Teachers' Opinions on Intercultural Competence: A Focus on Instagram

Zeynep CANLI[1] & Aylin YARDIMCI[2]

[1]Assist. Prof. Dr., Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Kahramanmaraş, TÜRKİYE
zeynepcanli@ksu.edu.tr
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1285-3364

[2] Assist. Prof. Dr., Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Translation and Interpretation, Kahramanmaraş, TÜRKİYE
aylin.yardimci@ksu.edu.tr
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3238-4646

Abstract

One of the main objectives of English language teaching is to increase students' intercultural competence (IC). People who will accomplish this goal are mainly English language teachers. For those teachers to assist their students, they must possess strong intercultural competencies. Consequently, it is vital to examine what English language teachers do in this context, but it is even more crucial to find out what they believe about intercultural competence. Traveling overseas and experiencing the target culture firsthand provide English language teachers with a valuable chance to hone their intercultural competency. Indeed, going abroad to travel, train, or receive training requires time and money. Social media is a novel and practical way for educators who lack these possibilities to build relationships with the target culture without having to relocate. There are a few studies about English language teachers' opinions of IC; however, given the current state of technology, social media needs to be covered in IC research. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to learn more about the opinions of English language teachers on the use of Instagram for IC. The participants were English language teachers employed by public schools in Türkiye – at the secondary and high school –, and English language instructors at universities. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Based on the survey utilized in Sercu's (2005) study, the interview questions were created. Permissions from the relevant ethics committee were secured. Content analysis was used to examine and categorize the data. The findings showed that the participants believed that Instagram use helped in the development of intercultural competency. English language teachers reported feeling good about the target culture, knowing about it, and having positive attitudes toward the people of the target culture. This study offers recommendations on how foreign language teachers might utilize Instagram as a social media tool to help students and themselves become more intercultural competent.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, English language teaching, Social media tools, Instagram, English language teachers.

Öğretmenlerin Kültürlerarası Yetkinliğe İlişkin Görüşleri: Instagram Odağı

Özet

İngiliz dili eğitiminin temel amaçlarından biri öğrencilerin kültürlerarası yeterliliğini arttırmaktır. Bu hedefi gerçekleştirecek kişiler esasen İngilizce öğretmenleridir. Bu öğretmenlerin öğrencilerine yardımcı olabilmeleri için güçlü kültürlerarası yeterliliklere sahip olmaları gerekmektedir. Dolayısıyla, öğretmenlerin bu bağlamda ne yaptığını incelemek önemlidir, ancak onların kültürlerarası yetkinlik hakkında ne düşündüklerini öğrenmek daha da kritik bir öneme sahiptir. Yurt dışına seyahat etmek ve hedef kültürü ilk elden deneyimlemek, İngilizce öğretmenlerine kültürlerarası yeterliliklerini geliştirmek için değerli bir fırsat sunmaktadır. Gerçekten de, yurtdışında seyahat etmek, eğitim vermek veya eğitim almak zaman ve para gerektirmektedir. Sosyal medya, bu olanaklara sahip olmayan eğitimcilerim hedef kültürle ilişkiler kurmaları için yer değiştirmek zorunda kalmadan yeni ve pratik bir yol sunmaktadır. İngilizce dil öğretmenlerinin kültürlerarası yeterlilik konusundaki görüşleriyle ilgili birkaç çalışma bulunmaktadır; ancak, mevcut teknolojik durum göz önüne alındığında, sosyal

medyanın kültürlerarası yeterlik araştırmalarında ele alınması gerekmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu nitel çalışmanın amacı, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin kültürlerarası yeterlik için Instagram kullanımına ilişkin görüşlerini daha iyi anlamaktır. Katılımcılar; Türkiye'deki kamu okullarında – ortaokul ve lisede – görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenleri ve üniversitelerdeki İngilizce öğretim görevlileridir. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Görüşme soruları, Sercu'nun (2005) çalışmasında kullanılan anket esas alınarak oluşturulmuştur. İlgili etik kuruldan izinler alınmıştır. Verilerin incelenmesi ve sınıflandırılması amacıyla içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, katılımcıların Instagram kullanımının kültürlerarası yeterliliğin geliştirilmesine yardımcı olduğuna inandıklarını göstermiştir. Öğretmenler, hedef kültür hakkında kendilerini iyi hissettiklerini, onun hakkında bilgiler edindiklerini ve o kültüre ait insanlara karşı olumlu tutumlara sahip olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin, öğrencilerinin ve kendilerinin kültürlerarası açıdan daha yetkin olmalarına yardımcı olması için Instagram'ı bir sosyal medya aracı olarak nasıl kullanabileceğine dair öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kültürlerarası yeterlilik, İngiliz dili eğitimi, sosyal medya araçları, Instagram, İngilizce öğretmenleri.

1. Introduction

Developing intercultural competence makes a significant contribution to the learning processes of foreign language learners. In this context, it is important to study this issue from different perspectives in the field of applied linguistics studies. Going abroad and being physically exposed to the target culture offers English language teachers an important opportunity to improve their intercultural competence (IC). However, traveling abroad to teach or receive training requires time and money. For teachers who do not have these opportunities, using social media to establish relationships with the target culture without leaving their location appears to be a new and effective option. As an obvious result of globalization and developing technology, individuals and cultures around the world are getting closer to each other each passing day. Individuals can interact and share culture effectively without being face to face. Today, social media tools have undoubtedly become one of the most effective communication tools. They can be the useful tools for both students and teachers to develop intercultural competence in the process of learning a foreign language. For this reason, there are studies investigating English language teachers' intercultural competence perceptions, but social media also needs to be examined in intercultural competence studies in the digital world. In the current study, Instagram, which is the third mostly used social media tool among popular social media tools such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit, was selected to be investigated. It is obvious that Instagram is the fastest growing social media network today (Hu et al., 2014). In 2023, Instagram had 1.35 billion monthly active users, and estimations for the following years reaffirm Instagram's popularity, mentioning that it could have 1.44 billion active users (Daneshjo, 2023). Among the countries with the most active accounts accessing the photo-sharing application, Türkiye ranks 5th with 58.45 million users (Backlinko Team, 2024).

2. Literature Review

Intercultural competence includes "knowledge, skills, and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas including the students' own country and a target language country" (Sercu, 2005, p.viii). Intercultural competence is also defined as the capacity to think and behave correctly, interact and collaborate with others from diverse cultural origins both domestically and internationally, and operate well across cultural boundaries (Leung et al., 2014). However, it creates different effects on individuals depending on different factors. Sercu and Bandura (2005) argue that since they are now members of the outgroup themselves, people should reevaluate their social identities, their beliefs about outgroups, and how they feel about these groups. Experienced emotions vary from relief and exhilaration to rage and worry. The feelings stem from a variety of places: anger because a long-held idea may have been questioned, relief via self-expression, excitement at discovering new and different ways of thinking, and fear of meeting someone new. The element of surprise, which forms the basis of the cross-cultural experience, is the common component. Some people can react with jealousy or shame, while others might feel happy and grateful. As the process of learning a foreign language is significantly aided by the development of intercultural competence, it will be helpful to get a deeper understanding of foreign language teachers' opinions on intercultural competence.

In the era of globalization, linguistic proficiency is not enough for students to become proficient in speaking English; they also need to understand culturally appropriate ways to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, such as expressing gratitude, making requests, and agreeing or disagreeing (Krasner, 1999 as cited in Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016). The significance of incorporating culture into foreign language teaching has been a prominent area of study within the globalized world. Social media has been one of the most popular and helpful tools used by newcomers in recent years. It is essential for bringing people together globally to share and exchange cultural traditions and expertise. In actuality, the combination of social media apps has made the world a smaller village. As a result, social media platforms allow users to connect and communicate with one another as well as learn about the cultures of others. Thus, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds are able to comprehend and honor the customs and traditions of others (Alamri, 2018). Numerous investigations have been conducted to examine the influence of social networking sites on the intercultural competence development process. Álvarez Valencia and Fernández Benavides (2019) investigated how intercultural communicative competence is aided or hindered by a social networking site for language learning (SNSLL) and found that SNSLLs have the potential to improve intercultural competencies; yet, to increase possibilities for intercultural interaction, most of their activities need to be refocused and adjusted pedagogically. Similarly, Ngai et al. (2020) investigated the idea that social media contacts might operate as a casual way for foreign students enrolled in higher education institutions to foster intercultural competency. Results yielded that while individuals in the bottom tertile of intercultural competence development tended to emphasize the value of using social media for passive information consumption, those in the top tertile tended to discuss more proactive social ways and the advantages of interacting with potential sources of support over social media.

Supporting the findings of the research, Vurdien (2014) states that social networking services on the internet have improved the atmosphere for language learning and have emerged as a possible venue for internet-based cultural assignments in second language lessons. Social networking encourages online cross-cultural engagement amongst students from other nations as a type of telecollaboration to foster intercultural competency. Another investigation on the effect of social media tools on the development of intercultural communication competence of Chinese individuals living in Sweden (Liu, 2019) revealed that social media appears to have a good impact on Chinese immigrants' cultural capital although this effect depends on genuine social connection with the host culture. As it is obvious from the study results discussed above, the process of learning a foreign language is significantly aided by the development of intercultural competence. Fornara (2018) argues that social media users frequently talk about issues pertaining about their native cultures and post glimpses into their everyday lives. This information's significant visual component may be used to help students enhance their visual literacy for IC. Tools like Flickr and Instagram, for instance, offer an infinite collection of real, up-to-date, and diverse images—pictures, mostly—that may be utilized in foreign language classes to examine goods and customs from other cultures. It is very vital to see the differences between people from different cultures, to interpret them, and to evaluate the events (Eğinli, 2011). In light of this, applied linguistics scholars should investigate this problem from several angles. Teachers have a significant chance to enhance their intercultural competency by traveling overseas and seeing the target culture firsthand. It is evident, nevertheless, that going overseas to teach or obtain training costs money and time. Social media seems to offer a novel and practical way for educators who lack these possibilities to build relationships with the target culture without having to relocate.

Globalization and technological advancements have undoubtedly brought people and cultures closer together, as evidenced by the fact that these days are passing more quickly. Without really meeting, people may communicate and exchange cultures efficiently. Social media platforms are without a question among the most useful instruments for communication available today. It might be one of the helpful resources for teachers and students to build intercultural competency when studying a foreign language. The literature review indicates that there are numerous studies showing that social media can be used to enhance students' intercultural competency levels. These studies generally focus on how social media can develop students' IC levels or how English teachers utilize social media to improve their students' intercultural competencies. Nevertheless, there is a need for additional studies analyzing teachers' views on IC within the framework of social media use.

One of the main objectives of English language teaching is to increase students' IC. People who will accomplish this aim are mostly English language teachers. In order for these educators to assist their pupils, they must possess strong intercultural competencies. As such, it is vital to examine the actions taken by teachers in this context, but it is even more crucial to delve into the perspectives of teachers toward IC. Teachers have a valuable chance to enhance their intercultural competency by traveling overseas and immersing themselves in the target culture. Social media is a novel and practical way for educators who lack these possibilities to build relationships with the target culture without having to relocate.

Research on perceptions of intercultural competence among students is available; however, given the digital age, social media should be included in intercultural competence research, and English language teachers' views should be analyzed. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to learn more about the opinions of English language teachers on the use of Instagram for intercultural competency. As a result, this study is organized to answer the following research question:

1. How does Instagram contribute to the development of foreign language teachers' and instructors' intercultural competence?

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The researchers conducted qualitative research to investigate the phenomena of intercultural competence. As "*qualitative research searches for meaning through words, observations, interactions, and symbols of a phenomenon*" (Lane, 2017, p.143), the researchers tried to get the meaningful results by conducting semi-structured interviews with English language teachers and instructors. Qualitative research methods help researchers understand the actions of participants, the individuality of the instances, and the distinctiveness of people and systematically investigate social events in their natural environments "*to develop initial understandings in a less explored area*" (Levitt et al., 2018, p.28). This qualitative study makes it possible to obtain deeper information about English language teachers' and instructors' opinions. The researchers used the phenomenological research design, which refers to a process that emphasizes the unique experiences of the participants (Zinker, 1978). The current descriptions of these personal experiences give meaning to the phenomena. As Groenewald (2004) claims, the researchers aim to reveal "the reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject" by using a phenomenological research design. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine English language teachers' and instructors' views regarding the use of Instagram for intercultural competence.

3.2. Participants

Criterion sampling was employed to find participants to be included in the study according to prearranged norms regarding the problem statement (Morrell & Carroll, 2010). The study group of this study was determined through criterion sampling as one of the purposeful sampling strategies which is one of the non-random sampling approaches (Neuman, 2006). All of the participants had to have Instagram account and use Instagram actively, and they were required to follow Instagram profiles that shared posts related to the target culture. Ten participants were chosen purposefully to reach information-rich sources. The participants of this study were five English language teachers working in secondary and three at high schools affiliated with the Ministry of Education and two instructors working in a state university in Türkiye. The participants were between 35 and 46 years old. Their teaching experiences range from 10 to 23 years. Five participants had international experiences. Three of them have been abroad for short periods for traveling, and two of them have been abroad for 6 months for educational purposes. All participants signed the consent form agreeing to participate in the study. Participants were informed about the possibility of stress that would occur during the interview due to the nature of the interview.

Table 1.
Features of the participants

Gender	Age	Teaching experience(years)	Education	Work Place	Overseas experience
10 *f*	35-46	10-23	English Language Teaching	Secondary school-5 High school-3 University-2	Yes-5 No-5

3.3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the required data for this study. Firstly, eight questions were shaped to obtain the demographic data of the participants, such as gender, age, education, place of work, and teaching experience. As an effective data collection tool, semi-structured interviews allow the researchers to ask more questions to the participants and gain a greater understanding of the topic. The interview questions were designed based on the survey used in Sercu's (2005) study. The interview questions were prepared and controlled to collect and categorize the necessary data in a way that can be examined. Necessary permissions were obtained. To ensure confidentiality, the researchers used codes rather than names, and the identities of the participants were anonymized; for instance,

they used "P1" for teacher 1. The interview schedule included demographic data and ten open-ended questions regarding the research question. The following questions were asked of the participants in semi-structured interviews:

1. How do you perceive the objectives of foreign language teaching?
2. What do you say about 'culture' in foreign language teaching?
3. How do you get information about the target country, culture, and people?
4. What is "Intercultural Competence"?
5. How do you interact with the target culture while you are at home?
6. How many Instagram accounts do you follow that will help you learn about the target culture?
7. How often do you check these accounts?
8. What kind of posts do these accounts share?
9. How do these accounts contribute to the development of your intercultural competence?
10. How do you benefit from the information you gained from these accounts about the target culture in your classes?

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The participants answered the interview questions in Turkish and English since they were free to choose whichever language they wanted to respond in. Turkish answers were then translated into English for the research. Therefore, two English language instructors helped the researchers in the translation phase. The interviews were recorded. The duration of each meeting varies between 30 and 45 minutes. In some cases, participants were asked extra questions so that they could express their thoughts well, and their answers were deliberated in depth, thus revealing what was meant.

3.5. Data Analysis

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews between December 2023 and January 2024 in Türkiye. The interviewees' responses were analyzed by content analysis. Coding units and categories have been defined and a coding scheme has been developed. Based on the participants' responses, meaning units have been organized into defined categories. The coding scheme has also determined how the data will be analyzed. In this context, words, phrases, or sentences that may belong to the relevant category were written in bold when quoted. The results were categorized and shown with the themes.

Responses from each interview were carefully reviewed. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the researchers received expert support. The researchers conducted their analysis. The results were compared, and a consensus was reached. The indicator of the reliability of the coding is the agreement between the coders. It is a ratio of whether coders assign codes consistently. If coders decide faultlessly on their codes, they take an intercoder score of 1.0. Miles and Huberman's formula (1994) was used for inter-coder reliability. The reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.80 [reliability=consensus / (consensus + disagreement)]. In addition, verbatim quotations were included for the validity of the study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

3.6. Research Ethics

The researchers confirm that they comply with unbiased reporting standards. The Ethics Committee of Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University approved and registered the study by the meeting held on September 28th, 2023, with decision number 2023-36. The research was conducted by paying attention to ethical rules. During the research process, citations were made in accordance with the rules.

4. Results

The study aimed to investigate English language teachers' and instructors' thoughts about using Instagram for intercultural competence. The results showed that all participants had a more or less reasonable level of knowledge about intercultural competence. They were aware of its meaning and how it contributed to their lives. For this purpose, they declared that they had positive feelings and exhibited positive attitudes toward the use of Instagram. The interview results were coded and categorized under three themes. The categories were presented in Table 2 as follows: knowledge of the target culture, positive feelings toward the target culture, and communication with people in the target culture.

Table 2.
Participants' thoughts about using Instagram for intercultural competence

Themes	Codes	Participants	
Knowledge of the target culture	Learn new things about the target culture	P4, P6, P8, P10	
	Be aware of differences	P2, P3, P5, P7, P9	
	Be aware of similarities	P1, P6, P10	
Positive feelings toward the target culture	Sympathy	P1, P6, P8, P10	
	Sense of intimacy	P9, P4	
	Changing feelings	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P10	**4.1.**
Communication with people in the target culture	To write comments	P1, P2	
	To send direct messages	P3, P6, P10	
	To join live broadcasts	P5, P6, P9	

Knowledge of the Target Culture

All of the participants said that they had the opportunity to learn about the target culture. They stated that thanks to Instagram, it has become easier to see what people in the target culture do in daily life. P8 exemplified this issue by stating that the information she obtained from Instagram accounts was diverse.

*The Instagram accounts I follow share their daily activities, weddings, holidays, school lives, family visits, house cleaning routines, child-raising styles, education lives, friendships, in short, **everything from life**.* (P8)

A much more inclusive answer was given by another teacher who stated that she learned about the target culture, which would enable her to improve constructive attitudes and intercultural competence.

*Thanks to these accounts, **I learned a lot about them** that I didn't know. For example, I thought they were cold and distant towards their children. There are no hugging, kissing, or squeezing-style displays of affection like we do. But there is something they call personal space in their lives. They keep their distance, yet they love their children as much as we do. I think we are a nation that likes to touch more than them. I thought they would break ties with their parents after they turned 18. However, they have an event called Thanksgiving, where they spend more intimate time than almost the entire year.* (P10)

Some participants stated that the information they acquired about people living in the target culture and what they do had a positive impact on their teaching.

***Having knowledge of cultural background** is beneficial in my job. For example, I think **the use of words** in sentences **can change**. In other words, the word may have other meanings on the streets of London other than its dictionary meaning.* (P3)

In line with other answers, another teacher said that she noticed the differences between cultures and accepted these differences, and as a result, life went on better.

***Their breakfast culture is not like ours**. We are different but we are beautiful like that.* (P4)

4.2. Positive Feelings towards the Target Culture

Almost all participants said that they had goodwill towards the target culture and their feelings changed as a result of using Instagram. One of the participants expressed that the more she learned about them, the closer she felt to them.

*I am curious about their daily routines, thoughts and their family life. Instagram provides me with endless data about things I wonder about, and this information **makes me feel close** to them.* (P9)

Another participant explained what intercultural competence meant to her and talked about the positive contributions it made to her daily life and business life. She stated that Instagram accounts, which she found useful, were not just a social media tool used for entertainment, but could also be a learning and teaching tool that teachers could benefit from.

*IC seems to me like having a superior perspective. That is, the person has reached intellectual capacity, is aware of his own culture and other cultures, and recognizes differences or similarities. I think it just ensures respect and acceptance. Thanks to competence in this field, **my sympathy** for the target culture **increases**.* (P10)

In parallel with other answers, P7 also defined using Instagram as witnessing the life of someone in the target culture, moment by moment. She stated that Instagram was easily accessible and could be used to improve intercultural competence. She elaborated on her thoughts as follows:

*As I follow foreign accounts, the prejudices I feel towards them disappear and I **have positive feelings towards them**. It makes me happy to see their posts immediately when I enter the application. It is also nice to have such pages with recommendations on my discover page. I can say I follow almost 100 accounts.* (P7)

4.3. Communication with People in the Target Culture

Seven participants declared that they were able to communicate with the people in the target culture with the help of Instagram usage. They stated that they found it easy to contact them by writing messages and comments or joining live broadcast. One of the participants (P1) claimed that while it was difficult to talk face to face, she did not hesitate to write under the post on Instagram accounts.

*It is tough to talk live in real life. I am into target country's singers and movies. I **write comments** on their posts. I can learn the culture by this way.* (P1)

P4 claimed that talking to foreigners while traveling was a good opportunity to learn about their culture. However, she found the use of Instagram very useful in this regard since she could not travel very often. She verbalized that accessing the source of information was as easy as entering the screen password of the phone.

*Except for a few trips, I did not have one-on-one contact with foreigners. But I love learning about them. Because of my job, their cultures, traditions, customs, and traditions interest me. I **like** their posts and **write comments**.* (P4)

Another participant said that since she was able to communicate with foreigners, she also encouraged her students in this regard. She said that gaining new information from one-on-one sources made her a better foreign language teacher in her profession. She underlined that language and culture were two intertwined concepts. She added that culture would not be overlooked when teaching a foreign language.

*I definitely benefit from Instagram. I can **send DMs** (direct messages) to them to ask for something. I **watch their live broadcast, join and speak.** What I learn about target culture surprises my students as well as me, and their sympathy for the language increases. Thus, we provide universal positivity. I think we contribute to raising individuals with a developed sense of acceptance. Their courage to **communicate with foreigner** increases.* (P6)

5. Discussion

The research question is to what extent Instagram contributes to the development of foreign language teachers' intercultural competence. Participants have acknowledged that having intercultural competence is necessary and important when people learn a foreign language. When the relevant literature was examined, similar results were seen with the research (Leung et al., 2014; Sercu & Bandura, 2005). Participants found Instagram useful for developing intercultural competence. Teachers get more information about the target culture, people and country by the help of Instagram. As Eğinli (2011) stated that IC is important, thanks to intercultural competence, people can learn the differences between cultures and the understanding that these differences bring.

Participants used Instagram to improve their intercultural competence so that they could learn about the target culture and have positive feelings. This result is in line with the studies of Alamri (2018), Álvarez Valencia and Fernández Benavides (2019), and Ngai et al. (2020). Thanks to their Instagram accounts, they had the chance to communicate with the target culture. According to Vurdien (2014), social networking services improved the rapport for language learners. Social media encourages online intercultural engagement amongst students from other cultures to foster intercultural competency. Similarly, this study claims that social media is a useful tool for teachers as well as for students.

Liu (2019) proposed that the process of learning a foreign language is significantly assisted by the improvement of IC. The interview results agree with Liu's claims. Participants of the current study found IC effective in learning and teaching English. Correspondingly, they were aware of the importance of learning the target culture and using this knowledge in language classes. Another study (Fornara, 2018) supported this conclusion, saying that social media users often talk about their native culture. Therefore, the study suggests that the use of Instagram has an important role in language learning and teaching in the context of intercultural competence.

6. Conclusion

This research was conducted with English language teachers and instructors. The study aimed to investigate English language teachers' and instructors' opinions about using Instagram to improve their intercultural competence. The study results were discussed by comparing them with the results of different studies in the literature, and some suggestions were given related to the results. The researchers examined interview results and concluded that they were expressed under the headings of knowledge of the target culture, positive feelings towards the target culture, and communication with people in the target culture.

The study showed that it is necessary to have intercultural competence and foreign language teachers can learn more about the target culture, people and country through Instagram. The participants developed an understanding of the differences between cultures and an appreciation for these differences. By using Instagram, the participants reported to have a chance to learn about the target culture and to have positive feelings towards it. This study suggests that social media is a useful tool since social media users often talk about their own culture. Therefore, the study suggests that the use of Instagram plays an important role in the context of intercultural competence in language learning and teaching. This study has some limitations; it was conducted with only ten English language teachers; therefore, similar studies could be carried out with more English language teachers or other foreign language teachers. Additionally, not only Instagram but also other social media tools like Twitter and Snapchat can be used to determine whether they are useful in developing intercultural competence.

7. Pedagogical Implications

The relationship between language and culture is intertwined. A particular language refers to a particular community of people associated with it. Interacting with a particular language also means interacting with a culture that speaks the same language. Intercultural competence is a skill that people can develop, just like other social skills. When people are culturally competent, they can consider a deeper level of evaluation of their cultural assumptions, biases, values, and beliefs. The development of intercultural competence is a complex and gradual process and depends on intercultural environments. Instagram accounts appear to be the most accessible tools in these environments. Therefore, Instagram can be integrated into the learning and teaching of English as it allows people to interact with foreigners to improve intercultural competence.

At the end of the study, some suggestions were made for teachers, instructors, and stakeholders to improve English teaching environments. This study may reveal important clues about how and when Instagram can contribute to English language teaching in terms of intercultural competence. Authorities may conduct studies or organize programs for teachers and instructors to use Instagram on their own, among themselves, or with students to increase their knowledge of the target culture in English education and to include this social media tool in education. This study can underline the importance of teachers' contribution to English education when Instagram is used purposefully and can create a supportive force that will mobilize other language teachers on this issue.

Note on Ethical Issues

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University with decision number 2023-36 (Approval Date: 28 /09 /2023).

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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