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## EXPLORING ELT STUDENT TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT ICC: INSIGHTS FROM TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN TURKEY

**Abstract.** Teacher beliefs about how cultural variables should be taught in English courses are of great importance specifically in countries where English is not spoken beyond educational contexts. To find out whether English teachers are prepared effectively in teacher education programs, this study aims at evaluating the beliefs of student teachers about intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in Turkey. To this end, Beliefs about ICC Inventory was developed as the main data collection tool. The quantitative data obtained from the inventory were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A total of 430 ELT student teachers across Turkish state universities participated in this study. The quantitative analyses revealed that most of the participants perceived themselves as the most competent in “*ICC attitudes*” and “*ICC awareness*” dimensions. Results also indicated that male student teachers held stronger beliefs about ICC skills and awareness than female participants; however, such differences were not observed in the other dimensions of ICC.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Communicative Competence, Teachers' Beliefs, Students' Beliefs, Pre-service Teacher Education, English Language.

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## Ағылшын тілі мамандығы студенттерінің мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілік туралы сенімдерін зерттеу: Түркиядағы болашақ мұғалімдерді даярлау бағдарламалары туралы тұжырымдар

**Аңдатпа.** Ағылшын тілі курстарында мәдени ауыспалыларды қалай оқыту керектігі туралы ағылшын тілі студенттерінің сенімі, әсіресе білім беру контексінен тыс ағылшын тілінде сөйлемейтін елдерде үлкен маңызға ие. Бұл зерттеу ағылшын тілі мамандығы студенттерінің оқу бағдарламалары арқылы тиімді даярлығын анықтау үшін Түркиядағы мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілікке (МКҚ) қатысты студенттердің сенімдерін бағалауға бағытталған. Осы мақсатта мәліметтерді жинаудың негізгі құралы ретінде «МКҚ туралы сенімдер сауалнамасы» жасалды. Тізімнен алынған сандық мәліметтер сипаттамалы

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және қорытынды статистиканы қолдана отырып талданды. Зерттеуге Түркия мемлекеттік университеттерінде оқитын 430 студент қатысты. Сандық талдаулар бойынша қатысушылардың көпшілігі өздерін «МКК қатынасы» және «МКК хабардарлығы» өлшемдері бойынша құзыретті деп санайтыны анықталды. Нәтижелер сонымен қатар қатысушы ұл балалардың қыз балаларға қарағанда МКК дағдылары мен хабардарлығы туралы жоғары сенімдерге ие екендігін көрсетті; алайда, мұндай айырмашылықтар МКК басқа өлшемдерінде байқалмады.

**Кілт сөздер:** мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілік, мұғалімдер сенімі, студенттер сенімі, болашақ ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерін даярлау, ағылшын тілі.

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### **Изучение убеждений студентов специальности «английский язык» в отношении межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции: выводы о программах подготовки учителей в Турции**

**Аннотация.** Убеждения учителей о том, как следует преподавать культурные переменные на курсах английского языка, имеют большое значение особенно в странах, где на английском не говорят за пределами образовательного контекста. Это исследование направлено на оценку убеждений студентов – будущих учителей в отношении межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции (МКК) в Турции с целью выяснения эффективности подготовки студентов английского языка к программам подготовки учителей. В этой связи была разработана анкета «Инвентаризация в отношении убеждений МКК» в качестве основного инструмента сбора данных. Количественные данные, полученные в результате инвентаризации, были проанализированы с использованием описательной и логической статистики. В этом исследовании приняли участие 430 студентов английского языка из турецких государственных университетов. Количественный анализ показал, что большинство участников считали себя наиболее компетентными в аспектах «отношения МКК» и «осведомленность МКК». Результаты также показали, что учителя-мужчины были сильнее убеждены в навыках и осведомленности МКК, чем участницы-женщины; однако такие различия не наблюдались в других измерениях МКК.

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурная коммуникативная компетентность, убеждения учителей, убеждения студентов, подготовка будущих учителей английского языка, английский язык.

### **Introduction**

With globalization and the emergence of English as a lingua franca, the role of intercultural competence has been considered in the field of foreign language education [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. For language learners and teachers to become an intercultural speaker, language educators should include ICC components in the curriculum. However, before teaching ICC in foreign language education, it is essential to unveil language teachers' or students' beliefs about this concept in a different context [7].

There is ample support in the literature for the view that teachers' beliefs impact knowledge acquisition, selection of course content, task definition and interpretation [8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. Moreover, Horwitz (1988) notes that studying students' language beliefs are important because they influence the students' expectations for and commitment to their learning [13]. Similarly, Zheng

(2009) maintains that teachers' belief is an important factor in understanding their "thought process, instructional practices, and change and learning to teach" and Sercu (2006) argues that understanding teachers' beliefs is vitally important, particularly when they are expected to adopt the innovation in foreign language teaching [14, p.73; 15].

It is a mere fact that ELT student teachers have a variety of beliefs, attitudes, perceptions which have been generated over time [16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21]. It is also well known that the beliefs and commitments held by student teachers significantly influence beginning teachers' classroom practices [22]. Lortie (1995) found that prior beliefs and perceptions were powerful influences on teaching practices [23]. Lortie's idea was subsequently confirmed in research by Pajares (1992) and Richardson (1996) [10, 24]. From his review on beliefs in education, Pajares (1992) concluded, "that beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom" [10, p.307]. He further added "Understanding the belief structure of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices" [10, p.307]. Studying teachers' beliefs is precious because prior beliefs and perspectives play such a vital role in teachers' behavior that many believe significant reform cannot be accomplished until these perceptions are better understood [17]. Although a considerable amount of research has been directed to the study of perceptions and attitudes about ICC [25, 26, 27], only two studies were found [28, 29] that focused on the assessment of ELT student teachers in teacher education. The major findings of the Lazar's studies were based on the use of qualitative methodology and a combined sampling of two pre-service teachers. The elements of student-teacher beliefs found in both studies have not been utilized or examined in terms of assessing the large number of pre-service teacher beliefs about ICC. Consequently, many researchers in the field have stated that more research study is needed for intercultural speakers who can use English interculturally. Thus, this study grows out of a concern to unveil the student teachers' beliefs about ICC. With this kind of information, teacher educators can more effectively structure teacher education programs to meet the needs of student teachers [30].

Numerous studies on ICC that mushroomed in the field of teacher education have tried to explain the importance of intercultural competence [3, 31, 30, 32]. However, because of the difficulty of finding a valid and reliable and practical instrument to measure ICC, many scholars tend to investigate largely in-service teachers' beliefs about ICC. The problem addressed in the current study is that teacher educators lack knowledge of ELT student teachers' beliefs about ICC and insights from initial teacher education. The previous research studies showed that no study has yet examined the ICC beliefs of Turkish ELT student teachers. Those who study at ELT programs may hold very different beliefs compared to undergraduate students who study at different majors. Furthermore, a comprehensive, valid, and reliable instrument to measure the student teachers' beliefs is unavailable. A well-developed student-teacher belief instrument could provide information about the extent to which student teachers' beliefs differ at each stage of the teacher education program. Thus, a study on ELT student teachers' beliefs about ICC may contribute to our knowledge in the area of second language teacher education. Therefore, this study investigated the ELT student teachers' beliefs about ICC, and the *Beliefs about Intercultural Communicative Competence Inventory* (BICCI) is utilized as a valid and a reliable tool for quantitative analyses. The findings of this study may provide visions for the research on ICC beliefs in the direction of better understanding and accommodating the student teachers in teacher education programs.

#### *Intercultural Communicative Competence in Teacher Education*

Byram (1997) defined *intercultural competence* as "ability to interact in their language with the people from another country and culture", whereas *intercultural communicative competence* as "ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" [3, p. 70–71]. The importance of developing language learners' ICC has been addressed in the Council of Europe's (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* [33]. The structure of this framework was based on Byram's (1997) ICC model. In

foreign language education, several studies have been conducted by the researches to unveil second and foreign language teachers' beliefs and perceptions about intercultural competence teaching [34, 35, 15, 36].

*The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education* in Turkey (2011) follows very similar lines in the sense that teacher candidates should have competences, such as “recognizing national and international cultures” and being able to “live in different cultures and adapt to social life”. According to Bayyurt (2013), the education system and language policy in Turkey has changed in line with the global trends in foreign language teaching [37]. Therefore, foreign language education should equip learners with the “awareness of difference”, “linguistic and cultural behavior” which will help them to communicate effectively with people of other cultures [1, p.62].

In order to be intercultural communicative competent, the language learners should have the “ability to establish an interpersonal relationship by understanding our counterparts through the effective exchange of verbal and nonverbal behaviors” [38, p.218]. Therefore, teacher candidates should develop intercultural competences, such as openness towards other cultures, acquiring information about social groups, having the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture [3]. Furthermore, Byram (2001) suggested that a model of the native speaker should be replaced by an intercultural speaker [39]. In other words, he meant that foreign language speakers should have cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills to communicate effectively in the intercultural context. In a related matter, Kramsch (1998) supported the idea of focusing on intercultural speaker and pointed out that “instead of a pedagogy oriented toward the native speaker, then, we may want to devise a pedagogy oriented toward the intercultural speaker” [40, p.27]. Likewise, Aguilar (2008) maintained that foreign language learners should become “mediators” to be able to manage communication between people of different cultural identities and languages [41, p.36].

#### *Significant Studies: Other Voices*

Research on teachers' beliefs has blossomed since the 2000s, focusing on the perception of ICC [3, 31, 42]. In a study investigating teachers' perception of ICC, Sercu (2005) found that the foreign language teachers supported intercultural objectives and were willing to integrate ICC into foreign language education [31]. However, the obtained data showed that EFL teachers devote more time to language components, not to culture teaching.

In agreement with the aforementioned study, Atay (2009) found that the development of ICC in foreign language learning is important [43]. The results indicated that participants of the study were aware of lacking their intercultural knowledge. Moreover, Önalın (2005) carried out a mixed-method study by using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews [44]. The study aimed to identify EFL university teachers' beliefs about the role of the target culture in foreign language learning. The findings of the data showed that teachers had positive attitudes regarding incorporating cultural knowledge in their lessons. In 2013, Kılıç conducted a study to find out 368 English lecturers' beliefs towards intercultural competence. The data were collected through the questionnaire and scale [45].

The findings of the study revealed that the participants were aware of the importance of teaching intercultural competence; however, it was not the priority among English teaching objectives. This shows that English lectures pay attention to more linguistic and general skills. The reason is that lecturers felt not competent about how to integrate ICC into their courses. The researcher of the study suggested adopting measurement methods to assess intercultural competence.

In their research, Young and Sachdev (2011) followed 21 experienced teachers to investigate their beliefs and practices regarding ICC. The results of quantitative and qualitative data indicated that majority of teachers believed that integrating ICC would be successful; however, it seemed unable to put it to practice. This may be because there is “a lack of learner interest, a lack of

curricular support, a lack of suitable textbook material, a lack of ICC learning” [7, p.95]. Czura (2016), in a study of 162 undergraduate student teachers, found that teacher education objectives need an urgent revision to develop theoretical and practical aspects of ICC [28]. The results also suggested that teacher education programs should provide intercultural teacher training courses with a detailed needs analysis [28] because such courses have a positive impact on student teachers’ intercultural awareness [46]. In a 2015 study, Lazar explored two pre-service English teachers’ beliefs about integrating ICC in language teaching. They also examined factors which influence teachers’ beliefs. The participants followed the ICC course, which was an optional lesson. The results showed that integrating ICC courses in language teaching raises pre-service teachers’ intercultural awareness. The findings of the questionnaire and interview revealed that “development of intercultural communicative competence has to be incorporated in teacher education courses as early as the first year of studies” [29, p.125].

There is a vast amount of literature on teacher education, which revealed that teachers should be a center of the successful implementation of ICC in language teaching [34]. In a similar vein, Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003) stressed a significant point that language teachers and educators should have “a particular responsibility to understand the new intercultural challenges facing [them] and to teach the new skills that are now demanded” [47, p.239]. The abovementioned studies focus mainly on English language teachers’ beliefs about culture and intercultural competence.

With this general background in mind, it can be said that intercultural beliefs allow teachers to encourage the students’ acquisition of intercultural competence [15]. In conclusion, various intercultural competence scales have been used to investigate language teachers’ beliefs. Although early research that administered general culture scales often resulted in inconclusive results, scales specific to language teachers’ context have yielded more consistent findings from the foreign language in-service teachers, not from pre-service teachers. Besides, information about student teachers’ beliefs could be used by teacher educators to build teacher education programs, which will equip students with contextualized knowledge and intercultural skills.

### Research Methods

#### *The purpose of the study*

According to the aforementioned background previous knowledge, the present study intended to investigate Turkish ELT student teachers’ beliefs regarding the ICC. To carry out this intent, the quantitative research method was used. To this end, this study aimed to shed light on two research questions:

1. What are student teachers’ beliefs about ICC?
2. Is there a statistical difference between in student teachers’ beliefs about ICC in terms of gender?

#### *Participants*

The participants of the present study were 430 ELT student teachers (96 male and 338 female) whose ages ranged from 19 to 36 (M = 22.5). A convenience sampling method [48] was used to access easily to participants selecting among the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> graders [49]. The data were collected from English language teaching programs at different state universities in Turkey (Table 1).

**Table 1 – Demographic Information of ELT Student Teachers**

Variables	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
		(f)	(%)
Gender	Male	92	21.4
	Female	338	78.6
	Total	430	100.0

### *Data Collection*

In this study, quantitative data were gathered through the 5-point Likert inventory with four main factors and 34 items. The inventory items were prepared in English by the researchers. Then, the inventory was piloted in a large sample to conduct exploratory analysis to construct validity. Due to the researcher being out of the city, the data collection for student teachers from different cities was conducted in cooperation with the supervising instructors during the month of March and April in 2019. The student teachers were given an inventory that consists of two sections.

### *Instrument*

The data collection instrument of the study was an inventory (BICCI) developed by the researchers based on the framework of Byram's ICC model (1997). BICCI was designed for measuring student teachers' beliefs regarding ICC and included dimensions of intercultural communicative competence [50]. The inventory comprised of 34 items, including attitude, knowledge, awareness and skills factors. The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale and evaluation was conducted on the formula  $“(5-1)/5=0.80”$  and the intervals were those; (1 – 1.80 = totally disagree), (1.81 – 2.61= disagree), (2.62 – 3.42 = somewhat agree), (3.43 – 4.23 = agree), and (4.24 – 5.00 = totally agree). The inventory was prepared in English because student teachers studied at ELT departments and had a high proficiency level of English. After getting the experts' opinions, the pilot study was conducted with 366 ELT student teachers from a different group. By doing so, KMO and Barlett's test showed that the value of Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy was 0.912 and Approximate Chi-Square value of Barlett' Test of Sphericity was .000.

BICCI has a four-factor structure explaining 50% of the total variance. A pilot study was applied to 399 student teachers before implementing an original study. This group of participants was ELT student teachers in Ankara, Turkey. According to the results of Exploratory Factor Analysis, the BICCI indicated a very high level of reliability and validity. In order to check reliability, the factor analysis was run. Cronbach's Alpha for internal reliability was .95.9 and had high value [48]. The inventory was specially developed for the ELT context, so it would be helpful for further research studies in teacher education.

### *Data analysis*

This study relied on the quantitative method for analysis since the researchers attempted to gain an understanding of ELT student teachers' beliefs about ICC; quantitative approach fit this research design. The data were analyzed through SPSS 20. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to check the normality. The results of this test showed that the data sets were not distributed normally. Thus, non-parametric test such as Mann-U Whitney was conducted. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed for responses to the student teachers' background inventory and individual BICCI items.

## **Results**

### *Student Teachers' Beliefs about ICC*

The BICCI items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11 concern the general knowledge of student teachers about ICC. The descriptive statistic of ELT student teachers' ICC beliefs is listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistic Results of Student Teachers: ICC Attitudes**

Items	N	M	SD
1	2	3	4
1. I value cultural diversity.	430	4.3698	.80819
2. I am open-minded to foreigners who speak English.	430	4.5000	.73459
3. I am curious about the culture of people from other countries.	430	4.2674	.97072

Continuation of Table 2

1	2	3	4
4. I am willing to learn from people who have different cultural orientations.	430	4.3698	.79656
5. I tolerate other cultures.	430	4.2256	.86787
6. I am willing to empathize with people who have different cultural backgrounds.	430	4.2093	.86792
7. I understand foreigners' worldviews.	430	3.8977	.85212
8. I understand the value of cultural diversity.	430	4.2581	.81126
9. I am empathetic with foreign people's attitudes.	430	4.0628	.80977
11. I am flexible towards other cultures.	430	4.1605	.81924

Concerning the *ICC Attitudes*, the majority of the student teachers believed that they were open-minded to foreigners who speak English (M=4.50, SD=.734). Accordingly, they indicated that they valued cultural diversity (M=4.37, SD=.808). As to item 4, “I am willing to learn from people who have different cultural orientations”, the responses were positive. Additionally, the findings indicated that student teachers tolerated other cultures and understood the value of cultural diversity. Beliefs of the ICC attitudes, therefore, appears to affect student teachers' development of intercultural competence.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistic Results of Student Teachers: ICC Knowledge**

Items	N	M	SD
15. I know about the history of other countries.	430	2.9744	.89380
16. I know about the political situation of other countries.	430	2.8837	.92137
17. I have culture-specific knowledge of other countries.	430	3.2023	.86285
18. I know about the literature of other countries.	430	2.9791	.89652
20. I have knowledge about the art of other countries.	430	3.0814	.96820
35. I can analyze the cultural information.	430	3.6581	.84283
36. I can interpret the cultural information.	430	3.6744	.83683
37. I can relate the cultural information.	430	3.7000	.85321

As can be seen in Table 3, in the section of *ICC knowledge*, there are 8 items. It is seen that the student teachers were generally somewhat agreed or disagreed about most of the items of ICC knowledge. In other words, it can be stated that the student teachers believed that they do not have enough knowledge about ICC. The student teachers disagreed on item 15 (M= 2.97; SD=.89380) “I know about the history of the other countries” and the item 16 (M=2.88; SD=.92137) “I know about the political situation of the other countries”. On the other hand, item 17 (M=3.2023; SD=.86285) that “I have a cultures-specific knowledge of the other countries” was the statement that the student teachers were uncertain about. The same results found in item 18. Nevertheless, participants agreed that they can analyze and interpret the cultural information (item 35 and item 36). Lastly, about the statement (item 37) “I can relate the cultural information”, the student teachers agreed on (M=3.7000; SD=.85321).

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistic Results of Student Teachers: ICC Awareness**

Items	n	M	SD
21. I am aware of the cultural differences.	430	4.2023	.80122
22. I understand my own culture.	430	4.4395	.85543
23. I am aware of my own culture.	430	4.5093	.73453
24. I am aware of other cultures.	430	4.0512	.84301
25. I understand my own cultural identity.	430	4.3605	.81239

The results about this dimension of ICC awareness were that the participants were aware of their own culture (M=4.50, SD=.73) (item 23); aware of other cultures (M=4.01, SD=.84) (item 24); understand their own culture (M=4.43, SD=.85) (item 22); understand their own cultural identity (M=4.36, SD=.81) (item 25); aware of the cultural differences (M=4.21, SD=.80) (item 21). These findings indicate that student teachers strongly believe that they are aware of cultural differences. They held the belief that being aware of own and other culture is important for them, as shown in the Table 4.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistic Results of Student Teachers: ICC Skills**

Items	N	M	SD
26. I am able to communicate effectively with people from other cultures.	430	3.7256	.84954
27. I can communicate in socially appropriate ways.	430	3.8326	.78140
28. I can communicate in culturally appropriate ways.	430	3.6721	.81187
29. I am able to get information about other cultures.	430	4.0093	.78441
30. I am able to communicate well verbally with people from other cultures.	430	3.6597	.82075
31. I am able to communicate well non-verbally with people from other cultures.	430	3.4558	.94198
32. I can identify some misunderstandings happening in interactions between Turkish and English speaking people.	430	3.7953	.81075
33. I am able to contrast the communicative behaviors of Turkish and English speaking people in social settings (e.g., family, school, office, etc.).	430	3.7093	.78248
34. I seek opportunities to explore the culture of target language communities out of my program (The Internet, forum, etc.).	430	3.7884	.87405
35. I can analyze the cultural information.	430	3.6581	.84283
36. I can interpret the cultural information.	430	3.6744	.83683
37. I can relate the cultural information.	430	3.7000	.85321
38. I am able to act as a mediator in intercultural exchanges.	430	3.3233	.84189
39. I can discover other cultures.	430	3.9209	.82404
40. I am able to adapt to the multi-cultural environment.	430	3.7465	.97207
41. I seek out opportunities to cooperate with individuals from other cultures.	430	3.7186	.94481

When we analyze the statements associated with *ICC skills* (Table 5), we find out that the student teachers believed that they have enough ability to communicate with foreigners. For example, item 29 “I am able to get information about the other cultures” displayed that student teachers agreed (M=4.0093; SD=.78441) with this statement. Likewise, for the 39<sup>th</sup> item, student teachers believed that they could discover other cultures. Similarly, one of the statements that the student teachers agreed with was that they could identify some misunderstandings happening in interactions between Turkish and English speaking people (item 32). The result of the 27<sup>th</sup> item (M=3.8326; M=.78140) “I can communicate in socially appropriate ways” indicated that they believed that they are able to communicate in an appropriate way. Although the mean score for the 38<sup>th</sup> item “I am able to act as a mediator in intercultural exchanges”, which is categorized under the ICC skills section, pointed out to an indecision on the statement, the mean of agreement (M=3.3233; SD=.84189) demonstrated that many student teachers were unsure about being a mediator in intercultural exchanges.



**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Student Teachers' Beliefs about ICC in Terms of Factors**

Factors	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Attitudes	430	1.09	5.00	4.2613	.59176
Knowledge	430	1.00	5.00	3.2638	.61736
Awareness	430	1.29	5.00	4.0449	.55163
Skills	430	1.31	5.00	3.7113	.58264

According to Table 6, the attitude of student teachers is somewhat agree level (4.2613). They have somewhat positive knowledge of the ICC (3.3638). The awareness concerning ICC is the highest score among all factors. The student teachers mostly agreed that they are aware of ICC (4.0449). They showed somewhat beliefs in skills (3.7113). If assessed in terms of the survey in general, the results showed that the student teachers believed that they had ICC knowledge, ICC skills, ICC awareness and ICC attitudes.

*Student Teachers' Beliefs about ICC in Terms of Gender*

Responses of the male and female student teachers on the BICCI were compared. This enabled the researchers to answer the second research question: “How do these beliefs compare male and female students?” In comparing the BICCI responses of male and female student teachers, some differences were indicated. Overall, most of the male student teachers tended to agree or strongly agree with the skills and knowledge. Regarding the attitudes and awareness factors, although male and female student teachers hold strong beliefs, females believed that they had positive beliefs about ICC.

**Table 7. Comparative Statistics of Student Teachers' Beliefs about ICC in Terms of Gender**

Factors	Gender	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
Attitudes	Male	92	211.84	194989.5	15211.500	.750
	Female	338	216.50	73175.50		
Knowledge	Male	92	235.72	21686.00	13688.000	.078
	Female	338	210.00	70979.00		
Awareness	Male	92	212.60	19559.50	15281.500	.800
	Female	338	216.29	73105.50		
Skill	Male	92	248.04	22819.50	12554.500	.005
	Female	338	206.64	69845.50		
Total	Male	92	213.02	19597.50	15319.500	.829
	Female	338	216.18	73067.50		

Table 7 presents the Mann Whitney U Test results which showed significant differences between males (MR=148.04; SR=22819.50) and females (MR=206.64; SR=69845.50) participants in skills and total with females (MR=216.18; SR=73067.50) scoring higher than males (MR=195197.50). The results showed that except for the third factor, ICC skills, there is no significant difference in all four factors and in the total in terms of genders. It means that the males believe that they are able to communicate with people from other countries. That is, gender does not play a significant role in students' beliefs towards ICC.

**Discussion**

Turkish ELT student teachers' beliefs about ICC were identified through the findings of the BICCI developed by the researchers. Four underlying factors were found in the BICCI for ELT student teachers in Turkey: (1) attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) awareness, (4) skills. In terms of the individual items of the BICCI, most items belonged to the mean ranges between 4.0 and 4.5, indicating that Turkish ELT student teachers in this study “agreed” with the items of inventory. The

median rating for student teachers' *ICC attitudes* was 4 (agree) for 10 items, except 1 item. The previous studies revealed similar findings [44]. The findings of the second factor (*ICC knowledge*) revealed that Turkish students were not sure about their intercultural knowledge because the median rating for all items in this factor was 3 (somewhat agree). This shows that student teachers were lack of intercultural knowledge, because language teachers dedicated more time to language teaching than culture [37]. The study conducted by Larzen (2005) indicated that teachers do not feel confident about how to teach culture in a modern efficient way [50]. However, Önalın's (2005) study, which conducted with Turkish EFL university teachers, revealed that those teachers incorporated cultural information in language teaching [44]. By analyzing items 15, 16, 18, it can be said that student teachers did not familiar with other countries' history, literature, and political situations. Celce-Murcia (2007) suggested that cultural knowledge such as history, traditions, and literature of the target culture is gained better by observation and experience [51]. Moreover, Sercu (2006) stressed the dominant role of the textbook in developing ICC and called textbook designers to prepare teaching materials, which promote cultural knowledge [15]. As shown from the results, the median ratings of 5 items for *ICC awareness* were 4 (agree). Interestingly, all participants agreed with these items in this part. The data indicated that student teachers were aware of ICC and understand their own and other cultures. The previous studies have found similar results [53]. The findings of the last factor (*ICC skills*) unearthed that the median rating was 4 (agree) for all items in this factor. The data indicated that all student teachers believed that they were intercultural competent. Unfortunately, there is a lack of study, which indicated student teachers' beliefs about ICC skills. Accordingly, it is difficult to compare findings with previous studies. Nevertheless, Sarıçoban and Öz (2014) explored student teachers' ICC level, which had found that the participants' ICC skills were low. The authors explained that it is because of a "lack of ability to communicate across cultures, lack of openness to different cultures, and ambiguity tolerance" [53, p.528]. The result of the aforementioned study is congruent with the findings of Polat and Barka (2014) [54]. Investigating intercultural levels of preservice teachers from Turkey and Switzerland, these authors found that the participants from Switzerland had higher intercultural competence than those from Turkey. This is because the Turkish education system pay less attention to the importance of intercultural education [55].

Interestingly, some of the beliefs inventoried by the BICCI in males and females were similar, despite the different gender. This means that female ELT student teachers did not perform differently on the data obtained from inventory in comparison with the male student teachers. These findings are in line with Mirzaei and Forouzandeh's study (2013) [56]. In summary, concerning Turkish student teachers' beliefs of ICC, this study supports the findings of many studies, which indicate that Turkish students tend to have positive beliefs regarding to ICC [57]. However, no study has confirmed the ICC beliefs with ELT student teachers in Turkey. Thus, after a review of previous studies, the results highlight the need for further research to investigate ELT student teachers' beliefs on ICC in the different contexts.

### **Conclusion**

Consequently, in a setting where the exposure to the target language learned is limited, teaching ICC plays a significant role in second language learning. Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the ELT student teachers' beliefs about ICC in a Turkish context, which is one of the countries of expanding circles. The results of the study were mostly based on quantitative data. Since this investigation is a quantitative study which assessed through a statistical procedure, the future studies could be conducted qualitatively using subject groups from a different context. The results from a quantitative study could complement those obtained from a qualitative one. It could be beneficial also to conduct a study that helps student teachers to develop ICC knowledge.

### **Author Note:**

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