



## Intercultural competence of English language teachers in International Baccalaureate World Schools in Turkey and abroad

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### APA Citation:

Demircioğlu, Ş., & Çakır, C. (2015). Intercultural competence of English language teachers in International Baccalaureate World Schools in Turkey and abroad. *Journal of language and linguistic studies*, 11(1), 15-32.

### Abstract

The study explores the opinions and attitudes of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain on intercultural language teaching. 16 teachers from Turkey, 15 teachers from the USA, 11 teachers from the UK, 10 teachers from New Zealand and 8 teachers from Spain, in total 60 English language teachers participated in the study. An online research survey which consists of seven open-ended questions was prepared. Textual (content) analysis and the constant comparative method were used for the analysis of the research survey. The IBDP English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain found intercultural language teaching very important in the globalization world and they thought that intercultural communicative competence (ICC) ought to be given a good deal of emphasis in foreign language teaching.

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*Keywords:* Intercultural communicative competence, intercultural communication, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, intercultural communication plays an important role in ELT partly because English assumes the role of an international language which is used extensively by millions of people outside its original geographic boundaries to “convey national and international perceptions of reality which may be quite different from those of English speaking cultures” (Alptekin, 2002, p. 17). As English continues to spread as an international language, the number of second language users of English will continue to grow, far surpassing the number of native speakers of English. A new and changing era has made intercultural communicative competence (ICC) a prerequisite, which has set a new goal for foreign language teaching. The native speaker as the model in English language teaching has become questionable. The goal of foreign language teaching is not only to enable the learners to acquire language competence and communicative competence, but more importantly, ICC. Thus, teachers today are expected to promote the acquisition of ICC in their learners.

But what exactly is ICC? ICC is defined as “the ability to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one’s own” (Byram, 2000, p. 297). It is also defined as “the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on specific attitudes, intercultural knowledge, skills and reflection” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 13). According to Spitzberg and Changnon

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(2009), it is “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive and behavioural orientations to the world” (p.7). Fantini (2009) states that ICC is “the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 458). Chen and Starosta (1996) emphasizes that “competent persons must know not only how to interact effectively and appropriately with people and environment, but also how to fulfil their own communication goals by respecting and affirming the multilevel cultural identities of those with whom they interact” (p. 358- 359). As the definitions show, in order to promote ICC, it is necessary to change the overall goal of foreign language teaching. Instead of focusing on the native speaker as a model or teaching merely grammar, syntax and vocabulary, successful English teaching is to help language learners cultivate a good ICC. Corbett (2003) summarizes that the ultimate goal of language education is not so much ‘native speaker competence’ but rather ICC. Foreign language teaching is seen as comprising not only linguistic performance and verbal communication, but also such abilities as intercultural consciousness and intercultural skills. It is a well known and accepted fact that linguistic skills and cultural issues are inseparable and should be handled together in language learning and teaching. As Jordan (2002) states, it is acknowledged that language proficiency alone is inadequate; communication is holistic and also requires the knowledge of the ways culture and language interlock and an understanding of how interaction across cultures operates.

It is obvious that if a teacher wants to maximize students’ communicative effectiveness when interacting with members of other cultures, the students should also be provided with intercultural awareness training as an integral part of their English courses (Hoa, 2007). Enabling learners to possess ICC is a significant task of language teachers, particularly when their goal is to promote communicative competence (Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014). As Sercu et al. (2005, p.5) point out, L2 teachers and teacher trainees need “an adequate sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, frequent and varied contacts with it and a thorough command of the pragmatic rules of use of the foreign language in contexts that may be considered to belong to their professional sphere”. Teachers can play a role in either reinforcing or refuting cultural pluralism. Culturally sensitive teachers understand and deal directly with intercultural sensitivity (Chen and Starosta, 1998; Fantini, 2000). Teachers are nowadays required to teach their learners how to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2013). However, teaching or emphasizing intercultural communicative awareness in the English language classroom is not an easy task and unfortunately teachers do not have enough knowledge about ICC and how it is assessed.

Although there is consensus on the fact that ICC should be developed in the language learners, language teachers do not have a clear understanding of how to teach it. Sakuragi (2008) states that intercultural communication has a paucity of literature when considering the study of languages. Sercu (2005) and other researchers conducted a study with 424 secondary teachers from seven countries to find out teachers’ approaches towards intercultural competence. The result shows that the majority of teachers focus on communicative competence but not ICC. Although they are willing to integrate ICC into their teaching, their actual teaching practices are very limited due to lack of time, lack of preparation, curricular overload and lack of necessary teaching materials. Skopinskaja (2000, 2003) hypothesized in the research project that because foreign language syllabi across different countries are mostly exam-centered, teachers merely concentrate on promoting their students’ linguistic abilities rather than their intercultural competences.

In their study, Hayden et al. (2000) sought the opinions of over 200 teachers and 1800 students in international schools on what it means to be 'international'. Using data collected through

questionnaires which contained 32 proposed characteristics of internationalism that formed the basis of the questions, the researchers determined that teachers (and incidentally, the students as well) believed that internationalism was best exemplified through ‘attitudes of mind’ including such habits as "being interested in and informed about other people and parts of the world showing respect for others and respecting the rights of others to hold views contrary to one's own" (p. 120) among others.

Putting an emphasis on ICC and international mindedness, the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) currently works with 3,290 schools in 141 countries to develop and offer three challenging programmes (primary years, middle years and diploma programme) to over 962,000 students aged 3 to 19 years. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right (IBO, 2006).

One of the three programmes, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), is for students aged 16 to 19 and it has a two-year curriculum leading to final examinations and a diploma that is recognized by universities around the world. The IB curriculum represents the best from many different countries rather than the exported national system of any one. The programme encourages students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view (IBO, 2006).

There are some key words in IBDP such as critical thinking, inquiry-based learning, learning how to learn, and international-mindedness. IBDP encourages international-mindedness. To do this, IBO believes that students must first develop an understanding of their own cultural and national identity. All IB students learn a second language and the skills to live and work with others internationally. To promote intercultural communicative competence, the English course has an important place in the IBDP curriculum. It is designed to provide students with the necessary language skills and intercultural understanding to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken. At this point, English teachers have lots of responsibilities to design their course and develop materials to promote students’ intercultural communicative competence.

### *1.1. Research questions*

In light of the purpose of the research, the following research questions are explored:

- 1) What is the current status of English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain in terms of intercultural communicative competence teaching?
- 2) What is the level of importance that English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills?
- 3) In what ways do English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain create opportunities for students to understand and experience the cultures of other countries?
- 4) Which aspects of culture do English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain consider most important in teaching a foreign language?
- 5) What are the opinions English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain about the level of emphasis to be placed on intercultural competence in foreign language teaching?

## **2. Method**

### 2.1. *Sample / Participants*

60 English language teachers working in IB World Schools (44 female, 16 male) participated in this study: 16 teachers from Turkey, 15 teachers from the USA, 11 teachers from the UK, 10 teachers from New Zealand and 8 teachers from Spain. The profile of the teachers who participated in this study can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Of 60 of the teachers, 26.67% live in Turkey; 25% in the USA, 18.33% in the UK, 16.67 % in New Zealand; and 13.33 % in Spain.
- 2) 73.33% are female and 26.67% male.
- 3) 63.33% are native speakers of English and 36.67% are non-native speakers of English.
- 4) 76.67% have lived in an English speaking country and 23.33% have not.
- 5) 61.67% have worked abroad and 38.33% have not.
- 6) 35% have 0-2 years of experience of teaching English, 40% have 3-6 years, 5% have 7-9 years and 20% have 10 and more years.
- 7) 11.67% have not attended any IB workshops, 31.67% have attended one IB workshop, 18.33% two IB workshops, 16.67% three workshops, 8.33% four workshops, 6.67% five workshops, 1.67% six workshops, and finally 5% seven and more workshops.
- 8) 93.33% have travelled abroad and 6.67% have not.

### 2.2. *Instrument(s)*

The research survey contains two parts. The first part includes fourteen demographic questions about the teachers' background, gender, nationality, years they have been teaching in IBDP, teachers' previous exposure to other cultures, participation in IB workshops, international projects, previous travel, and years of working abroad. The purpose of asking these questions is to get general information on the current situation of teachers.

In the second part, there are seven open-ended questions about teachers' intercultural communicative competence to provide their own explanations and to put the emphasis on the meaning of the beliefs of the teachers in the educational process. The written texts obtained in the process provide material for discourse analysis and interpretation.

Some of the open-ended questions are taken and adopted from a similar study by Pędich et al (2003). Q1 and Q2 were paraphrased. Q3 was directly taken from the study. Q4 and Q5 were also borrowed from the study but some sub-items were added for easy comprehension by teachers. Q6 was adopted from the study. Q7 was written by the researchers. The length of the answers was left to the participant.

Q1 asks the teachers whether they have any intercultural communication training in the in-service training and what kind of training this is. The purpose of this question is to find out their previous education about ICC.

Q2 asks how their own experiences with people of other countries/nationalities have affected their teaching. This question aims at having teachers assess their previous experiences and finding out to what extent teachers' intercultural experiences affect their teaching.

Teachers are asked in Q3 how much importance they attach, while teaching English, to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills and why they do so. From this basic information data might be obtained about their attitudes towards ICC.

Q4 asks teachers in what ways they create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures of other countries and how they provide some possible ways to help their students avoid intercultural misunderstandings such as inviting people from other countries/nationalities to come as a guest speaker; bringing authentic materials; arranging video conferences; participating in international projects or competitions; attending international concerts, exhibition or festivals; celebrating some universal days; arranging student exchange programmes or summer camps; and guiding students to use technology such as Facebook, Twitter or forum pages. Teachers put a tick in the aforementioned sub-items if they apply to them. Teachers are asked to suggest other ways they create opportunities if they wish. The purpose of asking this question is that the transmission of intercultural knowledge in the classroom depends largely on the teachers' own intercultural awareness and understanding and willingness to create different opportunities for intercultural teaching and find out which ways are most commonly used. Additionally, the purpose is to explore the relationships between teachers' intercultural teaching beliefs and their teaching practices.

Q5 is about aspects of culture such as family life, community life, society, religion and spiritual beliefs, government and international relations, arts and crafts, education, resources and economics, food, customs and traditions, clothing, and festivals and values. Teachers are asked which ones are the most important in teaching a foreign language, and they are encouraged to write one or two sentences to explain why they choose those aspects.

The level of emphasis to be placed on intercultural competence in foreign language teaching is asked in Q6. This question aims at investigating teachers' general approach towards the teaching of intercultural competence in a foreign language. Since participants of the research are English language teachers working in IBDP and the English course in this programme is founded on ICC, the last question is about what kind of changes they have observed in their students' intercultural competence thanks to the IB Diploma Programme.

### *2.3. Data collection procedures*

The pilot study feedback form for the survey was designed to gather information and obtain feedback prior to the study. The first draft of the surveys was pilot-tested face to face with a small group of ten teachers. Attached to the first draft was a separate feedback form on which teachers could critique the survey and make suggestions in terms of layout, flow, length, time it took to complete, clarity of questions and ease in following directions. Though the pilot study did not generate a lot of feedback, the input received was incorporated into the final survey that was sent out. Following the pilot study, the online version of the survey was prepared. When the teachers clicked link, they answered the questions and submitted their answers.

Firstly, the electronic invitation and the survey's link were sent to IBO to inform them about the study and to get IBDP coordinators' e-mail addresses. IBO wrote that they could not share this information in order to ensure that coordinators are not submerged with emails. Thus, the invitation and survey link were sent to IBDP coordinators of IB World Schools through the IB web site one by one for them to forward electronically to English language teachers in the programme. To be able to contact more IBDP schools, the electronic invitation and links were put on IBDP Coordinators Facebook pages, IBDP Coordinators LinkedIn sites and IBDP Coordinators Twitter page. Further follow-up was made with individual participants to clarify any questions that were not clear or that had the potential for misinterpretation.

Teachers were informed in the electronic invitation that participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality was assured at all times and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study as a prerequisite for the researcher to carry out the research. The researchers detailed

procedures to preserve the anonymity and protect the confidentiality of the participants. Participant identity remained anonymous throughout the research process, as scores were linked only to the identification codes assigned to the students.

#### 2.4. Data analysis

The research survey for teachers includes demographic information and qualitative data. Since there are open-ended questions, the research survey for teachers was a qualitative study and textual (content) analysis and the constant comparative method were used for the analysis of the research survey for teachers.

Cooper and Schindler (2003, p. 460) affirm that content analysis can be used to code and analyse responses to open-ended questions. The research tool, content analysis, is used to determine the significance of certain words or concepts within the survey. The meanings and relationships of words and concepts are quantified and analysed by the researcher who makes conclusion about the messages (Walt, 2006). The raw data received from the survey is changed into a structure that is suitable for analysis through the process of initial or open coding. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) add that researchers engage in this process in order to separate multiple pages of text into more controllable segments that can be grouped together and analysed. Hence, for the purpose of this study, content analysis is used to analyse open-ended questions.

The analysis involves classification of the responses and textual analysis. Possible generalisations are drawn, but the emphasis is primarily on the respondent as an individual and then a group to contribute to a picture of the views of representative English Language teachers in five different countries. As in another similar research of this type (Byram and Risager, 1999, p. 86), answers are formulated in ordinary language, without the use of specialist terms.

In the constant comparative method, as Taylor and Bogdan (1984) summarise, “the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts; by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model” (p. 126).

Coding is done by two coders (the researcher and a native English language teacher) independently. Neuendorf (2002) suggests that when human coders are used in content analysis, reliability translates to intercoder reliability or “the amount of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders” (p. 52).

### 3. Results

*Q1: Did you have any intercultural communication training while you were studying to be an English teacher? If “yes,” what did you do in intercultural communication training?*

According to the teachers’ responses, nine teachers out of 60 teachers had intercultural communication training as shown in Table 1. The teacher from New Zealand said that in the training, she learned about the differences in cultures and world views, explored similarities between cultures and learned about how culture is embedded in language. The Spanish teacher explained that she attended a course that was followed by written examinations, school visits and pilot teaching. The intercultural communication trainings of the teachers from the USA were typical university level intercultural courses, a course called Multi-Cultural Education or a multiculturalism in education course. In these courses, they studied the cultural biases and lenses through which people see the world, doing a lot of reading, watching documentaries and doing some simulations.

**Table 1.** Number of Teachers Taking Intercultural Communication Training

Teachers from	Yes	No
Turkey	0	16
New Zealand	1	9
Spain	1	7
UK	0	11
USA	7	8
TOTAL	9	51

Most of the respondents, however, admit that intercultural competence was taught in an implicit way in such courses or training as follows:

- Youth projects
- Training programmes
- World religion courses
- Communicating with native English language teachers
- Ethnical studies course
- Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) training

The way Question 1 was answered shows that only 15% of the teachers had a course on intercultural communication. Most of the answers point to the absence of any systematic presentation of intercultural communication training. However, formal education is closely tied to promoting learners' ICC (Elorza, 2008; Genc, & Bada, 2005; Moran, 2001; Wei & Xiao-mei, 2009).

*Q2: How have your own experiences with people of other countries/nationalities affected your teaching?*

Communication with others is fundamental since people transmit both grammatical structures and cultural messages during the act of communication (Johnstone, 2006). On a general level, teachers' experiences with people of other countries/nationalities resulted in greater awareness of cultural diversity and their willingness to tolerate diversity and share them with their students. A major impact of contact with people of other cultures is thus seen in teachers' attempts to incorporate at least some component of intercultural competence into their own language teaching.

All teachers from Turkey found their experiences with people of other countries/nationalities positive and rewarding in that these experiences increased their intercultural awareness and knowledge enabling them to add a new perspective, enlarge their vision, gain broader view points and transfer all this knowledge to the students and class activities, which really matters in IB. They also said that the experiences made them more broad-minded, tolerant, flexible, respectful and willing to take risks.

Exposure to other cultures for Spanish teachers leads to a greater awareness of cultural diversity and understanding of how language can be used in real life situations. This experience helps them adjust the content and purposes of their teaching enabling them to be more open-minded, more interested, more secure and more confident.

The experiences with people of other countries have also affected teachers from New Zealand positively. They have helped the teachers to be more thoughtful in their comments, more aware of different literary approaches and interpretations and more aware of prejudice/generalizations that may arise. One teacher said that "the more I interact with people of other cultures and nationalities, the deeper my understanding of myself and how to connect with a diverse student body." One teacher said that the experience has not particularly affected her teaching but certainly brought another strand to it.

Teachers from the UK expressed that the experiences provided them with firsthand knowledge of life in different places and worldviews and made them see things from another culture's point of view. Since most of the teachers from the UK have worked abroad and had opportunities to teach English in

different countries, they wrote about adapting their teaching to the needs of students from other cultures and adapting to new programmes of study and teaching regulations. One teacher compared her experiences in Turkey and China. She said that “my experiences in Turkey have shaped my teaching because the exam system and the motivations of Turkish students are very different. Turkish students tend to want to pass English exams, which govern every aspect of life in Turkey; whereas, when I have taught, for example, Chinese students, they have wanted to improve their speaking instead because of the prestige that speaking English well would bring them.”

Similarly, teachers from the USA found experiences of interacting with those from other countries rewarding and affective. They can acknowledge and teach the different styles of communicating which accompany a language and culture. Generally, teachers from the USA compared their experiences in different countries since they have worked abroad and taught English to non-native students of English.

On a general level, teachers wrote that these experiences have made them more patient and empathetic and have broadened their teaching in the best way.

*Q3: While teaching English, how much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills? Why?*

Comparing the teaching of ICC to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills, participants were divided in two groups. Most of the teachers think that ICC is more important than grammar and the rest, while others believe it is equally important. The majority of the teachers gave a reason or explained why they thought the teaching of ICC was more or equally important, though there were quite a few who did not explain why they hold that particular opinion. Typical explanations of why the teaching of ICC is or should be given a lot of importance were from IB teachers and those teaching English in an “international curriculum,” helping students “to avoid misunderstandings,” enabling them “to communicate effectively and interculturally competent” rather “than [focusing on] the correct use of grammar and vocabulary,” and “preparing students for the real life.” A number of teachers stressed that ICC should be integrated into the lessons while incorporating new structures and vocabulary, thus accomplishing both goals at the same time.

The teachers from Turkey found intercultural competence very significant. They all believe that, without intercultural training, students, especially IBDP students who have an international education, cannot reach their aim. They thought intercultural competence should be the fifth skill. Since the English B syllabus in IBDP is based on intercultural competence, teachers have implemented different activities about customs, traditions, global issues, media and health.

Spanish teachers believed it is equally important. They expressed that they try to integrate the four skills and intercultural competence equally in their course. They said that students learn grammar, vocabulary and the four skills using texts, videos, magazine articles, debates based on different cultures, and this is what makes them more globally-minded, understanding the differences and looking for similarities.

Teachers from the UK said that there is a lot of focus on intercultural competence in relation to the texts that are studied in the English course in IBDP. Understanding the cultural background of the texts is important in helping students to understand the texts themselves. One teacher said that “within national systems intercultural competence is not fostered, and students go to university with rather narrow patterns of thinking and with little knowledge of other cultures and societies. This leaves them trapped within a national paradigm and with views which are, to be honest, quite ignorant. Grammar,



vocabulary and other elements will always be taught, but if I have the opportunities to make them more open thinkers and culturally aware, it is important that I do so.”

Teachers from New Zealand believed that intercultural competency is a much more necessary skill than perfect grammar or vocabulary. According to them, the fundamental skills of English are also important, but being able to communicate effectively in different situations is the ultimate goal, especially for IBDP students.

Teachers from the USA also found intercultural competence to be more important than the four skills. Most of the teachers put emphasis on teaching intercultural competence. A teacher advocated focusing on teaching ICC because “the students live in a ‘bubble’ of sorts and have to be taught that their world isn’t the only world.” Another teacher stressed the fact that she gave “high importance [to ICC] because it is harder for the students to acquire this information on their own compared to grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills.”

*Q4: In what ways do you create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures of other countries? How do you provide some possible ways to help them avoid intercultural misunderstandings? Please put a tick in the box for the item if it applies to you.*

- *Inviting people from other countries/nationalities*
- *Bringing authentic materials*
- *Arranging video conferences*
- *Participating international projects or competitions*
- *Attending international concerts, exhibition or festivals*
- *Celebrating some universal days*
- *Arranging student exchange programmes or summer camps*
- *Guiding students to use technology such as Facebook, Twitter or forum pages*
- *Others...*

**Table 2.** Different Ways for Students to Understand and Experience Other Cultures

Different Ways	Inviting people from other countries/nationalities	Bringing authentic materials	Arranging video conferences	Participating international projects or competitions	Attending international concerts, exhibition or festivals	Celebrating some universal days	Arranging student exchange programmes or summer camps	Guiding students to use technology such as Facebook, Twitter or forum pages	Others
SUM	36	46	8	36	16	34	20	28	10
%	60	76.6	13.3	60	26.6	56.6	33.3	46.6	16.6

Teachers are supposed to take into consideration learners’ sociocultural backgrounds and how to be careful and sensitive in selecting appropriate materials and educational approaches for specific contexts of teaching cultural dynamic pinpoints (Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014).

When all the data was examined from Table 2, it was seen that bringing authentic materials (76.6%), inviting people from other countries/nationalities (60%) and participating in international projects or competitions (60%) are the most frequently used ways to create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures of other countries. Arranging video conferences (13.3%) is the least preferred one among the choices.

Teachers from New Zealand prefer bringing authentic materials (90%), celebrating some universal days (70%) and guiding students to use technology such as Facebook, Twitter or forum pages (70%). None of the ten teachers prefer to arrange video conferences. Four teachers added their own ways such as student and teacher storytelling, using the human resources within the school, developing Model United Nations groups to attend conferences and doing research.

As for the Spanish teachers, all eight of the teachers prefer bringing authentic materials to enable their students to experience other cultures. The second most chosen way is inviting people from other countries/nationalities (75%). None of the Spanish teachers added other ways.

When Turkish teachers' responses are examined, Turkish teachers mostly prefer inviting people from other countries/nationalities (75%) to help their students experience other cultures. Bringing authentic materials, participating in international projects or competitions and arranging student exchange programmes or summer camps are the second most preferred ways to create opportunities (68.7%). According to Jung (2002), research has shown that L2 learning contexts present more fruitful input than foreign language learning contexts and that learners are inclined to display continuous convergence to native speaker pragmatic behaviour as their length of accommodation increases. Two teachers added their ideas suggesting preparation of bulletin boards on certain countries each month and giving some details about the country.

The data shows that teachers from the UK mostly prefer to bring authentic materials (72.7%). Participating in international projects or competitions is the second preferred way and inviting people from other countries/nationalities is the third preferred way to enhance students' intercultural competence. Arranging video conferences is not preferred, just like New Zealander teachers.

As for teachers from the USA, celebrating some universal days (80%) is the most preferred way to enhance students' intercultural understanding. Bringing authentic materials (66.6%) is the second and inviting people from other countries/nationalities (60%) is the third preferred way. One teacher added his ideas expressing online forums, visiting the websites in other cultures, viewing movies and films from the target culture were ways that he likes to incorporate cultural education into his class.

As communicating in real and given L2 situations always bears contextual and cultural dimensions, culture and communication cannot be separated from each other (Kramsch, 2001 and Valdes, 1986). When all the data is examined, it is seen that bringing authentic materials is the most preferred way to create opportunities for students to learn about other cultures by the New Zealander, Spanish and English teachers. In this area, the most preferred way is different for Turkish and American teachers. Inviting people from other countries/nationalities is the most frequently used way by Turkish teachers and celebrating some universal days is the most preferred way by American teachers. Arranging video conferences is the least preferred way by all participant teachers in five countries.

*Q5: Which aspects of culture do you consider most important in teaching a foreign language? Please put a tick in the box for the item if it applies to you.*

- *Family Life, Community Life, Society*
- *Religion & Spiritual Beliefs*
- *Government & International Relations*
- *Arts & Crafts*
- *Education*
- *Resources & Economics*
- *Food*
- *Customs & Traditions*

- Clothing
- Festivals
- Values

Why?

**Table 3.** Aspects of Culture

Aspects of Culture	Family Life, Community Life, Society	Religion& Spiritual Beliefs	Government& International Relations	Arts& Crafts	Education	Resources& Economics	Food	Customs& Traditions	Clothing	Festivals	Values
SUM	51	26	22	18	23	7	15	47	5	16	46
%	85	43.3	36.6	30	38.3	11.6	25	78.3	8.3	26.6	76.6

Language and culture are regarded interrelated constructs and culture is viewed as glue which binds languages together (Brown, 2007) in the sense that culture for language is as water is for fish (Öz, 2015). As seen in Table 3, family life, community life and society is the most important aspect of the culture (85 %) in teaching a foreign language according to participant teachers. The second important aspect is customs and tradition and the third one is values. Clothing is the least important aspect of the culture.

According to teachers from New Zealand, family life, community life and society is the most important aspect of the culture (90%) in teaching a foreign language. Values (80%), religion and spiritual beliefs, education, customs and traditions (70%) are the second and third most important aspects. Except one teacher, all teachers gave their explanations about their choices. One teacher explained that “in the areas I have taught, I have discovered that family values seem extremely important to the parents so I am always aware that, although, my culture is very different I should respect their views and beliefs while still stressing the importance of accepting the views and beliefs of others,” Another teacher observed that the importance of aspects changes depending on the culture. She gave an example: “When I was in Vietnam, festivals and family life were the most important. In Saudi Arabia, it struck me that religion is the most important.”

Like the teachers from New Zealand, Spanish teachers consider family life, community life and society the most important aspects in teaching a foreign language (100%). Values (80%) are the second, education and religion and spiritual beliefs (70%) are the third important aspects. Clothing, resources and economics (1%) are the least important aspects. Half of the teachers explained why they consider various aspects of culture most important. A teacher observed that most of the aspects specified in the question are the common topics students know about, and it is easier for them to compare and analyze and they enjoy finding similarities or learning new things. Another teacher added that “when language is taught in context and students have a chance of experiencing first hand issues of the target culture then language makes meaning to them and they can use it in context.”

Unlike the teachers from Spain and New Zealand, Turkish teachers find customs and traditions and values (87.5%) to be the most important aspects of culture in teaching a foreign language. Family life, community life and society (81.2%) is the second important aspect. Except for four teachers, all teachers explained why these aspects are important. One teacher, who chose all the

aspects except for government and international relations and food, said that these aspects are “life itself.” Another teacher added that “these items include the most inevitable points related with our past, present and future.” A teacher who found family life, religion, governmental relations, customs, tradition and values more important than others argued that “they are the little C part of the culture. Generally students have an idea of food or clothing or festivals. When learning about a new culture, the big C cultural elements would be discovered first; they are the most overt forms of culture. However, they do not know what constitute them beyond these cultural aspects. They are invisible.”

Like Turkish teachers, customs and traditions (81.8%) is the most significant aspect of the culture in teaching a language according to teachers from the UK. Values (63.6%) are the second and family life, community life, society and government and international relations (54.5%) are the third significant aspect. Just one teacher did not give an explanation about her choice. One teacher said that “it is important to see different ways of living, to understand wider social issues and to think beyond your own, often privileged situation. Also by looking at problems and how they are dealt with in other cultures, it can foster more critical thought.”

Like Spanish and New Zealander teachers, according to American teachers, family life, community life and society is the most important aspect of the culture (100%) in teaching a foreign language. Customs and traditions (86.6%) are the second and values (73.3%) are the third most important aspects. Food and festivals are the least important aspects. Fourteen teachers made an explanation why the aspects they have chose are important. A teacher said that “without an understanding of the social structures within which other people live, communicating with them will be difficult. Understanding values is extremely important, but this is best taught not through high-level and abstract discussions of norms and morals but through insights into the everyday actions of other people. Hence, customs, family life, school and daily existence are important aspects of culture to be taught.”

To sum up, the choice of aspects of culture to be introduced in the language classroom derives from the teachers’ opinions of the relevance of these topics for ICC, as well as their appeal to the students.

*Q6: Provide your opinions about the level of emphasis to be placed on intercultural competence in foreign language teaching.*

- *I think that more emphasis should be given because...*
- *I think that less emphasis should be given because...*

Generally, the answer to this question expresses the opinion that ICC ought to be given a good deal of emphasis in foreign language teaching. The reasons given by the participant teachers generally fall into two categories: the idealistic reasons which would contribute to a better world and the pragmatic reasons which are related to the course itself and preparing students for future lives.

A number of idealistic reasons for ICC in foreign language teaching were mentioned:

- A hope for world peace and reconciliation, creating a better world
- A deeper understanding and appreciation of other ways of life
- Breaking down barriers among different cultures
- Creating open-minded and tolerant societies through worldwide understanding
- Raising future global leaders

The pragmatic justifications of the presence of ICC in language teaching were as follows:

- Providing lessons more authentic materials and real-life situations, thus making lessons more interesting and fun
- Preparing students for their need for ICC in university education in different countries
- Preparing students to travel and work in other countries in such a rapidly developing and globalizing world

Some participants pointed out that “language and culture are intrinsically linked. Students cannot be fully ‘fluent’ without culturally competent.” A teacher from New Zealand defined ICC as a key competence. A teacher from the USA added that “culture gets to the root of real, whole communication between human beings, and it transcends language.”

Some teachers, referring to this question, pointed out the globalization: since the “world is a village these days” (New Zealand) and “we all live in one world” (Spain), “students have more possibilities to interact with people from other countries (Turkey).” Intercultural competence is “central to a student’s own story and identity, so it is the basis for developing understanding” (the USA).

To sum up, the responses to the question about the extent of ICC in language teaching, it can be said that teachers from the five countries who participated in the study are aware of the importance of the issue and agree that it ought to be given emphasis in the language classroom.

*Q7: What kind of changes have you observed in your students’ intercultural competence thanks to the IB Diploma Programme?*

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) places importance on the effect of the Diploma Programme on international understanding. Professor George Walker, director general of the IBO, in a strategic plan written for the organization (Walker, 2000) recognized and expanded upon the concept of international understanding. He defined international education as a working description of the distinctive features of an “international education” which covers an understanding of the meaning and importance of culture and a study of issues of global concern.

In IBDP, in addition to meeting academic prerequisites, students develop an understanding of other cultures, languages and perspectives. The students in the programme learn a second language and develop the skills necessary for living and working internationally. Such international competence is very important. International-mindedness is key to this competence and involves gaining the understanding that other people with their differences can also be right.

As for intercultural awareness, Tan (2005) pointed out that at the outset, the IB was created as a curriculum to cater to different cultures; hence, intercultural awareness is embedded in its mission statement, which calls for students across the world to understand that “other people, with their differences, can also be right”. As such, the IB programmes place an emphasis on developing students’ attitudes, knowledge and skills as they learn their own and other’s social, national and ethnic cultures. Meanwhile, the programme encourages students to consider a broad range of perspectives when dealing with global issues. For example, IB students have to learn to speak another language, empowering them to access another culture. Throughout the program, students learn about their own culture and how it fits into the world around them, and understand that their choices will affect others. Intercultural awareness leads to the development of intercultural competence and global-mindedness, which is the key for students to stay competitive in the 21st century (Tan, 2005).

Since the IBDP focuses on intercultural competence, this question was prepared for English language teachers working in the IBDP to learn how their students’ intercultural competence has

changed. Generally, all teachers mentioned positive changes in their students' intercultural competence.

A teacher from New Zealand said that the values of the IB Learner Profile and CAS have helped a great deal. Another teacher added that the world literature component of the course allows for much of this through related discussion. Another teacher had the same idea: "Students now have access to a work in translation, which means that they will most likely have access to some culture they aren't as familiar with (since most works are in English and come from the USA or the UK and since these places are their influence in terms of TV and movies). I feel that this is a great opportunity for us to give them more information about a culture that is not as familiar to them."

The Spanish teachers expressed that IB students are "more reflective, caring, much more open and acceptable for the difference." Another teacher went on to say that they are "open-minded and risk takers."

Teachers from Turkey reported the following positive changes that their students have undergone and can/will undergo:

- *They are accustomed to international ways of questioning, exams and ways of learning and practicing what they have learnt.*
- *They get a chance to see what other cultures and people have in common or different from them and this way they become better world citizens.*
- *Since the programme has an international curriculum, they are always exposed to the international materials and taking part in international projects or forum sites. They open new doors in their world. Thus, when compared to students in national curriculum, they are flexible, knowledgeable and open minded. They have critical cultural awareness necessary to communicate interculturally.*

As is easily seen from the comments of teachers from the UK, thanks to the IB diploma programme, IBDP students' intercultural competence is high:

- *The IB Diploma programme encourages students to consider and challenge ideas from all cultures, and students in the IB programme have responded well to these ideas.*
- *I think that they have a better understanding of other cultures in the world and they are less likely to jump to stereotypical assumptions about people from other cultures and traditions. Many of our students travel overseas to study and it is important for them to understand something of these cultures before they move there.*
- *A lot, because the curriculum forces them to address international issues and be more globally minded.*

Additionally, teachers from the USA had the same idea about positive changes in their students' IC thanks to the IBDP with other teachers in four countries;

- *Ideally, they are more aware of themselves as citizens of the world, given the variety of students, teachers, cultures, and ideas to which they are exposed and invited to appreciate.*
- *Because the units we have taught (Global Issues and Media, as well as novels, plays and poetry) have promoted intercultural competence and global perspectives, I think that our students are better off. The IB gives a particular framework that is more broad and comprehensive than any curriculum I have yet seen in any U.S. state system.*
- *Accent reduction; increased ability to comprehend texts; overall better competence and comfort with English and literature.*
- *My students seem to be more interested in studying other cultures as a result of the programme. They are better at understanding that the world is made up of a vast mixture of people. They are unified because of their differences.*

There is only one conclusion to be drawn from an analysis of the replies to this question: the IBDP leads to positive effects on students' intercultural competence. Teachers' views are in parallel with the previous study by Hinrichs (2001). This study indicates that the IB Diploma Programme may be effective in promoting international understanding as demonstrated by one measure used in the study.

#### **4. Discussion**

The aim of the study is to find out the opinions and attitudes of IBDP English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Spain on ICC teaching. Seven open-ended questions were answered by the teachers. The answers show that only 15% of the teachers had a course for intercultural communication. Their own experiences with people of other countries/nationalities affected their teaching in a positive way. On a general level, it resulted in greater awareness of cultural diversity and their willingness to tolerate diversity and share them with their students. Comparing the teaching of ICC to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills, teachers were divided in two groups. Most of the teachers considered that ICC is more important than grammar and the rest, while others believe it is equally important. Additionally, teachers tried to create different opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures of other countries. It was seen that bringing authentic materials, inviting people from other countries/nationalities and participating international projects or competitions were the most frequently used ways. Arranging video conferences was the least preferred way. According to teachers, family life, community life and society were the most important aspects of the culture in teaching a foreign language. All teachers thought that ICC ought to be given a good deal of emphasis in foreign language teaching. As for the changes on their students' intercultural competence thanks to IB Diploma Programme, all teachers mentioned positive changes in their students' intercultural competence. Teachers' views are in parallel with the study by Hinrichs (2001).

#### **5. Conclusions**

Obviously, the development of ICC is the core of foreign language education in this age of globalisation. It must be included into foreign language teaching as one of its goals. As Hismanoglu (2011) states, ICC education should commence at the very beginning of foreign language learning since ICC development is just as much a prominent ingredient of language development as phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic improvement. Thus, English language teachers have a responsibility to try and develop their students' intercultural competence. The research shows that there is not enough formal education about intercultural language teaching in university education. There is also little guidance available on intercultural competence teaching. The specific components of intercultural competence should be examined and how they may best be promoted through foreign language instruction should be given more closely in pre-service and in-service education. Pre-service teacher training programs should involve a course to inform prospective teachers about ICC and help them to gain knowledge and skills about preparation of IC based lesson plans and implementation of these lessons. Additionally, curriculum developers and syllabus designers should take ICC into consideration during the curriculum development process. Likewise, course book writers should design intercultural activities as frequently as possible in each unit, and support the teachers with background information in the teachers' manual.

#### **6. Limitations**

The study has some limitations like other studies in social sciences. The sample consists of 60 IBDP English language teachers. A large group of IBDP English language teachers may be needed to

get a big picture and for the consistency of the study. Additionally, this study involves only IBDP English language teachers. A future study which consists of English language teachers working in national curriculum can be done comparing with IBDP English language teachers. Although the survey is a powerful method to generate information about individuals, other research methods including focus group and personal interviews should be explored to generate rich data.

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## Türkiye ve Yurtdışında Bulunan Uluslararası Bakalorya Dünya Okullarındaki İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Kültürlerarası Yetisi

### Öz

Çalışma, Türkiye, ABD, İngiltere, Yeni Zelanda ve İspanya'daki Uluslararası Bakalorya Diploma Programında çalışan (IBDP) İngilizce öğretmenlerinin kültürlerarası dil öğretimiyle ilgili görüşlerini ve yaklaşımlarını araştırmaktadır. Türkiye'den 16, ABD 15, İngiltere'den 11, Yeni Zelanda'dan 10, İspanya'dan 8 öğretmen olmak üzere toplam 60 İngilizce öğretmenleri çalışmaya katılmıştır. Yedi tane açık soru sorudan oluşan online araştırma anketi hazırlanmıştır. Araştırma anketinin analizi için metin (içerik) analizi ve karşılaştırmalı yöntem araştırma metodu kullanılmıştır.

Türkiye, ABD, İngiltere, Yeni Zelanda ve İspanya'da Uluslararası Bakalorya Dünya Okullarında çalışan İngilizce öğretmenleri küreselleşen dünyada kültürlerarası dil öğretiminin çok önemli olduğunu ve kültürlerarası iletişim yetisine yabancı dil öğretiminde önemli bir yer verilmesi gerektiğini düşünmektedirler.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Kültürlerarası iletişim yetisi, kültürlerarası iletişim, Uluslararası Bakalorya Diploma Programı

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