

In the Discussion on “Doing Diversity” in Education, How do English Language Teaching Programs Measure Up?

Dr. Servet Çelik

Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey

Diversity in Education: Discourse vs. Practice

- European Union educational policies currently encompass issues such as:
 - Awareness of diversity;
 - Mutual respect;
 - The development of intercultural skills.
- However, the reality in schools is often far different. For example:
 - In Dutch public schools, minority students have been penalized or even expelled for speaking their native language (Yağmur, 2015);
 - In German education, poor academic performance among non-native students is frequently assumed to be the result of their cultural and linguistic upbringing (Karakaşoğlu, 2015).

Diversity in Education: Turkey's Case

- In Turkey, as in the EU, issues relating to diversity have been emphasized from a rhetorical standpoint;
- BUT – few specific policy objectives have been set in this regard (Tarman, 2010; Tongal, 2015);
- Classroom instruction is generally assimilative and does not account for cultural or other differences in learners (DG-EAC, 2017).

Addressing Diversity through Culture in English Language Education

- Unlike other aspects of education in Turkey...
 - The national English language programs for elementary and secondary students contain explicit recommendations for addressing culture (Çelik & Karaca, 2014; MoNE, 2013).
- Who is responsible for carrying out these objectives?
 - English language teachers!
- The problem:
 - Most pre- or in-service teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Turkey lack well-developed intercultural skills of their own (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; Yazıcı, Başol, & Toprak (2009).

Are We Preparing Turkish EFL Teachers for their Role in Dealing with Diversity?

- The core English language teacher education curriculum is defined by the Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu (Council of Higher Education, or CoHE).
 - The CoHE does not currently prescribe any content that addresses intercultural skills (CoHE, 2014; Karakaş, 2012; Yüksel, 2012).
 - The decision to include culture-related courses is left to individual ELT departments – such courses may be included as electives.
- What we don't know in this situation:
 - How widespread are current efforts to engage EFL teacher candidates with culture-related elective courses;
 - What types of diversity-oriented courses are being offered in Turkey's ELT preparation programs;
 - Which intercultural skills are being addressed.

Purpose of the Study

- This study was designed to explore how diversity is addressed in the ELT programs at Turkish public universities.
- The findings may serve two purposes:
 1. To highlight the current efforts of individual ELT programs to prepare future teachers of English to address cultural diversity in their practice.
 2. To call attention to a need for a more coherent and uniform approach to incorporating culture and intercultural awareness in Turkey's ELT programs.

Research Framework, Data Collection and Data Analysis

- The study was conducted as a systematic survey of the elective courses offered in each English language teaching department in Turkey.
- Data collection took place in Fall, 2016, and Spring, 2017, academic semesters as follows:
 - The official websites of the public universities in Turkey were reviewed to determine whether they supported an English language teacher education program.
 - The course catalogues of the targeted ELT departments were then examined through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Neundorf, 2002).
 - Courses related to cultural diversity were identified and indexed in terms of the course titles and descriptions.
 - The data were categorized in terms of (1) the total numbers of courses identified; and (2) the aspects of culture that were encompassed.

Results: Courses Relating to Culture and Intercultural Awareness

A total of 38 ELT programs were identified among all of the universities surveyed. Among these programs, only 14 included courses related to cultural issues. Eighteen individual culture-oriented courses were distributed among the 14 programs as shown in the table below:

1. Anatolian University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KÜL199: Cultural Activities 	8. Karadeniz Technical University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIDE222: British Culture • SIDE223: Intercultural Communication and Foreign Language Education • SIDE224: American Culture
2. Balıkesir University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S2024: Language and Culture 	9. Istanbul University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INOG4064: Cultural Studies
3. Dicle University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELT221: Cultural pluralism and education in Turkey and Germany • ELT223: Culture and Intercultural Education in Turkey and Germany • ELT227: British and American Culture 	10. Mersin University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • İDE4504: Intercultural Communication
4. Düzce University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • İÖP211: Intercultural Communication 	11. Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID320: American Culture
5. Erciyes University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • İÖP211: Intercultural Communication 	12. Ondokuz Mayıs University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • İNÖ407: British Cultural History
6. Gazi University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yİ414AA: Pragmatics and Language Teaching 	13. Pamukkale University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INO404: Intercultural Communication
7. Hacettepe University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • İDÖ484: History of British Culture 	14. Süleyman Demirel University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YDI406: History of American Culture

Results: Types of Courses Relating to Culture and Intercultural Awareness

The courses offered fell into 5 different categories, including general culture, direct instruction in a foreign culture, culture as it relates to language learning, intercultural communication, and context-specific cultural issues; as was the case with Dicle University, which maintains partnerships with a number of universities in Germany (<http://www.dicle.edu.tr/>).

Course Type	Course Title/University
General culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Activities – Anatolian University • Cultural Studies – Istanbul University
Direct instruction in a specific foreign culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Cultural History – Hacettepe University • History of British Culture -- Ondokuz Mayıs University • British Culture – Karadeniz Technical University • American Culture – Karadeniz Technical University & Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University • British and American Culture – Dicle University • History of American Culture – Süleyman Demirel University
Culture as related to language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Culture -- Balıkesir University • Pragmatics and Language Teaching – Gazi University • Intercultural Communication and Foreign Language Education – Karadeniz Technical University
Intercultural Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural Communication -- Düzce University, Erciyes University, Mersin University, Pamukkale University
Context-specific Cultural Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural pluralism and education in Turkey and Germany --- Dicle University • Culture and Intercultural Education in Turkey and Germany – Dicle University

Discussion

How widespread are current efforts to engage EFL teacher candidates with culture-related content?

- Among the 38 ELT departments identified, only 14 offer courses that address cultural concerns, representing fewer than 37% of Turkey's ELT programs.
- Only 18 culture-related elective courses were identified in total, distributed among these 14 programs.

Discussion

What types of diversity-oriented courses are currently being offered in Turkey's ELT preparation programs, and which intercultural skills are being addressed?

- About half of the courses relate to intercultural awareness, focusing on intercultural communication or on specific English-speaking cultures;
- Little emphasis is placed on the relationship between language and culture, or on approaches to teaching about culture, with only 3 of the 18 courses addressing these concerns.
- The remaining courses involved either very general cultural topics or highly context-specific concerns.

Conclusions

What the findings tell us:

- The efforts of English language teaching programs to support future EFL teachers' intercultural competence are both highly limited and inconsistent;
- While some attention is given to intercultural awareness, pedagogical skills related to teaching about culture are minimally addressed.

The takeaway:

- The Turkish education system is not yet doing enough to promote intercultural awareness and culture-related skills, as with the concerns raised by Bektaş-Çetinkaya and Çelik (2013), Yazıcı, Başol, & Toprak (2009), Tarman (2010) and Tongal (2015).

Limitations of the Study

- The present study provides only a basic overview of the culture-related courses being offered in ELT programs in Turkey.
- In-depth analysis of the content of these courses and of learners' experiences is needed to understand whether individual courses are effective in developing intercultural skills.
- Similar studies in future academic years may yield different results, as programs revise their course offerings.

Recommendations

- To support Turkey's ELT programs in preparing future teachers to deal with culture in the classroom, it is necessary to:
 - Encourage ELT program designers to include meaningful culture-related courses throughout their four-year degree programs;
 - Call on policy-makers (e.g., the Council of Higher Education) to making policy-level provisions to support the development of intercultural awareness.

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Thank you!

For more information, please contact:

Asst. Prof. Servet elik

Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey

servet61@ktu.edu.tr

