

# Investigation of cultural intelligence levels of Selçuk University Erasmus students who have been abroad

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## Abstract

Erasmus exchange program, which started in 1987 in Europe and in which Turkey started participating in 2004, aims at increasing the quality of higher education in Europe and the mobility among teaching staff. The purpose of the present study is defining the levels of adapting cultural differences in foreign countries and establishing effective communication of Selçuk University students, who have been abroad through Erasmus Program. Data of the study were collected from 122 students, who have been abroad as Erasmus students. For data collection, Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), which was adapted to Turkish by İlhan and Cetin in 2014 and has dimensions, such as cognition, meta-cognition, motivation and behaviour, was employed. According to the findings, there are significant differences across genders in all dimensions; the number of foreign languages they can speak has effects on the meta-cognition and cognition dimensions; while there aren't any significant differences in terms of educational status.

**Keywords:** Erasmus exchange program, cultural intelligence.

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of Erasmus program are encouraging cooperation between universities, providing students and teaching staff with the opportunities to exchange between universities in Europe and promoting the studies and the degrees of the participating countries academically. The organization and management of the program are controlled by EU Commission. European Commission provides individuals with financial contribution with grants in order to support the additional expenses of being abroad. Erasmus student exchange program provides students with opportunities to get education for 3-12 month periods at a university or higher education institution. However, the time spent and the academic studies conducted in the foreign countries are recognized by the universities that the students are enrolled within their own countries. Accordingly, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was developed in order to solve the problems related to the recognition of the education taken from different higher education institutions by the students and support student mobility (20).

Erasmus program aims at providing students and teaching staff with opportunities to spend a

certain period of their education at partner universities that participate in the program within the framework of reciprocal agreements signed by higher education institutions, and this way contributing to their knowledge in their academic fields, participation in studies and providing them with opportunities to get to know the cultures of European countries. This period varies between 3 and 12 months time (10).

Cultural intelligence is defined as the ability to adjust behaviours in accordance with the requirements of the culture the individuals are in (2,8), the ability to establish effective communication with people from different cultures (17,18,19) and the capacity to adapt to cultural differences (8,5,13,16).

Therefore, while every society has a culture, people groups in the same society may develop different cultures according to the area they live in, the language they speak, their economic fields of occupation and socio-economic statuses (Cirik, 2008). In this context, the concept of cultural intelligence can be defined as an area of intelligence that is coined to explain the differences between people in terms of the ability to establish effective

communication with different cultures in both other societies and within their own societies (12).

Cultural intelligence has a four dimensional structure as; meta-cognition, cognition, motivation and behaviour (3,14,19).

Meta-cognition dimension of cultural intelligence is mostly related to the ability to process information (8), and it is about the individuals' awareness of the cultural information they use during inter-cultural interaction and whether they have control over this information (3).

Cognition dimension of cultural intelligence includes information about other cultures obtained through daily experiences or formal education (2,3,4,13,14).

Motivation dimension of cultural intelligence is about the willingness to interact with people from other cultures and to learn new things about inter-cultural situations (1,2,3,13,14).

Behavior dimension of cultural intelligence refers to the ability to exhibit appropriate verbal or non-verbal behaviors when encountered with individuals from different cultural backgrounds (1,2,13,19).

The purpose of the present research is defining the levels of adapting to cultural differences, communication with people, and the behaviors exhibited towards people from different cultures of

undergraduate and graduate students of Selçuk University, who have been abroad via Erasmus program in 2015-2016 academic year. The findings obtained in the present research will be shared with Selçuk University Erasmus office in order to provide a reference for future Erasmus students.

## MATERIAL & METHOD

The present research was conducted in accordance with descriptive survey model in order to define cultural intelligence levels of Selçuk University students, who have been abroad as Erasmus students, in the foreign countries they have been to, through questionnaires. The universe of the present research consists of 122 undergraduate and graduate students who are abroad for the time being via Erasmus program in 2015-2016 academic year. For data collection, Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), which was developed by Ang et al. (1) and was adapted to Turkish by İlhan & Cetin (12), was employed. This scale has four dimensions as; cognition meta-cognition, motivation and behavior.

## RESULTS

This part presents obtained findings. According to the results of the t-test conducted in order to find out whether participants' scores from meta-cognition, cognition, motivation and behavior dimensions of cultural intelligence scale (CQS) varied by gender, there are significant differences in all dimensions in favor of female students.

Table 1. CQS dimension scores of participating students by gender.

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t
Meta-cognition	Female	30	6.09	0.78	0,23 *
	Male	92	5.61	1.11	
Cognition	Female	30	5.07	0.95	2.64 *
	Male	92	4.55	1.15	
Motivation	Female	30	6.37	0.76	2.74 *
	Male	92	5.74	1.17	
Behavior	Female	30	5.58	0.96	2.14 *
	Male	92	5.07	1.15	

\* P<0.05

Table 2. CQS dimension scores of participating students by the number of languages they can speak.

Dimensions	Number of Languages	N	Mean	SD	t
Meta-cognition	1	64	5.51	1.14	-2.49 *
	More than 1	58	5.96	0.88	
Cognition	1	64	4.33	1.13	-3.70 *
	More than 1	58	5.06	0.98	
Motivation	1	64	5.75	1.23	-1.46
	More than 1	58	6.05	0.96	
Behavior	1	64	5.04	1.13	-1.60
	More than 1	58	5.37	1.11	

\* P<0.05

Table 3. CQS dimension scores of participating students by educational status.

Dimensions	Educational Status	N	Mean	SD	t
Meta-cognition	Undergraduate	78	5.79	1.05	0.92
	Graduate	44	5.60	1.05	
Cognition	Undergraduate	78	5.90	1.13	0.11
	Graduate	44	5.88	1.09	
Motivation	Undergraduate	78	4.67	1.12	-0.94
	Graduate	44	4.69	1.13	
Behavior	Undergraduate	78	5.18	1.15	-1.54
	Graduate	44	5.22	1.10	

According to the findings presented in Table 2, there are significant differences in participants' scores of meta-cognition and cognition dimensions of CQS, while motivation and behavior dimension scores don't vary by the number of foreign languages they can speak.

As presented in Table 3, there aren't any significant differences between undergraduate and graduate participants in terms of CQS dimension scores.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study abroad with Erasmus program, undergraduate and graduate education in the field of Selçuk University is to uncover the cultural intelligence of students. For this purpose, it has benefited from a number of hypothesis. The findings are of cultural intelligence scale student women surveyed (CIS) metacognition and behavior subscales supported the higher would be the hypothesis, which of male students. Similarly, according to the language knowledge of metacognition and cognition variable CIS there is a significant statistical difference between the lower size, did not find a significant difference in motivation and behavior subscales. However, the positive effect of multiple linguists on the level of cultural intelligence in male and female learners is considered as an important contribution to the study. In the present study, gender difference may be associated with sex related difference in verbal and non-verbal skills. Gender stereotypes hold that males outperform females in non-verbal such as mathematics and spatial tests, and females outperform males on verbal tests (11).

Today, international student exchange programs, including the people of his thoughts, perspectives, behavior and gives direction to each other provinces about interference (6). Both came to Turkey are set out in the Erasmus students contribute to the development of cultural awareness and supports a number of researchers to the

European research in this context (9,20). Yağcı et al. (20) emphasizes that show prejudice in a manner open and tend to exhibit a positive attitude Erasmus program behavior that are reshaping and in the framework of the program the differences in research carried out by Erasmus students going to other countries.

International students are actually participants when they are faced and as part of the culture, both as observers and as part of the culture. This allows international students to develop a multi-faceted and selective perception of the new cultures they meet (15).

In conclusion, according to the findings obtained in the present research, there are significant differences between male and female participants in terms of their scores obtained in all dimensions of CQS. Accordingly, it can be claimed that female students, who have been abroad via Erasmus program have stronger senses of responsibility than male students. According to participants' scores in meta-cognition and cognition dimensions of CQS, students, who can speak more than 1 foreign language are more successful in adapting to other cultures and obtaining information about other cultures than students who can only speak 1 foreign language. This finding indicates that different languages come along with different cultures.

Consequently, it is observed that the management and analysis of cultural differences of students, who had education in complex and dynamic environments, has become an important issue. The ability to manage these cultural differences is a required feature for both the individuals who give education and the individuals who get education. Providing trainings on the management of these cultural differences at universities is very important for the prevention of possible problems. It is believed that students, who get education abroad via Erasmus exchange program and have cultural intelligence, can be more effective in global markets.

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