

EFL Teacher Educators' and Pre-Service Teachers' Views about Intercultural Communication Courses

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Abstract

This study examined ELT professionals' and pre-service teachers' views on making Intercultural Communication (IC) a compulsory course in the English Language Teacher Education Programs (ELTEP). Using a mixed-method design, data were collected from 104 pre-service teachers and five ELT professionals through scales, checklists, and interviews. Results showed no significant overall difference in ICC between first-year and senior students, though a significant difference emerged in the action dimension. Most participants supported the inclusion of a compulsory IC course, emphasizing its role in systematic and standardized IC education. The study concludes with implications for integrating IC into foreign language teacher education.

Keywords: Critical intercultural communication (IC), dynamic/fluid IC, ELT and IC, IC course syllabus design

EFL Öğretim Üyelerinin ve Öğretmen Adaylarının Kültürlerarası İletişim Derslerine İlişkin Görüşleri

Özet

Bu çalışma, Kültürlerarası İletişim derslerinin İngilizce öğretmenliği programlarında zorunlu bir ders haline getirilmesine ilişkin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi (ELT) öğretim üyelerinin ve öğretmen adaylarının görüşlerini incelemektedir. Karma yöntem tasarımı kullanılarak 104 öğretmen adayı ve beş öğretim üyesinden ölçekler, kontrol listeleri ve görüşmeler yoluyla veri toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, birinci sınıf ve son sınıf öğretmen adaylarının ICC düzeyleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir genel fark olmadığını göstermiş olsa da eylem boyutunda anlamlı bir fark ortaya çıkmıştır. Katılımcıların çoğu, kültürlerarası iletişim dersinin sistematik ve standartlaştırılmış kültürlerarası iletişim eğitimindeki rolünü vurgulayarak bu dersin zorunlu dersler kapsamında İngilizce öğretmenliği programlarına dahil edilmesini desteklemiştir. Çalışma, kültürlerarası iletişimin yabancı dil öğretmenliği eğitimine entegre edilmesine yönelik önerilerle sona ermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Eleştirel kültürlerarası iletişim, dinamik/akışkan kültürlerarası iletişim, İngiliz dili eğitimi ve kültürlerarası iletişim, Kültürlerarası iletişim ders izlencesi tasarımı

1. Introduction

Globalisation has profoundly transformed the ways in which societies interact, communicate, and educate, creating a network that transcends geographical and social boundaries and encompasses a vast array of diversity. Scholars such as Tuncel and Paker (2018) have emphasized that technological advancements,

economic pressures, and global mobility resulting from wars and migration have led to complex and inevitable interactions between societies. Khan et al. (2023) similarly highlight that in an increasingly connected world, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries has become a critical skill. The development of this skill requires careful consideration of challenges and meticulous preparation, particularly in the field of education, which has a transformative effect on society. Foreign language education occupies a central role in this context, as it provides a basis for frequent intercultural interaction. Sercu (2002) argues that speaking a foreign language always entails entering a cultural world that may differ from one's own, and therefore language education must also be intercultural education. This perspective underscores the bilateral relationship between language and culture, where language serves as a transmitter of culture and culture provides the context in which linguistic performances are shaped (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020; Yule, 2014).

The evolution of language education policies reflects these dynamics. The perception of language has shifted from a system of rules to a communication instrument, influencing the roles of education stakeholders. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020) adopts an innovative stance by viewing learners as language users and social agents, positioning language as a vehicle for communication rather than a subject to study. Kramsch and Hua (2016) note that globalization after the Second World War contributed to the integration of culture into English language teaching, encouraging consideration of diverse cultural backgrounds in classrooms. These transformations have also redefined teacher roles. Lallana and Salamanca (2020) emphasize that increasing intercultural encounters necessitate teachers' development as intercultural mediators, trainers, and social agents. Chau and Truong (2019) highlight the importance of teachers' intercultural sensitivity, noting that teachers must adapt intercultural content to diverse classroom profiles since textbooks cannot suit all contexts. Tuncel and Paker (2018) further argue that intercultural sensitivity enables teachers to teach foreign languages more effectively and broaden students' perspectives. Smakova and Paulsrud (2020) add that teachers are not merely information providers but participants in cultural diversity learning, illustrating their role as social agents who both construct and are constructed by intercultural learning.

Despite these evolving roles, challenges remain. Conti (2025) observes that teachers' ability to foster inclusive and reflexive learning environments is constrained by traditional training approaches that fail to equip them with necessary competences. Teacher training programs thus hold equal significance to teachers themselves. Cesur and Balaban (2020) note that the Council of Turkish Higher Education pioneered innovation processes in language teaching programs in 1997, 2006, and 2018, introducing regulations on elective courses. Yet, Lázár (2007) report that IC training is rarely included in curricula, and intercultural competence is often absent from graduation criteria. Young and Sachdev (2011) also remark the under-representation of IC in learner-negotiated syllabi, as well as the inadequacy of efficient and suitable approaches for cultural learning and interculturality in institutional syllabi, materials, and assessment. Bektaş-Çentinkaya (2014) stresses the need for teacher training programs to develop pre-service teachers' knowledge of intercultural competence integration. Razi and Tekin (2017) similarly underline the importance of revising programs to meet pre-service teachers' cultural needs. Civelek and Toplu (2021) emphasize the inadequacy of addressing cultural components in curricula and call for revisions to qualify teachers with both knowledge and skills. Maijala (2018) demonstrates that pre-service teachers often lack systematic integration of dynamic approaches to culture, remaining between static and fluid understandings. Lallana and Salamanca (2020) confirm that perceptions remain narrow and nationalistic despite gradual improvements. These findings indicate the necessity of transforming teacher education from static to dynamic cultural approaches.

The inclusion of intercultural competence in language teaching has been widely discussed. Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. (2003) reported that both pre- and in-service teachers expressed a need for systematic Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) training with appropriate materials. Tosuncuoğlu (2019) emphasized that cultural dimensions must be systematically internalized by teachers to enhance IC in classrooms. Lee et al. (2023) identified deficiencies in teacher competency, unsuitable materials, and inefficient pedagogies as impediments to ICC development. Liddicoat (2024) noted that while curricula increasingly include intercultural awareness as a goal, they provide little guidance on teaching methods. Hicham et al. (2025) highlighted the significance of curriculum guidance in empowering teachers to make informed decisions regarding IC training and the integration of practical dimensions of IC. These studies collectively highlight the importance of systematic IC instruction, material development, and pedagogical innovation.

The present study aims to investigate the need for a compulsory IC course from the perspectives of English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals and pre-service teachers, proposing a syllabus that adopts a dynamic

and critical approach. This responds to calls by Bektaş-Çentinkaya (2014), Razi and Tekin (2017), Civelek and Toplu (2021), and Conti (2025). Duisembekova (2020) suggests that needs analysis on pre-service teachers' expectations can inform course and material design, impacting ICC beliefs and integration into ELT departments. Similarly, Munezane (2025) notes that recognising education stakeholders' IC conceptualisation is crucial to IC development, as it underpins their learning and teaching practices Díaz and Moore (2018), Tuncel and Paker (2018), and Uğurlu et al. (2022) emphasize the necessity of compulsory IC courses, and this study seeks to fill the gap by investigating how such requirements can be addressed. A distinctive feature of the proposed syllabus is its emphasis on teacher roles. Lallana and Salamanca (2020) argue that teachers must move beyond being sources of knowledge to fulfil roles such as intercultural mediation. Equipping teachers with theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient; teacher education must combine theory with practice to develop skills for integrating IC knowledge into teaching. This addresses Maijala's (2018) finding that deficiencies in practical skills hinder teachers' cultural perceptions.

Adopting a critical approach in designing the syllabus is another significant contribution. Freire (2005) distinguishes between banking education, where students are passive recipients, and problem-posing education, which emphasizes consciousness and critical perception of reality. Problem-posing education dismantles the dichotomy between student and teacher roles, encouraging co-research and active engagement. This study intends to encourage pre-service teachers to learn and teach IC from a critical perspective, thereby eliminating gaps in teacher training and contributing to the literature with a sample syllabus and lesson plan.

2. Literature Review

Recent research highlights the growing recognition of culture and IC as integral components of ELT, particularly within the Turkish EFL context. Arcagök and Yılmaz (2020) emphasize that English courses offered in higher education aim not only to develop linguistic competence but also to foster cultural knowledge and awareness among pre-service teachers. In a similar vein, Karakaş (2021) underscores the profound influence of historical, social, and political contexts on the objectives and practices of language education, especially in ELT settings. These perspectives suggest that language education cannot be detached from its sociocultural environment and that intercultural dimensions should be systematically embedded within teacher education programs.

Despite the acknowledged importance of IC, merely incorporating intercultural elements into ELT curricula may not be sufficient. Traditional approaches to IC, such as Byram's (1997) ICC model, have been criticized for their relatively static conceptualization of culture. While Byram's framework was innovative in emphasizing learners' active engagement with cultural knowledge, it has been argued that it does not fully capture the dynamic, fluid, and contested nature of culture. Liddicoat (2024) contends that learners should be viewed as active interpreters and respondents of linguistic and cultural meanings rather than passive recipients of predefined cultural knowledge. This perspective calls for a reconceptualization of IC education that acknowledges the evolving and negotiated nature of cultural practices.

From a postmodernist standpoint, which challenges essentialist and reductionist views of culture, language and culture are understood as dynamic, hybrid, and multifaceted constructs. Within this paradigm, a critical approach to IC becomes indispensable. Kubota (2012) argues that critical perspectives are necessary to transcend essentialist cultural representations that overlook the complexity, creativity, and diversity of individuals' lived experiences. Without such a critical orientation, even pedagogical approaches that claim to adopt an intercultural stance may inadvertently reproduce static and ethnocentric understandings of culture. Therefore, the successful integration of critical IC into ELT requires careful consideration of how criticality is conceptualized and operationalized.

The notion of criticality itself encompasses multiple dimensions. Kubota (2012) notes that the term "critical" is often associated with critical thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which aim to enhance learners' cognitive abilities. However, this interpretation frequently neglects the sociopolitical dimensions of language and culture, including issues of power, inequality, and ideology. In contrast, Piller (2012) conceptualizes critical IC as an inquiry into who constructs cultural meanings, for whom, under what conditions, and for what purposes. This sociopolitical orientation is further elaborated by Coşgun-Ögeyik (2021), who argues that critical pedagogy seeks to raise learners' awareness of their social realities, power relations, and forms of oppression, ultimately empowering them to challenge imposed roles and dominant discourses.

Scholars such as Halualani (2011) extend this understanding by emphasizing the transformative potential of critical intercultural education. Halualani advocates for pedagogical practices that encourage learners to interrogate inequalities and power structures embedded in cultural interactions, positioning them as lifelong agents of social change. Similarly, Özcan and Gürsoy (2021) argue that critical pedagogy in language education aims to foster positive transformation not only within classroom contexts but also at the societal level. From this perspective, critical IC education is not merely an academic endeavour but a means of promoting social justice and equity through language teaching.

In summary, criticality in IC can be understood as encompassing two interrelated dimensions. First, it involves the application of higher-order thinking skills to analyse and interpret intercultural encounters. Second, it entails a critical examination of the sociopolitical contexts in which cultural meanings are produced and negotiated. Integrating these dimensions into IC education remains essential for developing learners' intercultural competence in a holistic and socially responsive manner.

Empirical research in ELT further supports the need for systematic and critically informed IC education. Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014), in a mixed-method study with pre-service foreign language teachers, found that cultural instruction positively influenced participants' intercultural knowledge, awareness, and skills, although its impact on attitudes was limited. The author suggested that incorporating topics such as stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and cultural values into language classes could enhance intercultural competence more effectively. Similarly, Genç (2018) reported that senior pre-service teachers and those with overseas experience demonstrated higher levels of ICC, highlighting the role of experiential learning in intercultural development.

Köksal and Genç (2020) further revealed that pre-service teachers' cultural orientations evolved throughout their education, with significant shifts occurring in the later years of ELTEP. These findings underscore the importance of sustained intercultural training within teacher education programs. Studies focusing on in-service teachers also emphasize the need for professional development and institutional support. Gedik-Bal and Savaş (2022) found that EFL teachers required additional training and materials to effectively implement intercultural language teaching practices, while Hua and Le (2025) highlighted the importance of curriculum flexibility, technological resources, and ongoing professional support. Similarly, Koşar et al. (2025) frame pre-service teachers as future practitioners of IC education, urging ELTEPs to equip them with necessary IC knowledge and teaching skills. Aligning with Köksal and Genç (2020), the study revealed that ELTEP that lacks any course specifically designed for IC instruction did not lead to significant difference in pre-service teachers' IC perceptions across study years, suggesting that ELTEP requires to be enriched with the courses underlining the significance and effective integration of IC into ELT.

Recent research on critical and dynamic IC education reveals persistent challenges. Fang and Elyas (2021) observed that pre-service teachers often lacked awareness of critical perspectives on culture, although targeted training helped some participants question essentialist cultural notions. Lou (2023) and Gurney and Demuro (2025) similarly reported that teachers' cultural understandings frequently oscillated between static and dynamic perspectives, suggesting the need for pedagogical approaches that explicitly address this tension. Collectively, these studies point to the necessity of integrating critical and dynamic IC frameworks into ELT to foster more complex and reflective intercultural competence.

Several empirical studies have examined the design, implementation, and impact of IC courses within higher education contexts, particularly in relation to language teacher education. Dombi (2011) conducted a comprehensive analysis of ten IC course syllabi offered at various higher education institutions with the aim of identifying dominant pedagogical orientations and content areas. The findings revealed that IC courses were predominantly structured around a combination of theoretical and practical components, suggesting an attempt to balance conceptual knowledge with experiential learning. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis demonstrated that cultural studies, communication studies, and linguistics constituted the core disciplinary foundations of these syllabi. This interdisciplinary orientation highlights the multifaceted nature of IC education and underscores the necessity of integrating diverse academic perspectives to address intercultural phenomena effectively.

Similarly, Kural and Bayyurt (2016) employed a mixed-method research design to investigate the effects of an intercultural competence syllabus on participants' global communication development. Their findings indicated notable improvements in several key areas, including English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) awareness, sociolinguistic knowledge, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural attitudes in global communication contexts. Importantly, the study also emphasized the critical role of instructors' own IC and ELF awareness in

shaping the effectiveness of IC instruction. This finding suggests that the success of IC education is not solely dependent on curriculum design but is also closely linked to teachers' professional knowledge and intercultural orientation.

In a similar vein, Mighani et al. (2020) explored the impact of an IC course on the development of ICC among 33 pre-service teachers. The study revealed that mediating IC tasks and activities significantly enhanced participants' ICC levels. More specifically, participation in the IC course led to statistically significant improvements in the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of intercultural competence. These results highlight the pedagogical value of task-based and mediation-oriented IC instruction in fostering learners' ability to interpret, negotiate, and respond to intercultural encounters.

Uğurlu et al. (2022) extended this line of inquiry by focusing on curriculum development for both World Englishes and IC courses. Involving 53 participants, the study aimed to identify stakeholders' perceptions and needs regarding the integration of these courses into the ELTEP. One of the most striking findings was that more than half of the participants advocated for the inclusion of IC and World Englishes courses as compulsory components of ELTEP. This result reflects a growing awareness of the importance of preparing future English teachers for linguistically and culturally diverse teaching contexts and supports calls for curricular reform in teacher education programs. Al-Eryani (2025) investigated IC dimension of EFL programmes in higher education context with a mixed-method design incorporating a questionnaire, measuring EFL instructors' perceptions and practices of interculturality, and corpus-based analysis of English language programmes' curricula. The results demonstrated the ineffective implementation of IC into curricula with inadequate authentic learning and teaching materials, imbalanced representation of cultural and linguistic dimensions, unproductive pedagogical practices and teaching methodologies. Accordingly, the study suggested diversifying culture-oriented resources and IC modules in materials, adopting a learner-centred, autonomous teaching style, and bridging the gap between theory and practice to enable learners to transmit their linguistic and IC knowledge into interactive practices.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate a consistent recognition of the importance of systematic and well-structured IC education in ELT and teacher education contexts. They also reveal common recommendations, such as the integration of theoretical and practical dimensions, the inclusion of interdisciplinary content, and the need for qualified instructors with strong IC and ELF awareness. Table 1 presents a synthesized overview of the recommendations for IC education derived from the aforementioned studies and the broader literature, offering a consolidated framework to inform future curriculum design and implementation.

Table 1. Recommendations for IC Education

Recommendations	Studies
Compulsory IC Courses	Díaz and Moore (2018); Tuncel and Paker (2018); Uğurlu et al. (2022); Conti (2025)
Critical IC Education	Fang and Elyas (2021); Lou (2023); Efeoğlu (2025); Türer and Kuyumcu Vardar (2026)
Fluid/Dynamic IC Education	Civelek and Toplu (2021); Fang and Elyas (2021); Lallana and Salamanca (2020); Lou (2023); Gurney and Demuro (2025); Li (2025)
Systematic IC Education	Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. (2003); Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014); Maijala (2018); Tosuncuoğlu (2019); Liddicoat (2024); Türer and Kuyumcu Vardar (2026); Efeoğlu (2025); Lu et al. (2026)
Professional Training for the Development of IC	Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014); Kural and Bayyurt (2016); Chau and Truong (2019); Köksal and Genç (2020); Mighani et al. (2020); Fang and Elyas (2021); Gedik-Bal and Savaş (2022); Al-Eryani (2025); Conti (2025); Hua and Le (2025); Koşar et al. (2025); Lu et al. (2026); Türer and Kuyumcu Vardar (2026); Young and Sachdev (2011)

Reconceptualization of IC in Teacher Training Programs	Razı and Tekin (2017); Díaz and Moore (2018); Arcagök and Yılmaz (2020); Civelek and Toplu (2021); Al-Eryani (2025); Hua and Le (2025); Efeoğlu (2025)
Incorporation of Theoretical and Practical IC Instruction	Dombi (2011); Genç (2018); Mighani et al. (2020); Civelek and Toplu (2021); Al-Eryani (2025); Li (2025); Hicham et al. (2025); Efeoğlu, (2025)

The present study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the Intercultural Communicative Competence levels of pre-service EFL teachers?
- 1.1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the IC competence levels of pre-service EFL teachers according to whether they have taken the elective IC course or not?
2. What are pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions regarding culture in general, and more specifically intercultural communication and its place in EFL classes?
3. What are ELT professionals' perceptions regarding culture in general, and more specifically intercultural communication and its place in EFL classes?
4. What are pre-service EFL teachers' opinions regarding the integration and possible content of a compulsory IC course into ELT teacher training programs of Turkish universities?
5. What are ELT professionals' opinions regarding the integration and possible content of a compulsory intercultural communication course into ELT teacher training programs of Turkish universities?
6. How can an IC course syllabus be designed both content-wise and material-wise based on the findings of the present study, as well as some recent discussions regarding culture teaching in language classes?

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study explores the need for a compulsory Intercultural Communication course in English Language Teacher Education Programs, drawing on the perspectives of ELT professionals and pre-service EFL teachers. The research began with quantitative measurements to assess IC levels among pre-service teachers, followed by semi-structured interviews to examine their views on culture teaching and the integration of an IC course. A multi-dimensional mixed method design was adopted, corresponding to Creswell's (2012) multiphase mixed-method strategy, which investigates a problem through several independent stages rather than relying on sequential or convergent explanations. This approach was chosen for two main reasons: first, mixed methods allow complex issues to be addressed by combining statistical data with qualitative insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2023); second, multiphase designs enable multiple projects to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the overall objective. Thus, this design was considered the most suitable for exploring the perceived necessity of a compulsory IC course in ELTEP and for informing the development of a syllabus that incorporates critical and dynamic perspectives on IC.

3.2. Setting and Participants

The study was carried out in the ELT department of a state university in Türkiye during the 2024–2025 academic year. In the quantitative phase, 113 pre-service EFL teachers initially participated. For the qualitative phase, nine participants were selected, consisting of five ELT professionals and four pre-service teachers, two of whom were first-year students and two seniors. To ensure reliability, first-year participants were required not to have prior IC education experience, allowing the study to examine the impact of the elective course "Intercultural Communication and Language Education" on ICC development. Participants who identified themselves as second-year students or did not specify their class were excluded, as they might have already taken the elective IC course or other culture-related courses such as "World Englishes and Culture." As a result, nine participants were eliminated, leaving 104 valid cases for quantitative analysis. The average age of the participants was 20, ranging from 18 to 25. Demographic details of the sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Variables of the Participants (N = 104)

Variable	First Year		Senior Year		Total	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Value (%)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Value (%)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Value (%)</i>
Female	45	73.8	17	39.5	62	59.6
Male	16	26.2	22	51.2	38	36.5
Not Specified	0	0	4	9.3	4	3.8

Note. Percentages may deviate slightly from 100% due to rounding effects.

The demographic profile of the semi-structured interview participants revealed that the ELT professionals included three women and two men, while the pre-service EFL teachers comprised three women and one man. The ELT professionals reported an average of 21 years of teaching experience, with a range between 14 and 30 years. The pre-service teachers had an average age of 21, ranging from 18 to 23 years. All of them indicated that their English learning journey began in childhood, reflecting long-term engagement with the language. Three of the four pre-service teachers had prior intercultural exposure through experiences abroad. The remaining participant, although without international experience, reported engaging with diverse cultures through tourism and online gaming. Both groups demonstrated substantial intercultural backgrounds, which made their perspectives on the integration of IC into ELTEP particularly valuable for the study.

Different sampling methods were used for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. In the quantitative phase, criterion sampling was employed based on whether pre-service teachers had taken an IC course. Accordingly, first-year students with no IC exposure and senior students who had completed an elective IC course were included, while second- and third-year students were excluded to avoid confounding effects. The sample size was considered sufficient based on established guidelines. In the qualitative phase, purposeful random sampling was used to select participants for semi-structured interviews. This method helped ensure balanced representation and avoid biased case selection. The qualitative sample size was deemed adequate for in-depth analysis.

3.3. Instruments

To ensure triangulation, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were employed. In the quantitative phase, the “Scales of ICC” developed by Göncü Ergün (2016) were administered to measure intercultural competence among first-year and senior pre-service EFL teachers. The scale, based on Council of Europe (CoE) components, consisted of 28 items grouped under attitude, knowledge, skills, and action. Factor analyses showed explained variances between 43.92% and 51.30%, while validity was confirmed through independent samples t-tests and correlation analyses, demonstrating no significant differences between English and Turkish versions. Reliability was established with Cronbach Alpha coefficients ranging from .78 to .84, indicating strong internal consistency. These results justified the use of the instrument in this study. Following the survey, participants completed a checklist designed to identify expectations for IC course content. Topics were selected based on their frequency in teaching materials and aligned with Razi’s (2012) cultural inventory, with “stereotypes” added to address static cultural views. Expert validation ensured the checklist’s content and face validity.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants’ cultural and intercultural perceptions. Brinkmann (2014) highlights the flexibility of this method, which allows deeper exploration while avoiding limitations of structured or unstructured formats. Interview questions were developed with reference to relevant literature and validated by expert review. Pre-service teachers were asked about their definitions of culture and IC, their educational background, and challenges in intercultural interactions. ELT professionals were asked about the role of IC courses in ELT and issues relevant to their integration into ELTEP. This dual focus provided insights into both learners’ experiences and professionals’ perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of IC in teacher education.

3.4. Procedures

Data collection proceeded in three phases: obtaining ethical and institutional approvals, administering the ICC scale in coordination with the thesis supervisor and conducting semi-structured interviews. To maximize voluntary participation and data quality, the survey was delivered by hand in classroom settings using group administration, which yields higher response rates than distant modes (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Researcher

and supervisor presence supported participant engagement, clarified the study purpose, and addressed queries. First-year data were collected with the supervisor present; senior-year data were gathered during the elective IC course to ensure sampling criteria were met. Informed consent was obtained in each class, with participants reviewing and signing forms prior to completion.

The qualitative phase included five ELT professionals and four pre-service teachers. Following quantitative coding, ELT professionals were invited via email; pre-service sampling was coordinated by the supervisor, and volunteers contacted the researcher. Interviews were scheduled accordingly, conducted individually in Turkish to enhance self-expression and data richness. Participants were fully briefed on study aims, data use, confidentiality, and the absence of academic consequences; both verbal and written consent were secured. Interviews lasted approximately eight minutes for pre-service teachers and 25 minutes for ELT professionals. Transcriptions underwent respondent validation to confirm accuracy (Bryman, 2012), thereby strengthening credibility. Subsequently, the validated transcripts were analysed using content analysis, as detailed in the following section.

Both statistical and qualitative analyses were applied to the data. For the quantitative dimension, responses to the Scales of ICC were examined to determine pre-service EFL teachers' competence levels across all subcomponents. For the qualitative dimension, semi-structured interviews were analysed to explore the current status of IC courses in ELTEP and participants' perspectives on the need for a compulsory IC course. The quantitative data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 statistics software. Data coding and labelling were completed, followed by checks for erroneous entries that could affect reliability. Normality assumptions were tested, as required for parametric analyses (Kerr et al., 2002). Results showed normal distribution for both first-year and senior participants, with skewness and kurtosis values within ± 1 . Shapiro-Wilk tests confirmed normality ($W = .98, p > .05$ for first-year; $W = .97, p > .05$ for senior; $W = .98, p > .05$ overall).

Reliability was re-evaluated through Cronbach's alpha, yielding $\alpha = .82$ for attitude, $\alpha = .77$ for skills, $\alpha = .83$ for knowledge, $\alpha = .83$ for action, and $\alpha = .92$ overall, indicating strong internal consistency. Descriptive statistics were then used to examine demographic structures and address research questions on ICC levels and course expectations. Independent samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were applied to determine statistical significance. The entire quantitative data analysis process was outlined in Figure 1.

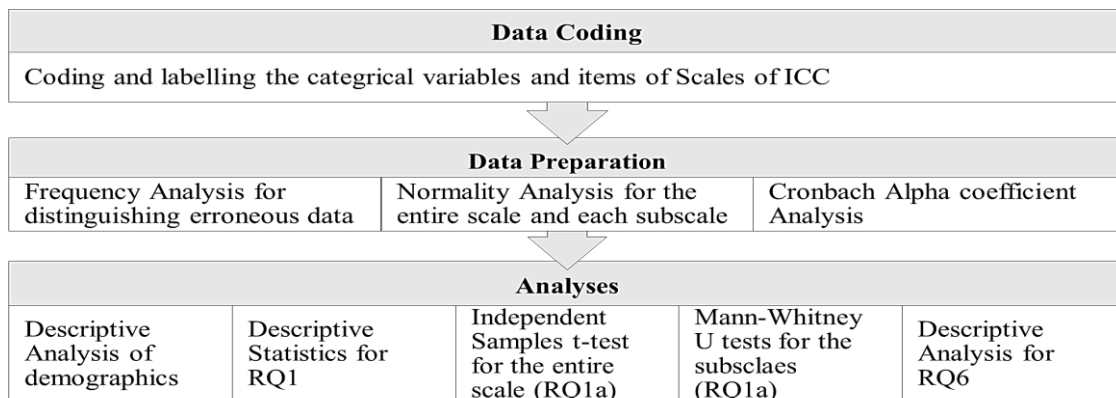


Figure 1. Statistical analysis of scales of ICC

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to address the second, third, and fifth research questions, with the aim of exploring the cultural and intercultural perceptions of both pre-service EFL teachers and ELT professionals. The data preparation process involved careful transcription of all responses and their systematic recording into the analysis program. During pre-coding, segments of data that appeared likely to yield extensive insights were underlined, and, following Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) guidance, each of these units was examined for its purpose and function before being labelled.

The analysis followed three phases described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016): data preparation, data identification, and data interpretation. In the identification phase, qualitative analysis began with open coding, which required attentiveness to any fragment of data that could generate meaningful categories. Once open coding was completed, axial coding was applied to group similar codes into broader, more comprehensive

categories. Finally, the interpretation phase involved theorising and construing the data to propose fundamental categories or hypotheses. These three phases were implemented cyclically for each interview question, ensuring that the analysis remained systematic, rigorous, and capable of capturing the depth of participants' perspectives. Figure 2 displays the data analysis process of the semi-structured interviews.

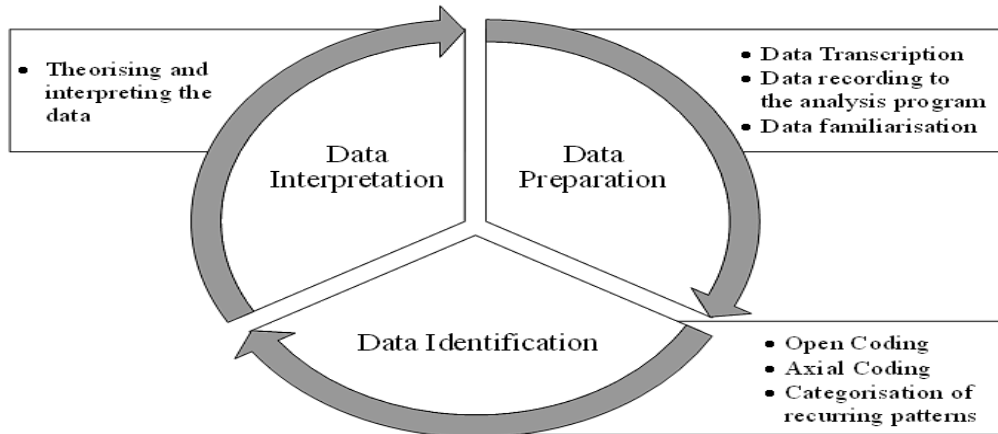


Figure 2. Data analysis process for semi-structured interviews

3.5. Credibility and Trustworthiness

The credibility of the analysis was ensured through prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking. As Brown (2009) explains, prolonged engagement involves dedicating sufficient time to the research setting or participants, which may also include intensive data collection and analysis within a short period. In this study, data were gathered over two weeks and analysed at several intervals, with individual interviews providing adequate interaction time. Triangulation was achieved by combining quantitative and qualitative phases and by collecting qualitative data from two distinct participant groups.

Trustworthiness was further supported by addressing transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Transferability was established through detailed descriptions of the research design, setting, and data collection procedures. Confirmability was ensured by rigorously recording and preserving all data, making the basis of interpretations transparent and available for further examination. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process, with access to the data restricted to the researcher and supervisor.

4. Findings

The first research question of the study, together with its sub-question, was designed to investigate the ICC levels of pre-service EFL teachers and to determine whether the elective *Intercultural Communication and Language Education* course offered to senior students in the ELT department of the state university had a measurable impact on their ICC development. This question was central to the study's aim, as it directly addressed the perceived necessity of integrating a compulsory IC course into teacher education programs. By comparing the ICC levels of first-year students, who had not yet taken the elective course, with those of senior students, who had completed it, the study sought to reveal whether the current elective structure was sufficient or whether a compulsory course would be more effective.

The quantitative analysis began with descriptive statistics to establish the overall ICC levels of both participant groups. Mean scores indicated that senior pre-service teachers demonstrated slightly higher ICC levels ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.07$) compared to first-year students ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.06$). While this difference suggested a modest improvement, it was necessary to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. To this end, independent samples t-tests were conducted for the entire scale and the skills subscale, as the assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneity of variances were satisfied. For the attitude, knowledge, and action subscales, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were employed, given the smaller number of items and the resulting changes in normality assumptions. The following table 3 provides a synthesized overview of the results.

Table 3. Comparison of Pre-service Teachers' ICC Levels according to Subscales (N = 104)

Scales	First-Year	Senior-Year	Statistics	p
Attitude	29 (6) ^b	30 (6) ^b	1199 ^b	.46
Knowledge	30 (6) ^b	31 (7) ^b	1244 ^b	.65
Skill	28.08 (3.80) ^a	29.30 (3.51) ^a	-1.67 ^a	.10
Action	27 (6) ^b	30 (5) ^b	970 ^b	.02*
Total ICC Scale	114.11 (1.68) ^a	118.60 (1.85) ^a	-1.77 ^a	.08

Note. ^a Values are Mean (Standard Deviation); Statistics represent *t* value; independent samples t-test was applied.

^b Value are Median (Interquartile Range); Statistics represent *U* value; Mann-Whitney U test was applied.

* *p* < .05

As demonstrated in Table 3, the results of the independent samples t-tests revealed that the ICC levels of senior students ($M = 118.60, SD = 1.85$) did not significantly differ from those of first-year students ($M = 114.11, SD = 1.68$), $t(102) = -1.77, p = .08$, for the entire scale. Similarly, the skills subscale showed no significant difference between seniors ($M = 29.30, SD = 3.51$) and first-year students ($M = 28.08, SD = 3.80$), $t(102) = -1.67, p = .10$. These findings indicated that, overall, the elective IC course did not produce a statistically significant change in ICC levels. However, the Mann-Whitney U tests provided more complex insights. For the attitude subscale, no significant difference was found between seniors ($Mdn = 30$) and first-year students ($Mdn = 29$), $U = 1199, z = -0.75, p = .46, r = .07$. Similarly, the knowledge subscale showed no significant difference between seniors ($Mdn = 31$) and first-years ($Mdn = 30$), $U = 1244, z = -0.45, p = .65, r = .04$. In contrast, the action subscale revealed a statistically significant difference, with seniors scoring higher ($Mdn = 30$) than first-year students ($Mdn = 27$), $U = 970, z = -2.26, p = .02, r = .22$. This result suggested that while the elective IC course may not have significantly influenced attitudes, knowledge, or skills, it did have a positive impact on students' ability to take intercultural action, with a moderate effect size.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of ICC levels, percentile analysis was conducted. Since the original scale developer did not provide threshold levels, the study established its own by dividing the groups into three percentiles. Participants scoring within the bottom 25% were classified as having low ICC, those within the middle 50% as moderate, and those within the top 75% as high. This methodology allowed for a clearer interpretation of performance across subscales. Specifically, scores below 27 on the attitude, knowledge, and skills subscales, and below 25 on the action subscale, were considered low. Scores above 31 on the skills subscale, 32 on the attitude and action subscales, and 33 on the knowledge subscale were considered high. Scores falling between these thresholds were classified as moderate. This classification provided a more complex picture of how ICC levels were distributed among participants and highlighted areas where development was most needed.

In summary, the analysis of the first research question revealed that while senior students exhibited slightly higher ICC levels than first-year students, the differences were not statistically significant across most subscales. The exception was the action subscale, where seniors demonstrated a significant advantage, suggesting that the elective IC course may foster greater intercultural engagement. Percentile analysis further clarified the distribution of ICC levels, identifying thresholds for low, moderate, and high competence. These findings highlight the limitations of the current elective structure and support the argument for integrating a compulsory IC course into ELTEP to ensure that all pre-service teachers develop the intercultural competence necessary for effective language teaching in diverse cultural contexts. The following Table 4 presents the results in a well-organized way.

Table 4. ICC levels of Pre-service Teachers according to Subscales (N = 104)

Scales	First-Year Pre-service Teachers						Senior- Year Pre-service Teachers					
	High ICC		Moderate		Low ICC		High ICC		Moderate		Low ICC	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Attitude	19	31.1	23	37.7	19	31.1	15	34.9	15	34.9	13	30.2
Knowledge	17	27.9	28	45.9	16	26.2	15	34.9	17	39.5	11	25.6
Skill	15	24.6	18	29.5	28	45.9	13	30.2	21	48.8	9	20.9
Action	14	23	25	41	22	36.1	16	37.2	19	44.2	8	18.6
Total Scale	15	24.6	24	39.3	22	36.1	12	27.9	24	55.8	7	16.3

As given in Table 4, percentile grouping showed seniors generally reported higher ICC than first-year students. On the attitude scale, 35% of seniors versus 31% of first-years scored high. In knowledge, 35% of seniors reached high ICC compared to 28% of first-years. For skills, 30% of seniors and 25% of first-years scored high. The largest difference appeared in the action scale, where 37% of seniors demonstrated high ICC compared to only 23% of first-years. Overall, first-years performed relatively better in attitude, while seniors excelled in action, highlighting that seniors were more likely to translate intercultural competence into practice.

4.1. Pre-service Teachers’ Expectations on the Requirements of a Compulsory IC Course

The fourth research question examined pre-service teachers’ perspectives on introducing a compulsory IC course into ELTEP. Using a checklist with a yes/no item and suggested topics, descriptive analysis showed strong support: 89 participants, or 86% of the sample, affirmed the need for such a course. When broken down by group, 85% of first-year students and 86% of seniors gave positive responses, indicating consistent agreement across levels of study. These high rates suggest that both novice and more advanced pre-service teachers recognize the importance of formal IC training in their programs. Following this, those who answered “yes” were invited to outline their expectations for course content, providing valuable insights into the themes and components they considered essential for a syllabus that would meet their intercultural learning needs. The results are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency of the Preferred Course Contents (N = 89)

Topics	First Year		Senior Year		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Lifestyles	41	78.8	36	97.3	77	86.52
Customs and Traditions	45	86.5	29	78.4	74	83.15
Beliefs and Values	41	78.8	32	86.5	73	82.02
Festivals	33	63.5	25	67.6	58	65.17
Idioms and Proverbs	30	54.5	25	45.5	55	61.80
Cuisine	26	50	27	73	53	59.55
Holidays	25	48.1	25	67.6	50	56.18
Stereotypes	24	48.2	18	48.6	42	47.19
Relationships	19	36.5	21	56.8	40	44.94
Other	2	3.8	3	8.1	5	5.61

As it is demonstrated in Table 5, ‘lifestyles’ was the most frequently preferred content for both participant groups; and the topic of ‘relationships’ was expressed as the least preferred content. It was also evident that the participants’ content preferences varied based on groups. Additionally, history, slangs, humour, politics, art, heritage, and business were suggested as other contents. Regarding these suggestions, it should also be noted that “slangs” was a content proposed more than once.

4.2. Findings from the Semi-structured Interviews

For the second, third, fourth, and fifth research questions, semi-structured interviews were examined through qualitative content analysis to provide a deeper and more holistic understanding of stakeholders’ perspectives on integrating IC into ELT education. Pre-service teachers were asked to define culture and IC, allowing the study to capture their conceptual understandings. Their needs and expectations were further explored by discussing prior IC education experiences and challenges in intercultural contexts.

The interviews began with self-introductions, which led into questions about their intercultural experiences and emotional dispositions during such interactions. Findings showed that participants had long-standing language learning backgrounds and had engaged in diverse intercultural encounters. A key theme that emerged was overseas experience, which played a significant role in shaping their intercultural competence. However, other factors—such as online communication and touristic activities—were also identified as meaningful contributors to their IC development. These insights highlighted that intercultural learning opportunities extended beyond formal education, underscoring the importance of incorporating varied experiences into ELTEP curricula. Table 6 summarizes the findings.

Table 6. Participants Perceptions of Themselves in Intercultural Interactions

Theme	Codes	Participants
Affective state in intercultural interactions	Curiosity	Pre-service Teacher 2
	Tolerance	Pre-service Teacher 4
	Speaking Anxiety	Pre-service Teacher 1
	Superiority and Inferiority	Pre-service Teacher 3

As Table 6 demonstrates the participants’ affective states in intercultural interactions, both positive and negative affective dispositions were expressed. Therefore, the participants’ divergent perspectives on this aspect were noteworthy. To elaborate further, curiosity and tolerance were found to be the positive themes. Moreover, a senior pre-service teacher stated their affective disposition in intercultural interactions from the perspective of inferiority and superiority.

The investigation into participants’ perspectives on IC challenges revealed several noteworthy themes. Three participants reported that they had not faced any significant difficulties in their intercultural interactions, suggesting a generally positive experience. However, hesitation in speaking emerged as the most common challenge among first-year pre-service teachers, reflecting a lack of confidence or fear of making mistakes in intercultural contexts. In addition, issues such as racism and prejudice were identified as potential obstacles that could hinder effective communication. For senior pre-service teachers, the challenges were more complex. They highlighted the diversity of behavioural patterns across cultures as a source of difficulty, noting that differences in norms, expectations, and interaction styles sometimes created misunderstandings or discomfort. These findings suggest that while first-year students struggle primarily with personal confidence and external biases, senior students encounter more complex challenges related to navigating cultural diversity in practice. Together, these insights underscore the importance of equipping pre-service teachers with strategies to address both individual and systemic barriers to intercultural communication.

Most participants described culture as a social construct shaped by society, often emphasizing observable elements like traditions and geography—reflecting a largely static view. When asked directly, nearly all defined culture as fluid, though only one participant (taking the elective IC course) clearly explained this by linking fluidity to diverse practices. Others showed partial understanding, associating fluidity mainly with transferability, suggesting that without IC education their views leaned toward static or hybrid interpretations.

Shortly, the interviews with pre-service teachers suggest that IC education may influence pre-service teachers’ cultural understandings, as participants without an IC background differed from those who had taken an elective IC course. The findings also revealed internal inconsistencies in participants’ views, as some described culture as fluid while simultaneously emphasizing the dominant role of society in shaping culture.

Responses to the question of whose culture should be taught further reflected these discrepancies. Participants without IC education tended to associate culture with nation-based categories such as American or British culture, whereas others adopted a more fluid perspective by rejecting the centralization of a single culture. However, even participants who had taken an IC course occasionally favoured native English-speaking cultures or culturally similar contexts. Regarding IC education backgrounds, first-year participants reported limited exposure to culture through theory-based high school courses, while senior participants referred to courses such as World Englishes and Culture or an elective IC course that included both theoretical and practical components. Participants emphasized the need for a compulsory IC course, particularly one that is discussion-based and critical.

Overall, the interviews revealed that participants’ IC development was influenced by overseas experiences as well as local and online interactions. Their cultural understandings were complex, combining both static and fluid perspectives. The findings also highlighted a clear need for compulsory and critically oriented IC instruction in ELT programs to support the development of intercultural competence.

Interviews with ELT professionals explored their IC teaching practices, views on improving IC education, and opinions on the need for a compulsory IC course in ELT departments. The participants, with an average of 21 years of teaching experience, emphasized the complexity of defining culture and IC, revealing varied perspectives. While some focused on cultural differences, others highlighted shared behaviours or interpersonal interaction, reflecting both static and dynamic cultural understandings. Most lecturers either did not teach IC directly or addressed culture only theoretically within other courses. The participants reported using activities

that promote intercultural awareness through critical thinking. However, they identified major challenges in IC education, including lack of standardization, limited materials, native-speakerism, and insufficient class hours. Table 7 presents the findings in order.

Table 7. ELT Professionals Perceptions regarding the Challenges of IC Teaching

Theme	Codes	Participants
IC Teaching Challenges	The lack of systematisation	Lecturer 1, 2, 4
	Nativeness non-nativeness issue	Lecturer 3, 4
	Lack of materials	Lecturer 2, 3
	The lack of sufficient class hours	Lecturer 4, 5

As displayed in Table 7, systematic IC education, the allocation of extended class periods to address cultural components comprehensively, designing or adapting teaching materials in accordance with the contemporary IC teaching approaches emerged as the fundamental requirements in ELTEPs. Furthermore, the theme of insufficient class time emerges as a notable concern hindering ELT professionals from integrating linguistic and cultural instruction in a holistic and nuanced manner. It is also attributed as a constraint to incorporating of practice-oriented IC activities into the foreign language courses. ELT professionals also noted that current ELT curricula insufficiently address language as a dynamic and critical phenomenon, particularly neglecting sociopolitical issues such as language policies and nativeness. All participants supported the inclusion of a compulsory IC course and agreed that a standardized syllabus incorporating both theoretical and practical components would be beneficial. Overall, the findings highlight a strong need for a compulsory, critically oriented IC course in ELT programs, while also revealing differences in instructors’ cultural and intercultural perspectives.

4.3. Theoretical Model of the IC Course Syllabus Design

The sixth research question sought to design a sample IC course syllabus, based on the previous findings. The suggested syllabus is underpinned by several theoretical frameworks, including those of Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2004). As in Deardorff’s (2004) model, a process-oriented and multifaceted IC education has been adopted, with a dynamic, non-essentialist, ethnorelative perspective, which constitute the core of the syllabus. Theoretical lectures focus on systematic knowledge, while practical sessions underline learner autonomy and skills development through various tasks. Furthermore, Byram’s (1997) model underpins the pedagogical structure of this syllabus in terms of the integration of critical IC education and diverse assessment methods, including questionnaires, observations, skill-oriented tasks and reflection reports. In essence, the syllabus synthesizes diverse perspectives informed by two distinct models. The following Figure 3 displays the relation between the sample syllabus and the theoretical models.

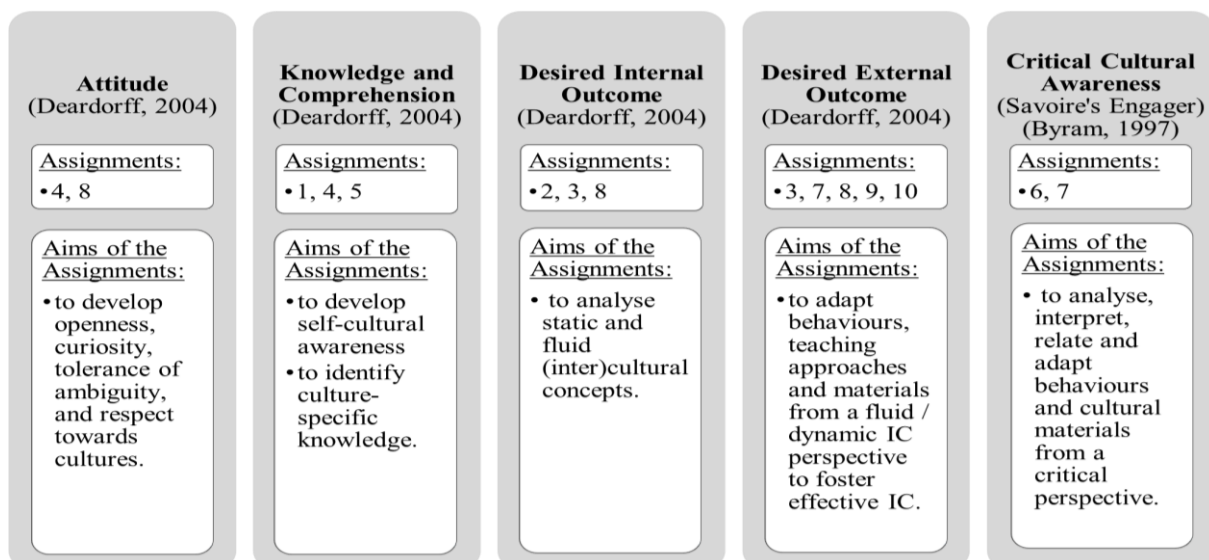


Figure 3. Theoretical Frameworks of the Sample IC Syllabus

The present syllabus is distinguished by its comprehensive approach, which transcends the scope of conventional culture-related courses' syllabi through the integration of practice-oriented, dynamic, critical IC instruction. Furthermore, as one of the principal objectives of the syllabus is to equip pre-service teachers with the skills necessary to undertake their future IC teaching, the syllabus incorporates topics that are likely to be frequently encountered in textbooks and other teaching materials. The inclusion of these topics is intended to enhance their skills to analyse and adapt culture-related materials, facilitating the integration of IC education into their teaching practice. The sample course syllabus for an effective IC teaching in foreign language education is provided in Appendix A.

5. Discussion

The first research question examined first- and senior-year pre-service teachers' ICC levels and revealed that both groups demonstrated high ICC, with only a slight difference between them. This finding aligns with previous studies (Gün, 2023; Sevimeş-Sahin, 2020) and supports the view that ICC can be enhanced through systematic instruction (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2014; Türer & Kuyumcu Vardar, 2026). Although no significant difference was found in the overall ICC scale, a significant difference emerged in the action subscale, with senior students outperforming first-year students. This suggests that elective IC instruction contributes particularly to the action dimension of ICC, consistent with Gönçü Ergün (2016).

The second research question showed that most pre-service teachers supported the inclusion of IC as a compulsory course in ELTEP, a finding consistent with earlier research (Conti, 2025; Díaz & Moore, 2018; Uğurlu et al., 2022). Participants' cultural perceptions fluctuated between essentialist and non-essentialist views, indicating a complex understanding of culture. While one participant displayed ethnocentric tendencies through "we–they" distinctions, such expressions were also observed more broadly in the qualitative data, reflecting traces of ethnocentrism (Kim, 2009).

The third research question revealed that ELT professionals emphasized the dynamic nature of culture, differing from studies reporting mixed or static cultural views (Gurney & Demuro, 2025; Lou, 2023; Lu et al., 2026). However, differences among lecturers were evident, with some prioritizing cultural differences and others emphasizing similarities. Participants highlighted deficiencies in current ELT curricula, including limited intercultural content, overreliance on textbooks, neglect of sociopolitical aspects, and lack of systematic IC education, echoing concerns raised by Gedik-Bal and Savaş (2022) and Lee et al. (2023). Finally, ELT professionals stressed the importance of integrating theoretical, practical, and critical dimensions into IC education (Liddicoat, 2024; Maijala, 2018).

The fourth, fifth and sixth research questions were oriented towards designing a sample IC course syllabus. Unlike the seniors enrolled in an elective IC course, first-years' content expectations revealed a nation-based tendency in culture teaching. This underscored the significance of a dynamic, critical IC education that de-centres the ideology of native-speakerism and challenges the dominance of monolithic, nation-based IC teaching methodologies. This was consistent with the Efeoğlu's (2025) study, which revealed that, Western influence predominates in elective IC course contents, despite the occasional referrals to English dialects and diverse cultural aspects. The need for systematisation in IC education, identified as a deficiency in ELTEP by Efeoğlu (2025) and Lu et al. (2026), emerged as a recurring theme in ELT professionals' content expectations. Based on the findings and relevant literature, a sample compulsory IC course syllabus was developed, incorporating critical, dynamic, and practice-oriented components to better prepare pre-service teachers for real classroom contexts.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study investigated the need for a compulsory IC course in ELT departments from the perspectives of pre-service EFL teachers and ELT professionals, with the primary aim of proposing a sample undergraduate IC course syllabus. Using a mixed-method design, the study examined pre-service teachers' ICC and explored participants' perceptions through semi-structured interviews.

The findings revealed that both first-year and senior pre-service teachers demonstrated high ICC levels, although a statistically significant difference was found only in the action subscale, favouring those who had taken an elective IC course. This suggests that IC instruction particularly enhances intercultural action skills. Qualitative findings showed that pre-service teachers valued culture teaching but held inconsistent views, oscillating between static and dynamic understandings of culture, indicating a need for systematic IC education.

ELT professionals similarly emphasized the importance of IC in ELTEP but differed in their cultural perspectives, with some prioritizing differences and other similarities. They highlighted the lack of standardization, limited materials, and time constraints as major challenges in IC teaching. Both groups strongly supported the inclusion of a compulsory IC course to ensure consistency and quality in IC education. Regarding course content, participants favoured a balance between theoretical, practical, and critical approaches. Based on these findings and the literature, a sample compulsory IC syllabus was developed, integrating dynamic, critical, and practice-oriented components to support pre-service teachers' development as both IC learners and future IC teachers.

The study also offers implications for pre-service teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers, emphasizing early IC instruction, professional development, curriculum innovation, and policy-level support for compulsory, critically oriented IC education in ELT programs.

The lack of statistically significant differences in most subscales suggests that the elective IC course, as currently designed, may not be sufficient to foster substantial improvements in ICC. The significant difference observed in the action subscale, however, indicates that the course may encourage students to engage more actively in intercultural contexts, even if their attitudes, knowledge, and skills remain relatively unchanged. This partial effectiveness underscores the need for a more comprehensive and compulsory IC course that addresses all dimensions of ICC—attitudes, knowledge, skills, and actions—rather than focusing primarily on practical engagement. By integrating IC education throughout the teacher training program, rather than limiting it to an elective taken in the final year, ELTEP could ensure that pre-service teachers develop intercultural competence more consistently and thoroughly.

Acknowledgements

This study is derived from the master's thesis conducted by the first author under the supervision of the second author. The corresponding tables and figures have been reproduced or adapted from the original thesis.

Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Funding Statement

This research received no specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Author Contributions

First author: Conceptualisation, methodology, data curation, formal analysis

Second author: Supervision, review & editing.

Ethics Approval Statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Ethics Committee (Approval No. 14/18).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

The authors used Google's Gemini for language editing assistance. The authors reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content.

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Appendix

Compulsory IC Course Syllabus Sample

Course Title	Intercultural Communication	
Course hours	Lecture: 2	Practice: 2
Course Objectives	The course aims to improve pre-service teachers' ICC in terms of both knowledge and practice. This course is designed to consider pre-service teachers' identities as both IC practitioners and IC teachers. It also introduces an array of instructional strategies within this context.	
Course Content	The course includes changing approaches to culture, the relationship between language and culture, identity and culture, models of IC, Critical IC, intercultural citizenship, and IC teaching practices.	
Weeks	Content of Theoretical Lectures	Assignments for Practical Lectures
1	Introduction: Discussion of the key terms. Relationship between culture and language	Assignment 1: Reflection Survey – pre-service teachers' background knowledge associated with culture and IC
2	Solid/Static & Fluid/Dynamic Culture Definition of culture and IC	Assignment 2: pre-service teachers are assigned to define culture/IC. The definitions are compared to identify static and dynamic cultural concepts.
3	Essentialism vs. non-essentialism: Lifestyles Ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism	Assignment 3: pre-service teachers are assigned to identify essentialist approaches in the given teaching materials including various lifestyles. They are expected to adapt the materials by adopting a non-essentialist perspective.
4	Language, Communication and Culture: Idioms and Proverbs	Assignment 4: Pre-service teachers elucidate the cultural background of an idiom/proverb that they have selected.
5	Identity and Culture Cultural Landmarks	Assignment 5: Pre-service teachers' presentations on the backgrounds of cultural landmarks
6	Models of IC	Assigning task 6
7	Critical IC: Stereotypes	Assignment 6: pre-service teachers are expected to analyse various sources, people, texts, media for a week to identify stereotypical and hegemonic cases. They are assigned to present their findings.
8	Midterm Exam	Midterm Exam
9	Critical Thinking in IC: Cuisine & Customs / Traditions	Assignment 7: critical writing – pre-service teachers are expected to choose an eating habit/traditions that they find interesting. They are assigned to write a paper reflecting their views. They are assigned to investigate the cultural background of the subject and write another reflection paper. They are asked to compare the two papers from a critical perspective and report the changes.
10	Identifying and overcoming the (Intercultural) Communication Barriers	Assignment 8: Reflective journals on IC experiences.
11	Global Citizenship	Reporting the preparation for the following task.
12	IC Teaching in ELT	Assignment 9: IC teaching in practice: Presenting the lesson plans and materials prepared in any subject they have determined.
13	IC Teaching in ELT	Assignment 10: IC teaching in practice: Presenting the lesson plans and materials.
14	Final Exam	Final Exam

Note. Adapted from the authors' master's thesis (Sezen, 2025, pp. 78–79).