

Exploring the Intercultural Sensitivity Levels of Young Learners in Specialized ELT Settings

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Abstract

This quantitative study explores the intercultural sensitivity levels of gifted young learners enrolled in Science and Art Centres in the Burdur province in Turkey. The study aimed to assess the learners' attitudes towards cultural diversity and their implications for English language instruction. Having utilized purposive sampling, 108 gifted students participating in the Support 1 and Support 2 programmes across three Science and Art Centres were selected. Data were collected via the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ICSS) developed by Wang and Zhou (2016). The results revealed a high degree of openness to intercultural interaction in most young learners, who demonstrated curiosity, enthusiasm and willingness to communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. These results underscore the significance of integrating intercultural competence into language education and provide valuable insights for language teachers, emphasizing the need to evaluate cultural content in instructional materials to adopt strategies of nurturing intercultural awareness among gifted learners.

Key words: *English language teaching (ELT); gifted young learners; intercultural awareness*

Introduction

In the contemporary era of rapid globalization, even the distant corners of the world are interconnected, and technology permeates every aspect of life. Mastering foreign languages, namely English, as lingua franca has become crucial for achieving

higher levels of communicative effectiveness beyond one's native tongue. As culture is a crucial aspect that embodies language and its multifarious components, it is incorporated into the language teaching process through which learners display greater proficiency and increased level of engagement (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007; Moran, 2001, Neuliep, 2017; Potowski, 2010). Incorporating cultural cues in learning a foreign language helps students build a bridge between their own culture and the target culture, especially in the early phase and in all age groups. Therefore, fostering young learners' interest in the target culture is a promising endeavour, given that language instruction can significantly enhance their intercultural awareness throughout their lives (Savić & Prošić-Santovac, 2020). Learning a language by underpinning the cultural elements and comprehending similarities and differences between native and target culture have superseded the prior method of teaching foreign languages, which was mostly based on form (Kızılaslan, 2010; Günday & Aycan, 2018). Culture and language learning are inseparable, and successful foreign language learning often goes hand in hand with a deeper understanding of the culture from which the language originates. In a similar vein, young learners' sensitivity levels to diverse cultures in the learning process are likely to play an indispensable role in their language development. During the early stages of the language learning process, young learners are introduced to the culture of the language, and they are expected to improve their intercultural communication skills so that they can properly interact in diverse cultural environments (Günday & Aycan, 2018). Therefore, "intercultural sensitivity has been regarded as a precondition for intercultural communicative competence and interculturality" (Nazlı & Aşık, 2022, p. 74).

Although there are studies covering intercultural awareness and sensitivity at various teaching levels in foreign language learning literature, the number of studies exploring young, gifted learners are rare, to the best of our knowledge. Therefore, the current study aimed to establish a niche in the field of gifted learners' language education with special emphasis on the development of intercultural awareness.

Literature review

In the past culture was viewed as a closed box that separated societies from one another. However, with technological advancements and increased mobility around the world due to various reasons, today culture is no longer confined within the borders of countries, but it has instead become a dynamic phenomenon open to shared experiences and constant interaction across diverse cultures. It has become tangible and visible in the field of art and in everyday lives, but it also exists in the form of invisible codes that affect our specific beliefs, perspectives and levels of perception (Driscoll & Simpson, 2015). People participate in multiple cultures that are internally variable, diverse and heterogeneous, and their engagement in these cultural contexts is fluid, evolving and changing, which can shape and potentially constrain their thoughts, emotions and actions (Barret et al., 2014). Since culture is

not a phenomenon specific to a certain place, a particular religion or a society but is associated with all social groups, it is difficult to define a particular person's culture (Elsherbeeney, 2022). According to Hofstede (1994), for instance, culture is the process that reveals the differences between people in a group from the people in another group, and it shapes the mental structure of people in all aspects to reveal these differences. On the other hand, Triandis (1989) claimed culture is as important to society as memories are for people. Language and culture are interrelated, and foreign language learning often goes hand in hand with a deep understanding of the culture from which the language originates. According to Baker (2022), learning English allows for ease in gaining intercultural competence because the learner encounters English not only in the classroom but also outside of it, adopts a different language and easily integrates into a different culture in accordance with the traditional goal of foreign language learning, which is to converse with and understand the culture of the "other" (Baker, 2022). Policies regarding the teaching of culture in language education evolved after the 1990s, and intercultural components were incorporated into language instruction. From an intercultural perspective, language teaching entails learners mediating between languages and cultures, as well as reciprocally negotiating and interpreting meanings through language use in various circumstances (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Risager, 2007). Therefore, it would be illuminating to provide a brief overview of the concepts of competence, communicative competence, intercultural communicative competence, intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity. Competence is usually regarded as a synonym for ability and/or skill, and communicative competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively—linguistically, socially and strategically—when responding to communicative challenges individually or collaboratively. Intercultural encounters provide valuable opportunities for learning, as they expose individuals to the attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to appreciate cultural differences and to engage respectfully in interactions that are mutually rewarding (Barret et al., 2014; Neulep, 2017). Communication within intercultural encounters is shaped by the language and culture of the interlocutors, which makes intercultural competence evolutionary by nature. Intercultural sensitivity (ICS) is a phenomenon that reflects the degree of enjoyment in interacting and communicating with people from different cultures (Ruiz-Bernardo et al., 2014; Shen, 2021). According to Chen and Starosta (1996), intercultural sensitivity is related to intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and reflects the emotional responses that this competence elicits in individuals. Several researchers claimed that intercultural sensitivity is an important factor that determines the level of impact in intercultural communication and ensures that this level is high (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Deardorff, 2020; Karras, 2021; Liddicoat, 2008; Zhao, 2002).

Intercultural awareness (ICA) is the ability to use ideas in real-time communication in a flexible and context-specific way, as well as a conscious grasp of the potential

influence that culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference might have in intercultural communication. Here, awareness is defined more broadly to encompass both behaviour and abilities (Baker, 2011). It entails two characteristics: awareness of one's own culture and awareness of another culture, which enables us to see the world from both our and the point of view of others. In other words, it is the capacity to step back from our perspective and recognize not only the values, beliefs and perceptions of our own culture but also those of other societies (Zhu, 2011). It is possible to effectively raise cultural awareness by having a clear concept of what culture is (Er & Çiftci Aksoy, 2023). The shift in language education away from the unsuitable native speaker paradigm toward one that includes the competencies and awareness required for intercultural and transcultural communication is closely related to the growth of communicative competence (Byram, 2008; Zhu, 2011). Language learners in cross-cultural contexts should make every effort to cultivate empathetic concepts and precepts during the foreign language learning process as an efficient strategy to develop their communication ability. Canagarajah (2013) stated that successful communication relies not just on the content but also on the “how” of interaction, which includes techniques for effective communication, intercultural competence and sociocultural awareness.

When it comes to the issue of learner giftedness and intercultural communication, it is a relatively new focus in Turkey (Şahin, 2015). Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness, coined by Renzulli (2012), is characterized by three interrelated traits: above-average ability, task commitment and creativity. Above-average ability includes both general and specific performance areas and is “the most constant of the rings”; (2) task commitment represents “a non-intellective cluster of traits found consistently in creative productive individuals”; and (3) creativity is a trait which includes “curiosity, originality, ingenuity and a willingness to challenge convention and tradition” (p. 153). Feldhusen (2001, p. 4208) defined gifted learners as “children who are superior in mental ability or very high academic achievers”. Their learning ability is at a higher level than that of their peers, they use reasoning and logic more effectively and are more successful in abstract and theoretical thinking. Gifted learners exhibit extraordinary levels of aptitude in one or more domains such as mathematics, music, arts, sports and languages (McGowan et al., 2016). It is feasible to say that in light of the broad definitions of giftedness, gifted learners may exhibit a variety of individual nuances in behaviour and learning in foreign language education (Ateş & Büyükkarcı, 2019; Farrell & Jacobs, 2010; Yıldırım & Akçayoğlu, 2018; Wallace, 2006). To communicate with native speakers, gifted learners need to reach a specific degree of linguistic and communicative competence. Communicative competence is closely related to the development of the intercultural sensitivity level of these students. They employ their talents to plan, organize, observe and assess the acquisition of a foreign language by creating scenarios or opportunities (Faulkner, 2003; Yıldırım & Akçayoğlu, 2018). When

the literature on gifted young learners in the foreign language teaching context and their sensitivity towards intercultural encounters was reviewed, very few studies were found examining the intercultural sensitivity levels of young learners (Nazlı & Aşık, 2022; Maru et al., 2018; Corbaz, 2001; Karras, 2021; Bernardo et al., 2014; Driscoll & Simpson, 2015).

Science and Art Centres in Turkey admit gifted students through a series of standardized tests to complement their regular formal schooling. Research conducted in these centres has predominantly focused on subjects such as mathematics and science, whereas areas like the intercultural sensitivity of gifted young learners attending English classes have received little or no attention. Therefore, this study aimed to contribute to further research by examining the intercultural sensitivity levels of young learners in EFL classrooms at Science and Art Centres by seeking answers to the following research question and its subquestions:

- 1 What are the intercultural sensitivity levels of English language young learners?
 - a Do intercultural sensitivity levels differ according to students' gender?
 - b Do intercultural sensitivity levels vary according to students' age and parents' educational background?

Based on the literature and the aim of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Gifted young learners attending English language classes in Science and Art centres (BILSEM) demonstrate high levels of intercultural sensitivity.

Hypothesis 1a: There is a statistically significant difference in intercultural sensitivity levels of students according to gender.

Hypothesis 1b: There is a statistically significant difference in intercultural sensitivity levels of students according to age.

Hypothesis 1c: There is a statistically significant difference in intercultural sensitivity levels of students according to their parents' educational background.

Methodology

Research design

The study utilized a quantitative research design to reveal the participants' intercultural sensitivity levels. It was conducted at three Science and Art Centres: Burdur, Bucak and Gölhisar. The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, whose content was broadened by Wang and Zhou (2016), translated into Turkish by Zhou (2016) and adapted for children by Nazlı and Aşık (2022), was used for data collection among students attending English courses within the Support 1 and Support 2 training programs in the fall semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Participants

The data were obtained from 108 English language learners (49 female and 59 male students) aged between 7 and 11 at Science and Art Centres in the province

of Burdur in Turkey. They were identified as gifted based on their scores on the group screening test entitled ‘*BILSEM Group Screening Application Exam via Tablet Computers*’ and international standardized aptitude test entitled ‘*Wechsler Nonverbal Intelligence Test*’. All the students were enrolled in state schools. They received two to four hours of English instruction per week both at their regular schools and at BILSEM. The demographic information obtained by the survey is presented in Tables 1 through 4.

When regarding gender, out of 108 participants, 49 were female (45.4 %) and 59 male (54.6 %), which is a relatively balanced ratio of male and female students.

Participants’ age is presented in Table 1. As can be seen, nine (8.3 %) participants were seven years old at the time of the study’s implementation, 30 (27.8 %) were eight years old, 52 (48.1 %) were nine years old, 15 (13.9 %) were ten years of age and two (1.9 %) 11 years old. While students aged seven, eight and nine were included in the Support 1 training program, students aged 10 and 11 attended the Support 2 program.

Table 1
Distribution of the students’ age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
7	9	8.3
8	30	27.8
9	52	48.1
10	15	13.9
11	2	1.9
SUM	108	100.0

Table 2 below shows the participants’ grade levels. As can be seen, 18 (16.7 %) of the 108 students were attending the 2nd grade at the time of the study’s implementation, 48 (44.4 %) the 3rd grade and 42 (38.9 %) the 4th grade.

Table 2
Distribution of the students according to grade

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
2 nd grade	18	16.7
3 rd grade	48	44.4
4 th grade	42	38.9
SUM	108	100.0

The following two tables (Table 3 and Table 4) display the educational background of the participants’ parents concerning the sub-research question.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the fathers’ educational background. It was observed that 92 (85.3 %) fathers obtained a higher (undergraduate, Master’s and Doctorate) degree; 11 fathers (10.2 %) had a high-school degree, and five fathers (4.5 %) had a primary or middle-school degree.

Table 3
Distribution of the fathers' educational background

Educational Background	Frequency	Percentage
basic (primary and middle-school degree)	5	4.5
secondary (high-school degree)	11	10.2
higher (undergraduate, Master's or PhD)	92	85.3
SUM	108	100.0

Table 4 presents the distribution of the mothers' educational background. It is observed that 85 (78.6 %) mothers held the highest degree (undergraduate, Master's degree and Doctorate degree), 18 (16.7 %) attained a high-school degree, and five mothers had primary and middle-school education degree (4.7 %).

Table 4
Distribution of the mothers' educational background

Educational Background	Frequency	Percentage
basic (primary and middle-school degree)	5	4.7
secondary (high-school degree)	18	16.7
higher (undergraduate, Master's degree and PhD)	85	78.6
SUM	108	100.0

Research instrument

The study adopted a quantitative research methodology to examine the variables specified in the research questions. This approach enabled the systematic classification, analysis and interpretation of the collected data while ensuring rigorous and thorough procedures that support generalizability, replicability, bias control and the consideration of alternative explanations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

As the data collection instrument, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ICSS) (Wang & Zhou, 2016) was used in its Turkish, child-adapted version developed by Nazlı and Aşık (2022). The validity and reliability evidence for this adapted version is based on the procedures conducted in the study by Nazlı and Aşık (2022), who concluded that “the simplified Turkish version of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale can serve as an appropriate instrument for assessing the intercultural sensitivity levels of young language learners in Turkish EFL contexts” (p. 91).

In their study, Nazlı and Aşık (2022) examined the internal consistency of both the original English version and the Turkish adaptation using Cronbach's Alpha and Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items measures. They reported coefficients of 0.970 for the English version and 0.973 for the Turkish version, which indicated excellent internal reliability. They also investigated construct validity through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), principal component analysis and varimax rotation. A single

eigenvalue above 1.00 indicated a unidimensional structure, with the English version explaining 71 % of the variance and the Turkish version explaining 72.86 %. Factor loadings ranged from 0.682 to 0.939 for the English scale and from 0.732 to 0.907 for the Turkish scale, all exceeding the 0.60 threshold for high factor loadings. Additionally, their confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that utilized maximum likelihood estimation further confirmed strong model fit for both versions.

In the present study, the ICSS was administered to gather data from participants. Statistical analyses were performed via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21. Frequency analyses and independent samples t-tests were conducted to identify gender differences. Since parents' educational background consisted of multiple groups, a one-way ANOVA was employed to examine its relationship with the dependent variables. These procedures were implemented exclusively for the purposes of this research.

Results

The current study aimed to explore the intercultural sensitivity levels of English language young learners studying in Science and Art Centres in the province of Burdur in Turkey. It also examined the effects of the factors such as students' gender, age and their parents' education levels on their intercultural sensitivity levels.

The ICSS (intercultural sensitivity scale) results

The results related to the scale items are presented in Table 5. For item 1, 44.4 % of the students selected *strongly agree*, while 33.3 % selected *agree*. Similarly, for item 2, 40.7 % of the participants selected *strongly agree*, and 39.8 % selected *agree*. These two items indicate that students enjoy encountering different cultures and initiate communication with peers from different cultural backgrounds. One of the implications of this sense of enjoyment is more positive communication with peers.

Additional items for which participants selected *strongly agree* or *agree* were Items 7, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 15. Items 7, 8 and 9 specifically relate to students' self-confidence when communicating with individuals from different cultures and suggest that they do not experience difficulty in such interactions. For item 7, 25.9 % of the students selected *agree* and 38.9 % selected *strongly agree*. For item 8, 32.4 % selected *agree* and 48.1 % *strongly agree*. For item 9, 27.8 % selected *agree* and 31.5 % *strongly agree*. Likewise, 27.8 % of the participants selected *agree* and 44.4 % *strongly agree* for item 13; 22.2 % selected *agree* and 40.7 % *strongly agree* for item 14; 22.2 % selected *agree* and 58.3 % *strongly agree* for item 15. Taken together, these items highlight the attention and care students invest in their communication with people from different cultural backgrounds.

In contrast, participants predominantly selected *disagree* or *strongly disagree* for items 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 12. These items assess whether young learners feel dissatisfied, discouraged or uncomfortable in situations involving contact with people from other cultures. For item 3, 25.0 % selected *disagree* and 37.0 % *strongly disagree*. For item 4, 25.9 % selected *disagree* and 49.1 % *strongly disagree*. For item 5, 13.0 % selected *disagree*

and 69.4 % *strongly disagree*. For item 6, 21.3 % selected *disagree* and 33.3 % *strongly disagree*. For item 10, 18.5 % selected *disagree* and 68.5 % *strongly disagree*. For item 11, 19.4 % selected *disagree* and 59.3 % *strongly disagree*. Finally, for item 12, 27.8 % selected *disagree* and 58.3 % *strongly disagree*.

Table 5
Items of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

Items	Frequencies					Percentages				
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1 I enjoy communicating with people from different cultures.	48	36	21	2	1	44.4	33.3	19.4	1.9	0.9
2 I often respond positively to culturally diverse peers.	44	43	14	3	4	40.7	39.8	13.0	2.8	3.7
3 I avoid interactions with people from different cultures.	9	11	21	27	40	8.3	10.2	19.4	25.0	37.0
4 I don't like culturally diverse settings.	8	9	10	28	53	7.4	8.3	9.3	25.9	49.1
5 I do not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	5	5	9	14	75	4.6	4.6	8.3	13.0	69.4
6 I think people from other cultures only accept their own ideas.	13	8	28	23	36	12.0	7.4	25.9	21.3	33.3
7 I am quite confident in communicating with people from different cultures.	42	28	29	4	5	38.9	25.9	26.9	3.7	4.6
8 I feel confident when communicating with people from different cultures.	52	35	16	1	4	48.1	32.4	14.8	0.9	3.7
9 I can easily communicate with people from different cultures.	34	30	27	8	9	31.5	27.8	25.0	7.4	8.3
10 I often feel useless when communicating with people from different cultures.	2	5	7	20	74	1.9	4.6	6.5	18.5	68.5
11 I get upset easily when communicating with people from different cultures.	8	2	13	21	64	7.4	1.9	12.0	19.4	59.3
12 I often feel discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	3	6	6	30	63	2.8	5.6	5.6	27.8	58.3
13 I am very careful when communicating with people from different cultures.	48	30	23	5	2	44.4	27.8	21.3	4.6	1.9
15 I try to gather as much information in intercultural interactions.	63	24	16	3	2	58.3	22.2	14.8	2.8	1.9

SA –Strongly Agree A –Agree U –Uncertain D –Disagree SD –Strongly Disagree

The results of the independent-samples t-test for levels of intercultural sensitivity according to gender are presented in Table 6. They show no statistically significant difference between the students' levels of intercultural sensitivity according to gender ($p>.05$).

Table 6
T-Test results for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to gender

Gender	N	X	SD	df	t	p
Female	49	3.00	0.39	106	1.34	0.18
Male	59	2.91	0.30			

The descriptive results concerning students' intercultural sensitivity levels according to their age are given in Table 7, and the ANOVA results in Table 8.

As seen in Table 7, the highest mean is observed at age 9 ($M=2.98$; $SD=0.39$), while the lowest is observed at age 10 ($M=2.90$; $SD=0.32$). Intercultural sensitivity levels are similar across the age groups. The mean intercultural sensitivity across all age groups is around 2.96. This suggests a generally moderate-to-high level of sensitivity. According to the standard deviations, there isn't a wide range in sensitivity levels across the age groups.

Table 7
Descriptive statistics for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to students' age

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
7	9	2.98	0.28
8	30	2.94	0.34
9	52	2.98	0.39
10	15	2.90	0.32
11	2	2.97	0.05
SUM	108	2.96	0.35

The results of the ANOVA analysis for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to students' age are shown in Table 8. They show no statistically significant difference ($p=.95$) in the students' levels of intercultural sensitivity according to their age: $F(4, 103) = 0.17$, $p>.05$. Furthermore, the between-group variance is almost negligible compared to the within-group variance, which indicates homogeneity among the groups with respect to age.

Table 8
ANOVA results for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to students' age

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	0.08	4	0.02	0.17	0.95
Within Groups	12.81	103	0.12		
SUM	12.90	107			

The descriptive and ANOVA results for the students' levels of intercultural sensitivity according to their fathers' and mothers' educational background are provided in Tables 9 and 10, and Tables 11 and 12, respectively.

As seen in Table 9, the average intercultural sensitivity level of students is 2.96. As fathers' level of education increases, students' average intercultural sensitivity appears to increase slightly.

Table 9
Descriptive results for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to the fathers' educational background

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	0.08	4	0.02	0.17	0.95
Within Groups	12.81	103	0.12		
SUM	12.90	107			

The results of the ANOVA analysis for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to the fathers' educational background are shown in Table 10. The table shows no statistically significant difference ($p=.25$) in the students' levels of intercultural sensitivity according to their fathers' educational background: $F(2, 105) = 1.39, p>.05$.

Table 10
ANOVA results for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to the fathers' educational background

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	0.33	2	0.16	1.39	0.25
Within Groups	12.56	105	0.12		
SUM	12.90	107			

When we examine Table 11, we observe that there is no significant difference based on the mothers' level of education, as the means are quite close to each other. In other words, students' intercultural sensitivity levels varied slightly based on their mothers' level of education. Furthermore, standard deviations are quite low across all groups, indicating that sensitivity levels are consistent within groups, which means there is no excessive variability.

Table 11
Descriptive results for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to the mothers' educational background

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Basic	5	2.99	0.22
Secondary	18	2.89	0.35
Higher	85	2.97	0.36
SUM	108	2.96	0.35

Students’ intercultural sensitivity levels according to their mothers’ educational background are presented in Table 12. Similar to the results in Table 10, the results of the ANOVA analysis reveal no statistically significant difference ($p=.68$) in the students’ levels of intercultural sensitivity according to their mothers’ educational background, $F(2, 105) = 0.38, p>.05$.

Table 12
ANOVA results for the levels of intercultural sensitivity according to the mothers’ educational background

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	0.09	2	0.04	0.38	0.68
Within Groups	12.80	105	0.12		
SUM	12.90	107			

The effect size of the students’ age, fathers’ educational background and mothers’ educational background on the levels of intercultural sensitivity was also calculated. The calculation of eta-squared value (η^2) that measures the impact of the students’ age on their intercultural sensitivity levels, yielded the result of 0.006; the calculation of eta-squared value (η^2) that measures the impact of the fathers’ educational background on their intercultural sensitivity levels obtained the result of 0.025, and the calculation of eta-squared value (η^2) that measures the impact of the mothers’ educational background on their intercultural sensitivity levels yielded the result of 0.006.

To interpret the results, we utilized Cohen’s markers (1988) (Table 13) and found that the students’ age had a negligible-sized impact, fathers’ educational background had a small-sized impact, and mothers’ educational background had a negligible-sized impact on the students’ intercultural sensitivity levels.

Table 13
Interpretation of Eta-Squared Values

Eta-Squared Values	Effect size
0.00 < 0.01	Negligible
0.01 < 0.06	Small
0.06 < 0.14	Medium
0.14 < 1.00	Large

Discussion

To enhance the effectiveness of foreign language instruction, fostering intercultural sensitivity is crucial, particularly among young learners who are at the early stages of their encounter with diverse cultures. Recognizing this need, the present study investigated the intercultural sensitivity levels of gifted young learners enrolled in Science and Art Centres. The results revealed high levels of intercultural sensitivity among the participants, which suggests that they are likely to develop strong intercultural competence—an essential skill in today’s globalized societies. This result aligns with previous research on intercultural competence and sensitivity (Chen & Hu, 2023; Chen

& Starosta, 2000; Engle & Engle, 2004; Penbek et al., 2012; Saricoban & Oz, 2014). Notably, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding young learners, as most studies have predominantly focused on older students, particularly university students (Akn, 2016; Chen & Hu, 2023; Çakır, 2022; Çiloğlan & Bardakci, 2019; Simkhovych, 2009). Thus, the present study makes a valuable contribution by addressing this gap and offering insights into the intercultural sensitivity of gifted young learners.

Regarding the effect of gender, this study found no significant difference between male and female students in terms of intercultural sensitivity. This finding is consistent with the studies of Bekiroğlu and Balcı (2014) and Yılmaz and Göçen (2013), both of which also reported no gender-based differences. However, it contradicts the findings of Gonzales (2017), Margarethe et al. (2019) and Penbek et al. (2012), all of whom found that gender had a significant influence on intercultural sensitivity levels.

Teachers may inadvertently overlook their students' needs and motivations—particularly their desire to engage in cross-cultural communication (Baker, 2022). Therefore, the present study is particularly important because it proves that students' intercultural sensitivity levels should be acknowledged from an early age, and a structured path should be followed to foster awareness of diverse cultures, as exposure to different cultural perspectives enhances students' higher order thinking skills (Thomas, 1996). Kramsch (1988) highlighted the inherent complexity of using any instructional material to teach both language and culture in an educational setting. Similarly, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) argued that textbooks alone were insufficient for developing intercultural awareness among language learners. After data collection, the modules and themes in the supplementary English coursebook used in Science and Art Centres, specifically within the Support 1 and Support 2 programmes were examined, and it was found that cultural elements were embedded in the curriculum. Future revisions of these programmes could incorporate a broader range of intercultural components to further enrich students' exposure to diverse cultural perspectives.

The results of the current study might serve as the predictors of the attitudes of young learners towards interculturality in English classes. They also suggest that young gifted learners exhibit self-confidence, respect for other people's ideas and cultures, and have successful communication skills. This finding is in line with the results of Brumfit et al.'s study conducted in 1991, in which they stated children have fewer negative attitudes towards foreign languages and cultures and higher motivation than adults. This student motivation should be used to the fullest in language instruction. Systematically asking students for their opinions on the intercultural elements introduced during instruction will help them quickly grasp these elements and adapt their understanding to improve their English language proficiency. Additionally, incorporating intercultural elements in lessons through engaging and entertaining activities might assist the elimination of possible confusion and misunderstandings during the initial encounter with intercultural elements, which could further raise their level of intercultural sensitivity.

Teachers should move beyond the margins of conventional structuralist curricula, as suggested by Kramsch (2021); particularly, English language teachers should bear large portion of the responsibility in the foreign language teaching process. Teachers' awareness of the students' intercultural sensitivity levels will play a prominent role in their active involvement in the education process, wherein the use of technology simplifies the acquisition of the (inter)cultural elements and raises motivation and interest in global learning. Utilizing authentic materials and activities might enhance intercultural awareness and help students meet the intercultural objectives required by modern educational standards. Technology offers considerable help in showing students examples from diverse cultures in audio-visual formats and printed digital texts via educational web tools. Because teachers play a central role in shaping how cultural differences are managed in foreign language classrooms, they frequently engage with multicultural communities and draw on diverse cultural experiences to inform their teaching. Moreover, establishing a curriculum for gifted learners that intentionally incorporates intercultural elements may lead to positive outcomes by fostering greater sensitivity and awareness toward cultural diversity.

Limitations

The sample of the study is limited to 108 participants from three Science and Art Centres in Burdur province in Turkey. The use of a convenience sample that was not determined through *a priori* sample size estimation methods aligned with the research question can be considered another drawback (Cohen, 1992; Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Since Science and Art Centres are limited in number in most Turkish cities, it was challenging to include more students in the sample. As a result, the study does not fully represent the entire population of English language students enrolled in these centres. Therefore, future research should involve larger and more representative samples of the target population. Additionally, the study relied solely on data gathered through the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ICSS), developed by Wang and Zhou (2016) and adapted to Turkish by Nazlı and Aşık (2022), to assess the intercultural sensitivity levels of young English learners in Turkish Science and Art Centres. In addition to the ICSS, qualitative data collection methods such as reflective journals, classroom observations or semi-structured interviews should be used in future studies to gain deeper insights into students' intercultural experiences and perspectives. Also, mixed-methods designs could yield a more comprehensive understanding by combining quantitative findings with narrative data, which might reveal how students interpret and internalize intercultural elements during classroom instruction. Portfolio assessments can lead students to actively implement their intercultural understanding into communicative contexts.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the present study, it can be concluded that intercultural sensitivity levels of young English language learners in three Science and Art Centres

in the Burdur province in Turkey display similar results according to their gender, age and parents' educational background. Most of the participants enjoy interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and are willing to sustain communication. They are also curious to learn about other cultures through interaction. The found frequencies and percentages demonstrate that young learners confidently interact with different cultures. They are open to the opinions of individuals from other cultures and embrace the possibility to build friendships with them by initiating conversations. This finding might suggest that intercultural content of the course has acquainted students with other cultures from a young age. The high level of intercultural sensitivity might also suggest that young learners are exposed to interculturality in English language classrooms and outside by means of mobile devices and other technological media tools. Additionally, regardless of gender and age, young learners attending English language courses at the three Science and Art Centres come from highly educated families who support language learning via cultural content in regular coursebooks, documents, supplementary materials and tasks in the classroom. Almost no statistically significant difference found between students' levels of intercultural sensitivity according to gender and age reveals that young learners adapt to other cultures with ease.

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Istraživanje razina međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u nastavi engleskoga jezika u specijaliziranim obrazovnim okružjima

Sažetak

U ovoj kvantitativnoj studiji ispitivale su se razine međukulturne osjetljivosti nadarenih učenika rane školske dobi upisanih u Centre znanosti i umjetnosti u turskoj provinciji Burdur. Cilj istraživanja bio je procijeniti stavove učenika prema kulturnoj raznolikosti i njihove implikacije na poučavanje engleskoga jezika. Primjenom metode namjernoga uzorkovanja odabrano je 108 nadarenih učenika za sudjelovanje u programima Dodatna nastava 1 i Dodatna nastava 2 u tri centra znanosti i umjetnosti. Podatci su prikupljeni putem Skale međukulturne osjetljivosti (SMO) koju su razvili Wang i Zhou (2016). Rezultati su pokazali visoke razine otvorenosti prema međukulturnoj interakciji većine učenika rane školske dobi, koji su pokazali radoznalost, entuzijazam i voljnost za komunikacijom s pojedincima iz različitih kulturnih sredina. Ti rezultati naglašavaju važnost integracije međukulturne kompetencije u jezično obrazovanje i pružaju važne spoznaje učiteljima jezika, naglašavajući potrebu za evaluacijom kulturnoga sadržaja u nastavnim materijalima kako bi se usvojile strategije razvoja međukulturne osviještenosti nadarenih učenika.

Ključne riječi: međukulturna osviještenost; nadareni učenici rane školske dobi; poučavanje engleskoga jezika (ELT)

Uvod

U suvremeno vrijeme ubrzane globalizacije čak su i udaljeni krajevi svijeta međusobno povezani, a tehnologija je prisutna u svakom aspektu života. Učenje stranih jezika, poglavito engleskoga, kao sredstva sporazumijevanja postalo je krucijalno za postizanje viših razina komunikacijske učinkovitosti izvan granica materinskoga jezika. Budući da je kultura važan aspekt koji utjelovljuje jezik i njegove mnogostruke komponente, uključena je u proces poučavanja jezika, pa tako učenici postižu više razine usvojenosti jezika i angažmana (Fulcher i Davidson, 2007; Moran, 2001, Neuliep, 2017; Potowski, 2010). Uključivanje kulturnih sadržaja u učenje stranoga

jezika pomaže učenicima prilikom povezivanja vlastite kulture s ciljnom kulturom jezika koji uče, posebno u ranoj fazi učenja i u svim dobnim skupinama. Stoga je njegovanje interesa učenika rane školske dobi za ciljnu kulturu perspektivna težnja, s obzirom na činjenicu da jezična pouka može značajno povisiti razine međukulturne osviještenosti učenika tijekom cijeloga života (Savić i Prošić-Santovac, 2020). Učenje jezika putem naglašavanja kulturnih elemenata i razumijevanja sličnosti i razlika između polazišne i ciljne kulture zamijenilo je prijašnje metode učenja stranih jezika koje su se uvelike zasnivale na formi (Kızılaslan, 2010; Günday i Aycan, 2018). Kultura i učenje jezika su nerazdvojni, a uspješno učenje stranoga jezika često ide ruku pod ruku s dubljim razumijevanjem kulture iz koje jezik potječe. Slično tomu, razine osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi za razne kulture u procesu učenja igraju neizbježnu ulogu u njihovom jezičnom razvoju. Tijekom ranih faza učenja stranoga jezika učenici rane školske dobi upoznaju se s kulturom iz koje jezik potječe i od njih se očekuje da poboljšaju vlastite međukulturne komunikacijske vještine kako na pravi način uspostaviti interakcije u raznim kulturnim okružjima (Günday i Aycan, 2018). Stoga se „međukulturna osjetljivost smatra preduvjetom za međukulturnu komunikacijsku kompetenciju i međukulturalnost” (Nazlı i Aşık, 2022, str. 74).

Iako postoje istraživanja međukulturne osjetljivosti i osviještenosti na raznim razinama poučavanja u literaturi o učenju stranih jezika, broj studija koje su istraživale mlade nadarene učenike je malen. Stoga se ovom studijom nastojalo pronaći nišu u polju jezičnoga obrazovanja nadarenih učenika rane školske dobi s posebnim naglaskom na razvoj međukulturne osviještenosti.

Pregled literature

U prošlosti kultura je promatrana kao zatvoreni krug koji je odvajao društva jedno od drugoga. Međutim, s tehnološkim napretkom i povećanom mobilnosti širom svijeta, zbog raznih razloga, danas kultura više nije zatvorena unutar granica zemalja, već je postala dinamičan fenomen otvoren za zajednička iskustva i stalnu interakciju raznih kultura. Postala je opipljiva i vidljiva u polju umjetnosti i svakodnevnoga života, ali također postoji u obliku nevidljivih kodova koji utječu na naša specifična uvjerenja, perspektive i razine percepcije (Driscoll i Simpson, 2015). Ljudi su dio višestrukih kultura koje su u svojoj unutrašnjosti promjenjive, raznolike i heterogene, a njihov angažman u tim kulturnim kontekstima je fluidan, evolutivan i promjenjiv, što može oblikovati i potencijalno ograničiti misli, emocije i ponašanja (Barret i sur., 2014). Budući da kultura nije fenomen specifičan za određeno mjesto, posebnu religiju ili društvo, već je povezana sa svim socijalnim grupama, teško je definirati kulturu određene osobe (Elsherbeeney, 2022). Prema Hofstedeu (1994), na primjer, kultura je proces koji otkriva razlike između ljudi u jednoj skupini i ljudi u drugoj skupini te oblikuje mentalnu strukturu ljudi u svim aspektima kako bi razotkrila te razlike. S druge strane, Triandis (1989) je usporedio važnost kulture za društvo s važnosti uspomena za ljude. Jezik i kultura međusobno su povezani, a učenje

stranoga jezika često ide ruku pod ruku s dubljim razumijevanjem kulture iz koje jezik potječe. Prema Bakeru (2022) učenje engleskoga jezika omogućuje lakoću u stjecanju međukulturne kompetencije zbog toga što se učenici ne susreću s engleskim jezikom samo u učionici već i izvan nje, usvajaju drugi jezik i lako se integriraju u drugačiju kulturu u skladu s tradicionalnim ciljem učenja stranoga jezika, koji podrazumijeva razgovor s pripadnicima druge kulture i njezino razumijevanje (Baker, 2022). Politike koje reguliraju poučavanje kulture u jezičnom obrazovanju razvile su se nakon 1990-ih, a međukulturne sastavnice tada su uključene u poučavanje jezika. Iz međukulturne perspektive jezična pouka podrazumijeva učenike koji posreduju između jezika i kultura, kao i recipročno pregovaranje i tumačenje značenja kroz upotrebu jezika u raznim okolnostima (Liddicoat i Scarino, 2013; Risager, 2007). Bilo bi stoga informativno dati kratak pregled konceptata kompetencije, komunikacijske kompetencije, međukulturne komunikacijske kompetencije, međukulturne osviještenosti i međukulturne osjetljivosti. Kompetencija je obično sinonim za sposobnost i/ili vještinu, a komunikacijska kompetencija odnosi se na sposobnost primjerene i učinkovite – lingvističke, socijalne i strateške – upotrebe jezika prilikom individualnoga ili suradničkoga reagiranja na komunikacijske izazove. Međukulturni susreti osiguravaju vrijedne prilike za učenje jer izlažu pojedince stavovima, znanju, razumijevanju i vještinama nužnima za poštivanje kulturnih razlika i uvažavajući angažman u obostrano korisnim interakcijama (Barret i sur., 2014; Neulep, 2017). Komunikacija u međukulturnim susretima oblikovana je jezikom i kulturom sugovornika, što međukulturnu kompetenciju čini inherentno evolucijskom. Međukulturna osjetljivost (MKO) je pojava koja odražava stupanj uživanja u interakciji i komuniciranju s ljudima iz različitih kultura (Ruiz-Bernardo i sur., 2014; Shen, 2021). Prema Chenu i Starosti (1996) međukulturna osjetljivost povezana je s međukulturnom komunikacijskom kompetencijom (MCK) i odražava emocionalne odgovore koje ta kompetencija izaziva u pojedincima. Nekoliko istraživača tvrdilo je da je međukulturna osjetljivost važan čimbenik koji određuje razinu učinka međukulturne komunikacije i osigurava njezinu visoku razinu (Chen i Starosta, 1998; Deardorff, 2020; Karras, 2021; Liddicoat, 2008; Zhao, 2002).

Međukulturna osjetljivost (MKO) je sposobnost korištenja ideja u komunikaciji specifičnoj za kontekst u realnom vremenu, kao i svjesno razumijevanje potencijalnoga utjecaja kulturno-zasnovanih oblika, praksi i referentnih okvira na međukulturnu komunikaciju. Ovdje je osviještenost definirana šire kako bi uključila i ponašanje i sposobnosti (Baker, 2011). Ova definicija obuhvaća dvije karakteristike: svijest o vlastitoj kulturi i svijest o drugoj kulturi, što nam omogućuje viđenje svijeta iz vlastitoga gledišta i gledišta drugih. Drugim riječima, to je sposobnost odmicanja od vlastite perspektive i prepoznavanja ne samo vrijednosti, uvjerenja i percepcija vlastite kulture, već i onih drugih društava (Zhu, 2011). Moguće je učinkovito povisiti razinu kulturne osviještenosti putem jasnoga koncepta o tome što ta kultura predstavlja (Er i Çiftci Aksoy, 2023). Promjena u jezičnome obrazovanju od neprimjerene paradigme govornika materinskoga jezika prema onoj koja

uključuje kompetencije i svijest potrebnu za međukulturnu komunikaciju, blisko je povezana s razvojem komunikacijske kompetencije (Byram, 2008; Zhu, 2011). Učenici koji uče strani jezik u međukulturnim kontekstima trebaju se potruditi kako bi usvojili i razvijali empatične koncepte i norme tijekom procesa učenja kao uspješnu strategiju razvoja vlastite sposobnosti komunikacije. Canagarajah (2013) je smatrao da uspješna komunikacija počiva ne samo na sadržaju, već i na načinu interakcije, što uključuje tehnike učinkovite komunikacije, međukulturnu kompetenciju i sociokulturnu osviještenost.

Pitanje nadarenosti učenika i međukulturne komunikacije relativno je novi fokus u Turskoj (Şahin, 2015). Troprstena koncepcija nadarenosti Renzullija (2012) karakterizirana je trima međusobno povezanim osobinama: iznadprosječne sposobnosti, posvećenost zadatku, tj. motivacija i kreativnost. Iznadprosječne sposobnosti uključuje oboje opća i specifična područja izvedbe i „najstalnija je od triju prstena”; (2) posvećenost zadatku predstavlja „skupinu osobina koje dosljedno karakteriziraju kreativne i produktivne pojedince i (3) kreativnost kao osobina koja uključuje „znatiželju, originalnost, snalažljivost i voljnost za propitivanjem konvencija i tradicije” (str. 153). Feldhusen je opisao darovite učenike kao „djecu sa superiornim mentalnim sposobnostima ili vrlo visokim akademskim uspjehom“ (2001, str. 4208). Njihova je sposobnost učenja na višoj razini od one njihovih vršnjaka, učinkovitije koriste sposobnost zaključivanja i logičnoga razmišljanja i uspješniji su u apstraktnom i teorijskom promišljanju. Nadareni učenici pokazuju iznimne razine sposobnosti u jednoj ili dvjema domenama poput matematike, glazbe, umjetnosti, sporta ili jezika (McGowan i sur., 2016). U svjetlu širokih definicija darovitosti moguće je reći da daroviti učenici pokazuju raznolike individualne nijanse u ponašanju i učenju stranih jezika (Ateş i Büyükkarcı, 2019; Farrell i Jacobs, 2010; Yıldırım i Akçayoğlu, 2018; Wallace, 2006). Daroviti učenici trebaju dosegnuti specifičan stupanj jezične i komunikacijske kompetencije kako bi komunicirali s izvornim govornicima. Komunikacijska kompetencija blisko je povezana s razvojem razina međukulturne osjetljivosti tih učenika. Oni koriste svoje talente kako bi planirali, organizirali, promatrali i procijenili usvajanje stranoga jezika stvarajući scenarije ili prilike za učenje (Faulkner, 2003; Yıldırım i Akçayoğlu, 2018). Prilikom pregleda literature o darovitim učenicima rane školske dobi stranoga jezika i njihovoj osjetljivosti prema međukulturnim susretima, pronađeno je vrlo malo studija koje su ispitivale razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi (Nazlı i Aşık, 2022; Maru i sur., 2018; Corbaz, 2001; Karras, 2021; Bernardo i sur., 2014; Driscoll i Simpson, 2015).

Centri za znanost i umjetnost u Turskoj primaju darovite učenike na osnovi rezultata na nizu standardiziranih testova s ciljem osnaživanja njihovoga redovnog školovanja. Istraživanja provedena u tim centrima prvenstveno su se fokusirala na predmete poput Matematike i znanosti, dok su područja poput međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi koji su učili engleski kao strani jezik zapostavljena. Stoga je ovo istraživanje nastojalo doprinijeti budućem istraživačkom korpusu ispitujući

razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u nastavi engleskoga kao stranoga jezika u centrima za znanosti i umjetnost postavljajući sljedeće istraživačko pitanje i pripadajuća potpitanja:

1 Koje su razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u nastavi engleskoga kao stranoga jezika?

a Razlikuju li se razine međukulturne osjetljivosti s obzirom na spol učenika?

b Razlikuju li se razine međukulturne osjetljivosti s obzirom na dob učenika i stupanj obrazovanja roditelja?

S obzirom na pregled literature i cilj istraživanja, formulirane su sljedeće hipoteze: hipoteze

Hipoteza 1: Nadareni učenici rane školske dobi koji pohađaju nastavu engleskoga jezika u Centru za znanost i umjetnost (BILSEM) pokazuju visoke razine međukulturne osjetljivosti.

Hipoteza 1a: Postoji statistički značajna razlika u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika s obzirom na spol.

Hipoteza 1b: Postoji statistički značajna razlika u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika s obzirom na dob.

Hipoteza 1c: Postoji statistički značajna razlika u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika s obzirom na stupanj obrazovanja roditelja.

Metodologija

Dizajn istraživanja

Ovo istraživanje zasnovano je na dizajnu kvantitativnoga istraživanja, a za cilj je imalo ispitati razine međukulturne osjetljivosti sudionika. Istraživanje je provedeno u tri centra za znanost i umjetnost: Burdur, Bucak i Gölhisar. Skala međukulturne osjetljivosti, čiji su sadržaj proširili Wang i Zhou (2016), na turski jezik preveo Zou (2016), a za djecu su je prilagodili Nazlı i Aşık (2022), korištena je za prikupljanje podataka među učenicima koji su pohađali nastavu engleskoga kao stranoga jezika u sklopu obrazovanih programa Dodatna nastava 1 i Dodatna nastava 2 tijekom jesenskoga obrazovnog razdoblja 2024./2025. školske godine

Sudionici

Podatci su prikupljeni od 108 učenika koji su pohađali nastavu engleskoga jezika (49 učenica i 59 učenika) u dobi između sedam i jedanaest godina u centrima za znanost i umjetnost u turskoj provinciji Burdur. Učenici su identificirani kao daroviti na osnovi rezultata na testu grupnoga probira i međunarodnom standardiziranom testu sposobnosti. Svi učenici pohađali su državne škole i tjedno su imali dva do četiri sata nastave engleskoga, oboje u njihovim redovnim školama i u BILSEM-u. Demografski podatci o sudionicima prikazani su u tablicama 1 do 4.

Od ukupno 108 sudionika bilo je 49 (45,4 %) učenica i 59 (54,6 %) učenika, što predstavlja relativno ujednačen omjer spolova.

Dob sudionika prikazana je u Tablici 1. Kao što je vidljivo, devet (8,3 %) sudionika bilo je u dobi od sedam godina za vrijeme provođenja istraživanja, 30 (27,8 %) učenika imalo je osam godina, 52 (48,1 %) devet godina, 15 (13,9 %) deset godina, a dva (1,9 %) učenika imala su 11 godina. Učenici u dobi od sedam do devet godina bili su uključeni u program Dodatna nastava 1, a oni koji su imali deset i jedanaest godina u program Dodatna nastava 2.

Tablica 1

U Tablici 2 prikazana je distribucija razreda koje su pohađali sudionici istraživanja. Od ukupno 108 učenika 18 (16,7 %) ih je pohađalo drugi razred u vrijeme provođenja istraživanja, 48 (44,4 %) treći razred i 42 (38,9 %) četvrti razred.

Tablica 2

Sljedeće dvije tablice (Tablica 3 i 4) prikazuju stupanj obrazovanja roditelja sudionika.

Tablica 3 prikazuje distribuciju stupnja obrazovanja očeva iz koje je vidljivo da 92 oca imaju visoko obrazovanje (završen preddiplomski studij, magisterij ili doktorat), 11 očeva (10,2 %) ima srednju stručnu spremu i pet (4,5 %) osnovnoškolsku.

Tablica 3

Tablica 4 prikazuje raspodjelu stupnja obrazovanja majki sudionika iz koje je vidljivo da je 85 (78,6 %) majki steklo visoki stupanj obrazovanja (završen preddiplomski studij, magisterij ili doktorat), 18 (16,7 %) ima srednjoškolsko obrazovanje, a pet majki ima završenu osnovnu školu (4,7 %).

Tablica 4

Instrument istraživanja

Ovo istraživanje počiva na kvantitativnoj istraživačkoj metodologiji s ciljem ispitivanja varijabli specificiranih u istraživačkim pitanjima. Navedeni pristup omogućio je sustavnu klasifikaciju, analizu i tumačenje prikupljenih podataka, a u isto vrijeme osigurao rigorozne i temeljite postupke koji podržavaju uopćavanje i umnožavanje podataka, kontrolu pristranosti i razmatranje alternativnih objašnjenja (Creswell i Creswell, 2018).

Instrument prikupljanja podataka bila je Skala međukulturne osjetljivosti (SMKO) (Wang i Zhou, 2016) na turskome jeziku, tj. njezina inačica koju su djeci prilagodili Nazlı and Aşık (2022). Valjanost i pouzdanost ove prilagođene verzije zasnovana je na postupcima koje su u svojoj studiji proveli Nazlı i Aşık (2022), koji su zaključili da „Skala međukulturne osjetljivosti može poslužiti kao primjeren instrument za procjenu međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u turskim kontekstima poučavanja engleskoga kao stranoga jezika” (str. 91).

Nazlı i Aşık (2022) su u svojoj studiji ispitivali unutarnju konzistentnost originalne engleske verzije i turske adaptacije skale koristeći mjere Cronbachova alfa koeficijenta

i Cronbachova alfa koeficijenta zasnovanoga na standardiziranim česticama te izračunali koeficijente od 0,970 za englesku i 0,973 za tursku verziju, što je pokazatelj visoke unutarnje pouzdanosti. Također su istraživali konstrukt valjanosti primjenom eksplorativne faktorske analize (EFA), analize glavnih komponenata i varimaks rotacije. Pojedinačna svojstvena vrijednost iznad 1,00 pokazivala je jednodimenzionalnu strukturu, a engleska je inačica objašnjavala 71 % varijance i turska 72,86 %. Opterećenje faktora bilo je u rasponu od 0,682 do 0,939 za englesku skalu i od 0,732 do 0,907 za tursku skalu, a vidljivo je kako su oba raspona vrijednosti prelazila prag od 0,60 za visoka opterećenja faktora. Osim toga, provedena konfirmacijska faktorska analiza (CFA) u kojoj su koristili procjena najveće vjerodostojnosti potvrdila je primjerenost modela za obje verzije skale.

U ovome istraživanju primijenjena je Skala međukulturne osjetljivosti kako bi se prikupili podatci od sudionika. Za provedbu statističkih analiza korišten je Statistički paket za društvene znanosti (SPSS), verzija 21. Analize frekvencija i t-testovi za nezavisne uzorke provedeni su kako bi se utvrdile razlike između spolova. Budući da je varijabla stupnja obrazovanja roditelja sadržavala višestruke grupe, jednosmjerna ANOVA korištena je kako bi se ispitao odnos navedene varijable sa zavisnim varijablama. Spomenute procedure primijenjene su isključivo u svrhu ovoga istraživanja.

Rezultati

Ovim istraživanjem nastojalo se istražiti razine osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u nastavi engleskoga kao stranoga jezika u centrima za znanost i umjetnost u provinciji Burdu u Turskoj. Također su se ispitivali učinci čimbenika poput spola, dobi i razine obrazovanja roditelja učenika na njihove razine međukulturne osjetljivosti.

Rezultati SMKO-a (Skale međukulturne osjetljivosti)

U Tablici 5 prikazani su odgovori sudionika na čestice skale. Za prvu česticu 44,4 % učenika odabralo je odgovor *u potpunosti se slažem*, dok ih je 33,3 % odgovorilo *slažem se*. Slično tomu, 40,7 % sudionika *u potpunosti se slaže* s česticom dva, a 39,8 % njih *se slaže*. Ove dvije čestice pokazuju da učenici uživaju pri susretu s pripadnicima drugih kultura i započinju komunikaciju s vršnjacima iz drugačijega kulturnoga okružja. Jedna od implikacija ovoga osjećaja ugođe jest pozitivnija komunikacija s vršnjacima.

Preostale čestice za koje su sudionici izrazili *potpuno slaganje* su 7, 8, 9, 13, 14 i 15. Čestice 7, 8 i 9 specifično se odnose na učeničko samopouzdanje prilikom komunikacije s pojedincima iz drugačijih kultura i pokazuju da sudionici nemaju poteškoća u takvoj interakciji. Za česticu sedam 25,9 % učenika odabralo je odgovor *slažem se*, a 38,9 % *u potpunosti se slažem*. Za česticu osam 32,4 % učenika odabralo je *slažem se* i 48,1 % *u potpunosti se slažem*. Na čestici devet 27,8 % odabralo je odgovor *slažem se*, a 31,5 % *u potpunosti se slažem*. Slično tomu, 27,8 % sudionika *složilo se* i 44,4 % *u potpunosti složilo se* s česticom 13; 22,2 % učenika odabralo je odgovor *slažem se* i 40,7 % *u potpunosti se slažem* za česticu 14; 22,2 % *se složilo* i 58,3 % *složilo se* u potpunosti s česticom 15.

Sve čestice zajedno naglašavaju pažnju i brigu koju učenici ulažu u komunikaciju s ljudima iz drugačijih kulturnih sredina.

Suprotno tomu, sudionici su uglavnom odabrali odgovor *ne slažem se* ili *u potpunosti se ne slažem* za čestice 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 i 12. Te čestice procjenjuju nezadovoljstvo, obeshrabrenost ili neugodu učenika u situacijama koje uključuju kontakt s ljudima iz drugih kultura. Za česticu tri 25,0 % sudionika odabralo je odgovor *ne slažem se*, a 37,0 % *u potpunosti se ne slažem*. Za česticu četiri 25,9 % odgovorilo je *ne slažem se*, a 49,1 % *izrazito se ne slažem*. Za česticu pet 13,0 % odgovorilo je *ne slažem se* i 69,4 % *u potpunosti se ne slažem*. Za česticu šest 21,3 % odabralo je odgovor *ne slažem se*, a 33,3 % *u potpunosti se ne slažem*. Za česticu deset 18,5 % odgovorilo je *ne slažem se*, a 68,5 % *u potpunosti se ne slažem*. Na čestici 11, 19,4 % odabralo je odgovor *ne slažem se* i 59,3 % *uopće se ne slažem*. Konačno, 27,8 % odabralo je odgovor *ne slažem se*, a 58,3 % *uopće se ne slažem* za česticu 12.

Tablica 5

Rezultati t-testa za neovisne uzorke s obzirom na međukulturnu osjetljivost prema dobi prikazani su u Tablici 6. Oni ne pokazuju statistički značajnu razliku između razina učeničke međukulturne osjetljivosti s obzirom na spol ($p > .05$).

Tablica 6

Deskriptivni rezultati razina međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema dobi prikazani su u Tablici 7, a rezultati ANOVA-e u Tablici 8.

Kao što je vidljivo iz Tablice 7, najviša aritmetička sredina izračunata je za dob od devet godina ($M = 2,98$; $SD = 0,39$), a najniža za dob od deset godina ($M = 2,90$; $SD = 0,32$). Razine međukulturne osjetljivosti slične su u svim dobnim skupinama sudionika. Aritmetička sredina međukulturne osjetljivosti svih dobnih skupina sudionika je oko 2,96. Ovaj rezultat pokazuje općenito umjerene do visoke razine osjetljivosti učenika. Prema izračunatim standardnim devijacijama, ne postoji širok raspon razina osjetljivosti s obzirom na dobne skupine sudionika.

Tablica 7

Deskriptivni podatci za razine međukulturne osjetljivosti prema dobi učenika

Rezultati ANOVA-e za razina međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema dobi prikazani su u Tablici 8. Nije pronađena statistički značajna razlika ($p = .95$) u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema njihovoj dobi: $F(4, 103) = 0,17$, $p > .05$. Osim toga, varijanca između skupina gotovo je zanemariva u usporedbi s varijancom unutar skupina, što pokazuje homogenost grupa s obzirom na dob.

Tablica 8

Podatci deskriptivne statistike i ANOVA-e za razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema stupnju obrazovanja njihovih očeva i majki prikazani su u Tablicama 9 i 10, te u Tablicama 11 i 12, tim redom.

Kao što je vidljivo iz Tablice 9, prosječna međukulturna osjetljivost učenika je 2,96. S porastom stupnja obrazovanja očeva čini se da neznatno raste i međukulturna osjetljivost učenika.

Tablica 9

Rezultati ANOVA analize razina međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema stupnju obrazovanja očeva prikazani su u Tablici 10. Podatci u tablici ne pokazuju statistički značajne razlike ($p = .25$) između razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika s obzirom na stupanj obrazovanja njihovih očeva: $F(2, 105) = 1,39, p > .05$.

Tablica 10

Iz Tablice 11 vidljivo je da ne postoji statistički značajna razlika između razina međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika s obzirom na stupanj obrazovanja majki jer su srednje vrijednosti ujednačene. Drugim riječima, razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika neznatno variraju prema razini obrazovanja majki. Nadalje, standardne devijacije su prilično niske u svim grupama, što znači da su razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika konzistentne u svim grupama, tj. da se ne razlikuju značajno.

Tablica 11

Razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema stupnju obrazovanja majki prikazani su u Tablici 12. Slično rezultatima u Tablici 10, rezultati ANOVA-e ne pokazuju statistički značajnu razliku ($p = .68$) u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika prema stupnju obrazovanja majki: $F(2, 105) = 0,38, p > .05$.

Tablica 12

Veličina učinka dobi učenika, stupnja obrazovanja očeva i majki na razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika također je izračunata. Vrijednost eta kvadrata (η^2) koja mjeri učinak dobi učenika na njihove razine međukulturne osjetljivosti iznosila je 0,006, izračun vrijednosti eta kvadrata (η^2) koji mjeri učinak stupnja obrazovanja očeva polučio je rezultat 0,025, a izračun vrijednosti eta kvadrata (η^2) koji mjeri učinak stupnja obrazovanja majki vrijednost 0,006.

Za interpretaciju rezultata korišteni su Cohenovi markeri (1988) (Tablica 13) i tako je otkriven zanemariv učinak dobi učenika, učinak male veličine obrazovanja očeva i učinak zanemarive veličine obrazovanja majki na razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika.

Tablica 13

Diskusija

Za povećavanje učinkovitosti nastave stranih jezika krucijalna je međukulturna osjetljivost, posebno učenika rane školske dobi koji su u ranim fazama susreta s različitim kulturama. Prepoznajući ovu potrebu, u sklopu ovoga istraživanja nastojalo se

ispitati razine osjetljivosti nadarenih učenika rane školske dobi koji su pohađali centre za znanost i umjetnost. Rezultati su pokazali visoke razine međukulturne osjetljivosti svih sudionika, što je prediktor daljega razvoja izražene međukulturne kompetencije – esencijalne vještine u današnjem globaliziranom društvu. Ovaj rezultat podudara se s rezultatima prijašnjih istraživanja međukulturne kompetencije i osjetljivosti (Chen i Hu, 2023; Chen i Starosta, 2000; Engle i Engle, 2004; Penbek i sur., 2012; Saricoban i Oz, 2014). Posebice je primjetna značajna praznina u literaturi s obzirom na mlade učenika jer se većina studija fokusirala prvenstveno na starije učenike, posebno sveučilišne studente (Akin, 2016; Chen i Hu, 2023; Çakır, 2022; Çiloğlan i Bardakci, 2019; Simkhovych, 2009). Stoga ovo istraživanje predstavlja vrijedan doprinos istraživačkom polju zbog svojega nastojanja da popuni ovu prazninu i ponudi uvide u međukulturnu osjetljivost nadarenih rane školske dobi učenika.

S obzirom na učinak dobi u ovoj studiji nisu pronađene statistički značajne razlike u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika i učenica. Ovaj rezultat u skladu je s rezultatima istraživanja Bekiroğlua i Balcija (2014) te Yilmaza i Göçena (2013), koja isto tako nisu otkrila razlike među djecom zasnovane na spolu. Međutim, ovaj rezultat kontradiktoran je rezultatima istraživanja Gonzalesa (2017), Ueberwimmer i suradnika (2019) i Penbekove i suradnika (2012), koji svi govore u prilog značajnog utjecaja spola na razine međukulturne osjetljivosti.

Učitelji mogu nehotimično previdjeti potrebe i motivaciju svojih učenika – posebno njihovu želju za angažmanom u međukulturnoj komunikaciji (Baker, 2022). Stoga je ova studija posebno važna jer pokazuje da se razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika trebaju prepoznavati od rane dobi pri čemu je potrebno slijediti strukturiran put ako se želi razvijati svijest o drugačijim kulturama, jer izlaganje drugačijim kulturnim perspektivama pozitivno utječe na razvoj vještina mišljenja višega reda (Thomas, 1996). Kramsch (1988) je naglasila urođenu složenost korištenja nastavnoga materijala u nastavi jezika i kulture u obrazovnim okolinama. Slično tome, Liddicoat i Scarino (2013) tvrdili su da udžbenici sami po sebi nisu dovoljni za razvijanje međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika u nastavi jezika. Nakon prikupljanja podataka ispitivani su moduli i teme u dodatnim udžbenicima engleskoga jezika korišteni u centrima za znanost i umjetnost, posebno u sklopu programa Dodatna nastava 1 i Dodatna nastava 2, a pokazano je da su kulturni elementi uključeni u kurikulum. Buduće revizije ovih programa mogu uključiti širi raspon međukulturnih sastavnica kako bi dalje promicale izloženost učenika raznolikim kulturnim perspektivama.

Rezultati ovoga istraživanja mogu služiti kao prediktori stavova učenika rane školske dobi o drugim kulturama u nastavi engleskoga jezika. Oni također pokazuju da daroviti učenici rane školske dobi imaju samopouzdanje, poštuju zamisli i kulturu drugih ljudi te imaju razvijene komunikacijske vještine. Ovaj nalaz u skladu je s rezultatima istraživanja Brumfita i suradnika provedenoga 1991. godine u kojemu je pokazano da djeca imaju manje negativnih stavova o stranim jezicima i kulturama i višu motivaciju od odraslih. Ova učenička motivacija trebala bi se u potpunosti iskoristiti u jezičnom

poučavanju. Sustavno izražavanje mišljenja o međukulturnim elementima tijekom nastave pomoglo bi učenicima pri bržem shvaćanju i prilagodbi vlastitoga razumijevanja s ciljem boljšeg poznavanja engleskoga jezika. Osim toga, uključivanje međukulturnih elemenata u nastavu primjenom motivirajućih i zabavnih aktivnosti može pomoći u uklanjanju mogućih zabuna i nesporazuma tijekom početnoga susreta s međukulturnim elementima, što ima potencijal daljšeg razvoja međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika.

Učitelji bi se trebali odmaknuti od konvencionalnih strukturalističkih kurikula, kao što je predložio Kramersch (2021); posebno, učitelji engleskoga jezika trebali bi ponijeti dobar dio tereta odgovornosti za nastavni proces poučavanja stranoga jezika. Svijest učitelja o razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika imaće važnu ulogu u njihovoj aktivnoj uključenosti u obrazovni proces, u kojemu upotreba tehnologije pojednostavljuje stjecanje (među)kulturnih elemenata i podiže razine motivacije i interes za globalno učenje. Korištenje autentičnih materijala i aktivnosti može povećati utjecaj međukulturne svijesti i pomoći učenicima da postignu međukulturne ciljeve koje postavljaju moderni obrazovani standardi. Tehnologija pruža značajnu pomoć tako što učenicima daje primjere iz raznih kultura u audiovizualnom obliku i u obliku tiskanih digitalnih tekstova na obrazovanim mrežnim alatima. Zbog činjenice da učitelji igraju središnju ulogu u oblikovanju načina na koji se pristupa i upravlja kulturnim razlikama u obrazovanim okolinama učenja stranoga jezika, oni su često u doticaju s višekulturnim zajednicama i koriste prednosti raznolikih kulturnih iskustava kako bi poboljšali nastavni proces. Štoviše, dizajniranje kurikula za nadarene učenike sa svjesno uključenim međukulturnim elementima može voditi pozitivnim ishodima, tj. razvoju veće osjetljivosti i svijesti o kulturnoj raznolikosti.

Ograničenja

Uzorak istraživanja obuhvatio je 108 učenika iz tri centra za znanost i umjetnost u turskoj provinciji Burdur. Upotreba prikladnoga uzorka koji nije određen *a priori* metodama procjene veličine uzorka prema istraživačkom pitanju može se smatrati još jednim ograničenjem ovoga istraživanja (Cohen, 1992; Sullivan i Feinn, 2012). Budući da je broj centara za znanost i umjetnost ograničen u većini gradova Turske, nije bilo lako u uzorak uključiti veći broj učenika. S obzirom na navedeno rezultati istraživanja ne mogu se generalizirati na cijelu populaciju učenika koji uče engleski jezik u tim centrima. Stoga bi buduća istraživanja trebala obuhvatiti veći i reprezentativniji uzorak ciljane populacije. Osim toga, istraživanje se zasnivalo isključivo na podacima prikupljenim upotrebom Skale međukulturne osjetljivosti (SMKO) koju su razvili Wang i Zhou (2016) i turskom kontekstu prilagodili Nazlı i Aşık (2022), s ciljem procjene razina međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u nastavi engleskoga jezika u turskim centrima za znanosti i umjetnost. Osim SMKO-a buduća istraživanja trebala bi koristiti metode poput refleksivnih dnevnika, opservacija u učionici ili polustrukturiranih intervjua kako bi se stekli dublji uvidi u međukulturna iskustva i perspektive učenika. Također, dizajn miješanih metoda mogao bi ostvariti dublje

razumijevanje putem kombinacije kvantitativnih rezultata s narativnim podatcima, što bi pokazalo kako učenici tumače i internaliziraju međukulturne elemente tijekom nastave. Procjene portfelja mogu voditi k aktivnoj primjeni međukulturnoga razumijevanja učenika u kontekstima komunikacije.

Zaključak

Na osnovi rezultata ovoga istraživanja može se zaključiti da su razine međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika rane školske dobi u nastavi engleskoga kao stranoga jezika u tri centra za znanost i umjetnost u provinciji Burdu u Turskoj slične s obzirom na spol, dob i stupanj obrazovanja roditelja. Većina sudionika uživa u interakciji s pripadnicima drugih kultura i voljni su održati komunikaciju. Također žele učiti o drugim kulturama u interakciji s njihovim pripadnicima. Izračunate frekvencije i postotci pokazuju da učenici rane školske dobi samopouzđano ulaze u interakcije s pripadnicima drugih kultura i rado prihvaćaju mogućnost uspostavljanja prijateljstava s njima tako što započinju razgovore. Ovaj rezultat ukazuje na mogućnost da je međukulturni sadržaj nastave upoznao učenike s drugim kulturama od vrlo mlade dobi. Visoka razina međukulturne osjetljivosti također može značiti da su učenici rane školske dobi izloženi međukulturalnim sadržajima kako na nastavi tako i izvan učionica putem mobilnih uređaja i ostalih tehnoloških alata. Osim toga, bez obzira na dob, učenici rane školske dobi koji pohađaju nastavu engleskoga jezika u centrima znanosti i umjetnosti dolaze iz visoko obrazovanih obitelji koje podupiru jezično obrazovanje putem kulturnih sadržaja u redovnim udžbenicima i raznim dodatnim materijalima i zadacima u učionici. Nepostojanje statistički značajne razlike u razinama međukulturne osjetljivosti učenika s obzirom na spol i dob otkriva da se učenici rane školske dobi s lakoćom prilagođavaju drugim kulturama.