, I experience culture shock at first. Then I get used to it and observe them with interest. It is an enjoyable process. [P15]*

*Different people, different thoughts are a wealth. I'd be happy. [P16]*

## 3. Teachers' Views on Taking Part in Collaborative Work with People from Different Cultures

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, sub-themes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question "What are your thoughts about taking part in collaborative work with people from different cultures?" are given in Table 3.

Table 3. shows that the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview were grouped under the theme of “Thoughts on Collaboration with Someone from a Different Culture” ( $f=28$ ).

In this theme, teachers stated that if there is a mutual understanding between the parties engaged in collaborative work, the work carried out will produce very positive results in terms of both process and outcome ( $f=2$ ); that they will be happy and enjoy being in this type of work and that they find these working environments fun ( $f=5$ ); that they have gained some features that contribute to their personal development through these studies ( $f=6$ ); that they have gained some characteristics that contribute to their professional development through these studies ( $f=3$ ); that they would like to take part in this type of study and are open to it ( $f=3$ ); that they are undecided between participating in this type of study environment or not, that they may feel tension in this environment on the one hand, but on the other hand, these environments can make a positive contribution in terms of breaking their prejudices ( $f=1$ ); that they can find the opportunity to look at their own behaviors and assumptions from the perspective of a person from a different culture in this type of work environment ( $f=1$ ); that they can have the opportunity for mutual culture transfer in a work environment where individuals from different cultures are present ( $f=1$ ); that such environments they have been in before function as a normal process ( $f=1$ ); that their willingness to take part in such a working environment may vary according to the working environment ( $f=1$ ); that such associations will make the study more qualified in various aspects ( $f=2$ ); that they may want to participate in these studies in order to witness different perspectives ( $f=1$ ); and that they want to participate in such environments in order to show the knowledge they have gained from the education system they have grown up in ( $f=1$ ).

**Table 3.** Distribution and frequency of themes, subthemes, and codes related to teachers’ views on taking part in collaborative work with people from different cultures

Theme	Codes	$f$
Thoughts on Collaborating with Someone from a Different Culture	Mutual Understanding	2
	I Will Be Happy	5
	Personal Development	6
	Professional Development	3
	I Want to Take Part	3
	Undecided	1
	Through the Eyes of Different Cultures	1
	Intercultural Transfer	1
	A Normal Process	1
	According to Work Environment	1
	Quality of Work	2
	Different Perspectives	1
	Opportunity to Transfer My Experience	1

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*I like this very much, because differences bring people together and bring many things to each individual. First of all, it gives them the ability to respect people who think and live differently from them. Then it contributes to people in terms of general culture. It also teaches you to look from different perspectives. [P1]*

*Why not? Thanks to this study, I can have the opportunity to get to know them and their culture better, and I will also have the opportunity to introduce my own culture to them. [P4]*

*It might be good. After all, working with someone means getting to know that person well and spending a lot of time with them. I would like to work together and witness different perspectives. [P13]*

*I can take part in collaborative work with people from different cultures. There may be difficulties, but I think I will be successful when a common language and understanding is provided. [P18]*

#### 4. Teachers’ Thoughts on Sharing Living Spaces (Workplace, Residential Complex/Building) with People from Different Cultures

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, subthemes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question “What are your thoughts about sharing your living spaces (workplace, residential complex/building) with people from different cultures?” are given in Table 4.

Table 4. shows that the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview on the subject were grouped under three subthemes, namely “Positive”, “Negative”, and “Under Certain Conditions”, and mostly under the sub-theme “Under Certain Conditions”.

**Table 4.** Distribution and Frequency of Themes, Subthemes, and Codes Related to Teachers’ Views on Sharing Living Spaces (Workplace, Residential Complex/Building) with People from Different Cultures

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	$f$	
Reflections on Sharing Living Space	Negative	May Be Disturbing	1	
		I Feel Like a Stranger	1	
	Positive	Has its Gains	3	
		Differences are part of this society	2	
		I Would Enjoy It	1	
		Within Respectful Bounds	2	
		Under Certain Conditions	If Social Rules are Adhered to	3
			As long as it does not cross the line of respect	9
			Depends on Behavior	1
		Belonging to Society/ Culture		2
			Must not act against my Cultural Values	1
		Must Adapt to Culture		1

The responses of the teachers regarding their opinions on sharing their living spaces (workplace, residential complex/building) with individuals from different cultures were mostly collected under the subtheme “*Under Certain Conditions*” ( $f=17$ ). In this subtheme, teachers stated that they would be happy to share their living spaces with individuals from different cultures if those individuals adapt to social rules and adopt a civilized lifestyle ( $f=3$ ) and that it would be a good experience to share a common living space with them if they prioritize respect in their communication with the individuals with whom they will share the same living space and in their approach to the cultural values of these individuals ( $f=9$ ). They stated that how they will evaluate this process depends on the behaviors of the individual from a different culture before the culture ( $f=1$ ) and that their thoughts on sharing a common living space will become clearer according to the society/culture to which the individual from a different culture belongs ( $f=2$ ), that coexistence and cultural interaction with different cultures will be a great advantage for them as long as they do not act contrary to their cultural values ( $f=1$ ), and that the person from a different culture should adapt to the culture of the place they come to ( $f=1$ ).

In the second subtheme, “*Positive*” ( $f=8$ ), teachers stated that sharing a common living space with different cultures has many gains such as learning new things, shattering prejudices, and expanding the field of conversation ( $f=3$ ), since the geography we live in is multicultural. They stated that we should see differences as a part of this society and therefore they welcomed this process positively ( $f=2$ ), that they were already involved in such sharing and enjoyed it very much ( $f=1$ ), and that they looked at this situation positively because they shared the same environment with different cultures within the framework of respect ( $f=2$ ).

In the third subtheme, “*Negative*” ( $f=2$ ), teachers stated that sharing a common living space with individuals from different cultures can be disturbing due to not having common values ( $f=1$ ) and that after a certain period they may feel like strangers around people from different cultures ( $f=1$ ).

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*I share with people from different cultures at work and in the gym. I don't feel uncomfortable because we live in a respectful framework. We learn new information by telling each other about different traditions and customs. Since the geography we live in is already multicultural, this should be a situation that we should get used to. [P1]*

*It is different, but sometimes there can be disturbing aspects. Because there are no common points. Because what binds people together are common values. [P8]*

*First of all, I respect cultures and I want to know different cultures. I think different cultures can live together as long as there is mutual respect. [P9]*

*It is a normal situation. As long as we live by respecting each other's living spaces, there is no problem. [P12]*

**5. Teachers' Attitudes towards the Behavior of Someone from a Different Culture Behaving Outside the Norms They Are Accustomed to in Their Own Culture**

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, subthemes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question “*What is your attitude towards someone from a different culture behaving outside the norms you are used to in your culture?*” are given in Table 5.

Table 5. shows that the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview were grouped under three subthemes, namely “*Positive*”, “*Negative*”, and “*Conditional Acceptance*”, and mostly under the subtheme of “*Conditional Acceptance*”.

Teachers' responses regarding their attitudes towards the behavior of an individual from a different culture that is outside the norms they are accustomed to in their own culture were mostly gathered under the subtheme of “*Conditional Acceptance*” ( $f=15$ ). In this subtheme, teachers stated that the behaviors they observe when interacting with an individual from a different culture should not be incompatible with their own cultural values ( $f=1$ ) and that they can approach these behaviors with understanding as long as the behaviors exhibited by the individual from a different culture do not cause harm or negativity in the environment or in the life of the participant ( $f=2$ ), that they would approach such behaviors with respect even though they find such behaviors strange ( $f=3$ ), that they would tolerate such behaviors but after a certain point they would expect their counterparts from the other culture to learn about our culture and the equivalence of these behaviors in our culture ( $f=2$ ), that these behaviors they exhibit to individuals from different cultures may draw reactions and that they can warn them first and if the behavior is changed they can approach these individuals with tolerance and understanding ( $n=3$ ), that they can

**Table 5.** Distribution and frequency of themes, subthemes, and codes related to teachers' attitudes towards the behavior of someone from a different culture behaving outside the norms they are accustomed to in their own culture

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	f	
Attitudes Towards Non-Normative Behavior of Someone from a Different Culture	Positive	I accept it	5	
		Negative	I would Respect it	2
			I'll be sad	1
	I would be surprised		1	
	Conditional Acceptance	Must not be incompatible with my culture	Must not be incompatible with my culture	1
			Would be Understanding as long as it does no harm	2
			I would find it strange but respect it	3
		Must Learn Our Culture	Must Learn Our Culture	2
			I would warn them	3
			Would React if it is directed at me	3
		I would be surprised but respect it	I would be surprised but respect it	1

approach such behaviors with understanding and respect but they can react if similar behaviors are applied to themselves or their close environment ( $f=3$ ), and that they may be surprised by these behaviors at first, but they will approach them with respect ( $f=1$ ).

In the second subtheme, “Positive” ( $f=7$ ), teachers stated that if the behaviors of individuals from different cultures do not conform to their own cultural norms, this is due to cultural differences, and that although they may be at odds at first, they accept these behaviors with tolerance and understanding ( $f=5$ ), and that they respect such behaviors ( $f=2$ ).

In the third subtheme, “Negative” ( $f=2$ ), teachers expressed that they might be surprised ( $f=1$ ) and saddened ( $f=1$ ) when someone from a different culture behaves in a way that is different from the norms they are used to in their own culture.

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*I accept this difference because I know that the reason for the behavior is due to having different cultural characteristics and thoughts. [P3]*

*As long as my culture and values are not disrespected, it does not pose any problem for me. For example, if my interlocutor comes from a culture where the elderly are addressed by their first name, this may be acceptable within his/her own environment. But if that behavior happens to someone from my circle, I tell my interlocutor that this behavior upsets me and that he/she should be more careful in such situations by thinking about me and my values. [P4]*

*I might find the behavior strange at first, but as long as I convince myself that it's a cultural difference, there shouldn't be any problems. I know that I don't have to explain or compare everything with my own culture. I accept that cultures have their own behavior and way of life. [P13]*

*I may be surprised and upset, but I try to stay calm. [P18]*

## 6. Teachers' Self-Assessments on Having the Necessary Competencies for Successful Communication with People from Different Cultures

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, subthemes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question “How do you evaluate yourself in terms of having the necessary competencies to communicate successfully with people from different cultures?” are given in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview were grouped under two subthemes: “Sufficient” and “Not Sufficient”.

The responses of the teachers regarding their self-evaluations about having the necessary competencies for successful communication with people from different cultures were mostly gathered under the subtheme “Sufficient” ( $f=19$ ). In this subtheme, while the teachers evaluated themselves in terms of the competencies necessary for successful communication with individuals from different

**Table 6.** Distribution and frequency of themes, subthemes, and codes related to teachers' self-assessments on having the necessary competencies for successful communication with people from different cultures

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	f
Self-assessment in terms of competencies required for intercultural communication	Sufficient	Self-confidence	1
		Ability to empathize	2
		No prejudice	2
		Understanding and Respect	5
		Communication Success	4
	Not Sufficient	Experience	2
		Interest in Diversity	3
		Foreign Language	6
		Insufficient Information	2
		Prejudice	2
		Not Sociable	1
		Closed to Differences	1

cultures, they have self-confidence ( $f=1$ ) and empathy ( $f=2$ ); they do not have any prejudice against different cultures ( $f=2$ ); they can conduct their relations with different cultures within the framework of understanding, respect, and tolerance ( $f=5$ ); they have successful communication skills ( $f=4$ ) and they are experienced in communicating with different cultures ( $f=2$ ); they were interested in cultural differences ( $f=3$ ); they were curious about different cultures and wanted to learn about them ( $f=3$ ); and they felt competent in communicating successfully with individuals from different cultures because they had the aforementioned characteristics.

In the second subtheme “Not Sufficient” ( $f=12$ ), the teachers stated that their lack of foreign language skills when communicating with individuals from different cultures ( $f=6$ ), their lack of knowledge about the cultural and social values of the individual on the other side ( $f=2$ ), and some prejudices they have about different cultures ( $f=2$ ), they felt inadequate in this type of communication process due to the possibility that not having an assertive structure in communicating with different cultures ( $f=1$ ) and being closed to cultural differences due to their way of thinking ( $f=1$ ) might lead to failure in this process.

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*When communicating with people with cultural differences, I try to adopt a tolerant approach and be respectful. If I feel prejudiced against my own culture, I would like to break it. In this context, I think that I am sufficient to establish a successful communication. [P3]*

*Tolerance, curiosity, and respect are necessary for successful communication with different cultures. If these three aspects are present in a person from a different culture, successful communication will be established. However, if any of these are missing, I believe that communication will break down at some point. [P9]*



*I think I can successfully communicate with people from different cultures in this country, but I am not sufficient to interact with people from different cultures in the world. First of all, I have some prejudices and I am insufficient in foreign languages. [P11]*

*I do not think that I will have problems in communicating with different cultures within my own country. I have enough understanding and tolerance. However, I do not have the language skills necessary to communicate with people from different cultures abroad. I do not have information about their languages, beliefs, or lifestyles. [P15]*

**7. Teachers' Thoughts on Whether Their Attitudes towards Their Interlocutors from Different Cultures at the Beginning of the Intercultural Interaction Vary from Culture to Culture**

The distribution and frequency values of the themes, subthemes, and codes that emerged as a result of the content analysis of the opinions of the teachers in the study group regarding the question "What are your thoughts on whether the attitudes you have towards your counterpart from a different culture at the beginning of the intercultural interaction vary from culture to culture?" are given in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that the opinions of the twenty teachers who participated in the interview on the subject were grouped under two subthemes: "Varies" and "Does Not Vary".

The responses of the teachers about whether their attitudes towards their counterparts from different cultures at the beginning of the intercultural interaction process vary from culture to culture were mostly collected under the subtheme "Varies" (f=13). In this subtheme, teachers stated that they have a more positive attitude towards cultures belonging to societies considered developed (f=2); that they have a more positive attitude towards some cultures because they feel closer to them (f=2) and that the reflection of the perception created through various media about the country or society to which the different culture belongs is very important in this case (f=5); if the different culture to be interacted with

is similar to their own culture, they will have a more positive attitude towards that culture (f=1); The attitudes of the participants may change depending on the feelings and thoughts of the individual from a different culture towards the culture of the participants. (f=2); and many elements including the way of life of the individual from a different culture such as moral behaviors and clothing are effective in developing attitudes towards that culture (f=1).

In the second subtheme "Does not vary" (f=9), the teachers stated that at the beginning of the intercultural interaction they would not have any prejudice against the individual from a different culture or his/her culture (f=3), that they accepted the individual and his/her different culture as they are and respected the differences (f=2), and that their attitudes were determined not by culture but by the behavior of the other person (f=4).

The quotes regarding the results can be expressed as follows:

*I can say that my attitude towards my counterpart from a different culture at the beginning of the intercultural interaction process varies from culture to culture. Although I respect every society, I can say that my desire to communicate and interact with the cultures of societies/countries that have the qualities of a "developed society" is at a higher level. [P3]*

*I show an attitude according to the behavior and attitudes of the person I will interact with. I do not force my interlocutor who makes me feel that he/she is closed to communication, regardless of cultural differences. [P6]*  
*It definitely varies, it is all about perception, and since there are always negative statements about some cultures in the world, it is also reflected on us. Especially with the influence of social media, some cultures are portrayed sympathetically while others are portrayed in a way that can be perceived as undesirable or negative. [P13]*

*At the beginning of the interaction process, my attitude may not change from culture to culture. I respect differences. I would like to be curious and get to know both culture A and culture B. After getting to know each other, my attitude may change in the future. [P15]*

**Table 7.** Distribution and frequency of themes, subthemes, and codes related to teachers' thoughts on whether their attitudes towards interlocutors from different cultures at the beginning of the intercultural interaction vary from culture to culture

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	f
Variation of Attitude in Interaction according to Culture	Varies	Sophistication	2
		Feeling Close	2
		Reflection of Culture	5
		Proximity/Similarity	1
		Thoughts About My Culture	2
	Does not vary	Lifestyles	1
		No Prejudice	3
		Acceptance and Respect	2
		Behavior Not Culture	4
		Prioritized	

**DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the present study, Turkish language teachers' intercultural sensitivity was examined. The research questions used were prepared by considering the five dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000). The first research question was addressed within the dimension of respect for cultural differences. In the participant responses to the research question, some ideas such as learning new things from individuals with different cultures, being interested in the differences of these individuals, and seeing the existence of these individuals as richness came to the fore. Some participants, on the other hand, approached individuals from different cultures in their environment from a more negative perspective. Participants characterized these people as individuals of low

socio-economic status from underdeveloped countries and stated that they harm our demographic structure. According to the data of the study, the majority of the participants approach people from different cultures living in this country or in their environment with a positive perspective within the framework of respect. In this context, we can say that most of the participants show an appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity within the scope of respect for cultural differences.

The second research question of the study involves the dimension of interaction enjoyment. Curiosity, excitement, eagerness, and happiness were the main emotions felt by the participants when interacting with people from different cultures. On the other hand, some of the participants stated that they felt emotions such as uneasiness, not being understood, and shyness during this process. Based on the study data, it appears that most of the participants feel positive emotions during interactions with people from different cultures and approach this process willingly. In this context, it is apparent that most of the participants show an appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity within the dimension of interaction enjoyment.

The third research question of the study was addressed within the dimension of interaction engagement. Participants' views on collaborating work with someone from a different culture were characterized by thoughts such as happiness, contribution to their personal and professional development, and willingness. A great majority of the participants have a positive attitude towards collaborating work with people from different cultures and think that this process will make significant contributions to them.

The fourth research question of the study was addressed within the dimension of interaction engagement, too. According to the study data, most of the participants put forward certain conditions for sharing their living spaces (workplace, residential complex/building) with people from different cultures. It was determined that if these conditions are met, the participants may accept this process and look positively on sharing their living spaces. Here, conditions such as respect and compliance with social rules come to the fore. Some of the participants stated that this process had gains, that they shared the same environment within the framework of respect, and shared their positive statements about the process. Some of the participants, on the other hand, made more negative statements such as that this process can be disturbing and that they may feel alienated. As a result, it can be concluded that most of the participants have a positive attitude towards the process and are ready to share living spaces with different cultures as long as mutual respect and understanding are shown. Based on the data for the third and fourth research questions of the study, we can infer that most of the participants showed an appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity within the scope of interaction engagement.

The fifth research question of the study was addressed within the scope of interaction attentiveness. Most of the participants stated that they could accept these behaviors under certain conditions when someone from a different

culture behaves outside the norms they are used to in their own culture. While some participants stated that they would approach these behaviors positively and accept them, some participants stated that they would take a negative attitude towards these behaviors. When individuals behave differently from the cultural norms they are used to in the face of people belonging to cultures different from their own culture, it is generally not for the purpose of disrespecting or angering the interlocutor. The person behaves that way because of his/her own cultural codes, because he/she was raised in such a culture. The appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity here is to approach such behaviors within the framework of understanding and respect with the awareness that such behaviors are due to cultural differences. If these behaviors will cause trouble or harm the parties, the interlocutor from a different culture can be warned in an appropriate way. Most of the participants responded in accordance with this attitude. It was determined from the responses of nearly half of the participants that they would not act in accordance with this attitude, and that they would react to these behaviors such as being upset, feeling alienated, getting angry depending on the behavior, and cutting off communication. Based on the study data, most of the participants show an appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity within the dimension of interaction attentiveness. However, a significant portion of the participants have deficiencies on the subject and do not show a correct attitude.

The sixth research question of the study was addressed within the scope of interaction self-confidence. Most of the participants expressed that they have the necessary competencies for successful communication with people from different cultures, such as being interested in differences, approaching different cultures with respect and understanding, and having communication success. From the answers given, it appears that most of the participants feel competent and confident in communicating with those from different cultures. A significant portion of the participants, on the other hand, characterized themselves as inadequate in this regard. Participants cited inadequate foreign language skills, prejudice, not being open to differences, and insufficient knowledge of different cultures as reasons for this. Insufficient foreign language skills can be interpreted as a technical issue rather than a lack of confidence. However, based on the other issues mentioned by the participants regarding their inadequacies, it appears that some of the participants do not see themselves as competent in intercultural interactions and have deficiencies in the interaction self-confidence dimension. As a result, a significant portion of the participants have deficiencies in this subject. The majority of the participants, on the other hand, show an appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity within the dimension of interaction self-confidence.

The seventh research question of the study is associated with all dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. The sub-themes of "it varies" and "it does not vary", which were created based on the data of the research question, received numerical values close to each other. Numerically, the sub-theme "it varies" was more prominent. The attitudes of most

of the participants towards their counterparts from different cultures at the beginning of the intercultural interaction process vary from culture to culture. Among the reasons for this variation, some ideas such as the perception created through various media about the country or society to which the different culture belongs, feelings of closeness to the different culture, and the level of development of the society to which the different culture belongs came to the fore. It is apparent that most of the participants have a negative attitude towards some cultures due to their prejudices or prioritize some cultures over others in terms of communication. This situation may also be reflected in communication. These findings reveal that there is no appropriate attitude in terms of intercultural sensitivity. In fact, Kürkçüoğlu (2021) found similar results in his study examining the intercultural sensitivity of the students of the German Language Teaching Program at the Faculty of Education. In the study, some participants stated that they felt closer to Western culture, that they preferred individuals belonging to Western culture more for intercultural interactions, and that they could be prejudiced towards some people from Eastern countries and belonging to that culture.

As a result of the study, it was seen that most of the participants exhibited a generally appropriate attitude in terms of having intercultural sensitivity. Some of these participants who exhibited an appropriate attitude had deficiencies in terms of some dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. On the other hand, a significant number of the participants did not exhibit an appropriate attitude in terms of having intercultural sensitivity in general. The data of the study conducted by Akın (2016) on the subject, in which the level of intercultural sensitivity of Turkish teacher candidates was determined by quantitative method, is similar to our study. Because in the related study, the level of intercultural sensitivity of the participants was found to be medium and it was stated that they were not at a good level. In the study, it was determined that as the class levels of the participants increased, their intercultural sensitivity levels increased in parallel. In our study, it was concluded that despite the deficiencies of the teachers who graduated and currently work, they generally show an appropriate attitude in terms of having intercultural sensitivity.

Bayles (2009), Westrick and Yuen (2007), Yuen and Grossman (2009) found inadequacies regarding the intercultural sensitivity of participant teachers in their studies. The importance of the intercultural teacher education program was emphasized in the studies and it was stated that teachers' intercultural experience could contribute to the process. As a matter of fact, in the studies of Kürkçüoğlu (2021) and Çetin Köroğlu (2016), teacher candidates who received education on foreign language teaching were evaluated positively in terms of having intercultural sensitivity. This supports the assumption that interacting with a different language and therefore culture can contribute to this issue. Having more intercultural interaction and encountering different languages and cultures does not guarantee that teachers will develop intercultural sensitivity. Because the development of intercultural sensitivity is a process where many factors can be

effective. However, it is possible to say that intercultural interaction will contribute to the development of intercultural sensitivity of teachers.

When we look at Turkey, it is seen that there are deficiencies in providing intercultural experience in teacher training processes. There are opportunities for short-term intercultural interaction. Programs for intercultural interaction should be organized in accordance with the aim of developing intercultural sensitivity in teachers. In our study, it was observed that most of the participants had some deficiencies in terms of intercultural sensitivity. One of the reasons for these deficiencies may be the lack of intercultural interaction.

Teacher training processes can be reconsidered in order to improve teachers' intercultural sensitivity and overcome existing deficiencies. In this regard, the undergraduate education that prospective teachers receive in faculties of education is of great importance. During undergraduate education, various stakeholders such as instructors and course contents should play an active role in developing students' intercultural competencies. Instructors should show that they have intercultural sensitivity with their words and behaviors and should set an example for their students. A course on intercultural communication, for example, can be added to undergraduate education. In-service training activities on the subject will also make an important contribution to the development of teachers' intercultural sensitivity.

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