

An Analysis of Intercultural Sensitivity and Ethnocentrism Levels of Teacher Candidates

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ABSTRACT The aim of this research is to find out the effects of two variables on primary and secondary school teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels. One of the variables is the subject matter they studied at university and the other variable is gender. The research model is descriptive. The study group consists of 348 volunteer teacher candidates who attended a private course to prepare for the Public Personnel Selection Examination (aka KPSS) during the 2014-2015 academic year. The intercultural sensitivity level of teacher candidates was measured using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta, and their ethnocentrism level was measured using the Ethnocentrism Scale developed by Neuliep and McCroskey. Linguistic equivalence, validity and reliability studies of the two scales were done by Ustun. One-way analysis of variance and independent sample t-tests were used to analyze the data. Findings of the study demonstrated that there is a statistically significant difference between teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity levels in terms of the subject matter they studied and that their ethnocentrism level significantly differs depending on their gender.

INTRODUCTION

The changing nature of globalization and modern technology makes it almost impossible for societies to isolate themselves from external influences. Since cultural diversity characterizes almost all societies to different degrees, they must find ways of coming to terms with and even profiting from it (Parekh 2002). The way of profiting from cultural diversity within the same geographical boundaries and establishing effective communication with individuals from different countries in order to ensure international peace and exchanges is to develop an education system that aims to improve intercultural communication competence.

Intercultural communication is described as a process of interaction between individuals with different cultural backgrounds (Coskun 2006). In this process, intercultural communication competence is required in order to minimize misconceptions and to establish effective communication. Intercultural communication competence is comprised of three dimensions, namely, intercultural awareness (cognitive), intercultural sensitivity (affective), and intercultural adroitness (behavioral) (Chen and Starosta 2000). Development of these three dimensions helps individuals be global citizens who can empathize with people from different cultures besides being aware of

both their own cultures and the other cultures (Eginli 2011).

Among the dimensions of intercultural communication competence, intercultural sensitivity gains much attention in related literature. This affective dimension is described as the self-desire, which is necessary to ensure intrinsic motivation for understanding, accepting and appreciating cultural differences (Chen and Starosta 2000). Intercultural communication competence is also defined as the sensitivity towards cultural differences and towards the perspectives of people from different cultures (Bhawuk and Brislin 1992; Ustun 2011).

The development of intercultural communication skills is an important effort to avoid intercultural conflicts. In addition to this effort, identifying the barriers to intercultural communication and taking precautions against them play an important role in preventing conflicts. Ethnocentrism is one of these barriers to intercultural communication.

Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) stated that ethnocentrism is one of the factors that affect communication between people with different cultural, ethnic, religious and regional backgrounds. Sumner (1906) described ethnocentrism as the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. An ethno-

centric person puts himself, his group and his culture at the center of the universe and determines the location of the others accordingly. He places the ones who are out of his group according to the degree of similarity to himself (Kartari 2006). Ethnocentrism, in other words, is to believe in the superiority of one's own culture and to judge other cultures by the values and standards of that culture (Jandt 1995).

In modern societies efforts aimed at preventing ethnocentrism start by educating individuals to have a positive attitude towards different cultures and be sensitive to cultural differences. It is known that societies that are exposed to immigration have been attempting to manage cultural diversity in various ways, and after these attempts they have focused on multiculturalism and interculturalism. It is also notable that there have been quite a lot of researches on multicultural and intercultural education in these societies.

As Coskun (2006) stated, multicultural and intercultural education concepts must be seen as an issue to study in Turkey for some reasons, such as the existence of Ottoman heritage in different countries, the multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious mosaic in Anatolia, the migration of labor abroad, and economic expansions to foreign countries.

In accordance with the abovementioned needs, the Ministry of National Education has updated the primary and secondary school curricula gradually since the 2004-2005 academic year, and goals and objectives related to intercultural communication competence have been included in some of these curricula. The aim is to enable students to learn about different cultures and to develop respect and tolerance towards cultural differences. In other words, the development of intercultural awareness and sensitivity is aimed for in the updated curricula.

In the process of developing intercultural awareness and sensitivity, the most important role, alongside the role of curricula and textbooks, is that of teachers. In this respect, the extent to which teachers have intercultural communication competence is an issue to focus on.

A considerable amount of literature, which aims to investigate teachers' and teacher candidates' level of intercultural communication competence, has been published abroad over the last decade. However, there has been relatively little literature published on this issue in Turkey.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the variables expected to affect teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity levels, which is the affective dimension of intercultural communication competence according to Chen and Starosta (1996), and to examine the variables expected to affect their ethnocentrism levels, which is seen as a barrier to intercultural communication.

English, Social Sciences, Turkish Language and Literature and Primary School teacher candidates were included in this study since they are expected to develop the students' intercultural communication competence according to the new curricula.

This descriptive study is expected to contribute to the regulation of pre-service and in-service programs that might be conducted by teacher training institutions and schools with the aim of developing intercultural sensitivity and preventing ethnocentrism. In this context, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity levels in terms of the subject matter they have studied?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between teacher candidates' ethnocentrism levels in terms of the subject matter they have studied?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity levels?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female teacher candidates' ethnocentrism levels?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study in which teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels were compared according to some variables is within the scope of descriptive research design. In a descriptive research design, the aim is to observe the situation without trying to change it (Karasar 2007).

Study Group

The study group consists of 348 volunteer teacher candidates who attended a private course

in Istanbul to prepare for the Public Personnel Selection Examination (aka KPSS) during the 2014-2015 academic year. Goals and objectives related to intercultural communication competence are clearly defined in Turkish (1st -5th grade), Turkish Language and Literature, English and Social Sciences curricula. For this reason, senior students and graduates of the departments of Primary Education, Turkish Language and Literature Teaching, English Language Teaching and Social Sciences Teaching were included in this study. Table 1 shows the distribution of teacher candidates according to their departments.

As seen in Table 1, 77 teacher candidates from Primary Education Department, 115 candidates from Turkish Language and Literature Teaching Department, 80 candidates from English Language Teaching Department, and 76 candidates from Social Sciences Teaching Department participated in this study. The study group, therefore, consisted of 348 teacher candidates. One hundred and ninety-eight of the participants were female and 150 of them were male.

Data Collection Instruments

The intercultural sensitivity level of teacher candidates was measured using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), and their ethnocentrism level was measured using the Ethnocentrism Scale developed by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997). Linguistic equivalence, validity and reliability studies of the two scales were done by Ustun (2011).

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), is a 24-item instrument with a Likert scale from 1-5. The scale is comprised of five dimensions, which are Interaction Engagement (items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23,

24), Respect for Cultural Differences (items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, 20), Interaction Confidence (items 3, 4, 5, 6, 10), Interaction Enjoyment (items 9, 12, 15) and Interaction Attentiveness (items 14, 17, 19). Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, 22 are reverse scored. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the original scale was 0.86 and 0.88 in two separate studies.

In order to test the validity of the Turkish form of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and the total variance explained by the five sub-scales was calculated as sixty-three percent. However, due to the fact that the factor loads of three items did not match, the Turkish form of the scale was used as a single-factor scale and the factor analysis was repeated. After the final factor analysis, one item (item 19) was removed from the scale due to its having a low factor load. Therefore, the Turkish form of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale included 23 items. Cronbach Alpha reliability of this form was 0.90.

Ethnocentrism Scale

The Ethnocentrism Scale, developed by Neuliep ve McCroskey (1997), is a 22-item instrument with a Likert scale from 1-5. Items 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 19 are reverse scored. The Cronbach Alpha reliability of the original scale was 0.92. The original Ethnocentrism Scale is a single-factor scale. After the confirmatory factor analysis, two items (items 10 and 19) were removed from the scale, as their factor loads did not match. Thus, the Turkish form of the Ethnocentrism Scale included 20 items. Cronbach Alpha reliability of this form was 0.82.

Data Analysis

In this study, teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels were

Table 1: Distribution of teacher candidates according to their department

| Department | Senior | | Graduate | | Total | |
|--|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|
| | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % |
| Primary education | 35 | 45.4 | 42 | 54.5 | 77 | 22.1 |
| Turkish language and literature teaching | 53 | 46.0 | 62 | 53.9 | 115 | 33.0 |
| English language teaching | 40 | 50.0 | 40 | 50.0 | 80 | 22.9 |
| Social sciences teaching | 29 | 38.1 | 47 | 61.8 | 76 | 21.8 |
| Total | 157 | 45.1 | 191 | 54.8 | 348 | 100 |

compared according to gender and the subject matter studied by teacher candidates. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent sample t-test were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Findings Concerning the First Research Question

The first research question of the study was stated as, “*Is there a statistically significant difference between teacher candidates’ intercultural sensitivity levels in terms of the subject matter they have studied?*” Descriptive statistics have shown that English teacher candidates have the highest mean score (X_i : 3.25), whereas Social Sciences teacher candidates have the lowest mean score (X_s : 2.90) on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the difference between the means. Prior to the ANOVA test, the Levene’s test for equality of variances was performed and it was seen that variances were equal [$F(3-344)$: 1.38, $p > .05$]. Table 2 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which was performed to test the difference between the means.

As seen in Table 2, there is a statistically significant difference between teacher candidates’ intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels [$F(3-344)$ =3.20, $p < 0.05$]. According to the Scheffe test result, the difference is between Social Sciences teacher candidates’ and English teacher candidates’ intercultural sensitivity levels in favor of the latter ($p < .05$). In addition, there is a statistically significant difference between Primary Education teacher candidates’ and En-

glish teacher candidates’ intercultural sensitivity levels, in favor of the latter ($p < .05$).

Findings Concerning the Second Research Question

The second research question of the study was stated as, “*Is there a statistically significant difference between teacher candidates’ ethnocentrism levels in terms of the subject matter they have studied?*” Descriptive statistics has shown that Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates have the highest mean score (X : 3.85), whereas English teacher candidates have the lowest mean score (X : 3.46) on the Ethnocentrism Scale. The Levene’s test for equality of variances was performed and it was seen that variances were equal [$F(3-34)$: 0.87, $p > .05$].

Table 3 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which was performed to test the difference between the means.

The data in Table 3 indicates that the ethnocentrism levels of teacher candidates differ significantly according to the subject matter they studied at university [$F(3-344)$ =3.42, $p < 0.05$]. According to the Scheffe test, there is a statistically significant difference between Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates’ and English teacher candidates’ intercultural sensitivity levels, in favor of Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates ($p < .05$).

Findings Concerning the Third Research Question

The third research question of the study was stated as, “*Is there a statistically significant dif-*

Table 2: ANOVA result for intercultural sensitivity level of teacher candidates by subject matter studied

| | <i>Sum of squares</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>Mean square</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>P</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Between groups | 4.62 | 3 | 1.54 | 3.20 | .01 |
| Within groups | 165.96 | 344 | 0.48 | | |
| Total | 170.58 | 347 | | | |

Table 3: ANOVA result for ethnocentrism level of teacher candidates by subject matter studied

| | <i>Sum of squares</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>Mean square</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>P</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Between groups | 5.13 | 3 | 1.71 | 3.42 | .01 |
| Within groups | 172.56 | 344 | 0.50 | | |
| Total | 177.69 | 347 | | | |

ference between male and female teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity levels?" The Levene's test for equality of variances was performed and it was seen that variances were equal. The independent sample t-test was used to analyze the difference between the means of male and female teacher candidates. Table 4 shows the t-test values.

According to the t value in Table 4 ($t=4.43$, $p>.05$), intercultural sensitivity levels of male and female teacher candidates do not differ significantly.

Table 4: Independent samples t-test result for intercultural sensitivity levels of female and male teacher candidates

| Group | N | X | S | SD | t | P |
|--------|-----|-------|-------|-----|------|-----|
| Female | 198 | 60.32 | 17.30 | 346 | 4.43 | .47 |
| Male | 150 | 58.83 | 16.77 | | | |

Findings Concerning the Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question of the study was stated as, "*Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female teacher candidates' ethnocentrism levels?"* The Levene's test for equality of variances was performed and it was seen that variances were equal. The independent samples t-test was used to analyze the difference between the means of male and female teacher candidates. Table 5 shows the t-test values.

As seen in Table 5, the ethnocentrism level of male teacher candidates is significantly higher than the ethnocentrism level of female teacher candidates ($t=.95$, $p>.05$).

Table 5: Independent sample t-test result for ethnocentrism levels of female and male teacher candidates

| Group | N | X | S | SD | t | P |
|--------|-----|-------|-------|-----|------|-----|
| Female | 198 | 63.48 | 18.35 | 346 | 4.32 | .00 |
| Male | 150 | 57.34 | 15.54 | | | |

DISCUSSION

Findings of the research showed that English teacher candidates' level of intercultural sensitivity is significantly higher than Social Sciences and Primary Education teacher candidates'

level of intercultural sensitivity. The fact that English teacher candidates have a high level of intercultural sensitivity is an expected result. Foreign language teachers are expected to be individuals who are able to think multidimensional in a setting in which two cultures are brought together, besides being sensitive and tolerant towards cultural differences. They are also expected to be aware of their own culture and evaluate it from a wider perspective while evaluating other cultures without prejudice (Cangil 2010). This finding is consistent with the finding of Banos (2006) in which it was found out that students who speak at least one foreign language have a higher level of intercultural sensitivity compared to the monolingual students.

Another finding of the research is that the ethnocentrism level of English teacher candidates is lower than the ethnocentrism level of other teacher candidates. Individuals who have a high level of intercultural sensitivity are expected to have a low level of ethnocentrism. This finding is in agreement with the finding of the study of Dong et al. (2008) in which it was shown that there is a significant negative correlation between students' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels.

In this research it was also found that Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates' level of ethnocentrism is significantly higher than other teacher candidates' level of ethnocentrism. This difference may be due to the fact that the Turkish Language and Literature curriculum includes goals and objectives that aim to improve the national awareness of students and help them develop a sense of belonging to a nation and share common values through literary works.

Another finding of the research is that male and female teacher candidates' levels of intercultural sensitivity do not differ significantly despite the fact that the average score of the female teacher candidates is higher than that of the male teacher candidates. On the other hand, male teacher candidates' level of ethnocentrism is significantly higher than female teacher candidates'. When the related literature is reviewed, it is possible to see researches in which the relationship between gender and intercultural sensitivity or ethnocentrism is examined. However, findings of those researches are inconsistent. For example, studies of Fretheim (2007), Westrick and Yuen (2007), Bayles (2009), Spinthourakis

(2009) and Yazici et al. (2009) have shown that there is no significant difference between male and female teacher candidates' levels of intercultural sensitivity, whereas studies of Banos (2006), Holme et al. (2009) and Talib and Hosoya (2010) have shown that there is a significant difference between male and female students or teacher candidates' levels of intercultural sensitivity, in favor of female teacher candidates.

The result that male teacher candidates' level of ethnocentrism is significantly higher than that of female teacher candidates is consistent with the findings of the study of Neuliep et al. (2001) in which male university students' level of ethnocentrism is significantly higher than female university students' level of ethnocentrism. The result that female teacher candidates have a higher level of intercultural sensitivity while having lower ethnocentrism is also in agreement with the study by Dong et al. (2008), which has shown that there is a significant negative correlation between ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity.

CONCLUSION

In this research, gender appears to be a determinant of ethnocentrism while being less effective on intercultural sensitivity. According to the findings, it was also concluded that the subject matter studied by teacher candidates has an impact on their intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels. Foreign language studies appear to be an important factor in developing intercultural sensitivity. Despite the inconsistent research results in the related literature concerning the effect of gender on intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism, it was confirmed in this research that there is a negative correlation between intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism. That is, individuals who have a high level of intercultural sensitivity have a low level of ethnocentrism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers, as architects of societies, are expected to be competent in social skills before the other members of the society. In this context, teacher training programs should include courses that aim to improve teacher candidates' intercultural communication competence. In addition, through in-service training, primary and second-

ary school teachers should be informed about the goals and objectives related to intercultural communication skills and they should be provided with the opportunity to discuss the ways in which these skills can be improved effectively.

The present research has been focused on quantitative data. Further research should concentrate on qualitative data in order to better understand the thoughts and attitudes of participants on cultural differences.

NOTES

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