

**A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF INTRODUCTORY LETTERS FROM
AN ELF PERSPECTIVE**



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**A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF INTRODUCTORY LETTERS FROM AN
ELF PERSPECTIVE**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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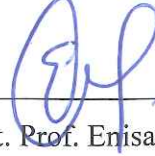
BY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences



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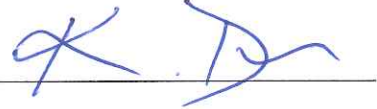
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ABSTRACT

A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF INTRODUCTORY LETTERS FROM AN ELF PERSPECTIVE

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This corpus study presents the findings of the corpus based analyses of Turkish, Ecuadorian and Ugandan ELF users' introductory and response letters. For this purpose, a corpus of 150 introductory and response letters from Ecuadorian, Ugandan and Turkish students to each other were analyzed in order to identify and investigate the similarities and differences in the content/topics involved in these letters; how Turkish, Ecuadorian and Ugandan learners of English use greetings and closures; and finally the extent to which the cultural backgrounds of Turkish students affect their understanding of letters they received from Ugandan and Ecuadorian students. The findings of the study reveal that while giving personal information and details about their school are the most common topics in all letters, "favorite local food", "free time activities", and "favorite singer" were the topics which were different than what the other two nationalities chose to mention. In terms of greetings, "Hi" and "Hello" were the most frequently used greeting words whereas in closures, cultural differences existed. Student interviews made with Turkish students also provided insight to Turkish students' ways of overcoming cultural differences which they come across in their letters such as "making it common" strategy.

Keywords: ELF pragmatics, greeting, closure, letter writing

ÖZ

TANIŞMA MEKTUPLARININ ORTAK DİL AÇISINDAN BÜTÜNCE TEMELLİ ANALİZİ

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Bu bütünce çalışması, Türk, Ekvadorlu ve Ugandalı ortak dil olarak İngilizce kullanıcılarının tanışma ve cevap mektuplarının bütünce analizinin sonuçlarını sunmaktadır. Bu amaçla, Ekvadorlu, Ugandalı ve Türk öğrencilerin birbirlerine yazdığı 150 adet tanışma ve cevap mektubunda yer alan içerik / konulardaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar, Türk, Ekvadorlu ve Ugandalı öğrencilerin selam ve kapanışları nasıl kullandıkları ve Türk öğrencilerin kültürel geçmişlerinin Uganda ve Ekvadorlu öğrencilerden aldıkları mektupları anlama düzeylerini ne ölçüde etkilediklerini anlamak ve araştırmak amacıyla analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, kişisel bilgileri ve okulla ilgili detayları vermenin en yaygın olarak yer verilen konular olduğunu gösterirken, “en sevilen yerel yiyecekler”, “serbest zaman etkinlikleri” ve “favori şarkıcı” gibi konuların diğer iki ülkeden farklı olacak şekilde her ülke için diğerlerinden farklı olarak bahsedilen konular olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Selamlaşmalardan “Hi” ve “Hello” en sık kullanılan selamlama sözcükleri iken, kapanışlarda kültürel farklılıkların varlığı görülmüştür. Türk öğrencilerle yapılan röportajlarda, Türk öğrencilerin, “ortaklaştır” stratejisi gibi mektuplarda rastladıkları kültürel farklılıkların üstesinden gelme yolları hakkında bilgiler de verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ortak dil olarak İngilizce edim bilimi, selamlama, kapanış, mektup yazma.



To My beloved kids Gülnihal and
Taha Berk

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELT	English Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
EIL	English as an International language
WE	World Englishes
GE	Global English
NSs	Native Speakers
NNSs	Non-native Speakers
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
L1	The First Language, Native Language
L2	The Second Language, English Language in this context
CEFR	Common European Framework
FTA	Face Threatening Act

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this chapter, research questions as well as the theoretical framework which enlightens the background and objectives to conduct this study are introduced. Moreover, the significance of this particular study is explained in detail by defining the frequently mentioned terminology.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

It is a very well-known fact that English has been the language of intercultural communication between speakers of various cultures and numerous speakers from different L1 backgrounds for more than three decades. Other than the academical and professional concerns, the quick spread of online communication and people's desire to share and gather information from all around the World as well as the popular culture items' being represented in English language have contributed to this consequence.

Having such a huge number of users and many different reasons to use worldwide, the status of English language has shifted from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or to English as an International Language (EIL), and from English as a Second Language (ESL) to World Englishes (WE) with new perspectives to define them according to the needs of the current position of the English language. Such a shift made it compulsory to change the way linguists and language educators view teaching of English in all levels.

As Marlina (2014) claims, "statistically, there are over 70 countries in the World that give special status to English". Taking their nationalities, common histories with English native speakers, and reasons why they learn the English language, Kachru (1986) attempted to categorize the countries speaking or teaching English as *inner*, *outer* and *expanding circle* countries. According to his

categorization, inner circle countries are the ones in which the English language is spoken as the national or native language while outer circle countries were once the British and the American colonies with another native language. The expanding circle countries were the ones which had no official or political connections with inner circle countries but taught, spoke English as a foreign language. However, this view has been the topic of a great debate, and by some it was criticized for being restricted to a closed, national framework (Sharifian, 2010; cited in Hoven, 2014). As well as the criticism, the theory is also regarded as out of date by Marlina (2014) by exemplifying the great amounts of travelling across countries for temporary or permanent reasons such as being a tourist, student or maybe as an immigrant. Also in his study, Graddol (2003) stated a very clear summary of the situation by stating that “English “speech communities” can be seen as cross-border affiliation groups rather than nations in their boundaries (p.165).”

Since at first, the aim was to communicate with the native speakers of English, and the most powerful -and that’s why important- sources of language learning were prepared and published by native speakers of English language; both the linguistic and cultural aim has been the native culture and clean, high native language with the perfect pronunciation of English. However; as the number of speakers and the variety of languages which were spoken by the speakers of English as the second language or English as the foreign language have increased, this aim has started not to fulfil the needs of so-called intercultural speakers of English, and fell out of reality.

In spite of the fact that speakers of English are from various different native language backgrounds now, and cultural norms being taught in English language classrooms of students from those countries do not fulfil their needs, native speakers and sources are still the most important and the mostly preferred ones. They do not lead students and teachers to the real life communication needs. Also when the literature related to international or cross-cultural communication are analyzed, the most common type of “intercultural communication” studies are still the ones between native and non-native speakers.

Even though some teachers and English language learners perceive EIL as not clear and effective enough to be taught, and demand for a standard form of English,

in many countries, particularly in the ones where English is spoken as a foreign language, the native speaker oriented approach ends up with learners who can understand, but cannot speak English because of the social pressure that says “Do not speak English before you can speak it like an American” (Honna & Takeshita, 2014, p. 70). When this fact is considered, the efficiency of one standard English is thought to have lost its effectiveness and actually deduction in where it is spoken as EFL. As Kirkpatrick (2014) states, “the increasing role of English as an international lingua franca also means that more and more multilinguals who have learned English as an additional language are using it internationally (p. 26).”

When we think about the importance of intercultural communication taking place between non-native speakers, what is to be considered as crucial is the negotiation of meaning, regardless of the existence of proper grammar use as set by the native speakers. It has to be kept in mind that English is now the international and intercultural language of communication, and it is used by various users of English. Moreover, speaking English is not the only way of communication which can take place between ELF users of English; writing also takes place quite common between non-native speakers of English, regardless of which reasons they write to. As Nystrand, Himley and Doyle (1986, p.36) claim, “text is not just the result of composing, it is also the medium of communication”, and this type of communication takes place in ELF context for academic purposes, for trade, for interacting in social media, and for learning English as well (Nystrand, Himley, & Doyle, 1986).

When the written communication comes together with the intercultural use of English between various users from different L1 backgrounds, the cultural and linguistic features which are inherited by interlocutors’ native languages are seem to have an influence on interlocutors’ use of English as a lingua franca in their texts. Their rules, their politeness strategies and their cultural expressions are inevitably placed in the text regardless of the culture the interlocutor of the writer belongs to. To overcome communication breakdowns which can possibly make the conversation impossible, studies should be conducted in the field of written communication and ELF together.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Even though English is used for international communication for decades and it is widely accepted that the number of non-native speakers of English is more than the native speakers of English, there are only few studies in which ELF pragmatics and ELF communication methods are given place. When the existing data is concerned, most of the ELF research is done by Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs), or by the analyses of spoken data between non-native speakers (NNSs). However, there is not a study in which real communication between ELF users, particularly communication managed by the written data, are analyzed.

It is widely acknowledged that English language is now used as the main lingua franca for international communication no matter which native languages are spoken between the interlocutors. It is also not only used for spoken language, but also for the written language between people with many different native language backgrounds. In this century, there are many reasons of using English as a lingua franca in written contexts such as job applications, reviews, academic papers and even letters. Among these, writing a letter can be regarded as the most complex one in terms of the data variety it includes. As Al-Khatib (2001) mentions, informal letters are ways of intimate communication, and “they are associated with the requirement to perform an identifiable set of procedures to meet the criteria on tasks such as greeting, congratulating, inviting, discussing personal issues which are all culture related (p.179)”. What also makes letter writing important is the “shared knowledge”. As Y. Kachru (1997) suggests, only limited communication is possible when there is not any shared knowledge between the writer and the reader of letters.

When the fact of not having a data collected from non-native to non-native written interaction in a letter context which is still a preferred way of exchanging information between interlocutors comes together with the increasing amount of ELF communication worldwide, a study regarding the international use of English becomes compulsory to conduct in ELF context.

1.3. Purpose of the study

As stated above, written language use is very common among ELF users for many purposes. Among these, writing introductory letters or sending informal emails to friends or new recipients is a very effective way of practicing English language skills for language learners worldwide. When real communication takes place by using English between different cultures, pragmatic rules gain more importance than the grammatical rules for the aim is always to cross the meaning to the interlocutor clearly. When the previous literature is concerned, it can be stated that no example of data collected from the written communication via introductory letters taking place between ELF users is available.

As far as the role of written communication to practice English language communication skills is concerned, information of the topics given place in introductory letters and the pragmatic features which can be found in introductory letters are regarded as necessary to create curriculum or plan writing lessons according to the data provided. To serve this objective, this study aimed at pointing out the similarities and differences of topics given place in introductory letters written by Ecuadorian, Ugandan and Turkish students to be sent to each other to practice their English language communication skills and introduce their cultures as well as get to know new cultures. In addition, the pragmatic features of greeting and closures preferred by three different cultures were analyzed. Also interview data was used to gather information about the intelligibility of the letters to the readers from another cultural and linguistic background.

1.4. Research Questions

In this study, answers were sought for research questions which are as follows;

- a. What are the similarities and differences in the content of introductory letters of Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students?
- b. Which types of greetings and closures do Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students use in their letters?

- c. To what extent the cultural backgrounds of writers affect the understanding of the letters by the Turkish readers of the letters and how can the Turkish readers overcome the cultural differences that they come across in the letters?

1.5. Significance of the Study

As the necessity of being intercultural users of English language in the globalized World has increased, studies related to the realization of intercultural communicative competence and studies reflecting the implementations of intercultural awareness activities gained extra importance. This study was conducted after the implementation of an extracurricular activity which aimed at creating an environment of language practice and an awareness raising activity for high school students. As far as the recent trends on literature about raising ELF awareness are concerned, this study can be stated as crucial for it contributes to the relevant literature by presenting a corpus data related to the international use of English as lingua franca.

Second, there are many corpus studies reflecting on the use of ELF in spoken language or in academic language use; however; the number of studies conducted about the written use of ELF is relatively insufficient. One of the reasons why it is so can be because finding real interlocutors communicating in English as Lingua Franca in letter forms are hard to find in professional environment. However, it should be noted that writing informal letters, or emails are still given place in English language teaching curricula and in ELT materials, and this type of communication is still preferred by many English language learners. This study is significant in terms of creating and analyzing a corpus of written interaction taking place between non-native/non-native speakers of English.

Another significance of this study is the number of nationalities who participated in the study. This study did not only give place to written interaction taking place between a country with another, but it included the written interaction of an ELF country with two different ELF user countries via introductory letters. This significance created the opportunity to see the cultural differences and the impact of culture on students' letters.

1.6. Definitions

English as Foreign Language: The role of English in countries where it is taught as a subject in schools but where it has no recognized status or function (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985).

English as Second Language: English which has some officially approved national status and social prestige (Nayar, 1997).

English as Lingua Franca: It is “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” (Firth, 1996, p.240 cited in Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339).

English as International language: “Functions of English, not to any given form of the language. It is the use of English by people of different nations and different cultures in order to communicate with one another (Smith, 1983, p. vi)”.

World Englishes: “Status of English in its varieties (Kılıçkaya, 2009)”.

Global English: “A language reaches global status when “it develops a special role that is recognized in every country” (Crystal, 2003)”.

L1: A person’s native or first language (Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian in this study)

Pragmatics: The study of how utterances have meanings in situations (Leech, 2016)

Cross- cultural pragmatics: Cross-cultural pragmatics analyses the differences and similarities in the language behavior of people representing different languages and cultures (Kecskes, 2017).

Intercultural pragmatics: Intercultural pragmatics focuses on intercultural interactions and investigates the nature of the communicative process among people from different cultures, speaking different first languages (Kecskes, 2017).

Intercultural communicative competence: The knowledge, motivation and skills needed to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures (Wiseman, 2002, p. 208)



Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter the terminology of the current position of English will be discussed, then the literature on empirical studies conducted about English as a lingua franca and pragmatics of ELF will be presented. Furthermore, the speech act theory and greetings and leave-taking rituals will be explained under the light of empirical studies. Finally, previous literature on pragmatics of letter writing will be presented and a wider perspective is aimed to be developed related to the previous literature on the topic of this study.

2.1. English as Foreign Language (EFL) vs English as Lingua Franca (ELF).

English as a foreign language stands for the use of English by taking the inner circle norms as basis. The term is mainly used while teaching English in an environment where English has no political, historical or geographical superiority, but it is respected and learned due to social, economic and academic purposes. In Turkey, English is taught as a foreign language. As in her definition, Kırkgöz states the position of Turkey in in Kachruvian circles as the “expanding circle” by differentiating it from outer circle countries “where English functions as the official or co-official language, as in India (Kırkgöz, 2009)”, and she continues by clarifying the position of English as “one of the foreign languages in the school curriculum (p.4)”. The EFL position of English creates an environment where native norms are taught as compulsory. In this environment, consequently, unless students are able to reach to a native-like proficiency, their progress is underestimated and students are led to disappointment in terms of learning English language.

Since, in time, the English language has carried the role of a lingua franca, which stands for “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture (Firth, 1996, p.240)”, the foreign language education which is currently being given has to meet the contemporary needs of the World in which it is spoken and taught. As suggested in Macias (2010), the inner circle supremacy has to be lowered via a more international perspective of teaching English (Macias, 2010).

Karlsson (2012) compared the advantages and disadvantages of teaching EFL vs. ELF. She points out that while teaching EFL is advantageous in terms of the respect it has gained thanks to the native speaker countries' reputations, already having exact rules and coding for the language, as well as the number of materials which have been developed accordingly, the disadvantages are the varieties of Englishes, the lack of possibility to use the language while communicating with a native and the fact that non-native English language teachers would never truly reach the native level of proficiency (Karlsson, 2012). Additionally, teaching EFL is disadvantageous because students may feel discouraged for they believe they may not sound intelligible or native enough.

When it comes to the pros and cons of teaching EFL vs ELF, Karlsson (2012) again states that not having an exact coding for the lingua franca use of English, the number of materials and methods to teach are insufficient; however, she advocates teaching ELF for it focuses on the English in use; the real life uses of the language.

2.2. Language and Culture

As it is widely acknowledged by many scholars, languages cannot be separated from the culture in which they are born and raised, so as one learns a new language, the culture of the native speakers of that new language follows immediately. And it happens not only to understand the rules but also the context the rules were born in. Brdaric (2016) represents the culture as a blueprint which organizes our lives on both national and family levels. She states "it is incorporated in all spheres of human life and it leaves traces everywhere. (p. 3)" Also in her study, she gives place to the view of "3P model", which is three headings such as "*perspectives*" (what members of a culture think, feel and value), "*practices*" (how members communicate and interact with one another) and "*products*" (technology, music, art, food, literature, etc.; the things members of a group create, share, and transmit to the next generation) (Frank; 2015, p. 3). So while languages cannot be separated from a culture, and English is perceived as a global language and while scholars are claiming that no nation can claim ownership upon a global language, whose culture is to be taught, or should culture really be integrated, are some questions which lead us to the other literature about the language and culture context in terms of language teaching.

In McKay (2004), the importance of the culture in language learning was identified in several matters. First, since in the international context the native speaker norms do not matter anymore, it is sufficient to let students know about the native culture than relying heavily on the understanding of it. Second, it has to be understood that giving place to the culture of the learner has a good impact on language learning. As she claims, “Such an emphasis in cultural content provides students with the opportunity to learn more about their own culture and to acquire the English to explain their own culture to others, especially to their own teacher if he/she is from another culture”(p. 20). She finally recommends local policy makers taking local circumstances into account while deciding on a language method to teach English in this “increasingly global village (McKay, 2004, p. 20)”.

In her paper, Celce-Murcia (2007) claims that “if the goal of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated to cultural and cross-cultural instruction (p.51)”. For example, she suggested introducing the knowledge of the art and literature, as well as the information about the geography and history of the target culture community. Furthermore, she claimed that if the target culture has different social structures such as the family relations, traditions, gender roles, also different religions and customs, it is a good idea to cover them to make language learners aware of the differences. Just like the other scholars, Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2003), among others, have shown that teaching language through content is one of the most effective means available for achieving communicative competence in a second or foreign language (Celce- Murcia, 2007, p.51)”.

When it comes to intercultural communication, more countries, and undoubtedly more different cultural backgrounds are to be introduced to English language learners. In a relatively recent study, Zacharias (2014) focused on the new position of culture in English as an international language. In his study, 12 bilingual English student-teachers (BESTs, as mentioned in the original study) were asked to implement EIL concepts into their mini lessons and cover the new concept of culture in their classrooms. The study found that most of the participants were eager to use local cultures as contents and contexts while teaching English. Also the data from the lesson plan and interviews showed that BESTs understand the term local cultures as

referring to the teacher's cultures, the majority of the student cultures, the current issues and local trends (p. 139).

In Turkish context, Kahraman (2016) conducted a study about the attitudes of English language teachers and learners towards culture and culture learning. The results revealed that our learners are intrinsically prepared to receive and take in the cultural knowledge. That is, there are learners waiting who are fully aware of their dire need for new cultural knowledge and ready to receive and incorporate this knowledge as a complementary component of their "*communicative competence*" (p. 10). Under the light of these results, Kahraman suggests to revise teacher education programs by adding courses about the intercultural awareness and communication. He argues that "once language teachers become more knowledgeable and competent regarding this issue, they will eventually be more able to integrate cultural practices in their teaching and meet the requirements of the learners in today's changing world." (Kahraman, 2016, p.10)

2.2.1. Communicative Competence. As seen in the literature given place above, many scholars attempted to help students to acquire communicative language, and policies regarding the acquisition of communicative competence were recommended. The term communicative competence was first introduced by Dell Hymes (1972) as an objection to the Chomskian view of linguistic competence, which focuses on form and advocates that language structures were context-free, and one can speak any language with the help of the linguistic rules. Hymes objected this idea and claimed that sociolinguistic competence, which is the rules for using language appropriately in context, is also needed for language is not a context free structure. At that time the linguists were also developing the communicative approach, and with some of the linguists' combining the two views, the "communicative competence" was born. Later, Canale (1983) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) contributed to the term "*communicative competence*" by adding new terms like discourse competence and actional competence. In Celce – Murcia's study (2007), she listed the contributions to the term communicative competence and the evolution of the views as given in the table below;

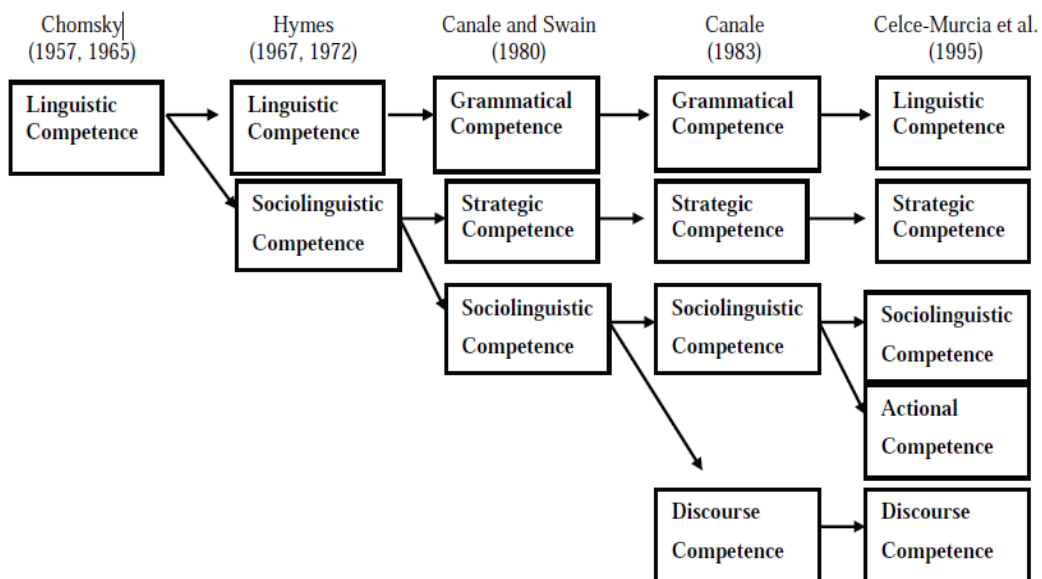


Figure 1. The Evolution of the Term Communicative Competence (Celce – Murcia; 2007, p:43)

In her study, Celce –Murcia (2007) suggested a new model of competence which is called the sociocultural competence. Sociocultural competence refers to the speaker’s pragmatic knowledge, i.e. how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication. This includes knowledge of language variation with reference to sociocultural norms of the target language. (Celce – Murcia, 2007, p. 46).

Widdowson (1989) described the communicative competence as follows;

“It is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as and when occasion requires”. It is much more related to knowing a group of patterns, frameworks, and a group of rules, [...] and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands. Communicative competence in this view is essentially a matter of adaptation, and rules are not generative but regulative and subservient.”(p. 135)

As the communication varies worldwide, more needs of intercultural understanding have raised. As an update according to the new uses of English

language worldwide, many scholars came up with a competence in which intercultural communication was promoted, and respecting one's culture first, then recognizing and respecting others' cultures and feeling equal in terms of international communication has become more popular.

2.2.2. Intercultural Communicative Competence. Ante (2015) demonstrates the importance of the relationship between the culture and communication skills to make interaction possible between two interlocutors as in his example "Some people study a foreign language for five years or more. However, when they go to a foreign country, they have communication problems in simple situations such as buying bread in a bakery, giving a present, etc. (Ante, 2015, p. 17)". Similar to what is represented in this example, Turkish people hesitate speaking or using English by hiding behind the excuse "I understand, but can't speak in English language". This example highlights the fact that because of the fear of sounding awkward or not accepted or may be rejected, people do not use English. However, when the culture, the norms and the rituals of the spoken language are acquired, the communication is highly to occur in a more intelligible setting.

The term "intercultural communicative competence" was introduced by Byram (1997) and he defines it as the "readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviors" and "to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging (p.34)". Intercultural communicative competence was also defined as "the knowledge, motivation and skills needed to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures (Wiseman, 2002, p. 208)". Also in Byram, Solves and Savvides (2013), it was suggested that teachers and learners need to become aware of other speakers' cultures and of their own. It is because as long as interlocutors from different L1 backgrounds get into contact, what they need to manage a successful communication is more than the functional rules of the language used, but the appropriateness of the content in order to prevent any communication breakdowns and disrespectfulness. In this context, many different scholars conducted studies to see the effectiveness of developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

2.2.3. Pragmatic Competence

Following the emergence of the term intercultural communication and intercultural competence, many studies regarding its pedagogical implementations have been conducted by many scholars. Supporting this view, and as a broader term brought to intercultural communicative competence, pragmatic competence and teaching of pragmatics has also been a matter of research.

When function matters more than form, and communicative competence, significantly for the recent use, the intercultural communicative competence matters more than ever, it is crucial to ensure intercultural understanding between speakers from different countries who come together for various reasons such as increasing intelligibility of interlocutors. The best way to raise this awareness is to raise pragmatic competence. Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which focuses on the analysis of the intended meaning of an utterance. It deals with the incongruities between what is said and what is meant, because in most real life communications, speakers mean more than what they say semantically (Fernández & Fontecha; 2008). As Lin (2007) mentions, studies of pragmatics highlight the suitability in intercultural discourses, and by learning pragmatics, the English speakers' intercultural communication competence can be raised (Lin, 2007, p: 91). By learning pragmatics, learners can look at the knowledge they get from their interlocutor from a wider perspective, and communication breakdowns, misunderstandings and intolerance caused by the lack of intercultural awareness and the lack of knowledge of pragmatics can be decreased to a minimum level.

As Deda (2013) defines, pragmatic competence is the ability to comprehend, construct, and convey meanings that are both accurate and appropriate for the social and cultural circumstances in which communication occurs. As it can be understood from the definition, no matter which cultural backgrounds the interlocutors belong to, the users of English have to be able to interpret and deliver the messages successfully. This has to be the aim while communicating in both non-native speaker interlocutors' contexts.

2.3. Literature on ELF Pragmatics

In the literature conducted so far about the pragmatics of ELF, comparisons of language use between native and non-native speakers took place. However, as Björkman (2013) suggests, “it is important to point out that these studies included comparative native corpora to observe what native speakers do in similar situations and in principle not because what native speakers do should be the norm for ELF speakers to adhere to.” As each culture has its own rules and non-native communications are based on their own pragmatic rules and editions of usage according to the communication type they take part, non-native to non-native communication examples should be taken as basis.

One of the first studies conducted in ELF pragmatics research was by Firth (1990; 1996). In his study, Danish export managers’ phone conversations with their clients were analyzed. It was a conversation analysis study and the phone conversations were transcribed then analyzed. The results of the study revealed very interesting results for the time it was first published. At that time, Firth’s aim was to compare non-native speakers’ English use performance in a lingua franca setting by comparing it to the native speakers’ performance. Consequently, even though it is a very good source of data which shows us the succeeding of low-proficient English users’ performance in a real life conversation and their strategies to overcome conversational problems occurring at the time of conversation, it is insufficient and unrealistic for this century when most of the communication made in English language occurs between the non-native speakers of English and they set their own rules while communicating without losing intelligibility.

Another empirical study from ELF pragmatics was again on the spoken data. House (1999) conducted a study to see the occurrence of misunderstandings while communicating interculturally. However, as setting was a simulated classroom and that’s why synthetic, students didn’t feel the necessity to communicate in English language. Still the study came up with the conclusion that “pragmatic fluency did not require conforming to ENL norms and that ELF speakers can be pragmatically fluent in their own ways without following ENL patterns (Björkman, 2013)”. This result proves the idea of not necessarily following the native speaker rules of

communication while at least two interlocutors from different L1 backgrounds communicate in a native language use –free environment.

The available data on ELF pragmatics is mainly on the collection and analysis of the data from spoken interaction with either native to non-native speakers, or from non-native speakers to virtual native speakers of English. However, in her recent study, Meierkord (2013) analyzed the small-talk conversations taking place between different non-native speakers in a native language setting. Her data was analyzed according to the discourse and conversation analysis method. The back-channeling rituals of non-native speakers were analyzed. The results indicated that lingua franca English was highly heterogeneous and the heterogeneity of data was shown to cause problems for the application of traditional approaches to conversation, which were created for the analysis of Anglo-American native speaker discourse (Meierkord, 2013).

In further studies, the setting and the habitat of the data were analyzed. In Pölzl and Seidlhofer's study (2006) where English is used by Arab students in their own habitat, Jordan. While using English to communicate with each other, as Björkman (2013) refers, "the subjects transferred their native language communicative norms to their ELF-like interaction, displayed a high rate of speech and frequent overlap and codeswitching, which was not perceived as irritating or inappropriate by the rest of the participants (Björkman, 2013)". It was concluded that although ELF is the use of English by speakers of different L1s, local pragmatic norms apply in interactive situations where speakers are mainly from one culture. This fact seems to support the idea of ELF being "cultureless", which means the irrelevance of native culture to the non-native speakers of English while communicating in ELF context.

As the summary of some literature provided in this study, what can be concluded is that, when two non-native speakers of English meet in spoken interaction, all they focus on is the mutual intelligibility and to cross the message to the interlocutor, and when communication breakdowns are about to take place or when the proficiency level of at least one of the interlocutors is not sufficient to maintain a conversation, they came up with some strategies to overcome the difficulties happening at the time of conversation. What else is to be understood from

the literature available in this study is the evolving nature of culture according to the habitat or the aim of the conversation taking place. When the interlocutors interact in English language from their own setting, they prefer their own norms. As the conclusion to this part, Bjorkman's words would suit more than anything as "It is precisely the native speaker as the ideal for international settings that is challenged by ELF research, calling for a need for prescription based on descriptive norms that are appropriate for international use (Björkman, 2013, p. 43)."

2.4. Pragmatics of Letter Writing

Being one of the earliest forms of information exchange, writing a letter is still currently wide spread across a wide range of uses and cultures (Bagwasi, 2008). As the specific genre analyzed in this study, letter writing is another important way of communication between ELF users. As Al-Khatib (2001) states, "writing personal letters in a foreign language is associated with the requirement to perform an identifiable set of procedures to meet the criteria on tasks such as greeting, congratulating, inviting, discussing personal issues, all of which appear to be culturally bound (Al-Khatib, 2001, p.179)". These criteria refer heavily on the cultural norms and privileges given by cultures to the topics, and international communication via letters become worth analyzing. In his study, 120 personal letters written by Arabic students to fictional native speakers of English were analyzed. The data analysis was done by two native speaker professors from the University setting the research took place. The findings of the study revealed that because of the heavy amount of cultural background-requiring input given place in letters, common or at least close to common amount of cultural background is required by the readers of these letters to understand what is mentioned in the written texts.

Another study was conducted to see the similarities and the differences between letter writings by and to British and Batswana people. In Bagwasi's paper (2008), 200 letters corpora were analyzed in terms of the pragmatic strategies given place. The findings revealed that in the British written mode there was directness while making the point, and there was very little stylistic ornamentation while the salutations and addressing were longer than the British ones.

As revealed in the findings, Batswana writers did not only transfer local lexical and syntactic patterns but also transfer cultural strategies for addressing the interlocutor, organization of the letter and politeness strategies that are used in local language use (Bagwasi, 2008).” Even though the current literature still compares the native language use with the non-native language use and refers to this type of communication as “intercultural”, they are still valuable in terms of highlighting the importance of letter writing and they can be referred to as the examples of analyses made on letters from one culture to another.

2.5. Politeness Strategies

When a conversation occurs, what is expected in the first place is to be understood. After the hearer or reader understands what he or she hears or reads, the next thing to expect is the understanding the meaning aimed to be delivered to the reader. And these messages are supposed to be clear. To define the mutual intelligibility when an interaction with an interlocutor takes place, scholars like Grice (1975), Leech (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1987) developed theories and strategies.

The politeness principles are crucial to mention for it is possible to explain greetings and closings under the heading of politeness because the way a person opens and closes a conversation is based on the politeness rules which are perceived as norms for the users’ cultural and pragmatic norms.

2.5.1. Grice’s Cooperative Principle. According to Grice (1975), participants in a conversation follow and assume that others are following certain rules to be understood. Grice claims that the conversation normally includes an order which is accepted as cooperative efforts to be understood. So he developed his maxims which are as the maxim of quality, which stands for the harmony between what is said and what is done, the maxim of quantity, which stands for the adequate number of message to be delivered, the maxim of relation, which stands for being relevant in an interaction and finally, the maxim of manner, which stands for stating up one’s point briefly and clearly, not leading to ambiguity.

Even though these maxims were criticized in terms of many different aspects, (Keenan, 1976; Eeelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Grainger, 2011; Mills, 2011) they are still very influential in terms of pragmatics.

2.5.2. Leech's Politeness Principle. As an update to Grice's principles, Leech came up with six principles widening what was put forward by Grice (1975). The Politeness principle states: "Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs; maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs" (p. 81) (Leech, 1983; cited in Shleykina, 2016). Leech's politeness theory includes maxims as tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, sympathy.

As Shleykina (2016) states, "Although Leech claimed that these maxims might vary in different cultures, his theory has been criticized for its sole orientation to Western culture, its individualism and neglecting group values characteristic of Eastern culture (see, for example, Wierzbicka, 1991)" (Shleykina, 2016).

2.5.3. Brown & Levinson's Politeness Theory. The last politeness principle is the study which highlights the importance of the notion of face, which means the role a person intends to present to their interlocutors. As Goffman defines, face is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact (Goffman, 1967). The notion of face is divided into sub categories as negative face and positive face. While positive face explains the desired way of being perceived by others according to the social role one represents, negative face is described by Brown and Levinson as "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

According to this theory, the main aim of communication, as Shleykina suggests is that, it is required to preserve the two faces of interlocutors by clarifying the knowledge of interlocutor's face, making good contacts in interaction, and presenting respect (Shleykina, 2016).

The fact that these terms are crucial to mention in this study is because the pragmatic functions greetings and closings present are regarded as directly related to the politeness theory for they are accepted as face threatening acts (FTAs). FTAs are

actions which put the interlocutor's position he wants to preserve into danger such as "inviting" or "apologizing", and five strategies are proved to be effective to save one's face such as using positive face strategies, performing speech acts directly, performing negative face strategies, using off-record strategies, and avoiding FTAs from the very beginning (Shleykina, 2016).

2.6. Pragmatic Functions of Greeting and Closing

Greeting is an essential factor of social interaction which develops and maintains interpersonal relationships (Li, 2010)". "Moreover, the modes used for greetings constitute significant linguistic mechanisms, helping the greeter to reflect their attitude and impression of their relationship with the speaker (Almegren, 2017)".

To better understand the nature of greetings, one needs to understand the philosophy and the objective behind making utterances in a language, and the speech act theory by Austin (1962) first and then by Searle (1969). The basic assumption of Austin's theory was "to say something is to do something (Austin, 1962, p.12)". With this aim, Austin put forward the idea of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts which explain the uses of language in terms of the meaning they carry. While locutionary acts carry direct meanings to deliver the interlocutor, illocutionary acts are the indirect sentences which look different than the meaning they carry. Finally, perlocutionary acts are like the responses to the previous linguistic behavior made by the interlocutor. He classifies illocutionary acts into six categories taking into consideration English verbs (Austin, 1962). These categories with some examples defining them are as follows:

1. Assertives, which are used for expressing a belief, e. g. "John is in the library."
2. Directives, which are used to get the addressee to do things, e. g. "Please close the door."
3. Commissives, which are used to commit oneself to some future action, e. g. "I'll wash the dishes." and/or "Can I do anything for you?"

4. Expressives, used to express certain feelings toward the hearer, such as thanking, apologizing, congratulating, greeting.
5. Effectives, which are used to cause changes in institutional state of affairs, e. g. “You’re dismissed.” and “You are hereby sentenced to five years in prison.”
6. Verdictives, which are used to determine institutional state of affairs, e. g. “Strike” said by a baseball umpire. (Li, 2010).

As far as the position of greetings among these illocutionary acts are concerned, “greeting” according to Searle’s (1979) classification is considered as a kind of performative because it concerns behavior towards others to exhibit attitudes and feelings (Jibreen, 2010) while it is under the headline of expressives according to Austin (1962). So they shouldn’t be interpreted the way they are read. What is meant here is that, the use of “how are you?” or “I hope everything is fine” does not necessarily mean that the interlocutor is interested in the other interlocutors’ status; instead, he or she meant to show his or her kindness to the interlocutor.

When it comes to the functions of closings, it can be best explained by the politeness theory itself. Closings are regarded as face threatening acts (FTAs) and they have to be used carefully depending on the face of the interlocutors. The types of closings previously named by scholars are listed on Table 1 as follows;

Table 1.

Closing Strategies.

Scholar /date of publishing	Closing strategies
Omar, 1993	Continuation (<i>See you later</i>), phatic inquiries (<i>I hope you're doing well</i>), declaration to leave, appreciation (expression of "thanks"), leave taking (<i>good-bye</i>)
Coppock (2005)	Positive face saving strategies: positive comment (<i>it was nice talking to you</i>) ; excuse (<i>I better get back to work</i>); dispreference marker (<i>well</i>) Positive/negative combined politeness strategies: blame (<i>I know you are busy</i>); goal (<i>I think we've talked enough</i>); summary (<i>this is how it goes</i>) Solidarity strategies: making arrangements (<i>see you</i>); naming the interlocutor (<i>thanks, Sherry</i>)
Dai (2007)	Self-others concept (<i>you must be tired, go home</i>)
Silvia (2013)	Terminal exchange (<i>good bye, bye</i>)

2.6.1. Empirical Studies on Greeting. Since emerge of the speech act theory, many studies related to the use of different speech acts were conducted. As for the greetings, there are numerous studies, and some of the most significant studies were cited in this study.

Rash (2013) describes the results of research into linguistic politeness in German-speaking Switzerland (GSS) and into one type of politeness in particular, namely the speech acts of greeting and leave-taking denoted by the German verb *grüßen*. To do so, she made interviews with 80 German speaking Swiss citizens and analyzed both the perceptions and utterances they make while greeting and leave-taking in a conversation which they participate. The findings of her study revealed that speakers of Swiss German believe in the importance of retaining their traditional politeness rituals "for social cohesion and a sign of respect and affection for one's fellow human beings (Rash, 2013)".

In Li (2010), the study was conducted to analyze the most important functions of greetings in different contexts. To do so, Austin's speech act theory and Brown & Levinson's (1978) politeness theories were discussed according to the English and Chinese contexts. He claimed the importance of cultural differences by stating that a considerable variation in greeting expression usage, across languages, across social groups within the same country, from one individual to the next, and even in the behavior of the same person from one instance to another existed (Li, 2010). Also, he claimed that greeting as a politeness routine is a universal phenomenon but has culture specification (p. 62). This statement shows the importance of conducting a study which aims at finding the cultural differences in greetings and closures by different ELF users.

In another study, Sithebe (2011) investigated the differences in the communication styles of siSwati and American English speakers in terms of the native and non-native siSwati speakers' realizations of request and greeting speech acts. They also investigated the realization of these speech acts in siSwati first language with 10 Swazis and 10 American Peace Corps volunteers living in Swaziland, and the data were collected with a questionnaire followed up with a semi-structured interview. The results showed differences in the way in which American English speakers and Swazi people perform and interpret greetings and requests, and that such differences emanate from the different cultural orientation of the two groups of people (Sithebe, 2011). Under the light of these findings, he also highlighted the importance of minding cultural differences in intercultural communication to sustain intelligibility.

Gharaghani, Rasekh and Tohidian (2011) conducted a cross-cultural study to see the politeness strategies that native English speakers and EFL learners employed for exchanging greetings in different contexts. An open-ended Dramatic Written Discourse Completion Task was used to collect the data. The participants were 60 female undergraduate EFL learners from a university in Iran and 60 native English learners from the USA. The findings revealed that the EFL learners were not linguistically competent in English greetings in different situations. It was also suggested that EFL learners use inappropriate politeness expressions in their English responses, as they do not have the ability to express greetings according to the

situational context and native culture. To overcome this handicap, they suggested adopting a systematic, appropriate and situationally contextualized greetings education in the Target Language (TL) in second and foreign language teaching. Even though this study compares the native and non-native uses of a speech act, it is important in terms of highlighting the cross-cultural differences which may hinder the conversation to take place. It is also important giving a path to follow for intercultural pragmatics studies.

2.6.2. Empirical Studies on Closing. Closing is defined by Hassall (2006) as “an act intended by the speaker to convey to the hearer that the speaker regards the encounter as at an end (Hassall, 2006; p. 35)”. Because of this nature of conversation stopper, closings are regarded as face-threatening acts which jeopardize the status of the interlocutor. Moreover, Ferguson (1976) categorizes closing formulas as “politeness formulas” whose main function is to smooth social interaction (Hassall, 2006). Because of this nature, closing was categorized either as a speech act (Hassall, 2006), or as a “conversational device” because of the role it carries in a conversation (Scarcella, 1983a) or even as a discourse “since they happen in patterned exchanges (Kasper, 1992, cited in Hassall, 2006)”.

It can be inferred from some early studies related to closings that, it is a difficult speech act since students may not know the right formulas to take leave (Hoffman – Hicks, 2000) or may not know how to differentiate formulas suitable for the context (Cook, 1985, cited in Hassall, 2006). However, DuFon (2010) claimed “closing formulas could rapidly be acquired when learners had opportunities for and open them up to the language socialization process (p. 96)”. In other words, the more English language is used in Lingua franca context, the better speech acts and conversational devices are acquired and used successfully in a real interaction.

Omar (1993) conducted a cross-cultural study about the closings made by Kiswahili and native English speakers. The native Kiswahili data was collected via participant observation and field notes, as well as telephone conversation recordings, reconstructed dialogues from personal experience, and analyzed video plays from Zanzibar Television while the native English data was collected via role play situations, recording of office hour conversations and telephone conversations used in Omar (1991; 1992). The findings revealed that Kiswahili closings were quite

elaborate and closing features were not strictly ordered and some features had a dual function of pre-closing and terminating a conversation for example the equivalent of goodbye is not the terminal pair in Kiswahili; it may not be used at all (Omar, 1993).

Another empirical study on closing was conducted in English and Mandarin Chinese uses of *I love you* as a closing by Dai (2007) who followed Kinnison's (2000) classification built upon linguistic routines used by American and Chinese guests at closings after dinner. Additionally, he highlighted some elements and strategies given place in a closing event employed in different situations in Mandarin Chinese such as telephone conversations, street encounters, and peer-gathering. Referring to his analysis, Dai (2007) claimed that “learning a language involves more than using the forms in spoken interactions; learning a language must also include understanding the pragmatic function(s) and cultural content of the forms; in other words, thinking for speaking in the target culture prepares one to conduct oneself appropriately in the target language and the target culture (Dai, 2007)”.

As it can be inferred from the literature presented in this chapter, the new position of English makes it compulsory to raise the awareness of the World citizens according to the needs of the century, and inform them about the other cultures by respecting their rituals and preventing any kinds of communication breakdowns. To do so, the culture and the rituals as well as the pragmatic features and the speech acts preferred by the other cultures and different L1speaking ELF users should be introduced in English classes in order to create a healthier communication which is possibly going to take place between speakers of different L1 backgrounds.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, the participants who engaged in this study and the setting in which the data collection was made possible were introduced. Later, the data collection procedure and the steps of analyzing the letter corpus which was used particularly for this study, as well as the interview analyses of 5 Turkish students are presented. The research methods and the rationale behind choosing the presented methodology are discussed with some references to the scholars from this field.

3.1. Research design

A corpus study is defined as studying the use of language characteristics by considering the relevant “association patterns” (Biber, Conrad, Reppen, 1998; p. 4). This qualitative study is an analysis of a small scale corpus of written ELF interactions gathered in a setting where English is used as a language of communication by non-native English speakers from three different countries. The corpus of this study is a collection of 150 letters written by Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian high school students sent as introductory letters. In this corpus-based research, the content analyses of the topics given place were categorized and the frequencies of greeting and leave-taking strategies as well as the mutual topics which were given place in all letters were analyzed. As stated in Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998) the essential characteristics of corpus-based analysis, which were adopted in this study, are as follows;

- It is Empirical, analyzing the actual patterns of use in natural texts;
- It utilizes a large and principled collection of natural texts, known as a “corpus”, as the basis for analysis;
- It depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques. (Biber, et. al., 1998).

Furthermore, Biber et. al. (1998) claimed that corpus studies can be regarded as functional “in order to provide reference materials (like identifying the fifty most common words)” (p. 5). In Delaney and Collentine’s study (2011), another benefit of

the corpus research was stated as the tool to understand how students map form to function. The corpus data analyzed in this study was developed after an extracurricular letter exchange project and it was collected via 150 handwritten letters from Turkish, Ecuadorian and Ugandan students.

3.2. Participants and Setting

The participants of the study were 33 Ecuadorian high school students from Ambato city, Ecuador; 50 students in total from Ugandan vocational high school and secondary school students from Kikaaya city; and 52 Turkish students from a private high school in Istanbul, Turkey. The ages of participants differed from twelve to sixteen years in three of the countries.

The school in Ecuador, Ambato is a girls' high school which gives mainly religious education from secondary level to high school level. It is located in the city center of Ambato, and it gives education since 1881 (La Inmaculada, n.d.).

The school from Uganda is a vocational school located in Busiro county, Buganda region, Uganda in East Africa, located 7 miles Kampala-Mityana road, Kikaaya village-Bulenga area, and it is a school set up to cater for the educational needs of children from low income earner's families and orphans (Kikaaya college school, n.d.). English language education is given at ordinary level which means it is a compulsory lesson to take for students.

The school from Turkey is a private high school complex which gives education in Turkish language, and three different types of high schools are located in one building. The complex includes high school types such as science high school, which gives education mainly on maths and scientific subjects, Anatolian high school which aims at giving high level of English education to get students ready for the tertiary level education and finally vocational high school which gives education to get students ready for the requirements in the industrial level ((Lise) türleri - Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, [MEB], n.d.) The participants of this study were a B1+ class from the science high school and an A1 class from the Anatolian high school.

In Turkey, the Common European Framework for languages (CEFR) which was developed by the European Union is taken as basis while designing the English

language curriculum. The CEFR “was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency (Council of Europe [COE], n.d.)”. The English proficiency level of Turkish students who wrote the first letters to Ugandan students was A1 to A2 according to Common European Framework (CEFR), while the proficiency level of Turkish students who wrote the responses to Ecuadorian students was B1+ to B2 according to CEFR. The proficiency levels of learners were identified according to the placement test students have taken in their schools at the beginning of the academic term in September 2017.

The researcher of this study is the English language teacher of Turkish students participated in this study, and both Turkish students groups had 2 hours of deductive course per group about writing an informal letter as a part of their curriculum in September of the 2017-2018 educational year.

3.3. Procedures

3.3.1. Data Collection Instruments. The data to answer the research questions was collected with two instruments which are letters sent from Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students and interviews conducted with 5 Turkish students who participated in the letter exchange.

3.3.1.1. Letters. For this study, 34 introductory letters from Ecuador to Turkey, and 30 introductory response letters from Turkey to Ecuador as well as 36 introductory letters from Turkey to Uganda and 50 introductory response letters from Uganda to Turkey were the instruments of data collection. In total, 150 letters were regarded as the data collection instruments analyzed for this thesis. Since the number of letters sent from Ecuador (32) was more than the number of students to respond these letters (16), Turkish students were assigned to reply two letters for each student. The Ugandan students (50) outnumbered the Turkish students (36), so 14 Ugandan students responded the same letters sent from Turkish students.

3.3.1.2. Interviews. For the second part of the data collection, 5 Turkish students were interviewed about their understandings of sentences from the letters they wrote and the responses they got to their letters, as well as their perceptions about the letter exchange and methods to overcome cultural differences they come across in a letter. The Turkish students who took place in interviewing process were two female and three male students who were chosen randomly among the students who wrote the first letters to Uganda (3) and replied the first letters from Ecuador (2).

3.3.2. Data Collection Procedures. After working on the writing informal letters subject of the English main course lesson with the two classes of Turkish English language learners, the researcher found collaborations via an online teacher collaboration website, and established contacts with a Ugandan vocational subject's teacher from Kikaaya and an Ecuadorian teacher of English from Ambato to start a collaboration project for their students to practice English language as lingua franca.

As the initial step, students were asked to write introductory letters to their pen pals whom they have never met before. The first letters to Uganda were written by 36 Turkish A1+ students group, and they were written in the form of pen and paper letters of introducing themselves in December 2017. Those letters were scanned and delivered via email to the Ugandan teacher. The response introductory letters from 50 Ugandan students to Turkish students were received via email in December 2017. Responses from Ugandan students were also in the form of scanned texts of handwritten letters.

The first introductory letters which were sent by 33 Ecuadorian students to Turkish students were received via email in January 2018. Then, 17 B1+ level Turkish students were assigned to reply to those introductory letters in February 2018. Each student replied to two letters sent from Ecuador. In order to make distribution of the letters to students easier, Ecuadorian teacher sent the letters in one .pdf file as letters. The response letters from Turkey to Ecuador were sent as scanned texts of handwritten letters to Ecuador via email three weeks later.

When the collection of the papers were complete, teachers of the students groups from Ecuador and Uganda were given a letter of consent to be informed about the use of letters for this particular MA study and to obtain their permission.

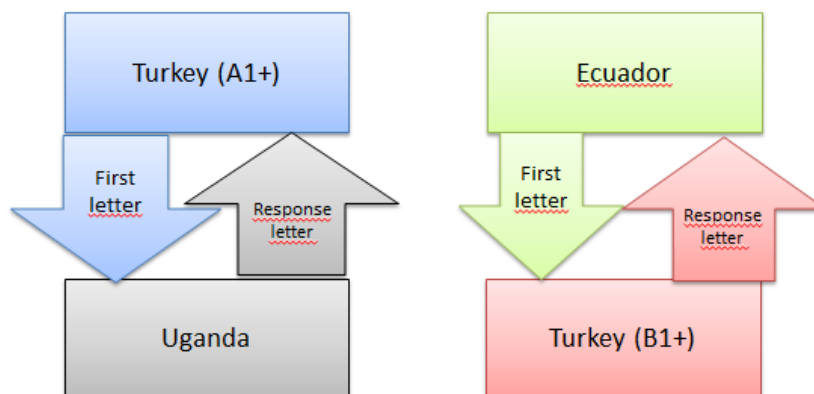


Figure 2. Scheme of Letter Exchange Traffic.

The interview procedure took place after the analysis of each letter in terms of the frequencies of common and culture specific topics which were given place and the pragmatic analysis of greeting and leave-taking structures. After the analyses of the letters, 5 random Turkish students who wrote either to Ugandan students or to Ecuadorian students were interviewed by the researcher. Each student was interviewed individually approximately for 20 minutes. Interviewees were asked 13 questions (see: Appendix B) related to their letter exchange experience and their perceptions of overcoming problems while communicating via written interaction.

3.3.3. Data Analysis Procedures

3.3.3.1. Letters. After all the letters were received, they were collected, and categorized into four groups as (1) the first letters from Turkey to Uganda, (2) replies from Uganda to Turkey, (3) first letters from Ecuador to Turkey, and (4) replies from Turkey to Ecuador. Then, each letter was analyzed in order to view the content given place in each letter. Types of greeting and leave-taking, themes and topics given place were marked in number to see the frequency of uses according to the categories they belong to. Since the current literature does not include any examples of written

interaction analysis in terms of the content and the greeting and leave-taking speech acts which take place between non-native speakers of English, some of the categorizations were named after the categories emerged from other studies which focus on the greetings and closings as “openings” and “closings” such as terminal closings for “*see you*” in Silvia (2013) and Honorifics by Gillani (2014). Some statements which are grammatically incorrect, but carry a message which is regarded to be intelligible were highlighted to use in interviews.

3.3.3.2. Interviews. During the interview process, each student participating in interview data collection procedure were asked to share what can be understood from the sentences given to them in an open ended interview, the questions of which was borrowed and adapted from Kuchuk (2012). Five students participating were voice recorded under their consent during their interviews and the voice records were tapescripted. The analyses of interviews were made after the transcription of the voice records, and the common answers from students were categorized depending on their focus, and their mutuality.

3.3.4. Trustworthiness. As Sinkovics, Penz and Ghauri (2008) states, “a qualitative researcher’s tool chest should be geared towards trustworthiness and encompass issues such as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008)”. “Trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014)”. In this particular study, all requirements are available and presented to ensure trustworthiness.

Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008; cited in Anney, 2014). During the data collection procedure, the participants were told to write their introductory letters with no worries of being graded for the course. They were confident and real while communicating via letters. The credibility of this study is provided thanks to the methodology triangulation with the use of the interviews and the letter content analyses done in different times of at least two months.

The nature of transferability, the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings, is different from other aspects of research in that readers actually determine how applicable the findings are to their situations (Polit & Beck, 2014) (Connelly, 2016). In this study, the findings of the data are transferrable in terms of its applicability to other cultures which give English not more role than a foreign language or a lingua franca. In a century when English is used for communication mostly between non-native speakers of English, the data collected from a context in which both sides are non-native helps to understand what is regarded to be important in an introductory letter. The findings can also be interpreted in terms of other types of written communication such as informal emails sent in NNSs-NNSs contexts.

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study (Polit & Beck, 2012, cited in Connelly, 2016). This study includes letters sent from three different countries with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and the letter receiving country held two different roles as the deliverer and the receiver. The fact that two other non-native ELF users of English who participated in the study strengthen the dependability of the findings to other studies conducted in this context.

3.4. Limitations and Delimitations

The data was collected via letters of secondary school and high school students with various levels of English. The only information about language proficiency provided about the participants belonged to the Turkish students; and the proficiency level of students from Uganda and Ecuador are unknown. Also the interviews were made only with Turkish students, and because of the resource unavailability of interviews with Uganda and Ecuador, the findings may lack of the intelligibility of statements in letters from Ugandan and Ecuadorian perspectives.

Despite the limitations, this study has also delimitations such as representing authentic examples of greeting speech acts and leave-taking features in intercultural context with the data from three countries. Besides, it provides content analysis of non-native /non-native interaction examples derived from real life communication tools and perceptions of ELF users in terms of overcoming communication breakdowns which may occur in the use of English for intercultural communication.

Chapter 4

Findings

In this chapter, the findings revealed after the corpus analysis of 150 letters from Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students as well as the interview data from 5 Turkish students are presented. The findings are presented in accordance with the order of the following research questions;

1. What are the similarities and differences in the content of introductory letters of Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students?
2. Which types of greetings and closures do Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students use in their letters?
3. To what extent the cultural backgrounds of writers affect the understanding of the letters by the Turkish readers of the letters and how can the Turkish readers overcome the cultural differences that they come across in the letters?

4.1. Research Question 1. Similarities in the Content of Introductory Letters

The first letters were sent from one group of 36 Turkish A1+ students to Ugandan students and from Ecuadorian group of 33 to B1+ group of Turkish students. The answers were written to Ecuadorian students from 34 Turkish students, and from Ugandan students to 50 Turkish students. After the content analysis of all introductory letters, the mutual points were categorized as presented in Table 2.

The table illustrates the number of common points both in the first and the second letters. As it can be seen from the table, almost all letters started with the statement of greetings, then they shared the information about their name and age. In 10% of the letters in total (16/150), students started their letters with conversation starters as follows;

Extract 1.

“Hello, how are you? I hope very well.” (Ecuadorian student’s conversation starter)

Table 2.

The Frequencies of Mutual Topics Given Place in Students’ Letters

Topics	First letters		Response letters	
	From Ecuador to Turkey (33)	From Turkey to Uganda (36)	From Turkey To Ecuador (34)	From Uganda to Turkey (50)
Greetings	32	33	29	50
Name	32	35	27	50
Age	33	35	26	50
Family members	30	26	20	48
Physical appearance	31	17	19	12
Hobbies/interests	21	10	17	26
Current location	17	17	27	25
After school routine	16	4	2	3
School subjects	26	2	17	6
School details	17	14	14	39
Daily routine	7	33	3	38
Closure	30	30	26	40
Country	6	8	5	12
Traits	15	4	6	1
Date of birth	7	11	3	24
Favorite music	14	4	3	2
Favorite food	6	4	4	27
Nationality	1	5	1	26
Favorite sports	8	2	9	9
Job	14	9	1	10
Conversation starter	7	4	1	4

Extract 2.

“How are you? I hope you have a good day.” (Turkish student’s conversation starter)

Extract 3.

“Hey [...]! How are you? I’m fine too.” (Conversation starter from Turkish student’s second letter to an exact reader)

Extract 4.

“Hello, How are you [...], I hope you are fine.” (Conversation starter from Turkish student’s second letter to an exact reader)

As it can be seen from the extracts, all conversation starters given place in the letters include asking the reader their wellness, and continue with the expressing of hope about the readers’ wellness. However, these conversation starters are not common and only seen in 10% of the letters (16/150) in total.

The third most common topic given place in the letters is the ones about the family members of the students. They shared the number of family members, their parents’ names, ages and their siblings’ names and ages in their letters. In some letters the number of siblings they have, their ages, their jobs and the relationship between their siblings was also shared with the readers. In Ecuadorian students’ letters, the number of family members and their siblings’ names were shared mainly, while in the Turkish letters, most students shared only the number of siblings they have and their names. In Ugandan students’ letters, however, not only the names of the siblings, but also their parents’ names and their parents’ jobs were given place. Also in some of the Ugandan students’ letters, their position in the family birth order and the consequences of this order were shared as it can be seen on the Extract 5.

Extract 5.

“I have one brother and two sisters. My brother’s name is [...]. And my sisters names are [...] but I am the last born. [...] they love me so much because I like studies and I am the last born.”

In both the first and the second letters, other common topics shared with the reader were the physical appearance. They mostly shared the length and the color of their hair, their height as centimeters or by stating “tall”, “average”, “short”, their weight as kilograms, the color of their eyes and whether they have contact lenses or brackets. 3 students shared the information about their skin color. Even though mutual, personal traits were not as common as the physical appearances. It was given place 15 times in Ecuadorian students’ letters, while it was given place 4 times in the

first letters of Turkish students and 6 times in the other group of Turkish students. Personal traits were given place only in 1 letter of Ugandan students' letters.

After physical appearance, another common topic was the interests or hobbies all students have. This section included quite various answers depending on the culture they belong to. While in the letters from Ecuador and Turkey the common types of hobbies were the about sports, music and cartoon genre and TV shows, the Ugandan students interests were mainly dancing and singing.

When it comes to "favorites", some topics were more frequent than the others. Topics such as favorite music genre, favorite food and favorite sports were common in all 4 groups of letters. Favorite music genre was quite common in Ecuadorian letters, while it was not that frequent in the other groups. The Ugandan group mentioned their favorite singers more frequently (see Table 5). Favorite food was also mutually given place in all letters, however, in Ugandan letters, it was the most common. In Turkish students' letters, both international fast food and food which can be found in anywhere of the World such as hamburger, potatoes and some foods are common, yet in Turkish students' letters, favorite local food from is given more place with their Turkish names such as "*Manti*", "*Dolma*". As the last mutual and frequent favorite, favorite sports were given place in all letters. In terms of frequency, they were almost equal to each other; however, in the first letters of Turkish students, it was mentioned only in two letters.

In all groups of students, the current location they live in was stated by using the structure "*I live in [...]*" and the hometown was located by the statement "*I'm from [...]*". Even though the statement of sharing nationality is mutual, the number of people who share their nationality is more than the other cultures in Ugandan letters. As another mutual category of topics, writing about school is mutual in all letters. Students from Ecuador gave more place to their after school routine and school subjects more than the other groups whereas writing about the school details is more common in Ugandan students' letters.

The mutual, yet less common topics mentioned in all letters are daily routines, statement of the job and sharing the date of birth. While daily routines are given place in Turkish students' first letters to Ugandan students and in the second

letters of Ugandan students to the same group of Turkish students; it was given place in 7 of Ecuadorian students' first letters and in 3 letters of the Turkish students' second letters to Ecuador. When it comes to the job statement, Ecuadorian students gave place to their jobs other than being a student as it can be seen in Extract 6. In Turkish students' and Ugandan students' letters, saying "I am a student" was marked as the job statement.

Extract 6.

"I am a student, I don't work"

"I don't have job because I am a student"

In all introductory letter groups, students gave place to their ages. In the first letters, 7 Ecuadorian students and 1 Turkish student gave the exact date of their birth while in the second letters, 3 Turkish students and 24 Ugandan students shared the full date of birth as day, month and the year of birth.

As the last item to be mentioned, closures were among the most frequent pragmatic features given place in all letters. While 90% (n=30) of Ecuadorian students' letters included closures, 83% (n=30) of Turkish students' first letters included closures. In the second letters from Turkey to Ecuador, 76 % (n=26) of letters and in the second letters from Uganda to Turkey, 80% (n=40) of letters included closures. The types of closures and rituals of departure were analyzed in detail in tables 7, 9, 10,11,12,13.

4.2. Research Question 1: Differences in the Content of Introductory Letters

4.2.1. Turkish Students' Letters. The first letters were written from A1+ Turkish students group to Ugandan students and from Ecuadorian students B1+ Turkish students group. The analyses of topics given place in Turkish students' first letters to Ugandan group are given as in Table 3.

Table 3

Topics Given Place Only in Turkish Students' First Letters

Topics	From Turkey to Uganda (36)
Favourite local food	13
Comment on Family members	2
Offer	1
Comment on food	1
Skin colour	1
Breakfast details	1
Asking father's name of the interlocutor	5

As it was mentioned above in previous chapter, the information about the favorite local food was the most common topic given place in Turkish students' first letters. Turkey is well-known by its cuisine internationally, and Turkish people are very proud of their cuisine, so they chose to mention these topics to introduce their culture and their cuisine when they talk to people from other countries.

The second most common topic given place specifically in Turkish students' first letters is asking the name of the reader's father with 13 % (5/36). This is another culture specific topic which can be seen in Turkish students' letters. In Turkey, in every government department and in social life, people are called after their father's names. In districts, even in small cities of Turkey, Turkish citizens are asked the question "*who is your father?*", or "*which family do you belong to?*" as a conversation starter or as a conversation developer while meeting someone new. As a cultural habit, Turkish students asked the names of their interlocutors' fathers. These statements were seen only in Turkish students' first letters.

With the percentage of 5.55 (2/36), commenting on family members is the third relatively frequent topic specific to Turkish first letters. The comments were "*I love my mom*" and "*my sister is very clever*". The other topics given place were offers of buying local food when the reader visits the writer's country, comment on food, breakfast details, skin color and the color of writer's pen. As seen in Table 3, even the least frequent topics are somehow about food, and this can also be regarded to the bond between the Turkish people and their cuisine.

After almost one month when the Ecuadorian students sent their letters, Turkish B1+ students replied to the Ecuadorian students' letters. The analyzed data results were categorized as in Table 4.

Table 4

Topics Given Place Only in Turkish Students' Response Letters

Topics	From Turkey to Ecuador (34)
Capital city	1
Favorite basketball player	3
Playing an instrument	1
Talking about the Islamic version of the interlocutor's name	1
Celebrating interlocutor's past birthday	2
Replying questions in the first letters	5
Feelings about having a pen pal	3
Summary of the letter	5
Horoscope	1
Brackets	1
Mutual interests	5
Comment on not having a pet	1
Language courses	1
Favorite YouTube channel	1
Questions about future intentions	3

As displayed on the table, there are various topics given place in the second letters written as answers to Ecuadorian students. The most frequent culture-specific topics are mutual interests shared with the interlocutor (extract 8), replying questions or giving feedbacks about topics in the first letters (extract 9) and a summary of the letters (extract 10) with 14% (5/34).

Extract 8;

"I really like all kinds of music too."

"I love pizza and chocolate too."

"Just like you, I like maths but I don't like biology☺"

Extract 9;

“I will listen to your advices for music.”

I’m fifteen years old and I’m good thanks for asking.”

“I’m happy to hear that you are playing basketball.”

Extract 10;

“That’s all about me.”

“Now you know what I like and my top qualities 😊”

“That’s it for now.”

As seen in extracts, even though students wrote the letters with pen and paper, they added some emoji like “😊” and “😞” by drawing them. These emoji are quite common in informal online texting, and they are frequently used to clarify or highlight the message the deliverer intend to deliver to the receiver, and students added them into their pen-paper writings to highlight the meaning they deliver to the reader.

The second most common topics given place in Turkish students’ second introductory letters are, with 8.82% (3/34) for each topic, about their favorite basketball player, their feelings about having a pen pal and questions about the reader’s future intentions as the education level and study in a university, or dream job. 5.88 % (2/34) of students celebrated the past birthday of the reader in their introductory letters.

For the other 8 topics given place in the second introductory letters that Turkish students sent as their replies to Ecuadorian students’ first letters, only one student for each topic gave place to that topics in their letters. One of the most interesting results seen on table 4 is “talking about the Islamic version of the interlocutor’s name” as seen in extract 11;

Extract 11;

“Your brother’s name is a Muslim name do you now it? 😊 It means in Turkish [...]”.

In another finding, comment on not having a pet was described as follows;

Extract 12;

“We haven’t got any pets because my mom takes care of cleanliness.”

Here the student shares the cause of not having a pet by stating her mom’s being careful about keeping their living space clean. To give the intended meaning, she used the literal translation of “paying extra attention” or being sensitive about cleanliness” as “take care” from Turkish.

As seen in Table 4, students give place to their cultural and religious backgrounds in their letters. Also in students’ letters, social media or online language use items like Emoji were give place to highlight the meaning they intend to give to the reader.

4.2.2. Ecuadorian Students’ Letters. The second group of first letters was written by Ecuadorian students to another group of Turkish students. The analyses of topics given place only in Ecuadorian students’ first letters are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Topics Given Place Only in Ecuadorian Students’ Letters

Topics	From Ecuador to Turkey (33)
Asking about interlocutor’s family members	2
Asking about free time activities	10
Favorite animals	1
Asking about interlocutor’s phobia	1
Questions about friends	1
Questions about sports	4
Friday routine	2
Neighborhood	1
Comment on a day	2
Clothing routine	3

As seen on Table 5, Ecuadorian students' the most common topics are questions. The most frequent one was asking questions to the reader about their free time activities. In 30% of the letters (10/33) Ecuadorian students asked the question "what do you do in your free time". The other most common topic was another question, which is about the reader's favorite sports. In 12% of the letters written by Ecuadorian students (4/33), students asked the question "*what is your favorite sport?*" This data can give us the clue about Ecuadorian students' lifestyle and priorities as being sports and their having free time in their days.

With 9% of frequency in students' letters (3/33) Ecuadorian students shared their clothing routines as in the extract 7.

Extract 7;

"I always like to wear jeans."

"I wearing my uniform in the mornings and in afternoon I wearing a shirt with jeans"

"I usually like wear blue jeans."

Since the main objective of this study was to focus on the topics given place in introductory letters and the corpus-based analysis of greetings and closures, the grammar rules were ignored, and thanks to the intelligibility of the letters, extracts taken directly from the letters were not corrected. As seen in the letters, Ecuadorian students use the adverbs of frequency to state their frequency of wearing some exact types of clothing such as jeans and school uniform.

With 6% of frequency (2/33), questions about interlocutor's family members, Ecuadorian students' Friday routine and their comments on a day of theirs are given place in Ecuadorian students' letters. Topics like favorite animals, career plans, social life, and facts about the writer were given place in the first introductory letters from Ecuadorian students. Questions about interlocutor's phobia, questions about friends were asked by only 6 per cent of students (2/33). The other 6% of students (2/33) wrote their addresses and introduced their neighborhood.

4.2.3. Ugandan Students' Letters. In this chapter, the analysis of Ugandan students' letters written as answers to Turkish group of students was given place. As seen in table 6, there are many culture specific topics written only in Ugandan students' letters. The analysis of results and the frequencies of mentioning the topics in letters per student were presented in table 5 in details.

As seen in table 6, 4 topics are quite common only in Ugandan students' letters. The most common topic which was given place in Ugandan students' letters was introducing their favorite singer. 16% of students (8/50) gave place to the information about their favorite singers. The following most frequent topic which can be seen in Ugandan students' letters was school subjects. Some examples from the topic school subjects are given in Extract 13.

Table 6.

Topics Given Place Only In Ugandan Students' Second Letters

Topics	From Uganda to Turkey (n=50)
Favorite singer	8
School subjects	6
Requesting	2
Favorite artist	2
Introducing home	1
Favorite dance	1
Living conditions	1
Address	1
Greeting family members	1
Comment on hobbies	1
Role models	1
Introducing teachers	1
Local clothing	1
Weight	1
Comment on losing weight	1

Extract 13;

“We have many teachers who teach us different subject and we learn how to sing, dance and netball.”

“My best subject is computer.”

“In our school we have co-curricular activities e.g. M.D.D., netball, football, etc. For me I like M.D.D. most so I liking so much to sing and dance.”

As seen in extracts, Ugandan students write about the school subjects that they like, and they give reasons for liking some subjects. And both from the extracts, and from the most common topics we can infer that in Ugandan culture, dancing and singing is very important and given a high place in their daily lives.

With 6% for each (2/50), favorite artist and the speech act of requesting are the third culture specific topics which can be seen only in Ugandan students' letters. They give place to requests as follows in Extract 14;

Extract 14;

“What I asking to you is to being my friend and I will feel great if you become my friend.”

“I request you to be my pen pal.”

As seen in both requests given place, the writers directly expressed their requests to be friends. These letters were written as the answers to the first letters from the Turkish group of students. It can be understood from the requests that students from Uganda express their intention to continue their letter exchange and they want to get to know each other with their pen pals.

Other less common but interesting topics given place only in Ugandan students' replies to Turkish students were living conditions, greeting family members of the reader, role models, weight and commenting on losing weight. The student who gave place to weight and losing weight was the same person, and after the salutation, stating name and age, the main theme of the letter written by that student was only focusing on weight problems and the student's weight. When it comes to greeting the reader students' family, it can be commented as being another culture specific topic which shows sincerity and friendship to the reader.

4.3. Research Question 2. Analyses of Greetings and Closings

When all the letters were analyzed in terms of the variety of greeting and closing types, it was seen that both in the first and in the second letters, greetings and closings were in quite different types. In this part, common greetings in the first letters, common closures in the first letters are displayed first. Then for the second letters, common greetings in the second letters were analyzed as one group. Since the types of closures from the second letters were quite various, they were analyzed in 6 different tables.

4.3.1. Greetings in the Letters. In Ecuadorian and Turkish students' first letters, 18 different types of greetings were categorized. While some of the greetings were the ones which are mostly used in spoken interaction, some of the greetings were culture-free and there were also common types of greetings for the two cultures.

Table 7.

Greetings in the First Letters

Greeting types	From Turkey to Uganda (36)	From Ecuador to Turkey (33)
Hi	5	12
Hello	12	5
Dear	-	9
Hello dear	4	-
Dear, Hello	-	2
Dear, hi	-	2
Hi dear	1	-
Hello my friend	2	1
Hi friend	1	1
Hello friend	5	-
Hi my dear friend	-	2
Hey	-	1
Hello there	-	1
Hi everybody	-	1
Name	-	2
Hi guys bro	1	-
Hello how are you, hope very well	2	-
Dear how are you? I'm fine	1	-

When the greeting types from each culture are compared, starting the letters with “*hi*”, “*hello*”, “*Hello my friend*” and “*Hi Friend*” were seen as the common types of greetings given place in both countries’ first letters. In the first letters of Turkish students only, using both greeting structures at the same time such as “*Hello dear*” and “*Hi dear*”, and addressing the reader as friend while greeting such as “*Hello friend*”, using conversation starters such as “*Hello, how are you, hope very well*” and sincere addressing and conversation starter such as “*dear how are you? I’m fine*” were given place. In one of the letters, greeting was done by using heavily informal spoken language greeting “*Hi Guys Bro*”. In this greeting, both “*guys*” which is used to address a group of people and “*bro*” which is used to address a male in highly informal spoken language are used at the same time with “*Hi*”.

When it comes to the greetings only seen in the first letters of Ecuadorian students, what attracts attention is the use of “*dear*” with 45% (n= 15) of greetings at the beginning of the letters among the other types. The most common is the use of “*Dear*” only. Also Ecuadorian students used both greetings at the same time such as “*Dear, Hello*”, “*Dear, Hi*”, “*Hi my dear friend*”. Also in Ecuadorian students’ letters, spoken greetings like “*Hey*”, greeting type of “*Hi everybody*” which is used to salute many people at the same time, and finally greeting the reader only by calling the readers by their names were given place.

In this part, the second letters written by Turkish students to Ecuadorian students and from Ugandan students to Turkish students as replies to the first letters were analyzed in terms of the greeting types included. The analyses of greetings were done to 34 second letters from Turkish students to Ecuadorian students and to 50 second letters from Ugandan students to Turkish students.

As seen on table 8, there are four types of greetings common in the second letters of both countries while two greeting types which were seen in Turkish students’ letters only and eight different greeting types were identified in Ugandan students’ second letters.

Table 8.

Greetings in the Responsive Letters.

Greeting types	From Turkey to Ecuador (34)	From Uganda to Turley (50)
Dear (name)	9	1
Hello (name)	4	24
Hi (name)	7	5
Hi	5	3
Hi dear (name)	2	-
To (name)	2	-
Hello	-	6
Hello my friend (name)	-	1
Hello dear	-	2
Hello my friend	-	3
Hey friend (name)	-	1
Hello dear (name)	-	1
Hello my beloved (name)	-	1
Hey	-	2

When the common greetings are seen, it can be said that 3 out of 4 common greetings included addressing the reader with a sincere greeting such as “*Dear [...]*”, “*Hello [...]*” and “*Hi [...]*”. While Turkish students used greeting with addressing “*Dear [...]*” with 26% (9/34) and “*Hi [...]*” with 20% (7/34), Ugandan students used greetings with addressing “*Dear [...]*” with 2% (n=1) and “*Hi [...]*” with 10% (n=5). Even though it was mutually used, 48% of letters from Ugandan students (n=24) used “*Hello [...]*” while it was used only in 11% of Turkish letters (n=4).

When the greeting types from Turkish students’ second letters only were analyzed, two closures, both of which greetings with addressing of the readers name were seen. Both greetings were given place in 5.88% (2/34) of the second Turkish letters (34). While one of them included double greetings such as “*Hi dear [...]*”, the other one included addressing the reader with the preposition of “*to*” such as “*to [...]*”.

In Ugandan students’ second letters, greetings were various. There were 8 different types of greetings used only in Ugandan students’ second letters. The most frequent one was “*Hello*” with 12% (6/50) of all Ugandan students’ letters. Following “*Hello*”, using greeting and addressing with a role together such as “*Hello*

my friend” was used at the beginning of the letters with 6% (3/50). The use of double greetings such as “*Hello dear*” with 4% (2/50) and double greetings with the addressing of the readers’ name as “*Hello Dear [...]*” and “*Hello my beloved [...]*” with 2% (n=1) for each were also seen in Ugandan students’ letters as well. “*Hey Friend [...]*” and “*Hello my Friend [...]*” were greetings including both addressing the reader as friend and the readers’ names with 2% for each use (1/50).

4.3.2. Closings in the Letters. When the closings in the first letters were analyzed, it was seen that in 83% of the Turkish students’ first letters (36) and in 90% of the Ecuadorian students’ first letters (33) closings were given place in various types.

Table 9.

Closings in the First Letters

Closure Types	From Turkey to Uganda (36)	From Ecuador to Turkey (33)
See you later	5	9
Name only	3	4
Good bye	1	1
See you	14	-
See you soon	-	1
See you bye	2	-
See you later, then	1	-
See you later, with love	-	1
See you friends	1	-
Bye, see you later	-	1
Please write me	4	-
I hope you write letter	1	-
With hugs	-	2
Best wishes	-	1
Your friend (name)	-	2
I send you many kisses and hugs	-	3
With love	-	3
Love	-	1
Xxoox	-	1
With love you friend, see you later	-	1
Bye my friend	-	1
With hugs, see you later	-	1
Bye, have a nice day	-	1

As seen in Table 9 above, three types of closings, namely continuation by Omar (1993) such as “*see you later*”, making arrangements by Coppock (2005) such as “*good bye*” and closing by naming the writer of the letter by Coppock (2005) were the most common types of closings seen mutually in the first letters from Turkish and Ecuadorian students. While Ecuadorian students preferred using “*see you later*”, which is a type of closing used in spoken and face-to-face interaction mainly, Turkish students gave place to “*see you*” which is the shorter form of terminal closing “*see you later*”.

When the closings only seen in Turkish students’ letters were analyzed, it was seen that closings with various forms of see you were given place in 50% of Turkish students’ letters (18/36). While 38% of the letters gave place only to “*see you*”, 2.7% of the letters (2/36) included double closure use such as “*see you, bye*”. The other two students who used “*see you*” forms preferred “*see you later, then*” and “*see you friends*” as closures of letters. “*See you friends*” is actually used while addressing more than one people in an informal speech; however, in one of the Turkish students’ letters, it was given place in a letter which is a written form of interaction.

The other two types of closings given place only in Turkish students’ letters were “*please write me*” or “*I hope you write letter*”. These closures show the writer’s intention of maintaining the communication between them with the reader and it is quite common in Turkish letter writing and Turkish communication to end the conversation with intentions of maintaining communication. This strategy is also called continuation by Omar (1993). Besides, 11 % of Turkish students’ letters (4/36) included “*please write me*” as their closings, whereas only 2.7% of letters (1/36) included “*I hope you write letter*” to end their letters.

When the closings seen only in Ecuadorian students’ letters were analyzed, they were seen to be more various than the Turkish closings. Ecuadorian students gave place to closings with making arrangements as stated by Coppock (2005) which are “*see you*”, such as “*see you soon*” with 3% (1/33) as well, but they also used extra types of closings by making arrangements such as “*see you later, with love*”, “*bye, see you later*”, “*with love you friend, see you later*”, and “*with hugs, see you later*” with 3% for each (1/33).

Using double closures were not limited to the use of extras with “*see you*”, they also used another type of informal closing type which is “*bye*” in double closure uses such as “*bye, have a nice day*” and embedding addressing to leave-taking such as “*bye my friend*” with 3% for each (1/33).

Closings only from the first letters of Ecuadorian students had another interesting feature such as including a high level of intimacy. Even though these letters were sent as the very first letters to an unknown group of readers, Ecuadorian students’ closures included “*love*”, “*kisses*” “*hugs*” quite common. Among the sincere closures, closures such as “*I send you many kisses and hugs*” and “*with love*” were common with 9% (3/33) for each. Following them, “*with hugs*” was a frequent form of leave-taking given place in 6% of the letters (2/33). Other intimate leave-takings were “*love*” and “*best wishes*” which were used 3% (1/33) in Ecuadorian students’ letters. Other than sincere closures, closing the letter with their names by addressing themselves as “*your friend [...]*” were used with 6% (2/33).

Among the closings from Ecuadorian students’ letters only, using internet abbreviation language, which is called “Emoticon” was given place in one letter as “*xxoox*” which is interpreted as “*kisses*” to the reader. This language is used while texting via mobile phones and in social media; however, an Ecuadorian student gave place to this Emoticon as a closing in the first letter.

Closings from Turkish and Ugandan students’ second letters were quite various, and due to this variety, closings were categorized as tables according to the contents they include such as closings of continuation, closings of gratitude, closings of benediction, closings with farewell, sincere closures and title closures.

Table 10 shows the closings which include the closing statement “*see you*”. These statements are named as continuation by Omar (1993). As seen on the table, there is not a common use of “*see you*” in two groups of students’ letters, and the most common uses are different for Turkish and Ugandan students’ letters. While the most frequent closings with “*see you*” in Turkish students’ letters were “*see you soon*” and “*see you later*” with 11% (4/36), Ugandan students preferred “*see you*” only as their closings with 16% (8/50).

Table 10.

Continuation Closings the Second Letters.

Closures with “see you”	From Turkey to Ecuador (36)	From Uganda to Turkey (50)
See you soon	4	-
See you later	4	-
See ya!	2	-
See you, stay happy	1	-
Bye see you later mate	1	-
See you (name)	-	3
See you	-	8
See you later, good bye	-	1
See you my dear	-	1

When the other closings with “*see you*” by Turkish students included wishes like “*stay happy*”, they also included the use of three different ways of closures together such as “bye see you later mate”. Addressing the reader as “*mate*” is another way of addressing the interlocutor in informal spoken interaction. In Turkish students’ letters, closures which can be used in spoken interactions are given place in the second letters quite common as well. Closing with “*see ya!*” in 5% of the letters from Turkish students’ letters (2/36) proves this statement. Ugandan students, on the other hand, used double closures such as “see you later, good bye” and closure with sincere addressing such as “*see you my dear*” 2% for each (1/50).

Table 11.

Appreciation Closings.

Closings	From Turkey to Ecuador (36)	From Uganda To Turkey (50)
Thank you	-	3
Thank you for reading my hobby	-	1
Thank you for cooperation	-	1
Thank you for reaching my words	-	1
Thank you very much	-	1
I will be happy when you receive my letter, thank you	-	1
Thank you, bye	-	1

Table 11 shows the number of closings including expressing gratitude in Turkish and Ugandan students' second letters. As it can be seen on the table, none of the Turkish second letters included closings with expressing appreciation while in 18% of all Ugandan letters (9/50) students used appreciation while closing their letters.

Table 12.

Closings with Benediction and Wishes

Closings	From Turkey to Ecuador (36)	From Uganda to Turkey (50)
Take care	1	-
Have a wonderful day, best wishes	1	-
Best wishes my pen pal	1	-
Hope you're doing very well	1	-
Have nice days	-	1
Have a good day	-	1
I wish you the best, may god bless you, yours faithfully	-	1
May God bless you	-	1
Wish you the best	-	1
Nice time to you	-	1

As seen in table 12, both groups of students used closings with benediction and by expressing their best wishes to the reader. However; the statements were various depending on the culture. For example, Turkish students used benedictions such as “*take care*”, “*have a wonderful day, best wishes*”, “*best wishes my pen pal*” and the conversation starter “*hope you're doing very well*” with 2.7% for each statement (1/36).

In Ugandan students' letters, 6 different statements including benediction and wishes were given place. All of them were used by 2% of students for each statement (1/50). In one of the closings including benediction, the Ugandan student used both benediction and wishing and a formal way of closing the letter such as “*I wish you the best, may god bless you, yours faithfully.*”

Table 13.

Closings with Leave takings

Closings	From Turkey to Ecuador (36)	From Uganda to Turkey (50)
Good bye, stay happy	1	-
Good bye dear	1	-
Good bye	-	4
Bye for now	1	-
Bye	-	1
Bye bye	-	3

In Table 13, leave-taking closures are displayed. In this table, it is seen that there is not any mutual closing statement between Turkish and Ugandan students' second letters. In Turkish students' letters, 8% of letters (3/36) included closings with a farewell, one of which is the use of benediction, the other one is closing with a sincere addressing, and the final one is "bye for now".

In Ugandan students' second letters; however, 16% of the letters (8/50) included closings leave-takings. The most frequent leave-taking expression was the use of "good bye" (4/50) and writing a spoken interaction closing, which is "bye bye" was the second most frequent closing expression given place in Ugandan students' letters with 6% (3/50) . Finally 2% of Ugandan students' letters (1/50) included just writing "bye" as if it was a spoken interaction.

Table 14.

Sincere Closings

Closures	From Turkey to Ecuador (36)	From Uganda to Turkey (50)
I love you	1	2
Lots of love	1	-
With love	3	-
With lots of kiss and hugs	2	-

Table 14 illustrates closures including intimate words for a relatively new conversation. When the closures made with sincerity words such as “love”, “kiss”, and “hugs” were concerned, just like it was in Ecuadorian students’ first letters, in the second letters as well, intimate closures were given place. The mutual sincere closure in Turkish and Ugandan students’ letters was “I love you” with 2.7% in Turkish students’ letters (1/36) and with 4% in Ugandan students’ letters (2/50).

Other than “I love you”, there is not any other intimate closing given place in Ugandan students’ letters. In Turkish students’ letters, however, there are three more expressions including sincere words. The most common type is, with 8%, “with love” (3/36). Following “with love”, 5% of Turkish letters (3/36) included “with lots of kiss and hugs”. The least frequent sincere closing was “lots of love” with 2.7% (1/36).

Table 15.

Closings with Title.

Closings	Turkey (36)	Uganda (50)
Name only	3	6
From your best friend	-	1
Yours faithfully	-	1
Signature	-	1

Table 15 shows the closing types made only by stating the title the writer addresses to him or herself. This table also reveals mutual closings in Ugandan and Turkish students’ second letters. Both Turkish and Ugandan students chose to end their letters by stating their names only. While it is the most frequent closure with title in Ugandan students’ letters, it is the only closing type given place in Turkish students’ letters. The other three statements such as ending by addressing the writer as the reader’s best friend, ending with a formal ending and ending with a signature were seen in Ugandan students’ letters and each of them were given place 2% (n=1) in three different letters.

4.4. Analyses of the Interviews

The aim of analyzing these interviews was to answer the following research question;

1. To what extent the cultural backgrounds of writers affect the understanding of the letters by the Turkish readers of the letters and how can the Turkish readers overcome the cultural differences that they come across in the letters?

The interview analyses were done after voice recording 5 Turkish students who participated in the letter exchange process. 3 of the interviewed students were from the group of students who wrote the first introductory letters to Ugandan students. 2 of the interviewed students were from the group which wrote the responsive letters to Ecuadorian students' first letters. 3 male and 2 female students participated in the interview process.

4.4.1. Interviews with the First letter writing group. Students in this group were asked 10 main questions about the topics they mentioned in their first letters, whether they could transfer the meaning and expressed themselves clearly, whether they have given place to any cultural items or whether they have observed any cultural topic from the interlocutor's culture and finally if they thought they could make themselves clear and how they could understand that. Other than these questions, random questions about whether they found this exchange program useful or whether they would communicate this way in a spoken interaction were answered.

In the first extract, a female student who wrote an introductory letter to a Ugandan student answered the questions as follows;

“While introducing myself, I focused on introducing my family, my routine, my family which means that I started quite general. I asked him questions about himself. While introducing yourself you start general, I mean, not like “I like volleyball” or “I go to this or that school” but like giving more demographic information. It gives more confidence I guess. I asked four questions like his name, age, his routine and his nationality. I asked these questions to know him generally.”

As seen in the first paragraph from the script, she perceives talking about her demographic information safer rather than talking about her interests and hobbies, her school information in the very first letter. Also she gives priority to questions like asking about the nationality, name and age which are all demographic questions. It can be inferred from her letter that she prefers safe communication while starting a new contact or as we can say “friendship” and these items were called as the ways of knowing about the interlocutor generally.

In contrast to the answers the first participant gave to the first question of the interview, another female Turkish interviewee replied as follows;

“I mentioned myself, my family, my routine, things that I like and I mentioned that I wanted to get to know him. I asked him where he was from and how old he was. I talked about my Daily routine; I wanted him to know about whom I was and what I liked. I asked these questions because I would like to know about a person that I will get into contact for the first time that where is the person from and I would like to know how old my interlocutor would be.”

As seen in the extract from the second participants’ interview, topics which are thought to be important to mention in an introductory letter are various. While the first participant stated that it would be unnecessary to mention her daily routine, in the second participant’s interview, writing about daily routine was seen as an important part of introducing oneself.

When the first participant was asked whether she thinks she could make her point clear, she gave the answers as follows;

“I expressed myself quite well. It sounds awkward to talk about my Daily routine in the first meeting, but I think I expressed myself well. He answered my questions and I got the answers I was looking for, but my questions were general anyways so it was a general reply. These questions are enough for the first letters but I think deeper questions can be asked as we get to know each other. I couldn’t feel any specific cultural structure. In my letter my waking up hour, my routine, my school shuttle and my breakfast may be culture specific, but I don’t see anything cultural. I think I started the letter properly and ended it properly. I used the emoticon to increase sincerity. It is interesting to see that my friend felt close to me and shared with me

that he did not have his dad. I think he gave place to it because I talked about my family.”

In the second paragraph the student analyzed the letter she received in terms of the answers and the topics given place to her as an answer. According to these comments, even though she is satisfied about the letter she received, she looked for extra information and kind of disappointed for not seeing anything extra than the answers to her questions. When it comes to culture, she perceived talking about her daily routine and writing about her timetable as well as the facilities to get to the school as a part of culture. Even though she couldn't give any examples to “deeper questions”, she kept stating that going from general to specific is a safer way of communication.

In the second participant's interview, she expressed her thoughts about her expressions as follows;

“I think I talked about everything very well but I would talk about more things if we could talk face-to-face. The things you can give place in a letter are limited, but if we had the chance to meet face-to-face I would talk about more things, different things. Writing letter limited me but in the next letters I could be able to ask more things. I think the things that I mention in the first letter are sufficient, in the forthcoming letters I can ask more sincere and detailed questions. Like his religion, whether he is a Christian or Muslim. I would ask his parents' jobs. People are curious, I would be curious whether he is a Muslim or not.”

As seen in the tables above, Turkish students gave place to religious topics such as clothing, rituals, names and as an introductory part, they stated their religion as well. In this students' interview, too, the student shares her curiosity about the religion of her interlocutor.

Finally students' comments on written ELF communication are stated by her as follows;

“Exchanging letters was an activity that I wanted. English is not a subject that I like and I couldn't speak it. Now I feel the necessity to understand what he writes and to reply him which is good.”

As the participant 1 states, even though English was not her favorite, using it in a real conversation environment made her feel the necessity to learn and use it and gave her the satisfaction of being understood by an interlocutor from another culture.

In the third participant's interview, he perceived giving place to culture specific topics in an introductory letter as well as the style of contact as follows;

“Writing about Trabzon is something that completes my culture because I’m curious; my mom cooks food from there. I don’t think that my pen pal will understand what I’m talking about when I say “kuymak”, “mihlama” but I would give place to it again since it is something that tells about me.”

Here the participant states the importance of writing about one's culture while meeting someone for the first time. He describes his hometown and local food as an important part of his daily life and he states that no matter whether the writer understands it or not he would state it again if he had to write the letter once again.

4.4.2. Interviews with the Responsive Letter Writing Group

In this chapter, two students who were in the group of Turkish students replying to Ecuadorian students' letters were interviewed. Both students were chosen randomly and they were asked to answer 10 interview questions related to their letters and the letters they received.

As it was in the first letters, second letter writing Turkish students were also asked which topics they gave place and why. The first participant discussed his answer as follows;

“I wrote about my hobbies, I told her about my school, TV series that I watch, YouTube channels that I follow and what kind of videos they record. I talked about my family and my physical and psychological features. I did this because I read what my friend wrote me and I answered her questions just the way she did.”

In his answer, we see that the writers' first aim was to answer the questions first, and answering all the questions as well as writing extra information was regarded as success to maintain the conversation. As seen in the topics, the

interviewed student gave place to topics about all kinds of media. This might be because of the interests and trends teenagers follow recently. Also in the second participant's replies, he commented on his letter as follows;

"I believe my letter was satisfactory for I answered all the questions she asked me. I wrote about my age, the place I live in, my height, my hobbies, my favorite Tv shows, songs and my favorite food. I even gave extra information about my personality, and my favorite local food."

In his comment, too, he related the satisfaction of his letter to answering all the questions asked by the interlocutor. He stated giving extra information which was not asked in the first letters as a part of his satisfaction criteria. When the second participant was asked whether he found his interlocutor's letter clear, and the reason behind his opinion, he gave the answer as in the statement below;

"I think her letter is quite clear; her sentences are clear, topic-focused. I also wrote exact sentences and expressed everything quite clear."

As seen in his sentence, he reached the conclusion of his pen pal's letter's clarity by referring to her sentences as being topic-focused and directly leading to a point instead of going indirect. The first participant student explained his pen pal's letter as follows;

"I answered all the questions she asked me and yes, her letter is clear. I believe I answered her letter sufficient since my English is sufficient. There is not any cultural difference between their and our cultures in terms of the Daily routines. They are just like us."

Here the first participant also referred to the first letter he received as clear but he didn't explain why. Instead, he focused on the proficiency levels they have as interlocutors communicating via English. Also he referred to the culture given place in terms of the role of culture in their daily lives. He compared his routine with what his pen pal stated as hers, and the Turkish student made a conclusion about culture by referring to the mutual daily routines.

In the second participant students' interview, culture was viewed from another perspective such as media and the show world as well as the comparison of cuisine which two countries have.

“There are cultural differences. Her favourite foods are pizza and ice-cream but my favourite foods are “İskender” and everything with meat. TV shows that she watches are science fiction while we love programs about history.”

By “İskender”, he refers to a very famous Turkish dish including meat, yoghurt and traditional bread, and he compares his appetite with his interlocutor's which is more international like it includes pizza and ice-cream. Other than foods, the second participant described another cultural aspect such as a Turkish TV series. She was asked why he mentioned the TV show and the Turkish food by their names and whether he thought they would be misunderstood or not understood at all. His answers are seen below;

“Since it was a television program I wrote it in Turkish. I didn't feel the necessity to translate it for it is famous all around the World. As cultural items I mentioned “Diriliş” and “İskender” and I think she understood what I meant, I mean, Why not?”

The second participant didn't feel the necessity to change anything in order to make understanding possible by claiming that his pen pal could learn about them easily with no misunderstanding. This can also be regarded as another feature of using internet where all kinds of information are accessible in seconds. In the first participant student's interview, he used another method to prevent misunderstandings that may occur while introducing another Turkish food;

“Even though I mentioned a Turkish food, I explained as “Turkish ravioli” to overcome the cultural differences. Probably she didn't understand the series because I said it's a Turkish Tv series.”

In his statement, he also mentioned a Turkish TV series, and he foresaw that the interlocutor may not be able to understand what it is. However; the writer states the reason as its being released on Turkish TV channels, not because the name was written in Turkish and not saying that it may not be understood or misunderstood.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

In this last chapter of the study, the findings and the analyses revealed after the release of the letter analysis and interview analysis results are discussed. In terms of the correspondence with the current literature, theoretical framework and the extent to which results reveal the answers which are sought in the research questions.

5.1. What Are the Similarities and Differences in the Content of Introductory Letters of Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian Students?

In The first research question, it was aimed to see whether topics covered in an informal introductory letter which is written to a pen pal from another country where English is not spoken as a native language were similar, to what extent there was a similarity and what differences were seen in different countries' students' introductory letters. To fulfil this aim, four groups of letters were analyzed in terms of the topics they cover, and it was revealed that while there were many similarities in terms of the topics they mention, greetings and the closures, the differences some of which are culture specific while some of which is different because of personal reasons were also common in all four categories.

When the results were analyzed, all four groups of students gave place to their name, age, family members, physical appearance, their hobbies, their current location quite frequently, while school details, daily routines favorite music genre, date of birth kind of topics were also mutual but less frequent. It can be inferred from the results that the main demographic information about oneself, as well as the way one perceives himself or herself is important while writing an introductory letter to someone from another culture no matter which culture the writer belongs to. And it can be seen that even though less frequent, somehow people writing from other cultures to each other have a kind of shared knowledge as Nystrand (1986) states; "the very information structure of written communication, for example, depends not just on the writer's meaning and purpose but rather on the extent of match between

what the writer has to say and what the reader needs to know, i.e., the extent to which writer and reader share knowledge (Al-Khatib, 2001)". Also Y. Kachru (1997) claims that "only restricted communication is possible without a shared knowledge of the sociocultural norms conditioning language use. (Y. Kachru, 1997). Referring to these statements by the professionals, the mutual topics which were given place in letters written by the Ecuadorian students to Turkish students and by Turkish students to Ugandan students made managing a successful, intelligible conversation possible.

When it comes to the differences, culture specific differences were many. Talking about the local food and asking the interlocutor's father's name were topics seen only in Turkish students' first letters, and it can easily be explained by referring to the culture Turkish people belong to. In Turkey, asking the foreign interlocutor, even to someone from another city whether they have ever tasted a local food or whether at least they know the name of the food they talk about are the questions that are frequently asked. Additionally, family ties are really strong in Turkish family, and the father is perceived as the representor of the family in community. For this reason, which family name you have and what your father's name is are the questions every person can come across when they interact with a Turkish speaker.

As in the Turkish students' letters, Ecuadorian students gave place to their free time activities and asked their interlocutors about the free time activities they have when they have no responsibilities. This finding can give us clues about the lifestyle of Ecuadorian students, their daily life, and the importance of free time in their Culture. Also talking about their favorite sports is another item that gives clues about their culture. It can be inferred that, students are encouraged to do sports, and it is an important part of their lives.

When it comes to the second letters written as replies to the first letters sent by Ecuadorian and Turkish students, some characteristics of letters written as replies to a previously sent letter are seen such as referring to the first letter, discussing mutual interests with the interlocutor, replying to previously asked questions by the interlocutor in the second letters. Apart from those, some culture – specific topics like writing about the favorite singer and dance were seen in Ugandan students' second letters. Referring to the email traffic between the Ugandan students' teacher

and the contexts of Ugandan students' letters, the importance of music and dance for Ugandan culture can be regarded as high when compared to the other cultures' students participated in this letter exchange project.

5.2. Research Question 2. Which Types of Greetings and Closures Do Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian Students Use in Their Letters?

After the analysis of the letters, it was seen that the pragmatic structures most frequently given place were the salutation or greeting rituals and closures. With the second research question, it was aimed to see whether there were any similarities or differences between the letters in terms of the greetings and closures they include and what kind of greetings and closures were given place. To make the analysis easier and clearer, types of greetings and closures were divided into groups as the ones in the first letters and in the second letters of Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students.

The findings revealed that four types of greetings were common in all the first letters, and all of the common greetings included "*Hello*" and "*Hi*". These two types of greetings are culture free, and can be used both in spoken and written interaction. Addressing the readers as "my friend" and using hello and hi with them were the other common greetings seen in the first letters. When the students were interviewed about their greetings the reader, they said it was a proper way of addressing the reader and they didn't know any other way of addressing the reader.

Using two addressing together as "*dear, hello*" was seen in Ecuadorian students' letters, and starting as "Hello dear" was seen in Turkish students' first letters. In Turkish language, using hello with a sincere addressing "*canım*", which can be translated as "*dear*" in informal communication is quite common, and this habit was transferred to the letter writing process taking place between Turkish and Ugandan students.

When it comes to the culture transfer in L2 communication using English as a lingua franca, the use of culture-specific closures in students' letters were also seen quite frequently in the letters. The intercultural norms of closures were seen in all four groups' letters, but closing by thanking, using highly sincere words like "*kisses*" and

“hugs” to a relatively unknown, or at least very recently known reader were seen in exact cultures. Ecuadorian students gave place to sincere closures more than the other groups, whereas expressing gratitude by stating “thank you” was seen only in Ugandan students’ letters.

As the most common way of communication in 21st century, using online tools to get contact also affected the habits of message delivery to a receiver. Thanks to the use of mobile devices, emoticons like “☺” “☹” and “xox” or using abbreviations like “c u l8r” are started to be used, and when the meaning is intended to be highlighted, these emoji or emoticon are started to be preferred. In this letter exchange project, too, students gave place to the emoticons and emoji to highlight the meaning they intend to convey to the reader. This shows how the social media and online communication affect the written communication as well.

5.3. Research Question 3. To What Extent the Cultural Backgrounds of Writers Affect the Understanding of the Letters by the Turkish Readers of the Letters and How Can the Turkish Readers Overcome the Cultural Differences That They Come Across in the Letters?

To answer the third research question, 5 Turkish students participated in the process of letter writing were interviewed about their perceptions and to discuss the letters in terms of numerous variables such as the intelligibility, the ability to transfer the intended message to the reader, and the ability to receive the message meaningfully. According to the statements of 5 students, while introducing yourself to someone from another culture, being polite and giving clear and exact answers were perceived as important to start a new friendship and make yourself understood very well. When their perceptions about asking and answering the questions were asked, they all stated proudly that they have given answers to the questions their interlocutor asked, or they commented on the letters they received as satisfactory because their questions were answered clearly. They also felt confident about their English proficiency and the intelligibility of their language competence after receiving answers to their letters. These results lead to the effective use of letter writing in English language teaching to motivate students to communicate effectively in ELF settings.

When students' replies to overcoming cultural differences were analyzed, it was seen that they used some methodology like "making it common" which means stating an original culture item in lingua Franca concept by using ELF and overcoming cultural differences. Firth (1990) also came up with some strategies that two ELF user groups developed such as "*let-it-pass*" strategy "where speakers let an unclear word or utterance pass (Björkman, 2013), or "*make it normal*" strategy where the content is highlighted more than the form by the hearer or reader. Similar to strategies from Firth, in this study, students chose to describe a cultural item with a more known and so-called "international" version of it as a student in the interviews did for "*mantı*" which is a Turkish dish made by wrapping meat with dough and boiling it in water by describing it as "*Turkish Ravioli*".

5.4. Pedagogical Implications

As McKay (2014) states, "effective pedagogy is pedagogy suited to the specific demands of the local context. This statement is true in terms of various aspects. First, pedagogy should be suitable for the requirements of the learners. When an ineffective and unrealistic goal is set, that cannot go beyond being a fantastic dream. Besides, pedagogical goals should suit into social, commercial needs and political perceptions for all these are interconnected and dependent to each other. These points should be kept in mind more than ever if one is trying to adopt their curriculum into an international method.

Graddol (2006) claims that, English Language Teaching has been perceived as a matter of appropriate technology with the use of proper materials, as well as "a problem about imperialist propaganda (p: 12)". However as clearly stated in his study, "English is now redefining national and individual identities worldwide; shifting political fault lines, creating new global patterns of wealth and social exclusion, and suggesting new notions of human rights and responsibilities of citizenship". With such big responsibilities, it has been a must to go under a change in terms of teaching English. However; as Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) claimed, "while teachers receive a strong message that their current practice may be inadequate in preparing learners for using English in international encounters, they are not presented with suggestions of where to start implementing changes (p. 332)." This problem is changing rapidly with new implementations and suggestions

appropriate for the EIL pedagogy, and these studies have a genuine importance when EIL curriculum design is concerned

With the increasing awareness of the public and the academics, this study can be implied to English language teaching in terms of developing materials such as updating the current books referring to the real results given place in this study. Even though in 21st century, almost all communication takes place online and within minutes, there are still situations where using online tools of communication such as e-mails or social media are either impossible or inappropriate. In terms of language teaching and learning in a classroom, controlling many students at the same time is sometimes possible with letter writing. It is preferred by language teachers to develop self-esteem, to let students practice what they have learned, and as a formal way of communication which is still preferred in various situations. With the help of online exchange programs available on the internet, teachers can develop project partnerships and to raise their students' awareness of the intercultural language use, they can set up letter exchange groups and lead their students who need guidance about what to mention in their letters with the present data from this study.

When it comes to its implication to material development, it can be said that while developing curriculum related to language teaching, they can use the study to upgrade the writing parts which include informal writing sections. In almost every language teaching book, writing an informal letter or writing an informal email are given place. The results gathered from this study are applicable to online written interaction in terms of the data it presents, so the material development professionals can give place to the mutual topics seen in introductory letters of the students from this study.

5.5. Conclusion

With the increasing number of communication taking place between the non-native speakers and writers of English, the necessity of analysis of non-native language users' interaction while using English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become inevitable. Consequently, this study aimed at analyzing four groups of letters written by Turkish, Ugandan and Ecuadorian students as introductory letters in terms of the

mutual and different topics they give place and to see the greeting and closing rituals preferred by Turkish, Ecuadorian and Ugandan students.

The findings of the study revealed that even though there were mutual topics given place in all letters, culture specific topics like the favorite local food, favorite dance and favorite singer as well as the topics giving clues about the lifestyles of students were quite common. Students also gave extra importance to asking personal questions to the interlocutor and receiving answers to their questions. When it comes to findings related to the greetings and closures given place in all the letters, the findings revealed similarities between three cultures in terms of the greetings but the closings included culture specific topics. It was seen that Ugandan students preferred closing by expressing gratitude while Ecuadorian students used sincere words like “kisses”, “hugs” and “love” while ending their letters. Finally, findings related to overcoming cultural differences revealed that students used some kind of strategy to overcome cultural differences by relating cultural items to less cultural and more international items to make it easy to understand.

5.6. Recommendations

This thesis reveals interesting results in terms of the pragmatic analysis of letters written by students from three different nationalities none of which belongs to the inner circle where native English is spoken. However, further research is necessary for better understanding the rationale behind choosing these topics to include in an introductory letter. The study presented data from interviews with 5 students from Turkish group; however, more participants from Turkey and participants from other countries taking place in such a project would increase the validity of the data.

Even though much research was conducted about the intercultural communication, only few of them represent up-to-date data about the non-native speakers' or writers' interaction. Further research is recommended to see the pragmatic features and standards preferred by the non-native speakers of English while communicating with other non-native speakers of English.

As an outcome of this generation, online communication is a must while communicating either in someone's native language or in any other language no matter which language your interlocutor uses. Because of the increasing necessity to communicate or understand the interlocutor either in spoken or written interaction, studies similar to this thesis can be conducted to see the topics and pragmatic features given place when non-native ELF use is available. Particularly studies about the language uses in the immediate information exchange tools like WhatsApp or in social media can be conducted to see students' preferences of topics to mention in an ELF conversation. Also studies revealing the conversation patterns of online immediate written data could be beneficial in terms of letting professionals know about "what to teach how to whom" just like it is in pragmatics.



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APPENDIX

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
BA	Yıldız Technical University	2015
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WORK EXPERIENCE

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2015-2015	Yenidoğan Fatih Secondary School	English Teacher
2015-2018	Ihlas College	English Teacher

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, pre-intermediate German, beginner Polish

PUBLICATIONS

1. Ünsal, M.B. , (2014)., “Teaching Pronunciation to Young learners of English by Using the Audio-Articulation Method”. Non published B.A. thesis, Yıldız Tecnicl University, İstanbul.
2. Ünsal, M.B., Yıldız, E, Yılmaz,Z., (2016). “The Effect of L1 in Lexical Errors of Elementary Level Young EFL Students’ Compositions”. Paper presentation from Cukurova University International ELT Conference, Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul.

APPENDIX

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS ASKED TO FIRST LETTER SENDERS

1. In your letter, which topics did you give place?
2. Why did you give place to those topics?
3. Do you think you could express yourself clearly?
4. Do you feel satisfied about the answers you've received in the reply you got?
5. Were there any questions asked to you? Did you answer them?
6. Do you think the 1st letter you received is clear? Why/why not?
7. Do you think you have given a satisfactory answer?
8. Were there any cultural differences you observed?
9. In the letter you received, you wrote.... Do you think this is clear?
10. In your letter, you gave place to these cultural topics, why? Why not?
11. Do you think your interlocutor will understand it?
12. Would you give place to topics from your letter when you had a spoken interaction?
13. What would be different in a spoken interaction?