

A text-based approach to developing EFL learners' intercultural awareness in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT Recent research suggests that learners should be provided with opportunities to negotiate meanings with other cultures and critically evaluate and reflect on their own culture. Texts have a great potential to provide such opportunities, especially in contexts where learners do not have the chance to experience other cultures through real-time observations. This case study investigates what the readers-as-text-ethnographers approach (RaTE) offers to promote intercultural awareness (ICA) in higher education. To this end, seven texts were selected following certain criteria, and a 15-week implementation was designed. Data were collected through learners' written productions, classroom video recordings, a post-implementation survey, and key informant interviews. Findings revealed that studying texts with the RaTE approach helped the learners develop their ICA in understanding the complexity of culture, otherness, and self. Furthermore, findings also showed that the learners had difficulties in certain areas, such as reading between the lines and textual analysis during the implementation.

Keywords: *English language teaching, Higher education, Intercultural awareness, Readers as text ethnographers, Text-based approach*

Yükseköğretimde İngilizce öğrenenlerin kültürlerarası farkındalıklarını geliştirmek için metin temelli bir yaklaşım

ÖZ Son araştırmalar, öğrencilere diğer kültürlerle anlamları müzakere etme ve kendi kültürlerini eleştirel olarak değerlendirme ve yansıtma fırsatı verilmesi gerektiğini öne sürmektedir. Metinler, özellikle öğrencilerin gerçek zamanlı gözlemler yoluyla diğer kültürleri deneyimleme şansına sahip olmadığı bağlamlarda, bu tür fırsatları sağlamak için büyük bir potansiyele sahiptir. Bu vaka çalışması, metin etnografi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımının kültürlerarası farkındalığı yükseköğretimde teşvik etmek için neler sunduğunu araştırmaktadır. Bu amaçla belirli kriterlere göre seçilmiş yedi okuma metni çerçevesinde 15 haftalık bir uygulama tasarlanmıştır. Veriler, öğrencilerin yazılı üretimleri, sınıf video kayıtları, uygulama sonrası anket ve anahtar bilgilendirici mülakatları yoluyla toplanmıştır. Bulgular, metinleri metin etnografi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımıyla birlikte çalışmanın, öğrenenlerin kültür, ötekilik ve benliğin karmaşıklığını anlama gibi alanlarda kültürlerarası farkındalıklarını geliştirmelerine yardımcı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca bulgular, öğrencilerin uygulama sırasında satır aralarını okuma ve metin analizi gibi belirli alanlarda zorluk yaşadıklarını da göstermiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *İngilizce öğretimi, Kültürlerarası farkındalık, Metin etnografileri olarak okuyucular, Metin temelli yaklaşım, Yükseköğretim*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, digitalization and internationalization have been considered the milestones of the 21st century, which have reshaped our world in various social domains in an unprecedented way. Today's world is mostly characterized by the removal of spatial distance, deterritorialization, interconnectedness, and intercultural exchanges (Baker, 2022; Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2019; Linares, 2016). In such an ever-globalizing world, the English language is the predominant medium of communication used "by people from different lingua-cultural backgrounds in a wide range of contexts" (Sung, 2017, p. 15). This has put an end to native speakerism in English language teaching (ELT) and has also proliferated the roles and status of English. In response to such a multitude of sociocultural and sociolinguistic realities, terms such as English as an international language, an additional language, a global language, and a lingua franca are now used to recognize the changing roles of English and accentuate the significance between speakers whose first language is not English (Kiczkowiak, 2020). Additionally, in the landscape of English language teaching (ELT), this paradigm shift has entailed transitioning from the Anglophone-centered cultural understanding to an intercultural one encompassing regional cultures, learners' own cultures, and other cultures in ELT (Parks, 2020; Piatkowska, 2015). With all these in mind, intercultural awareness (ICA) is embraced as one of the critical learner outcomes in the current ELT pedagogy so that learners navigate through multilingual and multicultural contexts and effectively communicate with culturally different people.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing ICA

ICA is often considered a critical aspect of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) rather than a stand-alone ability integrated into language learning. In various ICC models, an awareness of learners' own culture and other cultures holds either a central (Byram, 2021) or a fundamental position (CoE, 2020). Such awareness is heavily anchored in the notion that communication in English between non-native speakers has been rapidly increasing (Lan, 2020; Lee, 2020). In such cases, the effectiveness and success of communication inevitably depend on certain attitudinal, behavioural, and cognitive factors in that when interacting with culturally different people, individuals reflect their cultural backgrounds and activate their knowledge of the world (Baker, 2012, 2016; Byram, 2021). Despite nuances in the conceptualizations of ICA offered in various models, shared commonalities suggest that ICA is promoted by means of knowledge, awareness, and understanding that help bridge the gap between interlocutors' cultural views. This often entails critical evaluation of one's own culture and other cultures, openness and respect for cultural differences, along with effective use of all these in intercultural encounters mainly because, as Byram (2021) points out, responses to and refusal of different cultures are influenced by individuals' culturally-shaped ideas, values, and behaviours. Therefore, language classrooms should be transformed into places where learners find opportunities to gain different viewpoints, negotiate meanings with other cultures for mediation, and critically evaluate and reflect on their own culture (Corbett, 2022a; Linares, 2016; Ribeiro, 2016). From this standpoint, ICA is well beyond gaining factual knowledge about one's own culture and other cultures or detecting and listing tangible cultural similarities and differences; rather, such an awareness entails othering self and experiencing otherness (Corbett, 2022a; Polisca, 2011), so that learners can gain deeper insights into themselves and others as cultural beings. In doing so, the learning process should involve self-reflection, self-understanding, and self-discovery (Martin et al., 2021; Schat et al., 2021). Likewise, Guo and Jamal (2007) point out that exploring otherness can be actualized through self-reflection or engaging in activities requiring learners to involve alternative viewpoints.

Readers as Text-ethnographers (RaTE)

The RaTE is a text-based approach that integrates the principles of ethnography with studying texts for developing interculturality in the language classroom. This approach regards texts as cultural artefacts produced for communicative purposes; thus, studying texts provides ways to engage with others and

become intercultural through texts (Quist, 2013). As Hirvela (1996) argues, since text cannot change, the text-and-reader relationship can only come about through alterations in the reader's interpretation and projections. The unchanging nature of text also requires the reader to reflect on what is written in the text, to re-read critical parts repeatedly, and to adjust his or her response to the text accordingly (Hoff, 2019). This process is similar to the decentering component of ICA as it entails moving away from one's own perspective in order to gain a fuller, more nuanced understanding (Byram, 2021; Cierpisz, 2019). Accordingly, Quist (2013) argues that the reader, similar to an ethnographer, can read a text from an inside perspective and try to understand the wider cultural environment to which the writer intentionally or unintentionally refers. Such an inquiry inevitably entails an outside perspective in which the reader queries, compares, reflects on, and thereby understands his/her own cultural assumptions. Reading from such an outside perspective helps the reader go beyond the text and considers how other readers might interpret the text and how the text may relate to other texts (Hoff, 2019). This model of ethnography-integrated reading aims to analyze the text from surface to depth. Accordingly, learners delve into the text focusing on (1) content, (2) context, (3) genre, (4) structural features, (5) multiple voices in the text, intertextual aspects, (6) and their reflections, responses, and juxtapositions on the ways to write a similar text for a different audience or with a different purpose (Quist, 2013).

The positive impact of the RaTE on ICC is also underpinned by empirical data. Quist's (2013) study revealed that learners gained a better-informed intercultural stance, better reflected on themselves, developed criticality, and became aware that the text presented representations rather than facts. There are a few studies in which researchers integrated ethnography into reading to gain insights about the text-based approach to ICC. In their study, Yu and Van Maele (2018) designed a five-step analysis for the selected text to raise language learners' ICA. Their findings showed that two-thirds of the participants moved beyond basic cultural awareness and shifted from their taken-for-granted and stereotypical view of culture to newer perspectives recognizing its relative and dynamic nature. Hazaea (2018) researched the impact of using a critical discourse analysis tool for in-depth reading of the selected text on EFL learners' ICA, and findings showed that the tool helped learners appreciate their own and other cultures and raised their ICA. Farrokh (2019) employed the ethnography of communication model to investigate its effect on intermediate English language learners' reading comprehension. Her findings showed that ethnography-integrated language courses were effective in preparing learners to use English in culturally diverse contexts and helped them focus on cultural issues related to their own culture and other foreign cultures represented in texts. In other studies, though without a focus on ethnographic reading, researchers utilized texts to facilitate interculturality in the language teaching and learning process in the higher education context. Hoff (2019) investigated learners' engagement with and interpretation of literary texts in terms of interculturality. Her findings revealed that although learners interpreted texts from their own cultural, social, and historical points of view, discussion on the texts helped them to reflect on their own dispositions and values and led to a willingness to understand other perspectives. In a higher education context, Porto and Zembylas (2020) used literary works to facilitate intercultural empathy and solidarity in a language classroom. Their findings revealed that learners experienced otherness by putting themselves in the shoes of the characters given in the texts, thus "gained awareness of and concerns related to the marginalization of some groups in society" (p. 370). Martin et al. (2021) used literary texts involving controversial cultural issues as a discussion trigger to promote interculturality in the classroom. Their findings showed that controversial cultural issues were an effective way to experience otherness, and learners gained a positive and deeper understanding of the perception of otherness.

The Present Study

Texts (e.g., written, aural or visual) have great potential to promote interculturality in language classrooms. Accordingly, numerous researchers have been seeking ways to promote interculturality using different kinds of texts such as movies (e.g., Yue, 2019), literary works (e.g., Martin et al., 2021), or visuals (e.g., Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Despite their profound insights, these studies do not focus on ICA, and the need for more empirical studies focusing on texts and ICA is underlined (Hazaea, 2018; Yu & Van Maele, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to investigate what the RaTE

approach offers in terms of ICA and seeks answers to the following research questions:

(1) In what areas does the RaTE approach change EFL learners' ICA? (2) How do they perceive their learning experiences through the RaTE approach? What difficulties do the learners face during the implementation?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The instrumental case study design was deemed the best course of action to seek answers to the research questions as this way of inquiry allows the researcher to design the investigation around established theories or methods (Grandy, 2010) and gain deeper insights into an issue or phenomenon (Stake, 2005). Following this way of qualitative inquiry, this study is concerned with demystifying how the RaTE impacts learners' ICA and pinpointing some critical points, such as challenges stemming from this way of reading.

Participants

This classroom-based study was conducted at a state university in southwestern Türkiye. Fifty-three students (33 females and 20 males) who enrolled in the Academic Reading and Writing course (two credit hours, 100 minutes per week) participated in the study. All the participants were freshmen majoring in English Language and Literature and had at least a B2 level proficiency in English based on the institutional achievement test. Participants' demographics and language learning profiles are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Participants' Demographics and Language Learning Profiles

		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>			<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Female	33	62.3	Communication with foreigners	Yes	39	73.5
	Male	20	37.7		No	14	26.5
Length of language learning	4-6 years	3	5.6	Communication with foreigners	Face-to-face	9	16.9
	7-9 years	15	28.4		Social media (writing)	37	69.9
	More than 10 years	35	66		Social media (speaking)	7	13.2
Language learning method	Grammar-based	34	64.2	Frequency of communication with foreigners	Few times in a week	20	37.7
	Communicatively	16	30.2		Few times in a month	11	20.8
	Interculturally	3	5.6		Never	22	41.5
Duration of being abroad	Never	46	86.8	Proficiency in another foreign language	Yes	9	16.9
	Less than a month	5	9.4		No	44	83.1
	More than a year	2	3.8				

Text Selection

Seven different texts to be studied in the classroom were selected according to four criteria: authenticity, practicality, thematic relevance, and diversity (see Table 2). Authenticity emphasizes the genuineness of the text, which was originally produced to fulfil one or more real-life communicative purposes in the language community on which it was targeted (Lee, 1995), whereas practicality refers to the appropriate length of the text to be read and studied within a one- or two-hour course. Thematic relevance is related to the inclusion of cultural themes with varying cultural loads (e.g., familiar, distant, and remote), as suggested by Sharifian et al. (2004). Lastly, diversity aims to expose learners to an array of text types (e.g., autobiography, official document, newspaper article, short story) simply because expanding

learners' repertoire of genres contributes to their intercultural learning, and such exposure also helps learners gain multiple perspectives essential to promote ICC (Heggernes, 2021).

Table 2.
Selected Texts

Weeks	Reading Texts	Authors	Text-type
2-3	<i>Language at risk of dying out</i>	Jo Tuckman	Newspaper article
4-5	<i>The Māori Language Week</i>	Anonymous	Official document
6-7	<i>Toward a Rainbow Nation</i>	Lavendhiri Pillay	Perspective essay
8-9	<i>The Circuit</i>	Francisco Jiménez	Short story
10-11	<i>All Together Now</i>	Barbara Johnson	Public speech
12-13	<i>I am a Native of North America</i>	Chief Dan George	Reflective Essay
14-15	<i>The Barrio Boy</i>	Ernesto Galarza	Autobiography

Implementation

The study was conducted during a 15-week period of the Academic Reading and Writing course, as critical reading and textual analysis are part of the course. The implementation was initiated with two orientation sessions aimed to make learners familiar with the RaTE. In the first session, learners were informed about the objectives and contents and the texts to be studied. After this brief explanation, the RaTE was theoretically introduced, and the steps of the RaTE were clarified for learners. At the end of this session, a handout about the RaTE was given to each learner. The second session focused on the practice of the RaTE. Accordingly, a sample text selected based on the criteria mentioned above was studied in the classroom, and sample answers were shared with learners. At the end of this session, learners were informed that they were expected to read the texts before the class.

During the implementation, each text was studied in accordance with the steps suggested by Quist (2013) within a two-week period, as shown in Table 2. The first lesson for each text was devoted to studying content, context, genre, and structural features in four steps. In the first step, the content of each text was studied, paying attention to the main idea and supporting ideas presented in the text. These points were associated with learners' expectations and knowledge through small group discussions centered around the pre-determined discussion points. The second step concentrated on analyzing the context. The initial point in this step was to discuss the aim and function of the text in relation to the content and strategic means used to fulfil the aim. After that, learners discussed the target audience of the text, supporting their ideas by finding evidence from the text. In the third step, learners delineated genre features of the text, and then, in the fourth step, they analyzed the text paying attention to structural and cohesive features along with their effects. The second lesson for each text began with analyzing the text as a culture-text. Learners examined how the text dealt with the topic, how it addressed the reader, and whether explicit and implicit cultural values existed in the text concurrently or in a conflicting way, along with a variety of discourses and intertext. The last step was an attempt to encourage learners to approach the text from different perspectives. Therefore, short written in-class activities were included in this step. For example, learners were asked to explain how to adapt the text for a different target group or what other intertexts and discourses could be added to the text when they were asked to look at the text from an opposite perspective. At the end of each class, learners were asked to write their own responses addressing these six steps and submit them within a week.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected employing four different data collection techniques. These were classroom learners' written productions, classroom video recordings, a post-implementation survey, and key informant interviews. Classroom video-recording and participants' written productions were geared to capture changes in the participants' ICA during the implementation. These data provided vivid pictures about how and to what extent using the RaTE impacted their ICA. When the implementation ended, a post-implementation survey involving open-ended questions about ICA and the application of the RaTE was given to the participants. Lastly, key informant interviews were done with eight participants. It is a data

collection technique used to supplement research findings and requires in-depth interviews with purposefully selected respondents chosen as they are considered to have “the most knowledge of the subject matter” (Parsons, 2008, p. 407). These key informants were selected due to their regular attendance at the course and constant participation in in-class discussions. The interviews were done in two sessions. The first session centered around questions about ICA, whereas questions addressed in the second session were about their learning experiences of the RaTE.

The data analysis process started with preparing and organizing data for analysis (Lester et al., 2020). Therefore, audio and video data were transcribed, and these transcripts were accompanied by data gathered from surveys and participants' written productions. As qualitative data analysis often entails a nonlinear and iterative process, the analytic process was structured in a phasic fashion rather than in a stepwise fashion (Lester et al., 2020). The data were analyzed following six phases of the reflexive thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2019). Accordingly, the researcher familiarized with and immersed in the data through multiple readings. In the second phase, the whole data set was systematically examined to generate codes. Then, all these codes were mapped onto initial themes. After these themes were reviewed, reorganized, and labelled, the data analysis process was finalized with the contextualization of the data. Data analysis and interpretations were checked by another professional employing the peer debriefing technique to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Issues

This study was carried out with the approval and under the scrutiny of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the university (17.09.2021-174772) and complied with the rules of research ethics imposed by the Council of Higher Education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding the Complexity of Culture

This theme mainly centers around the changes in the learners' making sense of culture as a phenomenon. Their articulated understanding of culture was disputable in the initial step of the implementation, where they associated culture with a given nation, ignoring the multiplicity of several cultures within a nation (Avgousti, 2018; Perry & Southwell, 2011) and failed to clarify its broadness, complexity along with how those articulated cultural elements influenced one another. The following examples vividly portray this problem.

Culture is national, everything we inherited from our ancestors. So, it does not include physical objects such as artifacts, buildings, clothing; it includes customs. (S17, Written production [WP], Week 2 [W2])

Instructor: What does culture mean to you?

S12: It's a complex whole which includes our national customs and habits. I mean, everything that our nation does.

Instructor: What makes you think in this way?

S12: Because culture is national... I mean, each nation has its own culture.

Instructor: So, you're saying, all of us in this country live, think and behave in the same way.

S12: Not in the same way, but in similar ways. Because culture is national. (Classroom dialogue, W2, 01.10.2021)

Despite such initial problems, the learners modified their understanding of culture by studying the texts and gained a broader and more complex understanding by discussing and delineating how culture was portrayed in each text.

There is no need for millions of people to speak about culture because it refers to material and non-material similarities on which a certain social group agrees... Therefore, nations involve different social groups, and people are members of different social groups (S38, WP, W6)

This quote illustrates that the students no longer associated culture with nations. Another positive change appeared in explaining the links among cultural elements, and the following dialogue exemplifies that any change in the cultural perspective of a given community manifests itself through cultural practices.

Instructor: What does this text [Toward a Rainbow Nation] tell us about the impact of culture on society?

S9: Culture is the way of life of a group of people. So, if everyone in that group tolerates differences, it becomes a shared value, and this, I think, would solve conflicts that result from cultural differences.

Instructor: What do you mean by cultural differences?

S9: I mean religious, racial, ethnic differences... I mean, for example, if we all together value such differences, that means we share this value, and it becomes a part of our culture, and we stop fighting because of such conflicts.

Instructor: So, the text tells us what?

S9: [Cultural] differences enrich societies, and I think they aren't causes of conflict. I mean, if we all together accept them. (Classroom Dialogue, W7, 05.11.2021)

Quotes related to positive changes indicate that the learners understood the intertwined relationship among cultural elements and gained a broad understanding of culture. This type of understanding concurs with the notion that culture is a collective, dynamic, and heterogeneous phenomenon, consisting of and evolving through the constant interplay between members of different communities and their cultural practices, products, and perspectives (Abdallah-Preteceille, 2006; Perry & Southwell, 2011). From this standpoint, these findings are critical as they indicate an openness to change and heightened ICA simply because modifying one's own understanding and taking up other perspectives are essential to understanding one's own culture and other cultures (Baker, 2012; Byram, 2021). Furthermore, such a broad understanding of culture holds a critical place in ICA as it is a gateway to identifying a given culture's intricacies (Byram, 2021) and challenging cultural stereotypes and overgeneralizations (Cierpisz, 2019).

Understanding Otherness

The second theme that emerged from the data is experiencing otherness. Within the framework of intercultural language teaching, otherness is addressed in various ways, from basic comparisons of cultural differences to ethnographically analyzing cultural subtleties or even theoretical discussions based on philosophy and sociology. Therefore, Linares' (2016) conceptualization of otherness is adopted as it is heavily anchored in the theory and practice of ICC. Otherness refers to the marginalization of a group of people due to their race, language, gender, class, nationality, or religion (Linares, 2016). This way of conceptualization becomes practical and insightful in understanding learners' initial stances toward otherness. Accordingly, findings indicate that, in the beginning, the learners' perception of otherness heavily relied on the dichotomy between nationality and foreignness, which is the ramification of understanding culture from the nation-based perspective.

As the learners understood the complexity of culture with a broader perspective, their perception of otherness positively changed. Survey and interview results highlight the impact of the implementation and indicate that studying the text with the RaTE approach exposed them to otherness and provided them with opportunities to engage more with and reflect on this issue from different perspectives.

All those texts I read showed me how other people live in different cultures and the problems that they are having... My written reflections made me think carefully about those lifestyles and cultures from very different points of view. (S16, Survey)

I can say that I have become more aware of other cultures. But this awareness is not limited to saying that people of this culture do this or behave in that way. It's much deeper because as I immersed myself in the texts and wrote on them from different perspectives, I began to realize more intricate and implicit things about those other cultures and those I have. (S19, Interview)

As evidenced in these quotes, reflections on other cultures represented in the text helped them to develop their ICA. As Heggernes (2019, 2021) argues, engagement with otherness through texts, if elaborately guided, has great potential for the development of ICA as it offers learners a dialogic and freewheeling environment where they can discuss and reflect on multiple voices represented in the text and the classroom along with different culturally-determined perspectives in their own cultures. Schat et al.'s (2021) empirical findings also emphasize the significance of dialogic tasks and activities harmonized with noticing, comparing, interacting, and reflecting while imbuing learners with ICA. Although experiencing otherness plays a critical role in the development of ICA, it also entails understanding that experience and sustaining the gained insights about oneself and others (Dasli, 2011; Markovich, 2018). From this stance, the written productions provided more profound insights into how they engaged with otherness. The RaTe approach required the learners to reflect on the text both from the inside and outside perspectives, and this way of reading the texts helped them better understand otherness, similar to Linares' (2016) conceptualization. While reflecting on the texts from the inside perspective, the learners focused on standing in the shoes of the personas they regarded as marginalized due to their cultural differences. In doing so, they did not only focus on the protagonists but also reflected on some other minor personas represented in the texts. Furthermore, they also moved beyond the texts and related otherness to their own experiences, as shown in the following examples.

I felt the feelings of alienation and isolation to my bones while reading the text [The Circuit]. In Panchito's case, those feelings also merged with anxiety and uncertainty... I guess I felt this way because I had similar experiences while in high school... I could barely speak Turkish with a heavy German accent, and all my classmates mocked and laughed at me because of this. (S15, WP, W9)

I think what makes the story [The Circuit] impressive is that it also shows otherness through the minor characters... Panchito's father, mother and brothers live a nomadic life in a country whose language they can hardly speak... As a daughter of a military officer, I also had a nomadic childhood. That's why I attended different schools in regions where ethnicity was important. (S29, WP, W9)

While taking the outsider perspective, they followed two different ways. More than half of the learners reflected on the situations or personas that led to otherness in the texts and questioned the possible reasons behind such othering attitudes or practices. The rest of the learners choosing the other way questioned and identified their own ethnocentric stances that shaped their inside perspectives.

I have two opinions. First, Panchito's classmates outcast him because they aren't used to foreign people... My second opinion is that those children reflect ethnocentric attitudes they have learned in their family lives. (Student 50, WP, W9)

While speculating on Panchito's feelings, I regarded his classmates' behaviors as hostile. Yet, on the second thought, the word hostile doesn't sound appropriate as those are just children in a fictional text and thus might not be representing reality. (S41, WP, W9)

The learners' taking different perspectives while reflecting on the texts partly aligns with those revealed by Schat et al. (2021), in which the participants mostly associated themselves with the protagonists while experiencing otherness. Additionally, these quotes reveal that the learners adopted a distanced perspective in analyzing a culture-specific situation. As Escudero (2013) underlines, analyzing texts involving conflicts or controversial matters brings about positive changes in learners' understanding of other cultures and leads to a greater ability to reflect on their culturally-determined way of thinking. The controversial issues depicted in the texts helped the learners take such a distanced perspective triggering emotional engagement while experiencing otherness and stimulating a sense of common humanity and human rights (Martin et al., 2021; Schat et al., 2021). These findings are critical for ICA because taking

such a distanced perspective is considered learners' decentralized position from their own culturally-determined perspective and is among the indicators of ICA (Byram, 2021; Cierpisz, 2019; Porto & Zembylas, 2020). Furthermore, given that the great majority of them had not been abroad and lacked face-to-face contact with foreign cultures, these findings also indicate that the RaTE approach was an effective tool for understanding otherness in contexts where students do not have the chance to experience otherness through real-time observations of other cultures (Corbett, 2022a).

Understanding Self

Understanding self incorporates the learners' enhanced understanding of themselves as cultural beings and their insights into their own culture. First, similar to their notion of culture, the learners' cultural identities were anchored in their nationalities at the outset of the implementation. Therefore, they reflected on their prior experiences while questioning the reasons behind the association of cultural identity with nationality. A great majority of responses on this issue have been clustered around the view that it was perpetuated by the education they received.

Our education system indirectly teaches us culture as a nation-based phenomenon. During all those courses I took in high school and university, we never talked about culture itself, but all those courses shaped my understanding of culture because we always talked about elements of Turkish culture but not culture itself. (S21, Interview)

Education shapes people's views of culture. If you take many courses whose content is filled with national things, then you perceive culture from this perspective... Even while learning English, I don't remember we studied how Americans or British people live except for such iconic symbols as Big Ben, the Statue of Liberty or the 4th of July. (S31, WP, W5)

Such a critical look back on their past experiences is significant because individuals often perceive their own culture as central to their understanding of reality (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020). However, ICA requires critical evaluation of one's own culture from a distanced standpoint through reflective practices (Byram, 2021). Therefore, this finding shows the learners' ability to "stand back from themselves" (Masterson, 2018, p. 351) to develop an awareness of their cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions.

Second, as they engaged with the texts, they abandoned defining their cultural identities with nationality and began to use some other specific expressions highlighting their sociocultural or ethnic origins, such as "a member of an immigrant family" (S4), "a Yoruk-origin person" (S22) or "from a Circassian-origin family" (S26) while defining themselves. This finding is critical because language as a means of communication manifests individuals' norms, values, and attitudes (Corbett, 2022b). Therefore, the learners' discursive evasion of defining themselves with nationality and placing emphases on their sociocultural or ethnic origins indicate that studying the texts instilled them with an awareness of their own cultural identities, which were no longer limited to their national identity. As Almarza et al. (2015) underline, such an awareness of cultural identity, not bounded by national identity, is necessary for greater awareness to understand self and others and eventually for becoming an intercultural speaker.

Third, the learners were unaware of their own ethnocentric attitudes and perspectives that portrayed othering at the outset of the implementation. The following examples demonstrate such ethnocentric attitudes and perspectives.

S6: [While trying to advocate that Māori people were marginalized due to their cultural and linguistic differences] It seems that Māori people had to use English because their own language wasn't developed enough to meet their needs in the social life.

Instructor: So, how did you decide their language wasn't developed enough?

S6: It's written in the text.

Instructor: Are you sure? Please show me which part of the text tells that.

S6: [After scanning the text and could not find such a saying] I couldn't find it, but it's said in the text.

Instructor: Is it said, or is it your own interpretation?

S6: [After pondering for a while] It's my interpretation. (Classroom dialogue, W4, 15.10.2021)

This text [Language at risk of dying out] shows how dangerous it is to ignore endangered languages. Bari and Xoon are languages at stake and dying out with all the precious cultural knowledge they include... This is mainly because of the imperial desires and purposes of Western society... In Türkiye, we value and respect all languages spoken within our country. (S19, WP, W3)

As can be seen in these instances, both learners viewed their own culture as superior to those of others and judged them, holding subjective prejudices while reflecting on the text. This finding is in line with Quist's (2013) observation that students interpret texts from their own ethnocentricity. Although learners had such problems with their ethnocentric perspectives during the initial weeks, interview and survey findings reveal that studying the texts with the RaTE approach helped them develop an awareness of their own ethnocentric perspectives along with the reasons behind them. Drawing on the same students, Student 6 accepted that "labelling an indigenous language as undeveloped stemmed from the stereotyped images of such languages in media [he] was exposed to" (Interview). Similarly, Student 19 noted that he "became aware of [his] subjective and taken-for-granted views" and "understood that such views and opinions are shaped with stereotypes" (Survey Response). These findings concur with Kusumaningputri and Widodo's (2018) study in which EFL learners demonstrated similar ethnocentric attitudes in the initial step of the implementation toward other cultures before gaining an ethnorelative perspective and raising their ICA. Besides, Ribeiro's (2016) study also revealed a similar change in learners' perspective from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative one. Holding a different viewpoint, Çetin and Ağçam's (2021) study pointed out the criticality of gaining such a perspective for positive classroom dynamics and revealed that immigrant undergraduate students in Türkiye experience socialization problems in the classroom stemming from their own ethnocentric attitudes and prejudices. Within the framework of interculturality in language teaching, great importance is attached to any kind of practices through which learners become aware of and identify their own ethnocentric attitudes and behaviours and through which cultural differences are dealt with through an ethnorelative lens (Baker, 2012; Byram, 2021). Besides, as Cierpisz (2019) argues, in the introductory phases of activities aiming to raise ICA, learners' ethnocentric attitudes and discourses can be used to show them ethnocentricity as a threat or offense against other cultures, yet what is more important is to enable them to understand the notions behind and the mechanisms of their ethnocentric thinking patterns. From this standpoint, the learners' acceptance of their own ethnocentric attitudes and explaining the reasons behind those sayings are indicators of ICA.

Difficulties that the Participants Had

This theme addresses the difficulties that the students had during the implementation. Although the great majority of the students found studying the texts with the RaTE approach instructive and educative ($n = 51$) and considered orientation sessions helpful and enlightening to make them familiar with the RaTE approach ($n = 49$), they also underlined that it was demanding and challenging ($n = 50$). Table 3 shows the top five difficulties that students had during the implementation.

Table 3.
Survey Results

Themes	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Reading between the lines and interpretation	48	68
Boredom due to multiple readings	45	59
Planning what and how to write	41	55
Doing further research for some texts	38	49
Analyzing text as text	35	46

As the learners' responses to survey questions do not provide a full picture of these difficulties, a part of the interview sessions was allocated to this issue to gain in-depth insights into these difficulties. Key informant interview findings provided critical details and points that the interviewees touched upon

during the sessions, and these are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Key Informant Interview Results

Interviewees' Comments	Interviewees
Reading between the lines and interpretation was difficult because they had not studied any given text with such an approach that required a deep level of understanding, critical reading, and intertextuality.	All
What made the implementation and the RaTE approach boring was the number of texts studied and the duration of the implementation.	7 Interviewees
Planning what and how to write was sometimes difficult because the rules to be followed were strict, and we tried to use the same writing strategies for each text.	5 Interviewees
Some texts required further research or reading as they did not know much about the political or social background of the events referred to in the texts. It was hard to find reliable and to-the-point online sources briefly covering the topics they searched.	6 Interviewees
Finding structural and textual features in texts was not a problem, yet explaining the appropriate or correct impact of these features on texts was difficult.	5 Interviewees

Although the learners associated these difficulties with the RaTE approach, they belong to the core problems that many other learners have in contexts where the English language is used as an academic language for the medium of instruction in Türkiye. Recent studies showed that in such contexts, learners often had challenges reading between the lines, understanding the organization of texts, planning writing assignments, organizing and explaining ideas, and writing well-researched papers (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Kamaşak et al., 2021). However, in the Turkish context, learners are often not familiar with such reading and writing activities because they rarely practice while learning English in their high school education (Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2016; Kemaloğlu-Er, 2022). Therefore, given that more than two-thirds of the participants learned English through the grammar-based approach, having such difficulties is not unexpected and mainly stemmed from the divergences between the way they learned English and the requirements of using English as an academic language and the medium of instruction. Academic writing in English requires strictly following certain rules and more explicit expressions of logical relations (Hyland, 2021), and thus, developing this skill takes time and entails exposure to academic texts (Ağçam & Babanoğlu, 2019), getting feedback, and keeping writing in a meaningful way (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019).

Lastly, as underlined elsewhere in this study, English has gained dominance and evolved into a global language, yet this global status also entails a divorce from native speakerism and Anglophone culture while teaching English (Baker, 2022; Parks, 2020; Piatkowska, 2015). Therefore, integrating learners' own cultures with other cultures plays a critical role in language teaching. In line with this, the current ELT pedagogy aims to imbue learners with all the necessary abilities so that they can easily communicate in linguistically and culturally diverse settings. In doing this, however, how other cultures are represented in materials and how teachers touch upon cultural issues become critical. In higher education, the dominance of global language teaching materials is evident. Given that studies on these materials revealed problems with the representation of cultural aspects (Keles & Yazan, 2020; Kırkgöz & Ağçam, 2011), teachers and practitioners working in higher education need to find other ways to teach cultural aspects and raise their learners' ICA. Among the various suggested ways, this study focused on the RaTE approach to investigate what changes it offers for EFL learners' ICA. Despite the difficulties the learners had, considering their positive views and changes in their intercultural understanding, it can be inferred that they managed to cope with these difficulties during the implementation and took a big step toward becoming intercultural readers. As Hoff (2019) argues, an intercultural reader regards encounters with foreign texts as a precious undertaking that incorporates challenging his/her prior understandings.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In attempting to explore the influence of the RaTE approach on language learners' ICA, this case study reported results obtained from 53 participants using multiple sources of information within the scope of a single course, Academic Reading and Writing. Findings revealed that studying texts in this way helped the learners develop their ICA in areas of understanding the complexity of culture, otherness, and self. Furthermore, findings showed that the learners had difficulties in certain areas (e.g., reading between the lines, textual analysis, planning writing etc.) during the implementation. These findings cannot be generalized due to contextual and personal differences, yet the detailed picture of using the RaTE in higher education may guide other practitioners in integrating or adapting similar ways to raise their students' ICA.

In line with the findings, this study suggests four practical implications. First, any attempt to raise a group of students' ICA should begin with understanding their notion of culture. Teachers may use ready-to-use questionnaires to do so, along with enriching those questionnaires with their own notes. Second, text-based approaches to ICA or any other culture-related issues should involve activities to help students go beyond any given text. In doing this, teachers may expose their students to otherness and use such activities through which students relate otherness to their own experiences. Third, analyzing students' needs and interests while selecting the text may also culminate in including more compelling texts. Lastly, given that studying texts with the RaTE approach throughout a term caused boredom for the students, using more compelling and fewer texts at certain intervals may help teachers reduce boredom. Although multiple sources of information were used to collect data, and findings revealed the learners' raised their ICA, their ICA is limited to the classroom environment and their productions, and thus they do not show to what extent the learners can utilize their ICA in real communications with culturally different people. Therefore, further studies may focus on investigating EFL learners' ICA in such real interactions and look for ways to embed the RaTE approach into language learning smoothly.

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TÜRKÇE GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Dijitalleşme ve küreselleşme gibi olgular günümüzün dünyasını şekillendirmekte, mesafeleri ve sınırları aşarak farklı dil ve kültürlerden gelen insanların etkileşim kurabildikleri ortamlar yaratmaktadır. İngilizce bu tip çok dilli ve kültürlü ortamlarda kullanılan yaygın dil olarak ön planda yer almaktadır. İngilizcenin ana dili farklı olan insanlar için bir iletişim aracı olarak kullanılması ortak bir dil (lingua franca) olarak İngilizce kavramını ön plana çıkarmış ve bu kavram İngilizce öğretimini de derinden etkilemiştir. Bu durumun dil öğretimindeki en önemli sonuçlarından birisi Anglofon merkezli kültürel anlayıştan uzaklaşarak öğrencilerin hem kendi kültürlerini hem de diğer kültürleri kapsayan kültürlerarası bir anlayış çerçevesinde dil öğrenmeleridir. Ancak böylesi geniş bir kültürel yelpaze içerisinde dil öğrenenlerin her bir kültür ile ilgili derin bilgi birikime sahip olması olası olmadığından, öğrencilerin kültürlerarası farkındalıklarının artırılması gerekmektedir. Bu açıdan, kültürlerarası farkındalık, dil öğretiminde kültürlerarası iletişim yeterliliğinin ön önemli öğrenci çıktılarında biri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Alanyazında bu kavramla ilgili pek çok model öne sürülse de bu modellerin ortak noktası öğrencilerin kendi kültürlerini ve diğer kültürleri eleştirel bir şekilde değerlendirmesini, kültürel farklılıklara açık olmayı, saygı duymayı ve tüm bunların kültürlerarası karşılaşmalarda etkin kullanımını gerektirdiğidir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, kültürlerarası farkındalık, öğrencilerin kendi kültürleri ve diğer kültürler hakkında bilgi edinmenin veya somut kültürel benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları tespit edip listelemenin ötesindedir. Böyle bir farkındalık, kendini ötekileştirmeyi ve ötekiliği deneyimlemeyi gerektirir, böylece öğrenciler kültürel varlıklar olarak kendilerine ve başkalarına ilişkin daha derin içgörüler elde edebilirler. İlgili alanyazında bu tarz deneyimlerin elde edilmesinde farklı kültürlerin yerinde gözlenmesinin ve deneyimlenmesinin altı çizilmiştir. Ancak, sosyo-ekonomik gerçeklikler açısından ele alındığında bunun her öğrenci için yapılabilir olmadığı da aşıkardır. Metin temelli yaklaşımların önemi burada ön plana çıkmaktadır. Zira metinler, gerçek zamanlı gözlemler yoluyla diğer kültürleri deneyimleme şansına sahip olunmadığı durumlarda, öğrencilere bu tür fırsatları sağlama konusunda büyük bir potansiyele sahiptir. Metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımı, dil öğretiminde kültürlerarasılığı geliştirmek için etnografisi ilkelerini metin incelemeye bütünleştiren metne dayalı bir yaklaşımdır.

Bu vaka çalışması metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımının kültürlerarası farkındalık açısından öğrencilere neler sunduğunu araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlama, bu çalışma metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımı kültürlerarası farkındalığın hangi alanlarında öğrencilere katkı sağlamakta ve bu yaklaşımın uygulanması sırasında öğrenciler ne tip zorlukla yaşamaktadır sorularına cevap aramaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda 15 haftalık bir uygulama planlanmıştır. Uygulamada kullanılan metinler özgünlük, uygulanabilirlik, tematik ilgi düzeyi ve çeşitlilik ilkeleri doğrultusunda belirlenmiştir. Uygulama 2021-2022 eğitim-öğretim yılının güz döneminde Akademik Okuma ve Yazma dersinde gerçekleşmiştir. Uygulamanın birinci adımında metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımı öğrencilere hem kuramsal hem de uygulamalı olarak anlatılmış ve ardından seçilen metinler sırasıyla incelenmiştir. Her bir metin için iki haftalık ders saati ayrılmıştır ve öğrenciler bu metinleri sırasıyla içerik, bağlam, tür, yapısal özellikler, kültürel bir unsur olarak metin ve farklı bakış açılarından metin olarak incelemişlerdir. Ders esnasında bu altı unsur sınıf-içi tartışma yöntemiyle ele alınmıştır. Her dersin sonunda öğrencilerden bu altı adıma yönelik kendi yanıtlarını yazmaları ve bir hafta içinde teslim etmeleri istenmiştir. Çalışmaya 53 öğrenci katılmış ve öğrencilerin yazılı ürünleri, ders video kayıtları, açık uçlu anket ve anahtar bilgilendirici mülakatları veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır.

Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, genel olarak, metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımının öğrencilere kültürün karmaşıklığını, kültürel olarak ötekiliği ve kültürel varlık olarak kendileriyle ilgili anlayışlarını geliştirmelerine yardımcı olduğunu göstermiştir. Uygulamanın başlarında çoğu öğrenci kültürü ulus temelli bir kavram olarak görse de, uygulamanın ilerleyen haftalarında öğrencilerin kültür anlayışlarında olumlu değişimler olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu değişimlerin en önemlisi kültürü ulus temelli bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmekten vazgeçmeleri, bir toplum içerisindeki farklı kültürleri de dikkate almaları ve kültürü oluşturan unsurların birbirleriyle nasıl etkileşim içerisinde olduklarını daha iyi irdeleyebilmeleridir. Ötekilik ile ilgili bulgular ise, öğrencilerin metinlerde yansıtılan ötekiliğe daha

fazla dikkat etmelerine ve bu konuyu derinlemesine ele alıp dile getirmelerine yardımcı olduğunu göstermektedir. Öğrenciler bu yaklaşımla metin incelerken metinlere hem içerden hem de dışardan bakış açılarıyla yaklaşmıştır. İçerden bakış açısı sayesinde öğrenciler kendilerini marjinal olarak nitelendirdikleri karakterlerin yerlerine koyabilmiş ve metnin ötesine geçerek ötekiliği kendi deneyimleriyle ilişkilendirebilmiştir. Dışardan bakış açısı ile metne yaklaştıklarında ise, metinlerde ötekiliğe yol açan durumlar ya da kişiler üzerine kafa yormuş ve bu tür tutum ya da davranışların arkasındaki olası nedenleri sorgulamıştır. Kültürel varlık olarak kendileriyle ilgili anlayışları ile ilgili olarak ise, bulgular öğrencilerin kendi deneyimlerini eleştirel bir gözle sorguladıklarını, kendi kültürel kimliklerini tanımlarken sosyokültürel ve etnik kökenlerini ön plana çıkarmaya başladıklarını ve kendi etnik merkezli bakışlarının farkına vararak bunlardan uzaklaşmaya başladıklarını göstermiştir. Son olarak ise, bulgular öğrencilerin metinleri bu yaklaşım çerçevesinde incelemenin oldukça eğitici ve öğretici bulunduğunu ancak uygulama esnasında satır aralarını okumada, yorumlamada, çoklu okumadan kaynaklı bıkkınlıkla başa çıkmada, yazılı üretimlerini planlamada ve metinlerle ilgili daha derin araştırma yapma konularında zorluk yaşadıklarını göstermiştir.

Yukarıda belirtilen bulgular doğrultusunda, bu çalışma metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımı ve kültürlerarası farkındalık konusunda bazı önerilerde bulunmaktadır. İlk olarak, öğrencilerin kültürlerarası farkındalığını arttırmaya yönelik uygulamaların, onların kültürü anlayışı irdelemekle başlamalıdır. Öğretmenler bunu yapmak için kullanıma hazır anketler kullanabilir ve bu anketleri kendi gözlemleriyle zenginleştirebilirler. İkinci olarak, kültürlerarası farkındalığa yönelik metin tabanlı yaklaşımlar, öğrencilerin metinlerin ötesine geçmelerine yardımcı olacak etkinlikleri içermelidir. Bunu yaparken, öğretmenler öğrencilerini metinlerde dile getirilen ötekiliği kendi deneyimleriyle ilişkilendirecek etkinlikler tasarlamalıdır. Üçüncü olarak, metni seçiminde öğrencilerin ihtiyaç ve ilgilerini dikkate almak, onları daha ilgi çekici metinler okumalarını sağlayacaktır. Son olarak da, metinlerin bir dönem boyunca belirli bir yaklaşım çerçevesinde çalışılmasının öğrencilerde bıkkınlığa neden olabilir. Bu açıdan da belirli aralıklarla bu tip yaklaşımlar belirli aralıklarla ve daha hem daha ilgili çekici hem de sayıca daha az metinle uygulanabilir. İleri çalışmalar, metin etnografisi olarak okuyucu yaklaşımını dil öğrenimine sorunsuz bir şekilde yerleştirmenin yollarını araştırmaya odaklanabilir.