

THE VIEWS AND REFLECTIONS OF TURKISH GRADUATE STUDENTS
ON A PRE-DEPARTURE CROSS-CULTURAL ORIENTATION MODULE AS A GUIDE FOR
THEIR PROSPECTIVE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES IN THE USA

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ABSTRACT

The Views and Reflections of Turkish Graduate Students
on a Pre-Departure Cross-Cultural Orientation Module as a Guide for Their
Prospective Social and Academic Experiences in the USA

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This thesis explores the acculturation of three Turkish graduate students in the USA, who embarked on their study-abroad journey upon taking part in a nine-week Pre-Departure Cross-Cultural Orientation Module (henceforth, Pre-CCOM) in their home country. Adopting a narrative-case study design, the study gathered its data from multiple data collection tools such as initial semi-structured interviews, weekly reflective journals, reports, final interviews before their departure for the USA, and lastly e-mail exchanges and follow-up impromptu Skype interviews during the first three months upon their arrival in the USA. Based on Berry's acculturation model (1990) and Duff's academic discourse socialization (2010) as its theoretical frameworks, this study revealed attending the Pre-CCOM benefitted Ali, Nisa and Elif's acculturation by aiding it to be easier and smoother. In this regard, it was clarified by each participant that they decreased perceived and experienced acculturative stressors and increased their coping strategies thanks to the Pre-CCOM. Shedding light on their experienced acculturative stressors and coping strategies, their narratives also drew attention to the need for such a Pre-CCOM as a legitimate and indispensable part of the language curriculum.

Keywords: pre-departure orientation, cross-cultural orientation, acculturation, international graduate students, academic language socialization.

Öz

Türk Lisansüstü Öğrencilerinin, Amerika'daki Sosyal ve Akademik Deneyimleri için Rehber olarak Tasarlanan Gidiş Öncesi Kültürlerarası Uyum Modeli ile İlgili Görüş ve Düşünceleri

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Bu tez, kendi ülkelerinde dokuz haftalık kültürlerarası uyum seanslarına katılıp Amerika'da yurtdışı lisansüstü eğitimlerine başlayan üç Türk lisansüstü öğrencisinin kültürel etkileşimini incelemektedir. Öyküleyici durum deseni kullanılarak, bu çalışmada, ön yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, haftalık değerlendirmeler, raporlar, Amerika öncesi final görüşmeler, yaklaşık üç ay boyunca Amerika'dan alınan elektronik postalar ve takip amaçlı provasız Skype üzerinden gerçekleştirilen görüşmelerden oluşan çoklu veri toplama araçlarından yararlanılmıştır. Teorik olarak Berry'nin kültürel etkileşim modeli (1990) ve Duff'ın akademik söylem sosyalleşmesi (2010) teorilerine dayanan bu tez, Ali, Nisa ve Elif'in kültürel etkileşimi ile, Amerika eğitimi öncesi kültürlerarası uyum seanslarına katılmalarının, süreci daha kolay ve daha rahat kılarak sürece fayda sağladığını ortaya koymuştur. Her bir katılımcı, katıldıkları seanslar sayesinde karşılaştıkları stress unsurlarını azalttıklarını ve karşılaşılan stress unsurlarıyla başa çıkma stratejilerini arttırdıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Kültürel etkileşim stres unsurlarına ve bunlarla başa çıkma stratejilerine ışık tutan katılımcıların hikayeleri, aynı zamanda dil müfredatının haklı ve vazgeçilemez bir parçası olarak gidiş öncesi kültürlerarası uyum seanslarına ihtiyaca dikkat çekmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kültürlerarası uyum, gidiş öncesi oryantasyon, kültürel etkileşim, uluslararası lisansüstü öğrenciler, akademik söylem sosyalleşmesi.

To the Dearest Mother of the world, Nermin Kibar
Neredesin sen.¹

¹ Neşet Ertaş, Neredesin Sen.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCT	Cross-Cultural Training
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FI	Final Interview
FLTA	Foreign Language Teaching Assistant
II	Initial Interview
MONE	Ministry of National Education
NAFSA	National Association of Foreign Student Advisors
Pre-CCOM	Pre-Departure Cross-Cultural Orientation Module
RPs	Reports
TUBITAK	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
WRJs	Weekly Reflective Journals

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Presentation

This chapter presents an introduction to the study by providing the study background and the problem, the need for and the significance of the study, respectively. Finally, the chapter introduces the aims and the questions guiding the study.

1.1 The Study Background and the Problem

This thesis is on the acculturation of Turkish graduate students as Ministry of National Education (henceforth, MONE) scholars in the USA. The participants in question attended a pre-departure cross-cultural orientation module (henceforth, Pre-CCOM) that was designed to smooth their prospective acculturation by decreasing possible acculturative stressors and increasing coping strategies.

The USA is one of the most popular places to study abroad for Turkish students (Duru et al., 2011). There are many factors behind its attractiveness such as the standard of living in the USA, teaching quality, and the possibility of greater job opportunities (Tansel & Gungor, 2003). Highlighting this popularity, Amy McGoldric, EducationUSA Regional Director, stated that:

The USA remains the preferred destination for students from Turkey because of the quality and prestige associated with an American degree. Another contributing factor is an increased level of activity by United States colleges and universities to attract students from Turkey. (Press Release by Embassy of the United States, 2010).

According to the report released by Institute of International Education (2010), Turkey ranked 10th among the leading countries of origin for studying in the USA and 1st in Europe. However, in the most recent report (2014), Turkey was among the leading senders

with a drop in the number of students (down 4 percent). Increasing numbers of the Turkish international students in the USA have caught the attention of national and international researchers such as Davis (1971), Yalçın-Çelik (1998), Tatar (2005), Bektaş, Demir and Bowden (2009), Yıldırım (2009), Duru and Poyrazlı (2009), Gertzog (2011) and Ortaçtepe (2012; 2013). However, many of these studies have concluded that there are still things to explore Turkish graduate students' cases in the USA.

1.2 The Need for the Study

There are fundamental reasons to render the need for the present study. First, there are almost no studies, to my knowledge, have explored the acculturation of Turkish graduate students in the USA by taking into consideration their background, expectations, concerns and needs. Hence, almost no other studies have also been conducted as a longitudinal design by shedding light on the participants' experiences regarding prior to and during their being a graduate student in the USA. Second, the studies filling the available literature have been designed in the theoretical frameworks of quantitative studies, so there is a need for qualitative studies in order to provide clear insights into the lived experiences of Turkish graduate students in the USA. Third, as stated by Smith and Khawaja (2011), despite the plethora of research on international students, there is a shortage of empirically tested interventions that seek to decrease acculturative stress and aid adaptation of international students, which summarizes the need for the present study. Since acculturation is a process, it is also important to look at it holistically in order to understand what acculturative stressors are and how they can be minimized prior to and during study abroad experience in the host country. This highlights the importance of looking into international students' feelings, emotions, concerns, needs and experiences not only during but also before their study abroad experience in the host country. Only in this way can deeper insights into the acculturation of the international students be attained in order to understand their experienced acculturative stressors before their experience in the host culture. In so doing, minimizing possible acculturative stressors in their prospective social and academic environments can be possible. It is important to remember that

acculturation is a process and the international students' experiences prior to their study abroad experience need exploring.

1.3 Aims and Research Questions

Holding the potential of being the starting point of acculturation cycle in the USA for three Turkish graduate students in question, this study developed and implemented the Pre-CCOM so as to smooth their acculturation in the USA, the host country, by minimizing the number of acculturative stressors. The present study, as a professional avenue of help, aimed to address acculturative stressors of Turkish graduate students before their departure for the USA. It also initiated knowledge transfer about their prospective social and academic environments thanks to the shared experiences of the current Turkish graduate students or the ones who have previous academic experience in the USA as graduate students or language assistants. Moreover, owing to its interactive and interpretive nature as culturally sensitive counseling, the Pre-CCOM explored possibilities to enhance the participant's higher identification with the host culture, and increased their intellectual and psychological preparedness. In this vein, it opted for providing them with supportive knowledge and motives for their willingness to negotiate potential conflicts when encountered in their acculturation via the coping strategies gained in the Pre-CCOM. Following these aims, the study answered three main questions as reads:

- (R1): What are the expectations, concerns and needs of prospective Turkish graduate students in the USA regarding their prospective social and academic experiences?
- (R2): What are their reflections on the Pre-CCOM before they begin their social and academic experiences in the USA?
- (R3): In what aspects do they benefit from the Pre-CCOM after they begin their social and academic experiences in the USA?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Pioneering the studies especially in Turkish literature, the current study, with an interactive and interpretive nature, explored the participants' social and academic backgrounds (in terms of academic achievements, academic and social relationships, types of education received and etc.), concerns, needs and expectations about their new life in the USA as their study abroad country. In the light of the need analysis, a nine-week Pre-CCOM was developed and implemented as a first initiative in Turkey. By taking group specific characteristics of Turkish graduate students into consideration, the study looked at the participants' perceived acculturative stressors from a practical way since it developed a brand new module. Throughout the development phase, the Pre-CCOM took its shape from the participants' need, concerns and expectations to help them acquaint themselves with the essential cultural basics of their new experience in social and academic environments. In this way, they could get prepared for smoother and less difficult acculturation in the host culture by closing the distance between the home and host culture.

As stated before, there is an emergent need to support prospective Turkish international students of the USA with their future acculturation in the host culture with the help of a Pre-CCOM. In this way, this study showed how the Pre-CCOM would deal with Turkish graduate students' concerns about their experience prior to their departure for the USA, and in what aspects it would help them acculturate to their social and academic environments in situ. Holding the potential to contribute to the accumulation of acculturation of the participants, the current study is of great significance as it both offered a helping hand and also functioned as a pedagogical tool for the stakeholders to ease the graduate students' way for acculturation to on and off campus settings. Furthermore, it helped these three Turkish graduate students in the USA understand and make themselves be understood, increased their preparedness for differing relational styles, cultural and academic expectations and provided them with opportunities for talk. Stimulating a strong motivation to engage in their prospective social and academic environments, this study is crucial as it presented incentives to appreciate cultural diversity and deepen their understanding of the social and academic culture in the USA. Hence, this study was of great significance to encourage constructive communication and exploit the kind of thinking with

a broader worldview and perspective. Therefore, it played an essential role in changing the current picture of Turkish graduate students as being failures most of the time and inspired the prospective ones for a more fruitful study abroad experience. It also presented important social, pedagogical and theoretical implications for many stakeholders such as EFL instructors, prospective international students and scholars, administrators in Turkish higher education contexts, and orientation programmers in the related institutions sending such graduate students abroad. In this regard, it provoked initiatives for a cosmopolitan curriculum and cross-cultural classes in intensive English courses offered to these scholars sponsored by the MONE before their departure for the host country.

1.5 Definitions of Terms

This study applies some terminologies while presenting the gathered data. For a better understanding and easy reading, definitions of the key terms are provided in Table 1 below. Moreover, further information in detail about these key concepts is available in Chapter 2.

Table 1: Definitions of Terms

Term	Definition
<i>Academic Discourse Socialization</i>	a process by which newcomers to an academic community become a more competent member when participating in its oral and written discourse. (Duff, 2010). In this study, Academic Discourse Socialization refers to the academic experiences of the participants in the class activities.
<i>Acculturation</i>	“the process by which individuals change both by being influenced by contact with another culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes underway in their own culture.” (Berry, 1990; p. 235). In this study, acculturation concerns the participant’s social and academic experiences upon being in a new social environment.
<i>Acculturative Stress</i>	“The concept of acculturative stress refers to one kind of stress, that in which the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation; in addition, there is often a particular set of stress behaviors which occurs during acculturation, such as lowered mental health status (specifically confusion, anxiety, depression), feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level,

Table 1 (cont'd)

Term	Definition
<i>Acculturative Stress</i> <i>cont'd</i>	and identity confusion.” (Berry et al., 1987; p. 492). In this study, acculturative stress is defined as the process that the participants experience because of acculturative stressors. In this study, acculturative stress is defined as the process that the participants experience because of acculturative stressors.
<i>Acculturative Stressor</i>	The causes of the acculturative stress during one’s acculturation.
<i>Adaptation</i>	A relatively longer process compared to acculturation in which a person gets accustomed to the language, culture and values of a new social environment.
<i>Coping Strategy</i>	Approached utilized by people to manage and decrease the negative effects of stress. In this study, the stress is stemming from acculturation. That is why, coping strategy and acculturative coping strategy are used interchangeably in this study.
<i>Cultural Awareness</i>	Being aware of similarities and differences among and between cultural groups and being conscious of one’s own culture (i.e. perceptions, values, and biases.)
<i>Cultural Conflict</i>	Clashes experienced because of differences among and between cultural groups.
<i>Cultural Distance</i>	The stress experienced by an acculturating person in his process of acculturation (Babiker, Cox & Miller, 1980). The differences between the home culture and the host culture defined cultural distance in this study.
<i>Cultural Fit</i>	The degree to which an immigrant is able to conform and adapt to values and behaviors in a new social environment.
<i>Cultural Knowledge</i>	The level of knowledge-based skills in order to act as a legitimate person in a new social environment.
<i>Culture Shock</i>	The distress of new-comers to a different culture experience as a result of being confronted with an environment in which familiar signs and patterns of social integration are no longer valid (Olberg, 1960).

Table 1 (cont'd)

Term	Definition
<i>Intellectual and Psychological Preparedness</i>	The state of readiness upon gaining what it takes to be in a new social environment intellectually and psychologically.
<i>Language Barrier</i>	Unable to speak the target language fluently, which forms an obstacle for a person in a new social environment.
<i>Perceived Discrimination</i>	A person's perception that he is treated in a different and unfair way in a new social environment because of his different background.
<i>Self- Efficacy</i>	The belief in one's own capabilities to achieve specific goals.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Presentation

This chapter presents a literature review divided into four main sections. Starting with the foregrounding theoretical frameworks and sensitizing concepts of the study, the literature review addresses the overall picture first by rendering what it means to be an international graduate student in the USA. Then narrowing its focus to be more specific to this study, it presents what it means to be a Turkish graduate student in the USA by presenting the problems that previous Turkish graduate students encountered during their study abroad in the USA. As an attempt to see what has been done so far in the international and national literature to smooth and ease the initial stages of the international graduate students' acculturation, the relevant literature on the orientations implemented so far is provided. In this regard, the first section is based upon the literature pertaining to two theories that foreground the present study which are acculturation model (Berry, 1997) and academic discourse socialization (Duff, 2010) in company with sensitizing concepts for the study. Furthermore, the second section titled as being an international graduate student in the USA includes the relevant literature to draw a holistic picture of what studying in the USA as an international entails. Additionally, the third section focuses more on the experiences of Turkish graduate students in the USA. Lastly, the fourth section contains what has been done for international graduate students of the USA to smooth and ease their initial stages of acculturation and adaptation under the title orientations for international graduate students.

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives to Explore Acculturation and Adaptation

Used by American social anthropologists towards the end of the 19th century, acculturation and adaptation have named the theoretical frameworks of many studies in a large number of different disciplines in the literature so far. Since acculturation and adaptation are directly concerned with, it is worth having a definition of culture by Hofstede (1991) here:

Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. (p. 6)

In his study, Linton (1960), adopting ethnography as the research design, studied the changes Native Americans needed to make in order to become more integrated into mainstream American society. In addition to the social and psychological changes which would be necessary for closing integration to take place, the notion of the distance was identified by him in two main parts as social distance and psychological distance. While the former was associated with the actual contact available between the two cultures, the latter represented the extent to which the learner wanted to become closely adapted to the dominant culture. His study was acknowledged as the origin of acculturation theory by McLaughlin (1987).

Moreover, social distance and psychological distance were also referred in Schumann's work (1978). While dealing with these two concepts, Schumann described social distance as something referring to the learner as a member of a social group that is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language. In order to shorten the social distance, various factors are listed; for example, *social dominance* regarding political, cultural, technical or economical dominance and subordination of the second-language learning group to the target language group. In this case, the tendency of social contact between the two groups is assumed to be insufficient for optimal target language acquisition since nearly equal statuses will enhance more contact between the two groups and acquisition of the target language. The second factor is listed as *assimilation, preservation, and adaptation*. About these three concepts, *assimilation* is

regarded as the best condition for second language acquisition, and it is followed by *adaptation* as the second best condition. The least favorite condition is *preservation* that occurs when these two group of people in contact maintain to remain separated in linguistic and cultural aspects. The third listed factor is *enclosure* via which it is acknowledged that the most favorite conditions will remain if the second-language learning group share more social institutions including schools, churches, workplaces, shops, and others with the target group. *Cohesiveness and size* were listed as another factor. About these concepts, it is assumed that the small size and less amount of cohesiveness possessed by the second-language learning group are regarded as the signs of more favorable the conditions for second language acquisition. Another factor is *congruence* which implies that the number of similarities between the cultures of the two groups will define the likelihood of the second language acquisition as a result of their social contact. Also, *attitude* is brought up in the list of factors since positive attitudes held by the second-language learning group toward the target language community will sign more favorable conditions for second language acquisition. Finally, *intended length of residence* is listed among the factors since there is a positive correlation between the length of residence and the motivation to learn the second language. That is, it is more likely for a second-language learner group to respect the necessity of learning the target language since they are in the target community for a longer duration. As for the psychological factors as secondary important, he listed language shock which is the learner's confusion when using second language and culture shock which is the learners' disorientation as a result of culture differences among the factors affecting the psychological distance.

Among the competing views of what acculturation and adaptation mean, there are two quotes widely used in many studies as cited in Berry (2005). The first one is one of the earliest definitions to approach acculturation as a process that came from Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits (1936). It reads as follows:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. (p. 149–150)

As for the second one, acculturation was defined by Social Science Research Council (1954) as reads:

Culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life (p. 974).

Moreover, in his definition, Berry (1990) defined *acculturation* as “the process by which individuals change both by being influenced by contact with another culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes underway in their own culture” (p. 235). Referring to changes in an individual who is a participant in a culture contact situation, Graves (1967) introduced psychological acculturation of the individual influenced both directly by the external culture, and by the changing culture of which the individual is a member. Two main reasons reason behind two different levels of acculturation as cultural and psychological were stated by Berry (2005) as follows:

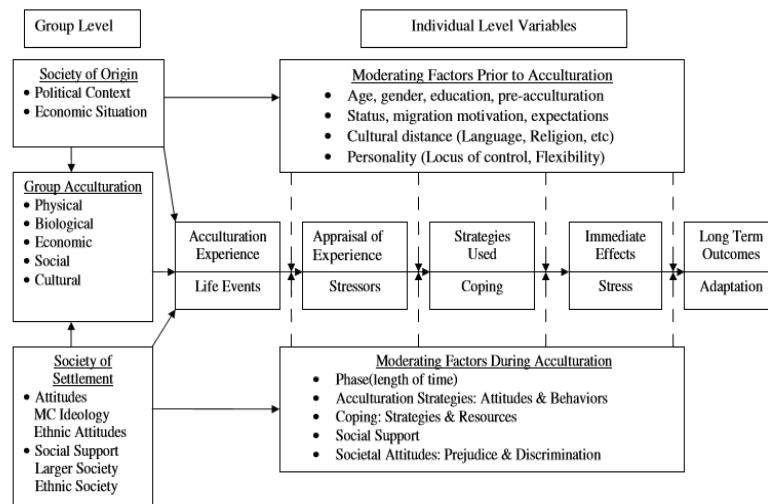
The first is that cross-cultural psychology views individual human behavior as interacting with the cultural context within which it occurs. Given these two distinct levels of phenomena, separate conceptions and measurements are required. The second reason is that not every individual enters into, and participates in, or changes in the same way; there are vast individual differences in psychological acculturation, even among individuals who live in the same acculturative arena. That is, while general acculturation is taking place at the group level, individuals have variable degrees of participation in them, and variable goals to achieve from the contact situation.

In addition to competing definitions, there are also competing models developed for acculturation. Cited as the earliest model by putting learner factors at the core of discussion, Schumann’s acculturation model (1978) was developed upon exploring Alberto acquiring English without getting any professional help in a Portuguese-speaking neighborhood while working in a factory of some non-native speakers of English. By underlining the social and psychological distance from the speakers of the target language, English in this case, Schumann acknowledged that it was Alberto’s limited contact with English speakers that resulted in his limited acquisition of English. The level of language proficiency the learner achieves is believed to strictly depend on the degree of acculturation by Schumann (1978).

What is more, two years later in another model, four stages of the process of acculturation in the target language natural environment were listed by Brown (1980). The first stage is *euphoria* that happens the learners get excited over the newness of the surroundings. The second stage is *culture shock* that emerges as individuals feel the intrusion of more and more culture differences into their own images of self and security. The third stage is *cultural stress- gradual recovery* that occur some problems of acculturation are solved, while others continue for some time after the learner whose problems center around the question of identity starts to understand the differences in thinking. Finally, the fourth stage was *full recovery- adaptation, assimilation or acceptance of the new culture* that is when a new identity developed. However, many criticisms aroused in many related studies since they concluded that the models developed were inefficient in accounting for their psychological analysis of how members of diverse cultures coming into contact with one another.

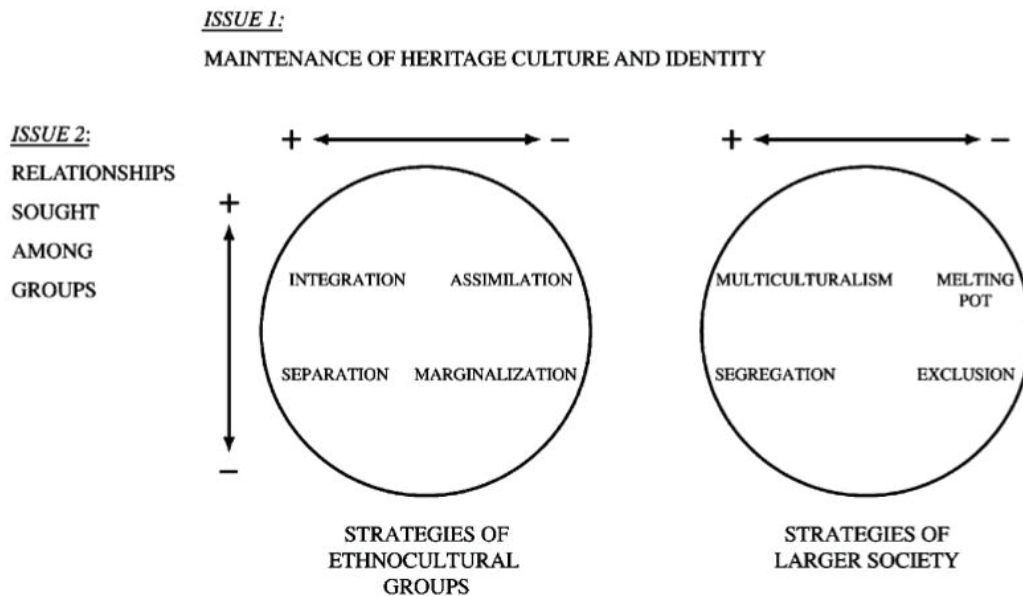
As stated by Schumann (1968), the model only accounts for language learning under conditions of immigration for successful language learning to take place, which underlines the reasons behind its irrelevance to the present study simply because the foci are not on their process of acquiring the target language but on their process of acculturating and adapting to the target community and this requires more psychological analysis. In that sense, Berry's model (1990) and acculturation strategies (1980) offer a more convenient base to present and discuss the findings of the present study. Inspiring a large body of literature on acculturation in various ethnic groups (Berry, 2003), Berry's bidimensional model of acculturation (1990) constituted the dominant theoretical framework of this study with foci on moderating factors prior to and during acculturation which are listed under individual level variables as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Individual and Group Level Variables in Berry’s framework of Acculturation (Berry, 1997)



As moderating factors prior to acculturation, there are some factors, as seen in Table 2, such as age, gender, education, pre-acculturation, status, migration motivation, expectations, cultural distance, and personality. As for moderating factors during acculturation, phase, acculturation strategies including attitudes and behaviors, coping strategies and resources, social support, and societal attitudes including prejudice and discrimination are included. These two parts of moderating factors summarize the main foci of the present study during the development, implementation and assessment of the Pre-CCOM. In Berry’s work (et al., 1992), they broadened the scope of acculturation by including varieties of adaptation. The acculturative experience, in his framework, is seen as an important life event being characterized by stress, and it demands cognitive appraisal of a situation. Requiring coping strategies, the framework includes group and individual level variables. Two independent dimensions for the acculturation strategies of ethnic minority groups suggested by Berry (1980) as follows: (1) retention of one’s cultural traditions, and (2) establishment and maintenance of relationships with the larger society, as displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Four acculturation strategies (Berry, 2005)



Respecting the multiculturalism and its importance in societies, Berry (1980) postulated four factors specifically identified as acculturative strategies as illustrated via two important issues, as noted earlier, in Table 3 above. The first one is *assimilation* that happens when the person acquires the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture. In this case, the acculturating person seeks interactions with the host culture by not wishing to maintain their original cultural identity. The second one is *separation* that takes place when the person rejects the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture. In this option, the acculturating person avoids interactions with other by holding on to his native culture only. The third one is *integration* that occurs when the person acquires the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture. That is, the person possesses interest in maintaining his native culture while contacting with the target culture. Finally, the fourth one is *marginalization* that brings about when the person rejects the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture. Marginalization is defined when the person possesses little interest in both maintaining his heritage culture and having relations with others. It is also concluded that individuals have a choice in the matter of how far they are willing to go in the acculturation process. In that sense, there are many underlying reasons that affect the process such as personal characteristics, age, gender, purpose and length of the stay as the

promoter of the contact between cultures. In Berry's study (1997), he asserted the relationship between one's acculturation strategies and positive adaptation since he further elaborated on integration as the most successful; marginalization as the least successful; and assimilation and separation strategies as intermediate.

Additionally, the sensitizing concepts to interpret the gathered data within the light of emerged themes since the research design of the present study highly rely on an emergent nature are handled in this section. First of all, Ward (1996) noted there are two aspects to adaptation. One is *psychological adaptation* relating to a person's self-esteem, and level of stress (Sabatier & Berry, 2008) includes family, original culture, and identity. The other is *socio-cultural adaptation* pertaining to individual's ability to gain fundamental skills to maintain successful interaction with members of the host culture. Also, as stated by Sandel (2014), it involves interactions with peers, school, friends and the management of social life. In order to understand the underlying factors of these two types of adaptation, Berry (2005) asserts:

Analyses of the factors affecting adaptation reveal a general consistent pattern. Good psychological adaptation is predicted by personality variables, life change events, and social support, whereas good sociocultural adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contact, and positive intergroup attitudes. (p. 709).

Furthermore, the importance of teaching culture in acculturation model was cited by Kubota (1999) since he believes that the explicit teaching of the conventions of the target discourse community to second language learner students in order to overcome cultural differences is promoted in the acculturation model. In that sense, there is a need for empirical support. Culture-specific knowledge and skills are stated to provide the foundation for effective intercultural interactions and facilitate psychological adaptation to new socio-cultural environments La Brack (2002). By addressing the moderating factors under the individual level of Berry's acculturation model (1990), the Pre-CCOM as an intervention prior to acculturation was shaped to provide the students with the social and psychological support to smooth their acculturation and adaptation to their respective social and academic environments. Functioning as a resource of social support and cultural knowledge, psychological and socio-cultural adaptation offer essential insights to be based in the present study. Another factor considered in the development, implementation and

assessment of the Pre-CCOM was *acculturative stress and its stressors* as defined by Berry et al. (1987) as follows:

The concept of acculturative stress refers to one kind of stress, that in which the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation; in addition, there is often a particular set of stress behaviors which occurs during acculturation, such as lowered mental health status (specifically confusion, anxiety, depression), feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion. (p. 492)

Moreover, acculturative stress, as another important correlate of acculturation, represents negative “side effects” of acculturation including pressures to retain aspects of the heritage culture as well as pressures to acquire aspects of the receiving culture (Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002). Berry (2006) points out that the internationals may experience the acculturative stress as a result of moving to a foreign country along with life changes during their experience. Broadly confounded with many issues and consequences, *acculturative stress* was of great significance to explore while developing, implementing and analyzing the Pre-CCOM accordingly.

As another component of the grounding conceptual framework, *cultural awareness* is “a recognition of the pervasiveness of ethnocentrism” (Homann, 1999, p. 10). Raising country specific and general cultural awareness also triggers internationals’ openness to differences by making them attain more acceptance and greater tolerance to the differences. As soon as one attains more cultural awareness, he understands how his perception of the host country is shaped by his ideas under the effect of his cultural background and approaches the events around with more increased appreciation. As a priority of the Pre-CCOM, this ideally opens rooms for more intercultural communication between differing cultural groups. Therefore, it stimulates an increased level of *social connectedness* defined as “cognitive structure representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness” (Baldwin, 1992, p. 461). International students with greater social connectedness with Americans were stated in the study of Zhang & Goodson (2011) to feel more comfortable during intercultural communication and more easily identify with Americans regardless of cultural differences. They also pointed out that the students with a greater sense of connectedness may be more open to learning the host culture and

developing intercultural friendships. It also eases psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. This illustrates the reason why the activities, content and approaches in the Pre-CCOM in this study addressed issues to build a high level of social connectedness with the host society. In so doing, international students will be able to feel more contended in a variety of intercultural communication environments with intercultural communicators. Another important factor for the acculturation process was *perceived discrimination* since Berry (1997) referred it as the major factor among those making the acculturation process potentially stressful. While strengthening the person's ethnic group identity, perceived discrimination as the theme of a plethora of research is stated to weaken ties to the national group by Schmitt and Branscombe (2002).

Another moderating factor tackled in the Pre-CCOM is *cultural distance* which was introduced by Babiker, Cox and Miller (1980) to account for the stress experienced by an acculturating person in his process of acculturation. It is also suggested in the study of Triandis (1997) that the greater the difference in the cultural backgrounds, the more likely it is that the behavior of international students will be misunderstood. Thus, cultural friction or conflict occurs. Generally speaking, the adaptation is considered to be less positive in case of the greater cultural differences, which entails more culture learning. As predictors of the cultural distance, cultural differences were dealt with in the Pre-CCOM since cross-cultural trainings should strive to improve cultural awareness (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley & Riedel, 2006), cultural adjustment and cultural intelligence (Ang & Dyne, 2008).

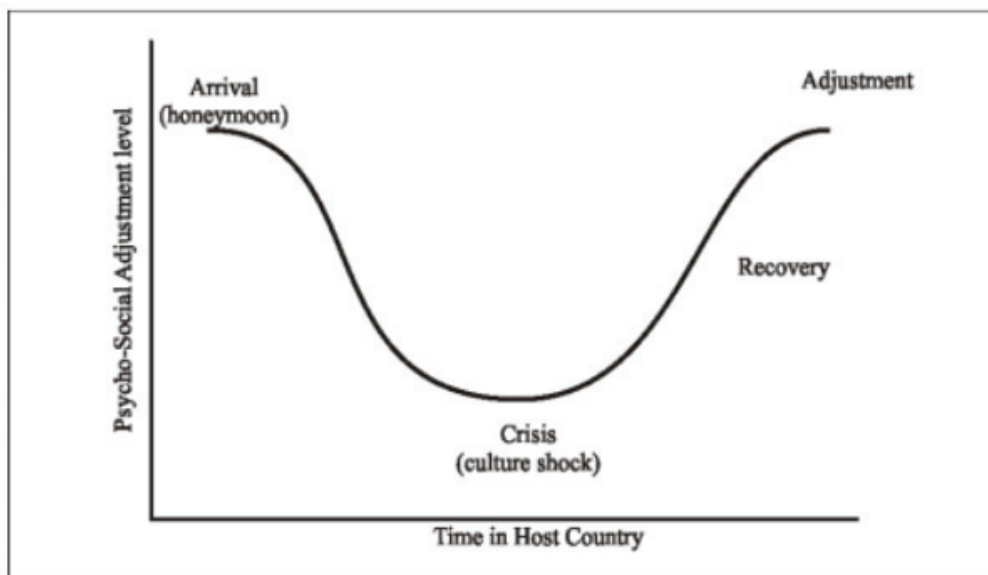
It is noteworthy to mention the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (henceforth, DMIS) created by Bennett (1986; 1993) as a framework to explain the way people experience and engage cultural difference. According to him, one of the main assumptions of the model is the possibility of predictions about the quality of intercultural communication thanks to the recognition of how people experience cultural difference. In this way, he also asserts that it is possible to tailor educational interventions to enhance development along the continuum including six different positions. The continuum extends from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Referring that one sees his own culture as central to reality, ethnocentrism is found in the first three position. These are *denial of cultural difference* in which one's own culture is experienced as the only real one

by avoiding considering other cultures, which results in psychological or physical isolation from difference; *defense against cultural difference* in which two concepts emerges as “us vs them” by underlining the superiority of us and inferiority of them, which results in high tendency of people to denigrate cultural difference; *minimization of cultural difference* in which cultural similarity is emphasized more than cultural difference, which ends up with more tolerance of superficial cultural diversity but obscurity of deep cultural differences. On the other hand, the second three positions are more ethno-relative since in these positions people experience their own culture and other cultures as relative to context. In that sense, the positions are *acceptance of cultural difference* in which other cultures are experienced as equally complex but various constructions of reality; *adaptation to cultural difference* in which one attains different worldviews of other cultures to behave in culturally appropriate ways; and *integration of cultural difference* in which one develops empathy towards the other culture by shifting smoothly from one culture to another thanks to the self as the marginal to any particular culture. Within the light of these positions in the continuum of DMIS, the data coming from three graduate students in the USA showed the way how they experience cultural difference.

Furthermore, as a term to describe the emotional reactions experienced by internationals upon encountering a new culture (Olberg, 1960), *cultural dissonance or culture shock* was revisited in light of the data gathered. According to Olberg (1960), culture shock is defined as the distress of new-comers to a different culture experience as a result of being confronted with an environment in which familiar signs and patterns of social integration are no longer valid. Olberg discussed four phases of emotional reactions of internationals while dealing with culture shock. The first phase is the honeymoon (i.e. feelings of euphoria, enchantment, fascination, and enthusiasm). The second phase is the crisis (i.e. feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety and anger). The third phase is the recovery (i.e. crisis resolution and culture learning). Finally, the fourth phase is adjustment (i.e. enjoyment of and functional competence in the new environment). Also, Schumann (1986) included culture shock among the four psychological factors of international students’ social and psychological integration to the target language group. It was also defined by Brown (2000) as “phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis” (p.183). While dealing with culture shock, it is noteworthy

here to illustrate the u-curve of the cycle of culture shock and adjustment by Lysgaard (1955) in Table 4.

Table 4: The U-curve pattern of cross-cultural adjustment (Adapted from Black & Mendehall, 1991, pp. 225-247)



First introduced by Lysgaard (1955), The U-curve hypothesis suggests four main adjustment periods or phases, which are arrival (honeymoon), crisis (culture shock), recovery, and adjustment phases as displayed in Table 4. Decreasing cultural distance by providing information, critical incidents experienced and shared by the experienced Turkish international students in the USA, the activities in the Pre-CCOM also handled culture shock to minimize it by reducing the degree of unpredictability and guesswork that scholars will face overseas (Grove,1989, p. 9).

As the interplay between language and culture, language socialization acknowledges that language learning also involves culture learning (Heath, 1983). In Leung's study (2001), language socialization is stated to deal with how novices "become competent members of their community by taking on the appropriate beliefs, feelings and behaviors, and the role of language in this process." (p. 2). Ochs (1996) also described the interplay between language acquisition and socialization as reads:

From this perspective, the acquisition of language and the acquisition of social and cultural competence are not developmentally independent processes, nor is one process a developmental prerequisite of the other. Rather, the two processes are intertwined from the moment a human being enters society. (p. 407)

Furthermore, language socialization is also adopted as a theoretical and methodological framework to explore “how language practices organize the life span process of becoming an active, competent participant in one or more communities” (Ochs, 2001, p. 227). Referred as the linguistic and interactional processes (Duff, 2002), language socialization is the way novices become acculturated into the linguistic and sociocultural practices of a group or a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Still as an emerging line of research, academic discourse socialization is also explored via language socialization. Academic discourse socialization is referred as a process by which newcomers to an academic community become a more competent member when participating in its oral and written discourse by Duff (2010). International students have also been reported to encounter great difficulties in adapting to new academic settings, which was dealt with in the following parts of the literature review. As for academic discourse as the backbone of academic discourse socialization, Duff (2010) describes it as “not just an entity but a social, cognitive, and rhetorical process and an accomplishment, a form of enculturation, social practice, positioning, representation, and stance-taking.” (p. 170). In order to achieve success at educational settings, it was claimed by Zappa-Hollman (2007) that one not only needs to possess advanced level literacy skills, but also acting according to the specific rules in their fields of study and the ability to behave in socially acceptable ways are among necessities. A good line of research on academic discourse socialization has put forward insights into internationals’ socialization in academic settings in terms of written, or spoken interactions and the related challenges such as linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological (e.g. nervousness, shyness, or insecurity) (Zappa-Hollman, 2001; 2007); unfamiliarity with academic tasks and unfamiliarity with the American pop culture (Leki, 2001); nervousness, shyness and insecurity (Morita, 2009; Zappa-Hollman, 2001; 2007), which prevented them from actively participating in class activities as a legitimate member. Hence, they are exposed to some negative feelings such as incompetency and incapability among their American peers and classmates (Leki, 2001; Morita 2004). By introducing the participants to

the specific rules and socially accepted behaviors in their respective academic contexts, this study also adopts academic discourse socialization as its theoretical framework to explore in what aspects the participants benefitted from the Pre-CCOM about their socialization into academic environments.

2.2 Being an International Student in the USA

Studying abroad is a common practice whether the experience is short-term to gain intercultural understanding and/or study the language, or long-term to complete a degree (Andrade, 2006) for international students all around the world. Students from other countries have been going to the USA since 1784 (Hendricks & Skinner, 1977). There are many differing reasons behind this popularity such as the quality of education, developed research techniques and methods, qualifications ascribed, prestige upon reentry to homeland, learning a new language, meeting new people and so on. With a varying number across different countries, international students coming to the USA to obtain college degrees have shown exponential growth (Levin, 2010; Tseng & Newton, 2002). The Statistics revealed by UNESCO (2012) showed that among the top 20 universities for international students the USA ranked as the first with a record of 749.482 students, the U.K was the second with a record of 427.686 students, France was situated in the third place with a record of 271.399 students. According to the International Institute for Education in their Open Doors report for 2013-2014 academic year, the number of international students at colleges and universities in the USA is released to increase by eight percent, achieving a record high of 886,052 students. Once again, these all confirm the country as the most popular destination for higher education.

There are unprecedented and reciprocal assets of studying abroad for both the international students and the institutions welcoming them since international students contribute to an institutions' economy, teaching, and research (Andrade, 2006; Ren & Hagedorn, 2012). It is also emphasized by National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (henceforth, NAFSA) (2003) that in addition to being a source of needed revenues, international students, as they bring strong academic backgrounds, add to the cultural

diversity of their new campuses and contribute to intercultural learning and increased understanding of this diversity and global issues.

Presenting opportunities for personal and professional development, pursuing a degree in the USA possesses, on the other hand, challenges which are deemed to exist in any cross-cultural educational experience. The problems undermining the international experience in the USA have been mirrored in a genre of research studies in which researchers have tried to picture the problems that international students have been through. Most common findings of such studies echoing in the related literature comprise language barrier (Chen, 1999; Mori 2000; Trice,2003; Pedersen, 1991; Zhai, 2002); educational, sociocultural and practical stressors, discrimination (Smith & Khawaja, 2011); acculturative and life stress, lack of social support, and low identification with the host culture (Zhang & Goodson, 2011); adjustment problems to new and culturally different expectations pertaining to teaching, learning, classroom participation, and assessment (Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Oei & Notowidjojo, 1990); forging meaningful social relationships (Pritchard & Skinner, 2002); rejection, not fitting in the culture, hostility against religions, feeling uncomfortable in social interactions, alienation from the host country, emotional vulnerability, feelings of being unwanted and disliked, and religious and moral conflicts (Eröz, 2003); feelings of exclusion and a lack of support emanating directly from prejudicial attitudes (Beoku-Betts, 2004); homesickness, loneliness, and depression (Wehrly, 1988); irritability, excessive concerns with health, distrust and hostility toward local people, hopelessness, withdrawal, rigidity, and lowered work performance (Brislin, 1981).

The existing literature has also displayed several sources as responsible for these problems international students face. In addition to the students' low identification with the host culture (Zhang & Goodson, 2011), faculty members are stated not to be always familiar with ways to resolve problems that international students present (Trice, 2003). This accompanies cultural communication boundaries leading to cases in which, stated by Thompson and Thompson (1996), international students did not ask for clarification of issues or assignments that were unclear in addition to their rarely debating issues, almost never disagreeing with the opinion of a classmate or instructor, or almost never challenging the status quo.

2.3 Studies on Turkish International Students in the USA

Before going into detail, it is noteworthy here to explain the choices of Turkish students to be an international in the USA. In Turkey, both students and academicians are candidates to experience study abroad in the USA for differing purposes such as participating in the programs mainly supported and sponsored by the National Agency, the Fulbright Program and the Ministry of National Education. In addition to such opportunities, many people manage their path to the USA by personal initiatives. In terms of relevance to the present study, I put the emphasis on the scholarship sponsored by the MONE. The scholarship is called YLSY in its Turkish abbreviation meaning that selection and placement of the candidates to be sent abroad for graduate degrees. For the purposes of this study, the Turkish abbreviation of the institution, that is MONE, is applied while referring to the participants interchangeably with Turkish graduate students. The objectives of this scholarship are to meet the needs of academic staff at universities and some state institutions such as the General Directorate of Turkey Petroleum Corporation, Turkish Republic General Directorate of State Railways Administration and Turkish State Meteorological Service. The scholars are financed during the intensive English course in Turkey which lasts for six months and their graduate degrees in the USA by the MONE. However, there is a fine detail since the scholarship is mutual. That is, there are mandatory service obligations for the scholars upon fulfilling their education in the USA. After their return, they have to work for the pre-defined institutions for an amount of time scheduled for them in accordance with the time spent in Turkey and in the USA. Further details about the MONE scholars are included in the methodology part.

When the literature so far is reviewed, it becomes clear that international graduate students in the USA have attracted their deserved attention in a good number of world-embracing studies. Conversely, the literature about the Turkish graduate students' experience in the USA universities seems to be limited and there are few studies on the MONE scholars. As one of the earliest studies, Turkish international students, who came back to Turkey after their study in the USA were studied by Davis (1971) to examine their attitudes towards the USA. In his study, Davis embodied the two-way mirror and the u-

curve methods to measure the images of America. While assessing the beliefs of the participants, he focused on five aspects of the country which were *social structure* including political and economical, *American character or personality*, *education*, *diplomacy*, and *family life*. In the conclusion, Turkish returnees from America who had spent only a limited time, such as one or two years, were reported to find the USA not preferable; however, this was not the case for the ones staying longer as they were stated to possess more favorable views towards the host country and its life. In such studies, as possible promoters of “the images”, individual, cultural, political and sociological nature are studied comprehensively.

Among the rare studies in Turkish literature, Çelik-Yalçın (1998) investigated the academic and social adjustment problems of Turkish graduate students in the USA in order to develop a psychometrically sound scale of Turkish graduate students’ adjustment problems, while defining academic and social dimensions of adjustment problems. Along with the aim of creating an understanding about Turkish graduate students' adjustment problems, the study opted for promoting clear policies and practices to improve those students' social and academic experience in the USA. The results revealed the academic adjustment problems and social adjustment problems. As for the academic adjustment problems, the study handled academic difficulties due to language problems, academic problems in the classroom, language skills, support from peers and advisors, problems in using resources and unfamiliarity with examples. As for their social adjustment, the problems accumulated on the following seven factors: communication problems, environmental and cultural problems, social interaction, homesickness, social life, discrimination, and financial problems. Presenting many implications regarding pedagogy, Çelik-Yalçın highlighted the need to prepare Turkish graduate students with orientation classes before their departure for the USA as the study suggested that such classes held the potential to draw their attention to the differences in academic and social lives and to make the things easier to adjust by preventing the students from taking some cultural cases personally.

Marking a new epoch in the literature of these kinds of non-linguistic or partially linguistic difficulties that Turkish students experienced in the USA, Tatar (2005) examined Turkish students’ perceptions of oral class participation in graduate courses at a USA university by using interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations and collected

class syllabi and presentation handouts during one academic semester. Multiple factors were announced to influence the participants' classroom participation experiences, which led to the differences in classroom environments ranging from the most anxiety stimulating to the most facilitative one. Among the factors dealt with in the study, there were mainly educational factors such as cultural background, environmental factors such as discussion topic, and influence of classroom dynamics such as peer dominance in discussion. Behind the participants' perceptions of non-existing or limited oral class participation, their silent engagement, their willingness only for useful interaction, and their high participation interest when the topic was relevant to the assigned readings, their low concern about their participation frequency were referred. Also, she highlighted the Turkish students' confusion about the academic expectations. Tatar's study (2005) held a stimulating power as several studies have focused on Turkish students since then. One of them is the study of Bektaş, Demir and Bowden (2009) in which they put their focus precisely on the acculturation of Turkish university students in North America. They investigated how psychological adaptation of 130 Turkish students was influenced by acculturation factors. Predictors of psychological adjustment were revealed in the analyses to be their means of social support and self-esteem.

Moreover, Yıldırım (2009) included 53 Turkish undergraduates majoring in dual diploma programs at the University of Buffalo to gain a clear understanding of problems related to their adaptation process. He addressed a range of sources from which the difficulties stemming; for instance, English language deficiency and concerns about adaptation. Through a questionnaire, the students were expected to rate a range of problems they had faced after their arrival in the USA, which contributed to a full report of challenges ranging from unfamiliarity with teaching methods, professors' requirements and expectations, incapability to focus on studies, difficulties in class participation, concerns about grades, to novelty of the relationships between students and teachers. Within the light of gathered data via the questionnaire, the participants were reported to experience a moderate level of adjustment problems in their new academic and social environments. Adding to the existing knowledge by shedding light on adjustment problems experienced by Turkish students in the USA, Yıldırım stated that the pre-departure orientation conducted in Turkey was regarded as being not comprehensive enough to prepare them for the

challenges of the new social and academic contexts. Yıldırım's investigation of the academic cultural elements that affected the students is of great importance and relevance to the current study.

As one of the recent studies, Gertzog (2011) surveyed 58 Turkish students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in 18 different American institutions to render their experience in order to smooth their transition into new educational environments Turkish students, in their new academic and social lives. In the study, the participants were reported to come across adjustment problems in a moderate level. The researcher also addressed these challenges under five categories; (1) *unfamiliarity with classroom teaching methods and tools* simply including wait time behavior, turn-taking, volunteering to participate in the classroom, note-taking, following lecture organization, seating arrangement practices, taking field trips, blackboard use and keeping a student diary; (2) *cultural and social challenges with North American classmates* covering lack of exposure to popular culture, lack of exposure to other cultures, influence of personal or prior knowledge, perceptions about diversity, limited contact with native speaking students, nonexistent shared identity, lack of shared interests, discomfort with establishing study groups and high levels of competitiveness; (3) *student expectations of professors* consisting of reliance on summarization of required reading, necessity for educators to follow textbooks, professors showing empathy to students and students' belief in the professors' expertise; (4) *instructor expectations of students* pertaining to appreciation for and familiarity with pair and group work, class participation, understanding of the rules related to cheating, familiarity with rules related specifically to plagiarism, innovative rather than rote learning, autonomous learning, ability to read voluminous and complex reading material, students' vocalization of confusion or incomprehension, willingness to learn beyond the required scope, development of relationships with teachers and advisors, knowledge of classroom etiquette related to tardiness and attendance; (5) *concerns about test-taking* enclosing exam style preferences, written versus oral exams, memorization versus critical thinking requirements and student test-taking ability. Including 18 different American colleges and universities, the study illustrated differences and presented implications to be taken into account by many stakeholders such as ESL instructors,

international students and professors, and administrators in the USA higher education contexts.

Moreover, the role of perceived discrimination, social connectedness, age, gender, and years of study in the USA, English language competency, and social contact patterns on adjustment difficulties were examined by Duru and Poyrazlı (2011). The findings of 229 Turkish international students studying in the USA showed that lower levels of adjustment difficulties experienced by the students who reported higher levels of social connectedness, lower levels of perceived discrimination, more years of study in the USA, and higher levels of English language competency. Moreover, it was shown that the predictors of adjustment difficulties were social connectedness and perceived discrimination. In addition, socializing with individuals from the USA was reported to lower the levels of adjustment difficulties of the students compared to the ones who strongly endorsed separation by socializing with only co-national members. Presenting some important implications for higher education personnel, findings stressed the value of intervention programs which is aimed at helping Turkish international students undergo a smooth transition by providing them with ways to reduce and cope with discrimination; and opportunities to increase their social connections with their social or academic environments.

Furthermore, Ortaçtepe (2012) explored four Turkish international students who studied in the USA within the framework of language socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986) to understand “how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in this process” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986, p. 167); and conceptual socialization (Kecskes, 2002) to refer to the process that second language learners go through in becoming members of the target language community in terms of linguistic and social aspects. The study had an important role in exploring the process that Turkish international students experienced during their conceptual socialization since it shed light on the socialization of international students in the host culture’s social and language aspects in addition to presenting recommendations for future international students to facilitate their conceptual socialization process. Social aspects of the study rather than linguistic repertoires possessed more relevant examples to the present study since it did not put its any foci on linguistic aspects of the participants in the USA. In that sense,

Ortaçtepe's findings yielded important insights into the challenges experienced by Turkish participants. To briefly summarize, different levels of intercultural adaptation to American culture such as integration, separation and marginalization, based on Berry's intercultural adaptation model (1990), were experienced by the participants. More specifically, Ortaçtepe (2013) focused on Erol's case by dealing with the challenges he experienced. She concluded the challenges as being stuck in-between, free-falling, lack of socialization with the target language speakers, feelings of loneliness, lack of meaningful relationships under the emergent themes of Erol's narratives.

More specific to the current study, according to the report of Council of Turkish Higher Education (2005), 43% of the Turkish international graduate students financially supported by the Council of Turkish Higher Education returned to Turkey without fulfillment of their graduate training due to academic failure. Similar findings have echoed in many other studies (i.e. Poyrazlı & Kavanaugh, 2006) and common factors behind the academic failure of Turkish international students were found to pertain to adjustment processes. Such studies concluded that Turkish international students with higher levels of perceived discrimination would face a tough time in their respective social environment in addition to going through more adjustment difficulties. This leads us to the importance of the Pre-CCOM to support the Turkish international students during their anticipated hard times in their acculturation and adaptation process to the host culture. More specifically, as a huge part of the Turkish graduate students in the USA, there is a need to shed light on Turkish MONE scholars' experiences in the USA to explore their experiences in depth, which is of great importance to the Pre-CCOM developed, implemented and assessed in this study. Therefore, I address what has been done about the orientation of the acculturating person before and after their arrival in the host country in both international and national research avenues.

2.4 Orientations for International Students in the USA

A brief review of the existing body of research clears up the important point that there is a lack of attention and quality support to international students in USA classrooms (Andrade, 2006; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Trice, 2001) and calls up for

further researchers to investigate the influx of international students and their acculturation and adaptation experiences. Therefore, the importance and great need of support and encouragement for international students have been pronounced to pursue the integration path in their new and culturally diverse contexts (Berry et al., 2006).

Most commonly, providing the needed support is executed in two ways: *individually* – they are left to luck to start acculturating and adapting themselves via self-searching tools such as videos, getting help from the people in the host culture that they are familiar with and etc.; *professionally* – done by professional institutions or academicians via presentations, orientations no matter if they are one-shot or longer. In the former one, such international students simply try to get in touch with their fellows currently or previously experiencing the USA social and academic culture. To do this, most common practices exist in social networking sites via special groups created for the knowledge transfer between the experienced and inexperienced international students. As for the latter, NAFSA, for instance, functions as a substantial bridge to the materials that can be used by educators in charge to support international students before and after their arrival in the host culture. It also offers many different intercultural activity toolkits and lists invaluable data on many aspects related to the social and academic lives in the USA. In its report released in 2007, there are lists of universities offering pre-arrival materials that are sent to the international students before arriving at their institution; for instance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Indiana University, University of Kentucky, and Ohio State University. They provide prospective international students with information on important documents, time limits, employment, cross-cultural experience, health insurance, travel, income tax, extensions, immigration procedures, dependents, departure, reminders, health insurance, housing, travel to campus, information about university and city. Moreover, arrival packets are also reported by NAFSA (2006) as materials packaged in a folder enclosing brochures, handouts, cards and handbooks and given to the scholar upon their arrival. In the same document, out of many ways to orient new comers, orientation presentations are also reported to be the most traditional and commonly applied ones in many hosting institutions such as Calvin Theological Seminary Carnegie Mellon University, Cyprus Fulbright Commission, Duke University, Georgetown University, University of

Kentucky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Ohio State University, University of Southern California.

Advancing the support, Campbell (2012) described a “buddy project” as an example from intercultural communication classes to promote intercultural communication on campus. In this project, each student was a buddy for a newly arrived international student for a semester with the purpose of giving social support to international students in the crucial first few months of their sojourn. The project in hand also complemented host students’ class-based theoretical learning with practical, meaningful experience with peers from another culture. Discussing the outcomes, challenges, and students’ evaluations of the experiential learning exercise, Campbell concluded the article with some students’ recommendations for future projects. Among such recommendations, starting the project sooner so as to maximize the benefits for the international students, extended duration of the project to ease the time pressure, reduction in the number of face-to-face encounters, increasing the number of get-togethers of body pairs with other pairs and arranging a whole-class get-together were suggested by the participants. In addition to these student recommendations, Champbell also elaborated that it could be adapted for use in other courses; for example, in language courses, and even the project could be implemented as a more general, faculty-wide, or even university-wide, project with a number of changes. In addition to all these tackled so far, many universities; for example, The University of Georgia, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Trinity University, design pre-orientation programs with the purpose of jumpstarting student engagement. Such programs embody experiences that increase connectedness to each other and their new academic contexts. The activities range from rock climbing, working in soup kitchens to researching undersea vehicles.

As examples of orientations overwhelmingly are initiated by the host universities, it may be misleading since one may think that orientations are only –and should be– executed by the faculty members in the host culture. However, it is highlighted in many studies that there is an emergent and great need to enhance the experience of acculturation and adaptation prior to their arrival, in other words, ‘at home’ in their home countries. Recently associated also in multicultural training, prior to departure cross-cultural training, known as CCT, is stated to help the border-crossers, international students

in this case, be prepared for the understanding of the cultural differences, which empowers their abilities for an easier and smoother cultural adjustment. CCT can be initiated in three different time intervals identified by Sinkkonen (2008; cited in Pessala, 2012) as before leaving to the host country (pre-departure), after arriving to the destination (post arrival) and when returning back (repatriation). Moreover, Jang & Kim (2010) also emphasized that being aware of how the host culture shapes the acculturation experience should make a considerable contribution towards a successful exchange semester.

In terms of underpinning conceptual framework of orientations, there are some available studies discussing what should be and should not be included in the orientations and how the topics are dealt with. To narrow the gap between the theory and practice regarding the program design, de Melo Dreasher (1993) discussed *learning domains (i.e. cognitive, behavioral and affective)* addressed in cross-cultural preparation for newly arrived international students by addressing *approaches (i.e. didactic and experiential)* and also *contents (i.e. culture-specific and culture-general)*. By proposing an integrated model for such programs, the researcher also defined the activities to be included as follows; distribution of reading materials, lectures/informational meetings, videos/film/slides, panel presentations, group discussions, field trips/tours, outings to cultural events, how-to activities, role plays/simulation games, and social events that promote. The topics ranged from academic/student-life issues, health related issues, immigration and other legal issues, campus resources, opportunities/services, miscellaneous issues, banking/financial issues, housing issues, adjustment/culture shock, American culture/values, transportation issues, safety/security issues, social/relationship issues, other cross-cultural issues, area resources/ opportunities/services, shopping, identification, survival, orientation related, telephone to food issues. While increasing both their knowledge and capabilities in the host culture, the Pre-CCOM in this study addressed different domains of learning and approaches as discussed above in de Melo Dreasher's study (1993).

Within the same vein, Steglitz (1988) also presented a picture of what is being done in the orientations, theoretical concepts in the development and implementation parts, and practitioners' ideas on what should be done. In the same study, the need to integrate such programs into the university calendar as a legitimate and important part of

the academic year was also underlined. She pointed out that the topics included in the programs included visa/immigration service, registration procedures, academic advising, establishing cross-cultural relationships, local transportation, library tours, shopping, to other such as party, dinner, social activities, taxes, traffic safety, counseling and geographical. As for the techniques, she concluded upon gathering data from 166 practitioners that question-and-answer, discussion sessions, lectures, excursions, films, videos, tapes, small-group projects, experiences/case studies, simulation exercises, intercultural workshop, and other (including foreign student handbook, handouts, individual advisement, social activities) should be utilized while dealing with theoretical concepts such as culture shock, assimilation and adaptation, reentry shock, ethnocentrism, culture-general and culture-specific, multicultural person, third culture, high- and low-context culture, and subjective culture.

Also, the problems regarding such programs were reported to be time, institutional support, funding, outside resources, programming, miscellaneous. Another example of cross-cultural orientations was dealt with in the study of Gamboa (1998) in which friendly facts, identifying cultural values, fears and hopes, discussion with American students, communication across cultures, registration workshops, academic advising workshops, discussions with international students, role plays, case incidents were included by adopting an experiential approach.

Furthermore, Bennett and Bennett (2004) provided an overview of several styles of diversity training including their scope, content and the attitude toward the conflict. The perspectives meriting the researchers' attention are "capital C" culture approach, the assimilation approach, the diversity-lite approach, the "Isms" approach, the legal approach, the intercultural developmental approach. Dealing with each perspective individually, Bennett and Bennett concluded that each model had its merits when sequenced to the appropriate level of readiness of the diversity initiatives and professionals. Keeping this in mind, I can say that I applied a blended approach of these perspectives simply by including the "capital C" culture approach and the diversity-lite approach as the first step and the intercultural developmental approach as the second and final step to enhance the effectiveness of diversity work. The reasons behind the application of these three specific perspectives in my blended approach lie in their scope,

content and the attitude toward conflict. To clarify, the “capital C” culture approach considers the cultural creations of diverse people as the focus by building familiarity cultural concepts and increasing the visibility of various ethnic groups. Not being substantive in its value, the approach has its place with such activities since they have the potential to bring culture into consciousness for those who are the denial stage explained previously in this chapter. However, the clear limitation of the approach refers to the reality that familiarity with cultural creations on its own is not enough to enhance intercultural competence. That’s why, I applied this approach in this study as the first step to increase awareness of various ethnic groups. Considering the nice but not sufficient attempts of the approach, I made use of the other approaches to supplement the deficits. In that sense, the diversity-lite approach was taken into consideration while designing the content, activities and materials of the Pre-CCOM since it highlights the importance of diversity by increasing the diversity initiative’s familiarity with what is included in this diversity and presenting a few issues that might affect the workplace and business cases to support him. Although the approach is seen unchallenging for those already in ethnorelativism and less than is needed for those in immersion, it is still important as an initial step for those in later stages of ethnic identity development. It clarifies the reasons behind the application of this approach in the present study. Lastly, the intercultural developmental approach has its place in the study simply because it suggests that the long-term effectiveness of the diversity initiatives can be increased thanks to the careful assessment of readiness level of the diversity initiatives and professionals. It highlights the importance of preternatural wisdom and skills which are provided to the individuals when supported sufficiently via systematically challenging work. It has a range of activities for those in different positions. For example, it starts with user-friendly topics for those in the denial stage, activities underlining common humanity or common organizational goals for those in the defense stage to move to the minimization stage and unique concerns for those who are in the integration stage. Its main goal to increase the ethnorelativism in individuals summarizes the rationale behind its application in this study.

Corresponding with DMIS, solid and liquid interculturality (Dervin & Dirba, 2006) have been key concepts about the development and assessment of interculturality in language teaching and learning. In their study, Dervin & Dirba (2006) proposed a call for

paradigm shift by moving from solid interculturality to liquid interculturality. They referred to the former one as descriptions of national features imposed on all of the representatives of a country by others, or even themselves. However, some assertions in the literature are discussed in the study since they concluded that teaching unrelated solid cultural topics ends up in over-generalizations and stereotyping. Hence, Dervin and Dirba suggests liquid interculturality as the realities of society. In so doing, any cultural encounter, for them, is based on liquid individuals rather than solid representatives of culture. Taking liquid interculturality into consideration, I aimed to guide my participants towards the development of intercultural competence throughout the Pre-CCOM by including informants' voices. In this vein, we change our roles since we believe that it was a real collaborative work by emphasizing liquidity.

As for the Turkish literature on pre-departure cross-cultural orientation sessions, as far as I am concerned, there is almost no study available on the development, implementation and assessment of such a Pre-CCOM. Maybe, it is simply because pre-departure orientations are not executed or they are, at the best, implemented as a one-shot and a two-hour meeting with a low attendance of the prospective international students. In the study of Yıldırım (2009), Turkish international students in the USA stated that the pre-departure cross-cultural orientations conducted in Turkey were not effective in providing the needed support and knowledge to overcome challenges waiting ahead in the USA. However, no initiative has been taken to gain a deeper insight into these students' concerns pertaining to social and academic cultures in their respective environment with the aim of easing the perceived acculturative stressors and increasing cross-cultural awareness and social connectedness prior to arrival in the host country. Therefore, once at the campus is too late and there is an emergent need to develop pre-departure orientation sessions and put them into practice to see what it adds to the knowledge of Turkish graduate students before and after they begin their acculturation and adaptation in the USA.

Reviewing all the literature regarding each phase of the Pre-CCOM, I am, however, aware of the fact that there was no one-size-fits-all design for the Pre-CCOM in which every international graduate student's needs could be met. Hence, the module was not readily available on the market and started from scratch. For this reason, this study

took the participants' unique characteristics into consideration while planning the overall design of the Pre-CCOM for its development and implementation. The process started with a need analysis of participants via semi-structured initial interviews in which I dug into their intrapersonal and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses and their journey led them to be an international graduate in the USA in addition to their fears and hopes, images of the target culture and people. Within the light of data, I customized the Pre-CCOM accordingly by maintaining the fit between the needs of the participants and the content of the pre-CCOM.

When the existing gap in the literature is considered, this study is a pioneer in the existing body of knowledge on Turkish graduate students in the USA. Its contributions to the literature are substantive as it, for the first time in Turkey, attempted to construct the Pre-CCOM deduced from the literature on the needs of international graduate students in the USA and the needs of its participants who were prospective graduate students in the USA and put it into practice and assessed it via the reflections of the participants who went to the USA right after the Pre-CCOM. Upon dealing with theoretical concerns situating the current study in the field, now the methodology is dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Presentation

In this chapter, methodology applied in this study is presented in seven basic sections. The sections deal with the characteristics of the study, the research site and the participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, ethical issues, the researcher's positionality, and validation strategies, respectively.

3.1 Characteristics of the study

The present study is grounded on the theoretical frameworks of qualitative research paradigm. As being endlessly creative, interpretive (Denzin & Yvonna, 1998) and inherently multimethod in focus (Brewer & Hunter, 1989), the qualitative perspective, in this study, relies on a narrative-case study design to study three Turkish graduate students. In this vein, the participants provided narratives about their acculturation and adaptation process in the USA by focusing on acculturative stressors before and after their arrival in the USA upon participating in nine-week Pre-CCOM in Turkey. Also described by Bromley (1990), it is a case study as a "systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aims to describe and explain phenomenon of interest" (p.302). Thus, the goal of this study is "to rely on as much as possible on the participants' views of situation" (Creswell, 2013). It also opts for understanding a specific case selected to understand a specific problem to be concluded by "assertions" (Stake, 1995), or building "explanations" (Yin, 2010). Considering the match between the nature of the problem in hand and the approach adopted, I strongly believe this kind of methodology is the most applicable and reliable one to come up with sound answers to the research questions simply because "choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context" (Nelson et al., 1992, p.2). Recognizing the urgent need for empirically

tested qualitative studies on international students' acculturation and adaptation with their acculturative stressors, I believe narrative theory is the most suitable design since explicitly engaging with the complexity of the world and the finite nature of human understanding (Ezzy, 2002) yield answers to unanswered questions in the existing literature.

As an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life such as schooling, work, marriage, divorce, childbirth, an illness, a trauma, or participation in a war or social movement (Chase, 2007), narrative inquiry, in this study, places its foci on study abroad experiences of Turkish graduate students in the USA. Referring to the whole of a person's account (Ezzy, 2002), narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' action of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (Bruner, 1986; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Laslett, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1995). In doing so, this narrative-case study provides reflections of Ali, Nisa and Elif on their acculturation and adaptation in the USA considering their participation in the Pre-CCOM.

In its frameworks, narrative research looks into the way people make meanings of their experiences, and appreciates the multiplicity and context-dependency of meanings. By framing the present study in a narrative approach, I aimed at digging into the stories of each participant's acculturation and adaptation. As a narrative researcher, I began from a 'curious, not knowing' position (Anderson & Gehart, 2012) and took aim at questions and occurrences in order to see to the participants' engagements in the events, what and how they feel, think, approach about their interaction with these events; and the metaphors told to render their study abroad experiences. In the present study, my aim was not to generalize the findings of the three participants but to describe their stories in their new social and academic experiences. In that sense, the uniqueness of each participant's experiences and each informant's ones is emphasized throughout the current study.

3.2 The Research Site and Participants

3.2.1 The Research Site

This study was conducted in one of the oldest and biggest universities in Ankara. Prospective Turkish graduate students of the USA are the scholars financed by the MONE as well. For this reason, Turkish graduate students and the MONE scholars are used interchangeably while I refer to the participants. They had to attend a six-month (at most) intensive English course designed especially for such scholars who had to learn English and certify their proficiency by taking one of the two international English proficiency exams which were the TOEFL IBT (standing for Testing of English as a Foreign Language Internet Based Test) and the IELTS (standing for International English Language Testing System). For the match between all these scholars' concerns and my observations, the site was found to bear relevant data and be a good representative for the case of the current study.

Moreover, the Pre-CCOM was designed within the light of each participant's needs. In other words, the module was not readily available since it started from scratch by interviewing the participants about their needs, concerns about their prospective study abroad experience in the USA. Since the module was not included in their regular intensive English course, I executed the sessions only for the participants after the course at the Assembly Hall of the university. Therefore, there was no connection maintained with their on-going intensive English course during the sessions. After the participant's lessons finished, we met at the Assembly Hall and spent about two and a half hours during the nine weeks of the Pre-CCOM. For those gathering, we defined the most suitable day for each participant and we continued the Pre-CCOM on the scheduled day each week. Before each session, I prepared the hall for the participants. Since I aimed at preparing a different atmosphere from a regular class, I designed the sitting order to stimulate interactions among the participants (See Figure 1 below). In this regard, my objective was to help them get rid of their stress because of the upcoming exams and focus on what was presented during each session.



Figure 1: The place of the Pre-CCOM.

Furthermore, the gathered data during the initial interviews and the literature review on the content of the cross-cultural orientations moulded the topics of each week during the Pre-CCOM (See Table 5).

Table 5: Weekly Schedule of the Pre-CCOM

Session	Topics
S1	Introduction to the Pre-CCOM: Culture (in general, big C and small c cultures, individualism vs collectivism), Culture Shock, Cross-Cultural Adjustment (Importance and Phases), Introduction to American Culture, American Assumption & Values & Situations.
S2	American Culture: The American Way, Basic values and customs of the USA culture, Melting Pot vs Celebrating Diversity, Cross-Cultural comparison of sex roles, Understanding American Culture Do's and Don'ts, American Communication Styles, American Phrase Book, American Manners, Living in America.

Table 5 (Cont'd)

Session	Topics
S3	Survival as a “foreigner”: Immigration and other legal issues, Housing (furniture rental place, housing conflicts, apartment leases, residence hall living, etc.), Food, Shopping (Local shopping areas, discount stores, grocery stores, shopping malls, Farmer’s market, ethnic markets, etc.), Transportation (how to get a license/ buy a car, info about public transport).
S4	Survival cont’d: Health (wellness, stress control, health insurance, health care issues-substance abuse-etc.), Safety (personal safety-security-etc.), Hooking up a telephone, Relations and friendships (how to meet/greet people- sexual harassment/assault etc.), Financial issues & banking, Religious issues.
S5	Current Issues & Miscellaneous: Practical matters, Racism/challenges/religious opportunities-religion/prejudice, Discrimination (sexual/racial), Current events + trends SKYPE Interview with a PhD Fulbright Scholar.
S6	Academic & Student Life: Expectations and Academic responsibilities, Campus resources/opportunities/service materials, Academic life in the USA, Welcoming home, Registration Procedures (Add-drop).
S7	Academic & Student Life cont’d: Campus Virtual Tours, Library, Club activities & Student Organizations, Activities beyond academics, Hospitality Program, Campus Slang.
S8	Academic & Student Life cont’d: Student life in the USA (Int’l and National), Academic Ethics (Plagiarism, Honor Code etc.), Comparison of Turkish & American education systems/ expectations/ student & instructor roles, Tips on college survival, Problems experienced by int’l students.
S9	Current Trends on campus & Miscellaneous: How to use feet, inches, miles, how to read time schedules and maps Guest Speaker delivering his speech: A current MONE Scholar visited us in our session.

For a better understanding of the materials used in the Pre-CCOM, a sample session plan is provided in Appendix A. In addition to the topics and materials available above, the participants were required to read and watch the materials provided to them via e-mails and posts in a Facebook group created purposefully for the Pre-CCOM. In this regard, they were able to have access to documents for their pre-knowledge before each session. Therefore, they were able to come up with the questions and topics to be discussed during the session thanks to their background knowledge provided to them by me.

3.2.2 The Research Participants

Among an array of possibilities for purposeful sampling, a criterion based sampling (Patton, 2002) was initially adopted for the selection of the participants in

question who were the ones found eligible to be Turkish MONE scholars of 2014. In the intensive English course on this research site, the scholars were grouped into different classes based on their proficiency level and differing requirements for the aforementioned exams by their host countries, which had a good range from the USA to China. However, it is worth noting here that the main focus of the study was placed only on the ones going to the USA and taking the TOEFL IBT. Whenever they get the required grade for their entry to their host country (which is 5.5 for IELTS, 60 for TOEFL IBT), they are allowed to continue their intensive English course in the USA. Moreover, if they get the required grade to apply for their graduate programs, they can leave earlier and directly start their master's degree or PhD in their host countries. To qualify a candidate as a MONE scholar, the main qualifications required are to obtain 70 points upon summing up 40% of the interview, 40 % of ALES (standing for Entrance Examination for Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education) and 20% of GPA.

In this study, I needed to get insight into the expectations, concerns and needs of the scholars who would continue their education in the USA so my first criterion was all the participants had to go to the USA. As for the second criterion I followed, the participants should not have been abroad before. Also, they should not have attended any orientation programs, which was the third and the last criterion. Only the ones that satisfied these criteria were chosen as a good representative for this study. It is worth noting here that there were eight participants satisfied the criteria and took part in the Pre-CCOM throughout nine weeks. Since this study aimed to analyze the participants' narratives on the Pre-CCOM before their departure to the USA as well after as their arrival in the USA, it was of great importance for its design to have participants who would provide me with their accounts of concerns, needs, emotions and lived experiences before and after their arrival in the USA. For this reason, the present study focused on only three of them as these three participants were the only ones who managed to go to the USA by obtaining the required score for their intensive English course in the USA. Hence, Ali, Nisa and Elif were found eligible to be a participant in this study. The participants in question for this study expressed their concerns about the experience ahead of them since the course aimed at aiding only their English proficiency not their psychological and intellectual preparedness for their prospective social and academic lives in the USA. In this part, I would like to draw

general portraits of each participant in this section since further information is available in the results chapter.

3.2.2.1 ALI

Ali, born in 1990, completed his primary and high school education in his hometown, functioning as a bridge between the Aegean region and the Mediterranean region. Then he moved to Turkey's geographically biggest city in Turkey, for his higher education. Right after majoring in the Faculty of Veterinarian at a state university for five years, he started to pursue a master's degree in Bio-Chemistry at the same university. Without finishing his thesis, he got the scholarship financed by the MONE to fulfill his master's degree in the USA and come back to pay his obligatory duty for General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies in Turkey. Though having some limited contacts with people in the USA, he accepted that his knowledge was not enough to feel ready to start his journey in the host country. That was what made him perfectly suited for the study.

3.2.2.2 NİSA

As for Nisa, from a small city in the Mediterranean region, was a graduate of Faculty of Theology at one of the oldest and biggest universities in Ankara. Nisa was getting ready to venture into her brand new experience in the USA for her master's degree. In her scholarship, she was financed and required to work at a state university in a small city in the Southeastern Anatolia region upon fulfilling her master's degree in the USA. Having a religious look as head-scarfed and a religious name in addition to studying religion as her area of study, Nisa seemed very anxious about what she would experience in the USA since she held many unanswered and even unasked questions on her mind. In that sense, she worded the emergent need for her to get to know more about the host country related to her future social and academic lives, which was what made her an appropriate participant in the present study.

3.2.2.3 ELİF

Finally, Elif as the third participant was born and she also fulfilled her undergraduate degree in Ankara. In that sense, she was unique among the participants since she did not change her hometown to study at a university. That means she did not leave her family until that time, and did not experience any acculturation and adaptation even in different cities of Turkey as Ali and Nisa did. As a graduate of one of the oldest and biggest universities in Ankara, she majored in Chemical Engineering and at the time of the initial interview, she was pursuing her master's degree. Yet, she was planning to freeze her registration because of moving to the USA. She was financed by the MONE to fulfill her master's degree in the USA and come back to work for General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies in Turkey. Her unique background, deficits in her knowledge as she did not know many people to direct her questions and concerns regarding her future life in the USA were the antecedents of her being selected as a convenient participant for the study.

In this study, I had also informants real "helpers" to support the design and most importantly content of the developed and implemented Pre-CCOM. In this regard, I reached people with USA experience either currently or previously via word-of-mouth, social networking sites, e-mailing lists, and friend circles. Finally, I had great help from many former and current Turkish graduate students, a Chinese international student, and two American Fulbright scholars in Turkey. They provided their lived experiences, essential suggestions, deep insights, critical incidents, and learned lessons relevant to the topics of each week in a video or audio format. They shared some written accounts and life-saving documents as well. They functioned as a bridge for the participants between their home and host countries while highlighting one point in common "it is my experience, so it is unique".

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Throughout nine weeks of the Pre-CCOM, the qualitative data were gathered through a vast array of materials including semi-structured initial and final interviews, a mini-listing questionnaire, weekly video recordings, weekly reflective journals, reports, weekly researcher’s journals, weekly e-mail exchanges and follow-up (Skype) interviews. I applied many different data collection tools not only for triangulating the findings but also for my strong belief in the following statement coding “the more complex, interactive, and encompassing the narrative, the better the qualitative study.” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). This section deals with data collection tools and rationales behind individually in the sequel.

Moreover, as a qualitative researcher who “views social phenomena holistically” (Creswell, 2003), I preferred using some visuals of data collection process as clarifying complements of this section. In doing so, I aspire to establish a broad and panoramic holistic picture of data collection procedure. Hence, Table 6 (below) provides an outline of the qualitative data collection procedure applied in this study.

Table 6: Data Collection Procedure

Time	Focus	Length
Before-Pre-CCOM		
a. Initial Interviews,	a. Meeting participants in depth for the module design.	a. average one hour for each- 3 initial interviews.
b. A mini-listing questionnaire.	b. Learning more about the participants’ needs to satisfy in the module.	
While- Pre-CCOM		
a. Weekly video recordings,	a. Getting any potential data.	a. approximately 25 hours of video recording.
b. Weekly reflective journals,	b. Gaining reflections of the participants on the content each week’s session.	b. 81 pages of 27 reflective journals.

Table 6 (Cont'd)

Time	Focus	Length
While- Pre-CCOM cont'd		
c. Reports,	c. Gaining reflections of the participants on the whole sessions executed until then.	c. 12 pages of 6 reports.
d. Weekly researcher's journals.	d. Reminding myself of incidents in data analysis.	d. approximately 10 pages.
Post- Pre-CCOM		
<i>Before departure to the USA:</i>		
a. Final interviews,	a. Gaining reflections of the participants on the Pre-CCOM.	a. average one hour and a half for 3 final interviews.
<i>After arrival in the USA:</i>		
b. Weekly e-mail exchanges,	b. Tracking the participants' acculturation, their acculturative stressors and coping strategies used after the Pre-CCOM.	b. 20 pages of 27 e-mail exchanges,
c. Follow-up impromptu Skype interviews.	c. Maintaining rapport and credibility with the participants and clarification of their experiences reported in their weekly e-mail exchanges.	c. average two hours for 9 skype interviews

3.3.1 Interviews

Marked by the time of application as before and after the Pre-CCOM, there were semi-structured initial and final interviews both of which were one-to-one in nature as it is said to be more appropriate for 'sensitive topics' (Barbour, 2010). As stated by Seidman (2006),

Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior and adds that interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (p. 10)

Having some weaknesses such as consuming time, conducting interviews is the most common, natural and socially appreciated way of gathering data and traditionally used for narrative-case studies. Dörnyei (2007) comments on its being versatile research instruments as it works very well thanks to its known common routine nature. This nature also makes people feel comfortable with it, which allows for obtaining useful, rich and in-depth data. Thanks to my presence, I was able to ask follow-up questions to obtain quality clarifications on the participants' accounts in a flexible manner. For all these potential strengths, interviewing is the most suitable data collection tool when the aims and the design of this study are considered.

Semi-Directed Initial Interviews included the questions (Appendix B) specifically aiming at getting to know Turkish MONE scholars' social and academic profiles, their expectations, concerns, and needs about their study abroad experience in the USA. The data gained in the initial step are of great significance both to answer research questions and to define the content to be dealt with throughout the Pre-CCOM.

Final Interviews were conducted for the participants to reflect mainly on the Pre-CCOM. Being one-on-one as the initial ones, the interviews consisted of questions related to overall impact of the Pre-CCOM (Appendix C). I conducted semi-structured interviews as they present the chances to elaborate more on the topics brought up 'in an exploratory manner' (Dörnyei, 2007). Contrary to the initial interviews having a function as an ice-breaker, rapport developer and smooth transition to the narratives explored, the final interviews were more focused and structured upon analyzing the transcripts of the

initial ones. The time interval between them enabled the participants to think deeply and come up with more relevant utterances to the current study.

Follow-up Impromptu Skype Interviews were maintained since I sought to maintain rapport and credibility with them via Skype interviews during the first three months upon the participants' arrival in the USA. These interviews were impromptu ones in nature by including questions to clarify their experiences reported in their weekly e-mail exchanges. Recognizing the difficulty to conduct narrative analysis because of short, directed questions that cut off the interviewee (Ezzy, 2002), I intended to decipher their narratives about the Pre-CCOM regarding the scholars' social and academic adjustment process in the USA through the questions prepared by me. During the interviews, sometimes I held the impression that I got out of line while listening to my participants and I thought I could not communicate my questions clearly. Then I realized that it was the actual line, though, which made me realize the importance of switching my role as an interviewer into a real listener. As also stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2008), all narrative researchers attend to the research relationship, but those whose studies are based on in-depth interviews aim specifically at transforming the interviewer-interviewee relationship into one of narrator and listener. The durations of the interviews are displayed in Table 5. The interviews held in Turkish and they were translated into English by me. Translations were peer-checked for validity.

3.3.2 A Mini-Listing Questionnaire

Right after fulfilling the initial interviews, I e-mailed them a mini-listing questionnaire (Appendix D) developed by me. It was to be completed in one-week time by each participant. In this phase of data collection, I expected them to list their preferences for accommodation sites, universities in addition to the main topics about which they wanted to attain more clear ideas or images in terms of social and academic lives in the USA during the Pre-CCOM. The reason why such a tool was utilized as a data collection tool was to give them some time to think purposefully and deeply about their upcoming experience and reflect more on their lack of knowledge after being informed about the study content. The data gathered significantly supported and enhanced deficit topics

emerged in the initial interviews to schedule the Pre-CCOM' path to be followed. In addition to participants, the informants were also asked to fill in a questionnaire about social and academic lives in the USA (Appendix E). The aim here was to benefit from their deeper insights gained through experience, which contributed a lot to pave the way for the Pre-CCOM' content. Both of these tools fed directly the overall content of the Pre-CCOM.

3.3.3 Weekly Video Recordings

Thanks to its interactive and interpretive nature, the Pre-CCOM included some discussions on real life experiences and critical incidents of the informants. Video recordings were done each week in order not to miss any potential data. Also, they helped me make exact references when needed both in the data analysis and also in the final interviews to remind the participants of the happenings. Hence, approximately 25 hours of the sessions were recorded to help data analysis with exact references and incidents. These recordings were also used effectively for the ones who could not make it on the Pre-CCOM' day because of their bureaucratic procedures for their American visa. They watched the session at a scheduled time with me. I was there for their further questions and discussion related to the content of the session they watched.

3.3.4 Weekly Reflective Journals

The participants reflected on the content of each week's session by answering the guiding questions (Appendix F) constructed by me; hence, they kept online records of what they learned, felt and thought about the Pre-CCOM' weekly content. For this, an e-mailing system was utilized and the participants had the following three days after each session to complete their weekly reflective journals (henceforth, WRJs). As an insider account and ongoing background information, such journals automatically made the participants co-researchers and helped me resolve the ambiguities emerging in the data.

3.3.5 Reports

In addition to the participants' WRJs, I expected them to write an online report every four weeks (Appendix G). Although WRJs and reports had the same purposes and rationales behind, the two reports aimed at exploring their general reflections on the whole sessions executed until then. Hence, WRJs and reports showed differences in questions as they had different foci. Combined with the WRJs, there were only two reports taken from the participants in week 4 and 8 and the questions involved were prepared by me.

3.3.6 Weekly Researcher's Journals

As a teacher-researcher, I kept my own journal each week in order to remind myself of incidents that might play a role in data analysis part. This is not an exception as every incident holds the potentiality of data and Dörnyei (2007) also adds that personal agency is an important part of qualitative inquiries and the 'meta-data' generated by the researcher offer valuable insights into the project. It is also argued by Richards (2005) that qualitative researchers need to account for and document each step in the project in order to make claims more credible. In this vein, validity and reliability are also increased.

3.3.7 Weekly E-mail Exchanges

When the participants started their study abroad experience in the USA, they reported their unique experiences by elaborating on what they saw, experienced, thought and how they approached the events happening around them, their relationship with the people in the host country, their acculturative stressors and coping strategies as an acculturating person in their weekly e-mail exchanges. While reflecting on their experiences, they also commented on the experience and knowledge presented to them during the Pre-CCOM. Exchanging e-mails constituted a paramount part in the data collection process since I was able to seek to build and maintain rapport and credibility with the participants. By providing deep insights and long narratives of the participants' study

abroad experience in the USA, e-mail exchanges underpinned some parts of the questions in following impromptu follow-up Skype interviews.

3.4 Data Analysis

First formally described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), theoretical saturation seems to have its basis from Everett Hughes, a sociologist, since he advised his students to keep interviewing until they did not hear anything new (Hintz & Miller, 1995). When theoretical saturation was achieved as a result of data analysis and data collection occurring synchronously, I finalized e-mail exchanges and Skype interviews since the participants did not come up with anything new in these data collection tools.

In this study, I got help from different data collection tools mentioned above since the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Although narrators are accountable for the credibility of their stories, narrative researchers treat credibility and believability as something that storytellers accomplish (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Lincoln, 2000). However, it is impossible to achieve or capture objective reality. Hence, triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Denzin, 1989a, 1989b; Flick, 1992). As suggested by Lofland (1974), although data collection and analysis strategies are similar across qualitative methods, the way the findings are reported is diverse. Bearing unique steps in data analysis, qualitative research attempts to understand not one, but multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), since its focus is placed on the perceptions and experiences of participants and how they make sense of their experiences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Merriam, 1988). Also, narrative inquiry is addressed as the most frequent form of data display among an array of methods applied in qualitative studies by Miles and Huberman (1984). Moreover, narrative inquiry is defined as a retrospective meaning making by shaping or ordering of past experience (Chase, 2007). It includes the following forms: a chronology, a process model, an extended story, an analysis by cases or across cases, or a detailed descriptive portrait (Creswell, 1998).

In the present study, an analysis by cases and a detailed descriptive portrait were applied in the analysis of different data sources of information which built a coherent

justification for themes by triangulating the whole data. The qualitative data were then retold and restoried by me as the narrative researcher into a narrative chronology by combining the views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Unlike a chronology, reporting events over time and the narrator's point of views are communicated in a narrative. Hence, emotions, thoughts, and interpretations are also expressed in a narrative along with the descriptions of what happened and why the narrative is worth telling in the first place. Moreover, narrative discourse is treated as a distinct form of discourse (Chase, 2007) by the narrative researchers. Unlike scientific discourse, which also explains or presents an understanding of actions and events, narrative discourse highlights the uniqueness of each human action and event rather than their common properties (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995). Hence, such unique experiences shared by Turkish graduate students both before and after the Pre-CCOM were essential antecedents to interpret and analyze their lives as acculturating people in the USA.

Furthermore, simultaneous data collection and data analysis which are reported to result in a more sophisticated and subtle analysis of the data (Ezzy, 2002) were initiated by transcribing the collected data. In this study, I did the transcriptions of each type of the gathered data on my own rather than having transcribers. For me, being personally involved in the transcription process turned out to be very effective and rewarding to get deeper insights into my data. Though it was I who conducted the interviews individually, being the transcribers of my own data provided me with the chance to read between the lines and come up with further questions and incidents to ask in the following interviews during the data collection process. Serving as a preliminary form of data analysis, the qualitative data in this study included around 170 double-spaced pages of verbatim transcripts of 15 interviews, approximately 81 pages of 27 weekly reflective journals, and approximately 20 pages of 27 e-mail exchanges.

As for the analysis part, the qualitative data gathered in this study were analyzed by adopting thematic analysis (Creswell, 2002). First of all, I organized and classified the whole data in different folders for each participant. Then I prepared hard copies of the data as soon as they were gathered because I must analyze the first bits of data for cues in order not to miss anything that may be salient and to incorporate all

seemingly relevant issues into the next set of interviews and observations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Ezzy (2000) describes making the interpretive process explicit and integral to qualitative research right from the beginning among the main aims of qualitative researchers, I synchronously involved in iterative thinking and interpreting processes by moving back and forth from data collection and analysis. In so doing, working on hard copies initiated the preliminary themes as a first step. Moreover, being at the heart of qualitative research, note-taking and also writing memos between the lines also fed directly into the process of data analysis. Based on Creswell's (2002) coding process, the thematic analysis was done by following six steps explained by Creswell (2003). These six steps are as reads:

Step 1: Organizing and preparing the data for analysis.

Step 2: Reading through all the data to obtain a general sense (i.e. writing notes in margins).

Step 3: Beginning detailed analysis by taking the data into categories and labelling these categories.

Step 4: Using the coding (in-vivo in this case) to generate categories and a small number of themes.

Step 5: Advancing how the description and themes will be represented (i.e. detailed discussion of several themes by using quotations).

Step 6: Making an interpretation or meaning of the data (i.e. capturing the lessons learned).

After initiating data management by verbatim transcriptions of the initial and interviews and organizing files of the weekly reflective journals, reports and e-mail exchanges as the first loop in the spiral of analysis, the preliminary coding scheme was created by in-vivo codes which are the exact words uttered by each participant. The data gathered from each participant were analyzed separately in different parts. For each participant, the qualitative data were analyzed into three main parts which are before-, while- and after-Pre-CCOM including the phase upon their arrival in the host country for their study abroad experience. In these parts, the analysis was conducted upon in-vivo codes to display multiple perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse

quotations and specific evidence (Creswell, 2003). Then themes deduced from the data were built by including several categories aggregated to form a common idea in the discussion part within the light of theoretical frameworks and sensitizing concepts handled in Chapter 2. Hence, the narrative inquiry included the descriptive portraits of each participant's unique experience and the analysis by cases. Moreover, the role of the participants was not limited to data collection part as I did not see them as data providers only. Hence, they were also included in the analysis process of the study as they attended member-checking sessions via e-mail exchanges with me.

3.5 Ethical Issues

The ethical principles complied in this study are comprised of the participation of each participant on a voluntary basis with their free will to stop taking part in the study in case of any troubles emerged for them and a debriefing form about the findings submitted at the end of the study. Since anonymity was favored by the participants, pseudonyms were used in this study. Upon getting the approval from the Institutional Review Board of the university, I reached my participants via talking to them in person during the breaks in the intensive English course I took part in as an English instructor. Right before conducting the initial interviews, the ones who met the criteria I was looking for were given an informed consent prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board. The debriefing forms were sent to each participant as an e-mail attachment when the analysis part was accomplished.

3.6 Researcher's Positionality

In this study, I, as a researcher, had an active role in each phase of the Pre-CCOM including development, implementation and assessment. As an English instructor in the same institution, I also lectured in a class of such MONE scholars. My previous experience in Denmark as a Comenius Assistant had a key role in raising my awareness about such graduate students' needs for orientation since I observed them in and out of the class. However, the participants of the Pre-CCOM were not students of me during the intensive English course I taught. That is to say, I was not familiar with them before the Pre-

CCOM and they did not see my teacher face. I believe their not seeing me as their instructors but seeing me in the Pre-CCOM sessions for the first time had some benefits. For instance, it helped us be liquid in our roles since I emphasized the interactive nature of the Pre-CCOM by discarding the role as the ambassador of the target culture. Not meeting my teacher face also made it possible for them to be in a different atmosphere from a regular class where they felt more relaxed to convey their ideas and questions during the sessions, their reflections and most importantly interviews. It also decreased the sources of bias about the participants, me and our interaction.

From the beginning till the end of the Pre-CCOM, I did my best to show that it was a real collaborative work as I got help from the participants and the informants. While presenting the material about the USA on specific contents aforementioned, I, without any experience in the USA, held a neutral stance by mainly functioning as a bridge between the experienced informants and inexperienced graduate students. Not rendering a totally positive or negative picture of the USA, I always emphasized the uniqueness of each person's experience in a new social environment. In my materials and my discourse, I aimed to avoid taking a side and directing the participants in the way that I thought or believed. In that sense, I also avoided stereotyping and biased acts.

As for the reflection part, it might be difficult for the participants to convey their reflections about the Pre-CCOM to the person who developed and implemented the module. In that sense, I assured the participants that I was open to any kinds of criticisms in their reflections to develop the module for the next sessions so that they could come up with what they really thought about the Pre-CCOM without being under the effect of my presence as the person who developed and implemented the module. To conclude, while developing, implementing and assessing the Pre-CCOM, I avoided invalidating the study as biased by my personal, social and political viewpoints.

3.7 Validation Strategies

There are mainly eight strategies (Creswell, 2013) applied in the present study. First of all, my active role in each phase of the Pre-CCOM enabled the prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the site. Therefore, I was able to build trust with

the participants and make decisions about salient and relevant utterances to the purpose of the study. Moreover, respecting triangulation in the present study, I made use of multiple sources of data collection and theories as corroborating evidence so as to present a theme, which provided validity to the findings of each case. In addition to negative case analysis pursued in the study, debriefing was provided to the participants after the analysis part was over. To establish credibility, I maintained member-checking throughout the interviews and e-mail exchanges. In addition to data collection resources, I was in contact with the participants in online platforms so that they could judge the accuracy and credibility of the data analysis. By providing detailed descriptions of the participants and the site, I also opted for rich and thick description as a validation strategy. An external consultant having no connection to the study also provided her reflections on findings, interpretations and conclusions of the data, which can be regarded as a sense of interrater reliability in the present study. Within the light of these strategies mentioned above, evaluation criteria for this narrative case study was applied by focusing on three individuals and collecting their stories about being a graduate student in the USA in a chronological order connecting different phases of the study (i.e. before and while their study abroad experience in the USA.) What was said by the participants and how it was said were reported in the emerging themes achieved after categories encapsulating in-vivo codes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.0 Presentation

The results of the analysis of the data gathered are displayed in this chapter. There is a separate part for each case titled by the names of the participants including three main parts. In these three main parts of each case, the results are conveyed by answering the research questions with the relevant in-vivo codes directly uttered by the participants and emerging themes. Before the presentation of the results, I think it is noteworthy to remember the research questions which are: *(1) What are the expectations, concerns and needs of prospective Turkish graduate students in the USA regarding their respective social and academic experiences?, (2) What are their reflections on the Pre-CCOM before they begin their social and academic experiences in the USA? and (3) In what aspects do they benefit from the Pre-CCOM after they begin their social and academic experiences in the USA?*

Before going into detail about the results, I think it is remarkable to provide a comprehensive overview of all the themes. In order to reach the themes in the study, the initial attempt was in-vivo codes. As the second attempt, these in-vivo codes handled in each case composed relevant categories as umbrella terms. In order to visualize all the relevant information about each piece constituting the themes which are perceived acculturative stressors and coping strategies and experienced acculturative stressors and coping strategies in this study, Table 7 is provided.

Table 7: The List of Themes, Categories and In-vivo Codes in the Study

Themes	Categories	In-Vivo Codes in cases
Perceived Acculturative Stressors	Before & While- Pre-CCOM Language Barrier, Knowledge Deficits, Loneliness, Lack of support for their intellectual and psychological preparedness, uncertainty	“I have not concerns or fears but questions I’d like to know” Ali
	Language Barrier, Knowledge Deficits, Perceived Discrimination, Cultural conflicts and misunderstandings because of cultural differences, Lack of trust, Uncertainty, Lack of support for intellectual and psychological preparedness, uncertainty	“My Arabic name, religious appearance and field of study as sources of my fears” Nisa
Perceived Coping Strategies	Language Barrier, Knowledge Deficits, Perceived Discrimination, Prejudices, Homesickness, Missing, Lack of support for intellectual and psychological preparedness, Emotional Personality, Stress stemming from the conditions of the scholarship	“I am a highly emotional person”, “I am really afraid of ...” Elif
	Before- Pre-CCOM Social Personality, Co-national friends in the USA	“I am a social person” “I will fly and be together with my Turkish friends” Ali “I am very determined” Nisa
	Social Personality, positive thoughts about studying in the USA, disguising herself in the existing diversity Being active, positive thoughts about studying in the USA, family and friends in Turkey and prospective co-national friends	“My mission is to break mutual stereotypes” Elif
	While-Pre-CCOM High identification with the host country, Raised cultural awareness and knowledge, Exploited way of thinking, Eliminated fears, concerns, hearsays and prejudices, Decreased challenges and cultural conflicts to face, Enhanced self-efficacy, Decreased cultural distance, Increased cultural fit, Increased social connectedness,	“I have learned ...”, “but in my country,...”, “The more I learned, the more I embraced”, “My fear, anxiety and two-fold prejudices were eliminated to the very minimum level”, “There will be almost no problems”, “Hocam, I am ready”, “as Nil/ Ercan/ Kemal/ Ece/ Cemre said ...”, “I have found more than expected” Ali

Table 7 (Cont'd)

Themes	Categories	In-Vivo Codes in cases
Perceived Coping Strategies cont'd	While- Pre-CCOM cont'd Formed trust, Having a virtual path, Relieved stress.	“not going to the obscurity”, “3Rs”, “I used to have really serious concerns and prejudices”, “I should/ will/ can/ do this and go there”, “What Nil Hoca said is in my ears”, “I do not know what it lacks since I have not seen one before” Nisa “... very beneficial to me”, “I am not afraid of living in the USA”, “I put myself in their shoes”, “My expectations have been successfully met” Elif
Experienced Acculturative Stressors	Experienced pains of the Pre-CCOM	“I regret coming” Ali “little things made my life difficult” Nisa “I realized how much I missed them” Elif
Experienced Coping Strategies	Experienced gains of the Pre-CCOM	“I experience a feeling of deja vu” Ali “I would have make the mistake of my life time” Nisa “There is not even a second that I do not remind me of the sessions” Elif

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Ali as a Case

In this part, I deal with three main parts while describing the acculturation of Ali before and after his arrival in the USA. For the first part, expectations, concerns and needs before the Pre-CCOM are touched upon. Mainly relying on his social personality as a coping strategy, Ali came up with his perceived acculturative stressors in his initial interview. Although he claimed to possess any concerns, his narratives unearthed knowledge deficits about the host culture, loneliness, language barrier and differing expectations in his new academic environment as his perceived acculturative stressors.

In the second part, Ali’s pre-departure reflections on the Pre-CCOM are provided. Ali’s narratives made it clear that there were less acculturative stressors and more coping strategies, which underlined possibly smoother acculturation in social and academic environments. As for his increased coping strategies, cultural knowledge and

awareness, his compare-and-contrast strategy, increased social connectedness, enhanced self-efficacy, eliminated concerns and prejudices, increased intellectual and psychological preparedness take up a really essential part. Stating that the Pre-CCOM achieved beyond his expectations, he emphasized his decreased perceived acculturative stressors during his social and academic experiences in the USA.

As for the third part, aspects that Ali benefitted from the Pre-CCOM after he began his social and academic experiences in the USA are portrayed. In this part, I mainly deal with two concepts that are experienced gains and pains after the Pre-CCOM in the USA. Ali touched upon his raised cultural awareness and knowledge about his coping strategies since he stated that he experienced exactly what had been discussed in the Pre-CCOM. He also called it as *déjà vu*. Furthermore, he reflected on his experienced pains which were in line with the perceived problems discussed in the Pre-CCOM. Those were transportation problems, limited social activities and different eating habits. However, his raised awareness about such pains was regarded by him as a real guide to easily overcome them. In the following parts, I present more detailed descriptions of the unique acculturation experience of Ali with his relevant quotes.

4.1.1.1 Ali's Expectations, Concerns, and Needs Before Pre-CCOM:

"I am a social person.": In the first interview, while reflecting upon his years spent at the university, Ali underlined his social self by touching upon relationships, social and academic activities in his university life. His social personality brought him to never-ending journeys all around Turkey by visiting approximately 56 cities. As the gains of those journeys and the touristic attractions in his hometown, he elaborated on his social personality by highlighting his chance to develop interpersonal relations with people from different cities and countries. Though not being a proficient user of English at those times, he relied on his being courageous while interacting with foreign people, some of whom he was still in contact with. Hence, Ali had already been in small contacts with the people constituting the diversity in the USA. He also thought his personality would play an important role as a coping strategy for possible acculturative stressors in helping him a lot in his acculturation in the USA.

Talking about his university years, Ali said he was aware of this scholarship and always followed the news about it. Also, he gave a pivotal role to his professors, who had been to the USA with the same purpose, in encouraging him to pursue such a scholarship. He also relied upon his social identity as the key to the success that had made him eligible to be a scholar. Hence, it became clear that being social and able to express himself confidently, for him, had always led to his both social and academic successes.

While responding to the question coding what the story was that brought him to the USA as a scholar for a master's degree, he stated his positive thinking about the host country as he saw the USA "as the center of science" and added the reasons behind this firm decision: "While deciding my choice, there were European countries and the USA in my institution's list. In case there may be no such chances again, I made up my mind for the USA." Another asset that he thought made him eligible to be a MONE scholar was the project he conducted with the support of TUBITAK (standing for The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey), which also emphasized his research skills in academia.

"I have not Concerns or Fears but Questions I'd like to know.": Ali's research skills in academia were successfully echoed in his daily life since he kept trying to look for the information that he needed about the USA. During the interview, Ali made it clear that he had a limited web of people whose sharing, he thought, provided him with some general information regarding the culture and the people in the USA. He also explained how that limited knowledge had impacts on his social and academic trajectory in the USA:

To my knowledge, the northern parts are more civilized by hosting the liberals coming from England. It was told that real English is also spoken there. The spoken language in the southern parts is mostly Spanish and the people are told to be less-educated. That's why I prefer the northern universities for my study abroad.

Digging into his cultural knowledge about his respective social and academic environments, Ali accepted that he did not know much about those concepts. In that sense, he confessed deficits in his knowledge about the USA. Whilst underlying the notion of "individualism" as a core concept, he implied these deficits: "people generally prefer to live individually with individualistic mentality and do not have a family life as we do." Here, it was noteworthy to point out that his knowledge of what "individualism" entailed was really

limited since he thought that concept had to do with the family issues only. Thus, there may be possible challenges that he was unaware of, though.

Considering his limited web of people in the USA or people with the USA experience previously, Ali, without hesitation, claimed “I have no fears, hocam².” Yet, reading between the lines in his utterances, I observed, as he also revealed, “loneliness” as one of the possible acculturative stressors that might challenge him: “Of course, there will be cultural differences, climate differences with different atmosphere. Maybe, there will be no people to talk about my problems. Sometimes, I might be alone.” Loneliness as a result of cultural differences was also one of the most commonly cited acculturative stressors in the related literature. As for his coping strategies with the perceived acculturative stressors, I can conclude that his strategies were two-fold of his personality. One led us to his social personality (i.e. extrovert), and the other one had to do with his relaxed and take-it-easy personality (i.e. being able to adapting easily) as he uttered. Once again, personality came to play a paramount role while defining his coping strategy for perceived acculturative stressors, which is frequently cited so in the existing literature.

Despite his claim to be fearless, Ali admitted that he had question marks that he wanted to clear off from his mind, which unearthed the hidden concerns he held about his study abroad experience ahead of him. He stated that he wanted to know sensitive and favorite topics of his prospective neighbors and people around him. In addition to knowledge deficits, he touched upon cultural differences, loneliness, and different expectations in the academia as the perceived acculturative stressors in the form of culture shock.

“I will fly and be together with my Turkish friends”: As for Ali’s support resources, his utterances were concurrent with the literature on the co-national friendships of international students. Since he was planning to be with his Turkish friends even while heading off to the USA, togetherness with co-national friends meant a lot to him. Also, he took a further step about the matter by choosing his prospective university, especially the professor he was going to work with from the same country of origin. However, he also signaled his chance for the new friendships from different countries in his to-do-list since he was planning to spend some time with his new friends that he would meet during the

² Hocam is used to call the instructor (the researcher in this case) in Turkish culture.

intensive English course he was going to attend for the first six months in the USA with the help of his social personality.

Moreover, Ali expressed his positive thoughts and attitudes that the people in the host country would hold towards him. Like many other international students, Ali regarded the language barrier as the sole and biggest challenge in his new experience and he thought that he would not face any problems if he possessed a good command of English. When asked, he sounded very positive about the outlook of him and how local people would approach him as an international student in the USA as in the following lines:

I heard Turkish people in the USA are respected because they are there for educational purposes possessing higher statuses. Yet, this is said not to be the case in England and Germany, where there is more discrimination. As we go to the USA for educational purposes, I expect positive approaches from people.

Being a sociable person made Ali hopeful and optimistic about what he would encounter. Though he uttered that he had no fears about his study abroad experience, it became clear in his sentences that unanswered questions about the host culture and people living in the USA and unknown concepts worried him about possible cultural conflicts as perceived acculturative stressors during his acculturation. That's why he had many "I'd like to know" sentences in his first interview in order to change his "going to the unknown" situation. After the first interview, Ali also filled in the mini-listing questionnaire by which I tailored the Pre-CCOM to fit his needs since the participants' voices were of great significance to develop the schedule to follow during nine sessions.

4.1.1.2 Ali's Early Reflections on the Pre-CCOM before his Departure for the USA:

"I have learned ...": While reading through the WRJs kept by Ali, I realized that the most salient sentences were starting with that quote above. That indicated that how many new things accumulated on his mind before his embarking on his brand new experience in a new culture. In session 3, as I did for the previous weeks, I e-mailed relevant documents and readings attached in an e-mail to my participants before the session. Moreover, I opened an event part in our group on Facebook and uploaded

necessary videos there. Furthermore, in the session, we started to dig into survival issues as an international student in the USA upon gathering general knowledge about the country through all the Pre-CCOM materials in the previous weeks. While addressing those things in the weekly presentations prepared by me, I also got help from available sources such as published handbooks with pictures for immigrants in the USA and mostly from online NASA materials. As for the sharing of lived experiences part by the informants in the study, that time we had three videos in addition to an audio file. In one video, there were two American women, who were then Fulbright Assistants in Eskişehir. They provided pivotal suggestions and information regarding the issues of the week. It was really effective as they delivered essential information about their own culture with an “insider” perspective. Furthermore, as they were also experiencing being a foreigner in Turkey, they were able to empathize with the participants. In that sense, they revisited American concepts through their recently experienced new glasses of Turkish culture. In other two videos, there were also two Turkish people talking about their experiences related to the week content thanks to their previous experience of the USA as graduate students.

In his reflections, Ali made notes of all these pieces mentioned above as new entries to his recently constructed knowledge of the USA. He also shared his raised cultural awareness about possible problems about transportation, and also unexpected and surprising facts especially regarding housing issues in the USA such as leasing. It seemed that the second most common sentence beginning for Ali was “I didn’t know that.” That emphasized the real picturing of the USA in his mind before his journey. One example for this happened when he reflected on universities offering practice driving courses, which was, as he stated, another new thing for him. In his WRJ-4, he made a very sincere introduction by stating that “This week, I met brand new and fruitful information pieces.” Also, he touched upon the topics which were health, safety, banking and religion by defining them as absolute must’s. Then he went into detail about the session topics one-by-one as reads: “I have learned something that I did not use to know: checking criminal rates in our neighborhood online. That is nice. (WRJ-4).”

Ali, in his 1st Reflection Paper (RP), noted that “We have been informed about almost everything” even though it was just the half of the whole sessions. In other words, we had still a half way to go. Though being early, that could be a good indicator of how

much he added to his pre-existing knowledge, which was almost at ground-zero level. In WRJ-5, he included practical things such as where to buy grocery, medicine, second-hand stuff such as books, furniture, and most importantly he added that he learnt how to follow and catch up with the current news around the new places in the USA. In addition to such practical clues, he was introduced to some bureaucratic procedures about his arrival in the states, which was reflected on in his WRJ-6 as: “I did not know that there were some procedures right upon my arrival in the USA regarding residential issues.”

In the seventh session, we went into the buildings in the campus such as libraries, and we explored activities beyond academics such as club activities, student organizations and hospitality programs. Moreover, we also looked at the discourse available in the campus as we handled campus slang. While covering these concepts related to academia, we listened to Nil, a former Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (henceforth, FLTA) in the USA and watched two videos from Dilek, a graduate assistant in Winona State University in the USA. One of them was very informative about academic life by explaining academic expectations from prospective students and the other one was a tour of a real class and corridors of the university, which was a real demonstration of their future class.

As for the content of the week Ali reflected on, there were things mostly related to the YouTube video on “5 things international students love and hate about American University Life.” Although he was really happy to hear that there would be a good number of holidays, his being happy phase didn’t last long as the professor in the video mentioned competitiveness among the whole students which led domestic students to distant themselves from their international peers having a relatively low proficiency of English in group projects. In addition to the journal, the participants were expected to fill in the 2nd RP at the end of the week 8. Ali noted:

Without going to the USA, I, at all points, acquired many important experiences to feel as if I had been to the USA before. I learned specific characteristics of most of the states regarding transportation, climate, economic situation, renting a car, getting a driving license, renting a flat, money transactions, what to expect in the academia of the USA, ideal shopping places. I have gained a very good amount of knowledge about the things above. (2nd RP)

Furthermore, Ali went on with the sentence coding “I learned” in his final interview right before his embarking on his study abroad experience in the USA. That time in the interview, his utterances highlighted the new knowledge by touching upon its functions. For example, he stated that such new information was so useful that he was as if he had been there without actually being there. He also shared that he would never forget the “U-curve” of the cycle of culture shock and adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955) illustrating different phases and common feelings experienced during culture shock. He finalized his gained new knowledge as follows: “Seeing and reading the things before our real experience, and thinking analytically about them have added a lot to me by broadening my knowledge and raising self-confidence, and replacing wrong information with the correct one. (FI)”

“but in my country, ...”: From the very beginning of the sessions, Ali always applied his compare-and-contrast strategy between Turkey and the USA. He resorted to this strategy to elaborate on what he learnt in the Pre-CCOM. In this regard, he pictured the overall convergence and divergence between two different cultures. He also valued his comparisons since he believed it made the things much more long-lasting on his mind. In this regard, he touched upon the following differences between Turkish and American culture as reads: “All of them different and diverse I learn in this lesson; USA culture is not good at relationship, friendship. Types of food are different. Working time is different. They are relaxed people because they do not worry about all things. Beliefs, traits and values are different. (WRJ-1).” In the following week, he also added “(...) the concept of freedom is different as everybody will do everything in the streets. They also make exercise everyday but in my country people do not make regularly exercise.”

In the week 4, I shared some online realias such as a debit card, a health insurance card, a prescription, bills and etc. Upon being introduced to such concepts under the title of survival as a foreigner, Ali reflected on the differences again. However, that time, it became clear that his tone of voice was more welcoming about the differences, and even liking the ways the things were done in the USA as he stated in his words as: “About security, they are more careful and sensitive compared to our country. They are free about religion (...) They are also faster about banking issues (WRJ-4)” As time went on, he attributed his attitude towards such comparisons by not rejecting them in a negative voice

but accepting and welcoming them in a positive voice. Another good example of this can be the lines that he confessed that he had found something in common between the USA people and him, and it was directness as reflected in his WRJ-9.

“The more I learned, the more I embraced.”: While reflecting on his new gained knowledge in the Pre-CCOM, Ali also made some essential interpretations about it, which shows his internalization of such new information and his increased social connectedness by closing the psychological and sociocultural distance. In the following weeks, he started using “that’s interesting!” or “I really liked it!” as a positive remark on the new information presented to him. For instance, in week 1, we also brought up “ritual talk” including “How are you?” not as a real question but just as a form of saying hi, or “Let’s meet for a coffee” not as a real offer but as a way of saying bye-bye. After seeing a YouTube video on American phrasebook, Ali, in his WRJ-1, wrote that what was interesting about cashiers’ saying “How are you?” was this question actually meant “welcome”.

In week 3, after getting information about buying or renting a car, Ali liked the idea of using one’s own car during the driving test, which was not the case in Turkey. However, he stated that he wanted it to be so in his native country as well. Other examples of his attempts to internalize what he had just learned about the host country and his high desire to apply such things in his native country can be seen in his following narrative: “High popularity of second-hand books is really an effective contribution to the country such as decrease in cutting down the trees, and increase in local economy by preventing foreign publishers and illegally printed books in the market. (WRJ-5).” Though not being familiar to the cultural concept, he favored personal space as he thought it was a must in a society. People’s not paying that much attention to others and keeping what happened in the class in the class were among Ali’s likes since he did not expect so before the Pre-CCOM.

Moreover, Ali’s observations and enlightenment about academia in the USA made him take some lessons to apply in Turkey. For instance, the value attached to the libraries, their great capacity of national and international sources, facilities such as rooms for group-work, scanning and e-mailing service of required pages, self-photocopying and so on. Upon learning such new things about the academic life in the USA, he seemed to have a to-do-list in his country’s education system. In all these reflections above, it became clear that he attained a positive attitude towards the things in the USA before his real experience

during the Pre-CCOM. This positive attitude that he gained triggered his desire to find such things in his native country. That is, he already unpacked acculturation by internalizing what he had learned up to that time. In addition to such desires of application and positive attitudes, he directly uttered that the more he was introduced to new concepts about social and academic lives, the more he embraced the USA by implying the increased social connectedness and decreased cultural distance.

“My fear, anxiety and two-fold prejudices were eliminated to the very minimum level.”: After being introduced to the U-curve of the cycle of culture shock and adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955) in the weekly presentation of Week 1, Ali thought he was already in his “honeymoon” phase by getting over “culture-shock” phase or at least minimizing the perceived acculturative stressors in the form of the culture shock phase. In his native country before the departure, he added perceived gains of taking part in such Pre-CCOM in his narratives.

Additionally, Ali also reflected on how this gained knowledge helped him overcome his fears, first and foremost, his prejudices. As he also accepted, I could observe the change in his way of thinking about and approaching cultural issues. Regarding his perceived discrimination about being a Muslim in the USA, there was a change in his way of thinking upon getting to know the host culture. For instance, he learned from his friends and the informants in the Pre-CCOM that the USA was a place where one could find the freedom of religions since everyone was stated to live his own religion freely. During the final interview, he kept making references to this subject since religious differences were the main area that his prejudices, fears and concerns mostly accumulated on. Before the Pre-CCOM, especially the ones that we had first-hand experiences of Turkish students in the USA such as Kemal, Ezgi and Cemre, he used to think that general prejudices towards Muslims would be directly projected on him.

Getting rid of the fears related to the academic life, Ali found the sessions very helpful for him to overcome his anxiety about academic staff and classroom environment in the USA universities. Especially after Ercan’s visit, Ali said he also crossed out the possibility of not finding a place for himself at a USA university. He, furthermore, highlighted the solution-oriented nature that was told to exist everywhere in the USA, which made him relieve a bit more. Though insisting that no fears left, Ali, in a very realistic way, valued

experiencing the things through his own inquiring lenses since he most of the time put an end to his sentences about his changed expectations by stating “I will see when I get there.”

“There will be almost no problems.”: One of the most common sentences uttered by Ali both in WRJs and in FI seemed to be the claim coding there would be almost no problem when he got a start in his prospective life in the USA. Hence, he uttered “We have seen possible problems, advantages and disadvantages in advance. Hence, our fears and concerns are almost alleviated.” For this reason, I think, this has to tell us something achieved in the Pre-CCOM, which is unearthing upcoming problems and raising the persons’ awareness about them by enabling high identification with the host culture. He touched upon his raised awareness about possible problems because that was a very assertive thought, though, for a man who did not have any abroad experience even for a short time in his life before. He mentioned how his awareness about some cultural things prevented possible problems to encounter in the USA since he accepted that if he were to go to the USA without getting informed about the things in the sessions, he would end up with more stressful incidents.

Upon learning personal space, Ali put it as: “I might make jokes by using hand gestures as I do in Turkey. Touching can be seen a threat in terms of personal space. So, I will keep that in mind. (FI)” Another example of eliminated problems was related to the academic life since Ali totally staggered after hearing honor codes at universities, especially the ones about plagiarism. He stated in the final interview that his academic record would be really unfavourable if he were to go without being introduced to this concept, which was, I think, a real life belt for him in a new culture. For him, it was before the study abroad experience that most of the hard work finished because stress was mostly related to before-the-arrival things. He underlined more than three times that he didn’t think there would be a problem in the USA during the final interview. However, being realistic, he counted climate change, new friendships that might affect him for the early days but nothing else would matter, he stated.

Moreover, step by step, Ali seemed to build bricks for his next home miles away. For him, the new information pieces laid the base. Then he strengthened his renewed knowledge via making comparisons between the home culture and the host culture waiting ahead. A better progress was accomplished after getting rid of fears,

anxiety, two-fold prejudices and solving possible problems without experiencing them. Further bricks were placed when he started to dream about what to do or what not to do in the USA. Throughout his reflections, it became apparent that he already prepared a to-do-list for himself upon getting informed about new topics each week; for example:

I have learned a lot of things that I do or do not in the USA; for example, avoiding talking and asking questions about 3Rs (Race Religion Region), not approaching very close to someone as there is the concept of personal space, being punctual since in the USA people usually arrive on time, they are not late somewhere- however, people will be late to party or entertainment☺ And also I will smile at everybody. (WRJ-2)

In week 3, Ali seemed to learn many important and useful brands of lots of different and very basic needs. For instance, he wrote that he found the safest transport company and it would be among his choices while traveling between the states. Furthermore, he defined his top three choices about where to do his shopping for clothing, electronics. In his 1st RP, he reported that knowing such things beforehand, making plans or doing a kind of feasibility study were always advantageous for such long-term goals. In the following weeks, 5 and 6, he decided which telephone operator he would choose and why, what kind of wallet was more comfortable during his long journey since he seemed to panic about carrying some amount of money with him, how and when to buy the cheapest tickets back to Turkey. He had also some important plans on Black Fridays since he decided not to miss any of them. When it came to the weeks dealing with academic, there was a boom in his to-do-list as follows:

I will be really careful about ethics and honor codes. I will improve my paraphrasing ability. Everything will be original and mine. I really like Google Docs and I will make use of it actively. I learned the importance of planning and time management and asking questions to the professors at office hours without hesitation. I will do these and participate actively in the lessons by not being a listener only. (WRJ-8)

Upon learning high expectations of the professors from graduate students and high level of success of Turkish students in the USA in addition to the ones especially from China and Japan, Ali got ambitious and wanted to be in this success circle. Hence, he stated “My prior aim is success not for me but for my country.” In his final interview, he came up with further details of his new planned decisions about his actions to take in the USA. For example, the most serious one was about housing, the very initial and crucial concern for

him as an international student. He talked about the change in his perspectives about how to rent a place to live in and he went on saying that he thought looking at places through internet pages would be enough to reflect the reality since some other issues, mentioned in the sessions, to consider such as the smell, bugs, proximity to the university, absence of frequent transport system didn't come to his mind. And again, he touched upon the possible problems caused by transport system and his re-scheduled plans because of this problem of public transportation in remote places.

As finishing words for his new plans, Ali once again warned himself about avoiding racism, being biased, and advised himself to be mindful about any possible invitations proposed to him. For his psychological well-being, he promised himself to accept and remember the real reason of his presence there and not to ask himself why he was there, which was a clue given by the informants during the sessions.

“Hocam, I am ready.” Thanks to all his broadened knowledge and the prospectus that he prepared for his new life abroad, Ali stated to gain the feeling of readiness during the sessions, which underlines his self-efficacy. Though not even knowing about the concept of culture shock before the Pre-CCOM, he considered himself as someone overcoming culture shock, or at least minimizing it, and enjoying the honeymoon phase even before his embarking on the journey waiting ahead of him. Personally speaking, he made references to his being extrovert and in his first reflective paper he added that he was a man who could get used to new environment and the people easily there; moreover, the Pre-CCOM increased the level of his easy adaptation.

In his final interview, he directly put forward his readiness and increased self-efficacy so many times as in the example as “we have learned the correct ones and in this way, I feel more comfortable and do not think that there will be problems. I am ready.” My further questions aimed to dig into the story leading him to feel ready and he replied that question by coming up with other examples to render his how-to-get-ready challenge. For instance, he had a health check-up of everything from A to Z. Being always sensitive about health, he got more cautious upon hearing about the health care system in the USA. He came to confess that it would not have been that much detailed if he had not been informed about them. Moreover, he bought a new pair of glasses and also stocked some contact lenses. As exemplified above, Ali, approaching very closer to his new experience in

the USA, felt and got ready by taking necessary steps before his departure. It is noteworthy to say that this increased feeling of psychological and intellectual preparedness and cultural awareness by taking necessary steps before departure was thanks to his getting rid of the blurred picture of what-to-expect in the USA. This was made via mapping very basic things correctly in his mind, which happened upon hearing real stories, watching related videos, most importantly thinking over the experience on a weekly basis.

In his RP-1, Ali wrote that his friends, not attending the Pre-CCOM, were not familiar with many things and even worse they might have been misinformed by the blogs with erroneous and unhealthy information. He went on that there were real people and experiences of people who were aware of this business. In the final interview, he reflected upon this matter as reads: "Rather than going there without knowing anything, it is more effective to go there upon being oriented here. (...) We gathered the tips and we will practice them weekly." He also stated that his friends kept asking where and how he got that much specific information. He also confessed that they expressed their jealousy upon hearing that he was provided with that much information during the Pre-CCOM. And once again, in his speech, he claimed that they knew most of the things since they talked about everything in a great detailed way. On the other hand, the ones who were not included in the sessions kept asking questions such as "Why are not we informed about this?" and "do you think about everything in that much detailed way?", which highlighted how necessary such Pre-CCOM were. In our interview before the last call for the flight, all these brought us to the gains of having such nine weeks of the Pre-CCOM. It was true that Ali was very impressed by what he had been learning for about nine weeks. Having a limited number, our sessions homed only nine participants. Yet, soon I realized that each of nine participants was like a new courier of the new information provided to them. That is, beyond the walls of our assembly hall, the participants expanded the Pre-CCOM by answering asked and even unasked questions of other scholars that were unfortunately not included in our sessions. The pros of this sharing were two-fold. It was advantageous for the others simply because they were, more closely, introduced to the place they were going to since this was a great chance for them to get rid of the questions marks in their mind, but to a limited extent. For the participants, it was really advantageous since they realized how much more advantageous they were vis-à-vis those others not participating in the Pre-

CCOM. The reason behind was that the participants in this study noticed that they had covered and learnt a lot about the host country.

“As Nil/Ercan/Kemal/Ece/Cemre said ...”: That was not a mere coincidence that the narratives gathered from Ali were filled with our informants’ names and references to their shared experiences. As the code suggests, there were many incidents where I happened to read sentences starting with “as Nil said”, for instance. Fortunately, those incidents were like lessons to take for Ali. On one occasion, for example, he thought it would be enough even not to experience what Nil experienced. In his WRJs, Ali had a huge room for his reflections on Ercan, a MONE scholar holding a master’s degree in Law in MIT in the USA. He visited us in our session eight during his short vacation to Turkey. Ali expressed his thanks for my invitation of Ercan since he believed that everything was really lovely. Ali summarized Ercan’s visit as “Ercan Hoca, sincerely, made a perfect summary of what we have been dealing with so far in the sessions by experiencing them in a very short span of time.” These lessons also turned up in the parts related to the video of Sena, a former FLTA in the USA, on academic and social life in the USA.

What is more, Ali mentioned his trials to empathize with the informants since he said he, most of the time, put himself in their shoes and concluded that he would not experience such pains since he was prepared for the experience. He also believed they experienced so since they went to the USA without such Pre-CCOM offered. Hence, he normalized their pains. Then he dealt with the things he gained in the sharing of our informants by answering the question what exactly he thought they did for him. For instance, they told him the acculturative stressors to expect with their possible consequences and relevant coping strategies to deal with them; for instance, “Sena Hoca helped us about library; Nil Hoca was very effective, we might experience Ercan’s police search as well. I did not think that speaking loudly and taking my hands from the wheel could be that much dangerous. (F1).”

In addition to raising awareness about upcoming problems, our informants, as Ali claimed, provided him with the windows that he had not thought of looking from before. For instance, Ali confessed that he did not expect the coordinators of intensive English course to take care of his non-academic problems. They also taught him what was advantageous or the right choice about his basic needs. For instance, Ali made up his mind

about the bank, the telephone operator upon hearing Nil's notices about these issues. He doubled his examples as in the following lines: "They provided me with a list of first-things-to-do. Actually, not just first things but the whole things. What agency to choose while travelling, where to buy best electronics and food, how to carry medicine with us while flying to the USA. They told us anything and everything (FI)" Ali finalized his reflections about the informants with the Skype information as reads:

The Skype interview was hard-hitting. It was good to summarize everything we have touched upon so far thanks to Ece Hoca, who shared her invaluable time with us by walking really early in the morning. She told there would be always an alternative to fix the problem and find the solution. No need to worry. It seems to me that Turkish scholars there have gained the perspective of local people. (...) They were a real guidance for us by shedding light on our way. (RP-2)

As made clear in Ali's narratives below, the sharing of experiences by our informants were of great importance in this study. What made such sharing more meaningful than any other information reached online was the fact that they sounded him more realistically. Sharing the same national background, and even the same scholarship program with some got a hand in it, Ali thought.

"I have found more than I expected.": Here comes the confession part of Ali since he admitted that he had not expected that much from the Pre-CCOM while commenting on it on balance. In his first RP, to the question "Is there any question left unanswered about the topic?", Ali replied that there was everything that had to be there necessarily in any orientations. Also, in the second RP, he answered the same question by asserting that the program did not bear any disadvantages or deficiencies, and he came across with a lot more information, resources and documents than he expected since he did not expect the program to be that much sophisticated, experienced and broad in scope. He brought up positive effects of the sessions in his final interview before departure for the USA by favoring the WRJs. To him, it was of great significance to make the things long-lasting since he stated "writing made it long-lasting since nothing passed over our heads." That was why he kept them in a folder to resort to them when needed in the USA. Having a good number of helpful informants and ideal number of the participants were among his positive remarks about the Pre-CCOM. Emphasizing the necessity of such a Pre-CCOM for such international graduate students, he elaborated further on:

It should be implemented. I think people have to know the value of it and run to attend. To be, it should be done in six universities in Ankara, during the weekends maybe. (...) I did not think that it was that much detailed and well-thought. I was expecting to get ready-made materials such as superficial pdfs including limited pieces of information as a formality. Yet, you put great value and effort in it. It was really of great significance for two collaborating countries. Implications should be taken into consideration. (F1)

Ali also reflected on data collection tools and other online platforms that we kept sharing informative stuff and discussing about the things related to each week's content. Here, he claimed something really important that even the way we informed each other or I gathered data from them formed a picture of the host culture in the USA, especially regarding academic culture. Providing regular feedback, following the links, videos, photos on Facebook group, arranging time on WhatsApp group, all made him get used to academic culture in the USA as well, he believed. In this way, he said to get the chance to know what was going to be talked in the upcoming sessions, which provided him with the opportunity to see what he knew and what he did not know about the subject matter in order to get his questions ready. He commented on it as reads:

This at the same time taught us how to live with deadlines, check e-mails regularly. This was rare in Turkish culture. We gained it. Most of the business will be over e-mailing during the intensive English course. Hence, this made us ready for the academic culture there. Having everything online and via e-mails will not be a problem for me and my e-mail account is now under control. (F1)

As Ali mentioned in his final interview, the final week was very effective in terms of their active interaction among the participants during their mini-presentations on cultural concepts assigned two weeks before to each of them. He noted that he really enjoyed the high level involvement of his friends. That's why as only one recommendation for the development of such an orientation module he suggested that participants should be more active participants by doing related research about the contents to be covered in each week. Maybe under the pure impression of such eye-opening sessions right before his departure, Ali strongly advised me to collect everything into a book. He elaborated on this ground-breaking idea by highlighting the limited number of departments at MONE that could inform such students as follows:

I really would like this study to be turned into a book. My friends should read it. It needs reading as a book. If there were such a possibility of a book for me, I would definitely read it. For instance, if this study had been executed last year, I would want to read it. (...) It should be valued by the MONE and support should be attained from them, people have to be informed about this. (...) Every year, thousands of scholars go to the USA, it will be more effective if such a study can reach people as many as possible. (F1)

All in all, Ali underlined that we did everything needed and the study reached its goals by raising his cultural awareness and familiarity, eliminating source of fears and concerns, decreasing possible conflicts and problems, enhancing self-efficacy, motivation, psychological and intellectual preparedness. Ali signaled his being a next volunteer in such respective Pre-CCOM for the next graduate students as new comers in the USA. As for his contributions to the module, he suggested adding more links as a perfect guide book for the new comers. He thought he would be a good guide for them. In doing so, he believed he could develop the overall picture of Turkish graduate students in the USA and stated that that was something done for the youth of his native country.

4.1.1.3 Aspects Ali Benefited from the Pre-CCOM upon his Arrival in the USA:

After about one week and a half than our final interview, Ali headed off to the USA for his study abroad experience as a graduate student. His highlights about his flight were very pleasant as he called "it was very cheerful and I was very cheerful." He was seen off by his parents in Ankara. As for the emotions, he shared that apparently it was tough for both his parents and him; yet, he emphasized for many times in his e-mails and Skype interviews that he did not cry. As I discussed very early in Ali's analysis, he was a very social people. That is why I was not surprised to read his notes about his very long conversations, newly built friendships, exchanging contact information, and keeping in touch with them or even taken and accepted dinner invitations during the longest flight he had ever experienced.

However, there was a very meaningful question from the lady in the same flight who was very eager to give him necessary information almost about everything related to the life they were flying to. She questioned whether he had been to the USA before or not simply because Ali was putting her thoughts she was about to touch upon

into words, which surprised the lady and made her ask the question. As an answer, Ali said that he smiled and then went on to talking about the Pre-CCOM he attended. In this part, I delineate how Ali's journey, starting very cheerful, advanced in his acculturation. After reading through the e-mail print-outs and transcripts of Skypes for many times thoroughly, I realized that everything was accumulated in only two different sides in his experience which were experienced coping strategies as experienced gains and experienced acculturative stressors as experienced pains. These two themes were home to two different sub-categories: the ones related to the life off campus and the ones related to the life at campus. Hence, I deal with gains and pains by having back and forth between the subcategories in each part.

4.1.1.3.1 Ali's Experienced Coping Strategies after the Pre-CCOM in Social and Academic Environments in the USA:

"I experience a feeling of *déjà vu*": As defined in Oxford Dictionaries, *déjà vu* is a feeling of having already experienced the present situation. Ali, as in the other in-vivo codes, directly uttered this sentence while talking about his new experiences as an acculturating person in the USA. The rationale behind his such wording was because his life in the USA seemed to him very similar to the things that we covered in our sessions before his departure. Thus, he concluded that what he lived in the USA was just sheer realizations of each piece of the whole Pre-CCOM content. For instance, what he noted in his very first e-mail was: "Thank you Ma'am the orientation helped me all the time in Houston. I experience a lot of advantages. I took my mobile phone line, opened a bank account, I went shopping to Ross, Marshall, and Walmart. I learned them during the orientations." Hence, it was time for him to put his knowledge, he was acquainted with during the Pre-CCOM, into real practice in his new life just started. In his second e-mail, he gave more information about his academic environment by making some comparisons between two cultures again as he did before his arrival in the USA in the following lines: "I think it is very hard because everyday teachers assign a lot of homework. We have to do it because they score our performance, which is very important for passing the level. (...). Teachers at this university have hard rules."

Furthermore, Ali went on commenting on the lunch issues, specifically his packed lunch, which was something he was not used to doing in Turkey. He stated he learned it during the sessions; yet still, he did not believe it since he used to think that the USA had big university campuses and so there should have been a lot of canteens. To his astonishment, he was wrong since where he found drink (not food) was automat. He also mentioned his new trials to open new windows to the life welcoming him there; for instance, he wrote me that he bought many different tropical fruit that he had never eaten before. He also underlined that he met a lot of international friends, which was in line with both his and my expectations thanks to his being a very sociable people.

After two weeks upon his arrival in the USA, I felt the need to get these very fresh experiences and related emotions in our first Skype interview in order to ask for clarification about his e-mail exchanges and my further questions, of course. He mentioned his guidebook that the sessions provided him with about where to go to buy something necessary, how to manage the things on the very first days and so on. However, his point was the reactions he took from his Turkish fellow because, just like the ones in Turkey, they were also shocked by his raised cultural awareness and enhanced knowledge. Moreover, Ali was another helping hand for the ones with the same background and purpose of stay since they were more likely to be in need about their new beginning in the USA. I really think Ali's friends' positive reactions and some other good comments about what was done for him in terms of such social and academic preparation before his departure for the USA functioned as true incentives for his good level of psychological well-being and motivation to get used to his new environment.

I think it is worth mentioning Ali's concerns about his religious identity before the sessions and during the sessions he pronounced were almost solved by the sharing of experienced people. It was also true for him about his unique experience in situ since he observed the kindness and thoughtfulness towards everything including many different religions and their religious services. Furthermore, before his departure, he uttered, in his final interview, he was not afraid of anything related to his new life. When I reminded him of this, he exactly stood behind what he said since he once again highlighted "Really, there is nothing to be afraid of, Hocam. Now, I am again not afraid of anything. What will happen

will happen.” It was most probably because he did not experience something unexpected so far.

As one of the gains of the decisions made during the Pre-CCOM, Ali mentioned housing issue. Upon learning that things might change when they saw the real place rather than pictures available online, he changed his mind and decided to look for it when he was in the USA. And he did so, did he regret it? No. Here is why: “People who arranged accommodation stay at a very distant for the sake of low rents. However, I am happy about the decision I made during the sessions.” After hearing his satisfaction with his decisions made during the Pre-CCOM, I went on to asking questions about his social self. During the WRJs and interviews before his departure, there were a huge accumulation of his sentences coding “I will do this and that”, which compiled a huge and long to-do-list. I asked him how successful he was about putting ticks to the things in his list and he answered that he was very active by attending events organized by the student clubs. Ali ended his first Skype by touching upon differences between the intensive English courses in the USA and Turkey. Though differences could be understood as pains, the case was not so since he familiarized himself with such stuff beforehand. He stated “Rules are just as we expected.” That’s why awareness of the differences before coming across with them turned perceived pains into experienced gains. It is also clear in his narratives that his raised awareness about the differences triggered his reasoning to see what lies behind the strict, as he called, rules. That might help him a lot while getting used to new happenings around him and it already seemed so, as well.

In his e-mail on the 3rd week, Ali started his sentences by explaining what surprised him and made the day funny for him. To tell the truth, it was also surprising for me to hear that he would get a good mark in a quiz thanks to our discussion on the culture shock phase in the weekly presentations. This can be also a clue that what we achieved together was building capacity for global learning. As for the e-mail I got from him about the 4th week, it was relatively shorter compared to the previous ones since, as he stated, everything was the same and there was almost nothing new, except for his first hair cut in a Mexican lady’s hands. That was the first time he uttered a sentence beginning with “I missed ...” and that time “Turkish hairdressers” filled in the preceding gap. Furthermore, he went on to talking about the tour that he took to observe surroundings and came up with

new comparisons about privacy, exercising and working styles between the home and host countries.

Additionally, Ali experienced an exchange of cultural values. From the very beginning, Ali was a real volunteer to introduce his native culture to the USA as a real mosaic of the whole world. I call this “holy mission” that almost every MONE scholar assigned this mission to himself to be completed in his study abroad in the present study. Though Ali was involved in many other conscious attempts to carry his holy mission, sometimes it happened to him unconsciously just like in the following case where he could not stop helping an elder man then the story went on: “We walked together about 5-6 minutes. He asked me why I helped him since I was not American. I said I am Turkish and in our culture we help old people. Then he thanked a lot.”

In the following weeks, Ali shared his socialization with his international friends such as celebrating the New Year of China with Chinese friends, afterwards having a bowling tournament, attending the coffee night organized by Rice Turkish Student Associate. He elaborated more on these social activities in our 2nd Skype interview by giving more specific examples about the bowling event. Specifically, he touched upon some strategies he and his Turkish friends applied to get to know more international people such as not being in the same group with his Turkish fellows. He went on explaining his close relationships conducted between his new friends and also instructors. He explained that he owed his success at breaking the ices to his feeling free to ask or tell something and he thought he gained this skill during the Pre-CCOM.

In many times, Ali again resorted to making comparisons between two cultures. When we were back to Turkey in our subjects, he remembered the things we covered and made some links between them and his new experiences about the diversity existing in the USA. I wanted him to judge himself in these terms and here is his self-questioning: “I am trying hard to experience outer society. We invite internationals even while attending tea parties so that English is spoken there and we introduce Turkish culture to them.” At this point, he also made references to Turkish friends around him to imply his situation was not the general picture since there were some who rejected speaking English and favored being only with their Turkish peers. This difference signaled that the Pre-CCOM may have played a role in his way of living in the USA, that is, adapting to the new

environment rather than only attaching to his own culture. This seemed to make his acculturation easier and smoother. His proceeding in this acculturation brought some changes to him, he thought. Opening his views with his belief that he would keep changing, he exemplified what changed up to that time:

Everybody is relaxed as we mentioned in the sessions. I was relaxed and I am more relaxed now here. They are very rule-governed about traffic and the priority is pedestrians' (...) Certainly, we will apply these all in Turkey but I am not sure if people in Turkey obey such rules by taking us as an example. (...) I start doing exercise as I got used to the idea during the sessions. (...) They educated us in terms of time; for instance, the doors are locked after the professor come in, if it is opened by the professor, there is a note taken as being late for fifteen minutes. Now, I am more careful about time even when I arrange something with my friends. There is a change in me about this matter.

While talking about daily life of people around him, Ali came up with the idea that "the Pre-CCOM did not belly at all" since he observed lots of coincidences between what was said and what was experienced in situ. To exemplify it, he rendered another holistic picture of daily life there by describing smiling faces and exchanging good mornings in the street. What is clear here is the signs of integration thanks to the mutual care people and he possessed. Then he concluded that everybody was much good. Once again, he drew my attention to the Americentric concepts we covered throughout the nine sessions and he highlighted the fact that each piece of the whole was truthful and now it was time for such pieces to fit in their correct places in the host country and they really did. He also uttered that our experienced informants explained everything in the most accurate way in their sharing. Moreover, he went on:

Everything is just like what I heard and lived in the sessions. The feeling of re-living the mentioned things is like *déjà vu*. It is really nice to feel like that I have already experienced it. (...) We remembered the things (covered in the sessions) again, what we experience is in line with what we discussed. I have experienced all of the sessions about transportation, challenges at school, eat and people's manners. As for consistence, it was 5 out of 5.

Just like before his departure, Ali commented on the gains of data collection tools in his study abroad experience. All these, writing e-mails weekly and conducting Skype interviews, turned out to be real gains, though not targeted, for him. He underlined the importance of wearing a curious researcher's lenses in his experiences in the USA as reads:

I look at the incidents in a more detailed way, I try to get a cause-effect relations and then realize that it will be useful for my reflection. Hence, I do not let the things pass me since I analyze them. After reflecting on them, I do not forget them, they become long-lasting. Without writing, they could be forgotten after a while. Now, I have stories attached to what I see in my mind, so I do not miss almost anything. Maybe, there are some; but they would be more without the sessions.

Ali also explained that his comparison between two cultures that started very early in the sessions had a great role in raising cultural awareness and mutual understanding for him as an acculturating person. As he put it in: "I know my culture; yet, since I do not know the other cultures, I am not aware of the value of presence of my culture. Upon interacting, I see the differences, and adopt which one is more advantageous or which one is better for people." For the next a few minutes, he compiled his sentences regarding the gains of the Pre-CCOM under some titles. For instance, he claimed that there was a real change to the positive in his degree to welcome the differences. In his narrative below, it became clear that such sessions added him the knowledge to leave hearsays and the motivation to be open to new experiences, respectively:

I totally left them (hearsays). For instance, before the sessions, I used to search for the stuff and end up with unnecessary, meaningless stuff. People exaggerate their experiences. We totally left them. Thanks to the sessions, we started to live and experience upon learning from real people. After my arrival, I realized that such exaggerations were ungrounded and my experiences coincided with the ones handled in the sessions.

Furthermore, Ali tried to put something on what he learned from such experiences by avoiding living bad experiences so as to replace them with better ones. Inferring from what he experienced up to the Skype interview, he also claimed that such sessions helped him to a great extent to ease cultural toughness because "Most of it was softened. I go on respecting and approaching with understanding towards everything. If it is in our culture, this is in their culture so I believe we should live without being strictly stick to our culture." It was not only cultural toughness that was eased, he also said that there was a great deal of the communication eased since he learned a lot of cues about the context of such communication. To make it more clear, he explained:

While communicating with people in the USA, I feel more comfortable since I know how they will react, they will approach with understanding and tolerance. The things that I learned in the sessions were the subjects of our conversations. Also, I know what to talk and what not to talk. That is why I do not ask any questions regarding religion and race. I come up with the topics that can be talked with them.

Because of all these gains mentioned in our second Skype, Ali concluded that he really had a feeling of being connected to the host society. He said it was like living the things before he literally experienced them, which was made possible thanks to the Pre-CCOM we held. In his e-mail exchange in the same week, he noted that he extended his friend circle by having regular meetings with new friends from Costa Rica and Korea. And he explained his friend circle a bit more. Because of the term, he said there were mostly international students for the intensive English program and that's why he bumped into Americans only in social spots; for instance, smoking zones at the campus. He exemplified such interactions: "They are not biased, they are nice. Almost all know Turkey since they know some Turkish friends. They listen to me while talking about cultural concepts. They are curious." Though limited, such interactions especially with Americans seemed very important to him maybe because of long-held views about the domestic students' behaviors towards international students as discussed in the Pre-CCOM upon watching a YouTube video. For this reason, he looked curious about such interactions in his unique experience and even positively impressed by having short conversations as it was reflected in his hopeful tune.

There was also another important event for Ali since it could be seen as a part of his holy mission towards his native country. He actively participated in Turkish National Day event by wearing cultural costumes, offering some special Turkish food and drink, and distributing leaflets of Turkey. Back on week 6, his e-mail had also very interesting comments on the changes experienced both by himself and by his Turkish friends. As for his part, he reflected on the changes in his life as being in life style, way of thinking, use of time, perspectives on life and perspectives on future. For the last one, he gave the reason that was because he looked positive all the time. When it comes to the changes he observed in his Turkish friends lives, he exemplified it by a coffee event for Turkish students at the university, approximately 70 in total. What he observed was punctuality in his Turkish friends. In his e-mail for week 8, he confessed that the week was very monotone since it was, to him, just a bare repetition of the preceding weeks. He started our last Skype

interview by explaining his feelings and he found himself a little bit nervous because of the application process and requirements for his master's degree. Then he reflected back upon three months passing in the USA:

Three months have passed well. I came here as if I was going to Istanbul or Ankara from my hometown, everything was fine. We were prepared for everything in the sessions. Hence, such sessions made me feel not like going abroad but like going to somewhere I already knew. I have experienced almost no challenges except missing my family. I was cheerful while coming, on the plane, and after my arrival here. If I were to come here again, I would not be in Texas and I would be in somewhere north.

After his "I wish ..." sentence, a question immediately came to my mind and I couldn't stop asking what he would change if he were to live the same acculturation process, and here is his answer as taken lessons for the new comers:

I would have bought a car first since the transportation is really important and a real problem here. Having a six-month intensive course, I preferred not having a car but I would change it if I had a second chance. There is nothing to be that much afraid of or anxious about. We were so anxious about banking issues, how to carry and keep the money. However, there is nothing challenging about such matters. Everything was easy and like we discussed during the sessions.

Hopefully, there was not much for Ali to change as clarified in his quote above. However, there were the things that kept changing in him since he started to "be like Americans". Also, he was careful about living with plans, punctuality and rules. He went on mentioning the changes he experienced as "we are trying to understand that there is nothing more valuable than human beings." These changes echoed in his social life as he held longer conversations with international friends and instructors. In one occasion, he was involved in a very deep conversation with his instructors, which made him really happy and feel a part of the whole society. To his astonishment, this conversation also led him to go beyond 3Rs (standing for race, religion and region). He also linked his sentences to the experienced gains of the Pre-CCOM as he thought the process was easy. The reason behind its being easy, as he said, he knew what would happen next after each step taken and he knew the process and how things worked.

Referring back to the *déjà vu* he felt during the first three months, Ali answered the question coding what made him happiest as bumping into the things that he knew and learned. However, he had many other reasons to make this process easier and

smoother since the sessions did not have the whole role in doing so. He explained his social support sources as his family, his friends both in the USA and in Turkey, and also counseling services for international students at his university. Stating that if he were to name his acculturation process as a theory, it would be “be half the battle won”, he explained that his victory was finishing his master’s degree and being successful when he was back to Turkey.

Then I applied an activity available online to find out what he thought his acculturation strategy was and whether his strategy was the right one considering the dynamics of the host country according to the categorizations of Berry (2001, 1994). I read him the strategies and he did not let me down by stating that it was “integration” that he unconsciously applied as a strategy in the host country that he defined as favoring “multiculturalism”. He also clarified why he thought it was multiculturalism prevailing in the host country by explaining that:

Here, there are people from almost all cultures around the world. Everybody is interested in their own lives and respecting other cultures around them. Different religions, and cuisines. The percentage of diversity is high; but, each person lives in a total respect. Everybody can do, drink and eat whatever they want. The rules are specific. It is not like in Turkey, there is not such an aim to assimilate a group of people or categorize them. Or else, there would not be a unity or an order.

4.1.1.3.2 Ali’s Experienced Acculturative Stressors after the Pre-CCOM in Social and Academic Environments in the USA

“I regret coming.”: In the very first e-mail exchange, Ali brought up transportation problems about the frequency and availability, which was in line with his pre-existing knowledge gained in the Pre-CCOM. Though familiarized with such possible transportation problems, his first experience of waiting was unfortunately even a lot longer simply because a friend of him was unaware of the changes done recently about the places of bus stops. That’s why he waited at a spot where no buses came to pass at all. However, even for the cases he was at the correct spot, he thought the informants were right. He stated that he felt terrible because of the cold to avoid unwanted smell, the unavoidable smell, lack of security and very different drivers, for him, who were mostly females speaking almost no English but Spanish. This led him to question himself, which he noted

down in his second e-mail: “Everybody usually speaks Spanish in here sometimes I ask a question to myself: Did I arrive to Houston in USA or Mexico?” That’s exactly what brought us to his regrets of being not in the USA, but in Houston because of really limited English spoken beyond the university walls, as he stated. He voiced his regrets of not being able to speak English with the people in the streets more during the Skype interviews in addition to some other problems related to the conditions of his social environments:

I am a little bit regretful about coming because almost no one in the streets speaks English. (...) Transportation is bad. You need to change many means of transportation even for a short distance. On the busses, there are homeless people and the ones who cannot afford a car. They always cool the busses in order to prevent the smell. It is the same case at school, classes are cooler than outside to raise concentration, prevent the smell and keep students awake.

Though first stating “the university is really good, without problems.” Ali found it difficult to fulfill responsibilities in the intensive English course since there were lots of assignments that he had to hand in. The grades were very important to him to pass to the next level. Expecting to have native teachers in the course in the USA, he seemed to stagger to find two non-native instructors. Then he decided the course he had taken in Turkey was more appealing to him for many reasons. He then confessed that “I missed the things in Turkey a bit, Hocam.” In addition to such problems, he, in his first e-mail exchange again, mentioned not having social activities in Houston as another experienced acculturative stressor. In our first Skype interview, he went on to talking about his unmet expectations. In this regard, he uttered that he could not find what he expected from Texas, which was more beautiful in photos.

(...) but places are really different, old houses. About language, I am in total shock. People do not speak English, which is the case in many places such as Walmart. A few people know English, but the rest, such as cashiers, is experiencing a great difficulty. I do not think that I have experienced culture shock. (...) We held expectations about the intensive English course; but it did not live up to my expectations by not having native teachers. Among the friends coming from Turkey, we discussed if it was that we came for from Turkey. I hope, this is contemporary for the first weeks and it will be OK in the following weeks.

In the second Skype interview, Ali answered my question coding what made you unhappy most with two phrases: that English is not spoken and that the transportation system was really bad. In addition to Spanish, widely spoken in the USA, another problem

was Turkish since Ali accepted that there was no get-away from Turkish people compiling a big part of the population in Houston. He worded it as “It is a great problem to stay away from Turkish people here, and it is almost impossible.” Another problem was introducing other international students the existence of Turkish as a language since there existed many illusions, he said, that Turks spoke Arabic. He exemplified this problematic issue and his trials to fix them as follows: “I say my name is Ali, and they ask me whether I am Arabic or I know how to speak Arabic. Everybody thinks the official language of Turkey is Arabic. It took me a great deal of time to introduce Turkish to people.” However, back in the first Skype interview, he also accepted that if there were not any Pre-CCOM, his acculturative stressors would double. The reason behind was because he thought he would have been more shocked to see the problem of transportation because of limited number of the busses. Yet, he was not much shocked because such unfavorable conditions of the transportation had been a persistent topic in many videos and audio sharings during the Pre-CCOM and his friends in the USA already mentioned them.

In his following sentences, it became clear that another acculturative stressor as experienced pain was related to eating. Although Ali had been introduced to the notion of packed lunch during the Pre-CCOM because of unavailability of the canteens he was used to in Turkey, he found it really difficult to adapt to the notion of carrying his packed lunch with him. And he expressed his feelings as follows:

(...) people’s carrying their lunch together with them is like the farming workers in Turkey. Adding your lunch to your bag in the mornings is not nice at all. (...) There are microwaves in student centers and there is always a long queue as people eat there. So do I. However, I do not feel comfortable while eating my packed lunch. Is someone looking at me my packed lunch I took from home or not? Should I share it, or not?

In the third Skype interview, Ali reflected more on this eating problem by stating that he could not freely buy any meat or chicken at any markets because of his religious concerns. That’s why he kept searching for Turkish or Arabic markets and not eating out any meat but salad at most. That was not what he expected, though. He thought it would be all right without eating pork. However, there is something called “halal”, which was the reason for his hesitation to eat any kind of meat and chicken. Moreover, Ali attended an orientation program organized by the university in the USA; yet, he did not find it as detailed as the one we did in Turkey. He mentioned the main topics as banking,

shopping, honor code, some specific rules like not praying in the corridors and avoiding speaking loudly, how to pass to the next level in the course, where to find books and etc. Most importantly, he conveyed "Since they know the life outside, they warned us against the cases that someone would approach and ask for money or mobile phones. They told us to give them what they wanted instantly." Upon learning this, he seemed to feel uneasy and wished not to experience such a thing in the street. In addition to limited information in the orientation of his university, he also made references to the MONE about not providing efficient support to its scholars in situ.

In our second Skype, I wondered what was the worst experience Ali had ever had until that time. He shared his two friends' and his visit to NASA with flat batteries of them all because in the USA a battery meant a navigation application for them. Ali did not think that he experienced the acculturative stressors commonly cited in the related literature on most of which we touched during the Pre-CCOM. In the following weeks, he was more concerned about applications for the graduate programs in the USA universities. He was doing his best to obtain the highest grade as much as possible to be accepted by the universities he wished. Thus, he was under the pressure of getting a place in a university meeting both his expectations and his future workplace's ones. Comparing two kinds of adaptation which are psychological and sociocultural (Ward, 1996), Ali decided that both of them had their unique difficulties; yet, to him, the most difficult one was sociocultural adaptation.

All in all, Ali managed to put his gained knowledge in the Pre-CCOM into practice in the USA, which seemed to help him a lot increase his coping strategies and decrease acculturative stressors before and after his arrival in the USA. Having relatively limited support from the host university compared to the Pre-CCOM, Ali did not come across any difficult times during his acculturation thanks to his enhanced awareness and knowledge about the host country and its culture during the Pre-CCOM. The reasons behind the avoidance of such unwanted pains in the USA are elaborated on throughout the previous parts in the results of Ali's case, so I do not want to repeat them here. I believe Ali's case successfully highlighted the importance of getting such professional help before his departure for the host country for a smoother and easier acculturation process. Once again, I would like to underline the uniqueness of Ali's experience in his initial stages of his

acculturation in the USA. Now, I look into the second participant's case in the following parts.

4.1.2 Nisa as a Case

In this part, I deal with three main parts while describing the experiences of Nisa before and after her arrival in the USA. For the first part, Nisa's expectations, concerns and needs before the Pre-CCOM are provided. Due to the limited number of people to help her about her questions in her mind, there were many perceived acculturative stressors for her; for instance, lack of cultural knowledge which might result in many cultural conflicts, she thought. She also touched upon perceived discrimination against her religion as a headscarfed woman and language barrier among her perceived acculturative stressors after her arrival in the USA. When it comes to her perceived coping strategies, she mainly referred to her social personality and co-national friends.

In the second part, Nisa's pre-departure reflections on the Pre-CCOM are presented. Nisa's narratives clarified her increased acculturative coping strategies and decreased acculturative stressors. As for her increased coping strategies, there are increased culture fit and decreased cultural distance thanks to her raised cultural knowledge and awareness, eliminated misunderstandings resulting from cultural differences, almost alleviated concerns and prejudices, formed trust towards the host culture and its people and increased self-efficacy thanks to her what-to-do and what-not-to-do lists scheduled in the Pre-CCOM. She did not touch upon any perceived acculturative stressors before her departure for the USA.

As for the third part, aspects that Nisa benefitted from the Pre-CCOM after she began her social and academic experiences in the USA are portrayed. In this part, I mainly deal with two themes that are experienced gains and pains in the USA after Nisa attended the Pre-CCOM. Nisa highlighted the importance of knowing the place and the culture beforehand as her acculturative coping strategies. Gained independence, enhanced self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-belief, being active everytime were among her coping strategies she touched upon. On the other hand, Nisa reflected on her experienced pains in the USA. As for this part, getting lost in the streets, difficulty in adapting to laundry system,

language barrier because of mispronunciation were the subjects that she came up with about her experienced acculturative stressors. In this regard, she referred to the Pre-CCOM as the essential helping hand in each step of her acculturation in social and academic environment. It is noteworthy to state here that the uniqueness of each experience is respected in Nisa's narratives. Therefore, she has her unique experience of her study abroad as a graduate student in the USA.

4.1.2.1 Nisa's Expectations, Concerns, and Needs Before the Pre-CCOM:

"I am very determined": While talking about her family's reactions towards her decision to study in the USA, Nisa emphasized the fact that she was really into it despite their unwillingness. Reflecting on her years at the university, she pictured her university life via her social personality and her strong relationships built with her professors. To her, it was really easy to come up with questions in case of unclear or vague situations in the class. That part of her personality would be an essential antecedent of her perceived coping strategies by taking initiatives, especially to maintain integration in social and academic settings.

Moreover, Nisa always wished to go further in academia and she was first informed about this scholarship by one of her professors when she was a freshman. The advantages of studying abroad for her master's degree and PhD and her desire to be an academician dominated her thoughts and paved the way to the USA which she regarded as a perfect fit. Her words once again underlined the values and endless possibilities that the USA presented to international students. During the interview, I also asked her the reason that made her the one to be chosen for the scholarship. While underlining the importance of surviving and remaining calm in tricky and challenging questions, she thought "being trustworthy" was the key and she explained why: "It is important for the MONE to pay back by your obligatory duty in Turkey. They are afraid of the possibility that people betray them by not coming back to Turkey. As they trust us, they give privileges to us."

“The very religious meaning of my name, my religious appearance and my field of study as sources of my fears”: Nisa was very concerned about possible prejudices and perceived discrimination to be projected on her as a result of her religion and religious look because of her head-scarf. She articulated that she did not want to be a victim of the conflicts recently prevailing in the Middle East and that was why she feared to experience acculturative stressors. Not having any relatives but a few experienced friends she met over the Internet, she clearly stated that she did not know much about what was waiting for her in the USA. That was why she could not relieve herself about her concerns and fears mentioned above. She added her another concern regarding the security and hustle because of her lack of trust in the host culture. Hence, her concerns were mainly related to her personal and religious identity, her appearance in Islamic clothing, security.

Moreover, Nisa found the information she gathered from the people she did not know personally inefficient and not enough to get rid of her concerns. So, she often highlighted the deficits in her knowledge about the USA. When asked, Nisa reflected upon her expectations and thoughts and, most of the time, she compared her native culture and the host culture. She was aware of the fact that there would be differences in terms of academia (i.e. the way they handle the lessons, the duration, assessment types, procedures to conduct research and analyze it and etc.). Nisa thought that it was not all about English since she thought understanding the situation fully might not resolve the chaos at all. Furthermore, about perceived acculturative stressors she commented on her thoughts about friendships. As she kept her distance at first, she thought it would take her some time to be friends. In order to trust her prospective friends, she had also another condition of feeling safe in the environment by observing the people as an outsider. Then she noted that she could join them. As for co-national friends, what she thought was:

I do want to have Turkish friends as well since we are on the same wavelength, which is really important. No matter how well we know English, I am more comfortable while expressing my ideas in my native tongue. We do not feel that much relaxed without communicating what we want in our language.

Favoring Turkish friendships and togetherness with Turkish people as a union were more obvious in Nisa’s plans for her acculturation process in the host country. As another possible acculturative stressor, Nisa was very concerned about cultural conflicts and misunderstandings owing to her lack of cultural intelligence. For this reason, she added

she wanted to know more about the USA so that she could prevent possible misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences. To exemplify, she added that it would be too difficult to call her prospective professors by their name, which was totally a different case in Turkey. Even though she mentioned she did not do any research while choosing her university for the intensive English program, Nisa, interestingly, talked about different means of social media (i.e. Periscope) that she used to get insights into the daily life in the USA. Talking about the differences existing between her native culture and the USA culture, Nisa came up with possible changes that she was ready to make in her life upon experiencing the host culture. Her readiness to shape her life within the light of the thinking and living way of the host culture was of great importance to give us a mental picture of her prospective acculturation.

About clothing, for example, they (people in the USA) care less than us (people in Turkey). It is not very important for them to have very loose, old and worn-out clothes on them (people in the USA). (...) In fact, that is something good as we make a lot of judgements by simply looking at one's clothing. We label them. (...) This may change in the USA for me by attaching less importance to the clothing.

As having a limited circle of people to respond to her questions, Nisa packed many concerns, fears (i.e. perceived discrimination against her religion, language barrier, lack of cultural knowledge) and questions to prevent possible conflicts and misunderstanding because of cultural differences in her “no way back” destination. Seeing her social personality and co-national friends as perceived coping strategies, she highlighted that there was an emergent need for her to get professional help while answering her questions before her departure for the USA. Or else, Nisa thought it would be tough times for her as an acculturating person in a country of obscurity.

4.1.2.2 Nisa's Early Reflections on the Pre-CCOM before her departure for the USA:

“not going to the obscurity”: In the very first session, the participants were provided with a participant folder including the consent form, the debriefing form, a handout for the first week and the syllabus. The aim here was both to make them aware of the flow and also to let them think and do research about upcoming sessions. In the first

session, I briefly introduced the overall schedule tailored to fit their needs and interests upon delivering welcoming marks. As for the culture shock experiences, I did a mini survey among the informants by asking them about their culture shock, which enabled my participants to learn more about culture shocking cases via real life experiences. Nisa used many sentences starting with “I learned that...”. After getting informed about these subjects, Nisa noted that people in the USA would be more relaxed towards a guest or a new comer. This was directly related to the notion of “hospitality” and the differences in what it entailed in two different cultures. In addition to a “help-yourself society”, tipping was another issue that was new to her since that was the first time she heard that it was a must in the USA, as she reflected in her WRJ-1.

Additionally, the U-curve of the cycle of culture shock and cultural adjustment was another point that Nisa touched upon as being a very successful and to-the-point evaluation. Because one of our informants shared her experience in which she went shopping with her American friends and got help only about transportation part and left alone while carrying the very heavy shopping bags, Nisa compared the concept of helping in two cultures as reads: “Even your close friend there may not help you until you directly ask for it. In my country, people feel they owe such helping each other to their friends.” As the moral of the experience for her, “ask for it” notion was the key to get help from other people. She reflected on how that awareness made a difference in her cultural fit she knew that it was all about culture nothing persona. In this way, she avoided the cases in which she might misjudge people around her in the USA. That is, thanks to her decreased cultural distance, she got to know more about people and their cultural characteristics by seeing and understanding the reason behind such different attitudes about “help”, for example.

In addition to the things Nisa learned, there seemed to be many remaining things that she wanted to learn since she uttered she would like to learn the differences and similarities in education systems of two cultures. Nisa, in her WRJ-2, found the ritual talk interesting and she asked why “how are you?” meant to say something else, though it was not the case in Turkish, which was another example of her strategy of comparing her native culture and prospective host culture. In addition to driving issues above, she found free-busses for students as another interesting thing. In week 3, they listened to different people from different states in the USA. Owing to their being in different states, they came

up with different information regarding the same topics. That caught Nisa's attention since she was not expecting such differences and everything was standard (i.e. the age to take the driving license, and the procedures) in Turkey.

In week 4, one of our informants shared the general tendencies of people in the USA about health care and its costs. Nisa seemed a bit concerned about the health care system as the health insurance provided by MONE was not comprehensive enough. Hence, she was happy to learn this before her departure. In her 1st RP, she clearly stated that they were not going to the obscurity. She clarified it as "To tell the truth, total obscurity came to my mind when the USA is said. Now, I got rid of it and I feel more relaxed." Thanks to the Skype interview conducted with Ece, a PhD Fulbright scholar in University of Arizona in the USA, Nisa reflected on many things about which she formed an opinion; for example, bank accounts, money transfers without huge fees charged, the announcement of place of residence to concerning institutions. For the WRJ of the week when we hosted Ercan in our session, Nisa highlighted the fact that she got answers to most of her questions about visa procedures, how to remain and get in touch with the MONE and attaché in the USA. In our final interview right before her flight, she first expressed her feelings about her departure for the USA. Out of stress, she found it impossible to name what she really felt. However, especially after she got her visa, she thought everything was ready for her flight.

Once again, Nisa underlined the importance of deleting the obscurity in the Pre-CCOM as a main gain. Getting rid of wh- questions regarding her new life approaching closer, Nisa cleared up blurred parts of her study abroad experience before her departure. Even though she got insight into possible acculturative stressors via videos and experience sharings, she noted that she did not hear anything that was awful at all. Furthermore, Nisa was planning to use the learned information as a monitor for her life in the USA. Learning these things would help her a lot; yet, that was not the only responsible part as a support resource for her in the host country. The reason behind was her self-research triggered by each session. In her narratives, it became clear that she made the most of such sessions by exploring further information which could be of great importance for her. In her final interview, she touched upon the learned things related to the academia as follows:

About academia, they are so relaxed as far as I see in the videos. They have different styles that I realized upon analyzing the professor in the video. In our case, there are many rituals while visiting a professor at office hours. For instance, it was said that

office hours are office hours in the USA since it is written on the doors of the empty offices in Turkey. Most of the time, most of them are not in the office during these hours. (...) However, I suppose it is not the case in the USA.

After being informed about the American libraries, Nisa came up with another comparison. As she used to work in her university library as a student during her bachelor's degree, she claimed to be knowledgeable about this matter. Moreover, she found e-mailing system of the required documents to the students "super" about the libraries in the USA.

"3Rs": In her WRJ-2, she mentioned the 3Rs rule which was covered in one of the videos by the informants in the related sessions by informing them that there were 3Rs which should not be told among people in the USA. These were, as stated in the video, race, religion, and region. Such important information helped her increase her cultural fit and decrease her cultural distance by eliminating misunderstandings and tough feelings. Considering the diversity of people in the USA, it made sense to Nisa. She reflected that she learned the fact that she should not question 3Rs about people and she said it was good to know that because it was not the case in Turkey. Though not being racist but curious in Turkey, she commented on that issue and confessed she would do the same in the USA. That might cause some troubles and misunderstandings about her as being racist. In her WRJ-4, she once again touched upon the rule of 3Rs since there was an interview video-taped by Cemre, a research assistant in Penn State University in the USA, and another international PhD scholar. In the video, the PhD scholar was a bit staggered when Cemre asked about race and religion. Therefore, it became clear that in order to maintain a cultural fit, she was aware of the fact that she would re-structure her questioning about people's national backgrounds.

"I would be broken-hearted and misunderstood": Listing the things Nisa learned in the sessions, she also highlighted the importance of such new information in preventing emotional vulnerability as being heart-broken and misunderstood. While talking about the importance of time for people, she shared her opinions about saying "no" to people because of a heavy schedule s/he had. She stated "if someone told me that s/he did not want to meet me, it would break my heart and I would feel hurt by thinking that s/he did not like me. But, the underlying reason is said to be different." However, Nisa now could give it to their busy schedule and the concept of "time is money". She noted that those things were really different for most of the Turkish people. That was why she might

find it difficult to absorb “no” as an answer to her invitation for a coffee when she needed to have a talk with the person, for example. She was also aware of the differences in jests and mimics.

Regarding the academia, Ercan, who visited us during the session as a Turkish graduate student in the USA, shared tough comments on his work presented in the class. Noting that he was aware of the fact that all such tough comments were made for the improvement of his work, he underlined the relations in the class were not affected by the comments. That is, he meant to inform us no one was cross after the sessions just because of the comments made. This also prevented Nisa from being emotionally offended. She explained it as follows: “Our classmate may criticize our work rigorously. In that case, I would think why s/he did it there in the class in public. I would be upset because s/he did not do this in person.”

“I used to have really serious concerns and prejudices”: As Nisa attained high identification with the host culture, she reflected back on the period in which her knowledge was really limited. She stated things presented in the videos and the other materials during the Pre-CCOM eased her mind. For instance, in week 3, we had a video from Ezgi, a Turkish graduate student in the USA, in which she also touched upon eating habits. Upon hearing that pork was not included in all the food available in the markets and there was almost no need for them to worry about the issue, Nisa wrote that Ezgi made a good point in solving one of the main concerns for most of the Turkish people in the USA.

In week 4, Nisa pointed out the fact that she used to have prejudices before the Pre-CCOM: “I alleviated most of them. Of course, there may be people looking at me, and even staring at me out of curiosity without judging me or approaching me in a disturbing way. I was anxious about such incidents; yet, what we call the USA is said to be a bowl of salad.” In our first interview and our social talks between the sessions, Nisa always unearthed her fears about being deceived owing to her lack of trust for the host country. That’s why she seemed to make constant connections between the things she learnt and her pre-existing fears in order to overcome them. That happened when she got information about the phone cards since she wrote that she would not hesitate if the operator was trustworthy or not. Hence, she saved time, and most importantly formed trust towards her prospective social environment. Another example showed up after she was informed about

how common it was to shop online in the USA and she realized that she should and could do online shopping without the fear of being defrauded. In the same week, she experienced the relief upon learning a good eating place in case she had any difficulties in finding one.

After four weeks, in exactly week 8, she was still thinking about the same matter and her questions to Ercan were mostly related to such fears she possessed about being deceived. Once again, she tested if she was wrong or right about being afraid of the life in the USA. She won when she failed because Ercan's experiences fortunately corrupted her fears again. Also, Nisa calmed herself down by reminding her of the fact that nothing would be in the way she thought before since she was sure that the people there were like them. She went on to talking about the diversity as a real advantage as she inferred from unique experiences of the informants that no one would discriminate her just because of her inefficient proficiency of English. Regarding the diversity, Nisa touched upon its being advantageous to hide her foreigner identity since almost everyone was different there, which was not the case in Turkey. Talking about her foreign friends during her bachelor's degree, she accepted that she did not have many. She mentioned the labelling a foreign person as a new comer in Turkey. Yet, she was sure she would not be noticed that much seriously as everyone was a newcomer or used to be once upon a time in the diversity existing in the USA. Then she explained how she changed the looks from being discriminating into being curios.

Moreover, Nisa talked about her future class which would include, in addition to her, many other different people with different backgrounds. She said she would meet people from the countries she had not heard before and these people would prevent her from being the only foreigner in the place and feeling alone. Also, she was convinced about the help she would get if needed because "Seeing that even the people we have not met in our lives sent us many videos there makes me think that people there will of course help us when we ask for it in the USA." For her, it was really impressive and comforting to get help from the people that did not know her. She summarized her words as she would not be in the place that she would feel herself alone. Another fear was revealed about flying alone for the first time. Yet, hearing the same stories of the experienced ones helped her repel her fears and enhance her self-efficacy as she uttered "Many people went there alone, and worked the things out. I can do the same. It will be also easy for me."

“I should/will/can do this and go there”: After getting rid of her pre-existing prejudices, concerns and fears, Nisa took lessons from the Pre-CCOM and prepared a real guidebook for herself. As for her first lesson taken, she wrote that she should get rid of such fears as there would not be people collaborating on purpose to disturb her in the USA. Drawing the attention to the similarities, in the same RP-1, she underlined the fact that the people in the USA were just people like the Turkish ones in general. The fact that all she needed was patience, confidence and ease was her advice to herself. Nisa also noted down “Black Fridays” in her WRJ-5 in order to catch discounts especially in electronics.

Nisa’s another lesson taken in the Pre-CCOM was about friendship. She touched upon this matter during the final interview and she warned herself against taking offence because of the friends in the USA as they would not be like Turkish ones. In that sense, she referred to the differences because of cultural notions such as “individualism” and “personal space”. That meant she would give it to the differences in cultural values. Nisa also added that she would better be more cautious about the things to talk or not to talk in public, which directly led us back to 3Rs concept as we discussed earlier. However, she stated that it would be really difficult to leave her old habits such as asking questions regarding their national identity while meeting a person for the first time. In her plans, Nisa did not have “buy a car” option since she was aware of the difficulties she would undergo in the USA as a result of not having a driving license in Turkey. Also, she was relieved to get more information about when an American driver license was needed. She was glad to learn that the Turkish one was still satisfying to rent a car. She had thought that her Turkish driving license would be invalid in every occasion, hopefully that was not the case.

Remembering the things told about the hospitals and especially the cost of the examinations of teeth and eyes, as a taken lesson, Nisa learnt to be very careful about her health. So she did every necessary examination before her departure, which was not in her plans before the Pre-CCOM. In this regard, she also stocked five packets of contact lenses after hearing that they would be a problem and costly in the USA from Ece via Skype interview. As for the academia, she had “reading the assigned pages before the class” in her agenda. Till the end of our final interview, she mentioned her plans about how to console herself since Ercan emphasized the importance of finding sound reasons for themselves for the cases in which they question their presence in the USA. For their psychological well-

being, remembering the real and powerful purposes of their stay in the USA would help them a lot overcome acculturative stressors and lead a successful life there, Ercan claimed. That was why she said the following things:

I should find sound reasons. A better life? or a better career? I survive and endure for them. As said by mother, we should educate ourselves to have better conditions than them. (...) In the USA, we will be alone beyond the doors. When the doors are closed, we are really alone no matter how much they help us. We will find and console ourselves by not finding a shoulder to cry on.

After highlighting the possibility of “being on her own”, Nisa put her last words about her plans in her future study abroad experience as being punctual and studying regularly for her classes. Reflecting on the Pre-CCOM, Nisa believed that there were not any deficits she observed. In that sense, she wrote in her first RP that she did not know the things that were discussed. She also added that nothing was useless and repetitive by highlighting the nature of the sessions by being effective and new every time. She also found it logical to have a general view of the USA rather than focusing solely on a specific state since everybody was going to different ones. That was why she favored seeing the holistic picture of the host country. Thanks to her gained faith in herself, she told she would absolutely go through more successful acculturation in her final interview.

Finally, without being asked, Nisa reflected on the reactions of other scholars who did not participate in our sessions since they kept asking how, where and when she learned that much information. Since the MONE scholars in Turkey were really busy with studying English and concentrating only on their required exams, most of them could not find a room in their stressful schedules to look for something about the USA even on the Internet. That was why they were shocked to see the reality that Nisa did it in her very busy schedule. However, she said she was shocked by how they did not know the things she shared with them. Then she confessed she realized that she possessed that knowledge by the inspiration of the Pre-CCOM. She got some comments from the other scholars as she was very alert. It was thanks to her courage to ask questions, which was highlighted by her in her WRJs as one of the gains of the Pre-CCOM. Nisa also told me that there was a difference in the levels of their awareness in her regular class of intensive English course: “They do not know even how to search for accommodation; yet, you shared some important websites with us. They did not know either traffic issues, or the education

system.” Nisa also gave another example of how the participants in this study expanded their knowledge to the ones behind the walls. Hence, she expressed that she let them know about the things covered in the sessions by narrating the things via her notes. Moreover, she thought she would have the same role in the USA for her Turkish friends around as she said she would also calm them down first and then explain how they would manage the things. Here, the courage to take initiatives was exemplified in her utterances and that was among her important gains of the Pre-CCOM. In her following lines, she touched upon the perceived acculturative stressors eliminated in the sessions as some of the gains she had by giving an example:

For instance, it was really good to hear that we must read the lease carefully while renting a flat. I, most probably, would sign it without reading. But now, I will definitely read it. (...) Tips about what to pack in our luggage were also effective since we avoid the things in our luggage that charge some fines.

“What Nil Hoca said is in my ears”: After reading through the data gathered from Nisa, it became clear that most of her utterances accumulated on the things that our informants mentioned. In her utterances, it was also clear that she took them as role models since she was really under the impression of their real life experiences. Most of the time, her taken lessons were deduced from the stories or suggestions of the informants. This once again highlighted the importance of hearing the first hand experiences of “real” people. She also added that such experiences provided her with many insights into the matters. What is more, she reflected that Ercan’s visit was really effective especially because it was a good experience to talk with somebody who recently experienced the culture shock.

By highlighting the relief that she gained, Nisa explained why: “I feel really at ease since the sessions were really useful. (...) People whose videos we watched shared their e-mail addresses unhesitantly and told that they would help us anything and anytime. Even if I do not need any further help, knowing this makes me relieve. (FI)” Reflecting on Nil’s audios, Nisa found them very effective and she stated that the things shared functioned as real fillers for many gaps in her deficient knowledge. While listening to Nil, Nisa told me that she most of the time put herself into Nil’s shoes. Most importantly, Nisa said she started to believe that Nil was exaggerating the things as Nisa reached more information that made her relax a bit more day by day. However, she accepted that if she

were to record her experiences without being involved in the sessions, it would have been worse than Nil's cases.

Once again, Nisa shared the shocking information she got from such experience sharing. One of them was related to Ercan's explanation about the head of the department of intensive English course. Ercan expressed that the people in charge were very caring about the students' problems though the problems may or may not be academic-related. Nisa also maintained a further contact with Ercan on one of the social networking sites and conveyed further questions about the libraries and she was impressed by the photos of the libraries he shared. She also told that she learnt about the things that she had not thought before. For instance, Kemal, a graduate student holding a master's degree in the University of Utah in the USA, informed the participants about the website that they could check the crime rates in their future neighborhood and she directly checked it online after the session.

Furthermore, Nisa expressed that there were many things that she had not expected from the sessions; for instance, she stated that she truly had not expected to have a live conversation regardless of the time difference between us. The reason behind was directly attached to "time is money" as a new concept that she met in the sessions. After hearing exactly the same sentence from very different people in different states, she was convinced that time was really important for the people as they got a really busy schedule to run after. Nisa summarized the experience as being "super" because "You can ask whatever comes to your mind. Or else, you have to wait at least for five hours to get an answer via messaging. (FI)"

Moreover, seeing the willingness of people in the USA to help new-comers, Nisa offered to be the next volunteer for the Skype interviews in case we did such Pre-CCOM again. In that sense, we can see that this willingness to help is something contagious, hopefully in good terms. Taking lessons from what was shared by our informants in their videos and audios, Nisa also found them eye-opening by eliminating possible disappointments ahead. After Nil's narration of her first observations in her neighborhood, Nisa said that she would have lived the same disappointments with Nil as she also expected to see skyscrapers everywhere not bungalows. Furthermore, she did extra research within the light of the awareness raised in Nil's experiences. Hence, she found the same case in

her neighborhood. Thinking about the converse situation in which she would go without knowing such things about the surroundings, she confessed Nil's words were always in her ears.

Finally, Nil pictured what would happen if she went to the USA without hearing all these as: "I would probably say I came to a totally village-like place and would ask if I came for this or they sent me to this place upon putting the burden of the scholarship on me." Nisa said the U-curve of the cycle of the culture shock and adjustment was absolutely lifesaving and she believed that she was already at the peak in her honeymoon since everybody around her was excited about her going to the USA. Taking informants as role models, Nisa made some comparisons between their experiences and her prospective experiences. Then she concluded that everybody was alone while managing the first days. Hence, she would do the same since things would be easier for her as well thanks to her increased belief in her self-efficacy.

"I do not know what it lacks since I have not seen one before.": Nisa ensured that she got what she needed and wondered throughout the Pre-CCOM. She also added that she met the things beyond her imagination since she uttered she had not thought about them before. For instance, about banking issues, she would directly go there and ask two or less people and make up her mind about which bank account to have; yet, there were many other things considered in the sessions which were of great importance for her financial well-being in the USA. She mentioned possible problems regarding banking as a consequence of not being informed before as: "I would open a bank account from a very local bank that could not be found in other states, which would put me in total trouble while travelling around the USA."

To the question about the possible challenges or deficits existing in the Pre-CCOM, Nisa answered that she had not seen any before. As a result, that was too difficult for her to compare the module with another one to be able to see its deficits. However, she expressed everything was well-thought and well-organized over the weeks. Also, she said timing was logical since she was not sure if we had done it earlier, she could have listened to the sessions with the same carefulness and concentration or not. Finding every session effective, informative and not being repetitive, Nisa did not think that there was any need to change something in either its content or its timing. However, she added she would like

to talk about how staying with a host family was like. As finishing words about the anticipated gains of the Pre-CCOM, she reflected on the effectiveness of the data collection tools especially in online platforms as follows:

If we were to continue without them, the sessions would be weak because such platforms were the places that we shared and stored information. We can easily check such places for further information wherever and whenever we need. For these reasons, they were effective. Visuality is broad and nice there. (...) I wish we made use of blogs by writing such things on a blog entitled as the steps to take for Turkish scholars while adapting to the USA.

Though not being among the aims of data tools, academically preparedness was brought up by Nisa as a gain of the scheduled deadlines for the WRJs after the sessions. Valuing giving feedback a lot, she believed that such tools helped her remember and internalize the things covered more since they prevented the presented stuff from just fading away after each session. Putting the learned things into words in the WRJs also raised her awareness while listening to them, as she stated. Hence, even the types of qualitative data collection tools oriented her to the future academic environment she would experience in a few days, she claimed. She also brought up her enhanced cultural knowledge, eliminated cultural conflicts and unwanted feelings of not being liked, almost alleviated prejudices and concerns, satisfied needs and formed trust as her perceived coping strategies with perceived acculturative stressors in her prospective acculturation.

4.1.2.3 Aspects Nisa Benefited from the Pre-CCOM upon her Arrival in the USA:

In this part, I dig into Nisa's study abroad experience in the USA by thematically analyzing the gathered qualitative data via nine weeks of e-mail exchanges and three Skype interviews. It was amazing to witness her new experiences closely from the very beginning since she always kept sharing her experiences, feelings and everything new to her on our WhatsApp group via photos, videos and even audio files. It seemed to us as the continuum of our sessions especially for the remaining six participants who did not get the score for the intensive English course program in the USA. What is more, it was of great importance to observe the changes that Nisa went through. As a new informant in our helping chain,

she, most of the time, encouraged the others to get rid of unnecessary worries in their minds by proving hers were nonsense after she could observe them then. To me, from the beginning till the end of our data collection process, Nisa was a really motivated tactician. What I mean here is she always came up with the instances that she applied the tactics she acquired in the Pre-CCOM and also she kept deducing new tactics from her first hand experiences for the new comers in our online groups. I look through these tactics used and given under two different titles as in the other cases: experienced coping strategies as gains and experienced acculturative stressors as pains.

4.1.2.3.1 Nisa's Experienced Coping Strategies after the Pre-CCOM in Social and Academic Environments in the USA:

"I would have made the mistake of my life time": After her first flight in her life, Nisa was happy that it was a nice flight for her. As she planned, she started to articulate her question marks in her mind immediately she got on the plane. Especially about directions, she got great help from the people she came across. Even on one occasion, the person offered a walk with her to show the route she was heading for. Also, she opened her first e-mail by giving tactics to her other Pre-CCOM friends, who were preparing to leave for the USA after May. Then she reflected on how she startled her friends in the USA out of their minds by how much she knew about almost everything in the USA as follows: "For instance, upon seeing AT&T, I said I could buy a telephone package. I asked whether there was Target. I did not think if the Chase bank was reliable or not. Turkish people here were shocked upon discovering how much I knew about the USA."

Furthermore, Nisa added that the sessions literally helped her a lot. For this reason, she felt comfortable and shouldered the responsibility of representing her native country by being a good example. As discussed before, this was her holy mission and that was why she was more careful and more kind. Talking about responsibilities she thought to have, she went on to giving some details about her surroundings. While doing this, she kept saying "as we talked/discussed/touched upon ..." since she luckily observed many good correspondences between what she learnt before and what she experienced in the USA. The examples were about the very huge universities and the small houses that were mixed, clothing, street life. It was the second week when she claimed that she more or less got

used to her new environment by exploring new places such as markets and banks. What was outstanding in her utterances was “on my own”. For instance, she said that she managed her posts herself. It was really important to her to observe self-efficacy while surviving in a new environment during the very first days. Having furtive glances especially from elder people, she was convinced that those glances were neither irritating nor discriminating but only wondering eyes of diversity in her opinion. She also emphasized that she gained this perspective during the Pre-CCOM.

Before her arrival, one of her biggest concerns was related to trust on practical things such as shopping, using a taxi, or banking. As for the latter, Nisa tested the trustworthiness of her bank though not intentionally by losing her card. Thanks to the raised awareness, she stated to make the best choice available among other banks since she would have chosen a more local bank which were not found in other states and may have caused her many fees during the transactions. That was a real gain for her as an eliminated pain. In the same e-mail, she also addressed the fact that the USA was really different from Turkey as the most precious thing she gained during the Pre-CCOM in Turkey. Knowing this beforehand helped her a lot especially about the health system. She came to learn how expensive even a simple treatment was in the USA. She expressed her relief since she managed all check-up issues in Turkey upon learning how costly they were in the USA. For this reason, she added that she would have made her life time mistake if she were to be in the USA without this raised awareness about the health system.

In our first Skype, Nisa’s opening remarks once again emphasized that she got used to the things as nothing was strange to her anymore. She said it was not like “Wow, I am in America”. She guessed it was thanks to her high level of intellectual and psychological preparedness in the Pre-CCOM. She included many gains of such lessons and most of them were eliminated pains actually. That is, such gains would have been real pains experienced in the USA if she had not been informed before arrival there. Hence, one of her gains expressed during the Skype interview was not to feel disappointed as much as Nil and she put it in:

Nil Hoca came to the USA with high expectations and was shocked after seeing village-like neighborhood. Everybody also told me about Bloomington and its being a small place, which made me ready for the situation. However, it was still below my expectations, that is, there is almost no social activity. Too small, too calm. It can be

boring for a person coming from Ankara. (...) However, I, thanks to Nil Hoca, prepared myself by setting realistic expectations and I was not disappointed.

In line with her first e-mail about people's amazement by her gained knowledge, Nisa shared some more anecdotes happening between her friends and her about the Pre-CCOM. Her friend, who struggled a lot in her first months because she knew nothing about the society she came in, told her what kind of problems and struggles she experienced in her first months. Thus, Nisa valued the chance making her strong and confident enough to manage her new life in addition to the psychological relief she claimed to possess thanks to the Pre-CCOM. Nisa explained that her friend's concern was that Nisa would live the same thing with her. That was why her friend seemed a bit dreading and cautious since she simply kept warning Nisa about almost everything. Upon hearing her friend's concerns about her, Nisa kept trying her best to convince her that she was fine. Then she shared her reflections about her friends' reaction upon learning about the sessions she attended. Summarizing their reactions as real jealousy, she went into detail about their reactions as follows:

First, they thought that the sessions were done by the MONE and they were not informed. I informed them about our specific case and they got really jealous. I added maybe the MONE would do such similar things. They experience hesitations about almost everything and they are afraid, which are the most difficult challenges for them. For instance, they were even afraid of coming here, they do everything as a colony in their groups and try their best to remain in the group since they believe that they will be in danger if they lose each other's support. Yet, we witnessed in the sessions that Americans are also normal, having a life style on their own. My friends did not get rid of the idea that they were going to the obscurity. They did not clear the blurred picture on their minds. They had great difficulty in overcoming this. Still, they experience the same thing. For instance, they go to the post office with five people.

Simply observing the differences between her and other Turkish new comers, she frequently noticed the gains she possessed after the Pre-CCOM. She reflected on herself as not being dependent since she was able to do the things on her own. She also uttered that she noticed there was an urgent need for people to be oriented before coming to the USA since they seemed to experience "a free-falling" (Ortaçtepe, 2012; 2013). That was why they constantly offered to help Nisa and insisted on being informed in case of any need. Their wish was simply "do not be like us, it was tough for us." However, Nisa's case was a totally different scenario than the others' since she explained her first outstanding difference as "I arrived here on 29th, and including shopping for my home and fridge, I did

everything on 30th.” While doing her shopping, she was relieved to know that she was in the place where she could find the cheapest and of high quality things there. Otherwise, she would have been hesitated to buy any necessary things to settle down, which would have meant extending the time spent to have a stable life.

What is more, Nisa also stated that it was true, as stated in the Pre-CCOM, there was no get-away from Turkish people since there were many. However, she explained her attitudes towards them as not being crazy about reaching them. Although she said she tried getting to know them, she did not feel that she had to be with them all the time. The reason behind was because she reasoned that there was no need to improve her Turkish as her main and sole concern was English. Yet, she seemed to value the conversations with her Turkish friends. She kept such Turkish conversations limited in number on purpose because she did want to practice English more in her daily conversations. However, she stated that the taste was really different in Turkish conversations since she sometimes felt that she could not put her thoughts into English. Another example of the learned lessons of the sessions to apply in the USA was regarding personal space. She stated that the informants and the other materials about personal space were absolutely true and it would have been a real pain for her if she had not known this concept before and she explained the reason behind as:

I also realized that people attach great importance to personal space as we mentioned. Even the kids say “excuse me” at a distant while passing next to me. If I were to come here without learning this in the orientations, I would not understand why they wanted to pass me from a distance. I would feel upset. However, this is not because of discrimination, they do not hit or push you while passing. They are really cautious about this.

Then Nisa mentioned her trials to keep up with this personal space as she started to use “Excuse me” in her sentences more than ever. Observing such a big difference between her native country and the host country, she once again emphasized the importance of her raised cultural awareness since she would have taken offense by thinking that it was a discriminating act because of her being a foreigner. She stated the possible question would have been: “why do people prefer not approaching me or keeping a distance between them and me?” Reflecting back on the changes she was through, she shared that she also kept exchanging good mornings and hellos in the street, which was something she learned in the Pre-CCOM.

Furthermore, back on the wondering looks Nisa attracted, she said she would have interpreted such looks as irritating. However, especially after she clicked that she experienced another coincidence with the informants in the videos, she was sure that the looks were really just out of curiosity in her unique experience of the USA. Though finding it interesting during the session we covered, Nisa confessed that people's tendency not to ask 3Rs (Race, Religion and Region) questions freely was also something she observed. Giving the most striking points of the USA as welcoming diversity, no discrimination, a bowl of salad, not judging others, she shared how motivating attitude the lady in charge in the bank about her English as she encouraged her to keep speaking English by commenting that there was no problem with her English as they could get their messages across.

In her e-mail for week 3, Nisa shared her friend's, the one who had real problems in her acculturation, remark on Nisa's acculturation that she never hesitated and seemed very alert. Nisa gave it to her raised level of cultural awareness, intellectual and psychological preparedness during the Pre-CCOM in Turkey. Nisa also commented on this issue by adding that: "You motivated me really well and now I am using my motivation. People coming here without being oriented are still uneasy and uncertain." As for the following week, she found one more point about which she felt herself lucky to know beforehand which was clothing. As one of our videos, Kemal, a graduate student holding a master's degree in the University of Utah in the USA, advised them to pack up their heavy clothes more as they would need them. He also noted that those things would cost them lots of money. The people who welcomed Nisa at the airport were a bit shocked to see how clever she was about the clothing since they simply took on their lightest clothes, which was a big mistake as they shared. Hence, Nisa closed her sentences by pointing out that clothing was important.

In week 5, Nisa seemed to have some difficulties in spotting her new experiences since everything started to seem ordinary to her. She wrote that there were not many new things except for their Turkish dinner served to other international friends as a socializing event. She reflected more on this event during our second Skype interview. After the dinner, they spent some more time in a club. About this part, she noted that her friends were really careful and thoughtful about her comfort. Since she was head-scarfed, they were with meticulous care not to disturb her. As she was able to spend some time

with them, some of her friends were a bit confused. Actually, there were many confusing instances in the interactions between Nisa as a Muslim woman and the people of different religions. For instance, Nisa's being in a club with her headscarf and her shaking hands with men while greeting were among the things that many people did not expect from her. She believed it was because wrong generalizations that people made by just observing a limited number of Muslim people around them.

Maintaining her holy mission as being a good representative of her culture and country, Nisa was also dealing with fixing wrong pieces of the puzzle of Turkey on the minds of people in the USA. No matter how confusing it was, she stated that she started to enter the society by expanding her friend circle. She noticed that the number of the people on the road that she was familiar with was increasing. Finding herself more social compared to previous weeks, she wished to have even more international friends on the following days. Here, she emphasized the importance of being social which was like a real tactic she used intentionally by putting it in: "I do my best to be social as far as possible because everybody says here, as stated in the sessions, do not close your doors and find something to do and be social, do not stay alone." Accepting that having international friends around did not have the same taste with having Turkish ones, she confessed that the former had still a different flavor that she really liked. Furthermore, she came up with another experienced coping strategy of the Pre-CCOM since knowing about the culture and the people provided her with the topics for longer conversations with the people in the host country. Sometimes, the experience of the orientation helped her in academic affordances; for example:

One of our lessons is related to American culture. I did not experience any difficulty in writing essays about individualism and personal space as we covered such topics in the sessions by thinking analytically and watching videos about them. I did not question the concept of individualism in terms of what it entails.

Moreover, Nisa was a member of a student association called Flagship and they talked about the trend topics for IELTS. Reading a Turkish poet, she participated in an event organized by the Flagship. In addition to this, she was also a volunteer to teach Turkish to foreign people. As she was informed about this possibility in Turkey, she immediately found the related club and joined in. It was effective for her since she could empathize with people learning a foreign language. This also helped her normalize her

problems while learning English. As an active member of many different associations, she also informed her Asian friend about the culture clubs she would be interested in. Nisa interpreted this incident as “we broke our shell, and now we are breaking the others’ shells.” In the second Skype interview, she also elaborated on what her case would have been “without the Pre-CCOM”. Unhesitantly, she defined the possible problems as lack of conversation with the people, fear of asking questions, high level of language barrier, lack of self-confidence and self-belief.

Thanks to the informants in the Pre-CCOM, Nisa believed herself and knew that the society was very welcoming for the new comers and there was also no discrimination against different English accents and that gave her the necessary motivation to voice her questions, needs and ideas in the society. While talking to Turkish people with many years of experience in the USA, she often realized that she had already known most of the things they shared in their you-must-know-this lists. Then she shared an anecdote of her friend, who had just experienced a police search. She expressed that her friend was totally appalled. Yet, she stated that that being appalled happened to her during the sessions, especially the one involving Ercan’s speech.

Theorizing her experiences, Nisa came up with the idea of having her feet on the ground more firmly than ever. To illustrate what she meant, she explained that she did not believe that she came to the USA to find her real self. On the contrary, she knew herself really well and she wanted to build more bricks on her existence in the USA. Being alone in the USA, she, every single day, felt a lot stronger than she used to be. Moreover, she felt that she gained further awareness of the experience she was living through by simply observing the things with a researcher’s curious lenses to add to her narratives during the Skype interviews. She believed that it would prevent her from not remembering the details regarding her life in the USA upon her arrival back in Turkey.

As for the week right after the second Skype interview, Nisa touched upon her newly built friendships with Americans. She thought such friendships were different from the ones with Turkish people. That was why she stated “I really feel cultural differences”. She also brought up the differences that kept making her confused and shocked such as different placements of the buttons in the lift, the different opening directions of the doors. She stated that those simple things made her life difficult in the USA. As one of her first

street experiences, she wrote me that she saw “real” Americans as she was happy to find some similarities between the ones in the movies and the ones in the street. Welcoming the spring, people, she said, stopped falling into a rut between the school and home and started chilling out. Then she reflected more on this real American concept by rendering a picture of people wandering around, listening to very loud music and rounding on the people here and there.

The last week’s e-mail exchange kicked off by happy news since Nisa passed her current level in the intensive English course. Having a difficulty in finding what was worth writing, she noted down that she was used to the local cuisine. What is more, she confessed that she even started to like them. She was also happy about forming new eating habits and getting rid of previous pains such as wrong choices about what to eat. Upon Nisa signaled the recurring themes in her e-mail exchanges, we conducted the final Skype interview to finalize the data collection procedure. In the final interview, she happily reflected upon her gained independence in her activities by stating that she could go out with an American friend on her own without the need for the presence of anyone else. That is, she gained her self-confidence about expressing herself in English. The month we were in was the starting point of her “on her own” activities since she expressed that before then she used to be a part of the group just because of the fear that she would not be able to put herself into words. Also, she defined this new ability as “being able to strike out alone in this ocean.”

Adopting “integration” as her acculturation strategy, Nisa made it clear that she neither tried to be with her Turkish friends only nor did she avoid making friends with internationals. Hence, she uttered “I do not close myself (to the outer society), I do not spend time only with Turks and I do not feel empty.” Therefore, she used a simile as being “a full stop” for herself and being “a thick book” for the USA. In this regard, she elaborated more on how her being with other Turkish people in the USA affected the meaning and power of their presence in the following lines:

We are simple dots; but we function differently when we are together. Sometimes we are a colon explaining things. We are a triple dot now and trying to prepare a program for Americans. We are dots in the complex book of the USA. There are lots of things, lots of letters, pictures and everything. We are dots but still meaningful.

As implied above, the importance of having some Turkish friends even before their departure was one of the things advised to the participants by the informants. This value once again was pointed out by Nisa since she mentioned it as an “absolutely important” thing. While talking about the Turkish community in the USA, she used the simile of a bell glass for the Turkish community and the ocean for the new society standing outside. She stated that she learned the route to the ocean during the Pre-CCOM and in the USA she also learned the route back to the bell glass whenever she felt bored in the ocean. In so doing, she was really careful to avoid betrayal as it was something not approved in the Turkish community there. She went on exemplifying the help and care she got from her Turkish friends. When asked what type of context she was in, she had a great difficulty in finding the right choice for the USA by implying multiculturalism thanks to the differences within and across the states in the USA. As she narrated the situation:

Everything can change across the regions. It is so massive that it is even bigger than a continent. I hear such things that some people do not accept Indian people. To my observation, possessing American identity card does not necessarily mean that you are. I also question whether there is an American because almost everybody has different origins. That is weird. It is not a problem if you are blond with blue eyes. However, to me, some people are also American as they were born and lived here; yet, they do not accept themselves as Americans.

While talking about different attitudes about different subjects in the USA society, I wanted her to reflect back upon her concerns regarding religious issues. She was thankful that she had not experienced anything as she feared before her arrival in the USA. However, she expressed that she was filled with apprehension because of the events happening recent times. It was the shooting three Muslim women dead that made her and the people around her uncomfortable. For that reason, her friends kept warning her against possible attacks and advised her not to be outside late and be alone while praying. That’s why she could not put the USA in a single choice among the alternatives as multiculturalism, melting pot, segregation and exclusion (Berry, 2001). She explained it as:

There are people respecting differences as well. For instance, Arabic friends come to the lessons with their face veils and yes it is pretty difficult to understand their speech for the instructors. However, no one told them to leave their face veils. It is out of question. Or, no one asked me why I did not wear such veils. On the other hand, there are people who do not accept. Sometimes, I am the only one shocked by different styles of people, especially about their clothing. For instance, there are many people

with the problem of obesity, but I did not catch any disturbing looks at them. Hence, I cannot put the USA in any available choices as the best fit.

Her last words summarized the overall gain she got out of observing herself in her brand new social environment. Since she had everything on separate files and kept a written diary of her time in the USA, it can be said that she compiled a real bag of memories when she was back to Turkey.

4.1.2.3.1 Nisa's Experienced Acculturative Stressors after the Pre-CCOM in Social and Academic Environments in the USA:

“little differences make my life difficult.” Until the first Skype interview, there was no mention of any experienced acculturative stressors for Nisa in the USA. As for the pain uttered firstly, it was her getting lost in the streets. The situation was not so serious as she kept asking questions to people as she learned in the Pre-CCOM. Also, she accepted that she was observing the environment by wearing curious lenses. Then she confessed that regardless of how prepared she was, there were still things making her shocked or looking very interesting. Hence, she sometimes could not stop asking herself whether or not it was America. Asking-the-question thing happened to her also about laundry since she had not seemed to absorb the idea of using a public washing machine during the Pre-CCOM as well. About clothing, she found it interesting to see that her instructor had a torn sweater even though she was aware of such situations, that is, people, as claimed by experienced informants, tended not to pay much attention to their clothing as in Turkey. If she had not attended the Pre-CCOM, she accepted that the situation would have been worse since she would have asked questions about such things. That would not have been so suitable, though. She explained how she reacted to such occasions thanks to the knowledge gained throughout the Pre-CCOM as reads: “I feel ‘the shock’ inside and absorb it; and I know I cannot question such things since it is pretty normal for the people here.”

In our 3rd Skype interview, Nisa elaborated more on another cultural concept, that is, “time is money” in our Pre-CCOM. She expressed that this concept was even available in charity works because people tended not to spend more time than scheduled in such works. It was one of the things that she felt the cultural differences and found it a bit shocking since she was used to the condition that people would not bother giving another

two hours more on such occasions. Underlining the instructors' efforts to help them build new friendships by pairing them up differently each time, Nisa rendered the picture of her class by having diversity. Talking about people's being cautious about 3Rs questions, she gave another example of her adapted self by stating that no one asked such questions and neither did she. In so doing, she avoided possible acculturative stressors. It was the second interview that she mentioned the conversations she was involved in with other international students over cultural issues. She observed that there were many differences that they kept asking why those things were in the way they were and confessed that such details made the life more difficult for new comers.

Then Nisa expressed that she experienced some difficulties in making herself understood because of mispronunciation of the important pieces in their conversations. However, her American instructor's attitudes towards accented English speeches were what relieved her as he stated that it was the diversity he favored more. He also believed that it was not a source of discomfort but joy. Then we witnessed the greatest claim for her experienced acculturative stressors in the USA since she stated that her problem was not possessing a sense of belongingness in the USA. She uttered that "The soil that I step on does not belong to me." That made her feel uncomfortable. Yet, she noticed that it was not only to do with her. That is, there were other international people, as she observed, with more than six years and they also had the lack of sense of belongingness in the USA.

As for the experienced acculturative stressors mentioned in our 3rd Skype interview, Nisa mostly touched upon the terrorist attacks in Turkey at those times and how much she was influenced by such occasions millions miles away from her country. Adding that she passed her honeymoon phase in her acculturation since she was not shocked by the new things around, she confessed she started her sentences coding everything was the same. Claiming that she got used to living in the USA, she noted that there was a time that she felt tough and "hit the bottom" then cried a lot even though there was not a sound reason for her to do so and explained it as reads:

However, I really cried well here. It was like an accumulation of emotions. (..) After arguing with a friend as a last drop, I burst into tears. After the lesson, I questioned my presence here. Why am I here? I totally hit the bottom on that day. (...) My friends around me were also worried and they were afraid that someone did something bad intentionally to me because it was their main hesitation about me regarding

opponents of Muslims. Yet, it was nothing about that. Then I was back to my normal mood.

Nisa thought it was because of the things accumulated on her emotional side such as missing her family, getting bad news about bombings in Turkey and so on. Moreover, she found it normal to have such fluctuations in her acculturation graphic since this was what she observed in other people's experiences there and she was expecting to feel the same toughness and cry some time later in her study abroad experience once again. Being accustomed to the things happening around made her a bit bored since she really liked being shocked by the new experiences. However, that was the sign of the fact that her honeymoon was over.

To sum up, Nisa exemplified in her narratives that the Pre-CCOM played a significant role in helping her experience smoother and easier initial stages of her acculturation. As elaborated on with relevant quotes, it was mostly thanks to her increased coping strategies and decreased acculturative stressors in the Pre-CCOM. Her perceived gains of the Pre-CCOM turned out to be experienced ones since she was able to apply the coping strategies acquired in the Pre-CCOM in the case of facing experienced acculturative stressors. Moreover, she also had real gains by eliminating possible pains thanks to her increased coping strategies. Hence, Nisa's case rendered the value of getting such professional help about the host country before her departure for it.

4.1.3 Elif as a Case

In this part, I deal with three main parts while describing the acculturation experience of Elif before and after her arrival in the USA. For the first part, her expectations, concerns and needs before the Pre-CCOM are provided. Knowledge deficits about the host country and its culture, highly possible feelings of homesickness, fears regarding the life in the USA, her emotional personality and two-fold prejudices in two countries about one another were regarded as her perceived acculturative stressors to experience in the USA. On the other hand, before the Pre-CCOM, Elif stated she had some perceived coping strategies such as being active and getting her family and co-national friends' support in her unique experience. She was planning to apply such strategies in the

case of facing any acculturative stressors. That's why the strategies are called perceived coping strategies.

In the second part, Elif's pre-departure reflections on the Pre-CCOM are provided. Elif's narratives highlighted the importance of her broadened knowledge about the host country in many aspects regarding social and academic environments. It was also clear in her utterances that there were more perceived coping strategies and less perceived acculturative stressors thanks to her taking part in the Pre-CCOM. In this regard, she took necessary precautions upon learning more about the USA before her departure, which eliminated most of the perceived acculturative stressors for her in situ. She got rid of previously held prejudices and fears as well. About possible acculturative stressors, she mentioned only "missing" issue since she claimed nothing else left about her perceived acculturative stressors.

As for the third part, aspects that Elif benefitted from the Pre-CCOM after she began her social and academic experiences in the USA are portrayed. In this part, I mainly deal with two themes that are experienced coping strategies as gains since she acquired these essential tactics in the Pre-CCOM to lead smoother and easier acculturation. The second and last theme was experienced acculturative stressors as remaining pains in the USA even after her involvement in the Pre-CCOM. As for experienced coping strategies, Elif clarified it that she always remembered what was told during the Pre-CCOM as a real resource of guidance. Upon seeing the realizations of the module, she was happy to know what to expect in next step. On the other hand, Elif reflected on missing her family and beloved ones and language barrier as her experienced acculturative stressors in the USA. Now, I present Elif's unique acculturation experience in a more detailed way with relevant quotes.

4.1.3.1 Elif's Expectations, Concerns, and Needs Before the Pre-CCOM:

"I am a highly emotional person.": Having changed many places to live in Turkey because of her father's occupation, Elif recognized the value of such experiences since she said all those had added priceless things to her such as the ability to adapt to new

places easily, and she learned psychology about what leaving places and people beloved behind was like. Though she changed where she lived until then, the thing that remained the same was with whom she had always been: namely, her family. This was going to be one of the biggest challenges as it was either worded or implied for many times in her narratives. In this regard, I saw her eyes become watery while talking about being alone for the first time in her life in such a place far away from every one and every place she was used to. Although Elif appreciated and believed that she always had her family and fiancé's support, it became clear in her answers that leaving them behind would not be easy for her and that was why she was very decisive about coming back to Turkey upon fulfilling her master's degree.

In Elif's academic trajectory leading her to the USA, her professors and the academicians with the same experience played an essential role by encouraging her to pursue it. Their utterances functioned as real motives for her to make up her mind to "the other side of the water" as she described the USA in her own words. Good relationships built between her professors and her and feeling easy to question vague things in the lessons were among the important pieces of the whole picture summarizing her bachelor's degree. Elif uttered that she was an average student showing great enthusiasm to put theory into practice. As a freshman, she started to help one of her professors as his assistant, which taught her to value practice over theory once again. This experience was of great importance to her since it made her realize that she was not a man of theory but of practice. This was a good indicator for her relatively smooth transition to the academic life ahead of her since the USA education system was believed to rely mostly on putting things into practice.

However, the destination was not an easy decision to make for Elif since she possessed some dilemmas about where to study abroad. It took her some time to reach a conclusion. Should it be somewhere in Europe, or the USA? To answer this question, she listed positive things of the USA and the ones of the former. In this list, it was very surprising and promising for her prospective acculturation she would undergo that she favored the diversity available in the USA so as to disguise her "the other" identity. She noted her further reasons to choose the USA in her list:

Also, compared to the Europe, they are more welcoming, respectful and tolerant. I was thinking about where I would feel more comfortable. Then I looked at the reflections of the people coming back to Turkey from the USA and they help positive thoughts and experiences. Moreover, I did extra research and realized that there were more experiences such as discrimination among the experiences of the Turkish people coming from the Europe. Of course, this case may be available in the USA since it is also available in my country.

After choosing the USA as her prospective place to study abroad, it was high time for Elif to think about what waited ahead. In so doing, she brought her question marks of “the unknown” and her fears to the table.

“I am really afraid of ...”: In her utterances, it was revealed that Elif had fears about her basic needs in the USA. Her concerns shown parallelisms to the existing ones in the related literature such as loneliness, hesitations about where to live and how to survive on the very first days, transportation, eating and security. About people living in the host culture, she had questions marks but with good expectations as she said “humans are always humans everywhere” by picturing different characteristics of Turkish people across different cities. She also noted that she had some perceived coping strategies to deal with loneliness of which she was most afraid. She thought her adventurous side would help her in that sense. In many times during the initial interview, Elif came up with “missing and homesickness” issues. Even in her interview for the scholarship, she made it so clear that one of the questions was directly linked to this issue. The people in charge as the interviewers asked her whether she could manage it while missing her family, friends and everything she would leave behind. She accepted that it would be tough and her being emotional feared even her since it would be the first time she would leave her family. Nevertheless, she said “sometimes dreams and goals require the person to take risks at one point” and that time it was her. As seen, most of her concerns and fears were related to her prospective social life.

When it came to her academic life, Elif was very confident that it would not be very difficult for her after getting acculturated to the environment. She added that nothing but her relationship with her thesis advisor would affect her. Moreover, she recognized the language barrier as the main problem to understand the literature on her area of specialization; yet, she relied on her previous knowledge about her subjects. As she would study a brand new branch, she accepted that it would be like starting all over it again, which might challenge her in her own opinion.

As for perceived coping strategies, friendships were like a life-saving belt for Elif to survive in the USA with her fears and concerns. Elif saw conducting the friendship circle as a first requisite to cope with her perceived acculturative stressors. Thus, she said everything would be all right after having some friends to exchange hellos at the campus or some friends and professors in the same project. She also favored co-national friendships more compared to international friendships because she believed she would need her Turkish friends as a source of psychological support. Not closing her doors completely to international friendships, she confessed her long-held sympathy for societies such as Japanese with their different cuisine. She valued such ties because it would teach her to look from a brand new and different window, she thought. Nonetheless, there was a fine detail to underline since she looked for similarities, or more precisely similar roots, in her international friendships as she put it: "I am really interested in the Middle East, therefore, I hold sympathy for people coming there. And I will exchange greetings whenever I see an Azerbaijani, and I will say I am from the same origin with you, I am like you." Letting international people in as her prospective friends in her thoughts, Elif valued the chance to meet different people as it also meant meeting different world-views.

Moreover, by giving clues about her perceived coping strategies, Elif showed us that she was ready to change some aspects of her personality upon encountering new people and new cultures in the USA. This was kind of improving her as a human by breaking her stereotypes although she said she did well so far about this matter in Turkey. Yet, she accepted that there were still a lot to do:

(...) people have some generalizations and I am always angry about such generalizations even in Turkey. (...) When I am in the USA, I believe I decrease the tendency to make generalizations about people since I will have my first-hand experience, I will experience and explore. When I am back to Turkey, I will have real experiences about people and I will talk about them; for instance, I had a friend like this and that.

Stating that Elif liked learning by experience, she confessed the uncertainty she had inside about the consequences of such experiences with the people in the host culture. Though ready to meet people, for her, there was always a possibility to be disappointed as she said "sometimes, there may be negative consequences, of course."

"My mission is to break mutual stereotypes": When I asked Elif if she did any research about the host culture, her answer was she knew the USA and the people in this

country thanks to films and TV series. She said her knowledge was limited to the extent what one could know about it without going there. She also asked questions to the people who were then in the USA. Importantly, she was aware of the fact that each experience was unique and affected by many variables such as one's personality, purpose of stay, length of stay, location, people and experiences he encountered. In that sense, she accepted that hers would also be unique. Furthermore, she confessed that she thought her experience would be more stressful compared to other students because of the conditions of her scholarship. Because of the uniqueness of one's experience in the host culture, she tried hard not to be affected by the negative thoughts or negativity of the people sharing experiences in online platforms such as forums, blogs or personal messages. Looking from the bright side and valuing the education in the USA, Elif explained:

I do not want to look at the comments much because it influences me a lot. There are some people with their whole negativity to push you directly to the bottom while you are getting ready for your departure. But, at least, there is a need to try to think positively. Of course, not everything will be perfect, there will be a tough process, yet what would I do if I were to stay here? Whereas there is no productivity in Turkey, would I have to produce something? (...) All in all, no one is fully happy by having everything they need. Total happiness is not possible since everything is not perfect in people's lives.

Talking about the USA culture in general, Elif brought up the individuality available in the USA culture. She was familiar with this concept as one of her best friends, who was just back to Turkey after the USA experience, explained it in the following lines:

Life here is so selfish that everybody talks to you but it is not the matter, she said. The matter is spiritual loneliness as said by my friends, with more experience of the USA. For instance, you are ill but no one cares as in the way Turkish people do. There is also nonpossessiveness in family concepts.

As the most important and distinguishing aspect of the USA culture, the notion of "a bowl of salad" was first introduced by Elif although she did not name it so. In this regard, she was aware of the diversity and the advantages of it as she uttered:

I think there is nothing like being an American as long as there is no injun. (...) I know in some parts some specific cultures are more heavy. For instance, there are some parts like Spain. Therefore, the USA is a mixture of differences. However, it can be advantageous for us because we are also different. In the European countries, there is more homogeneity and they have problems in accepting people into the culture. The USA is a complicated community possessing people of all religions and ideas. That is

what makes me happy because I do not like homogeneity as differences are more outstanding there.

Prior to arrival in the host country, Elif was hopeful that the diversity would help her in her acculturation since she said she would feel more “normal” or “just like everyone else” while getting into the life there. Then she thought she would feel belongingness as being attached to the society; but with some hesitations. In this question, she revisited her friendship strategies by broadening her boundaries previously mentioned since she said she wanted to have friends from very different nations. In her desire to have an international friends circle, the underlying reason seemed to be her mission to break stereotypes reciprocally as she noted:

I want to break some specific things on their minds by telling them about Turkey. For instance, they think Islam is ISIS. Maybe, they may change this view upon seeing a normal person. For instance, I am also biased towards a French person but this may change in the USA after coming across a good one. I will say they are different. Upon getting to know me, they will say Turkish people are not like that.

Moreover, living away from her home country would give more time to her to socialize and turn into herself, Elif said. In that sense, she had a real to-do-list to enjoy herself by exploring new places at the campus or around her respective neighborhood. However, she wanted to eliminate some questions in the Pre-CCOM such as what to do first upon landing in, how to find what she was looking for, what the sign for pork was in the supermarkets, and etc. While mentioning the things she wanted to know, she referred to the Internet as a limited source of answers to her questions in the following lines:

Theoretically, everybody got prepared. However, what we need is getting ready practically. The things that can be included may be talking to people with the same experience in the USA. I have many question marks on my mind; for example, about transportation, can I buy a car as soon as I get there? I cannot find the answers to my questions by searching for it. (...) However, someone there would lead us. The solutions to such questions are also not available online. You search for it but you find nothing. You cannot find what it is like living there, how to live there, origins online but some pictures.

Lastly, Elif shared an anecdote that she heard of about “misguidance” and she said she wanted to avoid such circumstances in our Pre-CCOM. Seeing her lack of knowledge, homesickness, emotional personality, mutual prejudices as her perceived

acculturative stressors, being active, family and mostly co-national friends' support were regarded as her perceived coping strategies in the USA.

4.1.3.2 Elif's Early Reflections on the Pre-CCOM before her Departure for the USA:

"... very beneficial to me": Elif's broadened knowledge of the USA regarding its culture and people was the most salient category of her written accounts during the Pre-CCOM. In almost all WRJs, she included what was new to her in her sentences coding "I learned" this and that. From the beginning till the end, she kept reflecting on the recently learned subjects as being "beneficial to her." Such new information which had just entered her overall knowledge of the USA seemed to shape her future path as she included some plans upon learning such things. For example, in the first week, we dealt with "individualism" told to have some changes across the States, which made Elif re-consider her choice of university for her master's degree.

There was a separate section in each of Elif's WRJs for "the most interesting thing I heard in today's session". For the first week content, it was personal space. Also, a very good number of comparisons between two cultures were available in Elif's discourse. She touched upon such comparisons under the title of "differences between two cultures". The very first example of such differences was collectivist and individualist notions of these two countries. In week 2, some American idioms and buzz words were among the things that caught Elif's attention best. Adding that she learned some necessary services as counseling and health and she would use them in the USA, she carefully noted down that humor and sarcasm were among the things often applied in people's interactions but 3Rs might cause some troubles to talk in the society of "a bowl of salad" which was regarded as the interesting topic of the session. She called the three subjects as dangers and decided to avoid discussing them with the local people, which was another precaution taken in her future path thanks to the Pre-CCOM.

Furthermore, the most interesting thing was chosen to be the handshake styles showing some differences across people regarding how close friends they were and the states. Comparing two cultures in her hand, that time Elif brought up time concept

since it seemed to her one of the most difficult cultural issues to adopt. The reason behind, as she put it in, was because time was not regarded as money in her native country and she was not used to getting “no” as an answer because of busy life and importance of time concept. While reflecting on the sessions, she came up with some confessions as “I used to think about this differently” or “I did not think about it in this way, though”. This brought me to the reality of Elif’s re-picturing of the USA with the help of the experiences and knowledge presented to her during the Pre-CCOM. This is also clear in the following lines:

Before, I used to think that Americans are relaxed people but I have learned that they are very careful about personal space. Their maintaining some space between the person they do not know and themselves, not joking about ethnicity showed me that they were not that much relaxed as I used to think by proving their humane sensitiveness just like we all. Yes, it is the country of freedom but there are things that I should be careful about in order not to disturb or hurt my foreign friends.

As for the Week 3, Elif was happy to learn about housing issues in the USA since she was dealing with such issues then. Moreover, she said she took the explained things into her consideration while deciding her new flat. Also, she learned some brands of markets that she would use for shopping in the USA. As for her hearing about the tipping issue in American restaurants for the first time, she reflected that it was good to learn it before experiencing a bad consequence. As the most interesting thing she heard, she chose accuracy of “fire alarms” since she was shocked to hear people’s some experiences such as activating the alarm while they were cooking in the kitchen since the alarms were too sensitive. As finishing words in her WRJ-3, she touched upon the differences between two countries over the systems of driving license.

Upon learning the high cost of healthcare in the USA in the Week 4, Elif decided to choose the most suitable health insurance for her. She added that she was not familiar with the concept of “over the counter medicines” before the session. She was also informed about banking, which led her to re-define her criteria to open an account at a bank. Hence, she decided to look for the most common one in the USA so as not to have any troubles while traveling across the states. Such new cultural items also motivated her to do further research since she stated to search for some criminal rates in some states on the Internet when she was home. Furthermore, she was also interested in learning abbreviations that would help her in the USA. As for the differences, she touched upon the

cost of healthcare in two countries since she found Turkey cheaper than the USA in these terms.

In Elif's WRJ for the Week 5, there were many new items entering her knowledge of the USA such as drugstores to go, means of transportation to use, shopping and economic terms to ease her life and telephone card to buy. She found online shopping which was told to be a very common thing in the USA difficult to adjust as it was not the way she used to do. Upon learning some problems related to the transportation system in the USA, she was disappointed simply because she expected much better conditions in the USA than Turkey. Envisaging the possible problems about transportation, she did her re-picturing of the USA once again.

In the sixth session, I again did a mini survey and asked people in the USA about the news sources that they regularly visited. In this way, the participants were able to get an idea where to look for to learn, read and listen to what was happening in the USA. The most striking part of this session, maybe of all sessions, was the Skype interview with Ece. For this Skype interview, I collected the unanswered questions of the participants during the previous sessions as they directly included such questions in their WRJs, and sent them to Ece so that she could think about those questions in advance. In addition to those gathered questions, I wanted them to revisit the concepts covered so far in the previous sessions, think about their concerns and problems and make up their own questions to eliminate vague concepts on their minds and they did it. It was so fruitful that Elif really enjoyed getting spontaneous answers to the questions of all the participants. For the things she learned, she included the following items:

I learned some dress shop names such as Ross, Marshalls in this lesson. When I go to the USA, I can use them. I learned the USA bank systems. For instance, a bank can suggest two options to me. These options are savings and checking. I can use savings system because in this system, I can protect my money in some stolen situations. I learned very important thing in this lesson. When I arrive in the USA, I have to inform my information to Turkish Consulate. I send some documents to Turkish Consulate. (...) I learned some good universities (...) for my thesis plan. In addition, reading is very important thing in USA master programs. I can read 300-500 pages at each week for my master thesis.

As for the differences in terms of the Week 6's content, Elif wrote about the laundry. She said it might be an important problem for her if she were to go before learning that she could use the machine individually in a common washing machine area. In the

following week, she was informed about the academia in the USA and “honor code” was the most interesting thing she heard in addition to information about graduate schools, and systems of enrolling in a course. When the subjects were related to the academic life, she touched upon the differences of the academia in two countries and she explained the differences in her English as:

In my county, students register for a semester courses at university and then they take their lessons in an automatic system. In the USA, taking lessons from university system is very different. It is look like a shopping. Students take lessons and then these lessons add a shopping list. In addition, students can take some lectures with permission numbers.

About her re-picturing the USA, Elif included that she did not use to check available courses for each semester while looking for a graduate program. However, she explained she would consider it from then on since she believed it was an important criterion. In Elif’s WRJ-8, the most beneficial piece of information was chosen to be the availability of writing centers at the USA universities since she planned to use them when necessary. Another important piece of information which influenced Elif’s way of decision was the fact that some states were found to be more conservative or more democratic. She said she would take it into her consideration while selecting her university for her master’s degree. As for the differences she caught between two countries in that week, she touched upon the following lines:

I observed that family life is a lot different from Turkey. In Turkey, families are more protective and sensitive. However, in the USA, people are more individualistic and families do not have to take care of their children after 18. This is pretty unfamiliar to us. Yet, for self-improvement and standing on one’s feet, this helps people in the USA.

Another important point Elif did in her WRJ-8 was regarding her re-picturing of the USA since she touched upon her changed views about family values and sharing in the USA. She stated to believe that people in the USA were extremely materialist; yet, she happened to learn that they valued the family unions since she heard they spent their Thanksgivings together with their family members. Hearing that for the first time, she reached the conclusion that they valued sentimental values as well.

In the final session, I opened the final session with Facebook statuses of Cemre, a graduate assistant at Penn State university, and Irmak, a graduate student

University at Albany, SUNY, upon getting their approval since their statuses included many important details pertaining to the topics of the week. Furthermore, the participants were ready with their presentations and they also included related videos in their presentations. Their cultural topics ranged from seasons and seasonal activities, important dates, important people, attractions, theatres, sports, cultural events to festivals. That was how we ended our Pre-CCOM. Elif was also impressed by the idea of presentations and found them very beneficial. Upon seeing some Facebook statuses of Turkish graduate students in the USA, she realized the possible increase in her emotional sensibility because of missing the people and places she would have to leave behind. As for the differences she found between two countries, she elaborated on the habit of regularly checking one's e-mail accounts.

Within the light of the presented information regarding social and academic life in the USA, Elif, in her final interview before her departure, included her plans about her prospective life in the USA. For instance, she found some student clubs where she could help people who were interested in learn Turkish at her future university, Syracuse University. She would go there, she said, and help about Turkish and get help about English at the same time. She expressed the excitement she had about the matter as reads:

Once a week, I will attend such a club and it makes me at ease and I am getting really excited about it. I will teach them something, and empathize with them. When they feel stuck, I will understand better that it is normal. When they talk nonsense, I will again normalize my feelings while learning English. I will feel more comfortable while talking English to them. This will help me overcome the language barrier. (...) For these reasons, I will absolutely be a part of such clubs. As far as I searched, there is such a club in my university. It is really nice to learn that.

“I am not afraid of living in the USA”: Thanks to the holistic picture that was drawn during the Pre-CCOM, Elif was happy to leave most of her pre-existing fears behind. She believed that even association would help her in both social life and academic life. Such reactions as “I have heard it before” or “It was what Ercan Hoca said” would ease her fears since she thought that people tended to be afraid of the unknown. However, she confessed there were some remaining perceived acculturative stressors; yet, they were purely related to her emotional self. Despite such emotional fears, she confidently uttered that she was not afraid of living in the USA any more. She valued her resting at ease thanks to the Pre-CCOM as:

Now, I believe I am pretty more comfortable. One more thing, you prepared us for asking for help from people without hesitating and being afraid of. For instance, we will have a phone conversation tomorrow with our landlord. I prepare our questions as we should ask this and that. Then I realized, without the sessions, I would be shy to ask such questions. However, now I know that there is nothing to be afraid of while asking people for help since they will do their best.

Drawing the attention to the inaccuracy and inefficiency of the information available online, Elif felt the easiness of getting more accurate and faster answers to her questions about non-existing stuff online. Moreover, she elaborated more on her previously perceived acculturative stressors in her following utterances during the final interview:

Before, I used to fear more. That is, I had times that I experienced deep fears about how to go to the USA. Should I leave my scholarship? Then thanks to the sessions. I got rid of such fears and questions on my mind. I am more self-confident. I saw I could do it after getting the required score as well.

Elif once again highlighted the importance of “knowing” where to go to buy something specific, what to find in a specific place and how to ask for help before actually going to the USA. She summarized her knowledge as “I know what to expect and I know what is awaiting ahead of me.” She also came up with the idea that she minimized her perceived acculturative stressors that she might face upon arrival in the USA: “In the orientation sessions, we asked a lot of questions to each other as well. In this way, we learned a lot from each other. (...) We decreased the factors that might put us into shock.” Considering her without the Pre-CCOM case, she confessed perceived acculturative stressors she would go through about practical issues; for example, problems about having a bank account from a very local bank and not finding its ATMs in other states. Thanks to the drawn holistic picture, she stated that she got rid of blurred notions as things were more clear in her vision then. This happened also about academic life as she explained in the following lines:

Now, things are more clear to me. About academia, we will not be late for the class even for five minutes. (...) I saw that we were going to be tired, really tired. But, it is nice. Also, I witnessed that you got what you deserved at the end. If you put your effort in it, avoid plagiarism, they will give you what you deserve. We learned that plagiarism would cause a lot of troubles and we should be really careful about it. Hence, I will do my best to produce something original, belonging purely to me.

Since Elif was happy to learn the existence of writing centers at universities, she said she would be really sad if she had finished her graduate school without knowing such an opportunity. She also touched upon her perceived acculturative stressors regarding religious discrimination; yet, she felt a sense of relief thanks to the existing diversity in the USA. However, she was still cautious since she was aware of the fact that there might be some differences across different states and so her experience would show her if her fears were in vain or not. Having talked about the differences across the USA, she expressed her shock upon getting to know them since she did not expect that many differences, though. She explained her thoughts as:

It depends on the state and the person. It changes. I did not expect that many differences. Different laws, different life styles, different perspectives. There is such a perception like places to live for foreigners, safe and dangerous or cheap and expensive states. That is, I used to have only on America on my mind. But not, the map is separated into different pieces.

“They are so unconscious that ...”: Elif came up with comparisons made between the participants of the Pre-CCOM and other scholars who could not take part in the sessions. She shared the situations in which her friends had no idea of what she was talking about. Observing strange looks at her, she could not understand how they did not know the things that she was really familiar with. Then she discovered the difference as taking part in the Pre-CCOM. After giving some clues about the life in the USA by sharing what she learned during the sessions, she got some questions from her friends as “Do you search for these in your busy schedule?” or “How do you know that many things?” Elif also emphasized the little amount of the knowledge shared with them since she said “those were the things that I quickly remembered; yet, there were many more noted down in my folder.” Her friends expressed their amazement over Elif’s sharing as “you are talking as if we were moving from Ankara to İstanbul and you tell us what to do and what not to do.”

“I put myself in their shoes.”: It was surely beyond doubt that the most impressive thing about the Pre-CCOM for Elif was having lived experiences of the informants from almost the same background with her. She found them very effective to empathize with what they had been through during their acculturation. In her first utterances about the informants in this study, she stated she found them encouraging,

convincing, and most importantly realistic and explained the reasons behind in her following utterances:

No one said life was perfect there. To me, the people we were in contact with were really realistic. Yes, we will experience some challenges but they said what we can do in these cases. I concluded that people felt stronger when they were in the USA and they gave us solutions and alternatives and advice such as do not try to push yourselves to the bottom, remain calm. I will say now I feel like this since I am in this specific phase in the u-curve.

It became clear in her sentences that Elif already started to use the tactics she deduced from the informants' experiences as her perceived coping strategies. Thanks to them, she gained a new skill as self-monitoring or self-guidance. She monitored herself to normalize the feelings and happenings around her. For example, when she felt afraid, she reminded herself of being in the process of fear since there were remaining unknown parts about the life in the USA. Then she talked to herself about the upcoming processes when she would start to like the things around after getting used to them. She accepted that there would be times she felt depressed, but she was sure that she would be able to overcome those times and liked the life there more than before. Furthermore, she found some mottos to console herself at possible difficult times. It was not surprising, though, that her mottos targeted at her being an emotional person; thus, she said she would tell herself not to lose herself in case of loneliness. She reasoned that she would say she had already known it by reminding herself of the fact that she might be alone in the USA, but not in the world. She consoled herself that her beloved ones would be still there to love her and support her but at a distance.

Finding the videos of the informants very effective, Elif favored face-to-face interviews best. Hence, she found the session with Ercan exceptional because it was the most encouraging one for her. Such experiences gave her the belief that she could do it if they did it by highlighting her enhanced self-efficacy as her perceived coping strategy. Furthermore, she elaborated on the session that we Skyped with Ece. Elif was a good observer of Ece and she was impressed by how self-confident Ece was and also how she managed to stay calm after talking about how much she missed her family. As her weakest point also explained in the very first interview, Elif was a bit more careful about emotional well-being of the people we contacted. She shared what she caught about Ece's emotional side as a role model for her as follows:

While doing the Skype interview with Ece Hoca, she was very confident. Then she felt very emotional while talking about how much she missed her family; but she knew how to pull herself together. Then I realized and assured that leaving one's family behind is really difficult for everyone. However, seeing how she dealt with it gave me courage and power. (...) Seeing this added me a lot, as a role model. (...) I do not forget the moments when I was impressed most during the session.

Getting a great deal of help from Nil's audios, Elif liked listening to real life examples of real people, which was totally different from a regular lesson concept. She felt great enthusiasm to listen to such lived experiences since she put herself in their shoes and tried to think what she would do if the same thing happened to her. That was why she collected many lived scenarios and possible solutions in her pocket before her departure as her perceived coping strategies. Such experience sharing in the formats of audios, videos, interviews and weekly presentations were eye-opening and thought-provoking for her. The most interesting detail she caught between the informants was their common points even though they did not know each other and lived in different states in the USA. They came up with almost the same sentences regarding the life during their study abroad. Thanks to Dilek's videos of a regular class at her university, Elif was glad to have a mental picture of her future classes. She also confessed that it was extremely secretive before such audios, videos, interviews, and short visual aids and she relieved upon talking to someone, seeing the things related to the life in the USA.

Though positive things shared made Elif happy, she found negative things soothing as important remarks of don't-do-this issues. She also realized one thing important: everyone had their own unique experience. "But, this is my experience; and yours will be different" was another common point between the narratives of the informants during the study. Elif was also impressed by this idea and noticed that hers would be hers with its uniqueness. She ended her words by stating "I will say this is my own experience, Elif's experience in New York" by avoiding generalizations. She valued the people she would come across in her future path since she deduced that they would make the difference. Moreover, she observed that everyone more or less went through the same process. The only difference was the people in their paths.

"My expectations have been successfully met": After almost each session, Elif reflected that there was no question left unanswered on her mind about the content of the session. Though her WRJs were filled with only the things that she just obtained detailed

information about, she added her comments and necessary needs to be done about the content of the Pre-CCOM. For instance, she, in her first RP, valued interviews most since she reasoned that personal experiences were very directive for the prospective graduate students. In addition to the weekly presentations providing some visual things for a better understanding of topics, as she stated, videos and reading passages were also found to be a good way to hold their attention. As for the things to be developed, she uttered that instead of written accounts of live experiences of the Turkish graduate students in the USA, she would like to have more face-to-face interviews.

Triggering learning more about the USA culture, Ercan's visit was of great significance to Elif. She reckoned there were many things covered as a real summary of whole sessions. In her final RP, Elif highlighted Ece's Skype interview and Ercan's visit most. In addition to the new cultural items she just learned about, she valued experiences of people and such face-to-face interactions since she stated that she could ask some important and tricky questions to the experienced people providing her with much more real and accurate information related to the USA. Regarding the deficits that she observed during the sessions, she added that there were few ones and she shared her personal opinions about the necessary developments to be done for better quality session as follows:

Maybe, sometimes, students prepare own questions related to that session and they can ask their important questions each session. I think it can be effective for students. Maybe, sessions should have much more videos or interviews rather than readings because I think that videos and interviews are more effective for students.

As for the expectations met during the Pre-CCOM, she noted down three important items: reality, trend and variety since the sessions provided her with real experiences, current updates and events, and a variety of information related to American life, culture and graduate education. In her final interview, she added that the timing of the Pre-CCOM was very legitimate; yet, it might be a good idea to have it extended through more sessions since she had some difficulty in retrieving some important pieces of information. Overall, she acknowledged that she had not expected a MONE scholar (Ercan) in the session as a guest. She elaborated further on Ercan's visit as reads: "Putting a MONE scholar in front of us during the session ... We did not expect it really. We were so excited and did not think that the sessions would be so effective."

As I touched upon eliminated pains as gains throughout the previous narratives, I came across the same case in Elif's narratives. In her final interview, she brought up her eliminated pains as "not being broken-hearted" upon living the differences between the two countries' value system. As her perceived coping strategy, she prepared her emergency kit in case of feeling lonely in the world of mostly individualist society, she said. She told me that, at those times, her support sources would be her fiancé, family and friends waiting for her on Skype. Experiencing the value of sharing lived experiences, she was also a volunteer to be a next brick on the wall by suggesting Skype interviews and visits to pay for the next Pre-CCOM to be conducted as she put it in:

You should conduct Skype interviews with each of us. Videos are not enough, though. I will absolutely find time for that since they are more effective. In the videos, one cannot come up with spontaneous questions. You cannot ask what the person means. But in the Skypes, the topics are led by you. We need more Skypes or visits like Ercan Hoca. We can pay such visits during our holidays as well. Also, it was also nice to see videos of the classes. I can also do it. Even a two-minute video is drawing a picture in your eyes. In other case, you ask questions about what they were like.

As one of perceived acculturative stressors that was eliminated in the Pre-CCOM, Elif drew attention to the differences in the health systems of these two countries and commented on her precautions for the USA about the matter. For instance, after hearing the high cost of healthcare system in the USA especially from the informants, she did some check-ups by having her two wisdom teeth out. She admitted that the operation was really painful; yet, considering the possible conditions and cost in the USA, she reassured herself. Underlining the role of the Pre-CCOM in raising awareness, she also emphasized espousal she went through as she added that they, as a group of participants, accepted that it would be greatly different there (in the USA) and they welcomed the differences, or else they would misunderstand and take offence for no valid reason. On the other hand, she simplified the situation as they (the people in the USA) were also human beings so she could get on well with them as well.

In addition to her reflections on the parts which were also among the overall aims of this study, Elif added new perspectives to the gains of the Pre-CCOM for her. She claimed that those sessions decreased her language distance as one of her perceived acculturative stressors since she felt a lot closer to the target language. She also thought she improved especially her listening and speaking skills. Her possessing less fear and

hesitation but more motivation and self-belief were among her perceived coping strategies. Furthermore, she commented on the importance of involvement of multiple affordances such as e-mailing system, WhatsApp, and Facebook to inform and keep in touch with each other. She valued those different platforms since they were effective to manage timing of the WRJs and sessions. She approached our Facebook group as an open resource of informative data to check when necessary.

Along with everything included in the development and implementation of the Pre-CCOM, Elif also underscored each participant of the sessions. Being “tarred with the same brush” as she put it in, she asserted that she learned a lot from her peers as well. In this regard, she mentioned the help she got, the effectiveness of even breaks thanks to their exchange of ideas, and her obtaining new perspectives since sometimes she was amazed by the necessary questions asked by her peers and never come to her mind before. Though it was not possible in their regular classes, sharing was the most salient purpose of the sessions for them, she said. She elaborated more on this aspect as follows:

We are tarred with the same brush. So, we have more intimate relationships and help each other. Even the breaks were fruitful as we keep exchanging answers. (...) We have learned a lot from the WhatsApp group. We cannot do such things in our regular classes, however, in the orientation sessions, we felt free to ask and answer the questions as everybody deal with talking about such stuff. You feel closer. For this reason, we could freely ask questions in the sessions. (...) Also, we witness their concerns and needs. We thought about the things that we had not thought before. He asked a question that never came to my mind. I have built trust towards them; I can share my flat since there is a high possibility for us to come across in this path once again.

All in all, Elif, thanks to many affordances and materials, was glad to increase her cultural knowledge that enabled her to decrease potential challenges with increased cultural understanding and empathy. Exploiting the kind of thinking, the Pre-CCOM were stated to help alleviate her concerns and fears regarding the experience. She also highlighted the importance of learning from lived experiences and her peers in the Pre-CCOM. Having a to-do-list as a virtual path, she had clear ideas about what to expect and how to manage in the new culture. Expanding her social support source which was limited to her family, fiancé and friends in Turkey, she added the informants, the Pre-CCOM friends and most importantly local people since she gained the courage to freely ask for help. Therefore, she successfully increased her perceived coping strategies while decreasing her

perceived acculturative stressors thanks to her involvement in the Pre-CCOM during nine weeks.

4.1.3.3: Aspects Elif Benefited from the Pre-CCOM upon her Arrival in the USA:

In this part, I explored Elif's journey through nine weeks of e-mail exchanges and three Skype interviews. Considering her narratives of her experience, I came to the conclusion that it would not be wrong to call Elif as a real people-watcher. With her awakened curiosity about the different cultures and people in the USA, she was delighted to come into real contact with many differences, which made her feel that her vision of world was expanded. She approached the things happening around her with the lenses of a curious observer. This penetrated almost all of her sentences regarding her brand new experience just kicked off in the USA. Just like in the cases of Ali and Nisa, I also come up with two different themes of her observations and experiences. These are experienced coping strategies as gains and experienced acculturative stressors as pains. I touch upon them respectively in the following sections.

4.1.3.3.1 Elif's Experienced Coping Strategies after the Pre-CCOM in Social and Academic Environments in the USA:

“There is not even a second that I do not remind me of the sessions”: From the early seconds of her life in the USA, Elif started to reap the benefits of the Pre-CCOM. Up to her first e-mail, she reflected that everything went well by then and she was familiar with almost all the new happenings around her as she said “for example, personal space, time is money, names of the markets; I am familiar with them thanks to the orientation.” She was also glad since she did not experience anything bad regarding religious discrimination as she was concerned before the USA. Making a remark that she used the coping strategies she acquired during the Pre-CCOM by not talking about the 3Rs with anyone, she regarded the week as her adaptation week. During the week, she handled the most important things of settling-down issues by opening a bank account, signing up for lessons and so on. While dealing with the-first-things-to-do, she emphasized the fact that “the orientation done in Turkey helped me a lot about most of the things here.” She elaborated on the help by reflecting: “For instance, I am familiar with the washing machines

that work by pulling some coins in. I do not find the rarity of the busses weird as much as my friends do. When the teacher says “melting pot” in the class, I do not think about what she meant.” As seen above, the gains were also observable in her academic life since she got some examples in the class as the realizations of the Pre-CCOM. It was very clear from her sharing that she early and easily started to do shopping online by buying a computer. She used the website she learned in Turkey, and she stated that she knew where to buy what as one of the gains of the Pre-CCOM. Hence, it saved her time. Otherwise, she would drag her feet about the decision where and how to buy a computer which was a mere necessity for her to satisfy as soon as possible. She was also glad that she came across with free busses to shopping malls as Nil said in her audios.

Another experienced coping strategy Elif made use of was “asking for help” since she voiced her problem and got the needed attention and help about her classes in the intensive English course. She started her second e-mail by summarizing her main activities up to then since she spent most of her time settling down and trying to learn her immediate surroundings. Here I also had a glimpse of Turkish families and friends in her experience. She expressed the great help and care they offered to her. Regarding it as “the silent help circle”, she deduced that they adopted a lot from the culture and people in the USA; for instance, not to judge people around. Then she shared a mention of her valuable observations and her feelings attached by stating that:

This is really a country of freedom and respect. There is a special place built at the university for Muslims to fulfil religious service. On the first day, I was shocked but now it is very normal. People live freely their religion and ideas without hurting and being hurt. Next week is an important week for Chinese people. I will carefully follow the week and learn something. I really like differences.

In the same week, Elif experienced her first group work with other international students, about which she felt really excited. She was also relieved and motivated to see that she could do it and get positive remarks on her English from her group members. That meant a lot to her since she believed that exposure to the target language made a difference in her proficiency level. It was also that week that she confessed the reality regarding there was not even a second that she did not remind her of the Pre-CCOM. In this sense, she said “you came to my mind whenever the instructor said time is money.” The things she learned during the Pre-CCOM shaped the path for her

decisions even about what to eat. About academia, she brought up calling the instructors by their first name which was counted among the acculturative stressors international students experienced in the related literature. Yet, Elif said she did it with ease though it was still interesting for her. Then it was time for the first Skype interview we conducted. Giving some information about Syracuse, which was her new place to live, as a small town, she said that she experienced exactly what was discussed in the Pre-CCOM and she really liked the pleasant feelings of such moments.

Enjoying being with international friends and feeling lucky to have a multicultural classroom, Elif came up with self-explorations in her experiences. She confessed that she realized the things that she did not use to know in her before. For instance, she was not a silent person in any contexts. However, she was aware of the differences especially in social interactions. For example, she knew it was her that should take the initiative and should be direct in what she really wanted. She learned that upon getting “no” as an answer, no one would insist her on joining them, which was most of the time not the case in Turkey. She thought people around her welcomed and liked her since they were really into what she said. She got many questions about her native language from them as well. This led us to think about the holy mission she mentioned in our final interview. She believed she was on the right track to fulfill the mission since she got really good comments from her new friends on Turkish people. She was happy because she said “they were not afraid of a Muslim Turk.” This occurred also when they exchanged farewells with her Japanese friends. They told her that she broke the stereotypes about Turkish people on their minds simply because she was not that person they expected her to be by being very outgoing and easygoing. They also notified that they used to have some hesitations while approaching her as a head-scarfed woman. However, she succeeded in proving real her by being very friendly and approachable, she thought. Since she realized that people knew almost nothing about Turkish people or they were somehow confused, she had the passion to explain who she is and where she is from by including some details every instance possible. Moreover, she added a list of things as new missions for her as she felt the lack of general knowledge of world cultures in her by putting it in:

She has even been to the places in Istanbul which I haven't seen. She shows some photographs. In such cases, what I tell myself is to go home and study geography because we fall behind them about these as I do not have any ideas of the things she

meant. Their general culture knowledge is really high; this motivates you to learn something new.

Emphasizing the importance of cultural intelligence and competence, Elif was amazed because she found herself unbelievably social by attending almost all free activities announced by the university calendar with her international friends. She also underlined unnecessary concerns she used to possess before the Pre-CCOM that had lived up to her expectations. Moreover, she reflected on the one-shot orientation held upon her arrival in the USA. Though not being as detailed as the Pre-CCOM, that one-shot orientation possessed some similarities as she had many sentences starting “as Ercan hoca said.” In her journey in the USA, she was not only observing the new people around her, but also her Turkish friends around. Her comparisons revealed further gains of the Pre-CCOM, one of which was the awareness of what she lived as her experienced coping strategy. For instance, when she felt down, she did know the reason and the phase she was in then she came up with the cure by normalizing the things. Though little they might seem, the things she learned helped her a lot. She replied that she had already known the things suggested by her Turkish friends, who spent many years there. In the following lines, she weighed the differences between her and other Turkish graduate students, who came to the USA without knowing anything as she stated:

Some friends are not aware of what they experience during their adaptation process. (...) We knew that it was necessary to bring some extra money with us. We knew that the culture was different here. They still think that life is expensive. I do not think so, I got over this idea. I do not think in terms of Turkish currency. We really did it in the sessions. We do think dollars as dollars. However, my friends are depressed because of the cost of the life in the USA. We feel the difference. For instance, Turkish table is a brand new concept for them. However, to me, it is as if I am living the things I know although I have never been here before.

Having the sense of *déjà vu*, Elif was regarded herself psychologically prepared before coming since she was aware of what she would be through. However, that was not the case for the other Turkish graduate students since they shut themselves off when they felt depressed. She applied the coping strategies gained in the Pre-CCOM and cured herself by stating that “I have the control of my missing feeling, I know it is natural and I accept it.” Thinking the situation in which if she had been in the USA without attending such sessions, she claimed everything would have been different since she, at that time, expected to sink

into a depression and skip lessons as her depressed Turkish friends continuously did. Then she highlighted the importance of our not taking a side in the Pre-CCOM, that was why I aimed at giving the holistic picture of the USA and avoiding any generalizations and strict directions about their prospective lives. She explained how she reflected on the things in the Pre-CCOM upon her real contact with the host culture as follows:

There are some friends who complain about everything. However, you told us that every minute is invaluable and we should make the most of it. You motivated us to integrate into the society by asking questions, having conversations, being social and meeting new people. However, you did not tell us to stay away from Turkish people at the same time. The people with whom we were in contact told us to find a Turkish person before our departure for the USA since they believed that Turkish people would understand us best by showing the best way to solve the problem. (...) Hence, you adjusted the dose well. So, while coming here, I am not one of the people that say I will not talk to Turkish people, neither am I the one saying foreigners are bad, dangerous and etc. That is, I was aware of the need to talk to Turkish people since they would help me more.

Elif also reminded herself of the reason of her stay, which was what our informants advised them to do while they were in the USA. She wisely took some precautions upon learning the life in the USA and those helped her a lot; for instance, her good choice of clothing packed, stocking extra things because of the possible laundry problems, and of course the convertor since her Turkish friends lived real troubles about using their electronics. She got lots of comments about how much prepared she was since they kept saying "how nice! Somebody mentioned you this before." Thanks to being ready for the experience in many aspects, she said she did not live "coming to the city from a village shock" which was the biggest difference between her and other Turkish friends. She also added her family, fiancé and friends in Turkey as her best support sources and she regarded the Pre-CCOM tips and friends as the other helping hands she only had. Thanks to all these, she felt really confident and powerful, which made her amazed since she said she did not know that she was that much powerful before. Then she came up with an assertive claim that "she would live no matter where she was in the world from then on." However, she gave the most important complementary place to the Pre-CCOM because, to her, made the base for everything and things were retrieved at the right time in her experiences and helped her a lot about both social and academic contexts.

Furthermore, there were also lots of new things Elif happened to learn in her new society such as being more humanistic, optimistic, respectful. Having more sentences

that she was the agent in, she confessed she started to think as an individual under the influence of mostly individualist society she was in. In the following week, she kept exploring new places and new tastes in her experience. The first theatre experience, for instance, was one of them. She also paid her first visit to the library and she was totally impressed by the atmosphere. Then she wrote about the social events she attended with her international friends, such as mini-concerts, Chinese celebrations of monkey year besides Turkish dinner that gave the feeling of “home” to her.

In her week 5, Elif once again reflected on the coping strategies she gained in the Pre-CCOM to apply in the USA since she noted that she tried her best to be active all times and explore the city and the people around her instead of staying home and shutting her down. As the most outstanding social event of that week, she gave the event for Valentine’s Day where she felt the delight of listening to universal music, laughing at common things, enjoying themselves with people from different cultures and she defined it “as a really different experience.” Moreover, she had also a wonderful birthday week in the next week since she received many warm wishes sent in messages, photos and videos in addition to surprise birthday parties. Once again, she and her international friends in the intensive English program enjoyed themselves so much. For all these reasons, she felt “she really got used to the things around.” Other reasons counted by her were having a social circle, getting used to the class environments and not hesitating to speak as much as she used to do before. Also in this week, she reminded herself of the Pre-CCOM as follows: “make the most of it as time flows and I am living the place when I am here.”

In our second Skype interview, Elif went on to talking about her Turkish friends as they started to spend most of their time together. This was something that Elif was not comfortable with. That was why she preferred decreasing the time spent with Turkish friends and increasing the time spent with international ones because she wanted to practice English more often. In the spring break, she visited one of her international friends from Abu Dhabi and she was really happy about the experience. Here is why: “it was a totally different experience for me since I thought in English for 32 hours. We used the language needed at home and I learned a lot about kitchen discourse.” Observing the others, she concluded that most of her Turkish friends had already forgotten why they were there. Yet, thanks to many highlights of the informants during the Pre-CCOM, she

considered herself not forgetting her real aim, at all. Accepting that honeymoon was over, she came to the point wherein she took normalizing the things happened to her as the main experienced coping strategy, gained in the Pre-CCOM, to apply in the USA:

For instance, I have changed, I learned how to say “no” as an answer. Sometimes, I will say “No, I do not want it.”, which will make people shocked. However, there is nothing shocking since I also changed and learned this. Is this a bad change? To me, absolutely no. You learn to be alone, to stand on your own feet. Still, it is not overdose individuality, as I know, overdose individuality is not my cup of tea. I am a person who values family a lot.

Instead of tackling by the events, Elif found a mere opportunity to meet herself as a stronger person than ever before by looking at her life as an outsider. Furthermore, she accepted that there was a high possibility for every new comer to go under total depression; yet, what she actually felt was recognizing and realizing her as a self in a new social environment. In addition to this, she valued her experience as she thought it was worthy of placement in her the-things-done list of her life by stating that “Yes, I did it, I did a master’s degree in the USA in my life.” Though feeling normal as an insider in her new life in the USA, she continuously realized that the things she experienced were far different. This happened thanks to such e-mail exchanges that gave her a chance to look back on her life with a pair of critical eyes. No matter how difficult it might seem, she was happy to live through and do it actually.

As for the academia, Elif did not consider it hard and she was impressed by the learner autonomy she gained and authentic language she was exposed to. Therefore, as the main difference between the courses in two different countries, she gave the fact that what she really needed in her daily interactions was what was written on the board in the USA. In her words, it was living “real” English. In week 7, there was a mention of exchanging cultures between her and her instructor, who helped her compensate for the deficits in English. She was glad to get such help upon asking for it as she was advised by the informants in the Pre-CCOM. Telling her instructor about some of Turkish culture, she observed that Americans were very curious about and open to different cultures since her main course instructor were very interested in what they shared about their own culture and listened to them carefully.

Emphasizing the uniqueness of experiences that each person had, Elif went on explaining the echoes of the Pre-CCOM in her experience since, in the USA, she came across

with the concepts such as the importance of time, solution-oriented society, and “ask for it” rule in case of needed help. In our final Skype, as an answer to the question coding what the things that made her happy was, she gave the possibility to meet people from different cultures. Since it gave her the feeling of being at the very core of the world and surrounded by an immense circle with an improved vision of the world, she very liked to observe such different people around. As for the thing she easily adopted, she mentioned “respect” without hesitation. She felt she was understood by the people around her since they did not judge her simply out of her appearance. She also marked the avoidance of generalizations by people as one of the things she would miss when she was back in Turkey. Then she added “being relaxed” as another thing she easily accepted and really liked. By “being relaxed”, she meant doing what and how you wanted.

Thanks to the Pre-CCOM, Elif believed she gained the ability to explore cultures without possessing prejudices. Naming her experience as “Elif’s test with New York accent”, she took differences as something easy to adapt to thanks to her being informed during the Pre-CCOM. This pre-gained knowledge, as she stated, made the things easier for her to accept as well. As her main acculturation strategy, she chose “integration”, which also became obvious in her involvement with the host cultural activities. She also touched upon her Turkish friends’ amazement at the things that she rather felt like just observing what was told her. Furthermore, she elaborated on the USA as being a multicultural place since she believed the definition of this country would be very subjective and everyone lived his own experience of the USA. She added that it was everyone else’s own America.

4.1.3.3.2 Elif’s Experienced Acculturative Stressors after the Pre-CCOM in Social and Academic Environments in the USA:

“I realized how much I missed them.”: As highlighted many times, Elif’s emotional self was that which showed up first on the stage about her experienced acculturative stressors. In the very beginning of her e-mail exchanges, she noted down the things she found difficult to get used to were individualism and feeling of loneliness. Being a curious follower of every cultural happening around her, she had already started to do

some further research about the cultures in the USA during the Pre-CCOM. She maintained this upon her arrival in the USA, too. Being delighted with the diversity she was in, she encountered some things that were difficult to adopt; for instance, her lack of world cultures as she worded. She had some friends from the countries whose names she had never heard of before. This led her to go home and do extra readings for some days to study for her friends' cultures. It was just the second week that her e-mail included sentences about how much she missed her family since it was the week she felt she missed them more than ever, which can be counted as a real summary of her overall experienced acculturative stressors in her USA journey. Because missing her beloved ones left in Turkey was her predominant concern, it was a real pain as experienced acculturative stressor for her. There were some other reasons triggering those feelings like missing important family dates or birthdays of her closest friends. Not being able to with them on such important occasions was what she had the biggest difficulty in overcoming and she suffered most from.

Moreover, Elif included her mood as follows: "I have a complex psychological state, sometimes emotional but not depressed. Just feeling resentment." In a friendly chat, Elif told how much she missed her family to her new close friend in the USA, who was also international. That made it easy for them to empathize with each other since most of the time they felt the same. Even though they tended to have similar pains, they kept trying to come up with the ailments that would make them feel better. In one case, her friend advised her not to be alone. It was not the first time she got this advice since she was familiar with the idea from the Pre-CCOM. This sincere conversation meant a lot to Elif as she remembered what she needed to do and it met her expectations regarding people in the USA since she thought "humans were always humans everywhere and we were all one." Hence, Elif preferred studying at the library as a crowded place and chatting with friends to pass time since she realized she was more emotional when alone.

In her first Skype interview, Elif once again highlighted the reason of her efforts to be social when feeling emotional. Talking about the overall graphic of her acculturation, she reflected on her weaknesses and her slow progress in terms of emotions as follows:

I am just like in the u-curve graphic. I proceeded slowly only about my emotional side. Before, I used to be individual, in my room. I was shy in the class. Then by remembering the tactics in the sessions, I built a social circle including mostly

international friends. Now, I feel more belongingness when I am in the class, I got used to the instructors more.

Finding her pre-existing concerns groundless, Elif accepted that there was no need to have that many question marks about everything and she mentioned the times she cried a lot because of being far away from her family for the first time ever in her life. She stated it was tough at first; however, she got used to the idea since it, standing on her feet, was something she had been wishing to experience at least once in her life. It was interesting for me to realize that only Elif took notes about the abbreviations commonly used in the USA mentioned during the Pre-CCOM. Then she mentioned the difficulty in understanding them. For her, such abbreviations were just single letters with no meaning at all. Moreover, everything was different to her, which did not constitute a problem for her. It was mostly because of normalization as experienced coping strategy she applied for what she experienced, felt and realized. Since she initially felt really bad over not being able to get her message through because of poor structure and mispronunciation of her sentences, she overcame this by respecting the characteristics of her acculturation and adaptation. Talking about language barrier, she went on to talking about missing her native language especially while making jokes. In order to be in meaningful conversations, she needed her online dictionary on all the time. However, whenever there was only a Turkish friend with her, she went for “the second channel” which was Turkish.

With no mention of experienced acculturative stressors in her WRJ-4, Elif, however, touched upon her being sensitive easily about family issues. It was one of the important weeks for her since she was far away from her fiancé on his birthday. She said “being far away from him was really difficult for me.” In week 7, she met a Turkish professor and paid a visit to his office. Being welcomed in her native language made her utter the following words as “on such occasions, I realize how much I have missed my culture and my people.” There was a mention of her being sensitive about her family since she stated “When left to myself, I realize I really missed my beloved ones.” In our final Skype interview, she expressed her being stressed because of the upcoming exams required for the approval of graduate schools. Since she had some problems about staying focused, she complained about not being able to study as in the way she used to in Turkey. The reasons behind were mainly her being lost in new exciting feelings and experiences

surrounding her. Leaving “I was totally impressed” sentences behind, she acknowledged that her honeymoon phase was over and homesickness was already kicked off and she added:

Yesterday, I realized that I missed a lot. Then I said honeymoon was over. (...) I asked questions questioning the reason of my presence here as I was obsessed with almost everything like why the things are in the way they are. I confessed myself that Elif your honeymoon and the phase you spend adoring the things around and being happy were over. You are back to normal, with a piece of depression. (...) As we talked, now I am in the phase of regression but it is normal and I will be back to normal soon.

Accepting such fluctuations in her mood as normal thanks to her pre-knowledge gained in the Pre-CCOM, Elif mentioned her efforts to change her mood. For instance, on a day she felt depressed, she went downstairs and observed people who were also from other countries and were studying hard at that moment. Then she told herself to calm down and see that she was not alone since there were those studying international students even though their home was not there, nor were their families. That was another example of her self-motivating attempts. Feeling as minority was among her perceived acculturative stressors before coming to the USA; however, that was not the case. Instead, she said to feel lonely and put it in:

Individuality is high, you are all alone at some point no matter how crowded the place you are in is. You know in fact you are alone, on your own. What makes you feel this is really the country as this is the life style here. It is not only you who experience this. Even Americans live in this way. This is the perspective of life here, the mentality. You have to be like them; you like it or not. This is very opposite what we have in Turkey, which is what makes it difficult for me to get used to. Still, I have some difficulty; yet, I stop questioning: this is the way they do. It is like eating kebab in Turkey, you learn this here.

Furthermore, Elif reflected on her experience as she was aware of the fact that what she did was difficult. Yet, being able to do it gave her strength while the experience challenged her. At those times when she felt difficulty in handling things, she said she remembered the sentences from the Pre-CCOM. As her self-ailments, she reminded her of the people who would like to be in her shoes there in the USA no matter how troubling the experience was. As an answer to my question coding what the most difficult things to accept was, she addressed individuality. She said it was only she who cared for her and how bad she felt upon realizing that no one took care of her. Among her taken lessons for the

prospective graduate students in the USA, she stated that she would not have asked that many questions and she would not have been afraid that much if she had had the chance to re-experience her pre-departure process. Upon getting many questions from the ones still in Turkey, she said she would like to say them to calm down and stop worrying. The reason behind was because of her belief that everyone possessed an inborn ability to adapt to the new environment, so they would adapt to everywhere regardless of its pros and cons. She also believed that the answers to most of the questions were agent-dependent. That means, it was up to the person that how s/he would find the environment since there was not only a place which was good or bad for everyone at the same level.

In summary, Elif, with perceived acculturative stressors and coping strategies, embarked on her new journey in the USA after attending the Pre-CCOM. While eliminating perceived acculturative stressors such as perceived discrimination, feeling of minority, cultural distance, Elif already started to expand her resources to apply as her coping strategies. This made possible via increased cultural knowledge and awareness and decreased cultural distance in the Pre-CCOM. When looked into the real experiences of Elif in the USA, it becomes clear that her perceived coping strategies as the gains of the Pre-CCOM before the study abroad experience also turned out to be experienced ones. This emphasized the importance of such sessions provided to the graduate students before their departure in order for them to experience less acculturative stressors by possessing more coping strategies in their prospective acculturation in the host country.

4.2 Summary of the Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the qualitative data gathered via semi-structured initial and final interviews, weekly reflective journals, two reports, weekly e-mail exchanges and follow-up impromptu Skype interviews were reported regarding prior to-, while-, and after-Pre-CCOM in a longitudinal design.

To start with, the analyses of the initial interviews yielded answers to my first research question. There are two main themes which are perceived acculturative stressors and perceived coping strategies. These two themes concerned the expectations, concerns, fears and needs of the participants. Perceived acculturative stressors consisted of the

possible factors that would trigger stress in the participants' prospective acculturation. In that sense, the theme encapsulated the following categories such as language barrier, low identification with the host culture, perceived discrimination (against religion and race), cultural conflicts and misunderstandings because of cultural differences, loneliness, the stress stemming from the conditions of the scholarship, lack of support for their intellectual and psychological preparedness, prejudices, uncertainty, missing, homesickness, and lack of trust. All these categories under the theme named perceived acculturative stressors signaled the emergent need of such Pre-CCOM as a professional avenue to provide the participants with appropriate coping strategies for the possible acculturative stressors. As for the theme regarding their perceived coping strategies, it concerned the categories that they thought they would make use of while handling any possible acculturative stressors. In this regard, as the second theme, perceived coping strategies included positive thoughts about studying in the USA, disguising themselves in the existing diversity, and their sociable personality. Under the theme, there was also an important category as a support resource comprising the participants' family and friends in Turkey, and mostly prospective co-national friends in the USA.

Moreover, Ali, Nisa and Elif's early reflections on the Pre-CCOM before their departure for the USA revealed fundamental changes in their way of thinking and behaviors, which was obtained from the analyses of WRJs, RPs and final interviews during the Pre-CCOM as an answer to my second research question. In particular, those changes addressed the perceived coping strategies for perceived acculturative stressors. In that sense, the categories such as high identification, raised cultural knowledge and awareness regarding respective social and academic environments, exploited way of thinking, eliminated fears, concerns, hearsays and prejudices, decreased challenges and cultural conflicts to face, enhanced self-efficacy, decreased cultural distance, increased cultural fit, increased social-connectedness, formed trust, having a virtual path and relieved stress were placed under the perceived coping strategies. Thanks to the categories mentioned above, the participants believed that they would deal with any possible acculturative stressors upon encountering them in their prospective acculturation in the USA. As for the theme named perceived acculturative stressors, the participants reflected in their narratives that they almost alleviated their perceived acculturative stressors thanks to the Pre-CCOM. Yet,

there were still few categories remaining such as language barrier, homesickness, loneliness, and individuality.

Finally, Ali, Nisa and Elif's e-mail exchanges and impromptu follow-up Skype interviews were also analyzed to answer my third research question. Specifically, themes concerned experienced coping strategies and experienced acculturative stressors. As the third theme in the study, experienced coping strategies were regarded as experienced gains of the Pre-CCOM by the participants. In that sense, the theme embraced the following categories such as putting the participants' gained knowledge into practice, independence, minimized acculturative stressors in the form of culture shock, social connectedness, time-saving, increased cultural empathy and cultural tolerance, setting realistic expectations, awareness of the experience, awakened cultural curiosity, self-control, not taking things personal, being social and active, not staying alone but in the crowd, voicing their needs and problems, positive thinking, using tactics gained in the Pre-CCOM, normalizing, self-monitoring and self-counselling. As for the support resources, the participants worded their family and friends in Turkey by expanding friends circle with international ones in addition to co-national ones in the USA. The analysis also displayed experienced acculturative stressors regarded as experienced pains of the participants in the USA. In this regard, the theme addressed some categories such as language barrier (not being able to find an English-speaking person owing to the geography and mispronunciation disturbing the communication), different eating habits, transportation, difficulty in adapting to practical matters (i.e. different directions of the doors), not having the sense of belongingness, missing, homesickness, and lack of world cultures knowledge.

Accepting that Ali, Nisa and Elif would have been through more though times of their acculturation, they thought they would experience depression in the form of culture shock. Moreover, they stated that they were not able to find any deficits in the overall schedule of the Pre-CCOM because of the lack of such sessions to compare it with. They all seemed happy not to be left-to-luck as almost nothing of the things new to the others was new to them in their new social environment. That was their *déjà vu* upon finding echoes of the Pre-CCOM. They were all very eager to be a next link in the chain of prospective Pre-CCOM's volunteers to Skype since they experienced real gains of the sessions and reassured them in situ. They all also highlighted the importance of attending

such sessions very closer to their departure for the USA. In that sense, they found the timing and the content effective.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.0 Presentation

The present study explored the social and academic experiences of three Turkish graduate students in the USA, who embarked on their study abroad journey upon taking part in the Pre-CCOM in their home country. Focusing on prior to-, while-, and post-Pre-CCOM, a narrative case study was adopted to present the data gathered through initial semi-structured interviews, weekly reflective journals, reports, final interviews before their departure for the USA, and lastly e-mail exchanges and follow-up impromptu Skype interviews upon their arrival in the USA. In this regard, this chapter discusses the findings of the present study with reference to the literature review.

5.1 Discussion

In the previous chapter, a description of qualitative findings deduced from multiple sources of data collection was presented. The “lived experiences” (Holliday, 2007) of three Turkish graduate students, who were MONE scholars, in the USA rendered a holistic picture of the initial stages of their acculturation in the USA by placing foci on three different phases as prior to-, while-, and after-Pre-CCOM. Being a longitudinal study, the present study deciphered underpinning expectations, concerns and needs of each participant simply by conducting initial one-on-one interviews to develop the content of the Pre-CCOM before its implementation. The rationale behind was it would be “ideal to adjust orientation programs to each student’s needs according to his pedagogical background” (Gamboa, 1988). Their expectations were concurrent with the ones mentioned as in Erol’s case in the study of Ortaçtepe (2013) since they also held “hopeful imagination” (Simon, 1992) for a better life.

First of all, each of the participants, in the initial interviews, confessed their perceived acculturative stressors related to their prospective social and academic experiences in the USA. Analysis of their perceived acculturative stressors pointed congruence with the existing studies in the related literature; such as, perceived discrimination (Berry, 19997; Schmitt & Branscombe 2002; Smith & Khawaja,2011), forging meaningful social relationships (Pritchard & Skinner, 2002), homesickness and loneliness (Wehrly, 1988, Zheng & Berry, 1991; Sam & Eide, 1991), and cultural distance (Babiker, Cox & Miller, 1980). As a result of low identification with the host culture (Zhang & Goodson, 2011), each of the participants used to hold two-fold prejudices that they had towards the people in the host culture. In that sense, they shared their image of the host culture as not being helpful and not being kind and they thought the people in the host culture had some prejudices towards them. It became clear to me that the participants were mostly concerned about false generalizations about Muslims that existed in the host culture in their opinion.

Moreover, in the initial interviews, Ali, Nisa and Elif, underlined the fact that there were many important knowledge deficits about the host country and its culture that they would head for. For the reasons behind such deficits causing uncertainty and lack of clarity about mission for them, they thought it was mostly because almost no Pre-CCOM was organized for them. Although they attended a one-shot orientation, they noted it provided no country specific or general information about the USA. They found it very superficial and almost off-topic. It was in line with the implications of the study conducted by Yildirim (2009). In the study, Yildirim concluded that pre-departure orientations conducted in Turkey were regarded as being not comprehensive enough to prepare them for the challenges of the new social and academic contexts. In addition to the lack of such professional help, the participants in the study also touched upon the internet and limited number of “old-timers” (Ortaçtepe, 2012) around them as a limited source of information. That also signaled the emergency and the importance of the Pre-CCOMs to include in the language education.

Additionally, the findings of the initial interviews also provided essential insights into their personalities, which was of great importance to get a better understanding their acculturative stressors as an individual level variable in Berry’s

framework of acculturation theory (1990). As stated by Ward and Chang (1997), it was premature to dismiss the role of personality in adapting to life in a new culture since it was reported as an important factor in determining acculturation. Berry (1980) also highlighted the personality of the acculturating person was essential to recognize the importance of the fact that he had a choice in the matter of how far he was willing to go in the acculturation. Thus, it was personality that not only defines who is less and who is more acculturated but also what facilitates or retards acculturation. In that sense, Ali and Nisa had strong beliefs that they would kick off smoother acculturation thanks to their extroverted and easy-going personality. However, personality, for Elif, was a real source of fears regarding her prospective acculturation in the USA as she found herself highly emotional. That was the reason behind her fears to undergo tough times of “homesickness and loneliness” (Wehrly, 1988; Zheng & Berry, 1991; Sam & Eide, 1991). The last common point about their perceived acculturative stressors were language barrier as cited in many studies such as Chen (1999), Mori (2000), Trice (2003), Pedersen (1991), Zhai (2002). However, the Pre-CCOM in the present study did not aim at L2 proficiency development since English was provided to them in their intensive English course they were attending then. As for the Pre-CCOM, it was executed for the participants after the course by bearing no relation with it. All these data gave the last shape to the content of Pre-CCOM by tailoring it within the light of the participants’ uttered needs, concerns, fears, personal and professional background.

Throughout the Pre-CCOM, what Ali, Nisa and Elif experienced was attaining raised cultural awareness (Homann,1999; Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley & Riedel, 2006), cultural intelligence (Ang & Dyne, 2008) and cultural agility (Woldu, Patel & Crawshaw, 2013) as their prospective coping strategies. Thanks to these concepts brought up during the Pre-CCOM, each participant claimed to leave almost all of their fears, concerns, hearsays and prejudices regarding what was expecting them in the USA. In their utterances, they told they already satisfied their crucial needs, especially about getting informed professionally about the host country before really experiencing the culture. In this regard, a virtual path was provided to them as they learned the answers to their wh- questions on their minds regarding the host country; for instance, where to buy a specific item, what to do in a specific situation. Moreover, they uttered to know where they were coming and where they were going, which was made possible since they kept comparing their native culture

and host culture continuously upon learning a new thing about the latter. This also helped them recognize their native culture as they looked at it from different windows and with curious lenses by entering the USA culture, which could be regarded as another perceived coping strategy for perceived and possible acculturative stressors.

Moreover, as a perceived coping strategy, the Pre-CCOM provided the participants with increased social connectedness as discussed by Baldwin (1992). Social connectedness was mentioned as a priority of such Pre-CCOM in the previous chapters. That means they would overcome possible acculturative stressors easily as they closed the distance between the cultures. As they got to know more about the culture and the people in the USA, they stated to feel more closely connected to the host society by embracing and welcoming it with its similarities and differences. Upon seeing multicultural nature of the USA society in every material presented in the Pre-CCOM, Ali, Nisa and Elif got rid of their minority status stress as being foreigners before their departure. In that sense, they used to think that it would be easy to label them as foreigners in the host country. In the Pre-CCOM adding new perspectives to the participants about almost every respect of the USA in terms of social and academic experiences, our informants in the study had an important role since the participants relied upon what they heard from such real and lived stories of the people having co-national ties and the same background. Another important point was psychological and intellectual preparedness since all the participants in the present study worded their readiness as an essential perceived coping strategy for their new social and academic experiences lying ahead. With their uttered desire to gain social acceptance as a legitimate member in the USA, they noted to get rid of most of their perceived acculturative stressors about studying in the USA. They stated to regard it as a positive life event. Each of the participants also respected the value of having the Pre-CCOM as a resource of professional support in developing the pre-requisite skills such as learning to work through the cultural differences, welcoming such differences, empathizing with people from different cultures and thinking analytically about the host country in a holistic way before their departure.

As for the reflections on the Pre-CCOM, it became obvious that the participants in the study did not report that they faced many acculturative stressors during the three months of their initial stages of acculturation in the USA. As they did not report a

line of experienced acculturative stressors in the form of culture shock, their experiences hopefully showed great contrasts with the studies conducted about international students in the USA. For instance, psychological, sociocultural and academic acculturation experiences of the three Turkish graduate students in the USA were not in-line with the salient acculturation models in the literature. The analysis yielded the reason behind as they had relevant knowledge and sufficient coping strategies to apply while dealing with any acculturative stressors in the USA. For example, I observed that they did not experience the difficulty in forming social relationships which was a problem of internationals in the study of Pritchard and Skinner (2002). Moreover, Beoku-Betts (2004) also brought up prejudicial attitudes as challenges experiences by the internationals in their social adjustment in the USA. However, the participants of the study did not feel exclusion emanating directly from such attitudes. What is more, I also found the problems reported by Brislin (1981) as irritability, excessive concerns with health, distrust and hostility toward local people, hopelessness, withdrawal, rigidity, and lowered work performance irrelevant for the participants' acculturation in the USA. On the contrary, I dealt with forming trust, socializing and learning ways of thinking and living in the American way as emerging themes in the data analysis. On the other hand, homesickness (Wehrly, 1988) as the problem of the international students in the USA was mentioned as an experienced acculturative stressor experienced by Elif, who did not feel lonely or depressed as the challenges of the internationals. Though uttered by the remaining two participants under the category missing and homesickness as experienced acculturative stressors, I found it more tangible in Elif's narratives as a highly emotional personality, yet not to a serious extent.

What is more, picturing the acculturative stressors of international students in the USA, the study of Smith and Khawaja (2011) listed educational, sociocultural and practical stressors and discrimination; yet, I hopefully did not find such incidents in the narratives of the participants. The cultural and social challenges including lack of exposure to popular culture, lack of exposure to other cultures, influence of personal or prior knowledge, perceptions about diversity, limited contact with native speaking students, nonexistent shared identity, lack of shared interests as reported by Gertzog (2011) were not experienced by any of the three participants in the study, either. I think that was mostly because of the perceived and experienced gains of the Pre-CCOM since the participants

believed and experienced that they acquired essential coping strategies to overcome any acculturative stressors experienced during the initial stages of their acculturation. Additionally, the findings of the three Turkish graduate students in the USA did not coincide with the social adjustment problems reported by Çelik-Yalçın (1998). Hence, there was no mention of academic difficulties brought up in their narratives due to their social adjustment problems such as the communication problems, environmental and cultural problems, social interaction, social life, discrimination, and financial problems.

Furthermore, the participants touched upon the Pre-CCOM as a motive to set the stage to discuss building culture sensitivity and understanding “culture shock” (Olberg, 1960; Schumann, 1986). As also highlighted by Elif, the phenomenon of culture shock was real and significantly possible in many international students’ lives. Upon being introduced to various aspects of the USA culture and society in the Pre-CCOM, each participant claimed to alleviate their culture shock that might interfere with their academic, social, and psychological well-being before and after their arrival in the USA. Therefore, one interpretation might be that the Pre-CCOM fulfilled its objective to “help them develop an attitude that will hold them in good stead as they encountered new and unpredictable experiences” (Clarke, 1988, p. 82). As put forward by Baker (1988), orientation should provide meaningful preparatory information and learning experiences for students going abroad. That was also told to be achieved in the Pre-CCOM by the participants. Providing answers to the questions of “what” and “how” as a real guidebook, the Pre-CCOM were told to be a unique and vital opportunity for the development of realistic expectations by the participants. It was very important because, as stated by Fowler (1988), positive and realistic expectations are the best precursors of a satisfying overseas experience. In that sense, Triandis (1981) pointed out the importance to narrow a possible gap between reality and expectations. Therefore, it can be said that the participants in the study were glad to come across what they had already expected by avoiding any possible sources of disappointment and culture shock resulting from unrealistic expectations or a huge gap between the expectations and reality.

Additionally, the participants fulfilled their immediate needs quickly and easily upon their arrival in the USA since they already made decisions about them. The basic needs were regarded as the ones that must be satisfied before a person can function in

another culture (Mestenhauser, et al., 1988). It was thanks to the Pre-CCOM that facilitated their adjustment to the host culture and contributed positively to their acculturation and adaptation in the USA. Embarking on their acculturation in similar ways, Ali, Nisa and Elif were aware of “complex socio-cultural and psychological nature of acculturation” (Schönpflug, 1997). Thanks to the gained knowledge and raised cultural awareness in the Pre-CCOM, the participants constantly questioned “their assumptions and understandings of symbols and meanings in the host country” (Beamer, 1992). In addition to their reducing of perceived anxiety and discrimination, I believe increased understanding of and being able to predict the host’s behavior as perceived and experienced coping strategies were of great importance for their well-being.

Moreover, creating quality relationships, the participants were able to predict attitudes and behaviors of people interacting with them by “reducing unpredictability and guesswork” (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). It became obvious in their narratives that they developed cultural empathy (Louie, 2005; Tettegah & Neville, 2007) and tolerance of cultural differences (Montgomery, 2010) thanks to the informants’ shared experiences. This encouraged their “intercultural competency and constructive communication between students from different countries” (Hail, 2015). It would not be wrong to conclude that such shared experiences also proved that “discussion of cross-cultural experiences among expatriates gave validity to the individual’s observations and reactions” (Selmer & de Leon, 1998). Accumulation of experiences of the informants was also stated to play an essential role for the participants in the study as acculturating persons. Thanks to better cultural awareness provided by the informants, I observed the participants advanced knowledge about extensive cultural variation by region within the host country on a case-by-case basis. Understanding the reasons underlying the strict rules of the host culture, each of the participants came to the conclusion that they already developed cross-cultural understanding and cross-cultural patience thanks to the Pre-CCOM. Keeping an open mind, they all appreciated the diversity they were in. They also noted that they avoided judging people and cultures around them as they already left their previously-held prejudices and relieved the stress of the perceived prejudices that were to be projected on them because of their national and religious identity as an outsider. This also helped them decrease the

possibility to encounter cultural conflicts as acculturative stressors and increased their independence as legitimate members of the host society as coping strategies.

Furthermore, thanks to their feelings of inclusion, each of the participants was satisfied with their social-bounds by overcoming anxiety about such relationships. Attending social events at greater frequency, the participants' not facing socioeconomic disadvantage underlined that the Pre-CCOM facilitated the development of positive relationships in the USA. Also, familiarity as a strong foundation for social friendships (de Heer, et al., 2016) was claimed to be gained in the sessions. It was inferred from quality social relationships and meaningful conversations as shared in their narratives. In line with the findings of Zhang and Goodson (2001), their increased social connectedness during the Pre-CCOM enabled them to feel more comfortable during intercultural communication and more easily identify with the people in the host culture regardless of cultural differences. Hence, feelings of loneliness were not addressed by the participants since those feelings are regarded to represent "a personal emotional experience which occurs when an individual's desired amount or quality of personal relationships is significantly less than their actual experience" (Gierveld, 1998; Knox et al., 2007; Peplau & Perlman, 1982, Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Young, 1982; Suh, 1998, cited in Rujipak, 2009). Addressing their enhanced beliefs about their self-efficacy, the narratives of the participants, I believe, showed important relevance to the findings of Rujipak (2009). Rujipak concluded that successful socio-cultural adjustment in new environments is determined, relatively, by the nature of self-beliefs about the ability to overcome the difficulty of situations, which also echoed in the present study.

Thanks to the assistance for each participant in order to "participate fully, effectively and satisfactorily in another culture" (Nicholson, 1988), the participants also claimed to have their acculturation under their own control to the greatest extent possible (especially in Nisa and Elif case). When the cultural difference experiences and engagement of the participants were examined through Bennett's DMIS (1986; 1993), it became clear that what the participants experienced could not be either denial of cultural difference or defense against cultural difference. However, they were through minimization of cultural difference and mostly acceptance of cultural difference. These two positions could also be regarded as the first steps leading them to adaptation to cultural difference and integration

of cultural difference. Though the participants already possessed examples for these positions in their social and academic experiences, it would be too early to claim these positions as their current ones because of the limited length of time in this study design.

Planning to invest in the target language culture and the language during their study in the USA, the participants' attitudes towards the USA were also in concurrence with the study of Davis (1971). The study put forward that the students who had spent only a limited time, such as one or two years, were reported to find the USA not preferable; however, the ones staying longer, as in the present study, were stated to possess more favorable views towards the host country and its life. There were also similar findings with the study of Bektaş, Demir and Bowden (2009) since they concluded social support and self-esteem as key predictors in the psychological adjustment of Turkish students in the USA. As asserted by Duru and Poyrazlı (2011), the role of perceived discrimination and social connectedness on acculturative stressors was also observed in the narratives of Ali, Nisa and Elif since they also rendered that lower levels of acculturative stressors thanks to the increased social connectedness and decreased perceived discrimination as their coping strategies acquired during the Pre-CCOM in Turkey. Moreover, their socialization with the individuals from the USA rather than endorsing separation by socializing with only co-national members lowered the levels of their adjustment difficulties, which was also reported by Duru and Poyrazlı (2011).

When the initial stages of the acculturation of Turkish graduate students in the USA in the framework of Berry's bidimensional model (1990) by focusing on "lived experiences" (Holliday, 2007), Ali, Nisa and Elif experienced almost the same levels of *integration* by acquiring the receiving culture and retaining the heritage culture at the same time. In so doing, they attached importance to both cultural parties by valuing and welcoming the differences between them. Their coping strategies such as prior knowledge and familiarity with social and academic environments in the host culture, decreased perceived anxiety and fear, eliminated prejudices, increased social connectedness, developed cultural awareness, cultural intelligence and self-efficacy were reported to help them function as an independent and legitimate person in the host country. In this regard, this study bore some partial similarities with the one conducted by Ortaçtepe (2012). As in the present study, the participants of Ortaçtepe also endorsed integration with some

differing levels in addition to other behaviors align with separation and marginalization but assimilation did not occur at all. Yet, those behaviors (i.e. separation, marginalization) were not brought up in any narratives of the participants in the present study. To my observation, their not experiencing separation or marginalization was mostly thanks to their using the perceived coping strategies.

From the perspectives of academic discourse socialization (Duff, 2010) as the second foregrounding conceptual framework in the present study, the participants regarded themselves as “competent members of their community by taking on the appropriate beliefs, feelings and behaviors, and the role of language” (Leung, 2001) in their acculturation. Not experiencing the challenges in the academic context cited in the related literature and being able to voice their needs and take part in actively in class activities, the participants exemplified in their narratives their successful and smooth acculturation into academic settings by “becoming a more competent member when participating in oral and written discourse” (Duff, 2010). The participants’ experiences were in congruence with neither the challenges cited in Zappa-Hollman’s studies (2001; 2007) as nervousness, shyness, or insecurity, nor the ones brought up in Leki’s study (2001) as unfamiliarity with academic tasks, unfamiliarity with the American pop culture. Feelings of being incompetent and incapable (Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004) were not among the experiences dealt with under the emerging themes in the study. Moreover, the acculturation experiences of Ali, Nisa and Elif confirmed the link between students’ cultural orientation and academic motivation. In this regard, they did not bear any resemblances to adjustment problems to new and culturally different expectations pertaining to teaching, learning, classroom participation, and assessment as concluded in the studies by Klineberg and Hull (1979), and Oei and Notowidjojo (1990). One interpretation of this could be the participants in the present study were introduced to such differences in the expectations of academia of the host country during the Pre-CCOM.

Although Thompson and Thompson (1996) stated that international students did not ask for clarification of assignments in addition to their rarely debating issues, disagreeing with the opinion of a classmate or instructor, and challenging the status quo, which was not the case in the present study, either. Ali, Nisa and Elif were proud of their empowered ability and courage to voice their questions to clarify vague points whenever

needed thanks to the Pre-CCOM. Silent engagement in oral class participation (Tatar, 2005) was also not related to the experiences of Ali, Nisa and Elif in the present study. Within the light of their advanced knowledge about academic life in the USA, they also did not experience the problems concluded in the study of Yıldırım (2009) such as the ones ranging from unfamiliarity with teaching methods, professors' requirements and expectations, incapability to focus on studies, difficulties in class participation, concerns about grades, to novelty of the relationships between students and teachers (i.e. calling teachers by their names). However, the common utterances of each participant were in line with Yıldırım's study since it was also underlined, as in the present study, that pre-departure orientation conducted in Turkey was regarded as being not comprehensive enough to prepare them for the challenges of the new social and academic contexts.

Additionally, the findings of the three Turkish graduate students in the USA did not coincide with the findings reported by Çelik-Yalçın (1998) since there was no mention of academic difficulties due to academic problems in the classroom, support from peers and advisors, problems in using resources and unfamiliarity with examples in their academic life. Additionally, the participants in the present study did not experience any challenges dealt with by Gertzog (2011) regarding academic life such as appreciation for and familiarity with pair and group work, class participation, understanding of the rules related to cheating, familiarity with rules related specifically to plagiarism, innovative rather than rote learning, autonomous learning, ability to read voluminous and complex reading material, students' vocalization of confusion or incomprehension, willingness to learn beyond the required scope, development of relationships with teachers and advisors, knowledge of classroom etiquette related to tardiness and attendance. Hence, having been exposed to the information regarding the academic life awaiting the participants in the USA before their departure, they reported that they were familiar with the specific rules and socially accepted behaviors in their respective academic contexts, which related their smoother and easier acculturation into academic life in the USA to their participation in the Pre-CCOM.

The findings also acknowledged the study of Jang and Kim (2009) asserting that being aware of how the host culture shaped the acculturation experience should make a considerable contribution towards a successful exchange semester. In this regard, the

participants of the Pre-CCOM were able to choose and apply the most suitable coping strategy for experienced acculturative stressors in situ during their acculturation in the USA since they were provided with the intellectual and psychological preparedness about how to act appropriately in their new social and academic environments. As also highlighted in the literature (Çelik-Yalçın, 1998; Duru & Poyrazlı, 2011), thanks to experienced gains and eliminated pains dealt with in each case, the narratives confirmed the need to prepare such internationals before their departure for the host country as we did in the Pre-CCOM.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 Presentation

This chapter presents a discussion of the results by encapsulating the conclusion, implications, limitations of the present study and recommendations for further researchers.

6.1 Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study offer social, pedagogical, theoretical implications for many stakeholders including prospective international students, sending and hosting institutions and all the personnel in charge of the exchange programs all around the world, especially in Turkey, as the site of the present study. As for the social implications, one of the most far-reaching theme in the narratives of these Turkish international scholars in the USA was their perceived acculturative stressors. Among them, there were knowledge deficits owing to the lack of professional support about their psychological and intellectual preparedness and false consciousness as they used to get informed about the host country via unreliable sources such as personal blogs, series and word-of-mouth providing very subjective information. This caused them to come up with a wrong picture of the USA by holding groundless concerns, biases and stereotypes. However, thanks to the Pre-CCOM, they accepted that they replaced the wrong picture of the USA with the correct one by being exposed to real lived stories of experienced people as important informative sources in different affordances (i.e. Facebook, WhatsApp, Emails). In so doing, they set realistic and positive expectations regarding their study abroad in the USA. Another significant point to consider as their coping strategy to their acculturation in the USA was, thanks to their participation in the Pre-CCOM, their cultural awareness, intelligence, empathy and tolerance of cultural differences. This reinforced the significance of raising cultural

awareness, intelligibility and agility of such international students “at home” before their departure for the host country. Hence, such Pre-CCOMs to support the international students regarding academic, social and cultural aspects of the host culture must be professionally and obligatorily implemented to ensure international students’ psychological and intellectual preparedness before their departure for the host country.

As for the pedagogical implications of the present study, the narratives of Ali, Nisa and Elif strongly encourage emphasis on the necessity of not thinking classes cultureless, seeing language teachers as culture teachers. Over the years, intensive English program have both narrowed and broadened our understanding of what it means to teach English (Byrd, 1988). Such a Pre-CCOM as an urging need and recent trend should be taken into consideration as an essential part of language instruction offered to international students by home countries in addition to the ones held by host countries. For such a captive audience who is preparing to venture into a new society with a good number of question marks on their minds, a fairly rigorous, objective, and task-oriented program teaching intercultural skills, tools, and attitudes that would be appropriate and applicable in any culture should be a requirement for all who would go abroad to study (Baker, 1988). The MONE, sponsoring Turkish international scholars in the USA, provides the students with a six-month intensive English course in Turkey, which shows that respects the language barrier as the main concern of the scholars.

However, the findings of the participants in the present study underlined the lack of psychological and intellectual support via such Pre-CCOMs. This unveils the fact that although language is undoubtedly very important for their acculturation in the USA, attainment of cultural awareness and knowledge pertaining to academic and social cultural contexts should also be taken into consideration in the curriculum of language courses as well. In that sense, such Pre-CCOMs should be integrated into the university calendar as a legitimate and indispensable part of the language courses offered to such international students by home countries. It is of great significance to remember that success depends not only on the expatriate manager’s competencies and skills, but also organizational support and assistance prior to and during the assignment (Aycan, 1997). We, as language teachers of such going international scholars, must see such language courses not just an opportunity to learn English, but also to learn another culture (Malsbary, 2014). In so doing,

the upward social and academic trajectories of international students all around the world can be promoted. Also, higher education policies should address these existing problems of going international students and come up with necessary solutions. As also suggested by Eröz (2003), there should be required acculturation classes to assist such students through their challenging acculturation in the USA in the host country since they should get this continuous support from the very beginning in their home country till the end upon finishing their study abroad experience in the host country.

As for the theoretical implications, in this fast-paced world becoming more and more interdependent, any orientation as the marriage of theory and practice is an invaluable asset for any newcomers to any culture. However, as stated by Caligiuri et al. (2001), one has to remember the more tailored the cross-cultural orientation is, the more expectations are met and the higher the degree of expatriate adjustment is. Moreover, it is noteworthy here to echo that a comprehensive intervention incorporates cognitive, behavioral, and psychological components to enhance the adaptation of international students (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Therefore, acculturation theory that mainly foregrounds the present study should be taken into account in every step dealing with such Pre-CCOM in addition to acculturative stressors and coping strategies. Generally speaking, it is assumed that immigration and acculturation are a risk; however, risk is not destiny (Beiser, et al., 1988). In this regard, what should be done first is to leave the assumption that a good person can always manage (Black & MendenHall, 1990) and such international students should not be left to luck simply by respecting the confluence of the aforementioned social, pedagogical and theoretical implications with the smoother acculturation of the international students as novices in a foreign country.

6.2 Limitations of the present study

Having its strengths as dealt with so far, this study had some weaknesses to eliminate in further studies. These weaknesses are found to be related to the implementation part in which I executed the Pre-CCOM and the assessment in which the participants reflected on the Pre-CCOM. As for the former one, although nine weeks were already longer compared to the existing orientations which were mostly one-shot, the

duration was still not enough to trigger discussions during the sessions. Such discussions would yield essential and more clear insights into the participants while answering the research questions in the study. As for the latter, I was able to keep collecting data from the participants only during the first three months of their acculturation. That was why I referred to their acculturation as the initial stages of it. Hence, it would be better and more preferable for the validity and reliability of the study to maintain gathering data for a longer period of time. In this way, the participants will be able to see both the aspects of the Pre-CCOM the participants benefitted and the deficits of the Pre-CCOM's content and develop it accordingly for further sessions.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Researchers

I hope the present study will initiate new possibilities and encourage theoretical and empirical work in the area of acculturation as a fertile field of study. There is a great need for such empirically tested interventions to aid the acculturation of international students both pre- and post-arrival in the host country. Calling for host and especially home countries to recognize their pivotal role in facilitating the acculturation of international students into social and academic environments, the study merits further attention and endeavors to shed new light on this process of Turkish and other international students in the USA in an era of increasing migration and globalization. I strongly believe that the findings hold promise to future researchers about a brand new vision of acculturation research as it can be impetus for them. In that sense, I have a few suggestions both for the development, implementation of further Pre-CCOMs and the reflections on them.

As for the development phase, respecting higher demand for host culture adaptation and increasing topics of acculturation on the host countries' political agendas, those who take initiative in the development and implementation of such a Pre-CCOM should notice important points. For example, there is no one ideal way to develop and execute orientations (Althen, 1980). Hence, it is necessary to give voice to the participants in the development of the Pre-CCOM as I did in the present study via initial interviews. As for the implementation phase, first of all, it was multiple data gathering tools and

triangulating that made the study reliable and valid. Therefore, it is of great importance to include a variety of tools to collect data. Including the voices from the field as experienced informants should be an indispensable part of such Pre-CCOM no matter how difficult it is to arrange such meetings and find the right time for everyone who has a really busy schedule. In that sense, the number of Skype interviews during the Pre-CCOM with the experienced ones in the USA should also be increased since such sessions were regarded as the most attention-grabbing and effective by the participants in the present study. Last but not least, considering the language barrier as the sole factor that remained almost the same before and after the Pre-CCOM, future researchers must consider this by allocating more time for group discussions conducted in English during the sessions. Although we held the sessions mainly in English, we unfortunately could not find enough time to discuss what we saw, listened and read about the USA during the sessions. That's why, the aims of the study did not refer to enhancing language proficiency to overcome the language barrier as an acculturative stressor.

As for the reflections on the Pre-CCOM, there are some points that can be strengthened by further research. First of all, I was able to trace only first three months of the participants while they were in the USA. I think, it would yield better insights if I could get more data about their social and academic experiences since I believe the narratives of the participants shed light on only the initial stages of their acculturation. About their academic experiences, since they were in their intensive English course for the first six months during their stay in the USA, they did not taste what it was really like being a graduate student in their graduate degrees yet. Therefore, keeping the data collection in the USA part longer would benefit the results especially for their academic acculturation. Moreover, because of the time limitation, the participants were not able to reflect on the deficits of the Pre-CCOM since they, I think, simply needed more time to experience and observe the host country to come up with the points that should be added in the content of the Pre-CCOM. Hence, it will be a good idea to conduct one more individual interview upon their arrival in Turkey after fulfilling their intensive English course lasting six months. This is of great significance to develop and come up with the most suitable content of such Pre-CCOMs for further implementations.

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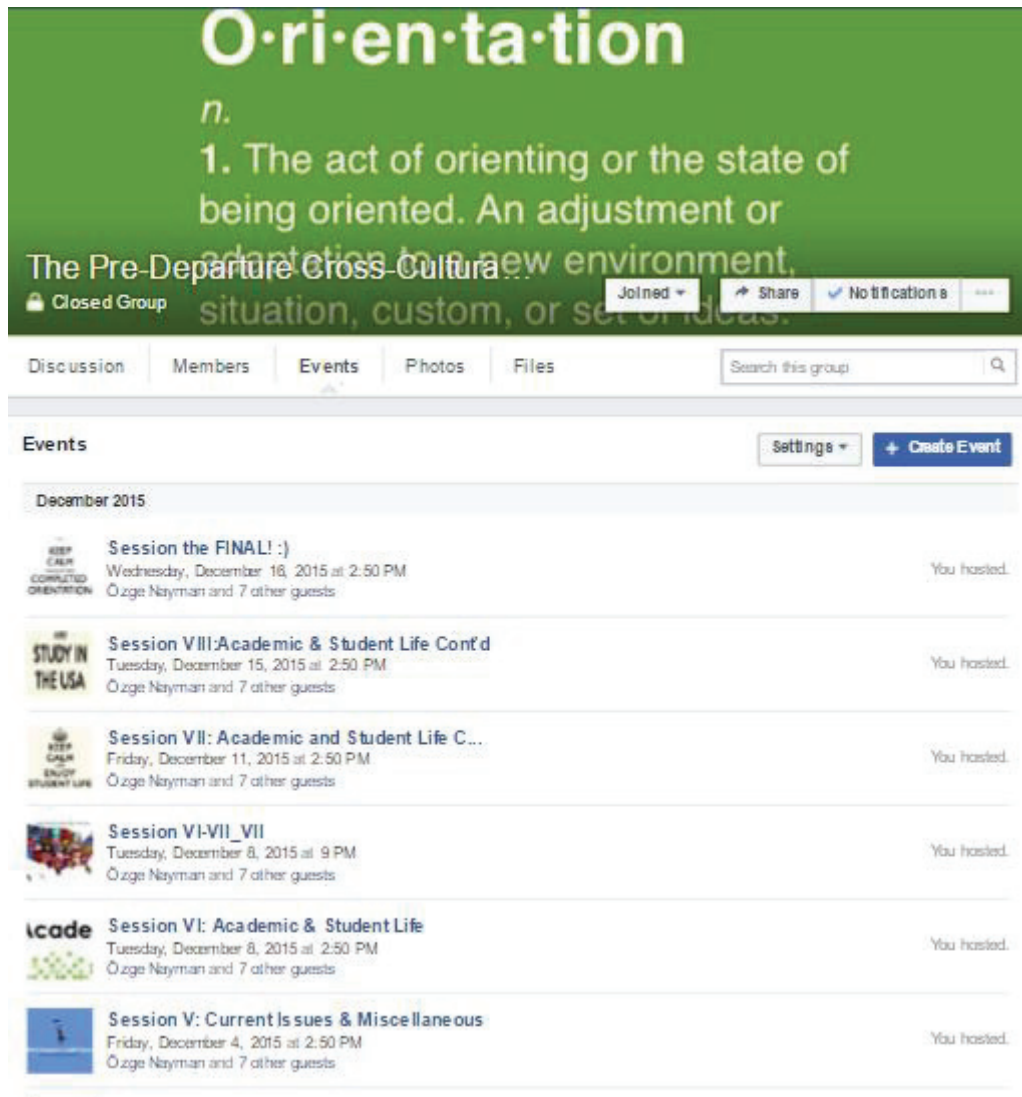
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APPENDIX A: A SAMPLE SESSION PLAN

Pre- Session

Via WhatsApp Group: The announcement of the time and place was done. The participants were informed about the materials uploaded on Facebook group.

Via Facebook: The group was entitled as Pre-Departure Cross-Cultural Orientation for the USA. Here is a screenshot of the group.

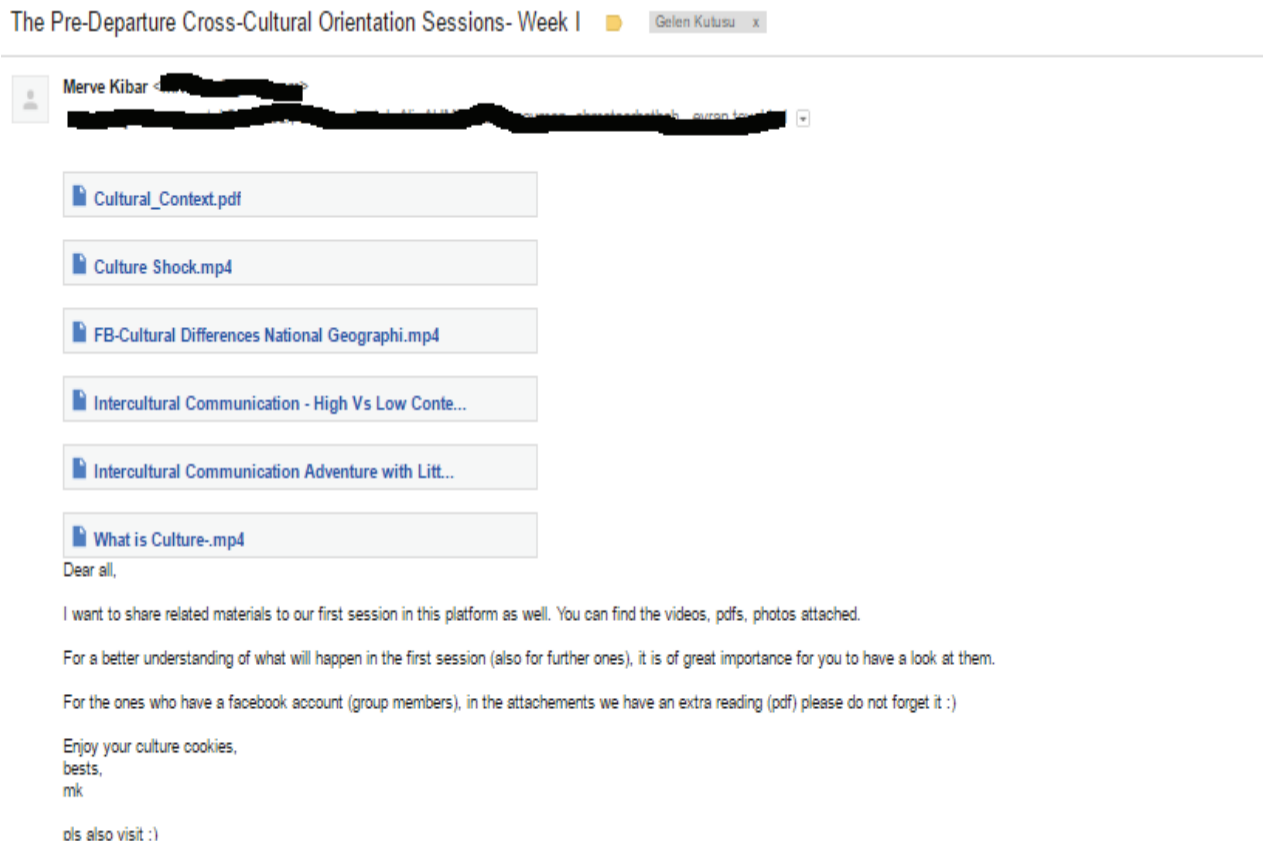


Video links are as follows:

- Stereotypes of USA, through the eyes of international students
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DULoPJIKXGM>

- What is Culture?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57KW6RO8Rcs&list=PLW99Tp-SeAfwfgu8MP6Z3pLlu6ZboMDK->
- Intercultural Communication Adventure with the Little Pilot
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSt_op3fQck
- Intercultural Communication - High Vs Low Context with Chris Grimes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m5M7XyQ3gg>
- Cultural Differences National Geographic
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT0kzF4A-WQ>
- An American Phrase Book
<http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~guy/american/>

Via e-mail: The participants were also e-mailed about the session including the materials and assignments for their pre-knowledge. There is a screenshot of the e-mail sent for the Week I.



Reading assignment was a chapter entitled as the cultural context in the book called Intercultural communication: A contextual approach by Neuliep (2014).

While-Session

The core material of each session was the PowerPoint Presentation prepared by me. Here is the week's PPT material followed by the links of the videos included.

The Pre-Departure Cross-Cultural Orientation

Inst. Merve Kibar
17.11.2015

Opening remarks...

WELCOME
we're glad you're here

Today's Session will include...
American Culture 101 ☺

- Culture: what is culture?
- Cross-cultural Adjustment
- Culture Shock
- Lived Experiences & Learned Lessons
- Introduction to American Culture
- American Assumption & Values & Situations

What is Culture?

I ♥ CULTURE

I understand culture as a treasure that is a part of our collective memory, of our perception of ourselves.

Culture is something that unites people.

Culture is us. We make it. We shape it as we love it to be.

It is a call for individuals to agree upon some common values that bind them in harmony.

What is Culture?

Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is not easily shared with people who live or don't live within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unspoken rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.

What is Culture?

What is Culture?

"Big C" culture.
what a person grows up with when he or she begins learning a foreign language. It includes the major things you learn first such as, the big movies in literature or well-known figures in the culture like Shakespeare or Bach.

"Small c" culture
things that may be visible only for today but also cannot be separated from everyday life. This type is generally derived from popular culture and affects communication.

"Paper or plastic?"

(Deegan, 2004)

High- and Low-Context Culture Continuum (taken from Neulog (2014)).

Most Collectivistic States	Most Individualistic States
Hawaii	Alaska
Louisiana	Oregon
South Carolina	Nebraska
Mississippi	Wyoming
Maryland	South Dakota
Utah	Colorado
Virginia	North Dakota
Georgia	Washington
California	Kansas
New Jersey	Iowa

Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Let's Discover!

High- and Low-Context Culture Continuum (taken from Neulog (2014)).

Low Context	High Context
Individualism	Collectivism
Individualism	Collectivism
Optimism	Social self-concept
High self-esteem	Need for affiliation
Lower social anxiety	Sensitivity to rejection
Emotional expression	Sensitivity to embarrassment
Satisfaction with self	In-group relationship preference
Satisfaction with freedom	Indirect communication style
Ease of interacting with strangers	Relating of social networks
Direct communication style	
Lower relational commitment	
Preference to work alone	

Lived Experiences: What is culture shock? Any conflicts?

CULTURE SHOCK.

“Experience is the teacher of all things.”

Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

To me culture shock can be regarded as everything. Even the architecture, the language, the food, they can be counted as parts of this shock. I cannot state that I have experienced culture shock since this is my second time in the States. In fact, actually I did not feel that in my first stay, as well. That is may be because we were informed about culture shock in our school years, I was already aware of the probable differences in cultures. However, I have some friends from other cultures who suffered from culture shock a lot. According to my friends, culture shock does not show up when people first arrive. It starts after a while and even the beautiful things seem irritating. In my opinion, people already experience it when they first arrive, but the shock becomes more powerful when people start feeling homesick. Thus, feeling homesick and the degree of culture shock must be strongly related.

Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Of course there are cultural conflicts between our own culture and the host culture, but their effects all depend on you, your reactions. For instance, you can meet missionaries coming from some churches to inform you about Christianity. This is very common in the states. If you think that 'some things happen for the Muslim religion in Turkey, this is a normal case', nothing happens. However, if you see it a very violent act of people towards your beliefs (to some of Turkish people, it was like that), then you will be affected deeply from these situations. To me, most of the conflicts were in a positive way. I mean, American people are so relaxed, they somehow solve the problems, there is no need to get panicked. This is actually a reverse conflict. As when you see people that relaxed, you feel that they ignore your problems. However, it is their nature, or in other words, there is no rush, panic, or stress in their lives (I mean, it is like this in my geographical area).

Nil, The University of Arizona, former FLTA

Food was a problem for me as fast-food was what they had but I was used to home-made food. I hated high-calorie food. I also didn't like the idea of organic food there.

The social distance between a teacher and his/her students, I can tell. It was not appropriate and even thought as "abuse" when, let's say, you had a small physical contact. The issue of personal space was of great importance for them, which is quite different than our culture.

Kemal, The University of Utah, M.A Student

Öncelikle Amerikalılar çok sıcak insanlar ama bir noktaya kadar. Sokakta, tramvayda semile çok sıcak komşuların esiri yaparlar. Taları ancak sana bulduktan zaman ayarlar. Önce için zaman on önemi çok, eller için varsa serin ne yaptığın onları pek ilgilendirmez. Bir Amerikalı arkadaşlık kurmanda çok ince bir ayar var. Onu tutturamazsan şey diye düşünmeye başlarsın: "Ya acaba ben de mi bir ikenti var? Adamlar bu kadar friendly için ben niye hiç güzel arkadaşlıklar kuramıyorum". Bir diğer kültürel yok tabii ki yemek. Burada yemek çepirdi çok ama bizim damak tadımıza uygun yemek az. Hakkı bir de domuz eti yemiyorsanız işin zor, çünkü domuz eti olmayan pizza, sausage, hamburger neyseye yok. Eğer köndü mektabını hernece kurup gilemezsen ilop dipandan aynı yemekleri yemek çok sıkıcı olabilir. Ayrıca burada herşey/dahi gibi her köşe başında bir dönerci ya da Türk yiyecekleri satan mağaza da var. Bir başka culture shock mesele buradaki sisteme alışmak. Butun ökü birimleri farklı. Libër yerine galeri, kilo yerine pound, metre yerine feet, celcius yerine fahrenheit taları kullanıyorlar. Markette ne alacağını bile karşmıyorsun çoğu zaman.

Kemal, The University of Utah, M.A Student

Burada insanlar kazandıkları paralarına veya çalıştıkları işlere göre sınıflandırılmıyorlar." Tabii ki neşah adından doktorlar construction worker arasında çok fark ama işi bundan dolayı sevgilik kompleksine girmiyor. Herkes biliyor ki insanlar est ve ona göre davranıyorlar. Bizim ülkemizde doktorun, hakimin, polisin önünde el pençe divan durunusun. Saygı göstermek zorunda hissedersen ama burada öyle değil. Doktora giden bir insanın lanıyla evinde tadilat yaptırın bir doktorun işçiyeye karşı tavı aynı. Birbirine saygılı, cana yakın ama mesafeli. Bu estilik anlayışı benim en sevdiğim yönlerinden birisi. Amerikalılar, işçiyeye verilen önem farklı. İşçiyeye atfedilip var ya amerikalılar 18'den sonra çocuklarını evden atıyormuş diye. Tamamen doğru olması da doğruluk payı var. Ebeveynler belli bir yaştan sonra çocuklarını sorumluluğa almaları, kendisi işlere atmasını istiyorlar. Birlik Çocuklarını çalışmaya, ekonomik özgürlüğünü kazanmaya itiyorlar. Bak mesele bir örnek vereyim. Benimle yaşlı amerikalıların çoğu ortalama 4-5 farklı işte çalışmıştır bu zamana kadar.

Kemal, The University of Utah, M.A Student

Ama çocuklar erken yaşta özgürlüklerini kazandı için aileden kopuyorlar. Bizimki gibi bağları kalmıyor artık. O yüzden Amerika homesick değil. Eğer bir gün işten atılman gülele kaşın bir ailen yok. Kardesin yok. Homesick olmanın tek yolu çalışmak. Bu yüzden bireysellik de üst düzeyde. Herkes kendi işine bakar. Sana yardım ederler ama kendilerinin fazlci vermedikleri sürece.

Sena, University of Massachusetts Amherst, a former FLTA

Culture shock can be defined as one's feeling of disorientation during the adaptation process into a new culture. After leaving the safe zone of a familiar culture, stepping into a new environment of different people with their own lifestyles and values may result in sad and anxious feelings and can make someone go back home. Clothing, food, social activities, work ethics, personal relationships can be given as the most common culture shock factors. Having culture shock can be overwhelming, but at the same time it should be regarded as a challenging and satisfying experience.

Sena, University of Massachusetts Amherst, a former FLTA

To narrow down the subject to the Turkish –American context, giving my personal experiences as an example would be more useful. For me, integrating into the new society in the USA was not a big challenge in terms of social life, as I was born and raised in a big city in Turkey. However there were some other elements of culture shock that occasionally made me feel homesick. For instance, at the very first moment being accommodated in a campus residence which is only reachable by shuttle buses with limited service hours was a huge problem for me as I had always enjoyed the comfort of my own house and my own car. Furthermore, I had to share the flat with four other people coming from totally different cultures; Chinese, Indian and Tanzanian. Putting up the way they cook and do cleaning was really difficult for the first three months, but then we tried to meet the halfway or we just naturally adjusted.

Sena, University of Massachusetts Amherst, a former FLTA

I believe that one's pre-departure expectations, which are often high expectations about the new cultural environment, may also lead to high levels of disappointment. Before leaving my country, people around me kept saying that I was going to live in that famous "American Dream" that they were used to watch on movies. And after I moved to the USA, I guess they believed that I was continuously enjoying my time in NYC skating in the Central Park or sunbathing on Miami Beach. The bitter truth was, I was stuck in a small college town called Amherst which is 3 hours far from Boston. To be honest, I also had great expectations at the very first place until I learned about the university that I was going to work for. After a quick search on the internet, I was able to picture the place on my mind and this helped me lower down the expectations; however, could not ease the culture shock that I was going to experience.

Sena, University of Massachusetts Amherst, a former FLTA

I cannot say that there are any value or culture conflicts between my native country and the host country; at least I cannot call them as 'conflicts'. To mention briefly, I can say that some values that I observed in the host country consist of what I like to see in my native country such as respect for the human rights, tolerance to cultural and individual differences, and self-devotion to whatever you do; your studies or your work.

Dilek, Wichita State University, M.A student

Culture shock is what you experience when you change your location and move from one city, region or country to another. In my case, I experienced it when I moved from Turkey to the USA to pursue my postgraduate degree. For instance, when I first came here, I stayed with a very nice family for a month until I found my own place. They told me that it was OK for me to cook and eat my own food in the kitchen. However, the idea of eating by myself without offering them to eat with me was so strange to me that I never did it. Instead, I always ate out in that one-month period. To be more specific, it would have made me feel selfish to eat by myself. This was only one of the value conflicts between the USA and Turkish cultures.

Dilek, *Wizona State University, M.A student*


Another example was when I went to a restaurant for the first time in the USA. I had a great meal and I was enjoying my time a lot when the waiter came to collect our empty dishes and asked us if we would like dessert. When we said we did not want any, he said he would bring the bill, which was a little offensive for me on that occasion as I was not used to being brought the bill without me asking for it. However, I find it normal now because I have got used to it. Tipping is different from what I am used to doing in my own culture as well. You can leave a tip using your debit card, which is used more than cash in the USA. I had difficulties until I got used to the concept. Another thing that was odd to me was when I learned that I can get cash using my debit card after I pay for the groceries I buy at big stores such as Target or Walmart. The idea that the cashier can give me money from my account at a store was very surprising to me at first.

Dilek, *Wizona State University, M.A student*

People here are always in a hurry as the pace of life is very fast in the USA. Therefore, time is far more valuable for Americans than it is for Turkish people. When you are waiting in a line to buy something, you need to be quick to make a decision, or not go into a lot of detail if you are asking questions to the owner of the shop. Otherwise, the people behind you might stress you out, which happened to me quite a few times. Also, people are very careful about who they are giving their time to and they do not tend to spend as much time just talking to their friends as they do in Turkey. They have more boundaries than Turkish people do, too.

Though these experiences made me feel unhappy or disappointed at first, I got used to them quickly and I learned a great deal from them. They enabled me to view the concept of "culture" from a wider perspective and be more open-minded. In addition, I had the opportunity to think about my own culture from a different perspective.

Learned Lessons



AMERICANNES?

Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Individuality: Being different than Turkish people, Americans live individually. What I want to say is they do not interfere other people's business, consider their plans and live according to their individual schedules. Don't feel broken-hearted if one of your friends says "sorry I need to do sport" instead of meeting you that day.

Punctual: Observing my professors and other instructors, I could clearly see that they are really punctual. They go to class at least five minutes early, set the computer and everything they need and they wait their students till the class time. They never finish the lesson early, keep teaching till the last second. Also, they never exceed the class time. If the time is up, they are done.

Relaxed: Don't feel stressed if you have a problem related to your visa or other things. American people always react to those situations so calm and they somehow find a way to help you figure out the situation as long as you clearly explain what the problem is and behave respectfully. In this way, we can also call them as helpful people.

Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Fun: They know how to have fun: American people are the experts on having fun. Thus, they do have several meetings and activities, festivals, concerts and so on every week. For instance, the students may throw several parties in the first three weeks to celebrate the new school year. Just do NOT miss them! You can have free drinks and pizza there.

Diversity: There is not a typical American, in terms of physical appearance. I mean, the people may look like people from other nations, but they call themselves "American". Stay away from stereotyping and categorizing people as Americans and non-Americans.

Reading too many articles: A part of schoolwork is to read like crazy. Especially for Ph.D. students, they assign ten articles for only one course, keep your schedule balanced and don't think that you can handle five six classes as if you were a student in Turkey because you most probably cannot.

Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Friendly: Americans are friendly people. You can visit your professors during their office hours to consult them some of your problems. Especially while registering for classes, you can email them to learn more about the content and the assignments of the course, they reply as soon as they receive and see it. It is important to state that you should ask some reasonable things, related to school or course work. Otherwise they may not act so friendly | just a friendly reminder.


Confident: American people are self-confident people. You may feel yourself as an outsider if you have the fear of interaction and communication. Even the freshmen know their future goals, act as if they had been a college student for several years. As I said, feel free to participate, do not focus on your language level or grammar mistakes, they never humiliate you because of your English.

Learned Lessons



AMERICENTRIC CONCEPTS

Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student



American football, NBA (various other sports such as golf baseball): To me, the most important Americentric concept is American football. It is fun when you finally analyze the rules of the game. On the match day, people come together, have barbecue during the day and enjoy the match in the evening. Cheerleaders and the school band are always in the field. It is a really cultural element in American life-style.

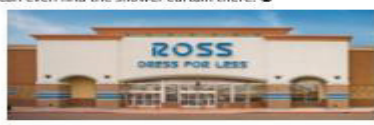
Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Chips and hot-dog: These are the real snacks. People eat them as a part of breakfast or lunch, or any time of the day.



Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Ross: The cheapest place to buy everything you need, no kidding, you can even find the shower curtain there.

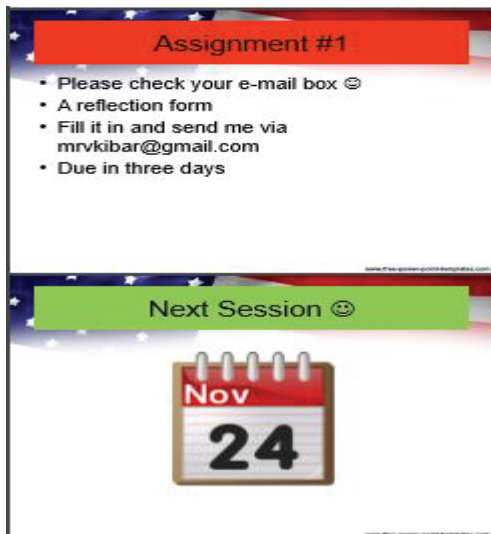


Ece- The University of Arizona, PhD Student

Casual dressing style: College students, especially BA students do not care about their dressing, clothes. They almost always wear shorts and T-shirts on weekdays (except parties held at the weekends). (This may not be true for other schools as I live in Arizona, and the extreme weather conditions of the state are an obvious reason for this deduction, it is 110 Fahrenheit during the day, approximately 42-45 Celsius).

References

- Hofstede, G. (1987). Culture and organizations: Software of the mind. Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival. McGraw-Hill.
- Neuliep, J. W. (2014). Intercultural communication: A contextual approach. Sage Publishers.
- Potanson, R. A. (2004). Where the Two Cultures Meet: Popular Culture. The Journal of popular culture, 11 (2), 385-400.



The image shows a presentation slide with two sections. The top section, titled "Assignment #1" in a red header, contains a bulleted list: "Please check your e-mail box ☺", "A reflection form", "Fill it in and send me via mrvkibar@gmail.com", and "Due in three days". The bottom section, titled "Next Session ☺" in a green header, features a calendar icon showing the date "Nov 24".

The links: **International** student experience part 1 culture shock:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPfB6GijM9Q>

Experience Sharing: An audio record of Nil was listened by the participants and their reflections were discussed.

Post-Session

The first Weekly Reflective Journal (WRJ-1) due in the following three days was assigned to the participants via e-mail.

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.** Could you please give information about you regarding your social (including family and friends) and academic (schools, universities, educational achievements) background?
- 2.** Why did you choose to study in the USA for your (post-) graduate degree? What is your reason or story led you to this scholarship?
- 3.** What are your expectations and concerns of your experience in and off campus in the USA? (i.e. friendship, housing, using services/opportunities in the campus)
- 4.** Do you have any idea or image of the USA people and their culture?
- 5.** Do you search for cultural concepts before your stay?
- 6.** What are the top 5 universities you are planning to apply? Expected differences and similarities on campus life?
- 7.** Suppose that a program was designed to make you more familiar with the USA, what would you want to know more about it and its culture?

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) What are the advantages and challenges of this pre-departure cross-cultural orientation module for you?
- 2) Considering your pre-conceived ideas about studying and living in the USA, do you think there is a change in your perceptions and your feelings? If yes, how & what?
- 3) What are your suggestions about this pre-departure cross-cultural orientation module?

APPENDIX D: A MINI-LISTING QUESTIONNAIRE

For Participants

Please list the places/parts/regions you are planning to live in the USA: ✓

Please list the things that you wonder about social life: ✓

Please list the universities you consider to attend: ✓

Please list the things that you wonder about academic life: ✓

For current (post)graduate students in the USA

About Social and Academic Life in the USA:

1) Please list the things (can be everything) that come to your mind when “Americanness” is said.

2) Please list Americentric (directly and only related to America) concepts/ examples.
p.s they can be even brands, market names, magazines, dressing style, sauces and etc.

APPENDIX E: INFORMANT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Merhaba,

Ben Merve. ODTÜ ELT bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim. Tezim için hazırlayacağım bir model için, Amerika'da eğitim/iş deneyimi olan kişilerden Amerika ile ilgili ancak belki de orda yaşanıp öğrenebilecek kültürel bilgiler topluyorum. Sizden gelenler, Amerika'ya eğitim için gidecek öğrencilerime "gitmeden Amerika ve kültürü ile bilinmesi gerekenler"i oluşturacağından çok önemlidir 😊

Bu anlamda, gitmeden bilinse hayat kurtarıcı & kolaylaştırıcı olan şeyler nelerdir bunu cevaplayabilmek için aşağıdaki cümlelerin altına ister cümle ile ister tek kelime ile dilediğiniz uzunlukla açıklama yaparsanız çok mutlu olurum.

Çok teşekkür ederim.

About Social and Academic Life:

1) Please list the things(can be everything) that come to your mind when "Americanness" is said.

2) Please list Americentric (directly and only related to America) concepts/ examples.

p.s they can be even brands, market names, magazines, dressing style, sauces and etc. 😊

About culture in general

Tell me about culture shock you have experienced, or a Turk may experience.

2) Any culture/value conflicts between the host and native cultures?

APPENDIX F: WEEKLY REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

Reflective questions will be shaped in line with the session content. Here are examples of general questions.

In today's session;

- 1) What is/are the learned lesson(s) for you about the topic? In what aspects will this session help you?
- 2) Please compare today's subject in terms of the USA culture and your native culture.
- 3) Is there any question left unanswered about the topic? If yes, please state your questions individually.

APPENDIX G: REPORTS

1) In what ways, has the pre-departure cross-cultural orientation module been effective so far? Please, reflect on them point by point.

2) In what ways, has the pre-departure cross-cultural orientation module had deficits so far? Please, reflect on them point by point.

3) What kind of your expectations has been met so far?

APPENDIX H: APPROVAL PAGE OF THE APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ODTÜ 2015

BU BÖLÜM, İLGİLİ BÖLÜMLERİ TEMSİL EDEN İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK ALT KURULU TARAFINDAN DOLDURULACAKTIR.

Protokol No: 2015-EGT-139

İAEK DEĞERLENDİRME SONUCU

Sayın Hakem,

Aşağıda yer alan üç seçenektan birini işaretleyerek değerlendirmenizi tamamlayınız. Lütfen “**Revizyon Gereklidir**” ve “**Ret**” değerlendirmeleri için gerekli açıklamaları yapınız.

Değerlendirme Tarihi: 02.11.2015

Ad Soyad:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Herhangi bir değişikliğe gerek yoktur. Veri toplama/uygulama başlatılabilir.
<input type="checkbox"/> Revizyon gereklidir <input type="checkbox"/> Gönüllü Katılım Formu yoktur. <input type="checkbox"/> Gönüllü Katılım Formu eksiktir. Gerekçenizi ayrıntılı olarak açıklayınız: <input type="checkbox"/> Katılım Sonrası Bilgilendirme Formu yoktur. <input type="checkbox"/> Katılım Sonrası Bilgilendirme Formu eksiktir. Gerekçenizi ayrıntılı olarak açıklayınız: <input type="checkbox"/> Rahatsızlık kaynağı olabilecek sorular/maddeler ya da prosedürler içerilmektedir. Gerekçenizi ayrıntılı olarak açıklayınız: <input type="checkbox"/> Diğer. Gerekçenizi ayrıntılı olarak açıklayınız:
<input type="checkbox"/> Ret

APPENDIX I: TURKISH SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

Türk Lisansüstü Öğrencilerinin, Amerika'daki Sosyal ve Akademik Deneyimleri için Rehber olarak Tasarlanan Gidiş Öncesi Kültürlerarası Uyum Modeli ile İlgili Görüş ve Düşünceleri

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, dünyada hemen hemen her ülkeden olduğu gibi Türkiye'den de sayısı yıldan yıla artış gösteren öğrencilerin yurtdışı eğitimleri için en gözde ülke haline gelmiştir. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne olan bu derece yoğun ilginin ardında sayısız nedenler sıralanabilir. Bunların en başında gelenler ise, iyi yaşam koşulları, eğitim kalitesi, eğitimdeki başarısı ve kişilerin orada ya da kendi ülkelerinde daha iyi iş olanaklarına sahip olma düşüncesidir. Günümüze kadar yapılan çalışmalar, çoğunlukla bu öğrenci grubunun yaşadığı sıkıntıları gözler önüne sermeyi hedeflemiştir. Daha çok nicel veri toplama araçlarıyla yapılan bu çalışmalar göstermiştir öğrencilerin yaşadığı başlıca sorunları okuyuculara sunmuştur. Örnekleme gerekirse, bu sorunlar dil yetersizliği, eğitimsel ve sosyokültürel stres unsurları, ayırimcılık, sosyal açıdan destek yoksunluğu, yeni kültüre yönelik bilgi eksikliği, akademik eğitim, öğrenim ve değerlendirme hususunda kültürel açıdan farklı beklentilere uyum sağlayamamadır. Aynı zamanda, yerel halk ve diğer uluslararası öğrencilerle etkili ve anlamlı iletişim kuramama, yalnızlık, gurbet, özlem, depresyon, alınganlık, yerel halka ve kültüre saldırganlık ve güvensizlik, umutsuzluk, geri çekilme ve düşük çalışma performansı da yaşanan sorunlar arasında yerini almıştır. Uluslararası öğrencilerin, yeni sosyal ve akademik hayatlarındaki sorunların çözümü olarak gösterilen kültürlerarası uyum seminerlerine yönelik araştırmalar ise içerik analizi ile sınırlı kalmıştır. Söz konusu araştırmalar, böylesi kültürlerarası uyum seminerlerinin neleri içermesi gerektiğine ışık tutarken içeriğin nasıl ve hangi yöntemlerle sunulması hususunda da çıkarımlar da bulunmuşlardır. Söz konusu çalışmalarda vurgulanan önemli bir nokta ise kültürel etkileşimi kolaylaştırmayı ve yaşanan sorunları en aza indirgeyerek daha başarılı bir uyum sürecini vaat eden çalışmalar, sürece yayılmalıdır. Burada altı çizilmek istenen, bu tarz kültürlerarası uyum seminerleri sadece ev sahipliği yapan kurumlar ya da sadece öğrencileri gönderen kurumlar tarafından değil her iki kurumda da iş birliği içerisinde

yurtdışı eğitim deneyimi öncesi ve sonrasında yürütülmelidir. Önemli olan, sadece uluslararası öğrencileri yeni sosyal ve akademik çevrelerine yalnızca girdikten sonra değil, bu olgularla birebir karşılaşma ve etkileşim yaşamadan kendi ülkelerinde kültürel bilinç aşılanarak psikoloji ve entelektüel hazırlıkları da alınan hedefler arasında olmalıdır. Fakat hâlihazırda yürütülen uyum seminerlerine bakıldığında bu yürütmenin daha çok neredeyse yalnızca ev sahipliği yapan kurumlar tarafından yapıldığı açığa çıkmaktadır. Bu anlamda, ev sahipliği yapan kurumlar öğrencilerine kültürlerarası uyum açısından destek olmak amaçlı kendi internet sayfalarında çeşitli materyaller sunarak ilk adımı gerçekleştirmekte ve daha sonrasında ise öğrencilere katılabilecekleri seanslar düzenlemektedirler. Ülkemizdeki duruma bakıldığında ise söz konusu kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının bir sefere mahsus bir toplantı şeklinde gerçekleştirildiği ve içeriğinin ise yüzeysel olmakla birlikte öğrencilerine yeni sosyal ve akademik çevrelerine ilişkin yeterli bilinci kazandıramadığı yapılan kısıtlı sayıda araştırmalarda çıkan sonuçlar arasında yer almıştır. Her ne kadar, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde uluslararası öğrenci olarak eğitim gören Türk öğrenciler birçok araştırmacının ilgisini çekerek kendilerini birçok çalışmaya başlık yapabilmişlerse de, ülkelerinde kültürler arası uyum seanslarına katılıp Amerika'da öğrenimlerine başlayan Türk öğrencilerin, kültürel etkileşim ve uyum sürecini inceleyen çalışmalar neredeyse yoktur. Bu durum ve bireylerin yeni akademik ve sosyal hayatlarına kültüre uyum sağlayamamadan doğan başarısızlıklar, bu öğrencilerin beklenen ve yaşanan stres etkenlerinin incelenmesini ve bunların azaltılması için kültürler arası uyum seansları ile gerekli müdahalenin yapılmasına olan ihtiyacı gözler önüne sermiştir. Bu amaçla bu tez, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde yüksek lisans öğrenimi görecektir 3 Türk YLSY (Yurtdışında Lisansüstü Eğitim Alacak Bursiyerleri Seçme ve Yerleştirme) bursiyerlerinin ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda dokuz haftalık kültürler arası uyum seansları geliştirmiş, uygulamış ve değerlendirmiştir. Söz konusu kültürlerarası uyum seminerlerinin desenini oluşturmak amacıyla, veri toplamaya öğrencilerle bire bir yapılan mülakatlarla başlanmıştır. Bu mülakatlarda, katılımcılara uyum seminerleri öncesinde kendilerinin gelecekteki sosyal ve akademik hayatına ilişkin endişe ve ihtiyaçlarının neler olduğunu sorulmuş, alınan cevaplar doğrultusunda desen hazırlanmış ve uygulamaya başlanmıştır. Bu tez, katılımcı bursiyerlerin gelecekteki sosyal ve akademik hayatına ilişkin endişe ve ihtiyaçlarını belirleyerek kişilerin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki kurumlarına gitmeden Türkiye'de uygulanan kültürlerarası uyum seansları boyunca bu deneyimi nasıl

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yoruıladıklarını ve bu uyum seanslarından Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki eğitim süreçlerine başladıklarında nasıl yararlandıklarını cevaplamayı amaçlamıştır. Ülkesinde bu alanda ilk girişim olan bu çalışma, bu sebeple çok büyük öneme sahiptir. Bu çalışmada yer alan katılımcılar, çalışma süresince Ankara'da bir vakıf üniversitesinde burslarının kapsamında İngilizce eğitim kursuna katılmışlardır.

Bu tez, nicel bir durum araştırması özelliklerini taşımakla birlikte verileri yorumlama ve sunumda öyküleyici durum desenini kullanmıştır. Bu tezde araştırma sorularına cevap bulabilmek amacıyla toplanılması hedeflenen veriler, ön yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, haftalık reflektif notlar, raporlar, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri öncesi final görüşmeler, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nden alınan elektronik postalar ve takip amaçlı provasız Skype üzerinden gerçekleştirilen görüşmelerden oluşan çoklu veri toplama araçlarından alınmıştır. Kısaca özetlemek gerekirse, dokuz haftalık kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının desenini katılımcıların ihtiyaçlarına en uygun şekilde oluşturmak için, katılımcılarla uygulama öncesinde bire bir yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yürütülmüştür. Toplanan verilerin ve şüana kadar gerçekleştirilmiş uyum programları içerik analizi çalışmalarının ışığında, çalışmadaki dokuz haftalık kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının içeriği belirlenmiştir. Katılımcılar içeriği belirlemede en büyük rolü alarak böylesi bir çalışmanın gidecekleri kültüre dair kendilerinde var olan bilgi eksikliklerini tamamlamayı hedeflemesi gereğini vurgulamışlardır. Ortak olarak görülmüştür ki, katılımcılar kendilerini neyin beklediğini bilmemekle beraber, belli konularda oluşturdukları yanlış imaj, onlara belli başlı korkular, endişeler ve basmakalıp düşünceler katmıştır. Müdahale edilmemesi durumunda, bunların katılımcıların deneyimleyeceği kültürel etkileşim ve uyum sürecinde olumsuz deneyimlere yol açacağı ön görülmüştür. Kültürlerarası uyum konusunda, profesyonel olarak hemen hemen hiçbir yardım almayan katılımcılar, kendilerini karşılayacak ülke ve insanları ile ilgili bir takım önyargılar oluşturmuşlardır. Daha iyi, daha rahat, daha kolay ve daha başarılı bir kültürel etkileşim için gerçek yaşantılara tanık olup, profesyonelce hazırlanmış materyallerden bilgi akışını gerçekleştirmek, çalışmadaki katılımcılar için en gerekli unsur haline geldiği bildirilmiştir.

Yukarıda içeriği betimlenen ön yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler sonrasında kültürlerarası uyum seansları dokuz hafta boyunca dokuz YLSY bursiyerinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Söz konusu katılımcıların, gelecekte bulunacakları akademik ve sosyal

ortamlara uyum sürecine olumlu katkıda bulunarak yardım etmeyi amaçlayan kültürlerarası uyum seansları, dil öğrenimi gördükleri vakıf üniversitesinde toplantı salonunda her hafta belirlenen tarih ve saatte gerçekleştirilmiştir. Klasik sınıf ortamının dışına çıkarak, katılımcıların yaşanmış hikâyeleri dinleyip, okuyup, görüp yorumlamaları esas alınmıştır. Seanslar boyunca, birbirlerinin deneyimlerinden etkili bir şekilde yararlanmaları sağlanmıştır. Her seansta, araştırmacının bireysel olarak hazırladığı sunumlara, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde akademik amaçlı bulunan ya da bulunmuş olan deneyimli akademisyenlerin birçok yazılı, videolu ya da sesli paylaşımları eşlik etmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, bir Skype görüşmesi ve bir misafir konuşmacı da uyum seanslarına olumlu katkıda bulunmuştur. Sadece toplantı salonunda kalmayan bu bilgi akışı, aynı zamanda daha fazla etkileşim ve bilgi paylaşımı amacıyla sanal platformlarda kurulan gruplarla desteklenmiştir. Bu çalışma, katılımcıların kültürlerarası uyum seansları öncesi, sürecince ve sonrasında incelemeyi amaçlamış ve katılımcılardan onlar Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeyken deneyimlerine ilişkin dönütler almayı hedeflemiş olduğundan bu ölçütleri gerçekleştiren bursiyer sayısı üçe düşmüş ve çalışmanın katılımcı sayısını belirlemiştir. Diğer katılımcılar da aynı veri toplama sürecinden geçmişlerse de çalışma boyunca Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne gidemeyecekleri için analiz ve değerlendirme sürecine onlardan toplanan veriler katılmamıştır. Katılımcıların ihtiyaçları ve literatürde yapılan içerik analiz çalışması ışığında hazırlanan kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının haftalara göre konu dağılımı şu şekilde düzenlenmiştir:

Tablo 8: Haftalık Plan

Haftalar	Başlık	Konular
Hafta 1	Kültür	Kültüre genel bakış (bireysellik, toplumsallık ve kültürel kuramlar), Kültür şoku, Kültürlerarası uyum, önemi ve basamakları, Amerikan kültürüne giriş, Amerikan değerleri, varsayımları ve durumları
Hafta 2	Amerikan Kültürü	Amerikan tutumu, değerler ve gelenekleri, Nüfusta çeşitlilik ve bu çeşitliliğe bakış açısı, Cinsiyetlere atfedilen rollerin kültürlerarası karşılaştırması, Amerikan kültüründe yapılması ve yapılmaması gerekenler, Amerikan iletişim stili ve yaygın kullanılan söylemler, Amerikan Tutumları, Amerika'da yaşamak

Tablo 8 (devamı)

Haftalar	Başlık	Konular
Hafta 3	Yabancı olarak Hayatta Kalma- I	Göç ve ilgili işlemler, Barınma, Yemek kültürü, Alışveriş, Özel ve toplu ulaşım kuralları
Hafta 4	Yabancı olarak Hayatta Kalma- II	Sağlık, Güvenlik, Telefon işlemleri, İlişkiler ve arkadaşlıklar, Finansal işlemler ve bankacılık, Din.
Hafta 5	Sosyal hayata dair gündemdeki konular ve çeşitli işlemler	Dinsel, cinsel ve ırksal ayırım ve Irkçılık, Yabancılar tarafından yaşanan problemler, Gündemde konuşulanlar, SKYPE görüşmesi: Bir Fulbright Doktora Öğrencisi
Hafta 6	Amerika’da Akademik Yaşam ve Öğrenci Yaşamı- I	Akademik beklentiler ve sorumluluklar, Kampüs olanaklar ve kaynakları, Amerika’da akademik hayat, Eve geliş, Kayıt Prosedürleri.
Hafta 7	Amerika’da Akademik Yaşam ve Öğrenci Yaşamı- II	Sanal kampüs turları, Kütüphane, Kulüp aktiviteleri ve öğrenci organizasyonları, Akademinin ötesinde aktiviteler, Kampüs dili, ulusal ve uluslararası öğrenciler.
Hafta 8	Amerika’da Akademik Yaşam ve Öğrenci Yaşamı- III	Akademik etik, Türk ve Amerikan eğitim sistemlerinin karşılaştırılması ve bu sistemlerdeki beklentiler ve öğrenci & akademisyen rolleri, Üniversite’de hayat kurtarıcı ipuçları, uluslararası öğrenciler tarafından karşılaşılan problemler.
Hafta 9	Akademik Yaşama dair Gündemdeki Konular ve Çeşitli İşlemler	Gündemde konuşulanlar, Ölçü ve para birimlerinin kullanımı, Harita ve şema okuma Konuk konuşmacı: Amerika’da yüksek lisans eğitimine devam eden YLSY bursiyeri.

Yukarıda belirtilen Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’nin akademik ve sosyal ortamlarına ilişkin bilgi veren her seans sonrasında, çalışmada yer alan üç katılımcı, kendilerine e-posta yoluyla iletilen haftalık reflektif notları akabindeki üç gün içerisinde doldurup göndermişlerdir. Bu haftalık reflektif notlar, adından da anlaşılacağı gibi o hafta seansta işlenen konulara dair sorular içererek katılımcıların nelere dikkat çektiği, ne gibi deneyimler yaşadığı ve yeni olarak öğrendikleri kültürel unsurları göz önüne sermesi açısından çalışma için büyük önem taşımıştır. Bundan daha da önemlisi, akıllarda kalan soru işaretlerini gidermeyi hedefleyen soru kısmında, katılımcıların konuyla ilişkili bilmedikleri, anlayamadıkları ya da merak ettikleri unsurları toplanmış ve gelecek seanslarda cevap

bulabilmek için araştırma yapılmıştır. Dokuz hafta boyunca, haftalık reflektif notlarda sunulan bu cevapsız sorular ise gerçekleştirdiğimiz Skype görüşmesi ve misafir ettiğimiz Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nden Türkiye'ye dönem arasında gelen konuk konuşmacımız vesilesiyle cevaplarını daha etkili bir şekilde bulmuştur. Bahsedilen reflektif notlara ilaveten, belirlenen haftalarda katılımcılara iki adet rapor verilmiş ve kendilerine verilen süreler içerisinde bu raporların tamamlanması beklenmiştir. Haftalık reflektif notların odaklandıkları belirli konuların yerine, dördüncü ve sekizinci haftalarda ek olarak verilen bu raporlar uygulanmakta olan kültürlerarası uyum seanslarına genel bir bakışı ve değerlendirmeyi sunabilmeyi hedefleyen sorular içermiştir. Katılımcılar ile dokuz hafta boyunca uygulanan kültürlerarası uyum seansları sonrasında, kendileri ülkelerini terk edip Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde eğitimlerine başlamadan yarı-yapılandırılmış final mülakatları gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu mülakatların içeriğini ise seanslara yönelik geri bildirimler oluşturmuştur. Aynı zamanda, kendilerinde gerçekleşmiş olduğu iddia edilen değişikliklere de yer verilmiştir. Bu dokuz haftalık kültürlerarası uyum seansları boyunca katılımcılardan e-posta yoluyla toplanan geribildirimler, raporlar ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne gidiş öncesi yapılan final görüşmeleri gözler önüne sermiştir ki tez amaçlarına katılımcılar daha yeni sosyal ve akademik çevrelerini deneyimlemeden ulaşmıştır. Bu yargıya ulaştıran söylemler de ortaya koymaktadır ki böylesi bir uygulamaya katılarak katılımcılar birçok konuda önemli bilgilere sahip olmuşlar, yanlış bildiklerini yaşanmış tecrübeler ışığında doğrularıyla değiştirmişler, önyargı ve korkularından arınarak yakın zamanda içinde bulunacakları toplum ve insanları hakkında olumlu tutumlar edinmişlerdir. Aynı zamanda, katılımcılar, bu seanslarda yeni yaşam alanlarında neleri, nasıl yapmaları ve neleri yapmamaları hususunda bilgi edindiklerini iddia etmişlerdir. Tüm bunlar, katılımcılara psikolojik ve entelektüel açıdan hazırlık duygusu işlemiş, onlarda kültürel farkındalık uyandırmış, olası kültürel şok unsurlarını en aza indirmiş, kültürlerarası fark ve uzaklığı azaltmış olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Uygulanan kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının deseninin geliştirilmesi amaçlı katılımcılara ne gibi konuların eklenmesi ya da çıkarılması gerektiği sorulmuş ama buna yeterli bir cevap alınamamıştır. Katılımcılar, bu konuda herhangi bir öneri ile gelememelerini daha önce benzer herhangi bir kültürlerarası uyum seanslarında yer almadıklarından karşılaştırma yapamamalarına bağlamışlardır. Uygulamanın içeriği ve zamanlaması çok yerinde ve yeterli olduğu, her bir katılımcı tarafından birçok kez ifade edilmiştir.

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde dil kurslarına başladıktan sonra, çalışmada yer alan katılımcı bursiyerler ile her hafta e-posta değişimi yapılmış ve üç ay boyunca kendileriyle üç Skype görüşmesi yürütülmüştür. E-postalarda haftalık olarak deneyimlerini paylaşan katılımcılar, ülkelerinde katıldıkları kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının kendilerinin sosyal ve akademik yeni yaşantılarında yansımalarını, karşılaştıkları problemleri ve bilgili olmalarının sağladığı kolaylıkları paylaşmışlardır. Belirli aralıklarla katılımcılara en uygun zamanda gerçekleştirilen Skype görüşmelerinde ise e-posta ile alınan verilere değinilmiş, oradan çıkan sorulara cevap aranmış ve provasız sorularla inceden inceye sosyal ve akademik deneyimlerin portresi çizilmiştir. Bütün bunları yaparken hedeflenen, katılımcıların ülkelerinde katıldıkları kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının kendilerine ne konularda yardımcı olduğunu incelemektir. Yazılı veriler, farklı dosyalarda zaman akışı ve kişi göz önünde bulundurularak düzenlenmiş ve ses kaydı yapılan tüm görüşmelerin kelimesi kelimesine çevriyazımı kişisel olarak yapılmıştır. Creswell'in tematik analizi (2002) temelinde, söylem içi kodlamaya, bağlamında beliren ana temalar eşliğinde, verileri yorumlamak için başvurulmuştur. Kodlanan verileri kapsayan temalara ulaşılmış ve verilerin tartışması bu temalarla okuyucuya sunulmuştur. Katılımcıların hikayelerinde geçen ifadelerden yola çıkılarak varılan söz konusu temaların yorumlanmasında Berry'nin kültürel etkileşim ve uyum teorisinden; ve Duff'ın akademik söylem sosyalleşmesi teorisinden yardım alınmıştır. Çalışmanın bel kemiğini oluşturan bu iki teoriye ilaveten, ulaşılan temaların yorumlanmasında ve tartışılmasında belli başlı sentezleyici kavramlar da dahil edilmiştir. Bunlardan başlıcaları; kültürel farkındalık, sosyal açıdan bağlılık, kültürel uzaklık ve kültür şokudur.

Bu tez çalışmasında; Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde eğitimlerine başlamadan önce Türkiye'de dil eğitimi gördükleri vakıf üniversitesinde, onların ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda hazırlanan kültürlerarası uyum seanslarına katılan üç YLSY bursiyerinin, sosyal ve akademik kültürel etkileşim ve uyum sürecinin incelenmesi önemli sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Birçok farklı nitel veri toplama araçları kullanılarak elde edilen bu sonuçlar göstermiştir ki Amerika Birleşik Devletleri eğitimi öncesi kültürlerarası uyum seanslarına katılmak, katılımcıların kültürel etkileşim ve uyum sürecini daha kolay ve daha rahat yaparak sürece olumlu katkıda bulunmuştur. Her bir katılımcı tarafından, sosyal ve akademik ortamlara ilişkin profesyonel olarak hazırlanmış uyum seanslarında önceden bilgilendirilmenin onların kısa sürede ve

etkili bir şekilde olabildiğince az problemlerle karşılaşarak topluma uyum sağlamalarına ve bağımsız bir birey olarak topluma katılmalarına çok büyük ölçüde yardımcı olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Bu yorumun altında yatan hikâyelerin içeriği bireylerin yaşamış olduğu kültürel farkındalığın öneminin altını çizmiştir. Aynı zamanda, daha kolay ve daha rahat geçirmiş oldukları kültürel etkileşim sürecini, katılımcılar psikolojik ve entelektüel açıdan hazır olmalarına borçlu olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Çevrelerinde bulunan aynı süreci yaşamış ya da yaşamakta olan diğer uluslararası ve Türk bursiyerleri hayrete düşürerek, her biri, kültürlerarası uyum seminerleri boyunca edinmiş oldukları bilgi ve taktikleri yeri ve zamanı geldiğinde başarılı bir şekilde zaman kendilerini kaybına uğratmadan pratiğe dökmüşlerdir. Bu sayede, sorularının çoğunun cevaplarını kendilerinde bularak, tereddüt etmeden yeni akademik ve sosyal hayatlarını bir an önce yola koymak için gerekli hususlarda uygun kararı kısa sürede tek başlarına alabilmişlerdir. Sosyal ve akademik çevreye uyumda neredeyse hiç zorluk çekmeyen katılımcılar, bunu kendileri için fazlaca motive edici bulmuşlardır. Kendi edindikleri bilgileri, tıpkı kültürlerarası uyum seansları gerçekleştirilirken olduğu gibi, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde de çevrelerinde bulunan, kültüre yeni bireylerle paylaşarak onların da kültürel etkileşim sürecine fayda sağlamışlardır. Daha öncesinde bilmiş olmanın verdiği özgüven ve cesaretle, katılımcılar şuna kadar yapılan çalışmalarda rapor edilen Türk öğrencilerinin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde yaşanan sorunlarını yaşamadıklarını iddia etmişlerdir. Aksine, katılmış oldukları kültürlerarası uyum seansları sayesinde kültürel etkileşim süreçlerinin başlangıcından itibaren daha sosyal bir birey olup ulusal ve uluslararası öğrenci ve akademisyenlerle etkili iletişimde bulduklarını bildirmişlerdir. Yaşadıkları sorunlara gelince; yanlış telaffuzdan ötürü anlaşma problemleri, literatürde dil bariyeri diye adlandırılan unsurla örtüşmüştür. Fakat Türkiye'de gerçekleştirilen kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının amaçlarında dili geliştirmek bulunmamıştır. Bunun nedeni, seanslar esnasında katılımcıların hali hazırda devam ettikleri dil kurslarıdır. İçeriğin yüksek oranda hedef dil olan İngilizce ile işlenmesi, çalışmanın amaçları arasında bulunmamasına rağmen, katılımcılarda dile olan motivasyonu arttırdığı ve hedef dille ilgili heyecan ben buzlari yok ettiği bildirilmiştir. Yaşanılan bir diğer zorluk ise, her bir katılımcı tarafından bireylerin geride bıraktıkları aile, arkadaş ve çevrelerini özlemek olduğu ifade edilmiştir.

Beklenen ve yaşanan kültürel etkileşim stres etkenlerine ışık tutarak, katılımcıların hikâyeleri, aynı zamanda böyle kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının dil

müfredatının haklı ve vazgeçilemez bir parçası olarak gelişimi, uygulanması ve değerlendirilmesine olan ihtiyaca önemle dikkat çekmiştir. Bu tez, aynı zamanda söz konusu değişim programları ile ilgili bu programlardan sorumlu şahıs ve kurumlara sosyal, pedagojik ve teorik olarak önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Sosyal çıkarım olarak kişilerin bilinçlendirilmesinin, kültürel etkileşim ve uyum sürecince olumlu deneyimlerde önemli rol oynadığı vurgulanmıştır. Bu sebeple, bireylerin böylesi değişim programlarında, farklı kültür ortamlarında başarılı bir uyuma ulaşabilmeleri için yanlış ya da az bildiklerinden kurtulup, tutarlı ve gerçek bilgilere ulaşmaları kendilerinin yeni çevrelerindeki sosyal ve akademik başarılarına faydalı olacaktır. Aynı zamanda, böyle değişim programından sorumlu ve ilgili kişiler için de bu tez önemli pedagojik çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Dili, kültürden ayrı; dil öğretimini gerçekleştiren eğitimcilerinde da sadece dili öğreten olarak düşünmemenin gerektiğinin altını çizmiştir. Bu bağlamda, öne sürülen şudur ki yabancı dil öğretimi ve öğrenimi gerçekleştirilen sınıfların kültürden arındırılarak düşünülmesi mümkün değil, aksine sakıncalıdır. Bu sebeple, özellikle böyle değişim programlarında yer alacak bursiyerlere hitap eden eğitim kurumlarının müfredatlarında sadece dil eğitiminin değil kültürel açıdan da gerekli psikolojik ve entelektüel hazırlığı sağlayacak kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının da yer alması önemli bir koşul olarak kabul edilmelidir. Böylesi seanslar, çok kapsamlı olmamakla birlikte ev sahipliği yapan eğitim kurumlarınca, öğrencileri gönderen kurumlarla karşılaştırıldığında daha sık olarak gerçekleştirilmektedir. Fakat bu seansların sadece öğrenci ve bursiyerlerinin yurtdışı eğitimleri için seçmiş oldukları ülkelere gittikten sonra değil kendi ülkelerinde de gerçekleştirilmesi çok büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu doğrultuda gerçekleştirilecek olan kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının deseninin geliştirilmesinde göz önünde bulundurulması gereken önemli faktörler vardır. Öncelikle, gelişim aşamasında katılımcıların ihtiyaçları en önemli kıstas olarak görülmelidir. Ve diğer kalan aşamalarda, literatürde bulunan kültürel etkileşimle ilgili önemli teoriler seminerlere yön verme ve sonuçlarını değerlendirme açısından ışık tutucu olmaktadır.

Diğer yandan, yüksek lisans tezinin uygulaması olarak geliştirilen, yürütülen ve değerlendirilen bu çalışmanın iki ana kısıtlaması mevcuttur. Bunlarda ilki, uygulamada kullanılan zamanın kısa gelmesidir. Hali hazırda benzer amaç doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilen ama içeriği ve uzunluğu bakımından bu tezde uygulanan kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının bir hayli gerisinde kalan bir seansta bitirilen uyum programı ile karşılaştırıldığında uygulama

süreci yeterli gözükse de daha uzun sürelerle yayılacak benzer uygulamalardan daha fazla sonuçlara ulaşılacağı öngörülmüştür. Bunun sebebi, katılımcılar, yoğun içerikten ötürü tartışmaya vakit ayıramamış ve ele alınan konularla ilgili daha içerikli fikir beyanlarında uygulama süresince bulunamamışlardır. Yalnızca bir kere yapılabilmesine rağmen, daha sıklıkla gerçekleştirilmesine ihtiyaç duyulan katılımcıların bireysel olarak gerçekleştirdikleri sunumlara ise aynı sebepten ötürü uygulama sırasınca yeterli sayıda yer verilememiştir. İkinci ve son kısıtlama ise, bu kez değerlendirmeye ayrılan zamanın kısalığıyla ilişkilidir. Biz tez uygulaması olduğundan, maalesef değerlendirmeye katılımcıların Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki ilk üç ayı dâhil edilebilmiştir. Her ne kadar katılımcılardan bu süre dahilinde ilgili araştırma sorusuna yeterli cevaplar alınsa da katılımcıların yakın zamanda dahil oldukları sosyal ve akademik çevreleri deneyimledikçe daha detaylı ve ileriki çalışmalar için daha faydalı sonuçlar doğurabileceği tahmin edilmektedir. Bu anlamda, ev sahibi ülkenin, yani Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin, sosyal ve akademik kültürünü yeterince deneyimleyen katılımcılar ileride kültürel etkileşim ile ilgilenen araştırmacılara benzer şekilde yürütülecek kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının deseni hakkında daha net önerilerle gelebileceklerine inanılmaktadır. Bunun sebebi şudur ki söz konusu katılımcıların tecrübeleri arttıkça, bir kültürlerarası uyum seansında neyi içermeli neyi içermemeli, hangi konuların üzerinde daha fazla durulmalı hangi konular hızlı geçilebilmeli ya da ne gibi kaynak ve materyallerden yararlanılmalı sorularına daha zengin cevaplar ve olanaklar sağlayacaklardır. Bütün bunlar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu tez önemi son zamanlarda daha iyi anlaşılın kültürel etkileşim ve uyum alanında araştırma yapacak araştırmacılara da önemli tavsiyeler sunmaktadır. Hem gönderen hem de ev sahipliği yapan kurum ve ilgili şahısları göreve davet eden bu tez, gelecekteki araştırmaların vazgeçilmezi olarak ilk koşulun böylesi kültürlerarası uyum seanslarının deseni oluştururken katılımcıların korku, endişe, ihtiyaç ve kişiliklerinin göz önünde bulundurulması olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu tezde de gerçekleştirildiği gibi; uygulamayı geliştirme, uygulama ve değerlendirme süresince olabildiğince çeşitli sayıda nitel veri toplama araçlarından yararlanmak ve nirengi yapmak araştırma sonuçlarını daha güvenilir ve geçerli yapmaktadır. Üç katılımcıdan da aynı doğrultuda gelen söylemler göstermektedir ki desenin olmazsa olmazlarından biri de deneyimli kişilerden duymak, okumak ve izlemektir. Hatta deneyimli kişilerle Skype üzerinden ya da yüz yüze yapılan görüşmeler en çok dikkat çeken kısımlar olarak ifade edilmiştir. Bütün bunlar da gösteriyor

ki, bu tarz etkileşimler mutlaka desene katılmalı ve sayısı olabildiğince yüksek tutulmalıdır. Daha fazla öngörü sahibi olabilmek için, katılımcılar bu tezde erişilen sürenin daha üzerinde bir sürede takip edilmeli ve katılımcılardan sürekli olarak dönütler alınmalıdır. Böylelikle, kültürlerarası uyum seanslarında ele alınan sosyal ve akademik kültürlere ilişkin unsurların ne derece yeterli ne derece eksik olduğu konusunda daha faydalı dönütler alınıp desen daha iyiye doğru geliştirilebilecektir.

APPENDIX J: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

Enformatik Enstitüsü

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

YAZARIN

Soyadı : KİBAR

Adı : Merve

Bölümü : İngiliz Dili Öğretimi

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : The Views and Reflections of Turkish Graduate Students on a Pre-Departure Cross-Cultural Orientation Module as a Guide for Their Prospective Social and Academic Experiences in the USA

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınmaz.

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: