

From national to international: Teacher experiences in diverse Turkish classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The sudden increase of numbers in terms of international students in once-monolingual EFL classrooms in Türkiye brought new challenges and opportunities for English as Foreign Language (EFL) instructors to adapt more culturally diverse setting-friendly approaches and methods in class instantly, which inevitably caused shifts and highlights on in-class practices as well. For this qualitative descriptive study, the data was collected from individual face-to-face interviews and survey results from eight experienced EFL instructors working at a Turkish private university's English preparatory program in the fall semester of the academic year of 2022-2023, focusing on highlighting the challenges and opportunities of teaching in multicultural classrooms. In conjunction with that, teachers' experiences with multicultural students were highlighted in teaching such intercultural and linguistically diverse settings. Following the manual thematic analysis of the data, results were grouped under three categories such as cultural, pedagogical and social issues regarding teaching in intercultural classrooms and presented in accordance with the relevant literature review which is in line with the results of this study. This paper contributes to this relatively new area of research as being one of the initial studies focusing on tertiary-level EFL instructors' experiences of teaching in multicultural classroom settings and their experiences rather than beliefs while teaching in such classrooms, and it can help to pave the way to design professional development activities which is crucial regarding aiming at improving Turkish EFL teachers' intercultural awareness in the classroom.

Keywords: International classroom, diversity, English language teaching, Turkish EFL teachers, multicultural education.

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INTRODUCTION

The World gets smaller as the borders fade with physical and virtual exchange of individuals seeking new settings where a better or simply different living or education is available. When the numbers of individuals from other countries rise dramatically, the residents of those "new settings" are left with no choice but to adapt to their new norms with the inclusion of various people with different social and cultural backgrounds. Even though the orientation of newcomers is more popular, the perceptions and experiences of individuals who welcome diversity are as important as the orientation of the newcomers. "During the past century, the world has become considerably smaller not only through the effects of the media—McLuhan's focus—but also through science, transportation, the Internet, migration, and the spread of global commerce" (Snyder and Wenger, 2010, 107). One of the groups that are directly affected by the internationalization of the local settings is, without a doubt, educators- teachers, university lecturers and

academics in the area of education. To be more specific, the rapid increase of international students in English language classrooms and its impact on education in different parts of the world as well as English-speaking countries has attracted the attention of educational researchers worldwide for more than two decades (McAllister and Irvine, 2002; Parker and Bickmore, 2012; Hachfield et al., 2015; Spotti and Kroon, 2017; Mubaraq et al., 2019).

The geographical, cultural, economic, and historical features of Turkey attract people to choose the country as a destination (Akar and Erdoğan, 2019; Kondakci and Onen, 2019 in Yilmazel and Atay, 2022). In the last decade, in Turkey in particular, almost every classroom at the tertiary level has at least one immigrant or refugee student, as well as international students visiting the country via exchange programs with universities all around the world which resulted in a sociocultural shift in once monolingual and homogeneous EFL classrooms in

Turkey. In order not to cause any inconvenience or trouble, in this paper all foreign students are addressed as “international students” since their exact reason for being in Turkey is not known precisely.

According to the statistics of the Turkish Council of Higher Education (CoHE), In Istanbul, particularly in private universities, the numbers increased steadily, almost tripling in the last five years (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of international students in private universities in Istanbul.

Academic year	Male	Female	Total
2017-2018	12647	7104	19751
2018-2019	17480	9697	27177
2019-2020	23409	13165	36574
2020-2021	28629	17326	45955
2021-2022	34632	23012	57644

In accordance with the increase of international students, the particular university setting for this study

also witnessed an increase in the numbers of international students as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The number of international students in this research setting.

Academic year	Male	Female	Total
2017-2018	279	147	426
2018-2019	303	183	486
2019-2020	358	237	595
2020-2021	439	291	730
2021-2022	529	339	868

As we can see in the figures in Table 2, the number of international students doubled in five years. This sudden shift of classroom settings from highly monolingual to multilingual created opportunities for students to experience and witness new cultures and linguistic diversity as well as bringing chances for English as foreign language (EFL) teachers to introduce various linguistic and cultural backgrounds right inside their classrooms. However, this multicultural diversity in classroom settings inevitably brought challenges in various areas from classroom management to EFL instruction. While numerous studies focused on teacher perceptions and attitudes towards multicultural classrooms from various points of view such as empathy (McAllister and Irvine, 2022), conflict management (Parker and Bickmore, 2012), nation-wise curricular reforms (Hajisoteriou, 2013), other studies highlighted the importance of pre-service teachers' intercultural awareness (Chisholm, 1994; Hachfield et al., 2015; Romijn et al., 2021) and teachers' intercultural identity (Elena, 2014; Tajeddin and Ghaffaryan, 2020; Meihami and Rashidi, 2020). However, in the researcher's scope of review, no articles were found regarding in-service EFL teachers' experiences with suddenly multiculturalized classroom settings in higher education. As Tualalelei's (2021) scoping review presented, “the field is broadly characterised by research that is single-site, Western-centric, focused on the compulsory years of education and short-term (p. 11).”

This study focused on Turkish tertiary-level EFL instructors' experiences with their international students,

and it aimed to answer the research question of what challenges and opportunities multiculturally, and linguistically diverse settings brought to Turkish EFL classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Roux (2001) defines instruction and learning as activities that are “socially determined” since they influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning classroom atmosphere. Providing a healthy social atmosphere is a must while teaching in intercultural classroom settings, and teachers have the biggest responsibility in terms of creating such environments. As Elena (2014) advocates, linguistic or communicative competencies are no longer sufficient to activate students “who are likely to operate in increasingly international, culturally diverse academic and professional environments (p.112)”, so she suggests EFL teachers developing “competencies, attitudes and values” to help students survive in this new society.

“Pedagogies that invite students to explore conflicting perspectives on unresolved issues could become opportunities for inclusive learning, relationship rebuilding, and pluralistic democratic engagement (Freire, 1998 in Parker and Bickmore, 2012)”. Eun (2021) suggests that Vygotskian sociocultural theory could help teachers obtain knowledge-based generalizable settings to functionally meet different requirements from intercultural classrooms.

In terms of preparing pre-service teachers to teach in multicultural settings, Chisholm (1994) suggests in-service teachers should be prepared for intercultural classrooms in three ways such as becoming reflective practitioners, gaining cultural competence and becoming effective cross-cultural communicators. He also indicates that cultural competency cannot be obtained “in an academic vacuum”. Instead, it develops via a mixture of “cultural knowledge, direct intercultural experiences, and reflection on those experiences (p. 9).” In Parker and Bickmore’s (2012) mixed method research, 68 pre-service and first-year teachers’ approaches and methods of addressing conflicts and ethnocultural diversity were analysed. The results showed the importance of responding to students’ diversities as an important part of their conflict management. It was suggested that novice teachers who could learn how to use conflict communication processes effectively in the context of diversity might be better prepared to teach in such settings.

Regarding in-service teachers’ beliefs and perceptions towards teaching in multicultural classrooms, several research were conducted in various settings (McAllister and Irvine, 2002; Vazquez-Montilla et al., 2014; Hajisoteriou, 2013; Hachfeld et al., 2015). McAllister and Irvine (2002) conducted a study to see the impact of empathy on their interactions with intercultural students with 34 teachers who participated in a professional development seminar from the USA. The results of the research revealed that even though empathy was found to be necessary after the PD seminar, it was perceived as not enough while communicating with culturally diverse students. Hajisoteriou (2013) conducted qualitative research with 12 in-service teachers from Cypriot primary schools and she investigated teachers’ definitions of intercultural education and the problems they faced as well as their roles while communicating with their immigrant students. The results revealed participants held conflicting views of intercultural education as they lacked cultural awareness of their immigrant students. As Forghani-Arani et al. (2019) point out to meet the expectations, teachers have to be supplied with relevant knowledge, capabilities, dispositions, values and skills (p.3)”. When teachers are not equipped according to the settings they are supposed to teach, the outcomes of the education might not be addressed and achieved properly which may result in more segregation as well as pedagogical and

societal level problems.

Hachfeld et al.’s study (2015) from the German context focused on a different terminology such as “colorblindness” which is defined as seeing people beyond their colour, race and ethnicity and perceiving them equally as others in the classroom, and they aimed to see whether teachers should be “colorblind” or more multiculturally aware. The results showed that colorblindness was not an effective and constructive pedagogy to be followed since even though, as the researchers stated “noble in its intent, [colorblindness] can result in a lack of willingness to prepare one’s lessons adequately for the challenges of a diverse classroom” and teachers would be “less likely to provide adequate support for immigrant students, or to assess and evaluate immigrant students’ performance accurately, all of which can lead to systematic discrimination (Hachfeld et al., 2010 in Hachfeld et al., 2015)”. The article suggests following a multicultural approach rather than perceiving home students and multicultural students as similar by ignoring their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

Setting and participants

The data for this study was collected during the fall term of the 2022-2023 academic year from a private university located in Istanbul. The English preparatory program (EPP) which was subject to this study had recently terminated its Turkish proficiency prerequisite policy at the beginning of the term which led to having international EFL students who did not only have low English proficiency levels but also had no or limited Turkish proficiency to survive in and out of classroom settings. The participants were eight experienced EFL instructors (four male and four female) out of thirty-five instructors from an English preparatory program at a private university in Istanbul. By keeping the number of participants small, the researcher aimed at scrutinizing the participants’ identities and their experiences with international students with the influence of their intercultural identities as well as hearing their opinions about changing policies and classroom settings with a detailed approach. The descriptive data of participants is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of participants.

Participants	Gender	Nationality	Year of experience
T1	Male	Iranian	15
T2	Male	Iranian	13
T3	Male	Turkish-Laz	6
T4	Male	Iranian	15
T5	Female	Turkish	12
T6	Female	Turkish	7
T7	Female	Turkish	4
T8	Female	Turkish	9

The three male EFL instructors who participated in this study were from non-Turkish backgrounds whereas four female participants called themselves of Turkish nationality. One male participant did not want to identify himself as a member of any nationality since he had Philipino and Turkish-Laz parents and grew up in Saudi Arabia and he felt like a “world citizen”. Their year of experience ranged from 4 years to 15 years with some of them having experience of teaching EFL abroad as well. While choosing participants, their consent and voluntariness were accepted as the initial criteria. Also, participants’ years of experience in English language teaching, as well as whether they had any international classrooms during the 2022-2023 fall term were taken into consideration.

Data collection tools and procedure

Initially, fourteen experienced EFL instructors accepted to participate in this study, and they were invited to share their opinions and experiences about the new policy and new classroom settings. However, due to a change in schedules in the middle of the term and not having mutual working days with the researcher anymore, six instructors were unable to complete answering the questions. The data was collected either from face-to-face interviews or via voice recordings. Also, a Google form document was prepared in case some teachers could answer the same interview questions in their free time. The interview questions and the Google form were made of three categories: 1. Questions about the demographic background of participants, 2. Questions about multicultural classrooms, 3. questions about teachers’ professional and intercultural identities. Data collection continued throughout the fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. The face-to-face interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes for each participant, and the forms were open until the end of the

fall semester in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Data analysis

The descriptive data from participants was thematically analyzed, color-coded, and the demographic results such as their years of teaching experience and nationalities were listed. To ensure the privacy of participants, the names were coded from T1 to T8 for each participant. The results were presented under two categories which are about teachers’ identities and their experiences within multiculturally and linguistically diverse classroom settings.

The validity of this research was established with two methods which were the sample size and forming a sample group with instructors having different individual and professional backgrounds. First, the size of the sample was eight, which made up twenty percent of the total number of EFL instructors teaching English at the particular English preparatory program. This number of participants allowed the researcher to gather the perceptions and experiences of one of the five instructors working at the same institution, validating the themes derived from the interviews and Google form entries of participants.

As for the reliability, two methods were adopted. First, as soon as the data collection from the participants was completed, the participants were individually asked to check the initial report of their feedback to see if their responses sounded right the way they meant and check if any correction of opinions or statements was needed. The participants all agreed on the initial report of their contributions and confirmed the wording and reporting of the data derived from their contributions. Second, following the categorization of themes, the results were also peer-reviewed by a fellow PhD student in ELT studying at the same department as the researcher of this study to achieve interrater reliability.

Table 4. A brief summary of the main themes and subcategories.

Themes	Frequency	Subcategories
Cultural (positive)	8	Learning about new cultures (T1, T6, T7)
		Widening viewpoints (T8)
		Promoting tolerance (T1, T4, T8)
		Learning about the importance of English language (T5, T6)
Cultural (negative)	5	Challenging (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5)
		Leads to misunderstandings (T1, T3)
Pedagogical	3	Content- accent (T3)
		Language barrier between teacher and student (T3, T6, T7)
Social	8	Support among intercultural students (T1, T2, T3, T6)
		Teachers’ awareness among intercultural issues (T1, T2, T3)
		Issues about family structures (T6, T7)

RESULTS

Following the manual thematic analysis of color-coded

five form entries and three transcribed voice recordings, three main categories emerged the benefits and the challenges of having nationally diverse classrooms as

well as the issues to bear in mind while teaching in diverse settings. The results are presented under main themes as cultural, pedagogical and social issues regarding culturally diverse classroom settings. A brief summary of the main themes and subcategories is presented in Table 4.

Cultural Issues

When the teachers were asked what the benefits of diverse classroom settings were for them, all eight teachers mentioned the notion of culture, advocating that international classroom settings could help their students learn (T6, T7) and raise awareness (T1) about new cultures, widening their viewpoints (T8), and promoting tolerance (T1) as students bring their backgrounds to the classroom (T4, T8).

“T1: ...it is much better because you can actually pull out a lot of examples from different cultures that can add to the richness of the lesson.”

“T6: Since English is learnt as an international language, it is always a good chance to have a student from another country. I can involve them in my teaching because it is one of the main reasons for our students to learn English: to communicate with other cultures. I also learn a lot from their cultures.”

Also, T5 stated that having intercultural students is a chance to see, show and understand the cultural richness as it would help students the importance of learning a foreign language. Teachers also perceived having intercultural settings as an opportunity to bring the world into the classroom;

“T7: When I enter my classes with international students, I sometimes feel like I have an opportunity that I would maybe get if I taught abroad. I can use so many cultural examples, and activities; my students can teach and learn different cultures thanks to my intercultural students.”

While depicting intercultural settings as colorful, T3 also mentioned the student profile quality as one of the descriptors of culture as an advantage in intercultural classroom settings;

“T3: I mean, I feel vibrant for no reason because, like, just being foreign students present makes me feel there is something going on colorful. So, this idea makes me feel kind of, like, excited to be in the classroom. Of course, depending on the student's profile as well. If the students are good students, this is also a plus. I can say something good. And generally, it makes me feel, as I told you, like, vibrant and active.”

Teachers who were not from a Turkish background also

expressed how beneficial their differences happened to be in that setting as it brought an opportunity to compare differences among cultures;

“T1: ...also me being not from that culture was useful because I always try to make this comparison with my own culture that's interesting for students because they say there are these similarities and there are these differences. So, they kind of also feel that, okay, we are connected to one another in a much deeper sense, right?”

Even though all teachers agreed on how beneficial culture was in their classrooms, when the challenges were asked, five teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5) mentioned culture again as a challenge in that it could lead to conflicts easily or could be hard to manage.

“T5: Sometimes it is difficult to understand if a topic is sensitive in one culture or not. You give an example in English not considering embarrassing anyone, but you may end up with it.”

Also, the cultural differences made communication breakdowns or misunderstandings inevitable. In the excerpt from T1, we can see an example of misunderstanding as follows;

“T1: I was asking people what city was their favorite and so on. Then I assumed everybody is from Türkiye, so people were saying these kinds of cities, like Paris, I don't know, New York and so on. And one of them actually mentioned Baku, which is like in Azerbaijan. And I smiled and I said, why, Baku? And I didn't assume that this person is actually from Azerbaijan. He thought that I am making fun of Azerbaijan. But I thought he's from Turkey. So, choosing Azerbaijan like Baku as a favorite city for a Turkish person was weird for my experience. So, I was like surprised, and I gave a smile, and he thought that I am actually making fun of his culture, which was not true.”

In class T3, he had a conflict with an international student regarding different hierarchical communication manners which could be perceived in different ways in different countries;

“T3: We were talking with some students, like some of them were foreigner ones. And like I said, okay, there are some good places to go, like in different countries here and there. And I know that that student somehow loves me, and I love him as well. But he directly said, “Teacher, we can go together one day.” I'm just like, why? I said, “Yeah, I hope so”. But I mean, you wouldn't directly say that one (to a teacher). But he's Pakistani, so I guess in Pakistan it's a bit different.”

Pedagogical issues

In Turkey, the EFL classrooms were highly monolingual until a very recent time. This made it easier for Turkish EFL teachers to focus on the needs of Turkish students in terms of pedagogy and content requirements. However, with the sudden change of classroom settings in Turkish EFL classrooms, teachers started to report some challenges, mostly regarding the content. Particularly, T3 reported some problems regarding pronunciation and intelligibility issues in the classroom.

“T3: There are some words that they try to say, they try to pronounce even. Maybe they try to spell word by word, but still, you're unable to understand them because their accent... affects how they pronounce each letter. Let's take the Pakistani student for example. I mean, they basically speak Urdu and it's like mixed with Arabic, Persian and Indian language. So, they have like different sounds in their language. So, whenever he tries to pronounce, let's say, letter R, letter T, letter D, letter E, letter A, sometimes I'm misunderstanding him. I just want him to repeat. I want him to spell one by one each letter even though I don't understand. I just, like, want him to write on the board seriously because I don't want them to feel like they are difficult to understand.”

Other than the accent, T3, T6 and T7 reported the language barrier as a problem in reaching international students as it hindered their communication in class;

“T3: ...some of them don't speak Turkish and they directly come to the prep school or to the faculty without learning Turkish from the Turkish Learning Center. So, it is sometimes difficult to express specifically the grammar, let me say, or some definition of words.”

To overcome this problem, T2 and T3 reported they would switch to Arabic which is the most common foreign language in their classrooms while T6 and T7 admitted finding the iterative use of the target language challenging to some extent as follows;

“T6: In elementary classes, it may be hard to adjust your language since they are used to Turkish instructions, explanations. That's why I use Turkish for especially instructions without even realizing it, but that's easy to adjust.”
“T7: It sometimes causes serious communication problems as a few of our students can only speak in their L1. I occasionally find myself struggling to explain an important thing about the exam or the school, not even the subject, to those students.”

Social issues

All eight participants reported different social issues that

they had to deal with in intercultural classroom settings, and T1, T2, T3 and T6 reported support among intercultural students in class, particularly between non-Turkish students. While T1 expressed how intercultural classrooms promoted tolerance, all teachers highlighted the importance of managing controversial topics in the classroom from different perspectives. For instance, T1, T2 and T3 stated that teachers' awareness of some social issues such as religion was important as was stated in the excerpt from T2 below;

“T2: I had this project presentation about the speaking and one of these students was coming and talking about the hijab problems that they have during the Turkish recruitment procedure and everything. So, I could see some people changing their faces that “okay, if you don't want it, take it off” ... You have to be careful especially in terms of those things.”

T6 and T7 stated issues regarding families could be controversial. As Also T6 and T7 reported the vulnerable nature of such classrooms as political issues such as war and racism happened to emerge in those settings;

“T6: Some Turkish students may sometimes have attitudes towards immigrants in Turkey. That's why they sometimes use discriminative language without realizing they may hurt some of their friends in the class. So, I try my best not to bring these kinds of debates/sensitive issues to the class.”
“T7: In such classrooms, anything can turn into an offensive topic if not paid close attention to. For instance, as I asked my class about languages and where they are spoken, one of my Turkish students said, “Arabic is spoken in Turkey, thanks to those Arab dudes!” as other Arab students were in the class. I felt the urge highlight the globalization.... It is a challenge in the sense that these students come from a war environment, and they need to feel welcomed without being alienated by their peers.”

DISCUSSION

As the literature review for this article presents from the existing body of research about multicultural, international classrooms and their impact on teachers, it can be said that the demographics of classrooms have been rapidly changing all around the world (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Vazquez-Montilla et al., 2014; Eun, 2021; Bhattacharya, 2020). As well as bringing opportunities, these changes come together with particular challenges that have to be faced either by international students (Yilmazel and Atay, 2022) or home students (O'Brien et al, 2019) as well as their teachers who are either pre-service or novice (Parker and Bickmore, 2012) or in-service (McAllister and Irvine, 2002; Hajisoteriou, 2013). This particular study aimed to present Turkish higher education EFL instructors' experiences of teaching in multicultural settings and what kind of challenges and opportunities these newly

multicultural settings brought to their once homogeneous classes and how they dealt with these changes with a qualitative descriptive design. The results were thematically analysed and then presented within three categories which were named as cultural, pedagogical and social issues.

The notion of culture was mentioned both as an opportunity by all participants and as a challenge by more than half of the participants. Elena (2014) stated each individual in the class is the bearer and messenger of a different individual 'culture' in terms of different family and social backgrounds. Accordingly, T1, T6 and T7 mentioned how they could benefit from the presence of their multicultural students since they provided a source of cultural richness for each other. In addition to that, Roux (2001) indicated that intercultural relations in the classroom may be a source of knowledge and mutual enrichment between culturally diverse learners if managed proactively by teachers. This statement shows the importance of teachers' intercultural awareness and classroom management skills as well as their tact in terms of multicultural classrooms when a conflict arises because of differences. T2 mentioned solving some possible conflicts before arising thanks to his awareness and knowledge about the religious limitations of Muslim ladies in burka (a piece of clothing that covers all body as well as the face of Muslim ladies) who prefer not to be paired with male classmates. Even though we cannot expect teachers to know all cultural, traditional and religious signs and rituals and taboos, having a general idea about what are the dos and don'ts of cultures that show presence in their classroom can be of great help, let alone solving extreme incidents as such in the example to T2.

Over and above, the findings supported the existing research in terms of pedagogical issues as well. For instance, Eun (2021) suggested that "as many students from minority language and culture join the regular classroom with limited or less than fluent English proficiency, teachers are faced with a daunting task of equipping these students with both the requisite language skills and content matter knowledge." This statement is in line with what the participants of this study shared in terms of pedagogical issues regarding intercultural classrooms. T3 stated the shift in school policy which was about terminating the Turkish prerequisite for English preparatory programs and how it affected his in-class practices by hindering teacher-student communication since most of the multicultural elementary or pre-intermediate English language learners (ELLs) were also dependent users of Turkish, consequently the lack of bridges in terms of communication caused pedagogical flaws in these teachers' classrooms.

When it comes to social issues regarding intercultural classrooms, notions of tolerance and controversial topics emerged. As Eun (2021) indicates, "Because educational institutions are not neutral with regard to larger societal and political forces working beyond the school walls, what goes on in the classroom is largely determined by these external constraints and/or affordance (p. 9)." Also, Parker and Bickmore (2012)

indicated that marginalized students might be unwilling to share different perspectives or may be treated disrespectfully. Sometimes teachers have to deal with racism against those intercultural students and these explicit acts of unconscious racism from students might cause multicultural students to segregate themselves from the rest of the class and form their own groups which may result in larger-scale social problems. To prevent this, teachers should know how to address vulnerable issues such as religion or ethnicity before a conflict occurs.

To be able to solve such conflicts effectively, teachers need professional development activities designed specifically for dealing with multicultural classrooms. Eun (2021) suggests professional development activities developed according to Vygotskian theory by stating "As teachers continue to learn and develop alongside their students, both will be involved in becoming culturally competent and culturally contributing individuals." For countries that face rapid demographic changes because of various reasons such as wars and pandemics as well as domestic changes that make the homeland attractive to students from different countries, it is a must for the teachers of such countries to make themselves more conflict-solvers than interculturally aware which is already present for most of the EFL instructors.

Pedagogical implications and conclusion

The present qualitative descriptive study aimed to address the experiences of Turkish EFL instructors with their multicultural classrooms and how this sudden shift from monolingual to multilingual, multicultural settings affected their teaching with a focus on the challenges and opportunities these classrooms bring with the light of teachers' experiences.

The results of the data analysis revealed that instructors had cultural, pedagogical and social issues regarding such classrooms. While all instructors agreed on the benefits of having multicultural students in class as a shift to cultural richness and as an opportunity to witness and experience different cultures as well as making foreign language use compulsory to communicate in real-life settings brought directly to classrooms, they also highlighted the importance of the ability to "control culture" or possible communication breakdowns that might take place in such classrooms as they named culture as a "double-edged sword (T1)".

When it came to pedagogical issues, teachers named pronunciation and low language proficiency as barriers to delivering and receiving messages from multicultural students. They named some strategies such as code-switching between English and Arabic or English to Turkish to make the content relevant to students. Also, they named some classroom management issues caused by differences in student-teacher communication manners between cultures and how this challenged them as teachers. Finally, about social issues, teachers shared how challenged and unprepared they felt while addressing issues related to families and war. They also stated that such classrooms helped students to develop

tolerance towards differences they face in and outside the school environment and they witnessed a community of help between multicultural students. Even though this study focused on English as foreign language (EFL) instructors' experiences with multicultural higher education language classrooms, the findings of the study could be helpful for teachers of various subject areas who teach in multicultural classrooms no matter which level or grade they teach in terms of showing which topics could be controversial and what to prevent in such classrooms as well as what to highlight and how to make use of different cultures in the classroom setting. Designing pre-service and in-service professional development activities to make teachers interculturally aware and tolerant as well as how to address issues resulting from the existence of different cultures in the classroom is crucial for the teachers who actively teach in countries where the demographics of classrooms are rapidly changing.

The results also showed the importance of updating content for language learning materials in order to prevent addressing possibly sensitive issues such as families and countries that are no longer innocent to place in books because of worldwide problems since migration and war-related family member loss are not uncommon. Instead, developing content and curriculum that addresses such issues from a critical thinking point of view can make these subjects easier to deal with in classrooms. Increasing teachers' social pedagogical content knowledge (SPCK) also becomes crucial to be able to teach in multicultural classrooms and including pre-service and in-service training regarding SPCK development for teachers would be of great help.

Education in suddenly multiculturalism settings is too serious to be left to the hands of some teachers who were, by luck, self-trained to be interculturally aware or have enough tolerance or classroom management skills to deal with multicultural classrooms, but they have to be systematically trained to professionally address problems as well as opportunities such classrooms bring.

Just like many pieces of literature, this paper has its limitations such as the limited number of participants and collecting data from one private university in Turkey. For further studies, quantitative data with more participants could be analyzed and also mixed method research where quantitative data is supported by the findings of interviews could make the points highlighted in this study clearer. Also, data can be collected from the academic staff's point of view could also be used from programs where the medium of instruction is English. Developing professional development trainings and seeing their impact on multicultural classrooms or developing materials that address culture-sensitive issues differently can also be scrutinized and they can contribute to the existing body of research effectively.

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