

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies of Turkish Learners of English: A Psychometric Evaluation

Türk İngilizce Öğrencilerinin Sosyal-Duygusal Öğrenme Yeterlilikleri: Psikometrik bir Değerlendirme

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ABSTRACT

The Social-Emotional Learning movement attempts to promote the mental health, happiness, and academic success of learners. The promotion of related skills is of utmost importance, as they are needed to ensure adequate social functioning, well-being, self-regulation, and good human functioning in the 21st century. It is assumed that investigations focusing on existing competencies and needs of learners have the potential to draw a realistic picture of the social and emotional needs of the young generation, thereby suggesting pathways to meet these needs and encouraging the involved parties to make informed decisions concerning appropriate pedagogies, teaching materials, and activities. The current case study investigated whether young Turkish adults taking a required introductory English course reported Social-Emotional Learning needs. Utilizing the Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning Scale, a recent foreign language-oriented psychometric test, the researchers gathered data from students ($F = 231$; $M = 111$; $Unstated = 2$) who were enrolled in various faculties and vocational schools at a state university in northeastern Turkey. Descriptive statistics showed that young Turkish adults considered themselves to have a good Social-Emotional Learning capacity in terms of self-regulation, social relations, and responsible decision-making, contrary to most studies from collectivist cultures. These self-reported good social and emotional capacities are explained in light of recent educational reforms, Turkish culture, and the methodology of the present study. Finally, some implications and suggestions for future research are provided.

Keywords: Awareness, emotion, SEL, well-being, youth

ÖZ

Sosyal-Duygusal Öğrenme hareketi; gençlerin zihinsel sağlıkları, mutlulukları ve akademik başarılarına odaklanan bir oluşumdur. Bu alanların gelişimi; 21. yüzyılda etkili sosyal işleyiş, refah, öz-düzenleme ve iyi insan ilişkileri için son derece önemlidir. Öğrenenlerin hâlihazırdaki yeterlilikleri ve ihtiyaçlarını irdeleyen çalışmaların; genç neslin sosyal ve duygusal ihtiyaçlarının gerçekçi bir resmini çizme ve dolayısıyla da bu ihtiyaçların karşılanması için çözüm yolları önerme ve ilgili kişileri uygun pedagoji, öğretim materyali ve etkinlik tasarlamak için bilgiye dayalı kararlar alma adına teşvik etme potansiyeline sahip olduğu varsayılmaktadır. Bu durum çalışması, Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencilerinin olası sosyal ve duygusal öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Araştırmacılar, yabancı dil odaklı güncel bir psikometrik ölçek olan Sosyal-Duygusal Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Ölçeğini kullanarak Türkiye'nin kuzeydoğusundaki bir devlet üniversitesinin değişik fakülte ve yükseköğretim kurumlarına kayıtlı ve temel İngilizce dersini alan katılımcıların yeterliliklerini ölçmüşlerdir ($K = 231$; $E = 111$; $Belirtilmemiş = 2$). Betimleyici istatistiksel analiz, kolektif yani yüksek bağlamli kültürlerde yapılan pek çok çalışmanın aksine, Türk gençliğinin öz düzenleme, sosyal ilişkiler ve sağduyulu karar verme ile ilgili yetilerinin oldukça iyi olduğunu göstermiştir. Katılımcı beyanına dayanan bu iyi derecedeki sosyal ve duygusal kapasite; güncel eğitim reformları, Türk kültürü ve ilgili çalışmanın yöntemi ışığı altında tartışılmıştır. Makale, ilgili çıkarımlar ve gelecekte yapılacak muhtemel çalışmalar için öneriler ile son bulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Farkındalık, duygu, SDÖ, sağlamlık, gençlik

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Introduction

Education in the 21st century is confronted by various risks and challenges such as increasing school violence, substance abuse, emotional distress and suicide, isolation caused by technology dependence, xenophobia, and feelings of mistrust resulting from acts of terrorism. Moreover, the changing demographic profiles of schools have led to populations of culturally diverse students who have different abilities and motivations. Complicating the matter even further is the concern that schools often lack the resources to equip their students with the social-emotional skills needed to cope with these challenges (Bulut-Serin & Genç, 2011; Durlak et al., 2011). In this sense, learners need specific competencies as documented in various international frameworks (for a comparative review, see Voogt & Rublin, 2012). These everyday skills required for the well-being of learners, which comprises both satisfactory academic performance and a satisfying life, include collaboration, communication, Information and Communication Technologies literacy, social and cultural skills, citizenship, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and productivity.

With this in mind, developmental scientists have devised theoretical positive development-oriented intervention frameworks, such as Social Competence, Positive Youth Development, Positive Psychology, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Although each of these models differs with respect to its definition, conceptual design, key constructs, population of interest, measurement, and intervention setting, they all attempt to promote the skills and assets needed to ensure adequate social functioning, well-being, self-regulation, and good human functioning (for a comparative review, see Tolan et al., 2016). The focus of the current paper, SEL, first emerged in the 1990s (Dresser, 2013). This framework is recognized as a promising scheme intended to equip learners with several of the 21st-century skills and competencies; as such, it deserves much attention.

Understanding Social-Emotional Learning

The SEL movement emerged in 1994 as a result of a conference hosted by the Fetzer Institute. At that time, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was founded by Daniel Goleman and Eileen Growald to support the integration of SEL into school curricula. The concept of Emotional Intelligence received particular attention in this regard, bringing about a revolution in educational thinking (Shanker, 2014).

In education, effective social and emotional development is regarded as a predictor of success, as it impacts individuals' psychological well-being and directly affects their social behavior and academic competence. While emotions have conventionally been regarded as an inner experience, Imai (2010) views them as a social phenomenon with interpersonal and communicative dimensions. In this regard, individuals who are working to reach specific goals construct emotions through interpersonal encounters. These acts, both negative and positive, have an impact on learning and development. For instance, when a learner cannot identify or interpret others' emotions, social communication and rapport decrease, and withdrawal tendencies increase (Izard et al., 2001), leading to deficits in motivation, concentration, and morale. As such, some view emotional intelligence as more important than IQ in the educational process (Denham et al., 2009).

Consequently, SEL has become a vital component of formal schooling, as classroom teaching and learning have cognitive,

social, and emotional dimensions, and students do not learn alone (Durlak et al., 2011; Frey et al., 2019). As emotions can help or hinder school engagement and academic success, they should be addressed in the classroom, especially in cases where culturally diverse students are brought together (Durlak et al., 2011). Although the existing literature lacks a uniform framework for SEL, broadly speaking, it should be understood as a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character-related skills that are needed for a successful and satisfying education, work, and social relationships. These are regarded as "soft" skills, as opposed to explicit teaching targets (Frey et al., 2019), and are considered as non-cognitive abilities that can be taught (Hoerr, 2016).

The related literature documents diverse SEL frameworks, including Character Lab, CASEL, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Search Institute, Youth to Thrive, the Habits of Mind, the PEAR Institute Clover Model, the University of Chicago Consortium, and Battelle for Kids P21. Among these, CASEL—one of the most prominent producers of SEL-related knowledge, practice, and policy—defines social-emotional learning as:

... the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (2020, para. 1)

With this in mind, CASEL aims at supporting policymakers, teachers, students, and parents in integrating evidence-based SEL into education from preschool through secondary education. According to CASEL (2020), there are five core social-emotional competencies: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship management, and (5) responsible decision-making. Self-awareness can be described as the ability to identify one's feelings, interests, needs, values, strengths, and weaknesses; understand the reasons for one's feelings, and feel others' emotions. On the other hand, self-management involves one's ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Furthermore, social awareness is the potential to empathize with others and appreciate different perspectives, while relationship management pertains to establishing healthy relationships. Finally, responsible decision-making entails considering issues such as morale and safety to make decisions intended to ensure both individual and social happiness. The CASEL framework addressing these five broad areas of competencies covers several sub-capacities intended to be taught and applied at various levels.

A Review of SEL Outcomes What the Research Says

The existing literature documents SEL outcomes through both SEL intervention studies and meta-analyses of these studies. One of the widely-cited meta-analyses in this regard was carried out by Durlak et al. (2011), who investigated 213 SEL programs and introduced six positive overall student outcomes: "(a) social and emotional skills, (b) attitudes toward self and others, (c) positive social behaviors, (d) conduct problems, (e) emotional distress, and (f) academic performance" (p. 410). In terms of the first category, they explored improvement in students' cognitive, affective, and social skills, such as recognizing feelings, setting goals, taking different perspectives, solving problems, and making decisions. Their findings regarding the second category demonstrated that learners developed positive attitudes concerning self, school, and society. Concerning the third category, positive social behaviors,

they referred to developing healthy relationships with others and increased prosocial behaviors. They pointed out that the fourth category entailed managing problematic behaviors like bullying and school suspension. The fifth category, emotional distress, concerned such negative issues as depression, anxiety, stress, and isolation. Finally, the sixth category, academic performance, was mainly associated with better performance in reading and math.

Furthermore, another recent meta-analysis by Taylor et al. (2017) of 82 SEL interventions from kindergarten to high school in both the USA and other countries worldwide highlighted the follow-up effects of SEL learning. Their analysis revealed that students continued benefiting from such interventions in subsequent years in terms of academic success and well-being; namely, they developed successful social-emotional competencies, demonstrated prosocial behaviors and attitudes, and avoided adverse outcomes such as problem behaviors, emotional distress, and drug use.

Apart from these meta-analyses, numerous empirical studies were carried out focusing on school-based SEL interventions. These studies, too, indicated positive social and academic outcomes. For instance, in a quasi-experimental study investigating the integration of social-emotional learning and literacy, Santiago-Poventud et al. (2015) found that using storybooks with social-emotional content increased the potential of social and academic development of young children at risk. These learners readily acquired the targeted social-emotional vocabulary and used it in context. Furthermore, this helped them understand and express their feelings more precisely and identify the possible effects of their emotions on others and their social relationships. In another study, motivated by much of the existing research on SEL outcomes for elementary students, Hamedani et al. (2015) investigated the possible outcomes of SEL interventions in high schools. They found that the students built better relationships with their teachers, liked their school more, had a strong desire to be more successful, were more motivated to help others and tackle social issues to make a difference, set ambitious higher education goals, and received support toward their preparation for university education.

The SEL movement has recently been a popular area of research in many countries, including Turkey where numerous studies on school-based SEL interventions and scale development have been conducted at various educational levels. For instance, in a recent study, Bademci et al. (2020) declared that their attachment-informed psychosocial program with learning-based games and various other art-based activities created a safe and secure atmosphere where elementary students with behavioral problems developed a sense of self-worthiness, felt more self-confident, regulated their emotions, and felt less anxious. The program also helped the teachers feel more empathy toward these students. In another study, Uşaklı (2015) found that drama activities developed social awareness between Turkish third and fourth graders and refugee children from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. However, these activities were not entirely effective in terms of responsible decision-making and problem-solving. A further study by Sakiz (2017) demonstrated that perceived affective support by the teacher increased the motivation, academic enjoyment, self-efficacy, and positive emotions of fourth- and fifth-grade students in science classrooms while also decreasing academic anxiety and hopelessness. Gol-Guven (2016), on the other hand, investigated teachers' classroom implementations of the Turkish version of The Lions Quest Program®, which was

intended to equip elementary school students with social and emotional skills, encourage them to contribute to society, teach them to protect both themselves and others from violence, and give them the skills to avoid drug use. Although the teachers in the study expressed positive attitudes toward the program, they were hesitant about teaching SEL as a distinct subject and about giving teachers the responsibility for SEL, rather than families.

From another perspective, Bulut-Serin and Genç (2011) examined anger management training programs for high school students. They argued that such programs could help all learners to recognize, define, and control their anger. Öz and Aysan (2011) were similarly successful in teaching adolescents how to cope with their anger and communicate effectively, while Karataş and Gökçakan (2009) found that group-based psychodrama and cognitive behavioral therapy helped 9th-grade students reduce their physical aggression. Moreover, Turnuklu et al. (2010) conducted a large-scale two-year study to investigate the effects of a conflict resolution peer-mediation program on understanding interpersonal conflicts, communication, anger management, negotiation, and peer mediation. They concluded that the program was effective in teaching students to resolve their interpersonal conflicts. A further study by Demir and Kaya (2008) illustrated that structured group therapy in a school-based SEL intervention increased social acceptance levels and friendship skills in socially isolated, neglected, and rejected students.

In addition to these classroom-based SEL intervention studies, several research attempts have been carried out to develop SEL-based scales. For example, Zaimoğlu (2018) designed a scale to measure higher education students' social and emotional competencies in learning a foreign language. This effort, motivated by the scarcity of research on SEL in higher education, resulted in the development of the Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning Scale (SEFLLS), which covered the three dimensions of self-regulation, social relations, and responsible decision-making. The self-regulation subscale covers eight skills: curiosity, recognition of strengths and emotions, self-efficacy, emotional costs, self-motivation, self-discipline, goal-setting, and help-seeking. In addition, five factors are grouped under the social relations subscale: leadership, social integration, social anxiety, respect for others, and social capability. Finally, three factors were grouped under responsible decision-making, including value-based decision-making, future responsibility, and scrutiny.

Social-Emotional Learning in Foreign Language Learning

Social-Emotional Learning is considered essential for second and foreign language learning, as language learning is a social practice in which parties have to interact (Melani et al., 2020). Various factors such as individual differences, the learning context, feelings, and the social setting may impact the language learning process; in addition, cultural and social knowledge must be acquired for meaningful communication to occur. As Bown and White (2010) point out, the learner and the context should be seen as complementary rather than competing components of the language learning process, and emotions play a crucial role in interpersonal relations, which form the nature of the language learning experience. According to Stevick (1980, as cited in Imai, 2010), "what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (p. 279) determines their success or failure in language learning. Language learners' affective responses (i.e., positive and negative emotional reactions) to the learning process directly influence their engagement, motivation, and the desire

to continue learning. Therefore, successful emotion regulation is a prerequisite for better academic performance (Bown & White, 2010; Garrett & Young, 2009).

The term “affect” in language learning covers several constructs, including personality traits, motivation, learning styles and strategies, beliefs and attitudes, and emotions. This affective aspect is regarded by Hurd (2002) as a crucial factor in language learning, as creating a safe and caring classroom environment via SEL may help support the language learning process (Zaimoğlu, 2018). It should be noted, however, that the general approach to language teaching in the 21st century needs revision in this respect. Many language teaching programs emphasize only cognitive abilities, ignoring the affective states of both teachers and students. It is believed that through SEL, all parties develop ownership of what they do, experience a sense of confidence, and enjoy the process more (Dresser, 2013), yet the affective responses of foreign language learners are under-researched in comparison to the cognitive aspects of language learning (Bown & White, 2010; Garrett & Young, 2009).

Ways of Teaching and Measuring SEL

There are two basic approaches to teaching SEL: explicit instruction and infusion. In the former, the school allots time on the schedule for teachers to provide direct instruction in SEL competencies and skills, with a distinct standalone curriculum apart from the other content areas. However, such skills are integrated into the existing content in the latter, allowing teachers to be more flexible and creative. Both approaches can be implemented by teachers based on their teaching routines and the structure of their school (Vaishnav et al., 2016). However, SEL has long remained on the periphery as a form of the hidden curriculum. Traditionally, social norms and values are not directly taught to students; instead, they are constantly exposed to them indirectly in the schooling process.

On the other hand, it has been argued that purposeful instruction in SEL should be integrated into mainstream teaching, given its potential to empower learners. In this regard, students with appropriate social and emotional development can predict the possible consequences of their behaviors and thus make good decisions, thereby avoiding negative consequences. They also develop the skills needed to collaborate with others and become effective problem solvers who can identify, analyze, and resolve academic, social, and emotional issues with the appropriate tools. As Frey et al. (2019) pointed out, SEL instruction helps alleviate problems that interfere with learning, such as anxiety and asociality. The learning process is both social and emotional in nature, as teachers' instructional decisions, statements, and actions all affect how students see themselves, their identity and potential as learners, communicate with the world around them, and perform academically. Thus, addressing social and emotional development of children should be a priority and not “an add-on or an afterthought” (Frey et al., 2019, p. 17).

There are diverse teaching practices that help promote students' social-emotional competencies. Reviewing the existing literature, Yoder (2014) identified 10 routines that might be critical in that regard, including “student-centered discipline, teacher language, responsibility and choice, warmth and support, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-reflection and self-assessment, balanced instruction, academic press and expectations, and competence building—modeling, practicing, feedback, and coaching” (p. 10). First, student-centered discipline requires the use of

classroom management techniques that are appropriate for student development and allow students to be self-directive while contributing to the establishment of classroom rules and values. The second practice, teacher language, concerns discourse that encourages students to do more and monitor and manage their behaviors. Next, responsibility and choice can be understood as the attempts of a teacher to offer meaningful choices to students, expecting them to make responsible choices in a democratic atmosphere. The fourth practice, warmth and support, denotes a classroom environment where students receive academic and social support from their teachers and peers. Then cooperative learning refers to organizing students in small groups where the students are positively interdependent, working together around a common task or goal. The sixth practice, classroom discussions, refers to open-ended teacher questions and detailed student elaborations on content that help enhance students' thinking skills. After that, self-reflection and self-assessment encourage students to think about their own work and assess it objectively using performance standards. The eighth practice, balanced instruction, indicates finding an equilibrium between active and direct instruction, and between individual and collaborative learning. Students should directly learn from the teaching material (direct instruction) and at the same time engage with it in a fun way (e.g., through project-based learning). Subsequently, the principle of academic press and expectations involves using challenging and meaningful tasks and expecting all students to be successful. Lastly, competence building is about the systematic development of social-emotional competencies by the teacher, who integrates them into lessons, models them, and encourages students to reflect on them. These 10 strategies provide high standards for academic learning and should be integrated into the current teacher education and professional development initiatives (Yoder, 2014).

To guide students' SEL development, teachers can use commercial programs or locally produced materials. The related literature discusses various such programs. One notable model was created by Frey et al. (2019), who offered an integrated SEL framework for deliberate SEL instruction and guidance. This integrated framework covers five tenets of SEL: (1) Identity and agency, (2) emotional regulation, (3) cognitive regulation, (4) social skills, and (5) public spirit. The first of these concerns the factors that shape students' identity and belief in their competence to affect the world, such as recognizing their strengths, self-confidence, self-efficacy, determination, resiliency, and ability to produce alternative solutions. Next, effective emotional regulation entails students' ability to identify and describe their emotions, perceive their own feelings first to understand others', control their impulses and delay gratification, manage their stress, and utilize adaptive coping skills. On the other hand, cognitive regulation is closely related to academic instruction and helps students build skills related to metacognition, engagement, goal setting, problem solution, decision-making, help-seeking, and organization. The fourth tenet, social skills, concerns the skills needed for effective social interactions, such as collaboration, relationship establishment, effective communication, empathy, and relationship repair. The last one, public spirit, is necessary for a democratic society characterized by respect and equality. Accordingly, students should be taught how to respect others, have courage, know their ethical and civic responsibilities, work hard for the material improvement of others' lives, and undertake service-learning.

Another common approach to SEL, RULER, was developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to help various parties,

including leaders, teachers, students, and families, understand emotions, build emotional intelligence skills, and design a positive school environment. The acronym refers to the five skills of emotional intelligence: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating (see <https://www.rulerapproach.org/about/what-is-ruler/>).

In view of the aforementioned SEL-related skills, measuring the quality of implementation and students' SEL skills is a concern. For this purpose, surveys can be administered to measure student engagement and parent satisfaction, while climate surveys can be applied in schools; furthermore, teacher-rated assessments may also be used to measure student attainment of such skills. The related literature documents various measuring tools to assess student development, including checklists (e.g., the Emotion Regulation Checklist for primary school students), questionnaires (e.g., the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for children of all ages), scales (for instance, The Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale and the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale), to name a few. Moreover, in addition to tools that measure individual student progress, there are tools to assess the effectiveness of school activities. These may include scales (e.g., the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) and inventories (e.g., The Comprehensive School Climate Inventory) (Shanker, 2014). However, the data from these measures have not been used to draw conclusions about educator performance and school quality (Vaishnav et al., 2016).

Despite positive outcomes supported by empirical evidence, the literature indicates ongoing controversy surrounding SEL integration into formal curricula. First, reading, writing, and mathematics are considered the core academic literacies to be addressed in school. Second, although parents do not object to the development of most of these SEL skills, such as self-control and integrity, many of them regard this attempt as outside the purview of public school teachers. Third, the society mainly believes that such skills and attitudes need to be taught at home or by a religious institution long before the onset of formal education (Hoerr, 2019). Additionally, some have argued that spending time on SEL instruction and teaching how to manage one's emotions and behaviors takes time away from teachers' other responsibilities. Still another concern about the integration of SEL into the curriculum is whether SEL might make learners to think and behave in the same way—"groupthink and uniformity" in Frey et al.'s (2019) terms; however, they maintain that schools do not endorse any particular way of thinking or pattern of behaving.

The Current Study

The existing literature documents several SEL-related studies conducted in various cultural contexts, including Turkey. The studies from the Turkish context, which can be grouped into meta-analyses, empirical research, and scale developments, do not discredit the need for further investigation of the issues that may affect young people's mental health and well-being amid changing circumstances. Thus, it is necessary to conduct systematic research on an ongoing basis to explore SEL-related competencies. Moreover, an urgent revision of language education and teaching practices in the 21st century is required, as cognition is often overemphasized at the expense of the affective dimension of language teaching and learning. Such ongoing investigations focusing on existing competencies and needs can draw a realistic picture of young Turkish adults' social and emotional needs, suggesting pathways to meet these needs and encouraging the involved parties to make informed decisions

regarding appropriate pedagogies, teaching materials, and activities. In that respect, this study meets the utility criteria of a good study listed by McDonough and McDonough (1997), as its findings may be of value to lecturers, materials designers, students, and other researchers.

Furthermore, earlier studies have primarily used scales that address the relevant capacities in a general sense, and they have mainly targeted primary, elementary, and high school students (see Arslan et al., 2011, for preschool children; Ozkubat & Ozdemir, 2014, for children aged seven to 12; Şahin-Baltacı, 2013, for secondary school students; Telef & Furlong, 2017, for a comparative picture of Turkish and American high school students). In this regard, this study can be considered original for two main reasons. First, it used data obtained through a recent scale developed specifically for language learners. Second, it attempted to explore the SEL-related competencies of young Turkish adults to respond to the need to investigate the SEL capacities of language learners within the higher education context. To this end, the following research question and sub-questions were devised to guide the present study:

1. Are Turkish learners of English socially and emotionally competent?
 - 1.1. What are their self-reported self-regulation competencies?
 - 1.2. What are their self-reported social skills?
 - 1.3. What are their self-reported responsible decision-making skills?

Method

To investigate the participants' self-reported SEL-related capacities, the researchers designed a case study. They were motivated to explore the SEL skills and competencies of the participants to discover implications for informed decision-making rather than simply generalize the findings beyond the sample. In this sense, the research could be considered an intrinsic case study, as the case itself was of primary interest (Stake, 2005).

Setting and Participants

The data were collected from students enrolled in a compulsory introductory English course at a mid-size state university in northeastern Turkey. A convenience sampling strategy, that is, one of the popular non-probability sampling strategies in second and foreign language learning research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), was employed, as the participants were readily available for the researchers to gather data with no cost or time constraint (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The difficulty of identifying the total target population in Turkey also encouraged them to utilize this non-probability sampling strategy (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). As the researchers were aware of the non-representativeness of this sampling strategy, they avoided making substantial generalizations about their sample. A total of 344 students participated in the study ($F=231$; $M=111$; $Unstated=2$). Most of the participants were between the ages of 19 and 22, and all were in their first year of studies. The participants were enrolled in various faculties and vocational schools and were studying toward an associate or undergraduate degree. Table 1 summarizes the participant-related information.

Data Collection and Analysis

To explore the participants' self-reported level of SEL competency, the researchers utilized the SEFLLS (Zaimoğlu, 2018) as

Table 1.
Demographic Information

		N	%
Gender	Female	231	67.54
	Male	111	32.46
	Not stated	2	1.00
Age	18 and below	71	20.64
	Between 19 and 22	246	71.51
	Between 23 and 27	20	5.81
	Between 28 and 32	3	.87
	33 and over	4	1.16
Major	Office management and executive training	35	
	Foreign trade	34	
	Social sciences education	30	
	Business management	23	
	Sports management	23	
	Emergency and first aid	19	
	Early-childhood education	17	
	Tourism and hotel management	16	
	Psychological counseling and guidance	15	
	Math education	14	
	Visual arts education	14	
	Primary education	13	
	Turkish education	12	
	Elderly care	11	
	Physical education	11	
	Recreation	10	
	Special education	10	
	Sports coaching	8	
	Science education	7	
	Music education	6	
Civil defense and firefighting	6		
Not stated	4		
Secretarial and office management	2		
Marketing	2		
Theology	1		
Total		344	

a psychometric test. The scale was designed solely for language learners at the university level rather than general primary, secondary, and high school students. In addition, the high correlations between its subscales and the moderate to high concurrent

validity with another parallel Turkish scale helped the researchers conclude that this was the most psychometrically sound data gathering instrument for the study. The scale covers five-Likert scale items ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The researchers used the Turkish version of the scale to increase the reliability of the findings because the participants might have had difficulty comprehending the items in the English version, as they were language learners at the A1 and A2 levels. This 24-item scale has five subscales categorized under three factors and covers several competencies, as shown in Table 2.

The researchers used SurveyMonkey®, an online survey portal, to collect the data. The quantitative data were analyzed utilizing the Social Science Statistics Package 28 for Windows, and descriptive statistics were calculated with frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. While presenting the numerical data, the researchers used tables to make the text more reader-friendly.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

The designer of the parametric scale that the researchers used to gather their quantitative data elaborated on the scale’s factor structure and construct reliability and validity assessment in her dissertation (see Zaimoğlu, 2018). The designer asked a group of preparatory program students to fill in the scale to test its reliability and validity and assessed it with another scale designed by two Turkish researchers, that is, Kabakçı and Korkut Owen (2010). Internal consistency reliability of the three factors, that is, self-regulation, social relations, and responsible decision-making, were found between .81 and .85 with a high total score ($\alpha = .91$) in social sciences. Regarding validity, the researcher found high correlations between factors of the designed scale and those of the established one (see Zaimoğlu, 2018, for the detailed psychometric properties of the scale).

The current study was evaluated and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university where the research was conducted (TRU Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities, Date: June 18, 2021, number: 2021-6/2.8). The participants were informed about the aim of the research and the research process in the introductory section of the online survey, and the researchers asked for participants’ written informed consent at the beginning of the scale. They also emphasized voluntary participation, noting that the participants could withdraw whenever they wanted and without any harm. The researchers also ensured anonymity by not asking the participants to provide their names or reveal any identifying details.

Discussion

The quantitative results were obtained by analyzing the data through descriptive statistics. Findings concerning self-regulation, social relations, and responsible decision-making are presented separately below.

Table 2.
The Scale with its Sub-scales and Factors

Factors	Items	Sub-scales	Specific Factors
Self-regulation	10	Self-awareness Self-management	Curiosity, recognition of strengths and emotions, Self-efficacy, emotional costs, self-motivation, self-discipline, goal-setting, and help-seeking
Social relations	8	Social awareness Relationship skills	Leadership, social integration, social anxiety, respect for others, and social capability
Responsible decision-making	6	Responsible decision-making	Value-based decision-making, future responsibility, and scrutiny

Self-Regulation Competencies

The first 10 items of the scale aimed to identify the self-reported self-regulation competencies, covering two sub-scales of self-awareness and self-management. The high mean scores, that is, weighted averages, as shown in Table 3, showed that the participants seemed to have good self-awareness and self-management skills. The scores were most often expressed as “agree” and “strongly agree” (4=agree; 5=strongly agree). This fact implies that the young Turkish adults participating in the study believed they could understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and predict how their behaviors could affect the people around them (i.e., the consequences of their behaviors) by examining prejudices and biases and identifying and using stress-management strategies. In addition to identifying their own emotions, they expressed their ability to manage them to achieve their goals and to have successful relationships with others. To illustrate, the item with the highest mean score was item 8: “I can overcome every difficulty to achieve my goals” (M=4.15), indicating that most of the participants reported having been aware of their strengths and capacity in solving problems to reach their aims. Similarly, the quantitative results regarding another goal-related item (item 7, “I can shape my life in accordance with my goals”) indicate the belief that they had the skills to set goals and shape their lives in such a way as to reach them.

Social Relations Competencies

The numerical data regarding the social relations factor summarized in Table 4 show almost the same picture, in that the participants reported having good social relations competencies. The mean scores were mainly four and above, indicating that they felt they had good social awareness and relationship skills, denoting understanding other people’s perspectives from different cultural contexts and empathizing with them. Furthermore, they reported that they could communicate and collaborate with others effectively and establish good social relationships. To illustrate, two items with the highest mean scores are items 18 and 15: “I am sensitive to others’ feelings,” and “I help others when they have problems” (M=4.38, 4.37, respectively), which covers two critical qualities needed to establish and maintain healthy social relations: sensitivity and help. It should also be noted that

Item Number	Self-Regulation Items	Weighted Average (M)
1	Be curious about learning different foreign languages	4.03
2	Recognize my emotions	4.01
3	Not hesitate to reflect my feelings while learning English	3.50
4	Can do even the hardest work in the class	3.56
5	Easily motivate myself when I feel bad	3.44
6	Concentrate on my lessons during English class	3.69
7	Shape my life in accordance with my goals	4.09
8	Overcome every difficulty to achieve my goals	4.15
9	Get my family to help me when I have social problems	3.44
10	Get my friends to help me when I do not solve the problem on my own	3.79

Item Number	Social Relations Items	Weighted Average (M)
11	Cooperate with my friends	4.01
12	Motivate my friends to do their best in group work	4.24
13	Try not to criticize my friends when we argue	3.34
14	Try to prevent others from being alienated	4.49
15	Help others when they have problems	4.37
16	Respect others’ thoughts	4.51
17	Recognize how people feel by looking at their facial expressions	4.24
18	Be sensitive to others’ feelings	4.38

the participants expressed the ability to collaborate with others effectively, integrate into society without hesitation, avoid social anxiety, and establish good relations with others, as they were able to identify others’ emotions, refrain from hurting them, and offer them help.

Responsible Decision-making Capacities

The remaining six items (items 19-24) were intended to determine the participants’ views of their decision-making skills. The numerical data are tabulated in Table 5. As with the first and second factors, the results show that the participants reported having had good decision-making skills. In addition, the high mean scores indicate that they believed they had future responsibility and value-based decision-making skills. Their responses also showed that they felt they could differentiate between good and evil and base their decisions on their values, evaluations, and scrutiny. To illustrate, the results regarding item 20 (M=4.18) show that before making responsible decisions, most think about the possible consequences of their behaviors rather than choose their way randomly.

Overall, the numerical data collected all three factors and sub-scales show that the participating young Turkish adults believed themselves to have good social-emotional capacity. The lowest scores belonged to self-regulation factors covering self-awareness and self-management, although the scores were still four and above (agree and strongly agree). While the responses of the female and male participants were quite similar, the females rated their competency somewhat higher but at a statistically

Item Number	Responsible Decision-making Items	Weighted Average (M)
19	Discuss the decisions that I consider unfair	4.43
20	Think about the future consequences of my actions while making decisions	4.18
21	Select the approach with positive outcomes while making decisions	4.01
22	Decide between right or wrong	4.16
23	Search extensively while making decisions about my future	3.97
24	Make decisions that are appropriate for my personal values	4.31

insignificant level. Moreover, the data showed that the older the participants were, the better their self-reported capacity. This positive picture contradicts most of the existing Turkish studies evidencing that young Turkish adults often have emotional problems and low subjective well-being and thus need further support to get to know themselves better and establish and maintain healthy relationships (see Arslan et al., 2020; Erkan et al., 2012; Telef & Furlong, 2017; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). It is not surprising, however, that the participants reported good social capacities, as Turkish youth are generally supported by family members and friends, rather than by conventional sources (i.e., professional help) when they have problems, as commonly argued by earlier studies (see Erkan et al., 2012; Şimşek & Demir, 2014; Türküm et al., 2004). The availability of social support in their surroundings might lead to good social skills and the establishment of strong social networks. In addition, this favorable profile of overall SEL competencies resonates with some earlier studies from different parts of the world identifying participants with a medium to high level of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and social management, and concluding that these competencies were closely linked to each other and could predict English learning achievement (see, for instance, Bai et al., 2021).

Another significant finding of this study was the high percentage of neutral answers. This discovery could be explained in a couple of ways. For one, the participants may not have wanted to seem extremist by choosing negative and positive answers at the opposite ends of the scale continuum. Alternatively, they may have been trying to protect their identities and avoid risking their positions by choosing neutral responses. Finally, they may have simply felt unmotivated to read and grasp the items, thus choosing the middle point, which was easy to mark.

The respondents' high level of self-perceived SEL competence may also be explained through educational, cultural, and methodology-related reasons. First, since 2004, Turkey has employed a more student-centered and constructivist education model, which takes students' interests and developmental and social needs into account in designing curriculum outcomes, activities, and teaching materials (Martin & Alacaci, 2015). Furthermore, pre-service teacher education programs could contribute to this positive picture through SEL-oriented content offered to teacher candidates in faculties of education. For example, courses such as Educational Psychology and Guidance could be beneficial for pre-service teachers in terms of familiarizing with the developmental characteristics of students, discovering motivational concepts for classroom implementation, recognizing the students' individual needs and problems, employing basic helping skills, and identifying the vulnerable students with special needs and managing the students at risk (Martin & Alacaci, 2015). Second, these conclusive findings could be explained by the cultural characteristics of the Turkish society, where the common good of the community is more important than that of individuals; where people feel more comfortable when they are close to each other; where solid and stable relationships with family and others are sustained; where emotional elements are essential; and where facial expressions and sentiments are considered vital in communication. In collectivist cultures, familial and social relations are crucial, as they promote individuals' happiness and subjective social well-being (Telef & Furlong, 2017). Therefore, it is no surprise that the participants in this study perceived themselves as having a high self-awareness and social competence. Lastly, the

seemingly positive findings may be associated with the methodological limitations of the current study utilizing a self-report measure only, as the participants may have tended to respond in a biased manner to draw a positive picture of themselves for social desirability.

The earlier literature on the role of SEL for English rather than general academic learning and performance highlights the importance of high-level SEL competencies to foster the English language learning journey. To illustrate, Bai et al. (2021) documented a close and complex relationship between the SEL competency areas and English language development, emphasizing the mediating effect of self-management skills on self-awareness and social awareness in collectively contributing to improved learner outcomes and achievement in English. Similarly, when language teachers support their preschool students through SEL-integrated classroom practices, they tend to achieve English proficiency faster (see, for instance, Malloy, 2019). Likewise, SEL-related motivational regulation strategies grouped under three categories as cognition, metacognition, and social behavior could lead to better English writing performance for EFL students (Teng & Zhang, 2018). Finally, such support is vital for language learners, as negative emotions such as anxiety could hamper the language learning process, thereby creating a need for positive emotions such as enjoyment, motivation, optimism, and comfort (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Accordingly, learning English compared to other subjects "could be very emotionally sensitive and socially dependent" (Bai et al., 2021, p. 5), and therefore English language learners cognizant of their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses could manage the language learning process well while they set realistic goals, motivate themselves, get help when needed, and regulate the learning process successfully.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the present investigation, the researchers used the SEFLLS developed by Zaimoğlu (2018) as a psychometric test to explore whether SEL needs exist among students from different degree majors who were taking a compulsory introductory English course at a state university in northeastern Turkey. Contrary to most studies conducted in collectivist cultures, including Turkey, the findings indicate that young Turkish adults feel they have good SEL capacities regarding self-regulation, social relations, and responsible decision-making. These self-reported social and emotional capacities could be explained in light of recent educational reforms, Turkish culture, and the methodology of the study.

Although the study reported good SEL capacity, young adults learning English still need to be supported through collaborative activities, putting the learner at the center and creating a meaningful and social atmosphere for communicative language learning. Such collaborative activities could encourage individual learners with different abilities to help each other. Particularly in heterogeneous groups, where more proficient students help the less proficient ones, a positive learning atmosphere is created where interpersonal skills thrive (Stahl, 1994). In such contexts, students learn to respect each other; they develop strong relationships; their communication skills improve; their growth accelerates (Azizinezhad et al., 2013); their motivation and self-confidence are enhanced, and ultimately, their academic success is positively impacted (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The process may also help them identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of self-awareness and self-management.

In addition, SEL-related input may be offered to encourage language learners to practice these SEL skills through language activities. For instance, students may be asked to reflect on their emotions as a writing activity; to put themselves into the roles of characters in reading texts to identify their feelings and needs; to conduct group projects in the form of mini-ethnographies where they investigate people's opinions and reactions to diverse issues via interviews; to discuss and analyze vignettes covering problems and cultural conflicts to find out alternative solutions and ways of behaving; and to play language games covering interaction, empathy, problem-solving, and critical and creative thinking.

In this process, the need for socially and emotionally competent teachers should be highlighted to create classroom conditions conducive to learning to obtain the desired language outcomes (Bai et al., 2021; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). As Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlighted, such teachers with high self-awareness can recognize their emotions, thereby using positive feelings to motivate themselves and their students. Besides, high social awareness helps them guess how emotions affect interactions with others and set strong relations based on mutual understanding. Moreover, their prosocial values and responsible-decision making abilities help them respect others and take ownership of their decisions and actions. Nevertheless, if teachers lack such awareness and management skills, they are likely to feel emotional stress, negatively affecting their job satisfaction, relationships with students, classroom management, and classroom environment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The present case study is not without its limitations. In this regard, it investigated only a single case, which does not allow generalizations about young Turkish adults. Future studies could conduct cross-case analyses to find out whether the tendency is the same among the participants. In addition, it could be interesting to replicate the study in other individualistic and collectivist cultures to draw a comparative picture. Furthermore, replication studies may be carried out after the COVID-19 pandemic, as this emergency may have affected how students feel and behave.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Amaç

Günümüzde ülkemizde ve tüm dünyada şiddet, madde kullanımı, duygusal sıkıntılar, teknoloji bağımlılığı, soyutlanma, intihar gibi çeşitli eğitim sorunlarıyla mücadele edildiği yadsınamaz bir gerçektir. Böyle bir ortamda yeni neslin etkili sosyal ilişkiler kurup bu ilişkileri yönetebilmesi, mutlu ve barışık olabilmesi, öz-düzenleme becerilerin kullanılabilmesi son derece önemlidir. Bu maksatla çeşitli pedagojik oluşumlar gündeme getirilmektedir. Bunlardan biri olan Sosyal-Duygusal Öğrenme hareketi, gençlerin zihinsel sağlıkları, mutlulukları ve akademik başarılarının teminini öncelemektedir. Dünya genelinde çeşitli eğitim bağlamında yapılan gerek kuramsal gerek deneysel çalışmalar, tüm bu becerilerin bir bütün olarak geliştirilmesinin yaşam verimliliği için elzem olduğu gerçeğinin altını çizmektedir.

İlgili literatür tarandığında çeşitli bağlam ve dönemlerde öğrenenlerin mevcut yeterliliklerinin ve ihtiyaçlarının irdelenmeye ihtiyaç duyulduğu görülmektedir. Zira bu sayede gençlerin sosyal ve duygusal ihtiyaçları gerçekçi bir şekilde tespit edilebileceği, bu ihtiyaçların karşılanması için çözüm yolları önerilebileceği ve bu anlamda uygun ve etkili pedagoji, öğretim materyali ve etkinlik tasarımı için öneriler getirilebileceği varsayılmaktadır.

Türkiye bağlamında mevcut meta-analiz, deneysel ve ölçek geliştirme çalışmaları irdelendiğinde, ilgili yeterlikleri belirlemek için genel ölçekler kullandığı ve çoğunlukla da bu ölçeklerin ilköğretim, orta öğretim ve liseyi kapsadığı görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla yabancı dil odaklı güncel bir psikometrik ölçek olan Sosyal-Duygusal Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Ölçeğini kullanarak özellikle yabancı dil öğrenen Türk gençlerinin olası sosyal-duygusal öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını ve yetkinliklerini araştırmayı hedefleyen bu durum çalışmasının özgün ve de yenilikçi olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Yöntem

Katılımcılar, uygun örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiş ve çalışmaya gönüllülük esasına dayandırılmıştır. Bu amaçla Türkiye'nin kuzeydoğusundaki bir devlet üniversitesinin değişik fakülte ve yüksekokullarına kayıtlı ve temel İngilizce dersi alan ve yaşları 19-22 arasında değişen 344 katılımcı (K=231; E=111; Belirtilmemiş=2) çalışmaya davet edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın nicel verisi, İngilizce olarak geliştirilen yabancı dil odaklı güncel bir psikometrik ölçek olan Sosyal-Duygusal Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Ölçeğinin tasarımcı araştırmacı tarafından Türkçeye çevrilen versiyonu kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Tasarımcı tarafından gerçekleştirilen analizlerde ölçek güvenilirliği oldukça yüksek bulunmuştur ($\alpha=91$). 5'li Likert tipi maddeler içeren bu 24 soruluk ölçek, 3 faktör altına toplanan 5 alt ölçekten oluşmaktadır: *Öz düzenleme*, *Öz Farkındalık* ve *Öz Yönetim* alt ölçeklerinden oluşmaktadır ve 10 madde içermektedir. İkinci faktör olan *Sosyal İlişkiler* de "Sosyal Farkındalık" ve "İlişki Becerileri" alt ölçeklerinden oluşup 8 madde içermektedir. Son olarak üçüncü faktör *Sağduyulu Karar Verme*dir ve "Sağduyulu Karar Verme" ölçeği altında toplanan 6 maddeden oluşmaktadır.

Araştırmacılar, çevrimiçi bir anket portalı olan SurveyMonkey© kullanarak nicel veriyi toplamışlardır. Katılımcıların kendi konforlarında doldurdıkları ölçekteki ham veri *Sosyal Bilimler İstatistik Programı (SPSS)* kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve frekans, yüzdeler ve ortalama değerleri kapsayan betimsel istatistikler hesaplanmıştır. Tüm veri toplama, analiz ve raporlama süreçlerinde etik ilkeler dikkate alınmıştır. Gönüllülük esasıyla seçilen katılımcılar bilgilendirilerek, çalışmadan istedikleri zaman ayrılma seçeneği sunulmuş ve onlara herhangi bir fiziksel, psikolojik ya da yasal bir zarar verilmemiştir. Gizlilik ilkesine uyularak katılımcılara kimlik bilgileri sorulmamış ve raporda görünür kılınmamıştır. Bunların yanı sıra çalışmanın gerçekleştirildiği kurumdaki Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulundan gerekli onay alınmıştır.

Bulgular

Üç faktör altına toplanan 24 maddelik ölçek ile elde edilen nicel veriler betimleyici istatistikî analiz ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, katılımcıların oldukça iyi öz düzenleme, sosyal ilişkiler ve sağduyulu karar verme yetilerine sahip olduklarını göstermiştir. Katılımcılar duygularını betimleyebildiklerini ve hedeflerine ulaşış sağlıklı ilişkiler kurabilmeleri için duygularını etkili bir şekilde yönetebildiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Buna ek olarak, belirledikleri hedeflerle hayatlarını yönlendirdiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Benzer şekilde, katılımcılar sosyal farkındalığa sahip olduklarını, başkalarıyla iyi ilişkiler kurabildiklerini, onların bakış açısından olayları değerlendirip onlarla duygudaş olabildiklerini, topluma kolayca uyum sağlayabildiklerini ve iş birliği yapabildiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, katılımcılar sağduyulu karar verme faktörü ile ilgili maddelere de oldukça olumlu cevaplar vererek kararları dikkatli bir şekilde aldıklarının altını çizmişlerdir.

Tartışma

Bu oldukça olumlu bulgular, kolektif yani yüksek bağlamı kültürlerde yapılan pek çok çalışmanın sonuçları ile uyumlu değildir. Katılımcı beyanına dayanan bu iyi derecedeki sosyal ve duygusal kapasite, temel olarak üç sebeple açıklanabilir. Öncelikle; güncel eğitim reformları ile uygulanmaya başlanan öğrenci merkezli ve yapılandırmacı eğitim modeli, öğrencilerin sadece akademik başarılarına değil aynı zamanda sosyal ve duygusal refahlarına önem vermekte ve ilgili becerileri formal eğitim sürecine dâhil etmektedir. Ayrıca öğretmen eğitimine de entegre edilen ilgili dersler bu konuda aday öğretmenlerin farkındalıklarını artırmakta ve dolayısıyla bu becerilerin okulda geliştirilmesi için onları cesaretlendirmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, Türk kültürü yüksek bağlamı bir kültürdür ve bu tarz kolektif toplumlarda bireyden ziyade toplum refahı önemsendiği için beraber çalışma ve dayanışma kültürü mevcuttur. Son olarak da bu oldukça olumlu sonuçlar çalışma yönteminden kaynaklanmış olabilir. Zira katılımcılar olumsuz bir görüntü çizmemek amacıyla dürüst cevaplar vermek yerine orta derece olan nötr seçeneğe yönelmiş olabilirler.

Sonuç ve Öneriler

Kolektif yüksek bağlamlı kültürlerde yapılan çalışmaların aksine bu çalışmada katılımcılar sosyal ve duygusal anlamda oldukça yetkin bulunmuşlardır. Ancak bu olumlu resmin devamını temin etmek amacıyla eğitimciler işbirlikli ödev ve görevlere öncelik vererek öğrencilerin duygu yönetimini gerçekleştirip başkaları ile iyi ilişkiler kurabilmelerine yardımcı olmalıdır. Özellikle, karma gruplarla yapılan bu tarz eğitim etkinlikleri vasıtasıyla öğrencilerin öz farkındalık ve öz yönetim açısından güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini tanıyabilecekleri öngörülmektedir. Bunların yanı sıra; dil becerileri öğretilirken öğrencilerden kendilerinin başkalarının yerine koyarak duygularını dil becerileriyle ifade etmeleri, mini saha çalışmaları yaparak gerçek hayatta insanların fikir ve tepkilerini ölçmeleri, kültürel çatışma içeren durumları analiz ederek muhtemel problem ve çözümleri irdelemeleri ve etkileşim içeren oyunlar oynayarak yaratıcı ve eleştirel düşünme yetkinliklerini geliştirmeleri beklenebilir.

Bu durum çalışmasında, tek bir durum üzerinden genelleme yapılması amaçlanmamıştır. Araştırma ve sonuçlarının Sosyal-Duygusal Öğrenme alanına katkı sunacağı; bütün insanlığı duygusal açıdan etkileyen COVID-19 pandemisi sonrası benzer çalışmaların yürütülmesine ve bulguların karşılaştırılmasına yardımcı olacağı düşünülmektedir.