

Ready or Not? Preparedness of Pre-service EFL Teachers to Inclusive Education: A Cross-cultural Comparative Study from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China

¿Listos o no? Preparación de los docentes de inglés en formación para la educación inclusiva: un estudio comparativo transcultural en Turquía, Kazajistán y China.

Erkan Yüce¹

Faculty of Education, Aksaray University, Türkiye

Zeynep Çetin Köroğlu²

Faculty of Education, Foreign Languages Teaching Department, Aksaray University, Türkiye

Meruyert Seitova³

Faculty of Philology, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Kazakhstan

Olufemi Timothy Adigun⁴

Faculty of Education and Humanities, University of Namibia, Namibia

Yongliang Wang⁵

School of Foreign Studies, North China University of Water Resources and Electric Power, China

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¹erkanyuce@aksaray.edu.tr; ²oluphemmy54@gmail.com; ³meruyert.seitova@ayu.edu.kz;

⁴zeynepcetin86@gmail.com; ⁵wangyongliang@ncwu.edu.cn

Abstract

This study tried to investigate pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' preparedness for inclusive education from a cross-cultural perspective. We used a quantitative survey design and collected the data in a cross-sectional way from three Asian countries: Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China. We implemented a questionnaire measuring knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers regarding inclusive education to 694 pre-service EFL teachers. We utilized the Kruskal Wallis test and Tamhane's T2 test to analyze the quantitative data of the groups in a comparative way. We found cross-cultural differences among the countries concerning inclusive education. The perceptions subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in China. The attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than those of the pre-service EFL teachers in China, while the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in China. The knowledge subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan, while the knowledge scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China are significantly higher than the scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan. Based on these results, we discussed the place of inclusive education in pre-service EFL education from a cross-cultural perspective.

Key Words: Cross-cultural, inclusive education, teacher education, EFL, pre-service teachers.

Resumen

Este estudio investigó, desde una perspectiva transcultural, el nivel de preparación de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en formación para la educación inclusiva. Se empleó un diseño cuantitativo de encuesta y se recopilieron datos transversales en Turquía, Kazajistán y China. Un total de 694 docentes en formación completaron un cuestionario que evaluó su conocimiento, actitudes y percepciones sobre la educación inclusiva. Para comparar los resultados entre los países, se aplicaron las pruebas Kruskal-Wallis y T2 de Tamhane.

Los hallazgos revelaron diferencias significativas entre los tres contextos. En Kazajistán, las puntuaciones de la subescala de percepciones fueron significativamente más altas que en China. En cuanto a las actitudes, los docentes en formación de Turquía y Kazajistán obtuvieron puntuaciones superiores a las de China. Respecto al conocimiento, Turquía presentó puntuaciones significativamente más altas que Kazajistán, mientras que China también superó a Kazajistán en esta subescala.

Estos resultados evidencian que la preparación para la educación inclusiva varía de manera notable entre los países analizados, lo que sugiere la necesidad de fortalecer la formación inicial de docentes de EFL considerando las particularidades culturales y pedagógicas de cada contexto. El estudio discute el rol y los desafíos de la educación inclusiva en la formación docente desde una perspectiva transcultural.

Resumo

Este estudo investigou, sob uma perspectiva transcultural, o nível de preparação de futuros professores de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) para a educação inclusiva. Utilizou-se um delineamento quantitativo de levantamento, com coleta de dados transversal na Turquia, no Cazaquistão e na China. Um total de 694 licenciandos respondeu a um questionário que avaliou seus conhecimentos, atitudes e percepções sobre educação inclusiva. Para comparar os resultados entre os países, aplicaram-se os testes Kruskal-Wallis e T2 de Tamhane.

Os resultados revelaram diferenças significativas entre os três contextos. No Cazaquistão, as pontuações da subescala de percepções foram significativamente mais altas do que na China. Em relação às atitudes, os futuros professores da Turquia e do Cazaquistão apresentaram pontuações superiores às da China. No que se refere ao conhecimento, a Turquia obteve pontuações significativamente mais altas do que o Cazaquistão, enquanto a China também superou o Cazaquistão nessa subescala.

Esses achados mostram que a preparação para a educação inclusiva varia consideravelmente entre os países analisados, indicando a necessidade de fortalecer a formação inicial de professores de EFL, levando em conta as especificidades culturais e pedagógicas de cada contexto. O estudo discute o papel e os desafios da educação inclusiva na formação docente sob uma perspectiva transcultural.

Palavras-chave: transculturalidade, educação inclusiva, formação de professores, EFL, licenciandos

Introduction

Globally, Learners with Special Needs Education (LSNE), that is, learners with hearing, intellectual, physical, and/or visual disabilities, autism, among others, are constantly faced with a series of challenges (Osisanya et al., 2015). However, several models have been suggested to ameliorate the practical challenges over the past three decades (Srivastava et al., 2017). Significantly, the Salamanca conference (UNESCO, 1994), which brought together various nations and international organizations, advocated for 'inclusive education'. The concept of 'inclusive education' is an educational approach that advances equity and social justice in all learners' teaching and learning activities, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities (Adigun, 2021). In other words, inclusive education seeks to establish equal and un-marginalized learning opportunities for all learners with or without special needs (SNE) under the same learning conditions. The Salamanca framework for action agreed upon by all signatories at the conference has been domesticated in several nations, including Australia, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Spain, and Türkiye, among others. The framework of action serves as a guiding principle through which neighborhood schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their emotional, intellectual, linguistic, physical, social, or other conditions. This further implies that inclusive education as an educational policy stipulates that LSNE should not only attend neighborhood schools but should be exposed to the same curriculum given to their counterparts without disabilities (Tuncay & Kizilaslan, 2021).

Interestingly, issues of community pluralism and globalization, in particular, have influenced teaching language(s) in various schools (Chumbow, 2009; May, 2008). Hence, all learners, regardless of disabilities, are said to be exposed to various language(s), especially the English Language. Lamentably, previous studies (Osisanya et al., 2015) have documented communication difficulties among LSNE. Thus, many such LSNE struggles with academic engagements with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. However, many such studies have suggested recurrent in-service training for EFL teachers of such learners. For instance, Ketrish et al. (2019) aver that the success of an inclusive education approach depends mainly on the training and re-training of in-service teachers for skill development and capacity building, a clear understanding of the pathological and psychological characteristics of LSNE as well deployment of appropriate pedagogical skill for effective instructional deliveries. On the contrary, until the present, there is a paucity of cross-cultural comparative research evidence that highlights the implication of preparedness among prospective EFL teachers for teaching within the inclusive educational setting. Thus there is limited understanding that could influence generalizable cross-cultural implications for policy and practice of inclusive education.

As indicated by Pokrivčáková (2018), teaching the English Language to LSNE within the inclusive classroom requires pedagogical skills that necessitate EFL teachers' attention, classroom awareness, and consciousness of the expressive language abilities of LSNE. Therefore, there is a need for prospective EFL teachers to develop appropriate organizational skills that could foster inclusion and academic cohesion and dislodge barriers to teaching and learning EFL. Unfortunately, the preparedness and readiness of EFL teachers for inclusive education remain a concern. This study investigates the knowledge, skills, and perceptions of prospective English teachers in Turkey, Kazakhstan, and China regarding inclusive education. The main reasons for selecting these three countries include the existence of different educational systems, the presence of different educational models for inclusive education, and the differences in the practices they use in English teaching. Therefore, this quantitative study aims to fill this gap by revealing findings regarding perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge in inclusive education from pre-service EFL teacher education contexts from three countries, Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China, in a cross-cultural way. Based on this aim, we addressed the following research questions in our study: Is there a significant difference among pre-service EFL teachers' competency levels, perceptions, and attitudes regarding inclusive education?

Literature Review

From the early twenties to the present, findings from research studies undertaken in many parts of the world provide insights into teachers' perspectives and attitudes about inclusive education. Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions Regarding Inclusive Education, and Comparative Studies about EFL Inclusive Education are examined through research from different countries.

EFL education and Inclusive Education in Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China

Inclusive education is crucial in teaching English as a foreign language in Türkiye. Disadvantaged individuals, migrant and refugee children, and those who require special education due to socio-economic reasons can access foreign language education through inclusive education. In this context, these individuals can overcome language barriers and find opportunities to express themselves by learning English, the global language.

Considering Kazakhstan's multilingual and multicultural social structure, the role and importance of inclusive education in teaching English as a foreign language is critical. Since English is used in education and business alongside Kazakh and Russian

in the country, it is very important to educate individuals who need inclusive education in this context.

Given China's vast geographical structure, ethnic diversity, and global interaction, the role and importance of inclusive education in English teaching is considerable. Students living in rural areas, ethnic minority groups, and individuals requiring special education are unable to receive sufficient foreign language education, which weakens their integration into society. Inclusive education ensures social equality and supports individual development in this context.

Pre-service EFL Teachers' Opinions Regarding Inclusive Education

The role of inclusive education in English language teaching is considerable because English language teachers can identify what may cause students to have difficulty in learning English and how they solve these problems effectively (Smith, 2018). English teachers and prospective English teachers who possess theoretical and practical knowledge of inclusive education can restructure their English teaching processes to cater to students who require content tailored to inclusive education (Miller, 2016). Therefore, this study comparatively examines the competencies of prospective English teachers in three different countries regarding inclusive education.

There has been insufficient research on the competencies of English teachers in Türkiye regarding inclusive education. Regarding existing studies, research conducted by Aksu Ataç and Taşçı (2020) found that prospective English teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusive education in English teaching. According to another study, the new English language teacher education program (ELTEP) of Türkiye informs prospective English teachers about inclusive education through six courses (Yastıbaş, 2021). Making applied activities and inclusive education courses mandatory in undergraduate programs that train English teachers in Turkey is among the recommendations. The study found that teacher candidates' proficiency in inclusive education, legal regulations on inclusive education, and its history is at an intermediate level. Another important finding is that female participants have a higher level of awareness regarding inclusive education compared to male participants (Gülay & Altun, 2023).

In Kazakhstan, the inclusion of inclusive education in the education system does not have a long history (Mukhitova et al., 2024). A study examined the perspectives of Turkish and Kazakh English teacher candidates on inclusive education (Zhalelkanova, 2019). This study found a slight difference between Turkish and Kazakh English teacher candidates. Kazakh English teacher candidates' perspectives on inclusive education were more positive than those of Turkish English teacher candidates. Participants were

found to have confidence in themselves and their creativity in inclusive education practices (Zhalelkanova, 2019).

Another study measured the awareness levels of prospective English teachers in Kazakhstan regarding inclusive education. The study concluded that the 80 prospective English teachers involved had a very high level of awareness about the basic content, objectives, and importance of inclusive education (Mukhitova et al., 2024). According to another study, older and more experienced English teachers exhibit more positive attitudes than English teacher candidates (Polat et al., 2023).

No research has been found on the role of inclusive education in the training of English teacher candidates in China. However, there is no study investigating the current situation of inclusive education in pre-service EFL teacher education cross-culturally. Additionally, there is no study presenting findings from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China in a cross-cultural comparative way. Accordingly, this study attempts to fill this gap by presenting findings regarding perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge in inclusive education from pre-service EFL teacher education contexts from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China in a cross-cultural comparative way.

Methodology

Research Design

We used a quantitative survey design throughout the study. In survey design, researchers administer a survey or questionnaire to a small number of people to reveal directions in perspectives, opinions, or features of a population (Creswell, 2012). We adopted a cross-cultural design and collected the data cross-sectional from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China to accomplish the research. Cross-cultural refers to systematic comparisons that directly address questions regarding the influence of cultural variations (Ember & Ember, 2009). In cross-sectional research studies, data are gathered at one point in time from a specific sample (Scott & Morrison, 2005).

Participants

Given the importance of teaching foreign languages in the framework of inclusive education, this study is noteworthy because it examines the attitudes, knowledge, and abilities of English teacher candidates in China, Kazakhstan, and Turkey regarding inclusive education. It is essential that all students receive equal instruction in English since it is a language that is widely used for communication, education, and employment. However, learning a second language necessitates greater assistance for

underprivileged populations, linguistic and cultural minorities, and people with special needs. Thus, in order to design effective teaching strategies that consider the disparities among pupils, English teacher candidates' abilities toward inclusive education are crucial. Additionally, the readiness of teacher candidates in this area determines the provision of inclusive and high-quality language instruction, as English language instruction is one of the priority areas of education policies in these three nations. The participants in the study were selected using a purposive sampling method. Incomplete and incorrectly filled-out responses were excluded from the study during data collection. Pre-service EFL teachers from three countries (Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China) participated in the study (N=694). The following table (Table 1) describes the demographic profiles (gender, country, and university) of the participants:

Table 1. Demographic profiles of the participants

Variable		N	%
Gender	Female	592	85.3
	Male	102	14.7
Country	Türkiye	150	21.6
	Kazakhstan	194	28.0
	China	350	50.4
University	Xinyang University (China)	139	20.0
	Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University (Kazakhstan)	111	16.0
	Henan University/Xinlian College (China)	96	13.8
	Aksaray University (Türkiye)	46	6.6
	Dulaty Univesity Taraz (Kazakhstan)	41	5.9
	Beijing Normal University (China)	36	5.2
	İnönü University (Türkiye)	31	4.5
	Amasya University (Türkiye)	26	3.7
	Other (49 universities from 3 different countries)	307	44.2

Instrument

We used the “Pre-service Teachers and Inclusive Education” questionnaire developed by Adigun (2021) for the data collection. The data collection tool employed in this study was a self-constructed questionnaire. The researcher established the content validity of the questionnaire by subjecting it to meticulous review by specialists in inclusive education, psychology, and social work. The questionnaire involves three subsections that measure pre-service teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding inclusive education. These sections comprise 4-point Likert-type items

ranging from *Strongly Disagree*=1, *Disagree*=2, *Agree*=3, and *Strongly Agree*=4. The “knowledge” subscale has 12 items, and examples of these items include: ‘*Students with special needs have the right to receive an education in mainstream classes*’, ‘*Students with special needs will benefit from the inclusive program in regular classrooms*’, and ‘*Students with special needs are academically better in inclusive classrooms*’. The “attitudes” subscale has seven items, and examples of these items include: ‘*Students with special needs must be integrated into the regular community*’, ‘*I cannot teach in a school practicing inclusion*’, and ‘*I will be more stressed if I have learners with disabilities in my class*’. Finally, the “perceptions” subscale has 13 items, and examples of these items include: ‘*I feel inclusion can work at all schools*’, ‘*Learners who require specialized academic support are demanding and require greater input*’, and ‘*I feel that inclusion increases teachers’ workload*’.

The knowledge subscale scores range from 27 to 45, and high scores show that participants are highly knowledgeable regarding inclusive education. The attitudes subscale scores range from 10 to 24, and high scores show that participants have positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The perceptions subscale scores range from 26 to 43, and high scores show that participants discern inclusive education as essential and beneficial. Cronbach’s Alpha values were calculated as $\alpha=0.73$ for the knowledge subscale, $\alpha=0.81$ for the attitude’s subscale, and $\alpha=0.79$ for the perceptions subscale in the original study (Adigun, 2021). These values proved that the instrument was statistically reliable as its Cronbach’s alpha consistency values were higher than $\alpha=0.5$ (Bowling, 2014). The language of the questionnaire is English. It should be noted that the participants did not encounter any difficulties in completing the questionnaire, as they were English teacher candidates. The participants’ language level is assumed to be B2-C1.

Data Analysis

We initially looked at the Skewness and Kurtosis values of the data to decide on the statistics to answer the study’s research questions. Accordingly, we found Skewness and Kurtosis values as .096-4.689 regarding “Perception about Inclusive Education”, .270-2.443 regarding “Attitudes towards Inclusive Education”, and -1.054-8.722 regarding “Knowledge about Inclusive Education”. We used non-parametric tests in the analyses since these values do not meet the standard distribution assumptions. We utilized the Kruskal Wallis test to determine whether scores on the scale differ across cultures, and we performed Tamhane’s T2 test, one of the Post-Hoc tests, to reveal from which group the difference emerged (Pallant, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). A difference interval of $3/4=0.75$ was taken as the scales used in the research had four options and three different intervals based on a 4-point Likert interval in the evaluations made according to arithmetic means. Accordingly, the different intervals in the evaluations in line with the arithmetic means are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Difference Intervals in the Evaluation of Scales

Difference Interval	Equivalence in the Survey
1.00 - 1.75	Strongly Disagree
1.76 - 2.50	Disagree
2.51 - 3.25	Agree
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree

According to Table 2, the arithmetic averages between 1.00 and 1.75 intervals correspond to “*Strongly Disagree*”; the arithmetic averages between 1.76 and 2.50 intervals correspond to “*Disagree*”, the arithmetic averages between 2.51 and 3.25 correspond to “*Agree*”, and the arithmetic averages between 3.26 and 4.00 correspond to “*Strongly Agree*”.

Findings

The following table (Table 3) presents the pre-service EFL teachers' averages (knowledge, attitude, and perceptions) regarding their thoughts about inclusive education from an intercultural perspective.

Table 3. The pre-service EFL teachers' thoughts about inclusive education

	N		S.d.	Correspondence
Perception about inclusive education	694	2.60	.29	Agree
Attitudes towards inclusive education	694	2.48	.36	Disagree
Knowledge about inclusive education	694	2.79	.29	Agree

According to Table 3, the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of inclusive education on the scale are at the “Agree” level ($\bar{x}=2.60 \pm .29$). However, it is seen that their attitudes towards inclusive education on the scale are at the “Disagree” level ($\bar{x}=2.48 \pm .36$), and their knowledge levels on the scale are at the “Agree” level ($\bar{x}=2.79 \pm .29$).

Table 4 shows the differences in the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers from the inclusive education questionnaire with regard to the cultures (Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China).

Table 4. Cross-cultural findings about inclusive education

Variable	Post-Hoc/Tamhane's T2 Test				Kruskal Wallis Test				
Perception	(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference	p	Country	N	Mean Rank	p	
	Türkiye	Kazakhstan	-.54873	.423	Türkiye	150	352.83	.028	
		China	.36190	.673	Kazakhstan	194	376.46		
		Kazakhstan	Türkiye	.54873	.423	China	350		329.16
			China	.91063*	.022				
	China	Türkiye	-.36190	.673					
		Kazakhstan	-.91063*	.022					
	Post-Hoc/Tamhane's T2 Test				Kruskal Wallis Test				
(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference	p	Country	N	Mean Rank	p		
Attitudes	Türkiye	Kazakhstan	.03457	.999	Türkiye	150	405.33		
		China	1.23333*	.000	Kazakhstan	194	398.97		
	Kazakhstan	Türkiye	-.03457	.999	China	350	294.19		
		China	1.19876*	.000					
	China	Türkiye	-1.23333*	.000					
		Kazakhstan	-1.19876*	.000					
	Post-Hoc/Tamhane's T2 Test				Kruskal Wallis Test				
	(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference	p	Country	N	Mean Rank		p
Knowledge	Türkiye	Kazakhstan	1.23285*	.001	Türkiye	150	372.31	.001	
		China	.41524	.416	Kazakhstan	194	302.43		
	Kazakhstan	Türkiye	-1.23285*	.001	China	350	361.85		
		China	-.81761*	.030					
	China	Türkiye	-.41524	.416					
		Kazakhstan	.81761*	.030					

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Firstly, Table 4 shows that the pre-service EFL teachers' scores in the perception subscale dimension differ significantly by culture ($p=0.028^*$, Kruskal Wallis test). This result stems from the difference between the scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan and China. Accordingly, the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than the perception subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China ($p=0.022^*$, Tamhane's T2 test).

Secondly, Table 4 indicates that the pre-service EFL teachers' scores in the attitude subscale dimension differ significantly according to the cultures ($p=0.001^*$, Kruskal Wallis test). The attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China, and the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China ($p=0.00^*$; $p=0.00^*$ Tamhane's T2 test). There is no significant difference in the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye and Kazakhstan ($p=0.99>0.05$ on Tamhane's T2 test).

Lastly, Table 4 reports that the pre-service EFL teachers' scores in the knowledge subscale dimension differ significantly according to the cultures ($p=0.001^*$, Kruskal Wallis test). The knowledge subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan ($p=0.01^*$; Tamhane's T2 test). The knowledge subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan ($p=0.03^*$; Tamhane's T2 test). However, there is no significant difference between the knowledge subscale scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye and China ($p=0.41>0.05$ on Tamhane's T2 test).

Discussion

Developing educational policies, practices, and outcomes for students who need special education continues to be a vital agenda in Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China, like in other developed and developing countries. Thus, inclusive education is a dynamic process continuously evolving due to cultural and contextual impacts. There is no doubt that teachers have a significant role in the practical application of inclusive education, meeting the learning needs of students with special needs, developing and enriching the course content for their interests, and getting the expected outcomes from the curriculum to be applied. Various research studies indicated teachers' role in inclusive education (De Boera et al., 2011). As the future's teachers, pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge about inclusive education have great importance in carrying out effective and quality inclusive education. Thus, pre-service EFL teachers will teach students with special educational needs in their professional life.

The results of the present research indicated significant differences among the participants from different countries in terms of attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge towards inclusive education. Participants' perception levels differentiate from each other according to the statistical analysis. Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers' perception level was significantly higher than Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' ($p=0.022^*$,

Tamhane's T2 test). The results can be interpreted as that the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan made necessary regulations about inclusive education in the "State Program of Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020" and the Chinese Government has published an important document, as "Special Education Improvement Plan" for 2014-2016 years (Fu et al., 2019). In this respect, it can be said that the Republic of Kazakhstan made necessary legislation about inclusive education before the Chinese Government. As the legislation is passed, teacher trainers may become more conscious of the issue. On the other hand, there is only one course related to inclusive education at the university level in Kazakhstan and China, and pre-service EFL teachers are enrolled. In this perspective, formal education at the university level provides nearly equal information about the issue to the study participants. However, the participants from Kazakhstan have higher perception levels than the Chinese participants. This result can be related to the quality of education of the course which is taught at universities, lack of content and pedagogical knowledge about inclusive education which is a result of the course, and lack of experience in teaching and teaching practice to students with SEN (Çelik & Zehir Topkaya, 2017). Another significant finding of the current research is that participants' attitudes level is significantly different from each other. Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' attitude level is significantly higher than Chinese pre-service EFL teachers. Additionally, Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes are significantly higher than Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes ($p=0.00^*$; $p=0.00^*$ Tamhane's T2 test). On the other hand, there is not a statistically significant difference between Turkish and Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers. The result is in line with Zhalelkanova's research (2019) that found slight differences when comparing Kazakh and Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching English to students with SEN. These results can be interpreted in the light of the cultural context of these countries. Inclusive education was started in 1983, firstly with the law 'Law on Children with Special Needs' in Türkiye. The law mentions that all students have equal learning rights and can study and teach in the same classroom whether they have a disability or not (Students in Special Education, 1983). From this perspective, the Republic of Türkiye dealt with the special education issue much earlier than this study's other two countries, Kazakhstan and China. Even though the Republic of Kazakhstan made necessary regulations about inclusive education later than the Republic of Türkiye, the participants have a similar attitude level to Turkish participants. Despite a little research being carried out about inclusive education in Kazakhstan (Zholtayeva et al., 2013), Kazakhs pre-service EFL teachers are conscious of inclusive education practices. On the other hand, Chinese pre-service EFL teachers have lower attitudes than Turkish and Kazakh study participants. The Chinese government made compulsory education mandatory for students with special educational needs in 1986 (Worrell & Taber, 2009), and after necessary legislative regulations were made, the government increased the budget to support students with SEN (MOEPRC, 2015). Despite sufficient legal arrangements, Chinese pre-service EFL teachers have the lowest attitude level among the participant countries in the research. Research shows

that pre-service teachers are not adequately prepared to work with students who need special education despite having positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Lambe & Bones, 2006; Stavropoulou & Markopoulou, 2015). Another important finding of the current research is a significant difference in knowledge sub-dimension among the participants who took part in the research from different cultural contexts. The scores of pre-service EFL teachers from Türkiye in the knowledge dimension are significantly higher than those in Kazakhstan ($p=0.01^*$; Tamhane's T2 test). The scores of pre-service EFL teachers from China in the knowledge dimension were significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan ($p=0.03^*$; Tamhane's T2 test). There is a single course on inclusive education at universities in Türkiye and Kazakhstan; however, there is no course related to inclusive education in the Chinese context. Assuming a course can provide both content and pedagogical knowledge and practicing the acquired knowledge of the course in real classrooms about teaching English to students with SEN would be an imaginary situation. As Rouse (2006, p.11) states, "developing effective inclusive practice is about not only extending teachers' knowledge but also encouraging them to do things differently and getting them to reconsider their attitudes and beliefs. In other words, it should be about 'knowing', 'doing', and 'believing'". The education of preservice English language instructors concerning inclusive education can be enhanced by courses focused on inclusivity, individualization, and modification of teaching methods. The inclusive education course offers extensive training on inclusive education, encompassing its definition and the development of instruction tailored for students facing various challenges in learning English for diverse causes. This extensive training can augment preservice English language teachers' comprehension of inclusive education, their responsibilities within it, and their methods for fostering inclusivity in their classrooms. In inclusive English-language instruction, differentiating instruction for students with learning problems necessitates the individualization and adaptation of instructional methods (Smith, 2018). Preservice English language teachers can enhance their understanding of differentiating instruction in special education, inclusion, education for hospitalized students, learning difficulties, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder through the individualization and adaptation of their teaching courses. Preservice English-language instructors can customize and modify their training, establish both long and short-term learning objectives for their tailored instruction, and create various assessment instruments and evaluation criteria for their unique instruction in this course (Yastibaş, 2021)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Relying on the findings and discussion, the results of the present study could suggest that English teacher training programs in China can change the ‘Inclusive Education’ course content to improve the attitudes and perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers. In addition, Chinese pre-service EFL teachers can internalise the theoretical knowledge they have learned from the course content through teaching practice to students with learning difficulties in a natural classroom environment. On the other hand, in the sub-dimension of knowledge, it was found that Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers have a lower level of knowledge than Turkish and Chinese pre-service EFL teachers. In this context, various academic activities can be organized by the relevant units to increase the knowledge level of Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers about inclusive education. For example, conferences, webinars, or workshops can be organized about inclusive education, and these academic events will contribute positively to the knowledge level of the participants.

The study’s findings suggest that pre-service EFL teachers should practice their content and pedagogical knowledge about inclusive education in schools with children who need special education. In this regard, each pre-service EFL teacher should have a chance to teach course content to children with SEN. Thus, as pre-service EFL teachers gain experience teaching students with SEN, they can become more responsive and open about inclusive education. In this perspective, pre-service EFL teachers should be trained to teach all the students with diverse abilities in different contexts. For example, children with SEN may have aggressive behaviors in the classroom, attention disorders, or language disabilities. In this respect, pre-service EFL teachers should be taught classroom management skills in inclusive education (AlMahdi & Bukamal, 2019).

Since the data for this study were collected from Turkey, Kazakhstan, and China, it covers Asian countries. Countries from continents such as Europe, America, and Africa could not be included in the study. For this reason, data could not be obtained on inclusive education practices, perspectives, and policies in foreign language teacher training. Another point is that quantitative methods were used in the study to collect data from English teacher candidates. Since qualitative data were not used in the study, it was not possible to gain in-depth insight into the participants’ thoughts on inclusive education in foreign language education. Future research can be designed taking these limitations into account.

Last but not least, as future teachers, pre-service EFL teachers have a significant role in carrying out effective inclusive education. In this respect, their training and education about inclusive education enable more equal learning opportunities for future students with SEN.

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Authors

Erkan Yüce is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education of Aksaray University. He received his Ph.D. degree in English Language Teaching from Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences in 2018. His research focuses on applied linguistics, teacher training, educational psychology, academic writing, and curriculum and instruction. His recent research appeared in journals such as *Porta Linguarum*, *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching (SSLT)*, *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, and *System*

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2716-5668>

Dr Olufemi Timothy Adigun is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Applied Educational Sciences, University of Namibia, Namibia. He is C2 NRF (South Africa) rated researcher and a recipient of the Shanghai Open University Visiting Scholar program and the University of Zululand Vice-Chancellor's Academic Award on Outstanding Achievements in Teaching and Research Community. Dr Adigun is a

beneficiary of the Stellenbosch University Postdoctoral Research Fellows conference awards. In addition, he was a 2023 recipient of the UNESCO-IICBA travel sponsorship to the 2nd KIX-UNESCO Continental Symposium on Educational Research in Africa. His niche area within disability studies research is the pursuit of quality education and sustainable, inclusive learning and development of students with disabilities, with special focus on deaf students

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6079-1690>

Assoc. Prof. Meruyert Seitova received her PhD in English Language Education from Hacettepe University, Turkey. Her research interests include English language teaching methodology, learner motivation, teacher professional development, and in-service and pre-service teacher education. She has published and presented widely on innovative approaches to English language teaching and teacher training. Dr. Seitova is currently engaged in teaching and research in the field of English language pedagogy.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0735-2469>

Zeynep Çetin Köroğlu has been working as an Associate Professor Doctor at the English Language Teaching Department of Aksaray University. She got her MA and Ph.D. degrees from Gazi University, Türkiye. Her academic background mainly consists of English Language Teaching. She acts as a reviewer at various international academic journals. She is a technology enthusiast, established researcher, and international conference presenter. Her areas of expertise include intercultural communication, language teachers' education, ICT implementations in language pedagogy, and language assessment. She published numerous book chapters and articles related to her research interests.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9456-8910>

Yongliang Wang serves as an editorial board member and a peer reviewer for several accredited international journals in the field of EFL education. He is a world top 2% scientist in languages and linguistics by Stanford University for 2 consecutive years (2024-2025), and his name was selected in the Highly Cited Chinese Researchers by Elsevier in 2022, 2023 and 2024. In recent years, his research interests lie in the interface between positive psychology (PP) and EFL teacher education, technology-assisted language learning, semiotics studies in intercultural communication as well as area studies.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4672-8481>

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