

Place of Global Issues in EFL Lecturers' Teaching Agenda in Türkiye

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Abstract: This study examines English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers' views on integrating global issues into language teaching in Turkish higher education. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, data were collected from 414 EFL lecturers across 12 universities via a questionnaire, followed by semi-structured interviews with 29 participants. Quantitative results indicate that EFL lecturers generally support the integration of global issues into EFL instruction. While gender, age, or overall teaching experience did not yield significant differences, prior experience specifically with global-issue-based instruction emerged as a significant factor. Among the themes, environmental issues were prioritized due to their perceived familiarity and pedagogical accessibility. In contrast, language imperialism was rated as the least important theme. Qualitative findings further clarify that this reluctance toward language imperialism stems from its ideological sensitivity, despite its relevance to culture and linguistic awareness. The study concludes with practical implications for language teachers, curriculum designers, and materials developers.

Keywords: *global issues, english as a foreign language, environmental issues, language imperialism*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly reshaped English language teaching (ELT) in higher education by expanding its goals beyond linguistic proficiency. Current approaches now prioritize critical thinking, intercultural awareness, empathy, and ethical responsibility (Barili & Byram, 2021; Bourn, 2022; Cates, 1990). Simultaneously, contemporary global challenges, such as climate change, migration, gender equality, digital transformation, and public health crises, are increasingly reflected in the pedagogical aims of language programs (Cordova, 2024; Gurney & Michaud, 2024; Uma, 2024). In addition, OECD's *Education at a Glance 2024* highlights that higher education policies are increasingly shaped by concerns related to global citizenship, sustainability, quality, and equity. Within this landscape, language education plays a strategic role by mediating global competencies and institutional priorities (Sarı et al., 2025; Yanniris, 2021).

Within the Turkish higher education context, recent research suggests that while ELT incorporates global perspectives but still lacks systematic alignment with international frameworks such as global citizenship education and sustainability education (Dimici & Başbay, 2025; Gülle et al., 2025; Tezcan Ünal & Schmitt, 2022). Studies emphasize that global issues (GIs) should be treated not merely as topics but as overarching thematic directions that expand the social and ethical purposes of language learning (Cordova, 2024; Diachkova et al., 2021; Omidvar & Sukumar, 2013). To address this gap, the present study examines how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers in Türkiye conceptualize, implement, and evaluate GIs within higher education contexts.

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Although the literature indicates that integrating GIs into language teaching enhances students' critical literacy and ethical sensitivity (Omar, 2024), the depth of this integration varies significantly from national policies, institutional structures to teacher attitudes (Dimici, 2025; Wang, 2025). In Türkiye, identified challenges include political sensitivities, limited classroom time, inadequate materials and rigid top-down curricula (Akbana & Yavuz, 2020, 2022; Akbana & Rathert, 2024; Akbana & Koşar, 2024; Arslan & Curle, 2024; Aslan & Altınkaya, 2024; Dimici, 2025; Erarslan, 2018).

Against this backdrop, this study explores the perceptions and practices of EFL lecturers regarding GIs in Turkish higher education. Specifically, this study investigates: the extent of EFL lecturers' beliefs in GI integration into instruction (I), whether perceptions vary by demographic and professional characteristics (II), how they define GIs (III), and the language skills they associate most closely with GI-based teaching (IV). Ultimately, this study seeks to illuminate how GIs influence course objectives, material selection, classroom interaction, and assessment processes, as well as to identify institutional or pedagogical barriers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Pedagogy and Critical Language Pedagogy

This study is theoretically grounded in critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a framework that challenges the idea that education is, or can be, a neutral enterprise. From Freire's (1970) foundational critique of the banking model of education to Giroux's (2024) theorization of schools as sites of cultural politics, critical pedagogy insists that teaching is always a socially situated practice, shaped by institutional structures, ideological assumptions, and unequal power relations (Apple, 2002; McLaren, 2015). According to Giroux (2025), Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy (remains relevant in shaping public consciousness and resisting oppressive power structures, advocating for democratic engagement and social justice. What makes this framework particularly generative for the present study is not its ideological ambition, but its capacity to make visible the tensions that practitioners navigate every day; between what they believe education should do and what institutional conditions allow them to do.

In ELT, these tensions have been theorized through what Crookes (2021) calls critical language pedagogy (CLP): a practice-oriented development of critical pedagogy that translates its principles into concrete pedagogical action. CLP asks not only what is taught but whose knowledge is legitimized, whose voices are heard, and what kind of agency language education makes possible (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Pennycook, 2021). Importantly, CLP is not a fixed method or a prescriptive curriculum; it is, as Akbari (2008, p. 277) puts it, a disposition toward "changing the status quo", one that encourages teachers to critically examine the relationship between their instructional choices and the broader social purposes of education. It falls precisely into this disposition, and the conditions that enable or constrain it, that this study seeks to investigate among EFL lecturers in Turkish higher education.

Central to this framework is Freire's (1970) concept of *conscientização* (critical consciousness), which enables learners to move beyond surface-level engagement with content toward a deeper understanding of the social conditions that produce the issues they encounter. In EFL contexts, this means extending communicative competence toward what Benesch (2001) describes as a more critical dimension. That is the one that equips learners not only to communicate effectively but to interrogate and reflect on the world they inhabit (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Yet the literature is not uncritical of this aspiration. Holliday (2013) and Kubota (2004) caution that critical frameworks developed largely in western academic traditions risk becoming prescriptive when applied unreflectively to non-Western settings. This is a concern that is directly relevant to the Turkish context, where institutional structures, national curriculum demands, and cultural expectations significantly shape what is pedagogically possible (Akbana & Rathert, 2024; Aslan & Altınkaya, 2024). Rather than resolving this tension prematurely, the present study treats it as a productive site of inquiry as it explores the relationship between critical pedagogical ideals and the realities of classroom practice.



Global Education and Global Issues: A Critical Synthesis

Within this theoretical framework, Global Education (GE) is understood not simply as a content area but as a pedagogical orientation. The underlying reason is that GE prepares learners to engage with interconnected world as ethical, reflective, and responsible agents (Oxley & Morris, 2013). GE encompasses dimensions such as intercultural competence, sustainability, human rights, and peace education, and has been increasingly institutionalized through international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) (UNESCO, 2025). Over the past decade, it has developed into a structured field of research, with growing attention to teacher education, citizenship competencies, interdisciplinary integration, and policy development (Bosio et al., 2023; Estellés & Fischman, 2021).

Yet the literature reveals important internal tensions within GE that a purely descriptive account would obscure. De Andreotti's (2014) influential distinction between soft and critical global citizenship is particularly instructive here. Soft global citizenship cultivates awareness and empathy but stops short of interrogating the structural conditions that produce global inequalities in the first place. Critical global citizenship, by contrast, demands a deeper engagement with root causes as an engagement that is uncomfortable precisely because it implicates the institutions and systems within which education operates. This distinction matters for the present study since it raises a question that sits at the heart of GI-based ELT: when lecturers integrate global issues into their teaching, are they fostering the kind of critical engagement that GE aspires to in their definitions? Critical pedagogy provides the analytical lens through which this question can be meaningfully pursued.

Studies conducted in Türkiye suggest that GE undergoes significant localization processes shaped by national priorities and cultural values (Çakmaklı et al., 2017; Gürel & Aslan, 2022). Rather than treating this localization as a deviation from a universal GE ideal, the present study reads it through a critical pedagogical lens as evidence of the contextual negotiation that all educational frameworks must undergo to remain meaningful (Takkaç Tulgar, 2024). This perspective resonates with Kumaravadivelu's (2003) concept of particularity, which calls for pedagogies that are responsive to local realities rather than imported wholesale from elsewhere. This is also a principle in a recent study that Özcan and Gürsoy (2026) demonstrate concretely in their problem-posing model for young EFL learners in Türkiye, where environmental themes drawn from students' lived experiences served as the generative content for both language development and critical awareness. Within GE, GIs, including climate change, migration, inequality, gender, peace, conflict, and public health, constitute the thematic content through which this negotiation takes place. These topics are not merely knowledge domains; they are, as Cates (2022) argues, arenas of ethical judgement, critical reflection, and potential social action. When addressed through a critical pedagogical lens, they become opportunities for learners to connect language use with broader social realities (Akbanı & Yavuz, 2020, 2022; Schulz et al., 2025; Santamaría-Cárdaba et al., 2024).

Global Issues in Language Teaching

The integration of GIs into ELT has a well-documented history, originating in Cates's (1990) foundational argument that language teaching carries an inherent ethical responsibility toward the world beyond the classroom. More recently, scholars have reaffirmed that global themes carry both pedagogical and ethical significance (Cates, 2022), and the literature has expanded to address specific pedagogical models; most notably project-based learning (PBL) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL), as frameworks for embedding GIs into language instruction (Başarır & Sarı, 2022; Dimici, 2025; Kimsesiz, 2023).

These models offer pedagogical value, particularly in creating authentic communicative tasks and meaningful learning environments (Cates, 2022; UNESCO, 2025). However, a critical reading of the literature reveals a tension that is rarely made explicit: when GIs are deployed primarily as vehicles for language practice, as topics that happen to be globally relevant, their transformative potential is significantly curtailed. Block et al. (2012) and Holborow (2013) have argued that the commodification of language education tends to reduce even socially significant content to instrumental ends, stripping it of its critical edge. This is worth sitting with, because it speaks directly to the question of whether GI-based ELT, as currently practiced, constitutes a genuinely critical pedagogy or a more aesthetically appealing version of conventional instruction.



The practical challenges documented in the literature reinforce this concern. Qualitative studies across Türkiye consistently report that while lecturers value GIs, they encounter systemic barriers—time constraints, curriculum demands, insufficient materials, and limited institutional support—that constrain their pedagogical choices (Akbanı & Yavuz, 2020, 2022; Dimici, 2025; Kimsesiz, 2023; Tarhan, 2024). From a critical pedagogical standpoint, these barriers are not merely logistical inconveniences; they are symptomatic of the broader standardization and accountability pressures that Apple (2002) and Ball (2003) identify as structurally inimical to transformative education. Addressing them, therefore, requires more than practical solutions. It requires a critical examination of the institutional conditions that produce them in the first place.

Assessment represents another dimension where this tension surfaces. UNESCO (2025) and several scholars (Başarır & Sarı, 2022; Cates, 2022; Dimici, 2025) have called for evaluation criteria that extend beyond linguistic proficiency to include critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. This is a significant demand, because it challenges the dominant assessment paradigm in higher education, which privileges measurable, standardized outcomes over the kind of reflective, dialogic engagement that critical pedagogy values. Research on skill-based teaching demonstrates that GIs can enhance reading, writing, speaking, and listening through authentic tasks (Cates, 2022; UNESCO, 2025), but the affective and civic dimensions of this learning; namely, empathy, engagement, global awareness are harder to capture and easier to marginalize (Kimsesiz, 2023). International research confirms that connecting ELT with global citizenship education strengthens intercultural communication, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility (Barili & Byram, 2021; Mouboua et al., 2024), and classroom discourse studies further suggest that global topics create opportunities for democratic dialogue when managed with pedagogical intentionality (Başarır & Sarı, 2022). Ultimately, GI-based materials have the potential to create authentic and meaningful learning environments that link linguistic competence with civic engagement (Cates, 2022; Dimici, 2025); however, but realizing this potential depends on the degree to which practitioners are equipped, supported, and theoretically oriented to move beyond surface-level integration.

The Present Study

A synthesis of the current literature points to a productive tension at the heart of GI-based ELT: the field has made significant progress in documenting the benefits of integrating GIs into language teaching, yet it has been slower to examine the conditions under which such integration can move from descriptive awareness to genuine critical engagement. This gap is particularly pronounced in specific national contexts where institutional structures, curricular constraints, and cultural expectations mediate and sometimes resist the transformative aspirations of critical pedagogy.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating EFL lecturers' perceptions and practices in Turkish higher education through the lens of critical pedagogy. Türkiye offers a particularly generative context for this inquiry: it sits at the intersection of global educational frameworks and strong national educational traditions, creating a space where the tensions between critical pedagogical ideals and institutional realities are especially visible. To capture both the breadth and depth of these tensions, the study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design by generating statistically robust findings through quantitative instruments while using qualitative data to illuminate the lived experiences and pedagogical reasoning of the lecturers themselves. In doing so, it moves beyond a descriptive account of what lecturers do and toward a theoretically grounded understanding of why they do it, what constrains them, and what possibilities remain open within the institutional contexts they inhabit.



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study aims to investigate EFL lecturers' perceptions of GIs and the extent to which they integrate these topics into their instructional practices; namely, classroom teaching. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was adopted. In this design, general trends were initially identified through quantitative data; these findings were then explored in depth via qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire designed to describe the lecturers' perceptions. This approach was chosen because questionnaire surveys yield reliable and generalizable results, enabling the numerical analysis of attitudes and experiences (Creswell, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007). Building upon these numerical insights, a semi-structured interview form was employed in the qualitative phase to explain the findings. Following Creswell's (2012) explanatory sequential mixed methods model, the study was grounded in a two-stage process where quantitative data collection and analysis preceded the qualitative phase to facilitate a comprehensive integrated analysis. The statistical patterns identified in the questionnaire, specifically the lecturers' focus on GIs and the role of teaching experience, were utilized to refine the interview protocol. This sequential process allowed the pedagogical reasons behind the lecturers' instructional choices to be explored in depth. By merging the broad survey data with individual interview accounts, the gap between general trends and classroom realities was bridged. Consequently, a more nuanced understanding of the professional and affective factors shaping global issue integration in Türkiye was sought through this integrated analysis.

Setting and Sampling

The study involved 21 public universities spanning all seven regions of Türkiye. To ensure regional representation at the design stage, a stratified purposive sampling strategy was employed at the institutional level, consistent with Teddlie and Yu's (2007) typology of mixed-methods sampling. Universities were purposively selected to represent all seven geographical regions of Türkiye; however, the final composition of the sample was also shaped by institutional consent processes, as only twelve of the twenty-one invited universities granted permission to participate (see in Table 1). This resulted in a non-probability, institutionally contingent sample rather than a strictly randomized one. Data collection proceeded in two phases. Initially, the questionnaire was distributed to EFL lecturers across all regions. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with volunteer participants from four regions, aimed at enriching the survey findings through qualitative insights.

Table 1. Regional distribution of the target population (universities and EFL lecturers, $N = 1617$)

Region	Universities (n)	Lecturers (n)	Lecturers (%)
Marmara	6	766	47.4
Central Anatolia	3	377	23.3
Mediterranean	3	39	2.4
Aegean	3	267	16.5
South Eastern Anatolia	2	57	3.5
Black Sea	2	94	5.8
Eastern Anatolia	2	17	1.1
Total	21	1617	100.0

Note. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of lecturers ($N = 1617$) across the seven regions. This table reflects the sampling frame, i.e., all EFL lecturers across the 21 invited universities, and not the achieved survey sample. As institutional affiliation was not collected from respondents to preserve anonymity (see Setting and Sampling below), a corresponding regional breakdown of the achieved sample ($N = 414$) is not available.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Çağ University on December 15, 2020 (Approval No: 23867972-044-E.2100000021). Once institutional permissions were granted by twelve of the invited universities, a total of 414 lecturers participated in the survey. This sample size surpassed the required sample size for the study, ensuring the statistical power of the quantitative analysis. To maintain participant anonymity, no institutional identifiers were collected. Furthermore, in line with Creswell's (2012) guidance on integrating qualitative follow-up,



29 volunteer lecturers were interviewed to provide deeper contextual understanding of the survey results. Because institutional affiliation was intentionally not collected from respondents (see above), a corresponding regional breakdown of the achieved sample could not be reported (see note to Table 1).

Participants

The survey aimed at collecting demographic information from participants, including their gender, age, length of teaching experience, and experience of integrating GIs into their lessons. As shown in Table 2, a total of 414 EFL lecturers participated in the survey.

Table 2. Participants' demographic and background information

Variable	Category	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Male	111	26.8
	Female	303	73.2
Age	25 to 33	107	25.8
	34 to 39	108	26.1
	40 to 46	100	24.2
	47 or higher	99	23.9
Teaching Experience	1 to 10	105	25.4
	11 to 16	110	26.6
	17 to 22	95	22.9
	23 or higher	104	25.1
Previous Experience in Teaching GIs	No	218	52.7
	Partly	121	29.2
	Yes	75	18.1
Total		414	100.0

Note. Percentages are within-variable proportions; totals refer to the full sample ($N = 414$).

Table 2 shows that the majority of EFL lecturers were female ($f = 303$), while a quarter were male ($f = 111$). Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 65, with an average age of 40.17 ($SD = 8.625$). Since age was recorded as a continuous variable, the data were categorized under four distinct age groups to facilitate a balanced distribution for subsequent statistical comparison. Participants' teaching experience ranged from 1 to 50 years, with an average of 17.06 years ($SD = 8.057$). When examining the distribution of experience, 110 individuals had 11–16 years of experience, 105 had 1–10 years, 95 had 17–22 years, and 104 had 23 years or more. When examining participants' experiences of using GIs in their lessons, it was determined that more than half ($f = 218$) had no experience, 29.2% ($f = 121$) had some experience, and only 18.1% ($f = 75$) had experience in this area.

Data Collection Tools

Data were obtained through a teacher survey using (1) a questionnaire based on lecturers' self-reports containing five Likert-type questions and (2) an online semi-structured interview form.

Teacher survey

A questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice questions was administered to determine the views of EFL lecturers regarding the integration of GIs into English lessons. The questionnaire was first developed by Cates (2000), then used by Yakovchuk (2004), Çavdar (2006), and most recently by Kaplan (2019). Kaplan (2019) adapted the questionnaire into Turkish and the same form has been used without making any further changes. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked to give their consent to participate, and demographic information (gender, age, teaching experience, and experience of integrating GIs into lessons) was collected. Subsequently, the section measuring participants' attitudes towards GIs such as environmental problems, peace education, human rights, intercultural education, socio-economic and health issues, and language imperialism in language teaching was included. Participants indicated their response to each statement using one of the



following options: ‘Definitely Yes’, ‘Yes’, ‘Undecided’, ‘No’ or ‘Definitely No’. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their email addresses to obtain their consent to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted online with participants who agreed to provide further feedback. Participant consent was obtained via a voluntary consent box at the end of the questionnaire and email sharing. A total of 29 participants voluntarily took part in the interviews. First-author prepared five interview questions that were consistent with the study's objectives and supported the survey results. These questions focused on (I) the definition of GIs, (II) the language skills most appropriate for teaching, (III–IV) the global topics receiving the most and least attention, and (V) the importance of teaching experience. Following the analysis of quantitative data, the items on which participants agreed most and least were identified, and interview questions were developed based on these findings. The second-author evaluated the clarity of the questions and their suitability for explaining the quantitative findings. This process contributed to the explanation and enrichment of the results by revealing the participants' views in depth (Creswell, 2012).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the teacher survey were analyzed using SPSS (v. 21). The normality of the variables was assessed through the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, supported by skewness and kurtosis values. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and normality test results for variables

Variable	N	Skewness	Kurtosis	K–S Sig.	S–W Sig.
Environmental Issues	414	-2.298	5.447	.000	.000
Peace Education	414	-1.270	0.525	.000	.000
Human Rights	414	-2.014	3.971	.000	.000
Intercultural Education	414	-1.738	1.973	.000	.000
Socio-Economic Issues	414	-1.566	1.568	.000	.000
Health Issues	414	-1.507	2.008	.000	.000
Language Imperialism	414	-1.161	0.869	.000	.000

Note. Skewness and kurtosis values fell within acceptable limits (skewness < 3, kurtosis < 10; Kline, 2016). However, both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests yielded $p < .001$ for all variables, indicating a significant departure from normality. Consequently, non-parametric procedures were employed for subsequent inferential analyses.

As shown in Table 3, the results indicated non-normal distributions across all variables ($p < .05$); therefore, non-parametric tests were employed in subsequent analyses. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were first calculated to summarize participants' responses to the Likert-type items. Group differences were then examined using the Mann–Whitney U test for comparisons involving two groups and the Kruskal–Wallis test for comparisons involving three or more groups. These analyses allowed the examination of lecturers' views on GIs across demographic and professional variables.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a high internal consistency coefficient for the questionnaire ($\alpha = .887$; $N = 414$). This value is comparable to the reliability reported in Kaplan's (2019) study ($\alpha = .91$; $N = 250$), supporting the stability of the instrument. In terms of validity, the final versions of both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview form



were reviewed by the first and second authors to ensure content relevance and clarity, consistent with established scale development practices (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using inductive content analysis, a method chosen for its capacity to condense raw textual data into a brief, summary format and to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings. This systematic process involved the rigorous identification of open codes, the subsequent grouping of these codes into higher-order categories, and the ultimate development of overarching themes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences. A hybrid approach combining inductive and deductive elements was adopted (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Open coding proceeded inductively, allowing codes to emerge directly from participants' own language rather than being forced into a predetermined coding scheme; the subsequent grouping of codes into higher-order categories and the interpretation of the resulting themes were, however, informed by the study's critical pedagogy framework, which functioned as a sensitizing lens for interpretation rather than an a priori coding template. Interview transcripts were read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data, after which meaningful units were identified and labelled through open coding. These codes were then grouped into higher-order categories based on conceptual similarity and frequency, consistent with content-analytic procedures (Lindgren et al., 2020). Themes were refined through an iterative process between the data, codes, and emerging structures. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, an independent qualitative researcher reviewed the coding process (Natow, 2020), and discrepancies were resolved through discussion. An audit trail documenting coding decisions, category development, and visual analytic models was maintained throughout the data analysis process (Ahmed, 2024). Additionally, member checking was employed by sharing a summary of the findings with a subset of participants to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations. Participant quotations were incorporated to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in their actual expressions, and detailed descriptions of the research context and procedures were provided to support transferability.

FINDINGS

Findings of Quantitative Data

Integrating global issues into teaching English

The first research question addressed to find out EFL lecturers' perceived implementations of integration of GIs at the tertiary level. Descriptive statistics, including Mean (*M*) and Standard Deviation (*SD*), were employed to assess the central tendency and the degree of consensus among participants regarding each issue. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 4.



Table 4. Participants' views on integration of different GIs into EFL teaching

Issues	Definitely No		No		Indecisive		Yes		Definitely Yes		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
Environmental Issues			1	.2	9	2.2	68	16.4	336	81.2	4.78	.476
Intercultural Education					24	5.8	78	18.8	312	75.4	4.69	.573
Human Rights Education	1	.2	5	1.2	29	7.0	74	17.9	305	73.7	4.63	.688
Health Issues			4	1.0	22	5.3	115	27.8	273	65.9	4.58	.638
Socioeconomic Issues			11	2.7	41	9.9	81	19.6	281	67.9	4.52	.779
Peace Education			12	2.9	56	13.5	85	20.5	261	63.0	4.43	.832
Language Imperialism	8	1.9	17	4.1	66	15.9	119	28.7	204	49.3	4.19	.977

Note. *f* = frequency; % = percentage; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. Response options ranged from 1 (Definitely No) to 5 (Definitely Yes). All percentages are based on valid responses per item.

Table 4 reports on the participants' views on the integration of GIs into English language teaching, and it was found that teaching staff achieved the highest average in the 'Environmental Issues' dimension ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .476$). Methodologically, the low standard deviation in this category indicates a high level of homogeneity in lecturers' agreement, confirming a strong consensus on the importance of environmental issues. This was followed by 'Intercultural Education' ($M = 4.69$, $SD = .573$) and 'Human Rights Education' ($M = 4.63$, $SD = .688$). Participants also took a positive approach to other areas such as health, socio-economic and peace education, but rated the issue of 'Language Imperialism' as the least appropriate global issue with the lowest average ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .977$), the fact that all dimensions remained above the midpoint of 4.00 statistically indicates a general positive tendency toward 'Yes' or 'Definitely Yes' across the entire scale. This quantitative trend provided the basis for the subsequent qualitative phase, which aimed to explore the reasons behind the relative prioritization of these issues.

Differences in EFL lecturers' opinions by gender, age and teaching experience

Within the scope of the second research question, non-parametric tests (Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis) were utilized to determine the effect of demographic variables as the data did not meet the assumptions of normality required for parametric analysis. The analysis indicated that participants' perceptions of GIs in EFL teaching did not differ significantly across gender for most issue categories ($p > .05$), with the exception of Environmental Issues. In this dimension, female participants reported slightly higher levels of perceived importance ($U = 15090.00$, $Z = -2.36$, $p = .018$). The mean rank values provide the statistical evidence for this directional difference, indicating that gender acts as a differentiating variable specifically for environmental issues. Conversely, age and professional experience did not yield a significant effect, suggesting that the perceived relevance of GI integration remains statistically stable across different age groups and teaching experience.

EFL lecturers' views on global issues by previous teaching experience

In the context of the second research question, analyses were also conducted to ascertain whether there is a discrepancy in EFL lecturers' views on the integration of GIs into English lessons according to their GIs teaching experience. In addition to the Kruskal–Wallis and Post-Hoc test results, the post-hoc pairwise comparisons were specifically used to pinpoint the exact source of variance between experience levels. The results are presented in Table 5.



Table 5. Kruskal–Wallis and Post-Hoc test results for EFL lecturers' views on global issues by course integration

Global Issue Dimension	Kruskal–Wallis H	<i>p</i>	Significant Post-Hoc Comparisons
Environmental Issues	6.556	.038	No < Yes
Peace Education	7.103	.029	No < Yes
Human Rights Education	8.262	.016	No < Yes
Intercultural Education	1.343	.511	—
Socio-Economic Issues	4.885	.087	—
Health Issues	9.171	.010	No < Yes; No < Partly
Language Imperialism	9.153	.010	No < Yes; No < Partly

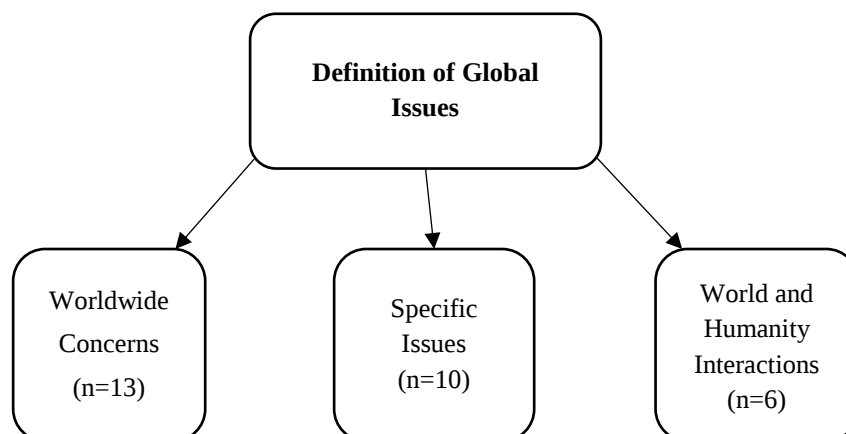
Note. The table reports Kruskal–Wallis omnibus tests and corresponding post-hoc pairwise comparisons. Only statistically significant contrasts are listed. “No < Yes” or “No < Partly” indicate that participants who had integrated global issues into their courses (“Yes” or “Partly”) reported higher scores than those who had not (“No”).

Table 5 shows participants' views on integrating GIs into their lessons according to their previous teaching experience and the results of the Kruskal–Wallis and post-hoc tests. The Kruskal–Wallis test results revealed that previous teaching experience showed significant differences in some areas. Statistically significant differences were found in terms of participants' experience levels in the dimensions of environmental issues ($p = .038$), peace education ($p = .029$), human rights ($p = .016$), health issues ($p = .010$) and language imperialism ($p = .010$). The post-hoc analyses statistically confirm that prior experience is a decisive factor, as participants with 'Yes' or 'Partly' experience consistently yielded higher mean ranks than those with 'No' experience. This finding suggests that pedagogical familiarity with GIs significantly strengthens the perceived appropriateness of these topics in language lessons.

Findings of Qualitative Data

Definition of global issues

Following the quantitative assessment of GIs, the qualitative phase was initiated to explore the conceptual frameworks of the participants through content analysis, which allowed for a systematic categorization of subjective definitions. Three categories emerged: ‘Worldwide Concerns’, ‘Specific Issues’, and ‘World and Humanity Interactions’. Figure 1 shows the resulting categories.

Figure 1. Categories elicited for definition of global issues

Participants' definitions of GIs centered around three main themes. The most frequent category, worldwide concerns ($n = 13$), referred to issues perceived as affecting all humanity.



Participants described GIs as shared problems requiring collective responsibility, such as “problems for which all citizens of the world should feel responsible” (P20) and “any concern related to the welfare of the world” (P16). The second category, specific issues ($n = 10$), included references to concrete environmental, social, economic, and health-related challenges. Participants mentioned examples such as global warming, poverty, the digital divide, famine, and pandemics. Several respondents also linked these issues to rights-based concerns, indicating that GIs encompass both material conditions and ethical dimensions. A smaller group of responses ($n = 6$) reflected the category world–humanity interactions, emphasizing reciprocal relationships between human actions and planetary well-being.

Overall, participants tended to define GIs as border-transcending environmental, social, and economic problems affecting both humanity and the world. This qualitative pattern helps explain the quantitative emphasis on globally shared concerns.

Language skills

Participants were asked which language skills could facilitate the integration of GIs into foreign language teaching as part of the second interview question. Content analysis revealed 24 responses grouped under five categories: ‘Integrated Use of the Four Skills’, ‘Listening and Reading’, ‘Speaking’, and ‘Writing’, Reading, and Speaking.

The most common category was the integrated use of four skills ($n = 11$). Participants emphasized the balance between input and output in GI-related instruction. As P10 stated, “students need to acquire knowledge through input (reading and listening) and then express their opinions (speaking and writing).” Similarly, P13 highlighted that listening and reading texts can serve as informative input, followed by speaking and writing as output activities. Several participants underlined that no single skill should be prioritized over others when teaching GIs. In addition, P17 emphasized that integrating skills creates opportunities for awareness-raising, noting that “it is highly meaningful for foreign language classes for students to participate in discussions and produce written work on these issues using reading texts or video/listening materials related to GIs.” In line with this view, P19, drawing on content-based teaching experience, stated that “all skills can be used in an integrated manner,” particularly highlighting the effectiveness of reading and speaking activities at intermediate proficiency levels.

In addition to integrated skills, listening and reading ($n = 5$) were viewed as important for introducing GIs due to their informational role. Speaking and writing ($n = 4$) were described as essential for discussion and idea exchange. For instance, P25 noted that “speaking is directly related to the processes of negotiation and persuasion.” Two smaller categories emerged as reading and speaking alone (each $n = 2$). Participants in these groups suggested that reading may be more accessible for students who are less familiar with GIs, while speaking supports interactive exploration of the topics.

In summary, participants viewed the integration of all four skills, especially reading and speaking, as the most suitable approach for incorporating GIs into language teaching. Their responses suggest a general tendency to combine input-based activities with subsequent output production, using GIs as a tool to foster awareness and meaningful communication. These qualitative insights complement the general positive perceptions identified in the quantitative phase by illustrating classroom-level implementation practices.

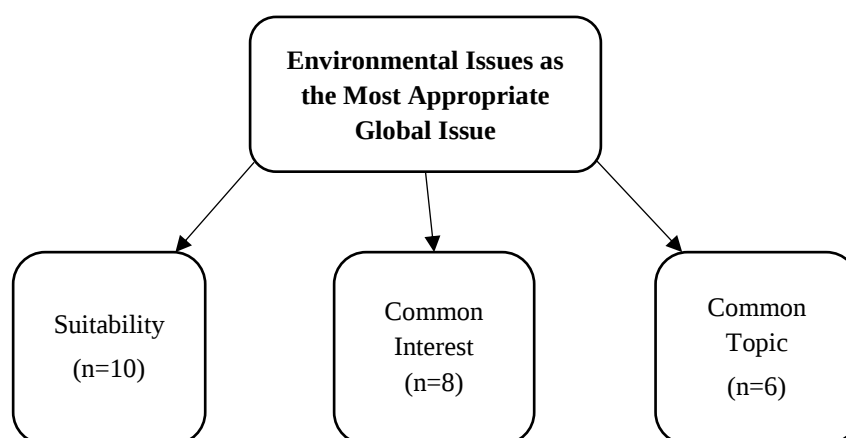
Environmental issues as a primary global issue

According to quantitative survey findings, ‘environmental issues’ received the highest mean score among all GI categories ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .476$). As part of the third interview question, participants were asked to share their thoughts on this quantitative result. Only two participants (P6 and P8) showed disagreement to this quantitative result. P6 stated, “I disagree that environmental issues are the most important global issue. Today, issues such as health or self-care are more important,” referring to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, P8 acknowledged the relevance of environmental topics but emphasized that other global issues should be addressed with equal importance. The remaining 27 participants supported the priority of environmental issues as



evidenced in the quantitative result and provided explanations that were grouped into three categories: Suitability, Common Topic, and Common Interest (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Categories elicited for the prioritizing environmental issues



The most frequently expressed theme was the pedagogical suitability of environmental issues ($n = 10$). Participants described environmental issues as easier to address in classroom contexts and less sensitive than other GI topics. For instance, P12 noted that such topics “can be safely addressed in the classroom and can attract the interest of every student,” while P13 emphasized that they “offer a less sensitive area compared to controversial issues.” P21 similarly stated that environmental issues constitute “a common area that all students can relate to,” facilitating open classroom discussion.

Another set of responses focused on the familiarity and accessibility of environmental topics due to media exposure. Participants referred to widespread coverage of issues such as global warming, pollution, and recycling, which they believed enabled students to engage more readily with the content. As P19 explained, “the availability of many programs on the environment ensures that students have much to talk about and learn,” and P7 noted that topics such as “global warming, pollution, and recycling” are already familiar to learners.

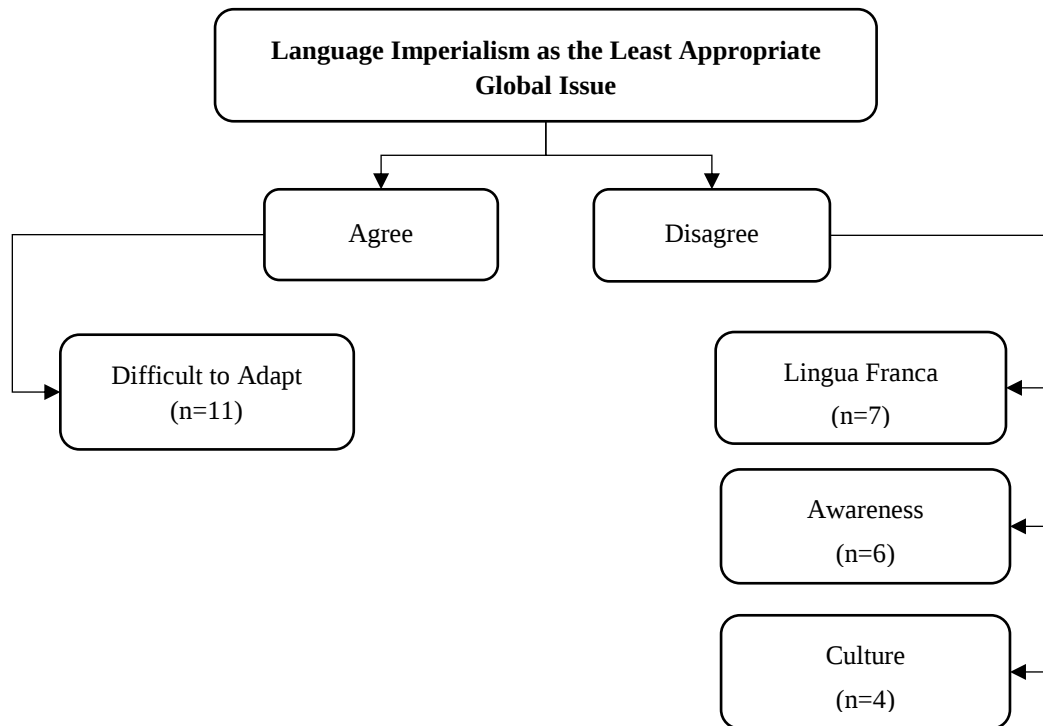
A third category highlighted student interest, by fostering shared responsibility and awareness. As P11 stated, these issues “attract the interest of every individual” while P9 described them as “the most effective tool for integrating language learning with a sense of responsibility.”

Overall, the qualitative findings help explain the strong quantitative consensus on environmental issues by showing that participants prioritized these topics due to their classroom suitability, familiarity, and capacity to engage students.

Language imperialism as the least appropriate global issue

According to quantitative findings, ‘language imperialism’ received the lowest mean score among the six GI categories ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .977$). Although the mean remained above the scale midpoint, the comparatively lower score and higher standard deviation indicate less consensus compared to other issue categories. To explore this distribution in more depth, participants were asked the question: ‘The quantitative findings revealed that *Language Imperialism* is the least appropriate issue to address in English teaching. Do you agree? Why/Why not?’ Content analysis yielded four categories. One category reflected agreement with the quantitative ranking, while three categories reflected disagreement. The categories are shown in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3. Categories elicited for the ranking language imperialism as the least appropriate global issue

Participants who agreed with the quantitative result mainly described language imperialism as difficult to adapt to classroom contexts. They referred to cognitive complexity, emotional sensitivity, and potential motivational risks. For example, P11 argued that framing language learning through imperialism “creates the perception that students need to learn the target language solely for survival.” Similarly, P12 described the topic as “too abstract and challenging for the cognitive levels of the students,” and P18 characterized it as “risky to address in the classroom.”

In contrast, a large group of participants challenged the quantitative ranking. Some rejected the concept of language imperialism altogether, framing English as a *lingua franca*. P3 described the English as “the common language of communication for the whole world,” while P29 similarly described it as “a common language in many areas, from economics to science.” P27 emphasized its global functional role as an indispensable tool for international cooperation and knowledge production, which should be approached “with a universal understanding of humanity.”

Other participants argued that language imperialism could serve as a tool for fostering language awareness and critical thinking rather than being avoided. P8 described it as “one of the most productive issues that can be addressed in classrooms,” and P13 the importance of discussing “how languages can be used as instruments of power.” A smaller group linked the issue to culture, with P17 emphasizing the need for language programs to support “a multicultural and multilingual worldview,” and P26 advocating for “an approach that avoids hierarchical assumptions among languages”.

Overall, the qualitative findings partially align with the quantitative results. While some participants considered language imperialism difficult to integrate, others viewed it as a valuable pedagogical tool for raising awareness, promoting cultural sensitivity, and encouraging critical engagement with the global role of English. In other words, while some participants’ concerns regarding complexity and sensitivity help explain the lower mean score, the presence of contrasting views illustrates the variability reflected in the higher standard deviation.

Role of teaching experience

The final question of the interview form aimed to determine the role of teaching experience in the integration of GIs in English language teaching. Quantitative analyses indicated that prior experience in integrating GIs into courses was associated with significantly higher perceptions of



appropriateness across several dimensions, including environmental issues, peace education, human rights education, health issues, and language imperialism (see Table 5). To further explore how teaching experience shaped these perceptions, participants were asked to reflect on the role of experience in integrating GIs into English language teaching. Content analysis yielded two main categories: “those favoring experience” and “those disfavoring experience”. The majority of the participants with 25 responses emphasized teaching experience as an important factor integrating GIs effectively. Participants frequently associated experience with greater pedagogical confidence, improved lesson planning, and more flexible material use. As P7 noted, “being aware of a subject does not mean being able to teach it successfully,” highlighting the role of experience in translating content knowledge into classroom practice. Similarly, P16 emphasized the importance of teachers’ vision and intellectual background, stating that “real learning is only possible with the teacher’s vision and intellectual background.”

Several participants also linked experience to increased confidence and material diversity. For example, P24 pointed out that as teachers gain experience, their teaching style and pedagogical knowledge develop, allowing them to use a wider range of original materials when addressing GIs. P26 further stressed that “success and guidance are only possible through experience,” underscoring the perceived irreplaceable role of experience in effective teaching practice.

In contrast, a smaller group of participants argued that teaching experience alone was not sufficient. These participants prioritized individual competence, creativity, and knowledge of students as equally or more important than experience. P28 stated that “the subject depends on the teacher’s personal competence,” while P13 emphasized that “getting to know the student is more important than experience.” P14 also cautioned that experience may sometimes limit openness to innovation.

Overall, the qualitative findings support the quantitative results by illustrating how teaching experience contributes to greater confidence, instructional flexibility, and material use when integrating GIs, while also highlighting that experience interacts with personal and pedagogical factors.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Discussion

This study examined EFL lecturers’ perceptions of integrating Global Issues (GIs) into language teaching across seven regions of Türkiye. The findings indicate that lecturers generally hold a positive attitude towards global themes, with the highest average scores obtained for environmental issues, followed by intercultural education and human rights. Qualitative findings corroborated these results, revealing that environmental issues were preferred because they were perceived as ‘pedagogically appropriate’ and a ‘shared area of interest’. Conversely, ‘language imperialism’ was the least preferred theme due to perceived cognitive and affective challenges. This contrast reflects a broader tendency among lecturers to favor themes that support student engagement while minimizing affective risk—a pattern documented in prior research (Cates, 2022; Efron & Mori, 2023). From a critical pedagogical lens, however, this pattern is not merely a matter of individual preference; it points to the structural and affective conditions that shape what lecturers perceive as pedagogically possible within their institutional contexts.

The findings align with UNESCO’s (2023) current framework for sustainable development and global citizenship education. The participants’ prioritization of environmental issues over other GIs is consistent with UNESCO’s emphasis that teaching programs should focus not only on cognitive outcomes but also on value-based decision-making, empathy, and social responsibility. The qualitative findings deepen this connection by showing that lecturers perceive environmental issues as “shared ground” that facilitates meaningful learning. This observation resonates with Dimici (2025) and Kimsesiz (2023), who highlight the motivational benefits of global themes when linked to real-life relevance and project-based learning. Within the Turkish context, viewing environmental issues as catalysts for affective engagement reflects a holistic approach to education. Yet, following De Andreotti’s (2014) distinction between soft and critical global citizenship, it is worth asking whether this preference for affectively safe themes reflects the kind of surface-level engagement that stops short of interrogating the structural conditions that produce global inequalities or whether it represents a contextually negotiated entry point into deeper critical work.



Teaching experience, emerged as a significant factor, particularly regarding environmental, peace, and human rights themes. Participants emphasized that such themes increase student participation by linking classroom learning to personal life experiences. Kimsesiz (2023) emphasized that global themes, when integrated with project-based learning, support meaningful learning and motivation. These findings are consistent with Bourn (2022)'s assessment that global citizenship education contributes to the development of ethical awareness, empathy, and social responsibility. From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997), more experienced lecturers demonstrate higher self-efficacy and pedagogical confidence. This was evident in the qualitative findings; where experienced teaching staff associated their professional longevity with the ability to 'plan more effectively' for student interests and lesson objectives. Consequently, teaching experience serves as an element that fosters 'pedagogical flexibility' and 'critical awareness.' This resonates with Akbari's (2008) characterization of critical language pedagogy as a disposition rather than a method: what experience appears to cultivate is not simply technical skill but a growing orientation toward examining the relationship between instructional choices and the broader social purposes of education.

However, the finding that language imperialism was the least preferred topic suggests a cautious approach toward political or ideological content in classroom discussions. This aligns with the tendency for teachers to reduce emotional risks when introducing global or ideological themes into the classroom environment (Cates, 2022; Efron & Mori, 2023). Nevertheless, some participants noted that addressing linguistic imperialism could enhance critical thinking. This parallels Bayraktar Balkır's (2021) conclusion that discussing language and power relations in a critical pedagogical context increases students' critical sensitivity. From the standpoint of critical pedagogy, this avoidance is itself theoretically significant: it illustrates the tension between what Freire (1970) envisions as *conscientização*, a movement toward deeper awareness of the social conditions shaping one's world, and the institutional pressures that render such engagement uncomfortable or professionally risky (Apple, 2002; Ball, 2003).

Overall, the findings show that EFL lecturers in Turkish higher education hold a positive orientation toward integrating GIs into language teaching, with environmental themes emerging as the most salient across both quantitative and qualitative strands. While the quantitative results indicate a clear prioritization of environmental topics, the qualitative findings clarify that this preference stems from their perceived pedagogical accessibility, affective safety, and capacity to foster student engagement. Teaching experience emerges as another enabling factor, as more experienced lecturers demonstrate greater pedagogical confidence and flexibility in integrating global themes, whereas the limited emphasis on language imperialism reflects a cautious approach to ideologically sensitive content. Taken together, these findings suggest that the integration of global issues is shaped less by awareness alone than by pedagogical confidence, affective considerations, and professional experience. Accordingly, the gap between critical pedagogical ideals and classroom realities is not incidental but structurally produced, reflecting the broader institutional conditions that Holliday (2013) and Kubota (2004) identify as mediating the uptake of critical frameworks in non-Western educational settings.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that EFL lecturers in Türkiye generally exhibit a positive orientation toward integrating GIs into language teaching. The current study has made it possible to arrive at several conclusions. First, environmental topics are the most pedagogically appropriate and accessible theme for students, whereas language imperialism can only be addressed to a limited extent due to cognitive and affective difficulties. Second, study concludes that the integration of global issues in the Turkish EFL context is shaped less by a lack of awareness and more by pedagogical self-efficacy and the perceived risk of discussing ideologically sensitive content. Furthermore, pedagogical confidence in bringing global themes into the classroom increases significantly with teaching experience. All in all, in the Turkish context, GIs support both affective awareness and critical literacy development in language teaching; however, it also highlights the necessity of institutional support, material diversity, and teacher training for the sustainability of this integration.



Implications

This study carries several implications for pedagogy, curriculum design, and higher education policy. Pedagogically, GIs can play a major role in developing learners' critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility, positioning EFL instruction within a broader global citizenship framework. Teacher education programs should therefore embed modules aligned with Global Education and the Sustainable Development Goals, incorporating CLIL-based and interdisciplinary activities.

Assessment practices should expand to include value-oriented outcomes such as intercultural awareness, ethical sensitivity, and social responsibility (Cates, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). At the policy level, The Council of Higher Education and Ministry of National Education could strengthen curricular coherence by systematically integrating global citizenship education components into language teaching programs and by supporting material development through funding, institutional incentives, and professional learning opportunities. As one of the first mixed-methods studies exploring this topic in Türkiye's higher education landscape, the study provides a foundation for future comparative and cross-national work.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The study has several limitations. First, the reliance on self-report data may not fully reflect actual classroom practices. Second, the exclusion of foundation universities limits the generalizability. Third, the achieved sample was geographically uneven: the Marmara region, one of Türkiye's most economically developed zones, accounted for a disproportionately large share of participating institutions and lecturers, while Eastern Anatolia was markedly underrepresented. This imbalance arose primarily because the final sample depended on which of the 21 invited universities granted institutional consent, rather than on a fully randomized selection process; consequently, findings should be interpreted with particular caution regarding regions outside Marmara, and generalizations to Türkiye as a whole should be made conservatively. Relatedly, because institutional affiliation was not collected from respondents in order to preserve full anonymity, a regional breakdown of the achieved sample itself cannot be reported; only the sampling frame (Table 1) could be disaggregated by region, which limits the precision with which this imbalance can be quantified at the respondent level. Fourth, online interviews may have lacked the depth of face-to-face interaction. Future research should therefore incorporate classroom observations, case studies, and longitudinal designs. Comparative studies across different cultural settings (e.g., Europe or Asia) and the development of digital, globally oriented teaching materials would further expand the pedagogical impact of GI integration.

Ethical Statement: This study was derived from the first author's master's thesis conducted under the supervision of the second author. This has been disclosed to ensure transparency. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Çığ University (Approval No: 23867972-044-E.2100000021; December 15, 2020).

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