KARADENİZ TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ * SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

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UYGULAMALI DİLBİLİMİ YÜKSEK LİSANS PROGRAMI

TURKISH ERASMUS STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND THEIR INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN ELF COMMUNITIES

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

SEVAL KISA

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Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Mustafa Naci KAYAOĞLU

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TRABZON

ONAY

Seval KISA tarafından hazırlanan "Turkish Erasmus Students' Perceptions about the Use of English as a Means of Communication and Their Intercultural Awareness in ELF Communities" adlı bu çalışma 15.06.2017 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda oybirliği ile başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı Uygulamalı Dil Bilimi **yüksek lisans tezi** olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Yukarıdaki imzaların, adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduklarını onaylarım.

Prof. Dr. Yusuf SÜRMEN

Enstitü Müdürü

BİLDİRİM

Tez içindeki bütün bilgilerin etik davranış ve akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde edilerek sunulduğunu, ayrıca tez yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanan bu çalışmada orijinal olmayan her türlü kaynağa eksiksiz atıf yapıldığını, aksinin ortaya çıkması durumunda her tür yasal sonucu kabul ettiğimi beyan ediyorum.

Seval KISA
15.05.2017

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and their intercultural awareness in ELF (English as a lingua franca) communities. Besides, the study presents a distinctive perspective as the effect of gender on participants' perceptions and the issue of intolerance are taken into account and discussed. The sample in the study consists of 107 Erasmus students from Karadeniz Technical University and Gümüşhane University. This is a mixed-methods study which combines qualitative and quantitative research tradition. It adopts an explanatory research design in which a questionnaire was followed by interviews for data collection. The questionnaire was conducted with 107 outgoing Erasmus students whereas the semi-structured interviews were carried out with 11 volunteer students. The findings reveal that various reasons such as visiting different cultures and improving language skills play an important role in promoting Turkish Erasmus students' participation in the program. The study also identifies various challenges and problems students faced before, during, and after their Erasmus experience. As a result of their study abroad experience, the participants acknowledge improving their linguistic knowledge and skills in English as well as vocabulary knowledge. Concerning the lingua franca status of English, English is considered as a world language used a contact language. As for the cultural aspect of the Erasmus, the participants agree raising their intercultural awareness thanks to their interactions with people from different cultures.

Keywords: Erasmus Exchange Program, English as a Lingua Franca, Intercultural Awareness

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk Erasmus öğrencilerinin İngilizce'nin ortak dil olarak kullanıldığı topluluklarda İngilizce'nin iletişim aracı olarak kullanımı ve kültürler arası farkındalıkları açısından görüşlerini araştırmaktır. Bunun yanı sıra, çalışma katılımcıların görüşleri üzerinde cinsiyetin etkisi ve hoşgörüsüzlük konusunu dikkate ve ele alması açısından farklı bir bakış açısı da sunmaktadır. Örneklem, Kardeniz Teknik Üniversitesi ve Gümüşhane Üniversitesi'nden 107 Erasmus öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Bu, nicel ve nitel araştırma geleneklerini birleştiren bir karma yöntem çalışmasıdır. Çalışma, verilen toplanmasında birebir mülakatların anket çalışmasını takip ettiği açıklayıcı (explanatory) araştırma desenini benimsemektedir. Mülakatlar 11 gönüllü öğrenci ile gerçekleştirilirken anket çalışması 107 giden Erasmus öğrencisi ile yapılmıştır. Bulgular, farklı kültürleri ziyaret etme ve dil becerilerini geliştirmek gibi çeşitli sebeplerin Türk Erasmus öğrencilerinin programa katılımlarını teşvik etmede önemli rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Çalışma ayrıca öğrencilerin Erasmus deneyimi öncesi, süresi, ve sonrasında karşılaştıkları çeşitli zorluklar ve problemleri ortaya koymaktadır. Yurtdışı deneyimleri sonucunda katılımcılar kelime bilgilerinin yanı sıra İngilizce dil bilgilerinin ve becerilerinin geliştiğini belirtmektedirler. İngilizce'nin ortak dil olma statüsü ele alındığında, İngilizce'nin dünya dili olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Erasmus programının kültürel yanı açısından katılımcılar kültürler arası farkındalıklarının, farklı kültürlerden insanlarla olan ilişkileri sayesinde geliştirdikleri görüşüne katılmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erasmus Değişim Programı, Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce, Kültürler Arası Farkındalık

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU   : European Union

ELF   : English as a Lingua Franca

ENL   : English as a Native Language

ESL   : English as a Second Language

EFL   : English as a Foreign Language

WE   : World Englishes

ELT   : English Language Teaching

ELL   : English Language Learning

VOICE   : Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English

CA   : Cultural Awareness

ICA   : Intercultural Awareness

QUAL   : Qualitative

QUAN   : Quantitative

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has become a predominant concept in almost every field of life. Along with this concept, there comes a constant change in every field it affects. In the era of global knowledge, education has been one of these fields which evolve around the necessities of globalization. As a result, higher education has become the centre of global education and universities have begun to restructure by taking some current concepts into account such as lifelong learning and continuing education.

In this regard, studying abroad has drawn attention when the needs of globalizing world and education are taken into consideration. Dwyer (2004) notes that studying abroad has several impacts on participants in terms of language use, academic, intercultural and personal development as well as career choices. In addition, the importance of study abroad programs which allow students to practice their language skills in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts has been considered as worth searching for the last few decades, the term ELF has become a prominent subject in the field of English language teaching and learning (Firth, 1996; Jenkins, 2006a, 2007, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2005; Cogo, 2012). The effects of using English as a contact language with other nonnative speakers can let teachers and learners question the traditional ways of English language learning. In this sense, Europe operates the most popular study abroad program in the world, Erasmus exchange program which can provide a useful source for the studies about the effects of ELF.

Given this fact, the current study aims to show how Erasmus program- most popular study abroad program within Europe- affects participants' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and contributes to raise their intercultural awareness after their study abroad experience.

CHAPTER ONE

1. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents an introduction to the concepts of Erasmus exchange program, English as a lingua franca, and intercultural awareness. It also explains the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. Furthermore, the operational definitions, research questions and finally the design of the study are outlined.

1.1. Background of the Study

The relationship between language which is the most essential means of communication and culture has always been considered inseparable (Krasner, 1999). In this respect, it has long been discussed and asserted that learning a language cannot be complete without learning its culture and the best way to do this is to spend time in a foreign country where people get the chance to learn about different cultures and also practice their language skills. Given this perception, students who study a foreign language or intend to improve their foreign language and academic skills try to make use of some study abroad programs. There are various kinds of study abroad programs all over the world, probably Erasmus (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) program being the most popular one in Europe.

Erasmus exchange program which was founded in 1987 is a student exchange program promoted by European Union and probably the most popular student mobility project at the European level. Teichler (2004) acknowledges that Erasmus program has been regarded as the flagship of all the educational programs administered by the EU and it is even claimed by experts that Socrates/Erasmus has been the most successful single component of EU policy. Concerning the European dimension of Erasmus, the program currently has 33 participating countries (28 European Union member and 5 non EU

member countries including Turkey) and it enables graduate or undergraduate students to study in a host university from 3 to 12 months without paying any educational fee. With the growing number of Turkish higher education institutions participating in the program, Erasmus has become the most popular exchange program in Turkish universities.

Erasmus program aims to strengthen European Higher Education, enhance participants' foreign language skills and raise their awareness of other cultures and countries (European Commission, 2014). To put in another way, "ERASMUS intends to increase the number of mobile students within the European Community in order to produce a pool of graduates who are experienced in intra-Community cooperation, and to strengthen the interaction between citizens in Member States" and it highlights the "promotion and enhancement of European dimension of higher education and the creation of a shared European identity" (Şahin, 2007:3) as its essential objective. Regarding these comprehensive objectives of the program, Erasmus exchange program has created an important source for researchers analyzing the program itself and the outcomes of the program from various aspects such as interconnected relationship between the program and its contribution to raising participants' intercultural awareness and promoting the use of English as a lingua franca.

As the globalization has become the trend and English has become the undisputed language of globalization, there has been a growing body of research on the use of English as a means of communication among billions of nonnative speakers surpassing millions of native speakers (Kachru, 1992; Widdowson, 1994; Firth, 1996; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004; Jenkins, 2006a; Cogo & Dewey, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2010). With the rapid spread of globalization, English has turned into the "contact language" (Firth, 1996: 240) for billions of non native speakers coming from different linguacultural backgrounds (Jenkins, 2009) and using it for instrumental reasons such as carrying out a business meeting, ordering at a café, or having a conversation at an online chat room. In this context, English has also become prominent as EU's lingua franca (de Swaan, 2001 cited in House, 2003a). According to a Eurobarometer survey (2006) applied by 26 out of 29 European countries, English was regarded as the most useful language to know (68 %), which makes the perceived importance of English in Europe undeniably high. Given this fact, ELF has also served as a common language for students studying abroad and therefore participants of

Erasmus program are required to have at least a basic knowledge of English language in order to fulfill their academic goals, meet their daily needs, and enhance their cultural interactions. Having English as their first choice for language use, participants may make progress in terms of developing different language aspects (Aguaded-Gomez & Pozo Vicente, 2011; Arslan, 2013) as well as changing their attitudes towards using of English as a lingua franca (Gnutzmann et al., 2014).

Along with its contribution to foreign language development, Erasmus program also promotes participants' development with its cultural dimension as one of the most important objectives of Erasmus program is also to eliminate prejudices against other nations and develop an understanding among European Countries (Mutlu, 2011). Therefore, Erasmus program can also provide participants an appreciation and understanding of the foreign cultures, which in return raises their intercultural awareness (Baker, 2011). Through their interactions with participants from other cultures as well as the culture of host country, the program helps students develop their intercultural awareness. With these possible outcomes of the program in mind, this study aims to investigate and determine how Erasmus program affects the perceptions of students about the use of English as a means of communication in ELF communities and whether it helps increase their intercultural awareness or not.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Studies on study abroad programs provide a rich source for researchers who wish to analyze these programs and their effects on participants from various aspects. Teichler (2004) indicates the reasons that had influence on 1998-99 Erasmus students' decisions, and learning a foreign language came to the fore among other reasons. As a result of its expected linguistic benefits, numerous studies are conducted in order to test these expectations. Regarding various studies, it has been observed that study abroad programs can provide significant improvements especially in the area of oral proficiency (Segalowitz, 2004). Apart from oral proficiency, several studies have indicated study abroad programs' prominent contributions in other linguistic areas such as vocabulary and reading (Dewey, 2004), narrative skills (Collentine, 2004; Pérez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2011) and pronunciation (Diaz-Campos, 2004). Besides its linguistic benefits, study abroad

programs have provided students with a better understanding of other cultures (Aktan & Sarı, 2010).

Erasmus Exchange Program in Europe aims to promote European higher education, participants' language skills and enhance their cultural awareness. A good deal of Turkish universities have participated in Erasmus Exchange Program since 2004 and it has enabled outgoing graduate and undergraduate students to study in different host universities in Europe. Within this context, the relevant literature provides fundamental information about the program itself and the studies conducted on this program. Yet, there has been a need to analyze the impacts of this program on students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication in ELF communities. Also, another contribution of this study would be to determine how Erasmus experience affects students' perceptions about other cultures and countries which can provide an insight into the concept of intercultural awareness. Last but not least, it can be substantial to determine if the gender factor leads to any differences regarding the perceptions of Erasmus students about the use of English and intercultural awareness.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The popularity of study abroad programs has attracted a great deal of attention in terms of analyzing these programs' effectiveness in promoting participants' linguistic, academic, and cultural gains (Ife et al., 2000; Collentine, 2004; Dewey et al., 2012). Therefore, numerous studies have been conducted in order to assess this relationship between culture and language within the framework of study abroad programs. Europe, where English acts as the prominent lingua franca, operates probably the most popular exchange program, that is Erasmus exchange program. While many of the studies about study abroad programs have focused on linguistic and cultural outcomes of the programs, this study might provide a useful source regarding the scarcity of studies conducted in Turkish context about the outcomes of Erasmus exchange program in general, the relationship between students' gender and their linguistic and cultural gains after their study abroad experience. In this respect, this study may contribute to the literature by focusing on the interconnected relationship between Turkish Erasmus exchange students' experiences in the study abroad contexts, especially in ELF communities and their

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perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and raising their intercultural awareness.

Additionally, considering the fact that Turkey has made great amounts of financial contributions for the execution of Erasmus program with incoming and outgoing students (Turkish National Agency, 2016), this study also aims to provide helpful feedback to Turkish institutions which have the decision-making authority. The findings of the study may help politicians and authorities at these institutions to make well-informed decisions in order to implement this project in a more effective way. Similarly, authorities at universities and experts at international relations offices can be equipped with up-to-date findings, and make improvements within their institutions. Finally, the results can be a useful source for the future outgoing students in terms of informing them about the possible challenges, expected academic, linguistic, and cultural outcomes as well as probable intolerance they may encounter during their stay.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and determine Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication in ELF communities and provide an insight into the program's contribution in terms of promoting students' cultural understanding after their study abroad experience. In this regard, the current study is conducted with the participation of students who attended the Erasmus program between 2013 and 2015 academic years. It aims to identify outgoing students' reasons for participating in the program, challenges and problems participants faced before, during and after the program, as well as how Turkish Erasmus students assess the use of English as a means of communication in ELF communities and the impacts of program in terms of raising their intercultural awareness. Another aim of this study is to compare the answer given by male and female participants so as to determine to what extent students' gender influence their perceptions.

1.5. Research Questions

In this respect, the current study addresses the following major research questions:

1. What are Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication after their study abroad experience?

2. How does Erasmus experience contribute to outgoing students' intercultural awareness?

3. Is there a difference between the perceptions of male and female students?

The study also aims to answer following minor research questions:

1. What are outgoing students' reasons for participating in the Erasmus program?

2. What challenges or problems do Turkish Erasmus students have before, during, and after the Erasmus period?

3. What are Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about their linguistic knowledge after their study abroad experience?

4. What are Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about their language skills after their study abroad experience?

5. How does the Erasmus program influence students' perceptions about practicing their English in an ELF context?

6. How do Turkish Erasmus students assess the cultural outcomes of the Erasmus program in terms of eliminating cultural bias?

7. How do Turkish Erasmus students assess the cultural differences in terms of carrying out successful communication with the foreigners?

8. Does the gender of students have a significant effect on their perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication, practicing English in an ELF community, and raising their intercultural awareness?

1.6. Statement of Method

In attempting to investigate Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and also raising intercultural awareness in ELF communities, the sample consisted of outgoing Erasmus students who participated in the program between 2013-2014 Academic Year and 2014-2015 Academic Year are selected. The participants are students from Karadeniz Technical University and Gümüşhane University and they are chosen through convenience sampling. The current study which

makes use of a mixed methods reserach design attempts to determine participants' perceptions by means of a questionnaire first and then a semi-structured interview which is carried out with the volunteer students. In this way, this study incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methods.

1.7. Overview of the Study

The present study consists of four chapters. The first chapter, Framework of the Study, presents background of the study by introducing the topic of the study. It also explains the statement of problem and significance of the study as well as identifying the purpose of the study and the research questions.

The second chapter, Literature Review, provides the review of relevant literature. In this regard, the chapter starts with focusing on study abroad programs and especially Erasmus exchange program. This is followed by providing information about the studies conducted in Turkey and abroad in regard to Erasmus program from various aspects. Then, it defines one of the key concepts in this study, which is ELF, and its relevance to ESL, EFL, EIL, and WE and later highlightes how ELF is related to Erasmus concept in this study. Lastly, it provides a general framework for the concept of intercultural awareness and its place in Erasmus program.

The third chapter, Methodology, gives information about the sampling and the research design of the study by explaining the rationale behind its preference. It also describes the methods, instruments, data collection and analysis processes employed in the study.

The forth chapter, Discussion, focuses on the data analysis and explains the findings obtained from both instruments and discusses them in relation to key concepts in the study as well as previous studies.

The last section, Conclusion and Implications, provides a summary of the findings of the present study and explains the limitations of the study. It also includes some pedagogical implications and further research suggestions.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Given the fact that English has become the global language of the world and is used by millions of native speakers and more importantly by billions of non-native speakers as a contact language, there has been a growing interest in international status of English and the concepts accompanying this status. Besides, the importance of study abroad programs such as Erasmus Exchange Program which enable students to practice their language skills in a foreign language setting has gained momentum. In this regard, the present chapter provides background information about study abroad programs, the term 'ELF' with a following review of key concepts such as ENL, ESL, EFL, WE, EIL, Communicative Competence, International Communicative Competence, Erasmus Program, and Intercultural Awareness. Throughout the chapter, other considerations concerning the implementation of these concepts in English Language Teaching (ELT) and English Language Learning (ELL) are presented and explained. In addition, this chapter also provides an insight into the relationship among Erasmus program, ELF within the Erasmus Program, and the program's contribution to participants' intercultural development as well as comprehensive analyses of various studies conducted within these fields.

2.1. Study Abroad

It is assumed that one of the most effective ways to master a foreign language is to study it in its natural setting where learners have the opportunity to practice their language skills through their interaction with the native speakers of that language. Therefore, study abroad programs have become a popular and vital part of language learning studies. Participants of these study abroad programs can have more interaction opportunities and be exposed to target culture, which in turn promotes participants' overall language skills and intercultural understanding. In this respect, this section provides an insight into study abroad term and its relation to language learning in the relevant literature.

2.1.1. Language Learning in Study Abroad Context

It is a well-known fact that learning a foreign language has been a challenging and demanding process for most of the learners. Regarding this fact, "a widely held assumption expressed both by learners and parents, teachers and institutions is that those students who experience periods of study abroad come back having improved their language skills dramatically" (Lopez Serrano, 2010: 149). Participants of study abroad programs usually enroll in language courses which combine formal classroom learning and informal learning (out-of-class). Thus, unlike studying a foreign language at home, study abroad programs enable students to be immersed in the target language as well as the culture itself and interact with the native speakers of the foreign language in real-life situations. Furthermore, students' study abroad experiences enhance their motivation about language learning and influence their lives in a positive way. Furthermore, it is important to note that these study abroad programs not also allow students to learn a foreign language but also help them practice their present language skills in its natural environment. Therefore, participants can also enhance their pragmatic skills about the use of that foreign language.

Regarding these possible gains of study abroad, the popularity of study abroad programs is increasing day by day. There are various international education institutions offering diverse study abroad programs for students from different countries. For instance, according to statistics by IES (International Education of Students, 2014), which offers more than 130 study abroad programs; more than 100,000 students have participated in these programs since its foundation in 1950. Another example is Institute of International Education (2014) which enabled over 35,000 participants from more than 185 countries to study over 200 programs in 2014. Statistics by IIE (2014) demonstrates that there were participants of almost all ages ranging from 12 to 87 and more than half the participants were female.

2.1.2. Studies on Study Abroad

Due to their popularity, there has been a growing interest in study abroad programs and their effects on participants' improvements and various aspects of study abroad programs have been investigated by researchers and most of these studies have focused on

linguistic and cultural outcomes. Therefore, this section aims to provide a deep understanding about the impacts of study abroad context based on relevant studies in the literature. These studies focusing on diverse skills of language proficiency and also cultural aspects form a rich source for the literature.

A considerable number of study abroad studies have investigated the improvements in participants' speaking skill (Allen & Herron, 2003; Serrano et. al, 2011; Wood, 2007). In her study, Lopez Serrano (2010) investigated comparative studies concerning language learning in study abroad and at home contexts. As a result of her review, she acknowledged that studies indicated much more improvement in study abroad context in terms of oral proficiency as well as more native-like phonological variants. It was also observed that study abroad context seemed to foster students' writing abilities and also their motivation and confidence about writing. In her study, Ife (2000) asked students to assess their overall language development after their study abroad experience. The study was conducted with 135 students and the results indicated that the majority of students reported greater vocabulary, more fluency in speaking and a better pronunciation. Several other studies (Dewey et. al., 2012; Diaz-Campos, 2009; Llanes & Munoz, 2009, 2013; Magnan & Back, 2007; Martinsen et al., 2010) conducted on the effects of study abroad program shows that students' study abroad experiences promote their oral skills significantly. Through social interaction, students can improve their speaking abilities and gain more native-like pronunciation patterns.

Although the majority of studies on study abroad highlight the importance of oral fluency as a linguistic gain, there are also several studies focusing on different language gains. For example, in their study Allen and Herron (2003) investigated both linguistic and affective outcomes of study abroad experience of 25 French college students. It was observed that apart from oral skills, students also improved their listening French skills significantly even in short-term program (six weeks). Also, students' language anxiety which stemmed from linguistic insecurity and cultural differences decreased significantly after their study abroad experience.

In his study, Dewey (2004) investigated the role of context in reading development, so he compared reading comprehension and processes between learners of Japanese in

study abroad and intensive domestic immersion contexts. The study determined that study abroad students had more gains on reading measures and felt more confident reading the second language than intensive immersion students. On the other hand, some other studies focused on the grammatical gains of study abroad context; however, several studies had conflicting results. For instance, in the study by Collentine (2004) no improvement was found in terms of grammatical and lexical abilities. Yet, in his study on Irish university learners' language development of French, Howard (2005) noted that there were improvements in certain grammatical structures. Regarding the study abroad students' progress in writing, Perez-Vidal and Juan-Garau (2009) found out that students started to write more fluently and in a more accurate and grammatically complex language after their study abroad experience.

Regarding the development of vocabulary in study abroad context, several studies (Dewey, 2008; Ife et al., 2000; Jiménez-Jiménez, 2010) support the idea that study abroad provides participants with more expansive vocabulary knowledge. It is revealed that study abroad students acquire a deeper level of vocabulary knowledge as they engage in productive activities such writing and speaking in the target language and also social networks. Also, these programs' impact on language learners' beliefs (Amuzie and Winke, 2009) indicates students start to believe more in the importance of learner autonomy and less in the importance of teacher's role in learning after their study abroad experience.

Apart from linguistic outcomes, study abroad may also help language learners develop their sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence as it provides an opportunity to observe and practice the target language in real-life setting with native speakers. In this sense, Shardakova (2005) analyzed American learners' acquisition of three different ways of apologies in Russian language. The study indicated that study abroad students were able to adjust their apologies more closely to the native speaker norm due an increase in their linguistic proficiency and direct exposure to Russian culture.

Some study abroad studies focused on the length of stay and how different periods of stay influenced the linguistics gains. Dwyer (2004) investigated the longitudinal correlations between specific programs. The study which had 3723 participants revealed that studying abroad for a full year had more important and enduring effects on students. A

similar study by Llanes and Serrano (2011) confirms the hypothesis that participants staying longer in study abroad context have greater linguistic gains.

Except for linguistic outcomes, study abroad programs have been analyzed in order to determine their effects on improving participants' cultural understandings. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) acknowledge that for a successful communication, language use must be integrated with culturally appropriate behavior. Therefore, culture has been an inseparable part of language studies. Studies in the literature approach this issue from different perspectives. For example, Martinsen (2010) studied how cultural sensitivity levels before the program affected participants' oral language skills, and found out that students with a higher level of cultural sensitivity were more successful whereas those with a lower level of cultural sensitivity were more intolerant to cultural differences which inhibited their social interaction during their sojourns and as a result their language development. Most of the studies in the literature support the idea that students have not only linguistic but also cultural gains as they also improve their overall intercultural sensitivity after their study abroad experiences (Anderson et al., 2006; Dwyer, 2004; Ileleji, 2009).

Study abroad studies include not only the effects of this context or its linguistic or cultural gains but also some factors which may influence participants' language learning. In this regard, it is possible to consider several factors such as age, gender, motivation, social interaction, and initial proficiency. For example, in a study by Dewey et al. (2012), researchers investigated several language use predictors such as age, gender, personality, and development of social networks. 118 volunteers from different countries participated in the study and their gains in language skills were also analyzed. It was concluded that some factors (personality and gender) had greater role in in-class language use while the language program being the most important predictor of language use. Concerning the gender factor, it can be informed that gender may influence the language acquisition in study abroad context since in some countries women's role is quite different from men's traditional roles. Thus, this different social role of women may inhibit their language progress and gains as they cannot interact as freely as men in the target culture (Polanyi, 1995; cited in Llanes and Serrano, 2011). For the age factor, Llanes and Munoz (2013) conducted a study and examined the effects of learning context and age on second language development. For the study, they compared the language gains in terms of oral

and written fluency, lexical and syntactic complexity, and accuracy of four groups of learners of English: children in a study abroad setting, children in their at-home school, adults in a study abroad setting, and adults in their at-home university. Results revealed that study abroad was more advantageous for children than adults even though adults performed better than children in overall gains.

2.2. Erasmus Program

Nowadays, changes taking place in every field of life due to the effects of globalizing world have led internationalization and also cooperation among societies and countries. Education which is one of these major fields has had a key role in this transformation process. Thanks to globalized academic system, higher education benefits from some elements which foster the internalization of education such as common academic models, partnering with foreign institutions, international use of English for academic purposes, and distance education (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). This internationalization process of education which is a relatively new phenomenon (Raikou & Karalis, 2007) has led universities set international standards and this condition affected the education policy of European Union (EU). It is assumed that education unity among European Community countries would foster the process of unifying Europe (Aydın, 2012). In this regard, Erasmus program was created in order to increase the quality of higher education in Europe as well as develop greater social cohesion within European nations. Erasmus program provides the mobility of students and academics within Europe and it aims to reinforce the relationships among partner universities. For this purpose, program helps the recognition of studies and places academically in participating countries based on agreements and it is required that one of the exchange countries should be a member country of European Union. Mobility of students and academics is supported by grants which National Agency in their country determine based on certain criteria of host country.

2.2.1. European Union and Student Mobility

Since the Erasmus program which promotes mobility in higher education is the world largest support program for international student mobility (Teichler, 2004), it would

be beneficial to investigate the program, its history, structure and goals in detail in order to have a deeper understanding of this exchange program.

Although the first step of forming EU's higher education policy was taken in 1971 (Corbette, 2003), it was not until 1999 when Education Ministers of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration. The Bologna Declaration which initiated the Bologna Process was designed to create a common ground for European higher education in order to enhance the mobility of students, teachers and researchers, provide high quality teaching so that international competitiveness of European higher education could be increased as well as incorporation of European dimension into higher education would be achieved (European Commission, 2015a).

Bologna process enabled the emergence of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which introduced a system of academic degrees that are recognizable and comparable. Within this framework, the process involved six actions including a system of easily recognizable and comparable academic degrees, the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries, ECTS-compatible credit systems, mobility of students, teachers, and researchers, cooperation, and European dimension in higher education. In this regard, it is aimed to develop European dimension in education especially by teaching Member States languages, encouraging mobility by academic recognition of their diplomas and period of study, promoting cooperation between educational institutions, and exchanging information and experience on common issues of education in Member States (European Commission, 2015a).

With regard to promoting mobility in Europe, several programs were created such as Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci with each program differing in its aims and target population. In this respect, Socrates is known as the Europe's educational exchange program which involves several actions. Its aim was to strengthen the European dimension in education, to promote lifelong education by learning foreign languages, to promote mobility and cooperation between educational institutions, and to increase the use of new technologies in education (European Commision, 2015b).

Socrates involved eight actions: Comenius- school education, Erasmus- higher, university and post-university education, Grundtvig- adult education and other education pathways, Lingua- language learning, Minerva- information and communication technologies in education, Observation and Innovation in Education Systems, Joint Measures, and Accompanying Measures. Socrates program which was the initiative educational program of European Commison ran until 1999. In 2000, it was replaced by Socrates II which also ran until 2006. After that, it was replaced by Lifelong Learning Program(LLP) between 2007-2013. In Lifelong Learning Program, two different programs, Socrates and Leonarda da Vinci, were brought together under the same program and four main programs- Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig, and Leonarda da Vinci were retained and also Jean Monnet actions were added. After 2013, Erasmus program which was named LLP Erasmus was started to be named Erasmus + between 2014-2020. Although the name of the program has changed for certain periods of time, most of the content and the aims of the programs has remained the same (Turkish National Agency, EU Education and Youth Programs from Past to Present, 2015).

2.2.2. Erasmus Program

Erasmus is the education program implemented by the European Commission which promotes the mobility of higher education students, teachers, and researchers. Erasmus program was named after the famous medieval scholar, philosopher, humanist, and theologian Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536) who travelled to many countries in Europe and it is the acronym of the name, the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. The program was established in 1987 by the European Community (EC) as a student exchange program and it was a subprogram of the Socrates. The European Commission which is responsible for the running of the Erasmus program manages the budget and monitors the implementation of the program. However, the European Commission charges National Agencies for the budget implementation, because it is assumed that this approach would bring Erasmus closer to its participants and provide a better adaption to the different education and training systems. Thus, each participant country has its own National Agency which promotes and implements the program at national level. These national agencies provide participants with the mobility grants which enable them cover their study abroad expenses and the amount depends on the host

country. In this regard, Erasmus program supports the mobility of students, academicians, and staff. In this way, it also enhances the cooperation among universities and higher education institutions through bilateral agreements. According to Raikou and Karalis (2010), Erasmus and especially students mobility combines three forms of Coombs' typology (1968, cited in Raikou & Karalis, 2010: 105).

> It is *formal* because, when studying abroad, students become part of the formal study programme of the host country; *non-formal* because they often concurrently attend other additional programmes (usually language courses or information courses concerning the study system and the university services); and *informal* because they come in contact with new environments.

Mutual exchange of students and academicians among participating universities is carried out in accordance with certain agreements based on the main content of the program. First, participating institutions have to be recognized as eligible for Erasmus activities which means that they should meet the required conditions for having a mobility agreement to send students to another university within framework of the Erasmus program (Şahin, 2007). Currently, the Erasmus program has 33 participating countries- 28 European Union member countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom), and 5 non EU member countries (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey) which can take part in the Erasmus program (The EU Commission, Education and Training, 2015).

Within the mobility programs offered by the Erasmus program, student mobility is by far the most preferred program with the most participants. Students studying at a higher education institution in one of the participating countries can participate in the programs after meeting certain criteria required for the program. The period of the study varies from three months to twelve months. Apart from the grants provided by the national agencies, graduate or undergraduate students can continue their education in the host country without paying university fee. According to the statistics, more than 3 million students participated in the Erasmus program since its foundation in 1987 and it is estimated that Erasmus + program which will run between 2014 and 2020 will provide grants for another 4 million participants including 2 million students (The European Commission, Press Release

Database, 2014). Regarding the objectives of the Erasmus program, it is assumed that the program will have the following outcomes (European Commission, Erasmus Program Guide, 2014, p.31):

- improved learning performance
- enhanced employability and improved career prospects
- increased sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- increased self-empowerment and self-esteem improved foreign language competences
- enhanced intercultural awareness, more active participation in society
- better awareness of the European project and the EU values
- increased motivation for taking part in future (formal/non-formal) education or training after the mobility period abroad.

2.2.3. Turkey's Participation in the Erasmus Program

Following Turkey's candidacy process for being a European Union Member State which started after the Helsinki European Council of December 1999 (European Commission Enlargement, 2016), practices for its participation in European education system also started. This participation process in European educational programs and the practices carried out can be divided into three stages: preparatory measures between 2002 and 2003, pilot applications between 2003 and 2004, and full participation in 2004 (Ağrı, 2006, cited in Aktan & Sarı, 2010). Table 1 presents recent information about the number of out-bound students by country.

Table 1: Number of out-bound students by country (studies and placements) in 2012-2013

Outbound student mobility yearly growth rates			
Countries	**2011/12**	**2012/13**	**Growth %**
MT	149	208	40 %
CY	257	350	36 %
HR	882	1124	27 %
TR	11826	14412	22 %
GR	3591	4249	18 %
SK	2685	3008	12 %
IT	23377	25805	10 %
DK	3315	3646	10 %
RO	4578	5011	9 %
BE	7091	7741	9 %
PT	6484	7041	9 %
NL	9310	10061	8 %
UK	13662	14572	7 %
FR	33269	35311	6 %
PL	15315	16221	6 %
EE	1092	1153	6 %
BG	1852	1952	5 %
CH	2714	2860	5 %
SI	1735	1821	5 %
DE	33363	34891	5 %
SE	3573	3728	4 %
FI	5272	5496	4 %
CZ	7004	7299	4 %
AT	5590	5714	2 %
NO	1690	1707	1 %
HU	4361	4387	1 %
IE	2754	2762	0 %
LT	3548	3529	-1 %
ES	39545	39249	-1 %

Outbound student mobility yearly growth rates			
Countries	**2011/12**	**2012/13**	**Growth %**
LV	2194	2149	-2 %
IS	261	255	-2 %
LU	450	405	-10 %
LI	38	26	-32 %
	252827	**268143**	**6 %**

Source: European Commission, Press Data Release, 2014

As it can be observed in the table, Turkey had the 7th greatest budget among 31 countries in Lifelong Learning Program conducted between 2003 and 2007 (Arslan, 2013). According to the statistics of 2012/2013 academic year, Turkey had 6145 incoming students from other countries whereas Germany, Spain, and France were the most popular three destinations. Concerning outbound students, Turkey was the 7th countries with 14412 students participating in the program (The European Commission, Press Release Database, 2014). After the pilot application in 2003-2004 academic year with the participation of 15 universities selected by Ulusal Ajans (the Center for the European Union's Education and Youth Programs), Turkey has started to participate fully in both the Erasmus program as well as other EU educational programs (Şahin, 2007). Since 2004, the number of incoming and outbound students and the number of participating universities in Turkey have been increasing each year. Currently, there are 138 universities participating in the program in terms of student and staff mobility.

Concerning the objectives of the Erasmus program, the increasing popularity of the program, and the growing number of participants, studies on the Erasmus exchange program have attracted great attention from researchers (Papatsiba, 2005; Sigalas, 2010; Teichler, 1996, 2004; Yağcı et al., 2007; Zhelyazkova, 2013). Studies on the Erasmus program examine the program from different aspects and highlight its various outcomes. For instance, in his study Teichler (2004) analyzed several Erasmus program evaluation studies and introduced the reasons which had a strong influence on 1998-1999 Erasmus students' decision to study abroad. Most cited reasons were learning a foreign language, opportunity for self-development (87% each), wish to gain academic experience in another

country (82% each, wish to improve understanding of the host country (73%), wish to improve career prospects, wish to travel (71%), and wish for a break from usual surroundings. In the same study, Teichler (2004) found out that 93 % of the 1998-1999 Erasmus students were satisfied with their Erasmus period abroad while only 2 % were dissatisfied with the program. Concerning such a high percentage of satisfaction with the program, it was noted that most students described their Erasmus experience as 'eye-opening' and 'horizon-broadening' (p.406).

Regarding the participants' reasons for participating in the program, another study was carried out by Raikou and Karalis (2007) with 144 Greek students who participated in the program between 2000 and 2004, and demonstrated similar results. The findings revealed that main reasons for participating in Erasmus were having European experience, academic and cultural reasons, future career plans, improving foreign language, and making friends abroad. In the context of Turkey, similar results can be observed in a study by Aktan and Sarı (2010) in which the researchers examined both the historical development of the Erasmus program in Turkey and the reasons and the views of exchange students. The study which was carried out with 36 student participants showed that students had similar reasons for attending the program such as meeting different cultures, experiencing in abroad, increasing self-confidence, improving foreign language, learning about different education systems, and career plans. It was also determined that students achieved most of their objectives at the end of their sojourn.

Apart from the reasons for participating in this international exchange program, a great number of studies have focused on the program's outcomes. For instance, some studies (Özdem, 2013; Yağcı et al., 2007) analyzed satisfaction levels of outgoing students and observed that students were satisfied with security, cleaning, health, sheltering, social and cultural activities provided by the host university.

In their study, Raikou and Karalis, (2010) investigated the non-formal and informal educational processes in the Erasmus program and the effects of students' participation on their lifelong development. The study which was carried out in a Greek university through questionnaires and interviews revealed that the effects of non-formal and informal education may be more important than formal education in the Erasmus program as

students reported developing an important degree of European citizenship and positive views about living in another country as well as enhancing their self-confidence. This aspect of the Erasmus program is supported by some studies in Turkish context (Arslan, 2013; Tekin & Hiç Gencer, 2013) in which increased level of respect and tolerance towards other cultures as well as personal acquisitions, gains, and experiences are highlighted.

Regarding the program's contribution to academic development, studies on Turkish Erasmus students (Aydın, 2012; Genç İlter, 2013; Ünlü, 2015) found out that Erasmus experience contributed considerably to the participants' language skills and knowledge, educational and intercultural experience as they became more enthusiastic, tolerant, and open-minded. However, they also reported having problems related to language, adaptation, grant, formal procedures, and negative points of views towards Turkish participants in terms of cultural and religious issues.

In another study, Brown and Aktaş (2011) analyzed the exchange students' fears before their departure for the program and found out that students were anxious about the quality of the accommodation in the host country, their language ability since having advanced level of knowledge English would be helpful for successful communication, feeling lonely, and being treated unfavorably because of their religion. Maiworm and Teichler (1998) analyzed the view of local directors about the problems faced by both their own students and the incoming students. The findings showed that local directors most often observe problems in coping with courses and examinations in a foreign language, also high level of courses as well as different teaching methods.

Although Erasmus is widely known as a student mobility program, it also promotes staff mobility for academicians. In this sense, it can be reported that Turkish academic staff exhibit a more participative attitude in this program concerning its positive impacts on professional development. In their study, Halat and Hocaoğlu (2014) examined the perspectives of academic staff about the academic and socio-cultural effectiveness of Erasmus Teaching Mobility and Erasmus Training Mobility programs. Participants were 113 scholars from Afyon Kocatepe University and it was found out that most of the participants achieved their expectations from the program such as obtaining international

experience and academic achievements, presenting their culture well, learning about other cultures, practicing English, and doing academic work with their colleagues. Furthermore, another striking result of the study was that female scholars were more positive about the program outcomes compared to their male colleagues. On the other hand, Oğuz (2013) investigated the underlying barriers which restrain the EU academics from participating in the program in Turkey through a literature review and a quantitative overview of the numerical trends in academic mobility. The study found out that concerns over the quality and the reputation of the higher education system, linguistic diversity, the available resources, openness, and geographical distance can be a barrier for the mobility of academic staff.

In addition to the effects of the program on Turkish outgoing students, Neuman and Knust (2013) examined the perception of two German incoming exchange students studying in Karabük University about Turkish culture. Participants stated that they attended the Erasmus program in order to experience Turkish culture and check negative accusations about this culture. As a result of their experience, participants acknowledged that Turkish culture differed a lot from the Turkish stereotype created in Germany. Similarly, Yağcı et al. (2013) examined the academic challenges which 106 incoming exchange students in 16 universities faced during their study in Turkey. The results indicated that students were generally satisfied with the academic process as they did not have many academic challenges. Also, there were no significant differences in challenges faced by the students according to their genders, universities, faculties, education levels, and countries. In another study by Boyacı (2011), incoming students were asked to compare classroom management in Turkish Higher Education with their own country. In this qualitative study with 55 exchange students, it was found out that in terms of instructional practices students perceived evaluation system, physical condition and classroom size as more advantageous than their own universities. They also expressed that students in their country had much sense of responsibility than Turkish students and more self- motivated regarding the Turkish academics' efforts to motivate students in classroom.

Cultural and linguistic aspect of the Erasmus program has not been the only research subject for the researchers. Some studies focus on other aspects of the Erasmus and its effects on the participants. For instance, Souto-Otero (2008) investigated the

financial issues and the family background of Erasmus students. For his study, he carried out a survey with the participation of over 15000 students from 2500 universities, which was the largest number of responses for a survey of Erasmus students to date. The findings revealed that in richer countries students from families with higher income levels participated in the program whereas in poorer countries fewer people from higher socio-economic backgrounds participated. Also, in spite of some existing important socio-economic barriers, access to the program has been widened over the last decade. The study also showed that occupational background of students' parents was not as important as their educational background in determining their participation in the program since a large number of parents had higher education.

Erasmus program has also offered a rich resource for studies which investigate the effects of the program on promoting the European Union and the European identity. Some studies (Sigalas, 2010; Wilson, 2011) investigated whether participation in Erasmus program changed participants' attitudes towards European Union in terms of increasing their support for the EU and the integration, and the results revealed that students' Erasmus experience did not strengthen their support for the EU, although they stated that EU membership gave them more personal advantages. On the other hand, in another study Mitchell (2012) compared 1041 Erasmus students with 970 non-mobile students from five countries and found out that for the vast majority of the Erasmus students, their sojourn abroad was an intercultural and transnational experience which increased their interest in Europe and the EU and made them feel more European and identify as European.

The review of recent literature about the concept of study abroad and the Erasmus exchange program in Europe suggests that these study abroad programs provide a great deal of points to be searched. The multi-dimensional aspects of these programs offer different perspectives to be focused on and investigated. The abovementioned studies and their findings reveal that study abroad programs, especially Erasmus exchange program have had various advantages in terms of equipping their participants with significant qualities such as enhanced language skills, improved learning performance, increased self-esteem, a better awareness of European cultures and values, raised intercultural awareness, better career prospects, and increased motivation for further their further studies. On the other hand, they can also include some disadvantages since it would be utopian to expect

these programs to yield an unconditional satisfaction about everything. Yet, it can be concluded from the studies that the advantages of these programs predominantly surpass their disadvantages.

2.3. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Language is a complicated and systematic communication tool used by people in order to transmit and express ideas, opinions, and feelings. It also allows people to develop a sense of belonging to the society in which they speak a common language. Since the world has become more globalized and cross countries boundaries have become less apparent, there has been a need for a common language which would serve as a means of communication among the speakers of different languages. Therefore, a common language –*lingua franca*- which was spoken and understood by the speakers of different languages came out.

Many researchers have made numerous contributions in order to define the term lingua franca from several aspects (e.g. Firth, 1996; House, 1999; Jenkins, 2006a; Seidlhofer, 2005). Regarding the fact that English is the most widely used language as a lingua franca (Dombi, 2011), the term 'English as a lingua franca' has been defined by various researchers. Firth (1996: 240) basically defines English as a lingua franca as "a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication". Seidlhofer (2011: 7) also indicates that EFL can be considered as 'any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" and which is "spoken by millions of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds on a daily basis, routinely, and successfully, in their professional, academic, and personal lives". In her definition, Jenkins (2009) on the other hand, highlights the importance different linguacultural backgrounds of EFL speakers.

2.3.1. English as a Native Language, English as a Second Language vs English as a Foreign Language

Initially, English was "the native language of a relatively small island nation", and now it has become "the most widely taught, read, and spoken language that the world has ever known" (Kachru and Nelson, 2001, cited in Kuo, 2006: 213). Various factors such as colonization, immigration and globalization have led English to be used as a native, a second, and also a foreign language among people. With an estimated amount of 2 billion speakers of English either as a second language or lingua franca (Crystal, 2008), it is important to make a distinction between these concepts. In this respect, it was Kachru (1985) who proposed three concentric circles for the varieties of World Englishes. In his model, he introduced the terms *Inner Circle* for countries where English is spoken as native language, *Outer Circle* for countries where English is not the native language, yet it is used as a second language and institutionally, and *Expanding Circle* for countries where English is neither a native nor a second language, but a foreign language.

Figure 1. Kachru's Three Circle Model

Expanding Circle e.g. Turkey, China, Russia

Outer Circle e.g. India, Singapore, South Africa

Inner Circle e.g. England, the USA, Australia
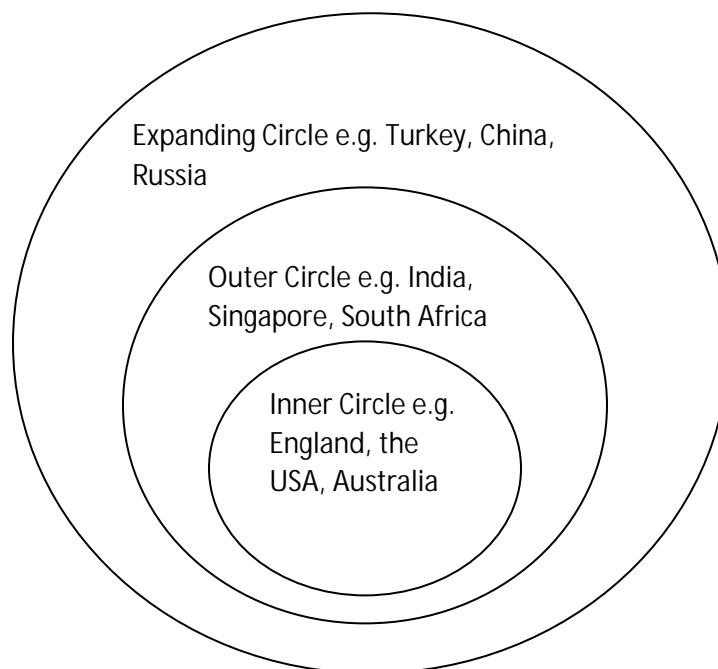
What makes ELF different from ENL is that although ELF is based on ENL linguistic forms, these forms differ from ENL due to contact among ELF speakers (Jenkins, 2009). Kuo (2006) acknowledges that today English is used in geographically and historically remote settings from inner circle for various purposes such as conducting professional discourse or carrying out everyday conversation in which no native speaker participation is required. Thus, ELF is the language of international communication with more non-native speakers than native speakers (Graddol, 2006). Given this fact, it can be stated that the importance of English in Expanding Circle countries is increasing day by day with people from different L1 backgrounds using it in their academic, professional, or personal lives. For example, ELF can be used in various setting such as in a business meeting in China, on the Internet through Facebook or Twitter, or in a conversation between Erasmus students.

2.3.2. English as a Foreign Language vs. English as a Lingua Franca

Due to increasing interest in EFL, it has been important to make a distinction between ELF and EFL which differ in terms of their aims, speakers, and contexts. As for *foreign language,* Mpepo (1990) notes that in EFL "the use of the language is with native speakers" (p. 232). Regarding the foreign language status of English in expanding circle, Andreasson (1994) acknowledges that for expanding circle members "the ideal goal is to imitate the native speaker's standard language as closely as possible"(p. 402). Jenkins (2006a) also explains that the purpose is to communicate with the native speakers (NS) of that language in an efficient way, so the aim of the speaker is to gain a native-like competence in the target language. Similarly, Seidlhofer (2004) acknowledges that the goal of foreign language learning is to gain near-native competence. Therefore, linguistic, pragmatic or socio-cultural differences between NS and NNS (non-native speaker) are regarded as *errors* which stem from incomplete L2 acquisition. On the other hand, English as a lingua franca is not "a foreign language learnt for communication with its NSs. Rather, it is a world language whose speakers communicate mainly with other NNSs, often from different L1s than their own" (Jenkins, 2006a: 140). In this respect, the following figure summarizes the differences between ELF and EFL.

Figure 2: Comparison between EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)

L2 ←————————————————————————→ L2

EFL: part of Modern Foreign Languages   **ELF: part of World Englishes**

-deficit perspective   -difference perspective

-transfer/interfrence and fossilization metaphors   - contact/evolution metaphor

-conformative, monolingual bias   - transformative, bilingual

-code-switching/ code-mixing =   - code-switching/ code-mixing =

    inference errors   bilingual resources

may be the same linguistic outcome,
but *errors* in EFL vs. *variants* in ELF

Source: Jenkins, 2006a: 140.

In the figure, it can be observed that EFL is regarded as a part of Modern Foreign Languages which depends on NS norms whereas ELF is considered not as a foreign language but as a world language used for communication with NNSs from different L1 backgrounds. Therefore, code-switching or code-mixing are regarded as natural in ELF while it is considered interference errors stemming from inadequate L2 acquisition in EFL. Due to EFL's dependence on NS norms, deviations are seen as "errors", "deficiencies" or "bad" English in EFL since the main purpose is to have a native-like proficiency in English.

Furthermore, Cogo (2012: 98) adds that ELF speakers cannot be clearly identified "within the traditional parameters" since "it includes people with different linguacultural backgrounds, and is highly variable, as the speakers may change more or less frequently over time and space". Therefore English "is no longer viewed as connected to the culture of the traditional English-dominant countries" (Baker, 2009: 570).

2.3.3. World Englishes

The current condition of English language as the global lingua franca with its billions of nonnative speakers surpassing the native speakers has led to the emergence of numerous varieties in this language. In this regard, the term World Englishes (WE) is used to refer to these countless varieties of English in use today and also 'Englishes' is used in order to highlight this diversity (McArthur, 2002; Davies et al. 2003; Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008; Ateş et al., 2015). Seargent (2012: 1) further notes that English language should no longer be considered "as a single, monolithic entity, but as something that has multiple varieties and forms". Considering the World Englishes paradigm and the varieties presented by this term, McArthur (2001: 16) acknowledges that it is now "possible to be multilingual within world English". The underlying idea of WE paradigm is that "it challenges the mainstream American and British linguistic norms and standards" (Ateş et al. 2015: 486). Kubota (2001) asserts that the stratification of WE has been presented in three concentric circles developed by Kachru (1985).

While World Englishes paradigm emphasize the recognition of numerous varieties of English arising from the continuing spread rate of English, some relative terms were also coined in this regard with International English (IE) and English as an International Language (EIL) being two of them. Davies et al. (2003) differentiate between International English (IE) and World Englishes (WE) stating that IE refers to a universalist view which suggests the existence of one English that unites all those who use English. On the other hand, WE refers to the idea that English has split into a variety of –lects. Regarding English as an International Language (EIL), Matsuda and Friedrich (2011: 333) define it as "a term that describes a function that English performs in multicultural contexts" and not as a particular linguistic variety used for international communication. In this context, Seidlhofer (2004: 210) makes a distinction between IE and EIL noting that IE refers to "clearly distinguishable, codified, and unitary variety" whereas EIL refers to English usage internationally whether in Expanding Circle, Outer Circle, or Inner Circle contexts. Therefore, it can be concluded that EIL can be regarded as relating to ELF since both EIL and ELF refer to the context in which language is used.

2.3.4. The Place of World Englishes in English Language Teaching and English Language Learning

Although WE and ELF seem to differ in terms of their foci points, both approaches are largely complementary to one another and share one important point which is proposing a paradigm shift in English language teaching. Concerning the recognition and examination of complexities of the roles of English in the world and regarding this new paradigm shift, several main points were indicated (Canagarajah, 1999; Jenkins, 2002, 2006, 2007; Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 2007; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2001 cited in Sacareni, 2009: 176-177):

> Non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers; native speakers can no longer claim exclusive ownership of the language; native varieties of English, British and American English (or any other 'native' variety) do not represent relevant models for learners of English around the world, be they in the Outer or the Expanding Circle; native speakers of English should no longer be regarded as the sole repository of truth about the language nor the default choice as language teachers; the distinction between native and non-native speakers should be downplayed as irrelevant and unhelpful; and as English becomes abstracted from Anglo-Saxon culture, the cultural component of ELT and learning should look to other (local as well as global) cultures as reference points. (Saraceni, 2009: 176-177)

As it was indicated above, the introduction of such novel terms such as WE, ELF and EIL has led researchers in the field of English language teaching to question the appropriateness of American and British standards as the instructional model (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011). Regarding the pedagogical aspect of WE paradigm, it is indicated that there is a need for a new English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy which will "take into account the cross-cultural values of the use of English in multilingual communities, the questioning of native-speaker models, and the recognition of the equality of the varieties of English that have resulted from the global spread of the language (MacKay, 2002). Similarly, Matsuda (2008) acknowledges that using American and British standards as instructional model may not be appropriate since there are multiple standardized varieties of English in language classrooms. Therefore, language teachers should be equipped with the information of current use and status of English. In the same vein, teachers should also respect and accept any kind of linguistic and functional diversity of English in order to raise language learners' awareness about WE paradigm and overcome the native-speaker bias. While it is indicated that making language teachers and learners

more aware about the WE paradigm is possible, it is not probable to describe and teach a single variety of English that can be used in all international contexts (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011), approaching the attempts of several researchers such as Jenkins (2002) and Seidhofer (2006) to describe and establish a teachable international English variety in doubt.

Whereas the controversy about selecting a variety over another as the instructional model continues, Matsuda and Friedlich (2011: 338) notes that it is important for students to understand that "the variety they are learning is one of many and may differ from what their future interlocutors' use". In this context, Matsuda and Friedlich (2011) suggests several approaches to increase students' awareness of English varieties such as exposing students to different varieties of English through teaching materials, providing opportunities for students to interact with English users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and increasing students' meta-knowledge about Englishes by making it a lesson focus. In this regard, several studies have been carried out in order to assess how WE perspectives are dealt within teacher preparation programs (Brown, 2005; Matsuda, 2009; Sharifian and Marlina, 2012). In their study, Ateş et al. (2015) analyzed and measured the effectiveness of incorporating WE perspectives in a teacher education program. The study which was carried out with 215 preservice teachers involved instructional activities aimed at promoting WE perspective in ESL courses. The findings of the study revealed that instructional activities were helpful in improving preservice teachers' perceptions, and appropriate interventions can promote students' awareness and acceptance of linguistic and functional varieties of English. In a similar study by Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015), a proposal for in-service ELF-aware teacher program which involved Turkish ESOL teachers reading ELF and WE literature and developing, teaching and evaluating ELF-aware lessons for their learners was presented. The study revealed that teachers were able to establish key distinction between ELF and standard varieties of English as well as between ELF and EFL and they also regarded their engagement with ELF not just as a means of getting to know ELF construct but as a broader opportunity for their own development as reflective teachers. Although WE has raised many teachers' and teacher educators' awareness of English language spread (Jenkins, 2006b), there is still a lack of research on how WE is handled in teacher preparation programs (Matsuda, 2009).

Therefore, it can be relatively important to promote studies in this field and help both language teachers and learners raise their awareness about WE and ELF.

2.3.5. Studies on ELF

Regarding its increasing importance in global context, English has become the common medium of communication for non-native speakers coming from Expanding Circle countries. This popularity of ELF has lead to various academic studies and controversies. Researchers have conducted a great number of studies on the different aspects of ELF (Baker, 2009; Dewey, 2007; House, 2003; Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2004). The following section of the study focuses on several studies in order to provide an insight into ELF term and its relevance to English language learning.

VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) which aims to provide a corpus of interactions using English as a lingua franca in the Expanding Circle and is compiled at the University of Vienna offers a rich resource for ELF studies. A qualitative study by Breiteneder (2009) based on data from VOICE analyzes ELF interactions of 25 participants from diverse linguacultural backgrounds indicates that although ELF speakers do not use third person marking –s in their conversations, this situation does not cause any misunderstandings or communication problems. Similarly, in another study by House (2003), the nature of interactions between international students from different L1 backgrounds was analyzed. Students who were studying at Hamburg University were asked to interact with each other and the university staff within different interaction groups (e.g. ELF, native, and comparable interactions). The result indicated that although the students transferred their L1 conventions to ELF discourse, this situation did not lead to any misunderstandings.

In their study, Cziser and Kontra (2012) investigated to what extent EFL students were aware of ELF and if their awareness affected students' aims, beliefs, and learning goals. They applied a questionnaire to 239 Hungarian students and based on the quantitative data, it was determined that although students have become aware of ELF, this awareness has not affected their learning goals. Another study by Jenks (2013) analyzed the relevance of ELF as a social category in online communication. For this study, the

researcher analyzed the interactions of chat room participants from different countries such as Korea, Egypt, and Turkey and found out that participants consider themselves as language-learners, non-native speakers, or foreigners, but they don't see themselves as lingua franca speakers or speaker of English as an international language.

In his study, Timmis (2002) applied a questionnaire to both students and teachers from different countries in order to find out whether the participants want to conform to NS norms of pronunciation and grammar. Interestingly, the study revealed that teachers were moving away from native-speaker forms faster than students and students were more willing to conform to native-speaker norms of English.

There are also studies focusing on the relationship between accent and identity in ELF, with Jenkins' study (2007) being one of the pioneering studies. In her study, Jenkins (2007) investigated 17 EFL teachers' attitudes towards English accents through semi-structured interviews. She found out that many of the participants held a negative attitude towards non-native English accents. While the participants felt obliged to acquire a native-like English accent as it was linked with their competence in English, they also expressed their desire to reflect their local identity in English. Similarly, in another study by Li (2009) the relationship between identity and intelligibility was investigated. Participants were bilingual speakers of Chinese and English from Hong Kong. As a result of the study, it was concluded that almost 80% of the participants preferred to speak English with a native-speaker accent whereas only 20% of the participants were inclined to speak with a local accent (cited in Sung, 2014). In his qualitative study, Sung (2014) studied the perceptions of 28 bilingual undergraduate students from Hong Kong about accent and identity. The results revealed that all the participants preferred to maintain their Hong Kong identity in ELF contexts, yet they differed in their accent preferences as 15 participants preferred to use their local accent of English in ELF contexts, other 13 participants preferred to speak English with a native-speaker accent. In this respect, it can be suggested that "preservation of L2 speakers' distinct accents helps them establish a sense of identity and pride in their own varieties of English" (Sung, 2014: 543).

2.3.6. ELF in Europe

English has more non-native speakers than native speakers and its use as a lingua franca has become more common in globalizing world. In this respect, "the language policy of the European Union aims to transform English from the language of Anglo-American culture to a means of multicultural understanding, communicating, and expressing" (Yano, 2009: 251). Accordingly, increasing number of bilingual and multilingual speaker in Europe has made English the EU' lingua franca (de Swaan, 2001, cited in House, 2003). According to recent Eurobarometer survey (2006:30-33) carried out in 26 out of 29 European countries, English was considered as the most useful language to know (68 %) followed by French (25 %), German (22 %), and Spanish (16 %). However, there were three exceptional countries where French was regarded as the most useful language to learn except for the mother tongue (Luxembourg 81 %, 62% the United Kingdom, and 58 % Ireland).

As the survey above reveals, the perceived importance of English in Europe is undeniably high. In this regard, English in Europe serves in almost every field of life; for instance, it is used as a medium of instruction in education, especially at the university level or it can be used institutionally (Berns, 2009). Apart from these, there is also another domain where English as a lingua franca prevails - that is business. Many European companies assess English as "a neutral choice" (Murray, 2003: 149).

Regarding the aforementioned importance of ELF in European context, Breiteneder (2009) acknowledges that "ELF in Europe is an entirely natural language development comparable to various world Englishes (WEs), and therefore it is not a 'learner language' but a 'user language' like any other" (p. 257). Furthermore, Modiano (2009) adds that European ELF learners accommodate other language users, so using local lexical items, idioms, and expressions are natural.

Seidlhofer (2001) has identified a number of lexico-grammar features which are systematic and frequent in ELF in Europe. For example, it includes the absence of /th/ sounds, the lack of the third person singular marking –s, interchangeable use of relative pronouns *who* and *which*, making uncountable nouns countable nouns such as *advices*,

unnecessary use of prepositions, lexical borrowings such as 'actual' for 'current', and so on. It was suggested that these features are the result of ELF's being a locally determined, context-dependent, variable, shifting, dynamic, creative language used by multilingual, multicultural communities of practice.

Empirical data on ELF in Europe indicates different aspects of language development. In a recent study by Leslie (2012), attitudes of 200 Portuguese university students towards ELF were investigated. It was found out that students had positive attitudes towards learning English and they did not feel any cultural or linguistic threat. Also, students did not associate English with class, status or education. In another study, Gnutzmann et al. (2014) investigated the potential of ELF as a possible source of European identity. The results indicated that students consider ELF as a beneficial mode of communication and as a unifying element. On the other hand, Phillipson (2008) rejects this idea by noting that English eliminates linguistic diversity of Europe.

Considering abovementioned studies and their implications emphasizing the important role English has in Europe as a lingua franca, it is of great importance to determine the effects of English language as a means of communication. In this regard, Erasmus exchange program which enables students from different countries to study in a host country may constitute a good source. Conducting a study with Erasmus students who practice their language skills with speakers from different L1 backgrounds in a foreign country and use English to carry out their academic tasks, communicate with other students as well as local people may provide an insight into the place of English as a lingua franca in Europe. Therefore, this study focuses on the perceptions of Erasmus students about the use of English as a means of communication and how its role as a 'common language' has become so prominent.

2.4.7. Communicative Competence vs. Intercultural Communicative Competence in ELF Contexts

The term communicative competence which was first coined by Hymes (1972) refers to both grammatical competence which requires a mastery of grammatical rules and also an ability for appropriate use of this grammatical knowledge in communicative

language use contexts. With the introduction of communicative language term, Hymes (1972) also added the "sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky's linguistic view of competence" (cited in Çetinavcı, 2012: 3446). This communicative competence model was further developed by Canale and Swain (1980) with three main components at the beginning. The first competence was grammatical competence which was defined in terms of Chomskyan linguistic competence and entailed knowledge of syntactic, semantic, phonetic, morphological rules as well as vocabulary knowledge in order to produce grammatically correct sentences. The second was sociolinguistic competence, which referred to the knowledge of language use in different socio-cultural and sociolinguistic contexts. The last competence was strategic competence which involved the knowledge of communication strategies such as paraphrasing, repetition, changing register, etc. in order to compensate for breakdowns in communication problems when they arose. In the later form of this theoretical model of communicative competence, Canale (1983) transferred several elements from sociolinguistics competence into a fourth competence which was called discourse competence (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). Discourse competence is the knowledge of achieving cohesion in form through pronouns, synonyms, etc. and coherence in meaning through repetition, progression, etc. whether it is written or spoken. Regarding the fact that the simplicity of Canale and Swain's model (1980) can receive criticism, it still remains as the dominant model for second and foreign language learning and teaching fields even though more comprehensive communicative models (Bachman, 1990; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995) were developed afterwards (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007).

With this model of communicative competence basically consisting of four main competences, there have been some prominent criticisms directed at Canale and Swain's model (1980) stating that these four competences may not be sufficient in terms of carrying out a successful communication since English has been considered as the international language by people with different native languages rather than a target language to communicate with its native speakers. These ideas have led to the emerge of intercultural communicative competence which refers to ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149). Intercultural communicative competence entails people to interact with people from different cultures effectively and appropriately (Wiseman, 2002).

Concerning the key points of communicative competence and its relevance to intercultural communicative competence, Alptekin's (2002) study entitled *"Towards Intercultural Communicative Competence in English Language Teaching"* provides a comprehensive elaboration of Canale and Swain's (2002) model where he interprets the model as utopian in terms of several aspects. First of all, he states that "communication competence, with its standardized native speaker norms, is as utopian as the notion of the idealized native speaker-listener" (p.54). Since English like any other language has dialects and one cannot claim one correct and appropriate way to use it, he rejects the idea of showing an idealized figure of native English speaker-listener as the reference point. In this context, he asks the question "Who is the 'real' native speaker-listener typifying accurate and proper language use" (p.60) and notes that it is nothing more than a myth. Secondly, regarding the standardized native speaker norms of the model, he claims that communicative competence "fails to reflect the lingua franca status of English" (p. 60). As English has become the language of international communication, it can be noted that much of the communication takes place among nonnative speakers of English for instrumental reasons such as professional contacts, academic studies, etc. Regarding this fact, Alptekin (2002) points to the groundless obsession of teaching and learning authentic language asking the question:

> "How relevant are the conventions of British politeness or American informality to the Japanese and Turks, say, when doing business in English? How relevant are such culturally-laden discourse samples as British railway timetables or American newspaper advertisements to industrial engineers from Romania and from Egypt conducting technical research in English? How relevant is the importance of Anglo-American eye contact, or the socially acceptable distance for conversation as properties of meaningful communication to Finnish and Italian academicians exchanging ideas in a professional meeting?" (p.61)

Therefore, he voices the criticism against communicative competence severely as the model ignores the needs in cross-cultural communication contexts and somehow imposes British and American culture to be learnt in order to communicate successfully in English whereas today most of the speakers may not have a chance to speak with an English or American in their daily lives. Thirdly, Alptekin (2002) asserts that communicative competence restricts learner and teacher autonomy because of its standardized native speaker norms. As communicative competence model requires providing learners with the authentic language in order to represent the native language use, it restricts learner autonomy dramatically, because the culture of the learner and their

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indigenous language are not taken into account. Considering teacher autonomy, nonnative speaker teachers may also feel intimidated by native norms of use embedded in curriculum and they may be hindered from raising multicompetent learners because of educational system's obsession with monolingual native speaker norms.

Regarding the whole criticism directed at communicative competence, it can be concluded that intercultural communicative competence becomes more prominent after current discussion. Therefore, Alptekin (2002) underlies the importance of creating a new pedagogical model concerning the international status of English. In this context, he makes several suggestions such as using successful bilinguals as pedagogical models, developing intercultural communicative competence among English as an International Language Learners, involving local and international contexts in instructional materials and activities and also involving suitable discourse samples in these instructional materials. Moreover, English language courses should promote learners' awareness of different cultures.

Taking the concept of communicative competence and the criticism directed at it by Alptekin (2002) into account, it is of utmost importance to reach the perceptions of people who use English to communicate with nonnative speakers in a foreign country. In this regard, reaching the perceptions of Erasmus students can be of great help since these exchange students from various countries make use of English language as a common language to communicate. English is taught through standardized native speaker forms and norms, yet Erasmus exchange students can have an opportunity to practice their language skills in nonnative settings without paying utmost attention to these standardized forms and norms. Therefore, they may come to question the necessity of sticking to native language forms and the authentic material in curricula and also realize the significance of intercultural communicative competence in carrying out a successful communication with nonnative speakers.

2.4. Language and Culture in International Communication

It is a well-known phenomenon that language and culture has an intertwined relationship, so for successful communication, learners need not only the grammatical knowledge and skill but also the ability to use that language in culturally and socially

appropriate ways. In this regard, The National Centre for Cultural Competence defines the term culture as (Goode et al., 2000: 1):

> "integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations".

Concerning this interwoven relationship between language and culture, culture has long been regarded as an inseparable part of language learning and teaching. This point of view based on understanding the relationship between language and culture led to the development of communicative competence model of Canale and Swain (1980), though it was Hymes (1967; 2010) who first coined the term 'communicative competence' which underlined the importance of using language appropriately in context. According to this model, linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence involves aspects of culture and the development of these competences is integrated with the development of cultural awareness (Yardımcı, 2014). Thus, "communicating with language means more than using the four language skills; it also entails understanding culture well enough to communicate with speakers from a different background" (Arslan & Arslan, 2012: 30-31). In this regard, only linguistic competence is not enough for a learner to be competent in that target language (Krasner, 1999). Language learners need to be aware of, for example, culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. They have to realize that language use must be in harmony with other culturally appropriate behavior.

English has become the international lingua franca or international language as a result of globalization and multicultural world, teaching and learning English has gained great importance. Due to its status as a global language, teaching culture is relatively important in terms of acquiring 'international communicative competence' Byram (1997) which involves knowledge, international attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction and critical cultural awareness. Therefore, teaching language with an 'international dimension' develops learners' intercultural competence, i.e. their ability to assure a shared understanding by people from different social identities and also their ability to interact with these people as complicated human beings with multiple

identities and their own individuality. In this way, language teaching with an international dimension aims to provide learners both with intercultural and linguistic competence, prepare learners for interaction with people from different cultures and enable them accept these people as individuals with distinctive characteristics, values and behaviors and also realize that such interactions are enriching experiences (Byram et al.,2001).

2.5. Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Awareness

Critical cultural awareness which is a part of Byram's (1997) international communicative competence is the "ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram et al., 2000, p.13). In other words, cultural awareness (CA) is "a conscious understanding of the culture plays in language learning and communication in both first and foreign languages" (Baker, 2012, p. 65). Therefore, it requires learners to develop an understanding of and comparisons between their culture and the target culture or cultures. Since English has become the global lingua franca all around the world, successful communication through English in expanding circle lingua franca contexts requires not only cultural awareness but also 'international cultural awareness' (Baker, 2012). A basic definition of intercultural awareness (ICA) by Baker (2012: 66) is as following:

> Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in a real time communication.

Baker (2011) discusses that ICA addresses a previously ignored aspect; English language as a global lingua can no longer be associated with any particular community. In this sense, he provides a model of ICA in which he draws distinctions between different levels of cultural awareness and intercultural awareness.

Figure 3: Twelve Components of ICA

Level 1: Basic Cultural Awareness

An awareness of :

1. culture as a set of shared behaviors, beliefs, and values;
2. the role of culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning;
3. our own culturally induced behavior, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this;
4. others' culturally induced behaviors, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally induced behavior, values, and beliefs

Level 2: Advanced Cultural Awareness

An awareness of;

5. the relative norms of cultural norms
6. cultural understanding as provisional and open to revision
7. multiple voices and perspectives within any cultural grouping;
8. individuals as members of many social groupings including cultural ones;
9. common ground between specific cultures as well as awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures

Level 3: Intercultural Awareness

An awareness of ;

10. culturally based frames of references, forms, and communicative practices as being relative both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication;
11. initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generalizations but an ability to move beyond these through;
12. a capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent socioculturally grounded communication modes and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication

Source: Baker, 2012: 66.

It is also suggested that English as lingua franca in intercultural communication is not a culturally neutral language since communication involves social institutions and speakers with purposes and positions and none of these are neutral (Baker, 2011).

As the role of culture has become central to language learning and teaching, this situation has given rise to studies focusing on the relationship between learners' understanding and acceptance of cultural differences and language learning. Since one way of promoting intercultural learning is through intercultural encounters (Holmes et al., 2015), study abroad studies provide a rich resource in this respect. For example, Twombly (1995) examined North American students' study abroad experience in Costa Rica. She found out that cultural differences were one of the most important factors which inhibited students' interaction with the host culture, which in turn hindered their language progress. Especially, female participants were uncomfortable with the traditional roles of women in Costa Rica. A recent study by Vande Berg et al. (2009) compared the target language, intercultural and disciplinary gains of 1300 U.S. students studying abroad with a control group at home. The results revealed that students enrolled in study abroad programs averaged more progress in intercultural learning and oral proficiency in the target language than control group students studying the same programs at home universities.

Similarly, Alvord and Christensen (2012) analyzed the pronunciation of Spanish learners who spent two years abroad and the factors which influenced their target-like pronunciation. The findings showed that cultural integration was the most important factor as learners who integrated themselves into the target culture most were the most successful group in terms of native-like pronunciation. Regarding the Erasmus aspect of these studies, Almarza et al. (2015) investigated the results of a comparative analysis of pre-placement questionnaire completed by British and Spanish Erasmus students. The questionnaire focused on students' reasons to take part to take part in the program and on the self-perception of their awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills before their Erasmus placement, based on Byram's model of intercultural competence (2002). The findings indicated that both groups had a positive attitude towards the host country and a lesser awareness of intercultural dimension. It was also noted that both groups considered themselves as flexible enough to adapt to the new cultural environments, though they thought that identifying and solving conflicts and misunderstandings lead to a greater challenge. Another study conducted by Ersoy (2013) aimed to understand the cultural problems six Turkish teacher candidates faced in the host country during their Erasmus experience. The participants stated that for the problems they faced in terms of not being able to speak English fluently, cultural differences, and cultural bias, they applied some

strategies such as examining the reason for cultural differences and introducing their own culture to the member of host culture. They also noted that this experience helped them understand how important English was in terms of increasing their cultural awareness and elimination their bias.

The overall review of the literature highlights the importance of some key concepts in this study, which are study abroad, Erasmus exchange program, English as a lingua franca, and intercultural awareness. The interconnected relationship among these concepts forms a basis for the study which aims to determine the effects of using English as a means of communication in a study abroad program and the participants' perceptions about this issue. Since English has become a world language due to globalization, it has started to function as a common language, namely as a lingua franca among the speakers from different L1 backgrounds. In this sense, study abroad programs provide students with a great chance to practice their English language skills in a foreign setting with native and non-native speakers. Erasmus exchange program, which is the most popular mobility program in Europe, allows university students and academicians from numerous European countries including Turkey to study abroad for a short period of time. Thus, these students can have the opportunity to use English as a means of communication, a common language, to meet their daily and academic needs. Besides, this program also enables students to learn about different cultures and lifestyles, which in return raises their intercultural awareness. Gathering of students from various cultures in such settings can increase the tolerance for different cultures and also eliminate prejudices against certain cultures. Therefore, it can be stated that it is vital to take the cultural aspect of this program into account when carrying out a study about the Erasmus program and its effects.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an introduction to the overall design of the study and proceeds with an explanation of the methodology adopted and the instruments employed for conducting the present study. Also, it includes a description of the participants and the setting, and in the same way data collection and data analysis procedures are presented.

3.1. Research Design of the Study

As the purpose of this study is to provide a greater understanding about the perceptions of Turkish Erasmus students about how they assess their study abroad experience in terms of using of English in ELF communities and raising their intercultural awareness, a mixed methods research design is applied in this study. Mixed methods research design can be defined as a technique which "mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17). Creswell et al. (2004: 7) acknowledge that "the underlying logic of mixing is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient in themselves to capture the trends and details of the situation", so by combining these two methods, "both quantitative and qualitative data yield a more complete analysis, and they complete each other".

Regarding the field of social sciences, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data often yields a more comprehensive analysis of research results (Bogdan & Bicklen, 2007, Creswell, 2009). Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research have their own weaknesses and strengths; therefore, combining them allows the researcher to compensate for their weaknesses and benefit from their strengths (Bryman, 2006). Mixed

methods "can add depth and further explanation to findings generated by one or the other method", so by integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, a researcher can carry out a more comprehensive enquiry as well as be able to "enhance the integrity of their findings" (Bryman, 2008, p: 263). In this regard, it can be stated that there has been a growing interest and inclination in using mixed methodological designs for research in the last decade (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Byram, 2006; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007).

An extensive review of the literature indicates that the nature of mixed methods research has led to different types of mixed methods research designs by various researchers. For instance, Caracelli and Greene (1997) developed a typology of mixed methods designs which consisted of three designs and four integrated design. On the other hand, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 57-58) have created a four type typology which involves "triangulation design, embedded design, explanatory design, and exploratory design", and they have also demonstrated the strengths and challenges of each type of design. Creswell (2003:16) provides an explanation for the sequential procedures in mixed methods research:

> *Sequential* procedures, in which the researcher seeks to elaborate on or expand the findings of one method with another method. This may involve beginning with a qualitative method for explanatory purposes and following up with a quantitative method with a large sample so that the researcher can generalize results to a population. Alternatively, the study may begin with a quantitative method in which theories and concepts are tested, to be followed by a qualitative method involving detailed exploration with a few cases or individuals.

In this study, data were gathered by following the principles of explanatory, sequential design in which quantitative methods and analysis were adopted as the first means and qualitative data collection and analysis are applied as the second means of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Concerning the rationale for this approach, Creswell (2012: 542) notes that through quantitative data, the results provide a general picture of the research problem, so "more analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture". In this way, statistical data gathered by using quantitative research method can be explained more in depth by applying qualitative research method. Since there is also a categorization in this research design based on the sequence and the priority of the instruments used, current study adopts

"questionnaire survey with follow-up interview'(QUAN→ qual)" as design pattern (Dörnyei, 2007: 170) in which data obtained through each instrument is analyzed separately and respectively.

To sum up, the current study utilizes explanatory design which obtained data through questionnaires and interviews respectively with the aim of determining the perceptions of Erasmus students about the use of English as a means of communication in ELF communities and raising their intercultural awareness.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaires

Since the aim of current study was to gain an insight into the perceptions of Turkish Erasmus students about the use of English as a means of communication in English lingua franca (ELF) communities and how Erasmus program affected participants' intercultural awareness, utilizing a questionnaire survey was considered as the most appropriate way of eliciting data for the first stage of the research after a comprehensive review of the literature. To obtain quantitative data obtain, a survey questionnaire was applied since "it provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2003: 153). Dörnyei (2007: 170) proposes that the questionnaire survey is a versatile technique which allows us to obtain a large amount of data in a short period of time and also they are relatively easy to conduct. Therefore, the present study utilized questionnaire as its data gathering instrument for the first phase of the study in regard to the nature of the study and the target population.

The first step for the design of the current study was to review the existing literature about the use of relevant instruments applied for investigating English as a lingua franca, Erasmus exchange programs, and intercultural awareness topics. Having finished the review of relevant literature, the researcher constructed the first draft of the questionnaire. In the process of preparing the first draft of the questionnaire, some items were either transferred directly (Aydın, 2012; Önder & Balcı, 2010) or some changes were done in

other items for the sake of a better adoption by taking the content of the study into consideration. In addition to this process, some extra items were also added to the different sections of the questionnaire by the researcher through the guidance of the expert's opinions. Since the questionnaire was planned to be applied to Turkish Erasmus students, items in each section were translated into Turkish and required adjustments were made in order to provide a better comprehension of items by the participants. Having finished the construction of the first draft, the opinion of student's advisor's was asked for. In the light of his feedback, required readjustments were done in the questionnaire and the second draft of the questionnaire was constructed after a careful revision of each item. Next, the piloting of the questionnaire was carried out and as a result of this process, the final draft was constructed. The overall construction process of the questionnaire lasted approximately 30 days.

The questionnaire (See Appendix A) constructed for this study consisted of five parts. The first part involved 9 items which were designed in different types- both open-ended and close-ended questions- to reveal the demographic characteristics of the participants as well as the details about their participation in the Erasmus exchange program. In the second part, there were 12 items which aimed to determine students' reasons for participating in the Erasmus exchange program. In the third part, there were 21 items referring to challenges and difficulties experienced by the participants before, during and after the Erasmus period. In this part, the participants were asked to fill in answers on a five-point Likert scale. The fourth part included 23 items about the perceptions of Erasmus students on the use of English as a means of communication in ELF communities and the effect of Erasmus experience in terms of developing their English language knowledge and skill. In the same vein, the fifth part of the questionnaire consisted of 13 items aimed to determine how Erasmus experience affected participants in raising their intercultural awareness. More detailed information about each part is provided in the following section.

Part 1: There were 9 factual questions; 6 of the questions were close-ended, which meant that participants were supposed to choose among the given alternatives. These 6 questions were aimed to reveal participants' gender, age, university, faculty, at which grade, academic year and term they attended the Erasmus program. The other 3 questions which were designated as open-ended were about the host country, whether the

participants had a previous experience in a foreign country except for the Erasmus program and the duration of this experience. For providing the confidentiality, the participants' names were not asked.

Part 2: This part which included a total of 12 items was designed to reveal the reasons that promoted students' participation in the Erasmus exchange program. Eleven items listed in this part were adopted from studies by Teichler (2004) and Aktan and Sarı (2010) as they were analyzing the study experience of Erasmus students and their views about the exchange program. Students were asked to mark the items which motivated them in attending the program. They could mark as many items as they wanted since they could have more than one reason for participating in the program. Following this phase, they were asked to indicate the most important reason for them by writing down the item number.

Part 3: This part with 21 items was designated to determine the challenges and problems faced by Erasmus students before, during, and after their Erasmus experience. Items listed in this part were both adopted from the studies by Aktan and Sarı (2010) and Önder and Balcı (2010) and some items were added by the researcher on the basis of literature. Items that focused on various aspects such as financial problems, official procedures, language and adaptation problems were grouped under 3 headings as before the Erasmus program, during Erasmus program, and after Erasmus program. These groups were formed with the intention of avoiding confusion and eliciting data in an effective way. The respondents were supposed to state their degree of agreement with the listed items by marking one of the expressions on a five-item Likert scale (Strongly Agree / Agree/ No Idea/ Disagree/ Strongly Disagree).

Part 4: There were 23 items in this part. Most of the items listed in this part were either transferred directly or adopted from similar studies (Önder & Balcı, 2010; Aydın, 2012; Kaypak, 2012). For instance, some of the items were applied syntactic modifications such as changing affirmative sentences into negative or vice versa, and also items related to each language skill were presented separately. Additionally, six items were added by the researcher in order to identify some other relevant aspects. Items in this part aimed to determine participants' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication

in ELF communities and also how their Erasmus experience affected their English language grammatical, reading, writing, speaking, listening knowledge and skills as well as comprehension and pragmatic use of language. The respondents were again expected to state their degree of agreement with the listed items on a five-item Likert scale.

Part 5: In this last part of the questionnaire, there were 13 items aiming to identify participants' perceptions about the effect of Erasmus program on raising their intercultural awareness. Similar to previous parts, some of the items in this part were adopted from the items used in similar studies through syntactic modification since adopted statements were not changed at the semantic level (Önder & Balcı, 2010; Aydın, 2012) and four items which focused on the importance of cultural differences and different life styles were prepared by the researcher on the basis of relevant literature. The respondents were requested to show their degree of agreement with the given statements on a five-item Likert scale about cultural effects of the programs (learning about other cultures, eliminating negative points of views against certain cultures or conversely developing negative points of views, etc).

The questionnaire constructed for the current study consisted of a total of 5 parts and 78 items.

3.2.2. Interviews

After conducting the questionnaire, a follow-up semi-structured interview was put into action in order to provide an insight into the perceptions of outgoing students and clarify these perceptions that are identified as a result of data elicited from the questionnaire. In the mixed-method design, qualitative data are used to explain, validate, supplement, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative data (Bogdan & Bicklen, 2007). Therefore, it is expected that data gathered from interviews would help explain possible gaps from the quantitative survey methods (Patton, 2002) and through the use of open-ended questions it provides interviewees with freedom to express their opinions on their Erasmus experience. It is possible to generate a considerable amount of data explaining, clarifying, and reinforcing the data elicited from questionnaires through the use of interview.

Regarding the supportive nature of qualitative data, semi-structured interview questions used in this study were prepared by the researcher (See Appendix B). Laforest et al. (2009) notes that semi-structured interviews are conducted to gather data, especially for the studies working with small number of participants. Concerning the nature of semi-structured interview, Dörnyei (2007: 136) states that "although there is a set or pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issue raised in an exploratory manner". Thus, the interviewee is let elaborate on certain issues (which constitutes the –semi part) under the guidance and direction of the interviewer (the –structured part) (Dörnyei, 2007). 13 pre-determined interview questions in parallel with the items in the questionnaires were constructed. The interview questions were constructed in order to determine participants' perceptions about English as a lingua franca, intercultural awareness, and their Erasmus experience in general.

It was indicated by the researcher that the participation in the interview was voluntary and those who wished to take part in this aspect of the study contacted the researcher through the contact information given after the completion of the questionnaire. The confidentiality of the participants in the interview was assured and each participant gave spoken consent for conducting the interviews which were carried out in Turkish.

3.3. Setting and Participants

The target population of the present study was Turkish Erasmus students who participated in the program in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic years. The participants of this research studied in different ELF communities for one or two academic terms within the framework of Erasmus exchange program. The rationale behind selecting the last two academic years was to reach more recent perceptions about the program and its effects. Since the total population of Turkish Erasmus students was immense and difficult to reach, the selection of the participants is made on the basis of convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is one of the main methods of non-probability sampling and usually referred as 'opportunity sampling' where the convenience of the researcher is an important criterion, which means that "members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical

proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer" (Dörnyei, 2007; 98-99). In order to administer the questionnaire constructed for this study, above mentioned criteria played an important role about the selection of participants. Therefore, this study was carried out with the participation of 107 Erasmus exchange students mainly from two state universities- Karadeniz Technical University and Gümüşhane University. The rationale behind the selection of these two universities was due to the fact that the researcher was studying in Karadeniz Technical University and also working at Gümüşhane University. Taking the convenience sampling aspect into account, it was practical for her to reach and gather information from the students at these universities.

As the questionnaire was planned to be applied through an online survey system named Surveey.com in order to reach as many participants as possible who either returned or continued their Erasmus studies, the International offices of these two universities were contacted and asked for the list of students who participated in the program between the years 2013-2015. Both universities have a readily available database with up-to-date e-mail addresses of the whole participants, and they agreed to provide the list including contact information of outgoing Erasmus students. Karadeniz Technical University was one of the first universities in Turkey to join the Socrates-Erasmus program and it obtained Erasmus charter in 2003. Since then, the number of outgoing students has increased reaching 146 students for 2014-2015 academic year. On the other hand, Gümüşhane University which was founded in 2007 is a relatively new university with a number of 50 outgoing students for 2014-2015 academic year. Except for contacting international offices of the universities, the researcher also made use of snowball sampling using friendship networks of the participants and also some social networking sites where outgoing Erasmus students had group profiles. After receiving the contact information of outgoing students, the students were sent an e-mail informing them about the content of the study and they were invited to participate in the study. A total number of 107 graduate and undergraduate students majoring in different departments participated in the study.

After sample selection for the questionnaire, participants for the semi-structured interviews were also selected following the principles of convenience sampling since the willingness to volunteer was the main criterion for selection. 11 participants out of 107

volunteered to take part in interviews by contacting the researcher via the contact information provided at the end of the questionnaire. One-to-one interviews were conducted with 8 of these volunteer students. However, 3 participants were still abroad continuing their Erasmus studies, so they were provided with the interview questions and they preferred to elaborate the answers of these questions in written form. Considering 11 participants for the semi-structured interviews, 9 of them were undergraduate students whereas 1 of them was a master student and the other was a PhD student.

Regarding the characteristics of sampling, 41.12 % of the participants were female (44 students) while 58.87 % of the participants were male (63 students). As for the grade at which they attended the program, the majority of the participants 41.28 % (45 students) participated the program at 3rd grade followed by 2nd grade with 27.52 % (30), 4th grade with 19.26 % (21), Master's with 8.25 % (9), and Phd with 3.66 % (4) respectively. In addition, more than 70 % of participants (85 students) had no previous experience abroad while only small minority of 24.29 % (26) had a previous experience in a foreign country.

3.4. Piloting

With the aim of eliminating any misunderstandings or ambiguity concerning the items in the questionnaire and the pre-determined questions in the interview, piloting of both instruments was conducted before applying them. Baker (1994: 182-183) acknowledges that "a pilot study is often used to pre-test or try out a research instrument". The piloting process which is carried out in order to detect the weaknesses in design and the instrument in terms of comprehension, organization, instructions, and Likert scale is designated to improve the quality of the instrument prior to administering it. Therefore, piloting which can reveal the deficiencies of the research instrument and help its improvement in return based on received feedback can be considered as "an essential precaution" before implementing it to large groups of people (Baker, 2004: 163).

The pilot study of the questionnaire constructed for the current study was carried out with three PhD candidates from the Department of Western Languages in Karadeniz Technical University on 18 April 2015. These three PhD candidates hold an MA degree in Applied Linguistics, have more than 5 years of teaching experience in the field of ELT,

and also published papers in highly prestigious international journals. Having made the required changes and corrections on the first draft of the questionnaire in the light of feedback by the advisor, the second draft was prepared. This second draft of the questionnaire was presented to three PhD candidates and the piloting process was carried out like a brainstorming session in which the PhD candidates expressed their opinions and criticisms about the items listed in the questionnaire. Each part and the items in them were handled separately in terms of instructions, design, wording, accuracy, clarity, and validity. During this stage, required corrections about the items were identified and also new items that were considered relevant to the other items were proposed. As a result of this piloting process, it was found out that some statements needed to be adjusted or expanded for the specific aspects they were referring such as the items in Part 4 asking the development in English language skills and knowledge. Besides, as the items transferred from similar studies were originally English and were translated into Turkish for the present study, some problems were detected based on the translation. Having analyzed each item for the piloting process, the items in the questionnaire were considered comprehensible and the overall framework of the questionnaire was indicated as suitable. Based on feedback received from the PhD candidates who acted as both students and experts, the final draft of the questionnaire was constructed.

The pilot study of the semi-structured interview was administered with two former Erasmus students who participated in the program for two semesters. This process which was conducted as a group discussion aimed to detect any ambiguity in terms of avoiding any comprehension problems by the respondents. In accordance with this purpose, both students reviewed the questionnaire before and then tried to answer the questions in the interview which were developed parallel with the questionnaire items. The students indicated that some questions about the intercultural awareness aspect of the program needed clarifying, yet other questions were understandable enough to answer them easily. After the required adjustments were done in line with the stated points, the design of the interview form was finalized.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaire and semi-structured interview were the data collection tools constructed for this study. After the final draft of the questionnaire was prepared, it was sent to 196 Turkish Erasmus students from two state universities via e-mail. Considering the fact that using an online system would be a convenient and easy way to reach out the students in different cities and countries, the researcher made use of an online survey system named Surveey.com in line with this purpose. Therefore, an e-mail informing the participants about the content of the study with an attached link of the online survey system was sent to 196 students. Except for these 196 students from two state universities, a snowball sampling method was also used through the friendship networks of these participants and also some social networking sites. Since the questionnaire was applied via an online system, period for the data collection was determined as 8 weeks.

The second step of the questionnaire was a semi-structured interview with 11 outgoing Erasmus students. Having completed the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the interview and several students contacted the researcher through the contact information given and volunteered to take part in the interview phase. In the end, the interview was administered with 11 participants. One-to-one interviews were carried out with 8 of these students as they completed their Erasmus studies and returned. The interviews were planned according to the participants' availability and carried out in Trabzon and Gümüşhane within a three-week period. All the interviews were audio-recorded in order to review and transcribe the data. Each of the interviews lasted about 10-20 minutes. During the interview, the researcher provided directions and guidance to the respondents- e.g. asking for clarification for the unclear statements or elaboration on some issues by giving examples.

3.6. Data Analysis

The current study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research techniques taking the employment of mixed-methods research into account. As for the quantitative data analysis process, using an online survey system was of great help since the data elicited through the questionnaires were presented in an Excel file on the online system.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.15.0) program was used for the analysis of quantitative data. Therefore, data presented in the Excel file were transferred into SPSS, and then some statistical calculations concerning the purpose of the study were carried out. In this regard, 'descriptive statistics' were employed and frequencies and percentages of the related items were calculated. Jaggi (2003) states that descriptive analysis offers a practical means for analyzing and interpreting data by summarizing the data in a clear and understandable way through the use of numerical and graphical procedures. In addition to frequency and percentage calculations, the Mann-Whitney U Test was applied in order to determine whether there are any significant differences based on the participants' gender, age, class, faculty, and duration of study abroad.

Regarding the qualitative data process, data from each semi-structured interview were gathered through partial transcription which refers to "having notes of the key points of the whole recording" (Dörnyei, 2007: 248). By taking the research questions into account, relevant points and themes mentioned by the interviewees were transcribed and highlighted. Next, categories based on each research question were constructed and the data were grouped and interpreted under the relevant headings. Having completed this step, the next phase was to mix and compare data elicited from both instruments and make comments accordingly.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the empirical data gathered from the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews were presented and analyzed. It started with the analysis of questionnaires and then continued with the analysis of interviews. As it was mentioned before, SPSS (v 15.0) for the questionnaire analysis and content analysis for the interview analysis were employed.

4.1. Analysis of the Quantitative Data

In this part, quantitative data collected via the questionnaire were analyzed and the findings were demonstrated. This process was carried out in accordance with the research questions. The first part provided the demographic data regarding the participants of the study. Then, the second part focused on students' reasons for participating in the program. The third part which highlighted the problems participants faced before, during, and after the program, the forth part which revealed the students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and practicing English in ELF communities, and finally the fifth part about participants' perceptions about raising their intercultural awareness were all designed with a five-item Likert scale.

4.1.1. Demographic Data

The present study was conducted with the participation of 107 Turkish Erasmus exchange students who attended the student mobility program within last two academic years. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to find out the information about the group characteristics. A frequency table of each item of Part I which consisted of 8 items was provided below. The first item was about the gender of participants, which was presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Participants' Gender Profiles

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	62	57,9
Female	45	42,1
Total	**107**	**100**

As Table 2 illustrated, the total number of participants was 107, 62 of whom were male (57,9 %) and 45 of whom were female (42,1 %). It can be indicated that male participants outnumbered female participants.

The second item in this section was about the participants' age. Since the participants of Erasmus Exchange Program consisted of undergraduate, graduate and PhD students, participants' age may vary considerably.

Table 3: Participants' Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-20	8	7,5
21-23	61	57,0
24-26	25	23,4
27 or over	13	12,1
Total	**107**	**100,0**

According to Table 3, 61 participants which formed the majority of the current study were aged between 21 and 23 (57,0 %) and it was followed by 25 participants aged between 24 and 26 (23,4 %), 13 participants aged 27 and over (12,1 %), and 8 participants aged between 18 and 20 (7,5 %) respectively.

The third item was related to the university where participants currently studied and which sent them to other host countries within the framework of Erasmus exchange program.

Table 4: Participants' Home University

University	Frequency	Percent
Karadeniz Technical University	85	79,4
Gümüşhane University	22	20,6
Total	**107**	**100,0**

As Table 4 showed, the majority of the participants, i.e. 85 students, were from Karadeniz Technical University (79,4 %) while 22 of them were from Gümüşhane University (20,6 %). Since Karadeniz Technical University has been one of the first universities to participate in the Erasmus exchange program, the number of outgoing students from this university is considerably higher compared to Gümüşhane University which is a relatively newly-established university.

The next item in this part was about the school, faculty, or institute at which participants studied.

Table 5: School/ Faculty/ Institute of Participants

School/Faculty / Institute	Frequency	Percent
Faculty of Architecture	5	4,7
Faculty of Engineering	24	22,4
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	20	18,7
Faculty of Marine Sciences	6	5,6
Faculty of Education	6	5,6
School of Physical Education	2	1,9
Faculty of Literature	16	15,0
School of Health	1	,9
Faculty of Medicine	2	1,9
Faculty of Dentistry	1	,9
Faculty of Theology	1	,9
Faculty of Communication	10	9,3
Institute of Social Sciences	9	8,4
Institute of Science and Technology	4	3,7
Total	**107**	**100,0**

As presented in Table 5, 24 participants (22,4 %) were from the Faculty of Engineering, 20 participants (18,7 %) from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 16 participants (15 %) from Faculty of Literature, 10 participants (9,3 %) from the Faculty of Communication, 9 participants (8,4) from the Institute of Social Sciences, while 6 participants (5,6 %) both from the Faculty of Marine Sciences and the Faculty of Education, 5 participants (4,7 %) from the Faculty of Architecture, 4 participants (3,7 %) from the Institute of Science and Technology, 2 participants (1,9 %) both from the School of Physical Education and the School of Physical Education, and 1 participant (0,9 %) each from the School of Health, the Faculty of Dentistry, and the Faculty of Theology.

The fifth item in this part was related to the participants' grade. 5 categories were created for this section.

Table 6: Participants' Grade

Grade	Frequency	Percent
2nd Grade	26	24,3
3rd Grade	46	43,0
4th Grade	21	19,6
Graduate	10	9,3
PhD	4	3,7
Total	**107**	**100,0**

As it was indicated in Table 6, 46 of the participants (43 %) participated in Erasmus exchange program were at 3rd grade whereas 26 of them (24,3 %) were at 2nd grade, 21 of them (19,6 %) were at 4th grade. The majority of the participants were undergraduate students, yet 10 of the participants (9,3 %) were graduate students and 4 of them (3,7 %) were PhD students.

The sixth item was related to the academic year and term in which the participants attend the Erasmus program. In this item, students were given alternatives about the last 2 academic years and different school terms about the duration of their study.

Table 7: Academic Year and Term of Participation

Academic Year & Term	Frequency	Percent
2013-2014 Academic Year Fall Term	11	10,3
2013-2014 Academic Year Spring Term	21	19,6
2013-2014 Academic Year Fall & Spring Term	20	18,7
2014-2015 Academic Year Fall Term	21	19,6
2014-2015 Academic Year Spring Term	10	9,3
2014-2015 Academic Year Fall and Spring Term (still)	24	22,4
Total	**107**	**100,0**

As seen in Table 7, 24 of participants (22,4 %) have participated in the program for 2014-2015 Academic Year Fall and Spring Term, which meant that they have not finished their study and come back yet. On the other hand, the rest of the participants completed their Erasmus study since 21 of them (19,6 %) participated in 2013-2014 Academic Year Spring Term and 2014-2015 Academic Year Fall Term, 20 of them (18,7 %) participated in 2013-2014 Academic Year Fall and Spring Term for two academic terms, 11 of them (10,3 %) participated in 2013-2014 Academic Year Fall Term, and 10 students (9,3 %) participated in 2014-2015 Academic Year Spring Term. It is important to note that validity of responses given by students may show difference as the statements of students who completed their study and returned to Turkey (68,3 %) may differ from the statements of those students who still continued their study (% 31,7). Yet, this situation did not pose a problem for the validity of the study but provided a deeper understanding for two ends of this continuum thanks to the experiences of past students and the experiences of present students.

The next item was about the host country where participants stayed as an Erasmus student either for one academic term or two terms.

Table 8: Host Country

Host Country	Frequency	Percent
Germany	9	8,4
Spain	4	3,7
Italy	6	5,6
France	2	1,9
Denmark	3	2,8
Czech Republic	12	11,2
Poland	30	28,0
Slovakia	5	4,7
Sweden	7	6,5
Lithuania	8	7,5
Romania	2	1,9
Portugal	7	6,5
Greece	4	3,7
Austria	2	1,9
Hungary	5	4,7
Bosnia- Herzegovina	1	,9
Total	**107**	**100,0**

As Table 8 illustrated, Poland was the first country with 30 incoming students (28 %) and it was followed by Czech Republic with 12 students (11,2 %), Germany with 9 students (8,4 %), Lithuania with 8 students (7,5 %), both Sweden and Portugal with 7 students (6,5 %), Italy with 6 students (5,6 %), both Slovakia and Hungary with 5 students (4,7 %), Spain and Greece with 4 students (3,7 %), Denmark with 3 students (2,8 %), Romania and Austria with 2 students (1,9 %), and Bosnia- Herzegovina with only 1 student (0,9 %).

The last item in this part was asked in order to reveal whether the participants had a previous abroad experience before their Erasmus experience.

Table 9: Previous Abroad Experience

Previous Abroad Experience	Frequency	Percent
Yes	83	77,6
No	24	22,4
Total	**100**	**100,0**

As presented in Table 8, a great majority of the participants, i.e. 83 students (77,4 %) did not have a previous experience in abroad before participating in the Erasmus exchange program whereas 24 students (22,4 %) had a previous experience in abroad.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the majority of the participants in the present study were male (57,9 %), aged between 21 and 23, from Karadeniz Technical University, from the Faculty of Engineering (22, 4 %), participated in the program at 3rd grade (43 %), during 2014-2015 Academic Year Fall and Spring Term (22,4 %), and Poland was the first host country in terms of most incoming students (28 %). Also, a great majority of the students had no previous experience in abroad (77,4 %) before their Erasmus experience.

4.1.2. Analysis of Part II- Students' Reasons for Participating in the Program

This part was designated for determining the students' reasons for participating in the Erasmus exchange program. In this section, the participants were provided with ten reasons to participate in the program, and they were asked to mark as many reasons as they wished since they may have had more than one motive that promoted their participation. They could also mark 'other' option and explain it. After this process, the participants were asked to indicate the most important reason for them by writing down the item number of that reason.

Table 10: Participation Reasons

Items	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gaining academic experience in another country / learning about different education systems	80	74,8	27	25,2
Improving foreign language skills	84	78,5	23	21,5
Learning a foreign language (except English)	33	30,8	74	69,2
Visiting different countries, learning about different cultures	96	89,7	11	10,3
Meeting new people from different cultures	91	85,0	16	15,0
Improving career prospects	67	62,6	40	37,4
Contributing to self-development	76	71,0	31	29,0
Having experience in abroad	92	86,0	15	14,0
Travelling to other countries	76	71,0	31	29,0
Introducing Turkish culture	44	41,1	63	58,9
Total	**107**	**100,0**	**107**	**100,0**

It can be observed in Table 10 that a number of reasons played an important role in promoting students' participation in the Erasmus exchange program. Regarding the reasons in Table 10, visiting different countries and learning about different cultures (89,7 %) was the most popular reason being followed by having experience in abroad (86 %), meeting new people from different cultures (85 %), improving foreign language skills (78,5 %), gaining academic experience in another country/learning about different education systems (74,8 %), travelling to other countries and contributing to self-development (71 %), and improving career prospects (62,6 %). On the other hand, introducing Turkish culture (41,1 %) and learning a foreign language except English (30,8 %) were the least popular reasons for the participants.

It was clearly seen that the most important reasons that triggered Turkish Erasmus students' participation in this program were related to the cultural and linguistic aspects of the program since visiting different countries and learning about different cultures, meeting new people from different cultures, and improving foreign language skills items had higher percentages. In the light of these findings, it can be noted they support the findings of a

previous study by Aktan and Sarı (2011) in which students' reasons for participating in the Erasmus program were found to have similar distributions.

Table 11: Other Reasons

Other Reasons	Frequency	Percent
No	103	96,3
having fun	1	0,9
learning about the history of Trabzon	1	0,9
learning to stand on my own feet without my family's support	1	0,9
making a synthesis of East and West	1	0,9
Total	**107**	**100,0**

The participants were also asked if there was another reason that promoted their participation, a great majority of them (96,3 %) answered no while one student (0,9 %) answered having fun, one student (0,9 %) noted learning about Greek history of Trabzon, one student (0,9 %) replied learning to stand on his own feet without his family's support, and another student (0,9 %) stated making a synthesis of East and West.

Table 12: The Most Important Participation Reason

The most important reason	Frequency	Percent
Gaining academic experience in another country/ learning about different education systems	11	10,3
Improving foreign language skills	**26**	**24,3**
Visiting different countries, learning about different cultures	24	22,4
Meeting new people from different cultures	3	2,8
Improving career prospects	17	15,9
Contributing to self-development	12	11,2
Having experience in abroad	4	3,7
Travelling to other countries	6	5,6
Introducing Turkish culture	3	2,8
Getting to know myself	1	,9
Total	**107**	**100,0**

Having noted the reasons for their participation, the participants were also asked to indicate the most important reason for them by writing down the item number. As it can be seen in Table 12, the most important for 26 participants (24,3 %) was improving language skills, for 24 participants (22,4 %) it was visiting different countries, learning about

different cultures, for 17 participants (15,9 %) it was improving career prospects, and it was followed by contributing to self-development with 12 participants (11,2 %), gaining academic experience in another country and learning about different education systems with 11 participants (10,3 %), travelling to other countries with 6 participants (5,6 %), having experience in abroad with 4 participants (3,7 %), introducing Turkish culture with 3 participants (2,8 %), and getting to know myself with only 1 participant (0,9 %).

It can be inferred that although reasons which highlighted the cultural aspects of the Erasmus program such as visiting different countries and learning about different cultures, having experience abroad, and meeting new people from different cultures were prominent in Table 10, improving language skills was observed to be the most important participation reason.

4.1.3. Analyzing Likert Scales: Problems Faced by Erasmus Students

This section was designed to analyze the data which was collected through Likert-scale and assess the findings. There was a total of 21 items in this part of the questionnaire, and in order to ensure the validity of the findings, inherent consistency reliability of the Likert scale was calculated with Cronbach Alpha coefficient. As a result of calculations, Cronbach's Alpha value was found as 0.788 for Part II.

4.1.3.1. Problems Erasmus Students Faced Before, During, and After the Erasmus Period

The items of Part III of the questionnaire survey which were designated to get information about challenges or problems the participants face before, during, and after the Erasmus program used a five-item Likert scale. The items in this section were listed under three headings in accordance with three minor research questions, which were '*What challenges or problems do students have prior to their departure", 'What challenges or problems do students have during the Erasmus period',* and '*What challenges or problems do students have after the Erasmus program'.* Therefore, there were three tables (Table 12, Table 13, and Table 14) below demonstrating the frequencies and percentages of the answers participants gave to items in each section. Of the 21 items in total, Table 12 illustrated 5 of them whereas Table 13 showed 13 of them and Table 14 3 of them.

Table 13: Problems Erasmus Students Faced Before the Program

Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Having problems about the formal procedures (passport, visa, etc)	18	16,8	29	27,1	5	4,7	**35**	**32,7**	20	18,7
Being nervous because of not having a previous experience in abroad	25	23,4	27	25,2	6	5,6	**33**	**30,8**	16	15,0
Being anxious about adapting to a new environment	**29**	**27,1**	**29**	**27,1**	11	10,3	**29**	**27,1**	9	8,4
Being afraid because I was going to be away from my family in a foreign country	**51**	**47,7**	33	30,8	7	6,5	10	9,3	6	5,6
Being concerned about the different education system and also courses and exams as they will be in another language	19	17,8	24	22,4	9	8,4	**35**	**32,7**	20	18,7

As presented in Table 13, the highest frequency and percentage for each item was bolded. It can be inferred from the table that two most important problems during the pre-departure period were the official procedures such as problems about getting the passport, visa, and preparing required documents and their concern about a different education system and the courses and exams in another language as almost half of the participants (51,4 %) *agreed* and *strongly agreed* with these two items. Another prominent problem 45,8 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* was being nervous because of not having any previous experience in abroad while 48,6 % of the participants with a very slight difference *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement. Concerning the item about being anxious about adapting to a new life, more than half of the participants (54,2 %) *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* while 35,5 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* with this item. As for the last item, a great majority of the participants *(78,9 %)* *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* about being afraid because of being away from family in a foreign country whereas only a small proportion of the students (14,9 %) *agreed* and *strongly agreed* with this statement.

Table 14: Problems Erasmus Students Faced During the Program

Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Having problems about adapting to a different education system	28	26,2	**34**	**31,8**	9	8,4	28	26,2	8	7,5
Having problems about having courses in another language except English	**44**	**41,1**	24	22,4	10	9,3	15	14,0	14	13,1
Having acculturation difficulty	**40**	**37,4**	37	34,6	9	8,4	17	15,9	4	3,7
Having insufficient language knowledge for communication.	**36**	**33,6**	34	31,8	14	13,1	12	11,2	11	10,3
Having insufficient language skills for communication.	**35**	**32,7**	34	31,8	17	15,9	12	11,2	9	8,4
Having problems about the climate	**42**	**39,3**	29	27,1	8	7,5	21	19,6	7	6,5
Having problems about different food habits	25	23,4	19	17,8	11	10,3	**31**	**29,0**	21	19,6
Having health problems	**48**	**44,9**	37	34,6	7	6,5	11	10,3	4	3,7
Having problems about the intensive curriculum	**52**	**48,6**	32	29,9	9	8,4	12	11,2	2	1,9
Having problems about insufficient language knowledge of personnel working at host country's Erasmus Office	**68**	**63,6**	29	27,1	5	4,7	2	1,9	3	2,8
Having problems about the transportation	**67**	**62**	25	23	8	7	6	5	1	0
Having accommodation problems (landlord, roommates, etc)	**46**	**43,0**	31	29,0	13	12,1	9	8,4	8	7,5
Having financial problems (the grant was insufficient, it wasn't paid on time, etc.	22	20,6	24	22,4	6	5,6	**29**	**27,1**	26	24,3

In Table 14, students were asked 13 items about the challenges and problems they faced during their Erasmus period. The items in this section varied from educational issues to health problems, from climate to transportation. As it can be seen in the table, adapting

to a different education system did not pose a problem for more than half of the participants (58 %) while it was a problem for 33,7 % of them. Concerning having courses and exams in another language except English, 63,5 % of the students were reported to *disagree* and *strongly disagree* while only 27,1 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed.* In the same vein, 72 % of students had no acculturation problem, 65,4 % of them did not have problems due to insufficient language knowledge, and 66,4 % of them did not have any problems about the climate. On the other hand, the participants were found to have similar percentages in terms of having problems due to different food habits as 48,6 % of the students *agreed* and *strongly agreed* and 41,2 of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this item. Most of the students (79,5 %) *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with the item about having health problems, and 78,5 % of them did not have problems due to intensive curriculum. Concerning the statement about having problems due to insufficient language knowledge of host country's Erasmus Office personnel, a great majority of the students (90,7 %) *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* whereas only 4,7 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed.* 86 % of the participants had no transportation problems and 72 % of them did not have accommodation problems. Regarding the last item about having financial problems, 51,4 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* having financial problems while 43 % of them *disagreed and strongly disagreed* with this statement.

Table 15: Problems Erasmus Students Faced After the Program

Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Having problems about the recognition of courses	**45**	**42,1**	35	32,7	13	12,1	6	5,6	8	7,5
Having financial problems (the rest of the grant was not paid)	23	21,5	22	20,6	13	12,1	**26**	**24,3**	23	21,5
Having problems about adapting to daily life in Turkey	4	3,7	7	6,5	8	7,5	51	**47,7**	**37**	34,6

For the last title of this part, participants were asked three problems after their Erasmus period. Since 34 students were still continuing their studies within the Erasmus program framework and did not return yet, the items in this section were answered by 73 students who completed their studies and came back to Turkey. As Table 15 shows, most of the students (74,8 %) *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with having problems about the

recognition of taken courses upon their return while only a small proportion of them (13,1 %) *agreed* and *strongly agreed.* Concerning the financial problems such as not getting the rest of the grant paid, 45,8 % of the students *agreed* and *strongly agreed* while 42,1 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed.* As for the last item about having problems in terms of adapting to daily life in Turkey, most of the participants (82,3 %) *agreed* and *strongly agreed* whereas only 10,2 % *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed.*

As a result, it can be concluded that two most important problems for the participants during the pre-departure period were official procedures and their concern about a different education system and the courses and exams in another language since 51,4 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* with these two items. Concerning the problems during the Erasmus period, financial problems came forward among other problems as 51,4 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* while 43 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this statement and it was followed by having problems due to different food habits on which 48,6 % of the students *agreed* and *strongly agreed* and 41,2 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed.* As for the problems after the Erasmus period, the most important problem for a great majority of the participants (82,3 %) was adapting to daily life in Turkey while it was not a problem for only 10,2 % of them.

4.1.4. Analyzing Likert Scales: English as a Means of Communication

This section was designed to analyze the data concerning participants' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and it also discussed the findings gathered through Likert-scale. There was a total of 23 items in this part of the questionnaire, and Cronbach's Alpha value for Part III was calculated as .942 which was acceptable since Cronbach' Alpha value higher than .70 is considered as an acceptable level for reliability.

4.1.4.1. Participants' Perceptions about the Use of English as a Means of Communication

As mentioned before, the items in Part IV were asked to gather data about participants' perceptions concerning the use of English as a means of communication

throughout their Erasmus experience. Therefore, the first 14 items in this section were designed in accordance with the one of the major research questions, which was *"What are Erasmus students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication after their study abroad experience"* and some other minor research questions such as *"What are Erasmus students' perceptions about improving their linguistic knowledge and skills after their study abroad experience"*. As one of the key concepts in the present study was the term English as a lingua franca, the remaining 9 items aimed to shed light into the question "*How does the Erasmus program influence students' perceptions about practicing their English in an ELF community"*.

Table 16: Participants' Perception about the Use of English as a Means of Communication

thanks to my Erasmus experience:	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I improved my English language knowledge	4	3,7	7	6,5	8	7,5	**51**	**47,7**	37	34,6
I improved my English language skill	4	3,7	5	4,7	4	3,7	**54**	**50,5**	40	37,4
I improved my listening skill in English	5	4,7	5	4,7	4	3,7	**53**	**49,5**	40	37,4
I improved my writing skill in English	7	6,5	12	11,2	14	13,1	**40**	**37,4**	34	31,8
I improved my reading skill in English	7	6,5	7	6,5	15	14,0	**46**	**43,0**	32	29,9
I started to speak English more fluently	7	6,5	5	4,7	8	7,5	42	39,3	**45**	**42,1**
I improved my pronunciation	5	4,7	9	8,4	9	8,4	**43**	**40,2**	41	38,3
I improved my vocabulary	4	3,7	7	6,5	12	11,2	**42**	**39,3**	**42**	**39,3**
I overcame my comprehension problems	7	6,5	6	5,6	6	5,6	**45**	**42,1**	39	36,4
I learnt how to use English in different contexts (school, daily life, etc)	5	4,7	8	7,5	14	13,1	**40**	**37,4**	**40**	**37,4**
I become more confident about using English in written form	7	6,5	8	7,5	17	15,9	**39**	**36,4**	36	33,6

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thanks to my Erasmus experience:	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I don't feel timid speaking English with other people	2	1,9	5	4,7	11	10,3	42	39,3	**47**	**43,9**
I can easily express myself in English orally	3	2,8	5	4,7	11	10,3	**44**	**41,1**	**44**	**41,1**
Now, I feel more comfortable speaking English	3	2,8	7	6,5	12	11,2	41	38,3	**44**	**41,1**

Data gathered in Part IV were demonstrated in two different tables. Table 16 including the items between 1 and 14 showed the findings about participants' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and improving their language knowledge and skills in English. On the other hand, Table 17 illustrated items between 15 and 23 which were designed to assess the lingua franca status of English within the framework of Erasmus exchange program. The highest frequencies and percentages in both tables were bolded. As seen in Table 16, 82, 5 % of the participant *agreed* and *strongly agreed* with the item about improving their English language knowledge while this percentage increased to 87,9 % about increasing their English language skills. In the following items, participants were given statements about each language skill and it was found out that 86,9 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* improving their listening skill, 81,4 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* starting to speak English more fluently, 72,9 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* improving their reading skill, 69,2 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* improving their writing skill, 78,5 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* improving their pronunciation, 78,6 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* improving their vocabulary knowledge, 78,5 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* overcoming their comprehension problems, and 74,8 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* learning how to use English in different contexts.

Concerning the following items, similar results were obtained since 70 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* becoming more confident in terms of using English in written form, 83,2 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* not feeling timid when speaking English and in the same vein 82,2 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* expressing themselves in

English orally and 79,4 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* starting to feel more comfortable when speaking English.

As seen in Table 16, items about the linguistics gains of the program had higher percentages. We can infer that Turkish Erasmus students had a chance to use English as a means of communication, which in return promoted their language skills. The findings of Table 16 indicated that the program provided students with more improved language skills compared to language knowledge since students made great use of English both in their academic and daily lives. Through interaction with other non-native speakers of English, they were able to use English in meaningful contexts which they didn't have much chance to create and practice in Turkey. Since data gathered in Part IV were analyzed in two different tables, Table 17 displayed the findings about participants' perceptions concerning the use of English in an ELF community. The following table illustrated how students assessed the impacts of using English as a 'contact language' during the Erasmus period.

Table 17: Students' Perceptions about Practicing English in ELF Communities

thanks to my Erasmus experience:	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I realized that English doesn't belong to one culture	5	4,7	5	4,7	7	6,5	36	33,6	**54**	**50,5**
I realized that speaking English with a perfect American or English accent is not necessary	6	5,6	5	4,7	6	5,6	36	33,6	**54**	**50,5**
I realized that English is a world language	5	4,7	4	3,7	9	8,4	32	29,9	**57**	**53,3**
I realized that speaking English with a Turkish accent is not bad	10	9,3	10	9,3	16	15,0	**36**	**33,6**	35	32,7
I realized that English is learnt best in a country where it is spoken as a native language (the USA, Britain, etc)	14	13,1	15	14,0	25	23,4	25	23,4	**28**	**26,2**
I realized that mastering English is important in terms of understanding other cultures and countries	5	4,7	6	5,6	3	2,8	37	34,6	**56**	**52,3**
I realized the necessity of knowing the cultures of countries where English is the native language (Britain, etc)	13	12,1	25	23,4	19	17,8	**29**	**27,1**	21	19,6
I think that most Turks need English to communicate with non-native speakers of English	3	2,8	6	5,6	19	17,8	**49**	**45,8**	30	28,0
I observed that mastering English grammar rules is not enough for communicating with the foreigners	13	12,1	24	22,4	23	21,5	**28**	**26,2**	19	17,8

As seen in Table 17, 84 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they realized that English does not belong to only one culture and also speaking English with a perfect American or English accent is not necessary. Similarly, 83,2 % of the participants

agreed and *strongly agreed* realizing that English is a world language, 66,3 % of the them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that speaking English with a Turkish accent is not bad. On the other hand, 49,6 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that English is best learnt in a country where it is spoken as the native language such as Britain and the USA while 17,1 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this item. In the same vein, 46,7 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* the necessity of knowing the cultures of these countries where English is the native language and 35,5 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this statement. Concerning another item saying that mastering English is important in terms of understanding other cultures and countries, 86,9 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* while 44 % of them also *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that mastering English grammar rules is not enough for communication with the foreigners. As for the last item, 73,8 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that most Turks need English to communicate with non-native speakers of English while only 8,4 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this statement.

In conclusion, it can be noted that Erasmus exchange program contributed greatly in terms of improving participants' both English language knowledge and skills as a result of their sojourn. Most of the students acknowledged having improved each language skill in English as well as improving their vocabulary and pronunciation, gaining self-confidence in using the language, overcoming comprehension problems, and using the language in different meaningful contexts. Therefore, the results indicated that the program had positive impacts in terms of foreign language skills. Furthermore, as Table 17 showed participants also believed that using English as 'a contact language' in ELF communities changed their perspective towards English. Now, they came to think that English is a world language which does not belong to only British or American culture and also they realized that mastering English is a key factor in understanding other cultures except British or American cultures. Besides, they noted that most people need it to communicate with foreigners with different L1 backgrounds.

4.2.4.2. Gender Difference in Participants' Perceptions about the Use of English as a Means of Communication

This part of the study was designated to determine whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students about the use of English as a means of communication. In this way, the minor research question '*Does the gender of students have a significant effect on students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication*? was answered. For this purpose, the analysis was conducted with 14 items which were related to the participants' perceptions about the use of English and how they improved their language knowledge and skills in English as a result of their Erasmus experience. The Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to determine if there was a difference between the perceptions of male and female participants and the frequencies of male and female participants mean ranks, sum of ranks, Mann-Whitney U and the significance values were shown in Table 18.

Table 18: Gender Difference in Participants' Perceptions about the Use of English as a Means of Communication

Items	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
1	Male	62	59,96	3717,5	1025,5	,011
	Female	45	45,79	2060,5		
2	Male	62	60,25	3735,5	1007,5	,007
	Female	45	45,39	2042,5		
3	Male	62	60,21	3733	1010	,008
	Female	45	45,44	2045		
4	Male	62	58,28	3613,5	1129,5	,079
	Female	45	48,10	2164,5		
5	Male	62	59,84	3710	1033	,015
	Female	45	45,96	2068		
6	Male	62	61,12	3789,5	953,5	,003
	Female	45	44,19	1988,5		
7	Male	62	62,23	3858	885	,001
	Female	45	42,67	1920		
8	Male	62	60,06	3724	1019	,011
	Female	45	45,64	2054		
9	Male	62	58,09	3601,5	1141,5	,087
	Female	45	48,37	2176,5		
10	Male	62	57,70	3577,5	1165,5	,125
	Female	45	48,90	2200,5		
11	Male	62	58,50	3627	1116	,065
	Female	45	47,80	2151		
12	Male	62	55,41	3435,5	1307,5	,550
	Female	45	52,06	2342,5		
13	Male	62	57,43	3560,5	1182,5	,148
	Female	45	49,28	2217,5		
14	Male	62	58,52	3628	1115	,059
	Female	45	47,78	2150		

It can be inferred from Table 18 that there were significant differences between male and female students in 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th items as the values of these items were found to be smaller than 0,05 (p>0,05). Analyzing the mean ranks of these items, it can be

stated that male participants approached the statements in 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th items more positively in comparison with female students. Therefore, it can be concluded that male students believed that they improved their English language skill (2nd item), listening skill in English (3rd item), reading skill in English (6th item) more and started to speak English more fluently than female students.

When it comes to language learning, gender can be a very significant variable. Therefore, the differences between the perceptions of male and female students about the items above can be interpreted in terms of some culturally constructed gender roles. In Turkish culture, men adopt a more dominant or active role whereas women are supposed to adopt a more domestic role. So, these roles which are socially attributed to men and women in Turkish culture may have affected students' interactions with other people during their stay. The items which demonstrated statistically significant differences were about overall language skills, listening, and especially speaking skills. Thus, it can be assumed that active or outgoing role that male participants adopted may have given them more self-esteem and chance to practice their language skills while female participants who acted more timid or unconfident may not have used the English language as actively as their male peers.

4.2.4.3. Gender Difference in Participants' Perceptions about Practicing English in an ELF Community

This section was designated to determine whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students about the practice of English in ELF communities. The minor research question *'Does the gender of students have a significant effect on students' perceptions about the practice of English in ELF communities?'* was answered. In this regard, the analysis was conducted with 9 items which were related to participants' perceptions about the practice of English in ELF communities. The Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to determine if there was a difference between the perceptions of male and female students and the frequencies of male and female students, mean ranks, sum of ranks, Mann-Whitney U and the significance values were shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Gender Difference in Participants' Perception about Practicing English in ELF Communities

Items	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
1	Male	62	54,77	3396	1347	,740
	Female	45	52,93	2382		
2	Male	62	57,57	3569,5	1173,5	,126
	Female	45	49,08	2208,5		
3	Male	62	55,85	3463	1280	,423
	Female	45	51,44	2315		
4	Male	62	56,32	3492	1251	,344
	Female	45	50,80	2286		
5	Male	62	54,56	3382,5	1360,5	,823
	Female	45	53,23	2395,5		
6	Male	62	55,16	3420	1323	,615
	Female	45	52,40	2358		
7	Male	62	52,55	3258	1305	,561
	Female	45	56,00	2520		
8	Male	62	55,52	3442,5	1300,5	,524
	Female	45	51,90	2335,5		
9	Male	62	55,51	3441,5	1301,5	,546
	Female	45	51,92	2336,5		

Table 19 demonstrated that the p value of none of the items was smaller than 0,05 (p>0,05), so there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students about the practice of English in ELF communities. While statistically significant differences were found regarding the items the first section of in Part IV, concerning the use of English as a means of communication, no statistically significant difference was found in the second part about students' practicing English in ELF communities. Therefore, it can be noted that male and female students have similar perceptions about the lingua franca status of English language. They both considered English as a 'contact language' which they used to communicate with other nonnative speakers.

4.1.5. Analyzing Likert Scales: Intercultural Awareness

The last part of the questionnaire also used five item Likert-scale and it included a total of 13 items. Cronbach's Alpha value for Part V was found as .833, which was an acceptable level. The data obtained in this part was analyzed and the findings were discussed below.

4.1.5.1. Participants' Perceptions about Raising Intercultural Awareness

This part of the questionnaire which includes 13 items was designated to determine the participants' perceptions about the Erasmus program's effect in terms of raising their intercultural awareness. The items were asked in parallel with one of the major research questions, which was *"How does Erasmus experience contribute to students' intercultural awareness"* and they also aimed to answer some minor questions such as *"How do students assess the cultural outcomes of the Erasmus program in terms of eliminating cultural bias"* and *"How do students assess the cultural differences in terms of carrying out successful communication with the foreigners"*. In this regard, data gathered in this section helped to evaluate the cultural outcomes of the Erasmus exchange program whose one of the main purposes is to enhance intercultural awareness of its participants.

Table 20: Participants' Perceptions about Raising Intercultural Awareness

thanks to my Erasmus experience:	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I increased my awareness of my native culture	5	4,7	13	12,1	19	17,8	**42**	**39,3**	28	26,2
I had the chance to introduce my culture to Europeans	3	2,8	7	6,5	12	11,2	**48**	**44,9**	37	34,6
I realized that I had prejudices against different cultures	22	20,6	32	29,9	11	10,3	**28**	**26,2**	14	13,1
I learnt about European people's points of views against Turkey	2	1,9	1	0,9	7	6,5	44	41,1	**53**	**49,5**
I became more aware of the differences between Turkish and other cultures	2	1,9	4	3,7	6	5,6	46	43,0	**49**	**45,8**
I learnt more about different life styles	2	1,9	1	,9	5	4,7	39	36,4	**60**	**56,1**
I learnt about the host country's culture better	3	2,8	1	,9	2	1,9	50	46,7	**51**	**47,7**
I became more tolerant against other cultures	3	2,8	3	2,8	5	4,7	41	38,3	**55**	**51,4**
I learnt that people from different cultures can create a common culture	4	3,7	6	5,6	12	11,2	42	39,3	**43**	**40,2**
Classrooms with student groups from different cultures was beneficial for cultural awareness	2	1,9	2	1,9	9	8,4	42	39,3	**52**	**48,6**
I realized that my negative perspectives against some cultures changed	10	9,3	11	10,3	20	18,7	**34**	**31,8**	32	29,9
I realized that paying attention to cultural differences is important for communicating with the foreigners	4	3,7	3	2,8	20	18,7	**45**	**42,1**	35	32,7
I gained some negative points of views against some cultures	**29**	**27,1**	**29**	**27,1**	25	23,4	14	13,1	10	9,3

Table 20 indicated that 65,5 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they started to know their own culture better thanks to their Erasmus experience while a small proportion of them (16,8 %) *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this statement. Also, 79,5 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they had the chance to introduce Turkish culture to Europeans. On the other hand, 39,3 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they realized having prejudices against different cultures while 50,5 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this item. 90,6 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they learnt about European people's points of views against Turkey and in the same vein 88,8 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* becoming more aware of the differences between Turkish culture and other cultures. 92,5 % of the students *agreed* and *strongly agreed* learning about different life styles, and 94,4 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* learning the host country's culture better. 89,7 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* becoming more tolerant against other cultures and 79,5 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that people from different cultures can create a common culture. Concerning the multicultural aspect of the classroom thanks to Erasmus program, 87,6 % of the students *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that classrooms with student groups from different cultures is beneficial for enhancing cultural awareness while only 3,8 % *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this item. As for the cultural differences among the participants, 74,8 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that paying attention to those cultural differences is important for a successful communication with the foreigners. The last two items of this part were asked to determine the effects of Erasmus program in terms of eliminating prejudices against certain cultures. In this regard, 61,7 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that the program helped them change their negative points of views against certain cultures whereas 19,3 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this statement. Accordingly, the other item asked students if they gained any prejudices against some cultures or not, and 54,1 % of them *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this item while 22,4 % of them *agreed* and *strongly agreed.*

In sum, Erasmus exchange program was successful in achieving one of its main goals- enhanced intercultural awareness. Most of the participants remarked that program helped them foster positive attitudes towards other cultures thanks to their interaction with people from different countries. It also enabled them to introduce Turkish culture to Europeans, make a comparison between Turkish and western cultures, eliminate their

prejudices against certain cultures, and become more tolerant towards other cultures. However, it can also be observed that even though most of their interaction with foreigners was inclined to be positive, some participants admitted gaining negative opinions against certain cultures as a result of their interaction with the students of these cultures. In this sense, Erasmus program provide students with a great opportunity to learn about cultural differences in various European countries and also to introduce Turkish culture to the Europeans. If it wasn't for the Erasmus program, Turkish students wouldn't have a chance to have experience in such a cosmopolite environment with so many other students from different European countries. Therefore, the program creates a unique setting in which social interactions among students from different countries boost its participants' cultural sensitivity and awareness.

4.1.5.2. Gender Difference in Participants' Perception about Raising Intercultural Awareness

This section was designated to determine whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students about raising their intercultural awareness as a result of their Erasmus experience. In this way, the minor research question *'Does the gender of students have a significant effect on students' perceptions about raising their intercultural awareness?'* was answered. The analysis was conducted with 13 items which were related to participants' perceptions about raising their intercultural awareness. The Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to determine if there was a significant difference between the perceptions of male and female participants and the frequencies of male and female participants, mean ranks, sum of ranks, Mann-Whitney U and the significance values are shown in Table 21.

Table 21: Gender Difference in Participants' Perception about Raising Intercultural Awareness

Items	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
1	Male	62	56,25	3487,5	1255,5	,357
	Female	45	50,90	2290,5		
2	Male	62	55,97	3470	1273	,408
	Female	45	51,29	2308		
3	Male	62	49,51	3069,5	1116,5	,070
	Female	45	60,19	2708,5		
4	Male	62	55,60	3447,5	1295,5	,485
	Female	45	51,79	2330,5		
5	Male	62	54,02	3349	1394	,994
	Female	45	53,98	2429		
6	Male	62	56,33	3492,5	1250,5	300
	Female	45	50,79	2285,5		
7	Male	62	57,82	3585	1158	,092
	Female	45	48,73	2193		
8	Male	62	56,81	3522	1221	,222
	Female	45	50,13	2256		
9	Male	62	57,02	3535	1208	,207
	Female	45	49,84	2243		
10	Male	62	54,79	3397	1346	,733
	Female	45	52,91	2381		
11	Male	62	53,23	3300	1347	,754
	Female	45	55,07	2381		
12	Male	62	54,90	3403,5	1339,5	,710
	Female	45	52,77	2374,5		
13	Male	62	55,97	3470	1273	,428
	Female	45	51,29	2308		

Table 21 displayed that there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students about raising their intercultural awareness for the p value of none of the items are smaller than 0,05 (p>0,05).

All in all, the data gathered through Part IV and Part V indicated that Erasmus program was successful in accomplishing its main objectives such as improving learning performance and language foreign language competences, enhancing intercultural awareness, incorporation of European dimension into higher education, better awareness of European values, and increased self-esteem. It can be inferred from the data gathered through the questionnaire survey that participants reached a consensus about the positive effects of the Erasmus exchange program on their foreign language skills and intercultural awareness. Regarding the differences between male and female students' perceptions, there were statistically significant differences in four items, which meant that male students believed starting to speak more fluently and also improving their English language skill, listening and reading skill compared to female students.

4.2. Analysis of the Qualitative Data

This section presented the findings and the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 outgoing Erasmus students. The analyses were carried out in accordance with the research questions of the current study. The interviewees were called as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, and P11 throughout the analysis. Regarding the interviews, 7 of 11 the interviews were carried out as face-to-face while 3 participants preferred to answer interview questions through e-mail since they were still continuing their Erasmus studies in host countries.

The interviews were carried out within the framework of 13 pre-determined questions which were developed in accordance with the research questions. The interviews were conducted in Turkish, yet they were translated into English by the researcher before the analysis process. Based on the research questions and the sub-sections of the interview form, the findings were categorized under five headings. In this regard, quotations were provided to illustrate and support the analysis of qualitative data.

4.2. 1. Students' Reasons for Participating in Erasmus Exchange Program

The first question of the interview intended to find out participants' reasons for participating in Erasmus exchange program. Their responses revealed a wide variety of

reasons which can be summarized as visiting different countries and learning about different cultures, meeting new people from different cultures, having experience in abroad, improving foreign language skills, gaining academic experience in another country, learning about different education systems, and travelling to other countries. Here are some samples from the interview to illustrate this:

P10: *First of all, I participated in the program in order to improve my foreign language skills, visit another country, observe other cultures in their place, have experience in abroad. These were some of the reasons which tempted me.*

P5: *My reason for participating in the program was both to learn about different countries and cultures and practice my foreign language like everybody else. Also, I was wondering the education systems of other countries and I had the chance to observe how they teach the lesson, and their procedures.*

P6: *Actually, I always dreamt of going to America. I really wanted it. I could go with Work and Travel program, but I couldn't dare and I didn't have the enough money. Then, I heard of Erasmus program. I thought if I couldn't go to America, then I could go to Europe. I thought I would travel and improve my foreign language. These two reasons were my priority.*

P3: *I participated in the program for my education. I thought that it would help me in terms of self improvement, so my priority target was to widen my horizon in terms of personal development. Then, to get to know other cultures and improve my language skills.*

P7: *I participated in the program to have experience in abroad, to spend a term during my PhD studies, and to take part in cultural activities. To have experience both about a different education system and the daily life there. I mean both in terms of social and educational aspects.*

P9: *My reason to participate was to improve to my foreign language, meet new people from different culture, and gain experience.*

P1: *I was curious about life in abroad like visiting other countries and learning about different cultures. I never considered in terms of academic aspects. I enjoy taking photos, so I thought I would take my camera and go there. And I went and made my dream come true.*

As it can be concluded participants' responses, travelling to other countries, learning about other cultures, improving foreign language skills, and having experience in abroad were the prominent reasons which motivated students in attending the program. However, some students acknowledged that they participated in the program so as to contribute to their self-improvement and career prospects as well as to make a synthesis of East and West as indicated by some participants below:

P2: *As I am studying Political Sciences, there are some dynamics in the West such as social, economic, political dynamics. So, I attended the program to investigate them. If we were compare to Turkey to another country, it had to be a country more advanced than Turkey. Since the Western society is more advanced than Turkey, I participated in the program. This was my main goal and I achieved it. Of course, having fun, travelling, learning about different cultures were also effective, but my main goal was that.*

P4: *My ambition is to be an academician. I thought it would contribute to my educational life, so I participated. And foreign language is essential nowadays, so I thought it would give me the chance to improve my foreign language skills. I mean both for career prospects and improving my foreign language skills.*

P11: *My reasons were to improve my foreign language, get to know other cultures, learn another language, have experience in abroad, and review the literature for my master thesis.*

Regarding the participation reasons, it can be concluded that findings from the interviews supported the quantitative data gathered through questionnaire survey. It was found out that visiting different countries and learning about different cultures, meeting new people from different cultures, improving foreign language skills, gaining academic

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experience in another country and learning about different education systems, travelling to other countries and contributing to self-development, and improving career prospects were significant reasons which encouraged their participation in the program.

4.2.2. Problems the Erasmus Students Faced

One of the minor research questions in this study was about the problems and challenges students faced before, during and after their Erasmus experience. Thus, this part of the qualitative analysis focused on the participants' statements about these problems in regard to items represented in the questionnaire.

4.2.2.1. Problems the Erasmus Students Faced Before the Program

The second question in the interview was about the problems and challenges participants faced before the program prior to their departure. The participants' responses indicated to one common problem faced by all of them, which was the official procedures such as preparing the required documents. Some of their statements are as follows:

P11: *There were a lot of documents that needed to be signed. Dealing with procedures was both exhausting and time-consuming. Also, even officers didn't know how to prepare some certain documents. I was misdirected a couple of times.*

P6: *Filling out the documents was very troublesome. It makes you so tired, you run from one place to another. I mean that was the only part I had problem with. I went to Ankara to get my visa, and I had no problem. I went there and got my visa.*

P5: *Bureaucracy is a very problematic in this kind of work. Paper work is very boring. A lot of documents are asked, and each from a different place. I mean it is a very tiring and boring process. In addition, tiredness of officers working in student affair's affects students.*

P3: *I had some problems while preparing the documents. Procedures. Apart from that, I had no problem.*

P4: *While preparing the documents, I said "I will never and ever go". I even cried. I said I wouldn't do this. I started to think so. For example, they asked for transcript, I brought it in Turkish and they wanted it in English. And a lot of things like that. But now I see that many students who are going to participate in the program are having trouble in the process of preparing documents. Procedures are really problematic in this sense.*

P2: *Of course, we were worn out by the bureaucratic procedures. I mean preparing those documents. Also, getting the visa. I even couldn't have some of my exams because of completing the documents on time. I had make-up exams because of these documents.*

The findings from the interviews indicated that the most serious problem Erasmus outgoing students faced was the official procedures which included preparing the required documents. In this regard, qualitative data obtained from interviews showed parallelism with the quantitative data gathered through questionnaires. Yet, the other most important problem found out in quantitative data which was their concern about a different education system and the courses and exams in another language was not mentioned by the participants in the interview.

4.2.2.2. Problems the Erasmus Students Faced During the Program

Another question related to problems students faced was the challenges they experienced during their stay in host country. Responses given by the participants showed that various aspects of the program such as language incompetence, a different education system, and adapting to a foreign country could pose a problem for them. Following are some statements related to students' thoughts on this issue:

P2: *During my first weeks, I had a coordinator instructor who took care of course enrolments. When I first met him, I was like "What is he saying?". He was speaking English but I couldn't understand anything. At first, I had difficulty, but then I got used to this situation.*

It is interesting to note that while P2 suffered from his/her lack of language competence, P1 below indicated some teachers' inefficiency in using English as a medium of communication. Instructors speaking English with a different accent or their inefficiency in this language may also lead to problems for exchange students.

P11: *The most important problem in Germany was the language for me. Germans speak English well, they even speak Spanish and French, but they don't prefer to speak them. I had difficulty outside the school because of not speaking German. Sometimes, I was even scolded like "you must speak German". As soon as I learnt enough German to meet my daily needs, then everything was OK.*

P9: *Since there were a few people speaking English except young people and they were speaking a dialect in the place I was studying, I had difficulty in understanding people and also expressing myself.*

As for the statements of P9 and P11, it can be noted that even though English was considered as a common language by Erasmus student, they also experienced some patriotic attitudes when it came to meet their daily needs or communicate with the local people. In these two statements, students clearly stated that some Germans acted with more patriotic feelings as they insisted on speaking German even if they could speak English or warned exchange students that they had to learn the language of host country if they were to study in that country. This patriotic attitude cannot be generalized and it is not peculiar to German people as it can also be observed in other countries. Yet, it can be stated that these patterns of behavior may make exchange students adopt negative thoughts or intolerance towards certain cultures as a result of their experience.

P1: *Courses were quite difficult. For example, my friends studying in Poland said it was easier in Poland, no attendance was needed. We had to attend the courses. Second, I got low marks, so I had make-up exams to raise my grades. I had courses in English, but some instructors were bad at English, so they would switch into Slovakian.*

P10: *I didn't have financial problems, and we had easy exams. Yet, I had a tough adaption period as I found myself in a different culture and lifestyle all of a sudden. Then, I got used to it.*

P6: *As we are from Turkey- a country surrounded by seas- there is nobody speaking English like in Europe. And here in Trabzon, there aren't even tourists. However, in Europe, English is the common language. Everybody is speaking the same language very well. When someone asked me asked me something in the beginning, I could only say "Yes" and "No". I had great difficulty because of that. Then, with the help of my German friend, Lisa, I improved my English. After struggling for a while, you keep going with no fear. I mean everything starts with kicking the ball for the first time.*

All in all, the findings of the interview indicated that the most serious problem uttered by the participants was the foreign language. Participants stated having comprehension problems due to English spoken with different accents, learning the language of host country for daily needs, and also insufficient speaking skills in English. An interesting point that should be indicated is that having insufficient language skills was not one of the items with high percentages in the quantitative data part. Yet, qualitative data analysis identifies it as an important problem students faced during their stay. Other problems were difficult courses and adaptation problem mentioned by P1 and P10.

4.2.2.3. Problems the Erasmus Students Faced after the Program

The last dimension of this section aimed to determine problems participants faced after their Erasmus experience. Since 3 out of 11 participants were still studying in a host country during the interview process, they were not asked to answer this question. Some sample statements given by other participants are presented below:

P7: *Adaptation was really difficult. I didn't want to come back to Turkey. I mean I didn't stay for a long time, just five months, but adapting to life in Turkey was very difficult.*

P6: *I had problem about adapting to life in Turkey. I was staring at the walls for the first month. I had travelled to Oslo, Russia and Tallinn, and then I ended up in Samsun. I mean you are travelling to Eiffel and Amsterdam and then you end up in Samsun. I was very disappointed. Also, there was nobody else around; my friends didn't come back to Turkey.*

P5: *I made an observation after I had returned. After living at a certain standard of life there, you want to see the same thing in your country. You realize that it is not a very difficult thing, and it's only about education and understanding. You say "Why not?". For instance, when a car doesn't stop on the pedestrian crossing, you feel disappointed.*

P3: *I had some adaptation problems. After living in Germany for one year, I started to approach certain things from a different point of view. Things that I used to consider normal in the past started to seem abnormal after living in Germany. Especially, concerning the communication among people.*

P2: *I passed three of my courses, but failed two of them. I sent assignments after I had returned to Turkey so that I could pass those two courses. They were very difficult, and I had to deal with the assignments from Germany after coming back. I was studying for midterm exams in Turkey and preparing my assignments for Germany at the same time.*

As it can be inferred from the statements above, the most serious problem for the participants after the program was to adapt to daily life in Turkey. Apart from this, handing in assignments after returning to Turkey in order to pass courses was mentioned to be another problem.

Considering the statements about the problems the participants face before, during, and after the program, it can be stated that while most of the statements support the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire survey, some statements were in contradiction with the quantitative data. For example, the official procedures were the most important problem for students before the program and it was supported both by

quantitarly and qualitative data. Similarly, concerning the post program period most participants remarked having adaption problems in their interviews, which in return supported the quantitative data. However, foreign language knowledge and skills were mentioned to be the most prominent problems participants faced during their study whereas the quantitative data from the questionnaires indicated the exact opposite as 65,4 % of participants *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with this item.

4.2.3. Participants' Perceptions about the Use of English as a Means of Communication

The participants were asked how Erasmus program contributed in terms of improving their English language knowledge. Since English language functioned as a lingua franca among the speakers with different L1 backgrounds, Erasmus students made great use of English in order to communicate with other students and carry out their academic tasks. Followings are some sample statements about this issue:

P4: *Yes, I improved my linguistic knowledge. I chose the lecturers who taught in English. I was also having English classes there. In this way, I improved it and grammar, as well. Also, I didn't hang out with Turkish students; I had Polish friends, so English was the only language that I could use.*

P7: *I improved my language knowledge. For example, I got 60 in YDS before I went. After I had returned, I got 85. Yet, this improvement was also related to my own effort. I mean there is no such thing that I went there and I improved my English by doing nothing. I also studied. Besides, due to using English, I improved it thanks to my own efforts, because English spoken in daily life is not at an advanced level or academic.*

P3: *In terms of language improvement, the program was beneficial, because my roommate was American and I learnt some new vocabulary thanks to him. So, the program contributed a lot in terms of vocabulary.*

P6: *Sure, I did. I mean I didn't even know what should, could, may, might meant. I knew that there were something, some phrases which were all in books, but I didn't know where or in what contexts to use them. After hearing it from someone else, you associate and use it. Of course, I improved my language knowledge.*

While some participants agreed improving their language knowledge in English, several others appeared to take a negative position about this issue. It was however interesting to note that negative ideas were very much associated with grammar rather than using the language as indicated below:

P1: *Actually, I improved my vocabulary, but in terms of grammar I couldn't improve it, because my friend was Slovakian. So, she was speaking English with a Slovakian accent and I was speaking it with a Turkish accent. Therefore, I improved my language skills, not my language knowledge.*

P5: *I can say that unfortunately I made no progress in terms of grammar. I also didn't study intentionally to improve my grammar*

P2: *No, I didn't improve my knowledge of grammar, and also in terms of writing. I prepared assignments, but I would open the book and write down what I understood without paying attention to grammar rules. That's why I failed some courses.*

Since there were contradictory opinions about the improvement of language knowledge, participants were also asked if they improved their English language skills. In this respect, they were also asked which language skill they improved most and least. Their perceptions about this issue are presented below:

P8: *I improved my speaking skill. Now, I can speak quite fluently. However, it wasn't like that when I first got there. Just after a month, I realized that I can speak clearly and fluently. And I improved my speaking skill most, and I don't think I improved my pronunciation, because it's an international place where everybody is speaking English with a different accent. So, my pronunciation didn't improve.*

P5: *The program was beneficial in terms of practicing English and having the courage to start a conversation. I improved my speaking skill most and writing skill least; because I think writing is related to grammar. I was bad at grammar before the program and also after the program.*

P10: *I believe that the program helped me practice my speaking skill. In the same vein, in terms of pronunciation. I assume that I am not still component in terms of writing and listening.*

P1: *The program was beneficial for my listening skill. I couldn't understand what I listened to. I mean I improved my listening skill most, because my friends were good at English, so they were always talking and I was listening to them. I improved my writing skill least even though the exams were oral and written.*

P4: *Yes, I improved my language skills. Especially, in terms of speaking. For example, I could understand what people say, but I couldn't speak very well. There was always something missing while speaking. I overcame that problem. And I think I improved my writing skill least; I can speak, but I cannot write. My writing has incomplete parts.*

P9: *Like everybody else, I was afraid of making mistakes while speaking English. I was worried about not making myself clear or that people wouldn't understand me, but I overcame that feeling. And I improved my speaking skill most, but writing and listening skills least.*

P11: *Of course, the program had positive impacts on my language skills. I started to speak faster, and I quitted speaking English with a Turkish mentality. It contributed to all of my skills, because I improved my listening, reading, and writing skills thanks to courses, and I improved my pronunciation because of practicing speaking skill.*

P3: *The program was beneficial in terms of improving my listening and comprehension skills. I improved my listening skill most, and writing skill least.*

As seen, the participants stated improving their language skills more compared to language knowledge, similar to the findings of the questionnaire. The findings about the language skills supported the quantitative data since students acknowledged improving their speaking skill most. It was followed by listening skill, vocabulary knowledge, and overcoming comprehension problems. Yet, the majority of the participants except P11 agreed that it was the writing skill that improved least.

The following questions in this section were asked to investigate the participants' perceptions about the lingua franca aspect of English language. Since English functioned as a contact language for students throughout their Erasmus experience, students were asked how they felt when speaking English with a Turkish accent and if English was improved only by talking to its native speakers, e.g. Americans, British. Some of their thoughts about this issue are presented below:

P7: *Actually, your accent doesn't matter, because everybody is speaking it with his or her own accent. Moreover, we spoke with a Turkish accent on purpose. I mean if we were speaking with an American or British, we would try to adjust our accent. Otherwise, it feels like you're teaching, and the other person may feel intimated. If one person speaks better, the other one feels uncomfortable. And for improving English, someone who is good at English is enough, he doesn't need to be British.*

P9: *Speaking English with a Turkish accent was fun and also funny. I learnt that you can improve English by speaking with the foreigners. So, you don't need native speakers; I gained self confidence by speaking with the foreigners.*

P2: *It was great. There were a lot of people from different nationalities and I didn't want to speak English like an American. I mean I liked it more, it reflected my Turkish identity.*

P3: *You cannot improve your language knowledge by speaking with the foreigners. You can just improve your language skills, because the important point is to express yourself. So, you don't use complex sentences.*

P11: *It was both good and bad. I mean almost everybody speaks it with his own accent, so you can easily identify his nationality. If you speak it with a Turkish accent, you give clue about your nationality, which is the right thing for me. On the other hand, it is undeniable that speaking with a perfect accent is very prestigious. Yet, I still prefer speaking it with a Turkish accent and I don't consider changing it. And I don't think that we need native speakers to improve English language.*

P10: *It was a little bit tiresome, because there may be problems because of pronouncing some words in different ways. Then, we would use body language in such situations, but speaking with people from every nation help us improve English language skills. Of course, speaking with a native speaker contributes more in terms of pronunciation, practice, learning phrases, etc.*

P8: *I believe that English is learnt best in countries where it is spoken as the native language. For instance, I listened to and I understood what other students meant, but I was shocked about how they formed sentences. They paid no attention to grammar, yet they were able to express themselves and speak fast. So, I think if you want to learn English in a correct way, you should study in the USA or England, because I couldn't improve my English language skills as much as I had desired.*

As the participants' responses demonstrated, there were different ideas about how students regarded speaking English with a Turkish accent. While some found it fun, funny, and great, some considered that it was tiresome. Yet, none of them felt intimidated because of their Turkish accent; on the contrary, they were all pleased with this situation since it helped them reveal their identity. This aspect of the findings supported the quantitative data. However, regarding the question if English is learnt best by speaking with the native speakers or not, most of the participants disagreed with this idea while P8 and P3 agreed with it saying that it triggers the correct use of language. In this regard, participants' responses seemed not to support the quantitative data as most of participants agreed with the statement that English is learnt best in a country where it is spoken as a native language. This can be explained by the capacity of qualitative tradition in that qualitative data deals with multiple realities rather than single reality which is associated with

quantitative data. In this way, interview reports, providing richness and diversity of opinions through conflicting, serve to complement the overall picture.

As for the last dimension of this section, participants were asked if English is a world language and if it belongs only to British culture or not, which aimed to assess their opinions about how they changed their viewpoints about English after speaking English with the foreigners. In this way, their opinions about the lingua franca status of English became clear as indicated below:

P8: *I believe that English belongs to British culture; it is spoken by everybody as it is a world language, but I suppose it has something peculiar to it.*

A good deal of subjects viewed English as a common language for communication and questioned the ownership of English due to its global aspects.

P1: *It is certainly the common language of the world. I mean it's a world language and it doesn't belong to American or British people.*

P3: *If we consider the whole world as a single country, then English should belong to everybody and every nation, which is the reality.*

P2: *Yes, English is a world language, but you don't need to know British culture in order to speak English better; you need to know the cultures of everybody speaking English. Knowing British culture to communicate with an Italian wouldn't help me.*

P11: *English is a world language. So, for me it doesn't belong to British culture. It is the language of science, art, and culture. While 1.8 people speaking English, it would be quite selfish to say that this culture only belongs to British.*

P4: *Yes, it is a world language. There were students from at least ten different countries there and English was the only language to communicate. And it belongs to all cultures.*

P9: *Yes, English is a world language and it belongs to all cultures.*

According to their responses about the lingua franca status of English language, most participants agreed that English is a world language spoken by people all around the world for different purposes. In the same vein, they also reached a consensus about the idea that English language does not belong to British culture; they claimed that it belongs to the cultures all around the world. These findings supported the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire since 84 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that English does not belong to only one culture 83,2 % of the participants *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that English is a world language in the questionnaire. As no pre-test was applied to these participants before their departure, there was no clear evidence to support if it was the program itself that changed students' perceptions about the lingua franca status of English or not. It was important to note that students could have been aware of this status of English before participating in the program, but not in a practical way. This means that the Erasmus program helped students to realize the necessity of using English as a crucial tool when communicating in real life situations in different countries.

4.2.4. Students' Perceptions about Raising Intercultural Awareness

This section of the interviews focused on revealing participants' perceptions about how their Erasmus experience contributed to raise their intercultural awareness. In this respect, the participants were asked four questions and several related sub-questions concerning the cultural effects of the program promoted by the interaction among students from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, participants were asked how they assessed the Erasmus program in terms of cultural aspect. Here are some statements on this issue:

P10: *The program contributed in terms of adapting to different cultures. It also helped us know our own culture better since we came to realize both positive and negative aspects of our culture. It also made us much more sensitive and tolerant.*

P5: *We all learnt something about the history or the culture of countries we visited. I avoided making generalizations. I had the chance to see that an average European and Eastern European are quite different from each other.*

P11: *Culture is a very broad concept. I mean there is British culture, German culture, Christian culture, Jew culture, university culture, food culture, clothing culture, etc. Thanks to Erasmus, I learnt a lot of things under these titles. For example, I learnt that Germans don't pay attention to their clothes but they never disobey the orders, and Italians eat nothing but marmalade and bread for breakfast, Spanish people only care about siesta and fiesta, etc.*

P7: *It is a very beneficial program in terms of learning cultural aspects. I mean there are a lot of students coming from different European countries. It is difficult to find such a cosmopolite structure in any another place. So, Erasmus was beneficial in terms of that.*

The participants' responses indicated that the program was beneficial in terms of getting to know other cultures better and being more tolerant towards these cultures. Most students were found to develop a sense of appreciation and understanding of different cultures. This also appeared to serve to understand and value their own cultures. The students were asked whether they had any bias against certain cultures before their Erasmus experience or not. Some were observed to change their ideas after the Erasmus experience:

P1: *Not as a nation, but I used to think that European people were more easy going people, so I was a little bit nervous.*

It is remarkable to note that some participants, as in the example, were found to suffer from de facto dominance of a single culture or cultural intolerance and ignorance which is connected mostly with western world. It might be surprise for some students to come across people in Europe who enclose themselves into a small glass with the feeling of cultural superiority mixed with racism over other cultures, which has the historical background.

P3: *I used to think that Germans were more tolerant towards other cultures, but I saw that unfortunately most of them had intolerance towards other cultures.*

P2: *I had a lot of bias. I mean people say that Europe is a bad society with no moral values. They would tell me "I wouldn't go there if I were you". So, I was wandering if I would be able to get on well with them or not.*

Regarding the participants' perceptions towards certain cultures, they were also asked if they changed their ideas after the program as a result of their interactions with the students from other cultures. The findings demonstrated that some students changed their ideas and perceptions about other nations due to their own genuine experience as follows:

P11: *I didn't have any prejudices before the program, yet afterwards I some negative opinions about some cultures. I wouldn't say prejudice; because prejudice is the thought you have without knowing someone. After getting to know some cultures, I saw that they were selfish people who thought that only they had the civilization. They expect kindness from you, but they don't behave in the same way.*

This statement of P11 obviously indicated the pain that the student had to endure due to the westerner's complexes of superiority over nations or cultures. The underlying idea in this statement can be interpreted as the intolerance or ignorance of European people towards other cultures or the attitude they adopt that claims a cultural superiority over other cultures.

P2: *Yes, I realized that there were some groups of students coming from certain countries. I couldn't figure out why they came to Europe. I would say for fun, but they were not having parties or something else. Or not for studying. They were coming from Africa or some Arabic countries. They were quite weird.*

P5: *Spanish people are always very late, and they are also lazy.*

P4: *Yes, I did. For instance, about the Italians. Their language sounded very rude to me. And I also think that they seem good but actually they are not so. Maybe it's all because that my friend had a problem with an Italian there.*

P7: *You have some kinds of thoughts about nations like identifying the stereotypes of some nations, because it is not just one person. For example, there were 200 Spanish, so you could make some generalizations after their certain behaviors. Of course, we cannot do the same to a nation with only 3 or 5 students. I wouldn't say prejudice, but I had some kind of antipathy against Spanish people.*

The participants were also asked whether they were treated in an intolerant way. Participants' responses showed that most of the students experienced an intolerant manner in one way or another. Followings are some samples about this issue:

P3: *Yes, I was treated in a prejudiced way. For example, we couldn't get into many nightclubs because of having a Turkish passport. We were considered as possible troublemakers at most of the places. Of course, every German is not like that, but 5 out of 10 Germans treated us in this way.*

P2: *Yes, I had such an experience. We were in a lesson discussing something, and then a German student told me "you are like this; many Middle Eastern countries feed on terrorism. I said "how did you come to think so?". I think it's all because of media.*

P1: *Yes, I experienced some negative points of views because of my headscarf. Some students even thought that I was a terrorist. I had a very close friend. Some students asked my friend "why is she covering her head? Why is she making head like a ball? Is she carrying a bomb?". I was shocked when she told me that.*

P9: *As I was wearing headscarf, people were staring at me at school, in the street, and at some other places.*

P8: *We didn't mind, but for instance, they would always say "this is pork, Turkish people don't eat it, don't eat it" or they would always ask us why we didn't wear headscarf.*

P4: I don't drink alcohol, for example. And I was fed up with explaining them why I wasn't using it.

The above-mentioned statements of the participants clearly indicated that the intolerance of western world became prominent as an issue to be elaborated. It is of utmost importance to discuss the statements above in regard to this concept, as it is also somewhat related to some other key concepts such as racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, which are gaining momentum and spreading all over Europe.

In this sense, intolerance can be defined as a lack of acceptance of views, beliefs, or behavior which are different from one's own, and cultural intolerance and ignorance have been on rise in Europe recently. Intolerance within this context includes hostility towards other groups based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality and it involves a feeling of cultural superiority which means that Europeans assume they are superior to others. It is known that "countries and cultures in Europe have always been diverse and heterogeneous in their ethnic, religious, and social composition" and "intolerance threatens the social cohesion of plural and democratic societies" (Zick et al., 2011, p.11-15).

Today, it is possible to observe their effects in the lives of minorities in Europe, especially through media. For instance, it was reported that "hate crimes against Muslims in London have risen by % 70 in the past year" (Adesina & Marocico, 2015). The rise of Islamophobia in Europe was indicated in the news dating back to earlier years as it was noted that Islamophobic movements were also rise on the rise in Norway, England, the Netherlands, Russia, and especially Austria (Briggs, 2011). These kinds of news also took place in Turkish media acknowledging that Islamophobia is on the rise in Europe and clashes and attacks are taking place because of Islamophobia, especially in France and Germany which have the two largest Muslim populations in Europe (Islamophobia Tension in Europe, 2016). Thus, it can be remarked that the existence of intolerance and Islamophobia became an undeniable truth in Europe.

Europe has been experiencing new challenges such as cultural diversity and immigration integration, and these challenges have given rise to the levels of intolerance. This situation can be observed in various reports with the report by the Council of Europe

(2012) being one of them. It was stated in the report that "racism and intolerance are on the rise in Europe today and the resulting tension sometimes leads to racist violence" (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2012, p.7). These increasing tensions "between national majorities and ethnic or religious minorities, more particularly with marginalised Muslim communities" has become widespread, and it is claimed by some thinkers and politicians that "it is almost impossible to accommodate certain minority groups, notably Muslims, in European countries because their cultural and religious faith are incompatible with secular democratic governance" (Dobbernack & Modood, 2011, p.19). Therefore, it can be noted that although Europe stands for fundamental rights and high values, this intolerance towards certain minority groups, especially against Muslims leads to a rise in Islamophobia which is the fear of Islam and Muslims and xenophobia- the fear of foreigners.

What is threatening is to see similar tendencies in university students, in other words in young generation. In her study, Yeşilyurt Gündüz (2010) elaborated on a report published by The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights in 2005 on discrimination and intolerance against Muslims and acknowledged that "distrust, enmity and prejudices towards Muslims enhanced deeply after the New York attacks" and examples of discrimination in the report "reveals cliche ´d media reports showing Muslims as "aliens" to and "enemies" of Europe; verbal and physical acts of violence against Muslims; prejudice in employment; hostile political slogans of right-populist parties; and negative security and immigration measures" were presented (p.37). In the same vein, xenophobia which is a false belief that people from different cultures, countries, languages, or ethnicity is a threat has risen in Europe.

It is possible to observe the impacts of Islamophobia and xenophobia in surveys which were carried to shed light into these concepts both by European Council itself and the researchers. For instance, in a survey by Quintelier and Dejaeghere (2008) on 6000 Belgian students, it was found that half of them saw immigration as a source of tension; four out of ten believed that everybody should share the same customs and traditions; and one-third stated that they do not trust people who are not from their ethnic group. Similarly, Andersson and Mellgren (2016) examined consequences of racist and/or xenophobic victimization among students with a minority and/or immigrant background in

a Swedish context and it was concluded that out of the 1036 participants in the survey a total of 510 (49 per cent) students were victimized sometime during their life time and also 133 (13 per cent) of these students had experienced incidents with racist or xenophobic motives. The GFE Europe survey conducted in eight European countries in autumn and winter 2008 and 2009 on 1000 people indicated that about half of all European respondents believed there were too many immigrants in their country and half or more condemn Islam as "a religion of intolerance". Also, an interesting finding of this report was that about one third of respondents believed in the existence of a natural hierarchy of ethnicity, which was a clear indicator of cultural superiority Europeans adopt against other cultures. Also, another survey in 2005 revealed that majorities across Europe regretted multiculturalism (65%), wanted the repatriation of illegal immigrants (25%) and regarded minorities and migrants as a threat to values such as peace, social equality, freedom of expression, tolerance and openness to others that are seen as European (75%) (EC 2007, EUMC 2005).

Having elaborated on the issue of intolerance in Europe, it can be stated that Turkish Erasmus students' responses to the question if they were treated in an intolerant way or not revealed that even though the program had an undeniable positive effect on raising students' intercultural awareness, they somewhat experienced intolerance during their sojourn because of their religion or nationality. They could be accused of supporting Islamic terrorism, or exposed to negative judgments or questions about wearing headscarf, not consuming alcohol, or eating pork.

In this regard, the statements of Turkish Erasmus students in this study can be discussed in accordance with the issues of intolerance and Islamophobia and xenophobia in Europe and their impacts on the perceptions of contemporary Europeans. An example of Islamophobia can be seen in the statement of P2, it is clear that some German people associated Islam with terrorism and Turkey was regarded as a Middle Eastern country and it was no exception. A similar experience was uttered by P1 studying in Poland when she was discriminated because of her headscarf. Headscarf is a part of dress code in Islam and it usually covers head and chest. In this case, P1 wearing a headscarf as a part of her faith was accused of being a terrorist or carrying a bomb in that headscarf, which was an irritating comment on her religion and personality. The same situation was expressed again by P9 studying in Poland when she felt uncomfortable as people stared at her at school, in

the street or at other places because of her headscarf. On the other hand, while some Europeans were intolerant against Muslim women wearing headscarf, they were also skeptical about those women who preferred not to wear headscarf as in the case of P8. P8 noted that she was fed up with explaining the reason why she was not wearing a headscarf since these people regarded headscarf as an inseparable part of Islam. Therefore, she felt a need to explain the teaching of Islam and related to this, the secular construction of Turkey and the people in Turkey every time she was exposed to that question.

Another example of cultural intolerance was the statement of P4 about the use of alcohol. Alcohol is forbidden in Islam and it is considered not permissible like eating pork, which is another point addressed by P8. In this case, P4 experienced intolerance towards her beliefs as people always questioned the reason why she did not consume alcohol. She implied that explaining it again and again made her feel uncomfortable. In the same vein, P8 felt offended when other students kept warning him about not eating pork. The last example of intolerance can be the statement of P3 studying in Germany when he was discriminated because of his national identity. In this example, it appeared from the findings that some German people act in an intolerant way against Turkish people not necessarily based on religious belief but possibly because of ethnical identity. It is important to note that Germany and the incidences of intolerance in Germany have come to the fore in most of the statements above. Being the second country in terms of having the most Muslim population after France, Germany faces an increase in Islamophobia and xenophobia. In a survey in 2011, it was found that %40 of German people considered the presence of Islamic communities "a threat" to their national identity (Malik, 2015). Similarly, survey results from 2004 indicated that that over 83% of Germans connected "Islam" with "terrorism" and in another survey from 2003, 27% of Germans agreed that "immigration to Germany should be forbidden for Muslims" (Yeşilyurt Gündüz, 2010). This situation in Germany also attracted European Council's attention when the Report on Germany by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was released in 2001. The ECRI Report expressed "its deep concern about the situation of and attitudes towards those who are considered "foreigners" and about Germany's insufficient efforts at promoting integration" (ECRI, 2001). Therefore, it can be stated that although intolerance, Islamophobia and xenophobia are spreading all over the European countries and threatening one of the founding principles EU based on- respect for diversity,

Germany seems to be one of those countries that are affected most. All in all, it can be acknowledged from the participants' statements that learning about new cultures also let them observe how some Europeans have certain perceptions about Turkish people and their Muslim identity.

As for the last question about the cultural effects of the program in the interview, the participants were finally asked if cultural differences were important in carrying out successful communication with the foreigners. It was found out that students didn't have clear cut ideas about this issue. Here are some examples to illustrate this issue:

P1: *At first, you have some kind of shyness because of not knowing the culture, but after a while you learn about their culture and in the same vein they learn about your culture.*

P3: *I think they are important. Let me give you an example. Turkish people kiss on the cheek or hug each other while greeting someone. But, if you want to hug someone in Europe, it is considered abnormal.*

P4: *These cultural differences can have positive effects. In terms of positive effects, you can have a good communication by sharing the differences.*

While some participants agreed that cultural differences play an important role in carrying out successful communication with the foreign students, P6 and P10 disagreed with this idea. Followings are their statements about this issue:

P6: *I didn't have any problems because of cultural differences. You are not German, Turkish, or Spanish there; you are just an Erasmus student. You gather under a single roof.*

P10: *I think cultural differences do not play an important role during the communication process, and I didn't have such a problem.*

In sum, the findings of qualitative data revealed that Erasmus program was beneficial in terms of carrying out one of its main goals, which is promoting students' cultural awareness. The participants' responses to interview questions suggested that Erasmus exchange program had several contributions on different cultural aspects. First of all, the participants agreed that thanks to Erasmus exchange program they had the chance to learn different cultures, and this made them more sensitive and tolerant towards other cultures. Their interactions with the representatives of different cultures helped them not only learn about other cultures but also introduce their own culture to Europeans. In this regard, some participants admitted having some negative opinions about certain cultures before the program, but the program helped them change their viewpoints about these cultures. Yet, the participants' statements indicated an interesting point about this issue. Even though it was acknowledged that some participants had negative opinions about some cultures before the program and claimed getting rid of these opinions, it was found out that after the program almost most of these participants were observed to change their perceptions about certain cultures. They tended to come up with stereotypes of each culture in their minds as a result of their experiences. Another striking point in the statement was that students stated having experienced some kind of intolerance during their stay by their Erasmus friends or the local people in host country. Some participants encountered some Islamophobic attitudes towards them because of their religion or some others faced intolerance, sometimes mixed with racism, because of their Turkish identity. The final question in the interview part was about the role of cultural differences in carrying out successful communication. The participants seemed to have contradictory ideas about this issue as some students stated that cultural differences were important in terms of carrying out successful communication with the foreigners whereas some students disagreed with this idea. Although the existence of cultural differences was highlighted by all respondents, their perceptions about how these differences served in carrying out a successful a communication or experiencing misunderstandings appeared a little ambiguous.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was designed to investigate social, academic, and cultural experiences of Turkish Erasmus students about the use of English as a means of communication and raising their intercultural awareness. Regarding Turkey's integration into European Union as a candidate country, the Erasmus program has a vital role in promoting the internationalizing of Turkish education system and students' personal, academic and cultural development as well as introducing Turkey's policies. Thus, Erasmus exchange program which was launched with an aim to provide education unity among the European countries and promote European system of higher education is the key concept of this study.

Turkey joined the Bologna process in 2001, and it has been taking an active role in the Erasmus program with its outgoing and incoming students and academic staff since 2004. The statistics reveal that since 2004, 98.171 Turkish students participated in the Erasmus program by the academic year of 2004-2015 (Turkish National Agency, 2016). As a part of following the requirements for an active participation in the Erasmus program, every year Turkey makes a considerable amount of financial contribution to the General Budget of European Union. For instance, after signing the agreement for participating in Erasmus+, which was planned to be executed between 2014 and 2020, Turkey is required to pay 800 million euro in total (Turkish National Agency, 2014). Based on the statistics, i was observed that only for the year 2014, Turkey paid 114 million euro (Turkish National Agency, 2014) in regard to the rules governing its financial contribution and in return it sent 14,651 students within the framework of Erasmus program (Turkish National Agency, 2016). Therefore, Turkey's full commitment to the requirements of European Union about the Erasmus program cannot be disregarded, and yet it can still be questionable whether such great amounts of payments for participating in this program really pays off in terms of achieving the desired internationalization of Turkish higher education. Thus, on one hand, the Erasmus program comes to the fore with its success especially in terms of social and cultural aspects such as providing Turkish students with enhanced cultural awareness,

linguistic competence, and personal development, and it also enables students to study in a different education system for a while and experience the academic gains of the program. Besides, program seems to be a great opportunity for the students with socio-economic disadvantages. Thanks to Erasmus program, students with lower-social class parents are now able to study abroad even if it is for a short period of time. Through the grant provided by the program, students who wouldn't go abroad with their own financial resources can study in a host university abroad. However, on the other hand, a short period of study in a host country cannot be considered very productive since adapting to a different education system and using a different language for academic studies can be problematic for Turkish students for a certain period of time.

Concerning the above-mentioned discussion about the Erasmus program and Turkey's investment in this program, this study aims to shed light into the program's both academic and cultural gains, which are the program's effects on the use of English as a means of communication and raising students' intercultural awareness. In this way, we may be able to answer the question to what extent the Erasmus program meets Turkey's expectations.

The findings of the current study revealed that cultural and linguistic aspects of the program promoted the participation of Turkish higher education students in the program as visiting different countries, learning about different cultures, and improving foreign language skills were prominent participation reasons in this study.

In order to provide a complete picture, the study focused on the program from various aspects. Therefore, problems and challenges the participants' faced were analyzed and categorized into three stages as before, during, and after Erasmus. Based on the analysis of both instruments, the most important problem for the participants before the program was the official procedures. It was the problem uttered by most of the participants and some participants used the words 'troublesome', 'time-consuming', 'exhausting', and 'being worn out' to define the process of official procedures. Regarding the problems during the program, findings from the questionnaire indicated to the financial problems, problems about different food habits, and adapting to a different education system. However, the interview part highlighted problems related to language skills such as having

comprehension problems due to English spoken with a different accent, learning the language of host country for meeting daily needs, and having difficulty in using the language and expressing themselves because of their insufficient speaking skill in English. About the last dimension of this phase, the findings showed that getting back to their routine in Turkey was the most striking problem after their Erasmus experience. The findings about these challenges seemed to support the findings of some previous studies conducted by Aktan and Sarı (2010) and Aydın (2012) in which official procedures, problems due to insufficient foreign language skills, and also getting back to their routine in Turkey upon their return were determined to be important problems before, during, and after the Erasmus exchange program.

One of the major research questions in the current study aimed to determine Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication after their Erasmus experience. In this regard, the participants' answers were arranged under two headings students' perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication and participants' perceptions about practicing English in an ELF community were elaborated. The findings revealed that the participants stated improving their language skill more compared to their language knowledge, and they agreed making great progress in terms of their speaking and listening skills, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and overcoming their comprehension problems in English as well as learning to use English in different contexts. It was also found out that writing was the least developed language skill whereas speaking was the most developed one for them.

The participants' perceptions about the most and least developed skills appeared as important issues to elaborate since one of the main objectives of this program is to provide academic gains. The rationale for speaking being the most developed skill can be explained by the fact that participants were always using English as a means of communication either with other Erasmus students, academicians at the host university, or the local people for improving their social relations, carrying out their academic tasks, and meeting their daily needs. Therefore, participants made great use of their speaking skills for these purposes and in return speaking became the most developed skill for them. On the other hand, writing was considered the least developed skill, partly because participants needed writing mostly for their academic studies, not in their daily life or social relations. For instance, P3

noted that writing was the least developed skill for him, because he needed writing only for his assignments, and when that happened he just opened a book and paraphrased what he understood. He further claimed that he failed some lessons because of writing his assignments without paying any attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling rules. In the same vein, P6 remarked writing being the least developed skill for her, because she noted that she could communicate orally through ungrammatical sentences, but she wasn't always able to form grammatically true and complex sentences for written exams or assignments. As seen in these examples, using writing skill mostly for assignments during their stay can be an important reason for them for not reaching the desired improvement. Also, most of the participants stated having oral exams rather than written exams, so they may have focused more on their speaking skills for a better exam performance.

Taking the academic aspect of Erasmus program into account, it can be noted that Turkish students also had a chance to compare the education system in their host countries and Turkey since they were able to study in a different education system for a short period of time. For example, P3 studying in Germany noted that Turkish and German education systems are quite different each other as German education system gives more importance to assignments, presentations, and research rather than exams. Similarly, P1 studying in Denmark stated that as opposed to Turkish higher education system, education system in Denmark focuses on assignments and group work very much. Also, some participants emphasized the differences between the education system at home and the host universities, especially in terms of teaching and testing approaches with host universities encouraging the students' active part and initiative in the learning process. In contrast to Turkish education system which is mostly theory-oriented and based on examination, Turkish Erasmus students appreciated much more student-centered and practice-based education systems in their host countries which provided them with an active role through research and assignments.

When it comes to practicing English in an ELF community, which was one of the key concepts in the present study, the participants' responses showed that the Erasmus program had positive effects on their perceptions about the lingua franca status of English language. The findings from both instruments indicated that participants realized that English is a world language, and it doesn't belong only to British or American culture. In

the same vein, they considered that speaking English with a Turkish accent is not bad; on the contrary, they felt comfortable and pleased while speaking it with a Turkish accent since it helped them reflect their identity. The rationale behind this perception is that participants came to think that speaking English with a perfect American or English accent is not necessary while speaking with the foreigners from different L1 backgrounds since everybody speaks it with his or her own accent. The emphasis on native-speaker norm dependency in Turkish education system came into question in regard to lingua franca status of English language; however, it is still observed through some studies that even though language teachers tolerate students' use of some features of ELF in classrooms, they still believe that students should be taught native-speaker norms and pronunciation (Coşkun, 2011; İnceçay and Akyel, 2014). Another interesting result is that the participants started to consider that mastering English grammar rules, which forms the essence of English language teaching in Turkey, was not enough for communicating with the foreigners. Their experience in an ELF community let them believe that error-free grammar was not what they needed for a successful communication, so they attached more importance to fluency when communicating with other Erasmus students or local people. They were not glad with the fact that more emphasis is placed on form while teaching English in Turkey whereas it has less practical use in communication. Lastly, a great majority of the participants agreed that most Turks need English in order to communicate with non-native speakers of English, which supported their perceptions about the lingua franca status of English, 'a contact language' during their stay in a foreign country.

The second major research question of this study was designed to determine the Turkish Erasmus students' perceptions about how the Erasmus exchange program contributed to raise their intercultural awareness. The findings from the questionnaire and interview displayed that participants tended to assess their Erasmus experience positively in terms of its cultural effects. As a result of their stay in a European country within the framework of Erasmus program, most participants agreed getting to know their own culture better and also introducing Turkish culture to Europeans. Also, they had the chance to observe European people's point of views against Turkey, and their experience helped them become aware of differences about Turkish culture and other cultures. Most of the participants confirmed learning about different cultures and lifestyles, and becoming more tolerant against other cultures in return. In this regard, they considered that classrooms

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with students from different cultures were beneficial for enhancing their cultural awareness, and cultural differences were thought to play an important role for carrying out a successful communication with the foreigners. However, no matter how perfect effects the program seemed to have in terms of cultural aspect, the findings also implied that there appeared some negative points to be addressed such as the issue of intolerance. It was found out that while some participants admitted having negative opinions or pre-existing thoughts against certain cultures prior to Erasmus program and that program helped them eliminate these opinions, some participants also acknowledged having negative opinions about certain cultures after the program as a result of their interactions with the students from these cultures. They remarked having experienced intolerance towards them in one way or another, and now they appeared more inclined to come up with stereotypes about each culture in their minds.

As seen above, the findings of this study suggest that analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data showed parallelism to previous studies (Arslan, 2013; Ersoy, 2013; Genç İlter, 2013; Raiko & Thanassis, 2010) as it was acknowledged that the program was successful in terms of improving the participants' language skills and knowledge considerably, encouraging their professional and personal development, and enhancing their intercultural awareness. However, it differed in terms of taking two important and neglected points into account: the concept of intolerance and the effect of gender on participants' responses.

First of all, as for the issue of intolerance, which was a neglected point in most of the studies in the literature, I believe that it is of utmost important to revisit this issue in order to deepen our understanding of the program's hidden cultural impacts since intolerance and ignorance demonstrated by some European people in different ways were one common concept implied in participants' statements.

The findings of this study made it possible to read between the lines and showed that the existence of intolerance and ignorance mixed with racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia by some European people could be inferred from participants' responses. Although, a majority of studies emphasize the positive cultural effects of Erasmus program, this study, in addition to positive aspects of Erasmus, also focused on addressing

the issue of intolerance, which was mentioned but not elaborated deeply in some studies (Aydın, 2012; Şahin, 2007), experienced by Turkish Erasmus students during their sojourn.

Second distinctive characteristic of this study was its focus on participants' gender in terms of having any significant effect on their perceptions. Gender can be a significant variable as both male and female students may have had different experiences which could have affected their thoughts about the program and its outcomes. Thus, the last major question of this study which focused on the aspect of gender aimed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between male and female participants' perceptions in terms of using English as a means of communication and raising their intercultural awareness. In this regard, the findings from the analysis of quantitative data showed that there were some statistically significant differences between the perceptions of male and female students as male participants believed that they improved their English language skill, listening, and reading more, and also started to speak English more fluently when compared to female participants. Apart from these items, no statistically significant difference was found concerning the other items of the questionnaire. Taking the gender aspect into account, it is possible to observe the gender effect on a few items, yet it did not have an extensive impact on most of the aspects handled throughout the study.

All in all, it can be concluded that the findings of this study indicated that Erasmus program was successful, to some extent, in achieving its main goals which is to equip students with improved foreign language competences, enhanced intercultural awareness, increased self-esteem, a better awareness of European countries and other cultures, and an experience of different educational systems. Therefore, it can be stated that current study corroborated the findings of several previous studies such as the study by Jenkins (2009) in which students started to appreciate being a non-native speaker of English in a multicultural context and another study by Užpalienė and Vaičiūnienė (2012) that found out that English was considered as a global lingua franca and the Erasmus program helped students enrich their language skills. On the other hand, the study also demonstrated that within these positive outcomes, there were some negative aspects implied, which were the problems students may face before, during, and after this Erasmus process and also the intolerance some students experienced because of their religion or Turkish identity. As a concluding remark, it can be noted that this Erasmus experience of Turkish students who

come from the only Islamic country within the program and have a different linguistic and cultural background can be very valuable for them. Rather than reading hundreds of pages of books about the differences between Turkey and European countries, experiencing these differences with its pros and cons for a short period of time can be more beneficial for them in terms of academic, personal, and cultural development.

Regarding the limitations of the study, the present study had some limitations which should be mentioned. The first limitation was about the sample size of this study. The number of participants in this research was 107, a relatively small sample that included participants only from two state universities in Turkey. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Turkish Erasmus students even though they may be beneficial in providing an insight into participants' perceptions about the Erasmus program and its effects. Secondly, the study was a cross-sectional one that was planned to be conducted in a certain period of time; no pre-test was applied to respondents. Thus, it would have been better if I had a chance to implement a pre-test before the program and then a post-test upon their return so that she could have made a comparison about the changes in students' perceptions. Also, the participants were limited to students who participated in the program within the last two academic years. The rationale behind this idea was to elicit more recent data since students who completed their Erasmus studies 3 years ago or over may have forgotten their opinions or experiences more compared to those who came back to Turkey within the last 2 years.

Another limitation was that only the volunteer students took part in the interview part, so it can be stated that those who had more interest in international communication and multicultural aspect of the Erasmus program were willing to participate in the interview process, which may explain the participants' the tendency in giving positive or negative answers. Therefore, those who did not volunteer to participate in the interviews may have different ideas and comments on these selected issues.

In spite of above-mentioned limitations, this study also enabled us to make some implications for the field of education. Throughout the study, it was reported that outgoing Erasmus students faced some problems such as adaptation problems, restricted use of English as a lingua franca in certain ELF communities, and the biases of European people

against Turkish people. In this regard, students should be provided with intensive orientation programs in which they should be informed about the concept of ELF and ELF communities as well as the challenges they may face in these ELF communities. Therefore, the importance of the concept of ELF should no longer be ignored by Turkish education system.

The norm-dependent English language teaching policy of Turkish education system does not allow Turkish students to familiarize with the concept of ELF. Thus, providing outgoing Erasmus students with samples from ELF contexts may contribute to their awareness of this concept before their sojourn. For this purpose, the English curriculum in Turkey should be reviewed to ensure that it gives students opportunity to familiarize with different cultures instead of sticking to American or British norms. Another suggestion at this point would be to train language teachers about novel language concepts such as ELF, EIL and WE to ensure that they would be good role models for the students. These teachers who keep up with the recent changes in the field of ELT can introduce different sentence and pronunciation patterns used in ELF communities to their students rather than asking their commitment to native speaker norms.

Concerning the cultural aspects of the Erasmus program, teachers should integrate cultural elements not only from British or American cultures but also cultures of European countries into their curriculum and teaching materials. Such kind of an initiative can raise students' intercultural awareness. Therefore, teachers should give more importance to create opportunities for their students to interact with the foreigners coming from different cultures and L1 backgrounds. Also, it is of utmost importance to support exchange programs at schools and encourage students to take part in such programs.

In the light of the findings and limitations of the present study, some suggestions can be provided for further studies. To begin with, a similar study with a larger sample can be undertaken with participants from different universities, which may provide a deeper insight into this issue. In the same vein, a similar study with a pre-test can be conducted in order to determine the changes which occur in participants' perceptions before and after the program. Also, this study focused on ELF communities in Europe and the interactions between students studying in these European countries, yet English is considered as the

global lingua franca in different parts of the world. Therefore, a further study with the participation of students from outer and expanding circle countries and studying in a foreign country within the framework of different study abroad programs or with the participation of incoming Erasmus students in Turkey can be conducted.

In terms of program's cultural aspect, it was acknowledged that one of the primary goals of this program is to provide an enhanced intercultural awareness as well as mutual cultural interactions and appreciation. However, due to implied issue of intolerance in this study, I am better positioned to suggest that it will be of great use to do some changes in school curriculums in Europe and integrate courses which can promote students' understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Such kind of adjustments done for the sake of proving a better understanding of other cultures and enhancing tolerance towards these cultures can also be also applied in Turkish curriculum. The rationale for this can be the fact that Turkish students immerse in a different cultural environment and with no previous experience abroad, they can have cultural adaptation problems and can act in the same intolerant way they can be treated. Therefore, it can be very helpful to equip students both from Europe and Turkey with a better cultural awareness through such adjustments in curriculum so that these incidences of intolerance can be reduced.

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APPENDIX 1- ERASMUS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

ERASMUS STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND RAISING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN ELF COMMUNITIES

Dear Students,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine your perceptions about the effects of Erasmus program in terms of English language use and intercultural awareness. These perceptions may be subjective, so there are no correct or incorrect answers. Therefore, answering the all questions is of great importance in terms of conducting the study successfully. The survey is anonymous; your answers will be confidential. Gathered data will be analyzed and interpreted in order to be used in the researcher's master thesis.

Thank you for your participation.

Seval KISA

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Department of Western Languages and Literature

Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics

Trabzon

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PART I: Demographic Information

Gender: Female ( ) Male ( )	
Age: 18-20 ( ) 21-23 ( ) 24-26 ( ) 26 or over ( )	
University: _____	
Faculty / Department: _____	
At which grade have you participated in the Erasmus Program? 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) Graduate ( ) Phd ( )	
Academic Year and Term of Participation:	
2013/2014 Academic Year :	
Fall Term ( ) Spring Term ( ) Fall & Spring Term ( )	
2014/2015 Academic Year:	
Fall Term ( ) Spring Term (still) ( ) Fall & Spring Term (still) ( )	
Host Country: _____	
Do you have a previous experience in abroad: Yes ( ) No ( )	
If yes, in which country and for how long?:	
_____	

PART II -Reasons for Participating in the Erasmus Program

Please, mark the reasons which have priority for you regarding your purpose of participation in the Erasmus program. You can mark more than one item.

1. Gaining academic experience in another country / learning about different education system   ( )

2. Improving foreign language skills   ( )

3. Learning a foreign language (except English)   ( )

4. Visiting different countries, learning about different cultures   ( )

5. Meeting new people from different cultures   ( )

6. Improving career prospects   ( )

7. Contributing to self-development   ( )

8. Having experience in abroad   ( )

9. Travelling to other countries   ( )

10. Introducing Turkish culture   ( )

11. other (explain:_____)   ( )

What is the most important reason for you among the reasons listed above? (item number is enough)

_____

PART III- Challenges / Problems Faced Before, During, and After the Erasmus Program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Before the Erasmus program:					
1. Having problems about the formal procedures (passport, visa, etc)					
2. Being nervous because of not having a previous experience in abroad					
3. Being anxious about adapting to a new environment					
4. Being afraid because I was going to be away from my family in a foreign country					
5. Being concerned about the different education system and also courses and exams as they will be in another language					
during the Erasmus Program:					
6. Having problems about adapting to a different education system					
7. Having problems about having courses in another language except English					
8. Having acculturation difficulty					
9. Having insufficient language knowledge for communication.					
10. Having insufficient language skills for communication.					
11. Having problems about the climate					
12. Having problems about different food habits					
13. Having health problems					
14. Having problems about the intensive curriculum					
15. Having problems about insufficient language knowledge of personnel working at host country's Erasmus Office					
16. Having transportation problems					
17. Having accommodation problems (landlord, hygiene, roommates, etc)					
18. Having financial problems (the grant was insufficient, it wasn't paid on time, etc.					
after the Erasmus Program:					
19. Having problems about the recognition of courses					
20. Having financial problems (the rest of the grant was not paid)					
21. Having problems about adapting to daily life in Turkey					

PART IV: The Use of English as a Means of Communication

Thanks to my Erasmus experience:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I improved my English language knowledge					
2. I improved my English language skill					
3. I improved my listening skill in English					
4. I improved my writing skill in English					
5. I improved my reading skill in English					
6. I started to speak English more fluently					
7. I improved my pronunciation					
8. I improved my vocabulary					
9. I overcame my comprehension problems					
10. I learnt how to use English in different contexts (school, daily life, etc)					
11. I became more confident about using English in written form.					
12. I don't feel timid speaking English with other people					
13. I can easily express myself in English orally					
14. Now, I feel more comfortable speaking English					
15. I realized that English doesn't belong to one culture					
16. I realized that speaking English with a perfect American or English accent is not necessary					
17. I realized that English is a world language					
18. I realized that speaking English with a Turkish accent is not bad					
19. I realized that English is learnt best in a country where it is spoken as a native language (the USA, Britain, etc)					
20. I realized that mastering English is important in terms of understanding other cultures and countries					
21. I realized the necessity of knowing the cultures of countries where English is the native language (Britain, etc)					
22. I think that most Turks need English to communicate with non-native speakers of English					
23. I observed that mastering English grammar rules is not enough for communicating with the foreigners					

PART V: Intercultural Awareness

Thanks to my Erasmus experience:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I increased my awareness of my native culture.					
2. I had the chance to introduce my culture to Europeans.					
I realized that I had prejudices against different cultures.					
4. I learnt about European people's points of views against Turkey.					
5. I became more aware of the differences between Turkish and other cultures.					
6. I learnt more about different life styles.					
7. I learnt about the host country's culture better.					
8. I became more tolerant against other cultures.					
9. I learnt that people from different cultures can create a common culture.					
10. Classrooms with student groups from different cultures was beneficial for cultural awareness.					
11. I realized that my negative perspectives against some cultures changed.					
12. I realized that paying attention to cultural differences is important for communicating with the foreigners.					
13. I gained some prejudices against some cultures.					

APPENDIX A- ERASMUS DEĞERLENDİRME ANKETİ

ERASMUS ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ELF TOPLULUKLARINDA İNGİLİZCE'NİN İLETİŞİM ARACI OLARAK KULLANIMI VE KÜLTÜRLERARASI FARKINDALIĞI GELİŞTİRME AÇISINDAN GÖRÜŞLERİ

Değerli Öğrenciler,

Bu anketin amacı Erasmus programının İngilizce öğrenimi ve kültürler arası farkındalık açısından etkisine dair görüşlerinizi tespit etmektir. Söz konusu görüşler tamamen kişiye özgü olabileceğinden doğru ya da yanlış cevap yoktur. Bu nedenle, cevapsız soru bırakmamanız araştırmanın sağlıklı bir şekilde tamamlanması açısından oldukça önemlidir Ankete adınızı veya soyadınızı yazmanız gerekmemektedir; verdiğiniz cevaplar gizli kalacaktır. Elde edilen veriler araştırmacının yüksek lisans tezinde kullanılmak üzere değerlendirilecek ve yorumlanacak.

Ankete katılımınız için teşekkür ederim

Seval KISA

Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi,

Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı

Uygulamalı Dil Bilimi Yüksek Lisans Programı

Trabzon

e-posta:sevalkisa@gmail.com

1.KISIM – KİŞİSEL BİLGİLER

Cinsiyet: Kadın   ( )   Erkek ( )

Yaş: 18-20 ( )   21-23   ( )   24-26   ( )   26 ve üzeri ( )

Üniversite: _____

Fakülte / Bölüm: _____

Erasmus'a kaçıncı sınıfta katıldınız? 2 ( )   3 ( )   4 ( )   Yüksek Lisans ( )   Doktora ( )

Erasmus'a katıldığınız eğitim dönemi:

2013/2014 Akademik Yılı :

Güz Dönemi ( )   Bahar Dönemi ( )   Güz & Bahar Dönemi ( )

2014/2015 Akademik Yılı:

Güz Dönemi ( )   Bahar Dönemi (halen) ( )   Güz & Bahar Dönemi (halen) ( )

Erasmus dahilinde gittiğiniz ülke: _____

Daha önce Erasmus haricinde yurtdışında bulundunuz mu?   Evet   ( )   Hayır ( )

Eğer bulunduysanız hangi ülkede ve ne kadar süre ile: _____

2.KISIM -Erasmus Programına Katılım Sebebi

Erasmus programına katılım amacınızı göz önünde bulundurarak aşağıda sıralanan sebeplerden sizin için öncelik taşıyanları işaretleyiniz. Birden fazla işaretleme yapabilirsiniz.

1. Başka bir ülkede eğitim almak / farklı eğitim sistemlerini hakkında bilgi edinmek   ( )

2. Yabancı dilimi geliştirmek   ( )

3. Farklı bir yabancı dil öğrenmek (İngilizce dışında)   ( )

4. Farklı ülkeleri ziyaret etmek, farklı kültürleri tanımak   ( )

5. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla tanışmak   ( )

6. Geleceğe yönelik kariyer planlarıma katkıda bulunmak   ( )

7. Kişisel gelişim yönünden kendimi geliştirmek   ( )

8. Yurt dışı deneyimi yaşamak   ( )

9. Başka ülkelere seyahat etmek   ( )

10. Kendi kültürümü tanıtmak   ( )

11. diğer (açıklayınız:_____)   ( )

Yukarıda sıralanan sebepler arasından sizin için en önemli sebep hangisidir? (madde numarası yeterlidir)

_____

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3.KISIM- Erasmus Programında Yaşanılan Zorluklar / Problemler Anketi

	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
Erasmus programı <u>öncesinde:</u>					
1. Resmi prosedürler (resmi yazışmalar, pasaport, vize, vb.) ile ilgili problemler yaşadım.					
2. Daha önce yurtdışı deneyimim olmadığı için tedirgindim.					
3. Farklı bir ortama gireceğim için endişeliydim.					
4. Yabancı bir ülkede ailemden uzak olacağım için korkuyordum.					
5. Farklı bir eğitim sistemi ve farklı bir dilde olacağı için dersler ve sınavlar açısından kaygılıydım.					
Erasmus programı <u>süresince:</u>					
6. Farklı bir eğitim sistemine uyum sağlama açısından problem yaşadım.					
7. Eğitimin İngilizce dışında farklı bir dilde olması açısından problem yaşadım.					
8. Kültürel uyum problemeleri yaşadım.					
9. İletişim açısından dil bilgim yetersizdi.					
10. İletişim açısıdan dil becerim yetersizdi.					
11. İklim ile ilgili problem yaşadım.					
12. Farklı beslenme alışkanlıkları açısından problemler yaşadım.					
13. Sağlık ile ilgili problem yaşadım.					
14. Yoğun eğitim programı açısından problem yaşadım.					
15. Gidilen ülkedeki Erasmus ofisi çalışanların yetersiz dil bilgisi açısından problem yaşadım.					
16. Ulaşımla ile ilgili problem yaşadım.					
17. Konaklama ile ilgili problem (ev sahibi, hijyen, ev arkadaşı, vb) yaşadım.					
18. Mali açıdan problem (verilen hibenin yetersiz olması/ zamanında yatmaması, vb) yaşadım.					
Erasmus programı <u>sonrasında:</u>					
19. Derslerin saydırılması ile ilgili problem yaşadım.					
20. Mali (hibenin kalan kısmının ödenmemesi) açısından problem yaşadım.					
21. Türkiye'deki hayata uyum sağlamakta zorlandım.					

4.KISIM – Dil Öğrenimi Algı Anketi

Erasmus tecrübem sayesinde:	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1. İngilizce dil bilgim gelişti.					
2. İngilizce dil becerim gelişti.					
3. İngilizce dinleme becerimi geliştirdim.					
4. İngilizce yazma becerimi geliştirdim.					
5. İngilizce okuma becerimi geliştirdim.					
6. İngilizce'yi daha akıcı konuşmaya başladım.					
7. İngilizce telafuzumu geliştirdim.					
8. İngilizce kelime bilgimi geliştirdim.					
9. İngilizce anlama zorluğumu yendim.					
10. İngilizce'yi farklı durumlarda nasıl kullanmam gerektiğini öğrendim. (okul,sosyal ortamlar, vb)					
11. İngilizce'yi yazılı kullanma açısından kendime olan güvenim arttı.					
12. Başkaları ile İngilizce konuşurken hata yapmaktan korkmuyorum.					
13. İngilizce sözlü olarak kendimi rahatlıkla ifade edebiliyorum.					
14. Artık İngilizce konuşurken kendimi daha rahat hissediyorum.					
15. İngilizce'nin tek bir kültüre ait olmadığının farkına vardım.					
16. İngilizce'yi kusursuz bir Amerikan ya da İngiliz telafuzu ile konuşmak gerekmediğini fark ettim.					
17. İngilizce'nin dünya dili olduğunun farkına vardım.					
18. Türk aksanı ile İngilizce konuşmanın kötü olmadığını anladım.					
19. İngilizce'nin en iyi ana dili İngilizce olan bir ülkede öğrenildiğini fark ettim (Amerika, İngiltere).					
20. İngilizce'yi iyi bilmenin farklı kültürleri ve ülkeleri tanımak açısından önemli olduğunu anladım.					
21. İngilizce'yi öğrenmek için İngilizce konuşulan ülkelerin kültürünü (İngiltere, Amerika) bilmenin gerekliliğini anladım.					
22. Çoğu Türk'ün İngilizceye, ana dili İngilizce olmayan yabancılar ile iletişim kurmak için ihtiyaç duyduğunu düşünüyorum.					
23. İngilizce yapısal dil bilgisinin yabancılarla iletişim kurmak için yeterli olmadığını gördüm.					

PART V – Kültürlerarası Farkındalık Anketi

Erasmus tecrübem sayesinde:	Kesinlikle	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorm	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1. Kendi kültürümü daha iyi tanıdım.					
2. Kendi kültürümü Avrupalılara tanıtma fırsatı buldum.					
3. Farklı kültürlere karşı önyargılarım olduğunun farkına vardım.					
4. Avrupa ülkelerindeki insanların Türkiye'ye karşı bakış açılarını fark ettim.					
5. Türk kültürü ve diğer kültürler arasındaki farklılıklar konusunda daha bilinçlendim.					
6. Değişik yaşam tarzları hakkında daha fazla bilgi edindim.					
7. Kaldığım ülkenin kültürünü daha iyi öğrendim.					
8. Farklı kültürlere karşı daha hoşgörülü hale geldim.					
9. Farklı kültürlerden insanların ortak bir kültür oluşturabileceğini öğrendim.					
10. Kültürel açıdan farklı öğrenci gruplarının bulunduğu sınıflar kültürel farkındalık açısından oldukça faydalıydı.					
11. Bazı kültürlere karşı olumsuz olan bakış açımın değiştiğini fark ettim.					
12. Yabancılar ile etkili bir iletişim sağlamak için kültürel farklılıklara dikkat etmenin önemli olduğunu anladım.					
13. Bazı kültürlere karşı önyargılar edindim.					

APPENDIX B- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was / were your reasons for participating in the Erasmus program? (explain)

2. What was the most important problem/ challenge for you <u>before</u> the Erasmus program?

3. What was the most important problem/ challenge for you <u>during</u> the Erasmus program?

-Courses, exams, accommodation, financial, transportation, etc. (explain: you can give examples)

4. What was the most important problem/ challenge for you <u>after</u> the Erasmus program?

5. How did the Erasmus program contribute in terms of improving your English language knowledge (mastering the grammar rules, vocabulary, etc)?

6. How did the Erasmus program contribute in terms of improving your English language skills?

- Which skill did you improve most (speaking, listening, writing, reading, pronunciation, etc)?

- Which skill did you improve least?

7. How did you feel when speaking English with a Turkish accent with the foreigners?

8. How did speaking English with the foreigners make you change your view about English?

- You were in interaction with students from different countries throughout the program, so do you think that English is improved by speaking only with the native speakers?

9. Is English a world language?

-Does it belong to one culture? Does it belong to only British culture?

10. Assess the Erasmus Program in terms of its cultural aspects? How did it contribute to you in terms of cultural aspect? (explain)

APPENDIX B - MÜLAKAT SORULARI

1. Erasmus Programına katılım sebebiniz /sebepleriniz nedir? (açıklayınız)

2. Erasmus Programı <u>öncesinde</u> sizin açınızdan en önemli zorluk / problem neydi?

(açıklayınız)

3. Erasmus Programı <u>süresince</u> sizin açınızdan en önemli zorluk / problem neydi?

-Dersler, sınavlar, konaklama, mali, ulaşım, vb.

(açıklayınız; örnekler verebilirsiniz)

4. Erasmus Programı <u>sonrasında</u> sizin açınızdan en önemli zorluk / problem neydi? (açıklayınız / <u>eğer öğreniminiz devam ediyorsa cevaplamanıza gerek yok</u>)

5. Erasmus Programı, İngilizce dil bilginizin gelişimi (İngilizce dil kurallarını bilmek/ kelime bilgisi) açısından size nasıl katkıda bulundu?

6. Erasmus Programı, İngilizce dil becerinizin (performans) gelişimi açısından size nasıl katkıda bulundu?

- En çok hangi becerileriniz açısından faydalı olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? (konuşma, dinleme, yazma, okuma, telafuz, vb)

-En az hangi becerileriniz açısından faydalı olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

7. Sizce yabancılar ile iletişim kurarken Türk aksanı ile İngilizce konuşmak nasıldı?

8. Yabancılar ile İngilizce konuşmak İngilizce'ye olan bakış açınızı nasıl değiştirdi?

- Program süresince farklı ülkelerden öğrenciler diyalog kurdunuz, peki sizce İngilizce sadece İngiliz veya Amerikanlılar ile konuşularak geliştirilir?

9. İngilizce dünya dili midir?

-İngilizce tek bir kültüre mi aittir? Sadece İngiliz kültürüne mi aittir?

10. Erasmus Programı, kültürel açısından değerlendiriniz? Kültürel anlamda neler kattı size? (açıklayınız)

CURRICULUM VITAE

Seval KISA was born in Sakarya in 1988. She completed her secondary school education in Tuzla High School in Istanbul. She started her university education in 2006 at Karadeniz Technical University and graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature in 2011. She started her MA degree in Applied Linguistics in 2011. She is currently a lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages at Gümüşhane University.