



A Study of EFL Instructors' Multicultural Teaching Competence at Tertiary Level*

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors' perception concerning their multicultural teaching competence in terms of four dimensions, namely awareness, knowledge, attitude, and skill. The study employed a convergent mixed-method research design, involving 114 EFL instructors across Turkish universities. Qualitative data collection involved two phases: semi-structured interviews with 20 instructors initially, followed by video-stimulated interviews with four instructors using in-class video recordings. The quantitative findings revealed that EFL instructors perceived themselves as highly competent in attitudes toward diversity, moderately high in awareness, knowledge, and skills dimensions. However, the qualitative data provided a deeper insight into the dimensions of multicultural teaching competence, which indicated relatively high competence. The study highlights the need for in-service training among current teachers and curriculum updates for pre-service teachers to effectively manage diversity in classrooms due to the increasing presence of learners from diverse backgrounds.

Research Article

Yükseköğretim Kurumlarında Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğreten Öğretim Elemanlarının Çok Kültürlü Öğretim Yetkinliklerinin İncelenmesi

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Araştırma Makalesi

Öz

Bu çalışma, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretim görevlilerin çok kültürlü öğretim yeterliliklerine ilişkin algılarını farkındalık, bilgi, tutum ve beceri olmak üzere dört boyut açısından incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada, yakınsayan paralel karma yöntemli bir araştırma deseni ve amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak Türkiye'deki üniversitelerde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten 114 öğretim elemanı yer almıştır. Nitel veri toplama iki aşamadan oluşmuştur: ilk aşamada ölçüt örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen 20 öğretim elemanı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, ardından sınıf içi video ders kayıtları kullanılarak dört gönüllü öğretim elemanı ile video destekli görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Nicel bulgular, öğretim elemanlarının kendilerini farklılıklara yönelik tutumlar konusunda oldukça yetkin olarak algıladıklarını ve farkındalık, bilgi ve beceri boyutlarında orta düzeyde gördüklerini ortaya koymuştur. Bununla birlikte, nitel veriler, çok kültürlü öğretim yeterliliğinin boyutları hakkında daha derin bir inceleme fırsatı sağlamış ve öğretim elemanlarının çok kültürlü yetkinliklerinin yüksek olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, çok kültürlü becerileri geliştirmek için farklı kültürlerden gelen öğrencilerin birlikte çalışmalarını sağlama becerisine önemle vurgu yapılmıştır. Çalışma, farklı dil ve kültürlerden gelen öğrencilerin sınıflarda artan sayısına vurgu yaparak, bu çeşitliliğin etkin bir şekilde yönetilebilmesi için yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi yapan öğretim

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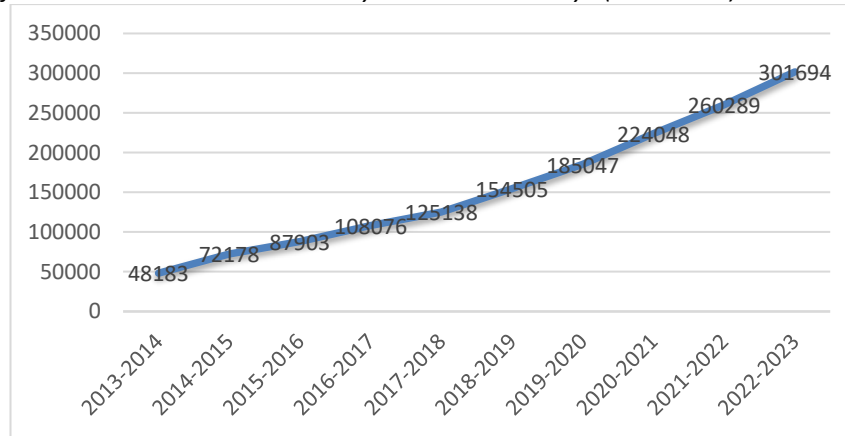
Introduction

Türkiye is undeniably a multicultural society with various dimensions of diversity, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, religious orientation, and linguistic variation. The country has experienced significant political and social instability in its neighboring regions, leading to a growing number of immigrants and refugees in recent years. As per the United Nations International Migrant Stock Report of 2020, the population of immigrants and refugees in Türkiye amounted to approximately 3.5 million. Furthermore, in a statement issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Refugees Association, 2023), it was declared that the count of documented immigrants had surpassed 4.5 million, which is 5.3% of the population.

In a similar vein, the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in higher education institutions suggests a potential social and cultural transformation within educational institutions. Chart 1 demonstrates a significant rise in the enrolment of international students in higher education in Türkiye, as indicated by the Council of Higher Education's Student Numbers by Nationality Report (2013-2023). In the past ten years, the number of international students in tertiary education has surged from around 50 thousand to over 300 thousand. This influx of international students, combined with the pre-existing cultural diversity within the country, makes it essential for higher education institutions to reorganize and adapt to the principles of multicultural education.

Figure 1

The Number of International Students in Tertiary Education in Türkiye (2013-2023)



It is evident that this transformation will have a direct impact on both current teaching professionals and future teacher candidates, who will encounter an increasing number of diverse students in schools. A crucial question arises regarding the level of preparedness among teaching professionals to effectively instruct students from diverse backgrounds. Research highlights the necessity of equipping tomorrow's teachers with the necessary skills and readiness to responsibly address the needs and potential challenges of diversity in classrooms (Akintayo et al., 2024; Chouari, 2016; Triggs, 2021; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

In a similar vein, research in the Turkish context underlines the significant importance of integrating multicultural education into teacher education programs (Aydın & Acar-Çiftçi, 2014; Aydın & Tonburoğlu, 2014; Erbas, 2019; Karadağ et al., 2021; Yıldırım, 2019). For example, Erbaş (2019) highlights the necessity of incorporating multicultural education into teacher education programs and promoting the adoption of its principles among teachers. In their study, Karadağ et al. (2021) reveals that teachers have weak multicultural competencies at the individual, institutional, and in-class cultural integration levels, but stronger skills in other classroom-related areas. Similarly, Yıldırım (2019) asserts that Turkish EFL instructors view themselves as competent in multicultural teaching, yet they lack formal training to adequately address the needs of diverse students.

At a more global level, multicultural education is considered as a valuable initiative to bring about significant transformations in how students are educated. Theorists and researchers in multicultural education hold the belief that when individuals can engage with diverse cultures, they gain a broader understanding of the collective human experience and can derive greater benefits from it (Banks, 2020; Grant, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2020). The core tenet of multicultural education underscores ensuring that all students, irrespective of their gender, social class, ethnic, racial, or cultural background are provided with equal educational opportunities (Banks, 2013). In this context teachers act as change agents and play a significant role in promoting democratic values and empowering students. To do this successfully, they need to have cultural competencies that primarily focus on personal competencies, encompassing knowledge, skills, and values (Perso, 2012). Scholars have emphasized variations of these components, such as *attitude/value, knowledge, and skills* (Martin & Vaughn, 2007; Sue, 2001).

The competencies of culturally responsive teachers go beyond individual qualities and extend to fostering social justice, equality, and social transformation (Banks, 2004). Villegas and Lucas (2002) propose six essential qualities that define a multiculturally responsive teacher: sociocultural awareness, positive attitudes towards diversity, commitment to transforming the school environment, understanding student learning, and supporting diverse learning styles, knowledge of the learner population, and application of this knowledge to enhance teaching practices. These traits are considered pivotal for teacher education in multicultural contexts, ensuring consistency and fostering a culturally responsive learning environment.

Spanierman et al. (2011), and Han and Thomas (2010) emphasize the crucial journey of developing multicultural competency among teachers. They underscore the significance of self-assessment, knowledge acquisition, and respect for diversity as foundational steps in this process. Additionally, Han and Thomas (2010) suggest three key perspectives: cultivating awareness, gaining comprehensive knowledge, and demonstrating skills to create inclusive environments. Together, these perspectives encourage respect, understanding, and broader perspectives in early childhood education through a unified approach to multicultural responsiveness.

Preservice teacher education programs play a crucial role in the development of prospective teachers, as they aim to foster multicultural perspectives in teaching and cultural responsiveness. These programs aim to equip candidate teachers with the necessary qualifications to support all students in achieving academic competence and preparing them for their future professional lives. However, many teacher education programs provide only limited, standalone courses that focus on a single aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gulya & Fehérvári, 2023). Studies also indicate that preservice teachers recognize the need for additional multicultural competence, including increased awareness, knowledge, and skills for working with diverse students (Lehman, 2017). To bridge this gap, professional development workshops and comprehensive, long-term approaches to integrating culturally responsive pedagogy into teacher education curricula have been proposed (Gulya & Fehérvári, 2023; Lehman, 2017), aiming to better equip teachers for the cultural diversity in today's classrooms.

As part of a larger study (Gürbüz, 2021), this study aims to investigate the *awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills* (Banks, 2004) of EFL instructors regarding multicultural competence. By investigating these aspects, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how EFL instructors can enhance their multicultural competencies, address the diverse needs of their students, and effectively manage the complexities of multicultural classrooms. The findings will have significant implications for both current instructors and teachers, as well as future teacher candidates studying in educational faculties in addressing the needs of diverse students and fostering inclusive educational environments.

To align with the study's objectives, the investigation was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do EFL instructors have an awareness of multicultural teaching competency?
2. How do they perceive their multicultural teaching competency regarding knowledge level?
3. What are their attitudes toward having diverse students in their classrooms?
4. How do they perceive their multicultural teaching competency in terms of skill level?

By incorporating a mixed-method research design, the study goes beyond solely examining perceptions and self-reported competencies. It delves into the actual implementation of multicultural teaching in EFL classrooms, providing insights into the real-life challenges and strategies employed by instructors. This approach adds richness and depth to the findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Overall, the study's research design and scope allow for a holistic exploration of EFL instructors' perceptions, competencies, and classroom practices related to multicultural education, contributing to the existing literature in the field.

Method

Research Model

This study adopts a convergence model of mixed methods triangulation design, which involves collecting, analyzing, and combining both quantitative and qualitative data to validate and corroborate findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). By combining both approaches, it is believed that a more comprehensive exploration of the research problems can be achieved compared to using either approach in isolation. By employing a mixed methods research design and utilizing multiple data collection tools, the study aims to capture a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of EFL instructors' perceptions. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data helps to triangulate the findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of the results.

1. Data Collection

The study utilized Critical Multicultural Education Teacher Competencies (CMETC) Scale developed by Acar-Çiftçi (2016), along with video-stimulated and semi-structured interviews to explore EFL instructors' perceptions. The CMETC scale comprised 42 items, with six focusing on *awareness*, eight on *knowledge*, nine on *attitude*, and 19 on *skill* dimensions.

The video-stimulated interviews were held with the participation of four EFL instructors. The instructors reflected on their 50-minute teaching video-recorded. They were specifically invited to justify their decisions and behaviors while teaching linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. For example,

Researcher: *I can see that you have changed that students' seat. Why do think you did this? Did you do this on purpose?*

Instructor: *Yes, I wanted to pair her with a local student because this is an opportunity for them to use the target language (English).*

Finally, semi-structured interviews provided insight into instructors' experiences and perspectives, contributing to a deeper understanding of their practices. The interview questions were formed based on the main themes regarding the four dimensions of multicultural teaching competence in the CMETC scale. For example,

Researcher: *What do you think about linguistic and cultural diversity in your classroom? How do you feel about linguistic and cultural diversity in your classroom?*

2. Participants

The selection of participants and the research setting was done purposefully to enhance the opportunity for gathering in-depth, comprehensive, and meaningful data from various perspectives. The study included 114 EFL instructors (see Table 1 for demographic data) at the tertiary level who were working at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) in various state universities (Gaziantep University, Harran University, Adıyaman University, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Çukurova University, and Kilis 7 Aralık University) where there is a linguistic and cultural diversity among students. The scales were distributed to the EFL instructors personally or online.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 114)

	<i>f</i>	<i>P</i>
Gender		
Male	38	33.30
Female	76	66.70
Experience		
1-3 years	3	2.60
4-6 years	9	7.90
7-9 years	28	24.60
10 or more years	74	64.90
Degree		
Bachelor's	51	44.70
Master's	53	46.50
Ph.D.	10	8.80

The participants selected for the video-stimulated interviews (N=4) and semi-structured interviews (N= 20) were purposefully chosen by calculating optimal cut-off points (see Table 2) to ensure the collection of significant data. This approach aligns with the principles of criterion sampling, which allows researchers to intentionally select specific individuals, settings, or events that can provide valuable insights (Nunan, 1992; Patton, 1990). Leavy (2014) also highlights the advantages of purposeful sampling, including the researcher's ability to identify and study the most suitable participants without excluding critical individuals from the sample. This approach increases the likelihood of obtaining deep, rich, and meaningful data.

Table 2
Optimal Cut-off Points

	<i>f</i>	%	<i>Range of CMETC Scale Scores</i>
Low	23	20.18	134-153
Medium	71	62.28	154-172
High	20	17.54	173-192
Total	114	100.00	

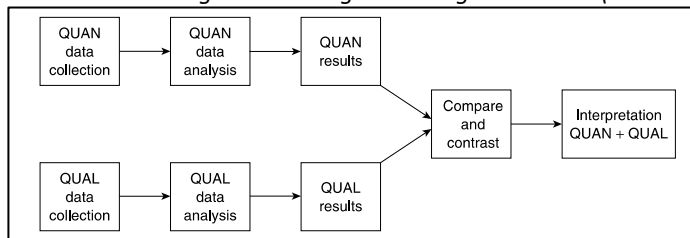
Based on the distribution of a total of 114 participant instructors, four participants were chosen from the range of high level, 12 participants were chosen from the range of medium level, and four participants were chosen from the range of low level. The number of participants for each level corresponded with the distribution of percentages on the scale. Another basis for the selection of participating instructors for the interviews was the number of diverse students in the participating instructors' classrooms. The average number of international students in each observed classroom was found to be four or five out of 20 to 22 students (around 25%).

3. Data Analysis

The research design employed in this study was a mixed methods approach, which involved the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of both quantitative and qualitative data. The breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration were ensured through the combination of the elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Figure 2

Mixed Methods Triangulation Design: Convergence Model (Creswell & Plano, 2007, p. 63)



The study focused on four research questions related to the dimensions of multicultural teaching competencies: *awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skill*. The data acquired to provide answers to these questions were analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics (on the IBM SPSS Statistics Software 24) for the data obtained from the scale and qualitative content analysis of the semi-structured and video-stimulated interviews (on NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software). This approach allowed the researchers to analyze the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews (30885 words), identify seven themes and 32 subthemes, and summarize key findings in an organized and concise manner. The extracts from the participants regarding the related multicultural teaching competence theme or subtheme were provided with pseudonyms.

To ensure interrater reliability and coding accuracy, the coding process involved cross-referencing and comparing the codes assigned to the data by both researchers. By employing this method, the study sought to achieve high levels of accuracy and consistency in the interpretation and analysis of the data. The analysis involved tabulating the overall scale analysis, as well as the individual items, along with their frequencies and percentages. These findings were then interpreted in conjunction with the qualitative findings obtained from the interviews, using a triangulation process.

Findings

The CMETC scale was utilized to investigate the participating EFL instructors' perceptions of their multicultural teaching competency under four dimensions and the following findings were obtained.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on the Scores of Instructors' Responses to the CMETC scale (N=114)

	Min.	Max.	X	sd
Dimension of Awareness	1.67	4.67	2.83	.51
Dimension of Knowledge	1.63	4.25	2.89	.59
Dimension of Attitude	3.00	4.89	3.81	.40
Dimension of Skill	3.16	4.89	3.95	.37
CMETC Scale	2.81	4.31	3.56	.27

Min.: Minimum, Max.: Maximum, X: Mean, sd: Standard deviation

As presented in Table 3 according to the average scores concerning the dimensions of the CMETCS, the participant instructors considered themselves competent at most on *skill* (\bar{x} Skill= 3.95±.37) and *attitude* (\bar{x} Attitude= 3.81±.40) dimensions. On the other hand, the participant instructors considered themselves least competent on the *awareness* dimension (\bar{x} Awareness= 2.83±.51), and the *knowledge* dimension followed it (\bar{x} Knowledge= 2.89±.59). The average score of instructors on *skill* and *attitude* dimensions was at the "Agree" level, and the average score on *awareness* and *knowledge* dimensions were at the "Partly Agree" level. The general mean score of instructors concerning the CMETC scale was found to be 3.56±.27. In the scope of this scale, this finding showed that the EFL instructors who participated in this study perceived themselves as competent though the level was not very high.

1. Dimension of Awareness

One aspect of the study intended to investigate the extent to which EFL instructors have an awareness of multicultural teaching competency. The interpretation of the findings is presented considering the findings acquired from both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure triangulation. Table 4 presents the relevant findings obtained from awareness dimension of the CMETC scale.

Table 4
Instructors' Responses to the Awareness Dimension

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I have prejudices stemming from my ethnic background	55	48.20	35	30.70	13	11.40	7	6.10	4	3.50
I am aware of my negative feelings about different students	19	16.70	20	17.50	27	23.70	39	34.20	9	7.90
There is no difference between the culture of different students and that of the school	27	23.70	48	42.10	23	20.20	11	9.60	5	4.40
I have knowledge about my ethnic origin	0	.00	7	6.10	15	13.20	45	39.50	4	41.20
I can continuously review my feelings and ideas about different students	1	.90	6	5.30	18	15.80	71	62.30	18	15.80
I know that I am biased when evaluating different students	62	54.40	27	23.70	12	10.50	10	8.80	3	2.60

f: frequency, *p*: percentage

In addition, the qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed the following themes and subthemes regarding the dimension of *awareness*:

Table 5
Themes and Subthemes Regarding Awareness Dimension

	<i>f</i>
Instructors' awareness of students'	56
Culture	41
Worldviews	8
Traditions	4
Values	3
Instructors' awareness of	43
Showing empathy	21
Showing respect	9
Need to be fair	4
Instructors' awareness of local students'	16
Prejudices	10
Conflicts	6

The triangulation of the data revealed that the participants highly value the presence of diversity in terms of *culture*, *worldviews*, and *traditions*. The descriptive analysis showed that a majority of the

participants *disagreed* with the idea that there is no difference between the culture of different students and that of the school. Similarly, as can be seen in extracts from the interviews, the instructors frequently expressed their awareness and appreciation of students' *cultures*, *worldviews*, and *traditions* (cited 56 times).

Participant-1: "...they bring their own culture into the classroom. I also try to make other students aware of the cultural difference." (Video-stimulated interviews)

Another consistent finding was that the instructors acknowledged the need to continuously review their feelings and ideas about different students and recognized the potential for bias in evaluating them. The interviews highlighted the instructors' emphasis on showing empathy towards diversity. For instance, another participant defines diversity as "...variety, different students, different cultures, all of them bring different things from their own selves."

The participants' definitions and perceptions of diversity indicate that they highlight the concept as a broad variety and differences, specifically among students and cultures. The phrase "different students, different cultures" emphasizes the recognition of unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that everyone brings into the educational setting. The reference to "all of them bring different things from their own selves" suggests that diversity is not only about external factors like nationality or ethnicity but also about personal contributions, such as values, beliefs, and worldviews.

2. Dimension of Knowledge

The second research question of the study aimed to seek an answer to how EFL instructors perceive their multicultural teaching competency in terms of the dimension of *knowledge*. Table 6 summarizes the findings acquired from the analysis.

Table 6
Instructors' Responses to the Knowledge Dimension

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Wrong information gained on culturally different groups is not free choice	0	.00	6	5.30	56	49.10	40	35.10	12	10.50
My ethnic origin does not affect learning-teaching processes	3	2.60	6	5.30	14	12.30	20	17.50	71	62.50
Different students do not have different styles of thinking, behaviour and speaking	55	48.20	46	40.40	5	4.40	2	1.80	6	5.30
Students who are culturally different do not learn in a different way	23	20.20	50	43.90	24	21.10	13	11.40	4	3.50
Different traits of students do not affect their learning-teaching process	26	22.80	60	52.60	14	12.30	12	10.50	2	1.80
Multicultural education does not necessitate changing the teaching goals	11	9.60	39	34.20	29	25.40	24	21.10	11	9.60
My cultural background does not affect my perception of events	6	5.30	11	9.60	20	17.50	28	24.60	49	43.00

Table 6 Continued.

Ethnic origins of students are not influential on their behaviours	20	17.50	55	48.20	29	25.40	8	7.00	2	1.80
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f: frequency, *p*: percentage

In addition to their responses to the scale, the instructors were interviewed about the dimension of knowledge regarding multicultural teaching competency in the interviews. Table 7 shows the themes related to their perceptions obtained from the content analysis.

Table 7*Themes Regarding the Knowledge Dimension*

	<i>f</i>
Essential role of experience	21
Lacking the necessary knowledge	20
Having the necessary knowledge	16
Need to avoid prejudices	15
Different traits of diverse students	6

The scale and the interviews revealed that most instructors (80%) believed that their ethnic origin does not impact the learning-teaching process and that they were able to “continuously review their feelings and ideas about different students” (78%). This aligns with the emphasis on *avoiding prejudices* (cited 15 times) expressed by the instructors during the interviews. For instance, one of the participants highlighted the significance of recognizing their own presumptions and the way it might influence learners from various backgrounds:

Participant-4: “When you try to teach something, the thing you're trying to teach is reflected maybe from your point of view, but students from different cultures or backgrounds could perceive them down in different ways.” (Video-stimulated recall interviews).

Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews identified other themes related to knowledge, including the *essential role of experience* (cited 21 times), the *lack of necessary knowledge* (cited 20 times), and *having the necessary knowledge* (cited 16 times). To illustrate, one of the participants emphasized the role of experience in learning to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students as he has learned how to treat learners over the years:

Participant-20: “When I first started teaching, I wasn’t skilled enough but through the years I have learned many things from these students, such as how they react to the events, how to solve problems, what kind of difference they have.” (Semi-structured interviews).

Additionally, the findings from the analysis of both the scale and the interviews showed consistency regarding the perceptions of EFL instructors towards the *different traits of diverse students*, particularly in terms of the dimension of knowledge. On the scale, most of the instructors (75%) “disagreed” with the notion that “Different traits of students do not affect the learning-teaching process”, and they (64%) acknowledged that culturally diverse students may have different learning styles. This finding was further supported by the qualitative findings, where the theme of *different traits of diverse students* emerged from the interviews (cited 6 times).

Participant-14: “They feel more enthusiastic, and most of the time they learn more quickly than my other students. It seems that they are more motivated than Turkish native students.” (Semi-structured interviews).

These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how EFL instructors are aware of the complexities of multicultural teaching and are actively working to enhance their competency in this area. By recognizing the influence of culture, acknowledging presumptions, valuing experience and knowledge,

and adapting teaching practices to meet the needs that emerge from diversity in the classroom, the instructors seem to believe that they can create more inclusive and effective learning environments for both students coming from different cultures and local students.

3. Dimension of Attitude

The study further aimed at exploring the *attitudes* of EFL instructors toward having diverse students in their classrooms. Table 8 exhibits the findings acquired from the participants' responses given to the scale.

Table 8
Instructors' Responses Regarding the Attitude Dimension

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
It is necessary to change teaching materials to ensure equality in education	2	1.80	9	7.90	2	17.5	4	41.2	3	31.60
Culture and language play a role in interpersonal communication	2	1.80	5	4.40	1	9.60	5	49.1	4	35.10
I respect the religions/spiritual beliefs of my students	0	.00	1	.90	0	.00	1	16.7	9	82.50
In my class, I present behaviours that consider differences and support diversity	7	6.10	2	1.80	9	7.90	4	36.0	5	48.20
Discussing ethnic traditions and beliefs causes divisions and debates between students from different cultures	8	7.00	3	26.3	3	29.8	3	24.6	14	12.30
Equal learning opportunities should be offered to different students at schools	0	.00	5	4.40	5	4.40	2	21.9	7	69.30
Different ethnic and cultural groups should be represented in curricula and textbooks	0	.00	1	12.3	2	25.4	3	30.7	3	31.60
I do not support teaching their mother tongue to students	1	13.2	2	23.7	4	36.8	1	15.8	1	10.50
The aim of education is to transfer social culture without change	5	4.40	3	32.5	3	32.5	2	24.6	7	6.10

Table 8 demonstrates that a significant majority of the participating instructors (99%) expressed their respect for the *religious/spiritual beliefs of their students*. Furthermore, 91% of the instructors believed that *equal learning opportunities should be provided to students of different backgrounds* within schools. These findings highlight the positive attitudes and inclusive perspectives of EFL instructors towards religious/spiritual beliefs and the importance of equality in education.

Table 9 shows the participating EFL instructors' perceptions concerning their attitudes toward diversity in their classrooms. These perceptions were elicited in the interviews.

Table 9
Themes and Subthemes Regarding the Dimension of Attitudes

	<i>f</i>
Instructors' positive attitudes	133
Richness	33
Opportunity for students to communicate in the target language	23
Opportunity for instructors to learn about differences	21
A positive role model	20
Encouraging mutual respect in the classroom	14
Instructors' feeling of responsibility	10
Opportunity for professional development	9
Adaptation of students to school and/or classroom	9
Being tolerant	8
Equal treatment	6
Instructors' negative attitudes	4

The participants reported having highly positive attitudes towards diversity on the scale. This was supported by their statements during the interviews, where they expressed positive attitudes toward linguistically and culturally diverse students in their language classrooms (133 citations). They frequently regarded diversity as a source of *richness* (33 citations) and an opportunity for students to communicate in the target language (23 citations). In the interviews, they emphasized the importance of *mutual respect in the classroom*. This finding can be considered to support the quantitative finding showing the instructors' positive opinions about respecting diverse *religious and spiritual beliefs*. Additionally, the majority of participants (91% agree and strongly agree) on the scale stated that *equal learning opportunities should be provided to all students*, which aligned with their preference for *equal treatment* (6 citations) expressed in the interviews. The participating instructors also recognized the role of *culture and language in interpersonal communication* (84% agree and strongly agree on the scale) and view diversity as *an opportunity for students to communicate in the target language* (cited 23 times). The participants emphasize the interconnectedness of culture and language and language in interpersonal communication, where the use of target language is fostered by linguistic diversity. In this process, cultural exchange and language proficiency is fostered while students from different backgrounds adapt their communication to engage with peers. In this sense, one of the instructors claimed that he found diversity as a source of motivation for communication among students in the target language:

Participant-11: It [linguistic diversity] is a big advantage because when the students try to communicate with these [international] students, they have to speak in English. So, it helps improve their speaking skills. (Semi-structured interviews).

On the other hand, during the interviews, some instructors were found to hold negative views (as evidenced by four citations) regarding linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms. For example, one considered herself fortunate to have only two students from diverse backgrounds in her classroom since she regarded diversity as challenging and complained about the extra workload and the difficulties it posed, particularly with learners who had limited proficiency in both the target and local languages. Another instructor stated that he hardly ever put extra effort into dealing with international students in his classroom as he had other things to do.

Participant-12: "I thought there was a lot of work to deal with, I don't know, I didn't try it. It was also because she [an international student] needed a lot of care starting from the very beginning. Even the alphabet [linguistic problems], many things. I was just like, okay good luck." (Semi-structured interviews).

4. Dimension of Skill

Regarding how EFL instructors perceive their multicultural teaching competency in terms of the dimension of *skill*, Table 10 presents the findings acquired from the analysis of quantitative data.

Table 10
Instructors' Responses to the Skill Dimension

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I can help fix the issues in my class stemming from the differences of students	0	.00	1	.90	9	7.90	67	58.80	37	32.50
I can help my students analyse their prejudices and biases	1	.90	1	.90	17	14.90	73	64.00	22	19.30
I can analyse the prejudiced and biased in teaching materials	0	.00	5	4.40	17	14.90	77	67.50	15	13.20
I can develop appropriate teaching materials for a multicultural classroom	0	.00	5	4.40	25	21.90	64	56.10	20	17.50
I can continuously consult with my colleagues on the suitable teaching methods for different students	0	.00	8	7.00	17	14.90	54	47.40	54	47.40
I can organize activities that can improve the self-confidence of different students	0	.00	1	.90	20	17.50	69	60.50	24	21.10
I treat different students equally	2	1.80	4	3.50	11	9.60	36	31.60	61	53.50
I can organize activities in my class that teach respect for different groups	0	.00	3	2.60	24	21.10	58	50.90	29	25.40
When offering a new piece of information, I can take into account the cultural background of students from different groups	0	.00	4	3.50	11	9.60	67	58.80	32	28.10
I can help my students understand the perspectives of ethnic and cultural groups who are different	0	.00	1	.90	16	14.00	66	57.90	31	27.20
I can help my students view historical and contemporary events from different perspectives	1	.90	3	2.60	15	13.20	57	50.00	38	33.30
In group activities, I can form groups bringing together students from different groups	0	.00	0	.00	18	15.80	59	51.80	37	32.50
In order to meet the needs of different students, I can adapt various teaching methods	0	.00	6	5.30	12	12.50	67	58.80	29	25.40
I can develop teaching methods that will eliminate negative discourses on different groups	0	.00	2	1.80	22	19.30	65	57.00	25	21.90
I do not reflect my racial beliefs, attitudes and emotions on people from different ethnic groups	1	.90	4	3.50	8	7.00	36	31.60	65	57.00
I can plan teaching based on the personal and cultural knowledge of different students	2	1.80	11	9.60	27	23.70	58	50.90	16	14.00
I can interfere with school practices that might harm different students	8	7.00	11	9.60	36	31.60	44	38.60	15	13.20
I can develop close relations with the families of my different students	15	13.20	27	23.70	45	39.50	21	18.40	6	5.30
I can understand what my different students want to say from their attitudes	1	.90	7	6.10	18	15.80	73	64.00	15	13.20

f: frequency, *p*: percentage

The study's findings highlighted that the EFL instructors who took part showed confidence in their ability to effectively teach in classrooms with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They agreed

with statements related to the dimension of skill, indicating their ability to continuously *consult with colleagues* on suitable teaching methods for different students and address issues arising from student differences in their classes. A significant majority of instructors (95%) acknowledged their capacity for collaboration and seeking guidance, while a similar majority (91%) affirmed their competence in resolving classroom challenges stemming from student diversity. These findings suggest that the instructors possess the necessary skills and willingness to adapt their teaching approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners.

The EFL instructors were invited to the interviews to talk about their perceptions of their multicultural teaching competency concerning the skills dimension. Table 11 shows the relevant qualitative findings.

Table 11

Themes Regarding the Dimension of Skills

	<i>f</i>
Bringing students from diverse groups together	22
Having necessary skills	16
Integrating the elements of diverse students' cultures into teaching	14
Treating and assessing different students equally	13
Providing a safe and caring environment	13
Cooperating with colleagues	12
Increasing diverse students' self-confidence	10
Helping linguistically and culturally diverse students adapt to school and/or classroom	9

As seen in Table 11, the participating instructors frequently mentioned the practice of *bringing students from diverse backgrounds together* (cited 22 times) as part of their classroom approach. Additionally, a majority of instructors (74%) expressed their ability to *form groups* that include students from different backgrounds for group activities. For example, some participants asserted that they had intentionally brought together students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, aiming for mutual benefits to be derived from their interaction:

Participant-9: "I group them [local students] with international students and believe me they learn a lot from each other. During pair- or group-work activities, I try to pair them with other students from diverse backgrounds to foster communication." (Semi-structured interviews).

The objective behind this approach is anticipated to encourage mutual support and explanation among students from different cultural backgrounds. By facilitating interaction and communication between local and international students, the instructors aimed to create an environment where students could assist and clarify concepts for one another. The findings obtained from both the scale and the interviews exhibit a remarkable consistency, supporting and reinforcing each other.

Another prominent theme that emerged from the findings was the instructors' *belief in possessing the necessary skills* (cited 16 times) to address classroom issues stemming from student differences. This aligns with the quantitative data, as an overwhelming majority of instructors (91%) reported their capability to resolve such issues. Furthermore, the instructors emphasized *treating and assessing students equally, creating a safe and caring environment, and collaborating with colleagues* in the interviews. Similarly, a significant number of instructors (85%) were found to have the necessary skills to treat students equally and consult with colleagues on suitable teaching methods for diverse students. Regarding this, one of the participants stated that:

Participant-18: "...acting fairly, giving extra attention, and making them participate in the lesson in my opinion will help solve the problems, often negative experiences, or challenges of diversity in your classroom. All problems will be resolved if you behave them equally." (Video-stimulated interviews).

These findings indicate that instructors have a favorable stance towards diversity and are actively working to foster inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding in their classrooms. This effort can contribute to enhanced learning outcomes and a more positive learning experience for all students.

Discussion & Conclusion

The first research question that guided the study aimed to find out the extent to which the EFL instructors have an awareness of multicultural teaching competency. The findings of the study demonstrate that the participating instructors expressed a clear awareness of certain dimensions, such as students' traits, and emphasized the importance of fairness, empathy, and respect in their roles as educators. These findings seem to be in line with what numerous scholars in the field of multicultural education have emphasized regarding the crucial role of teachers in fostering societal transformation by promoting equal and equitable learning opportunities within schools (Banks, 2004; Jones, 1997; Sue, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Previous research by Özdemir (2018) has also indicated that cultural empathy, as a personality trait, significantly predicts multicultural awareness, skills, and knowledge. Similarly, Acar-Çiftçi and Gürol (2015) identify awareness as a critical component of teachers' cultural competencies, encompassing recognition of how their own beliefs and values are shaped by cultural contexts.

Regarding the second and third research questions that investigated the participant EFL instructors' perceptions of their multicultural teaching competency in terms of the dimension of knowledge and skill, the findings were found to be consistent with previous studies (Acar-Çiftçi, 2016, 2019; Özkan, 2018). In these studies, academics or teachers perceived themselves to have moderate competence in terms of knowledge and skill in multicultural teaching competencies and often prioritized instructional practices that emphasized multicultural knowledge over skills. The findings acquired from the analysis of qualitative data indicated that the instructors highlighted the crucial importance of experience in acquiring multicultural knowledge. Furthermore, they demonstrated having adequate knowledge, particularly in managing culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. This suggests that the instructors viewed themselves as multiculturally responsive (Sue & Sue, 2003) by possessing general and specific knowledge about the groups they work with, demonstrating patience and tolerance in their interactions, and actively avoiding discrimination and isolation in their classroom practices. Teachers are expected to embrace the knowledge that encompasses the multifaceted aspects of diversity and adapt to new circumstances while having the capability to respond effectively to them.

As to the final research question that delved into EFL instructors' attitudes toward having diverse students in their classrooms, the findings revealed that the participant EFL instructors had positive attitudes towards diversity in their language classrooms and perceived it as an opportunity for students to communicate in the target language. They recognized linguistic and cultural diversity as a facilitator of communication among students from different backgrounds. These findings align with the discussions in the relevant literature. Giles et al. (1991) suggest that individuals who are culturally competent can establish relationships and interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, Bondy et al. (2007) propose that teachers can create culturally responsive classrooms by promoting interaction among learners from various backgrounds and explicitly addressing their diverse needs and achievements.

Bringing together students from diverse groups, the participants in the study were found to recognize the benefits of cooperation, interaction in the target language, and the prevention of isolation in the school environment. This practice aligns with the viewpoints of several scholars who emphasize the importance of bringing students together to foster collaboration and avoid isolation in classrooms (Leonard & Leonard, 2006; McCall, 1995; Montano, et.al., 2002). Gay (1990) highlights that the initial efforts to transform the curriculum to align with multicultural education were initiated when students from different ethnic backgrounds were brought together in the same school setting. Similarly, Leung and Hue (2017) suggest that teachers can develop multicultural competence through first-hand experience of diversity in their classrooms, enabling them to design culturally responsive lessons based on these

experiences. Similarly, the Association of American Universities (1997) emphasizes the significance of promoting harmony, unity, and collaboration through extracurricular activities.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for the field of EFL instruction and multicultural teaching competency. First, the participating EFL instructors demonstrated a high level of positive attitudes and moderate level of awareness, knowledge, and skills in teaching linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. Second, the emphasis on bringing students from diverse backgrounds together and creating a safe and caring environment highlights the importance of fostering a sense of community and promoting intercultural communication among students. EFL instructors can benefit from implementing strategies that encourage collaboration and mutual respect in their classrooms. Third, the findings underscore the significance of continuous professional development and collaboration among colleagues. The instructors' reported ability to consult with colleagues on teaching methods for diverse students indicates the value of ongoing learning and sharing of best practices. EFL instructors can benefit from engaging in professional development opportunities that enhance their multicultural teaching skills and provide a platform for collaborative learning and support. Overall, this study highlights the importance of promoting multicultural teaching competency in EFL instruction and provides insights into the attitudes and skills of instructors. The findings suggest the need for teacher training programs and institutional support that promote multicultural education, foster inclusive classroom environments, and facilitate ongoing professional development for EFL instructors.

Author Contribution Rates

The authors contributed equally to the study.

Ethical Declaration

All rules included in the “Directive for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions” have been adhered to, and none of the “Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics” included in the second section of the Directive have been implemented. Ethics committee permission for the research was received from Çukurova University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee in the Field of Social Sciences and Humanities (Decision No: 14).

Conflict Statement

The author declares no competing interests.

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