

Prediction of Attitudes Towards the English Course by Social-Emotional Competence and Intercultural Awareness of Students*

Öğrencilerin Sosyal Duygusal Yeterlik ve Kültürlerarası Farkındalıklarının İngilizce Dersine Yönelik Tutumu Yordaması

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is to examine how secondary school students' beliefs about their social-emotional skills and intercultural understanding can forecast their attitudes towards the English course. This study was developed with a focus on the connection between language and culture, as well as the correlation between social-emotional competence and communication abilities. The research model employed in this study follows the relational survey approach, which falls within the realm of quantitative research methods. To gather data, the researchers utilized the Attitude towards English Language Teaching Scale, the Intercultural Awareness Scale, and the Delaware Social Emotional Competence Scale. The study involved students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades as participants. By employing the stratified sampling technique, data were gathered from a sample of 1864 students, with 639 from the 6th grade, 620 from the 7th grade, and 605 from the 8th grade. The collected data were analyzed using two statistical methods: "simple linear regression" and "multiple linear regression" analyses. The results indicated that when considering intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence variables together, they accounted for approximately 24% of the overall variation in students' attitudes towards the English course. The students' perspectives on intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence emerged as significant predictors of their attitude towards the English course.

Keywords: Attitude towards the English course, social-emotional competence, intercultural awareness.

ÖZ: Bu çalışmanın amacı, ortaokul öğrencilerinin İngilizce dersine yönelik tutumları üzerinde sosyal-duygusal yeterlik ve kültürlerarası farkındalık algılarının etkisinin ne ölçüde olduğunu belirlemektir. Bu araştırma, dil ve kültür arasındaki ilişki ve sosyal duygusal yeterliğin de iletişim becerisi ile ilişkisi düşünülerek tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın temel modeli, ilişkisel tarama modeli olarak belirlenmiştir, bu nedenle nicel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada, veri toplamak amacıyla Kültürlerarası Farkındalık Ölçeği, İngilizce Dersine Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği ve Delaware Sosyal Duygusal Yeterlik Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Tabakalı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak, bu araştırma 6, 7 ve 8. sınıf öğrencileriyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veri toplama sürecinde toplamda 1864 öğrenciden (639 öğrenci 6. sınıf, 620 öğrenci 7. sınıf ve 605 öğrenci 8. sınıf) veri elde edilmiştir. Basit doğrusal regresyon ve çoklu doğrusal regresyon analiz yöntemleri verilerin analizinde kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, kültürlerarası farkındalık ve sosyal duygusal yeterlik algılarının İngilizce dersine yönelik tutumu anlamlı bir şekilde yordadığını ve İngilizce dersine yönelik tutumun toplam varyansının yaklaşık %24'ünü açıkladığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngilizce dersine yönelik tutum, sosyal duygusal yeterlik, kültürlerarası farkındalık.

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In a globalizing world, foreign language learning and teaching have become more important. Along with English being a more globally accepted language in intercultural interaction than other languages, the importance of learning English is also increasing today. English can be viewed as an intercultural communication tool as well. (Özer & Korkmaz, 2016). It serves as a crucial intercultural communication tool, facilitating interactions across diverse cultures. The ubiquity of English extends across various domains, including science, social sciences, culture, and economics, where it is almost universally recognized as a common language. Consequently, it is typically taught in schools as a foreign language, highlighting its pivotal role in education and intercultural understanding. In the realm of foreign language acquisition, the significance of one's attitude toward the learning process cannot be overstated.

Taking into consideration the teaching-learning process as a whole is of utmost importance, particularly in the context of foreign language learning. It can be stated that students' attitudes, motivations, and affective factors towards learning a foreign language can have a significant impact on their academic success. Therefore, supporting students' affective development and assisting them in cultivating a positive attitude are crucial factors for a successful learning experience in foreign language education. According to Aydoğmuş and Kurnaz (2017), attitude towards language learning is considered one of the most crucial variables in studies investigating affective factors impacting foreign language learning. Hancı-Yanar (2008), underlined that knowing the level and direction of attitude towards learning English has an important place in the goal of language teaching. Although various factors contribute to English language learning in general, there are also numerous factors that influence an individual's attitude towards learning English. According to Csizer and Dörnyei (2005), to achieve the desired success in a target language, it is important to determine the direction of attitudes, reorganize the learning environment accordingly, and make changes. In addition, Savignon (1983) emphasized that attitudes are the predominant and crucial factor in language acquisition, and the learner's success in acquiring the target language is contingent upon their attitude. In the contemporary context, where English is widely recognized as a lingua franca, fostering a positive attitude towards the English language becomes crucial for successful language acquisition. Attitude towards a foreign language can facilitate or hinder language learning. In this manner, determining what influences attitude is important.

Feldman (1996) states that attitudes can be learned and change depending on experiences. The events, experiences, and beliefs of individuals play an important role in shaping attitudes. Attitude directs the relationship between the individual and the object. Attitudes are an affective tendency that does not change easily, and a certain time is required for the formation of attitudes. Attitude can change whether the information is temporary or permanent. For this change, beliefs and thoughts in the cognitive element should also change (Tavşancıl, 2010). Although cognitive, behavioral, and affective factors are effective in the formation of attitude, attitude is seen as a tendency that covers these three components (Karagül & Aşlıoğlu, 2018). Demirtaş-Madran (2012) points out that the affective dimension of attitude includes feelings towards the object, the behavioral dimension includes a behavioral tendency towards the object, and the cognitive dimension includes thoughts about the object.

Analysis of studies conducted in Turkey at the secondary school level on attitudes towards English lessons reveals that teaching methods, teaching activities, and strategies are experimentally investigated to determine their impact on attitudes. Additionally, these studies examine whether differences exist based on various variables or examine the relationships between these variables. Several research studies have explored the attitudes towards English language learning by investigating various factors, including the implementation of the drama method (Kadan, 2013), instruction based on learning styles (Baş & Beyhan, 2013), the active learning model (Güleç, 2014), English story reading (Şahin, 2016), learner autonomy-based teaching (Orakçı & Gelişli, 2019), and the puzzle-based learning approach (Derer & Berkant, 2020). In the studies using the relational survey model, the relationship between self-regulated learning strategies (Güneyli, 2016) lifelong learning tendencies (Aslıtürk & Ekşioğlu, 2020), English anxiety (Yalçın, 2020) variables, and attitude towards English course were examined. In all of these studies, a significant and positive correlation was discovered between the examined variables and attitudes towards English language learning. In a study conducted by Kafa (2016), it was found a relationship between attitude towards English as a common language and intercultural awareness at the undergraduate level. In a similar study by Sewbihon-Getie (2020) in Ethiopia, the social factors that positively affect attitudes towards learning English were found as communication with native speakers, peer groups, and students' parents.

Within the existing literature, no research has been identified that specifically investigates the correlation between “intercultural awareness” and “social-emotional competence” variables, as well as their collective impact on attitudes towards learning English as a second language. The present study was conducted to address this research gap by exploring the associations between language and culture, as well as the connections between social-emotional competence and intercultural awareness.

Social-emotional learning is an ongoing process that incorporates a set of competences essential to its implementation. These skills act as the essential building blocks of social-emotional learning. The widely recognized framework developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2021) is commonly employed to guide social-emotional learning practices. Within this framework, five core competences are identified: responsible decision-making, interpersonal skills, self-regulation, social consciousness, and self-awareness.

The various competences included within social-emotional learning play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's attitude towards learning English. Self-awareness is the foundation of effective language learning. It involves recognizing one's strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and motivations. When learners are self-aware, they can better understand their language learning process, leading to increased motivation and a positive attitude. Language learning often requires self-discipline and the ability to manage frustration or setbacks. Those who excel in self-regulation are more likely to persevere through challenges and maintain a positive attitude despite difficulties in the learning process. Social consciousness encompasses an awareness of others' perspectives, cultures, and emotions. In the context of learning English, this competence enables students to appreciate the language's global significance and connect with speakers of diverse backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive and positive outlook. Effective communication is a fundamental aspect of language learning. Proficiency in

interpersonal skills, such as active listening and empathy, enhances students' ability to engage with teachers and peers, leading to positive social interactions that can bolster their enthusiasm for English. Learning a language involves making choices about how to allocate time and effort. Those who excel in responsible decision-making are more likely to set achievable language learning goals, make constructive choices in their study methods, and maintain a sense of agency and control, contributing to a positive attitude.

These competences not only facilitate language learning but also affect overall motivation and school success, as highlighted by Dittrich (2022). A positive attitude towards learning English is closely linked to the development of these competences, as they empower students to approach language acquisition with confidence, resilience, and an appreciation for its cultural and global dimensions. To attain proficiency in a foreign language, it is necessary to cultivate a variety of cognitive, social, and emotional skills. In the language teaching process, taking the social-emotional learning approach as a basis and developing students' basic social-emotional competences will increase success, especially in second language learning. The implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach enables the exploration of cultural differences, including the examination of how emotions are expressed across diverse cultures. The implementation of programs that integrate content and language in a way to cover many skills, such as social-emotional competences will be useful in foreign language learning (Gay et al., 2022). By exploring cultural differences and expressions of emotions across diverse cultures, students not only enhance their language skills but also develop a heightened intercultural awareness, which in turn can positively influence their attitude toward learning English. According to De Boer (2008), social sensory competences should be assessed in the context of the situation/environment. Behavior that appears socially competent in one situation or culture may be considered "asocial" behavior in another situation or culture. Therefore, it can be said that intercultural awareness may also be related to social-emotional competences. Social-emotional competences are instrumental in fostering a positive attitude toward learning English. They empower learners to navigate the challenges of language acquisition with self-awareness, self-regulation, social consciousness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making, ultimately contributing to their language proficiency and overall success. Moreover, the interconnectedness of these competences with intercultural awareness reinforces the idea that a holistic approach to language learning is key to developing a favorable attitude towards learning English.

It should not be forgotten that each language gains meaning within its own culture. In the field of language teaching, culture has become increasingly prominent in recent years, gaining significant recognition and attention. Linguistics acknowledges that the structure and usage of a language are indicative of the cultural values embraced by the respective society. Teaching a language without introducing the target culture will render the language meaningless (Cardona et al., 2015). Language is a means of understanding, and understanding is achieved through a common language. In order to understand, there is also a need for a certain degree of common communication standards in perception, belief, thinking, and behavior. The concepts of culture and intercultural communication have an important impact on linguistics (Knapp, 2010). In foreign language classes, learners encounter the values and understandings of other

cultures that can contribute to personality development as well as the use of communication skills. While learning a new language and the basic aspects of the target culture, learners inevitably encounter various cultural differences and understandings (Burwitz-Melzer, 2012). A growing number of foreign language instructors are recognizing the inherent connection between foreign language learning and the acquisition of foreign cultural knowledge. They understand that it is essential for teachers to foster students' intercultural awareness to cultivate their intercultural communication skills. Intercultural awareness involves comprehending and appreciating both one's own culture and a different culture. The first step to developing cultural awareness for an individual is to be conscious of their own culture. When an individual truly understands, embraces, and is well-acquainted with their own culture, they appear to notice differences and similarities as they become familiar with other cultures. They acquire a different perspective and gradually become aware of other cultures. Ultimately, this leads to intercultural awareness. "Intercultural awareness is the conscious understanding of the role of culturally-based forms, practices, and frameworks in intercultural communication and the ability to flexibly and contextually apply these concepts in real-time communication" (Baker, 2009, p. 88). According to Zhu (2011), when individuals from diverse cultures engage in communication, there is a potential for misunderstandings to occur due to variances in the interpretation and evaluation of events. Therefore, language learning and culture are closely related to each other.

According to Byram (1997), foreign language teaching should not only develop learners' language competence, but also their sociolinguistic, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. Intercultural communication competence can only improve if these areas are closely related. Furthermore, foreign language instruction should encompass sub-domains such as attitudes, knowledge, and interpretive abilities, along with associative and exploratory skills, and a discerning awareness of cultural nuances (Burwitz-Melzer, 2012). Self-reflection, which is necessary for intercultural communication, reflects not only individual motives and prejudices but also one's cultural patterns, including stereotypes and prejudices held in one's society or group. Intercultural communication requires awareness of one's cultural ties and foreign codes, values, and norms (Auernheimer, 2005). According to Chen (1997), in our contemporary era, intercultural communication has evolved into an almost indispensable component, incorporating elements such as intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural adaptability. Intercultural awareness can be considered the foundation of communication. It encompasses two essential qualities: awareness of one's culture and awareness of another's. In other words, it involves the ability to step back from our standpoint and not only be aware of our cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions but also to be aware of the cultures of others (Zhu, 2011). Intercultural awareness is rooted in the realization that foreign language learners cannot attain complete familiarity with all the intricate aspects of the culture in the society where the target language is used. Thus, the emphasis lies on the cultivation of awareness rather than comprehensive knowledge. According to Tomlinson (2001), intercultural awareness entails foreign language learners gaining insight into the presence and dynamics of a different culture. As acknowledged by Tomlinson, intercultural awareness is integral to foreign language acquisition, but how learners

approach and engage with the language is equally essential. In this regard, it becomes evident that developing a positive attitude towards English courses is not only beneficial but also fundamental to achieving success in English language acquisition. To facilitate this, it is imperative to delve into a deeper understanding of the various elements that influence and support attitudes towards learning the English language.

Intercultural awareness in the context of learning English means understanding the cultural nuances and context surrounding the language. When learners embrace intercultural awareness, they not only focus on language as a set of rules and vocabulary but also as a means to access and appreciate different cultures. This broader perspective on language learning can significantly impact learners' attitudes toward English lessons. When students recognize the cultural richness embedded within the English language, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward their English courses. They start to see language learning as a gateway to exploring diverse worldviews, traditions, and societies. This positive attitude, in turn, enhances their motivation, engagement, and commitment to mastering English. However, an isolated approach to language learning, neglecting cultural aspects, can lead to a less favorable attitude. Students may perceive English lessons as dry and disconnected from real-life experiences. Without intercultural awareness, they miss out on the depth and richness that the language and culture may offer, potentially leading to disinterest and a lack of motivation. In essence, intercultural awareness acts as a catalyst for fostering positive attitudes toward English lessons. It enriches language learning and broadens students' horizons, making them more receptive to the language and more eager to embrace the learning process. Therefore, cultivating intercultural awareness alongside language skills is pivotal for nurturing favorable attitudes and achieving success in English language acquisition.

Social-emotional learning and intercultural awareness can profoundly influence one's attitude toward learning English. While social-emotional learning equips students with skills like empathy, emotional control, and collaboration, intercultural awareness provides the ability to understand the values, norms, and perspectives of different cultures. These two concepts, when combined, can offer students a richer and more meaningful experience in the process of language learning. Social-emotional learning can help students develop a more sensitive approach to language acquisition, and intercultural awareness can instill in them the ability to better understand and respect these differences. The convergence of these two areas can contribute to students experiencing their English learning journey more positively, richly, and with cultural awareness, ultimately fostering a positive attitude.

The relationship between social-emotional competences and intercultural awareness interconnect in various ways. Social-emotional competences, which encompass skills like empathy and social awareness, facilitate the understanding of others' feelings and behaviors, thus promoting better comprehension of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, a crucial aspect of intercultural awareness. Successful communication skills, a subset of social-emotional competences, play a pivotal role in cross-cultural interactions, enabling individuals to establish meaningful connections and navigate cultural differences positively. These interconnected competences empower language learners to develop language proficiency and cultivate a deeper appreciation for intercultural experiences, fostering a more favorable attitude toward learning English or any other language. Intercultural awareness and social-

emotional learning can significantly enrich and transform one's attitude toward English language learning. Intercultural awareness supports students to understand the values, norms, and perspectives of different cultures, which can enhance their interest in learning English. Students may see English not only as a means of communication but also as a cultural window. In addition, social-emotional learning equips students with skills like empathy, emotional control, and collaboration. These skills facilitate more positive and effective communication with classmates and teachers. Moreover, increasing students' self-awareness empowers them to better understand their learning processes, potentially boosting confidence, and motivation in the language learning journey. In conclusion, intercultural awareness and social-emotional learning can turn English language lessons into a rich experience that offers more than mere language proficiency, fostering deeper cultural understanding, effective communication, and self-awareness, ultimately making the language learning process more positive, meaningful, and successful.

Developing a positive attitude towards English courses will increase success in learning English. For this reason, there is a need to know the elements that affect and support attitudes towards English language learning. Through an analysis of the literature, it becomes evident that there is a connection between social-emotional competence, cultural awareness, and the domain of language teaching and learning. The current study holds significant potential in providing valuable insights into the influence of social-emotional competence and intercultural awareness on attitudes towards English language teaching, thereby making a noteworthy contribution to the field. This investigation can aid in the development of more effective language teaching programs as a result. Moreover, the present study is expected to deepen our understanding of the importance of incorporating content into English language teaching programs as a means to promote the development of social-emotional competence and intercultural awareness.

In summary, the primary objective of the current study is to investigate the correlation between secondary school students' attitudes towards English courses and their perceptions of social-emotional competence and intercultural awareness. Additionally, the study aims to determine the predictive capacity of these perceptions on students' attitudes towards English courses. The study sought to examine and address the following sub-problem:

1. What is the relationship between students' perceptions of social-emotional competence, their perceptions of intercultural awareness, and their attitudes towards the English course?
2. Are students' intercultural awareness perception scores a significant predictor of their attitudes towards the English course?
3. Are students' social-emotional competence perception scores a significant predictor of their attitudes towards the English course?
4. What is the predictive power of students' social-emotional competence perception scores and intercultural awareness perception scores together with their attitude towards the English course?

Method

Research Model

The study employed the correlational survey model, which falls under the umbrella of quantitative research methods. Correlational research is an investigative approach that aims to explore the relationship between multiple variables without directly intervening or manipulating these variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020, p.191).

Population and Sample

The study population for this research consists of students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades attending public/state secondary schools located in the central area of Batman province. Within the central region of Batman Province, a population of 29,461 students is currently enrolled in secondary schools spanning grades 6th, 7th, and 8th. The study employed the technique of stratified sampling to ensure representative inclusion of participants. According to Büyüköztürk et al. (2020, p. 85), stratified sampling is a sampling approach that seeks to identify the subgroups within a population and guarantee their inclusion in the sample in proportion to their representation in the overall population. For this purpose, a total of 42 secondary schools in Batman City Centre were classified as socio-economic level in terms of parent profile according to the opinions of school administrators, eight secondary schools were classified as high, 12 secondary schools as middle, and 22 secondary schools as low socio-economic level. According to their perceptions of the population size, 19% of the secondary schools were high, 29% were medium, and 52% were low. The sample for this study was drawn from schools that were classified into two categories: high socio-economic level (two schools), medium socio-economic level (three schools), and low socio-economic level (eleven schools). Data were collected from students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades within these selected secondary schools, according to the predefined categorization. A total of 1917 students from 16 secondary schools, selected using the stratified sampling technique, participated in the data collection process, but those who did not fill in the scales applied by the purpose, those who filled in incomplete and incorrectly were removed and analyses were carried out on the scales filled in by 1864 students. Considering the impact of distance education during the pandemic, it was determined that the developmental stage of fifth-grade students was not deemed suitable for data collection purposes. As a result, the study did not include fifth-grade students due to the incompatibility of their developmental stage for data collection. Information about the sample group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Information on Sample Group

| Grade | Female | % | Male | % | Total |
|---------|--------|------|------|------|-------|
| Sixth | 307 | 48,0 | 332 | 52,0 | 639 |
| Seventh | 304 | 49,0 | 316 | 51,0 | 620 |
| Eighth | 315 | 52,1 | 290 | 47,9 | 605 |
| Total | 926 | 49,7 | 938 | 50,3 | 1864 |

Data Collection Tools

Attitude Scale towards English Lesson: The internal consistency coefficient of the ‘Attitude Towards English Lesson Scale’ developed by Orakcı and Gelişli (2019) on 6th-grade secondary school students was found to be Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.895. A two-dimensional and five-point Likert-type scale with a total of 16 items explaining 58% of the variance was obtained. It was found that items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, and 14 of the scale formed the first sub-dimension, and the items in this dimension were related to the affective dimension of the attitude scale. It was determined that items 3, 6, 9, 11, 15, and 16 formed the second sub-dimension, and the items in this dimension were related to the behavioral dimension of the attitude scale. Items 1, 2, 5, 7, and 10 were reverse-coded. The internal consistency value of the first sub-dimension of the scale was 0.911, while the second sub-dimension was 0.887. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient Cronbach’s Alpha value was found to be $\alpha=0.864$. The internal consistency coefficient Cronbach’s Alpha value for the first sub-dimension of the scale was found to be 0.83, and the second sub-dimension Cronbach’s Alpha value was found to be 0.73.

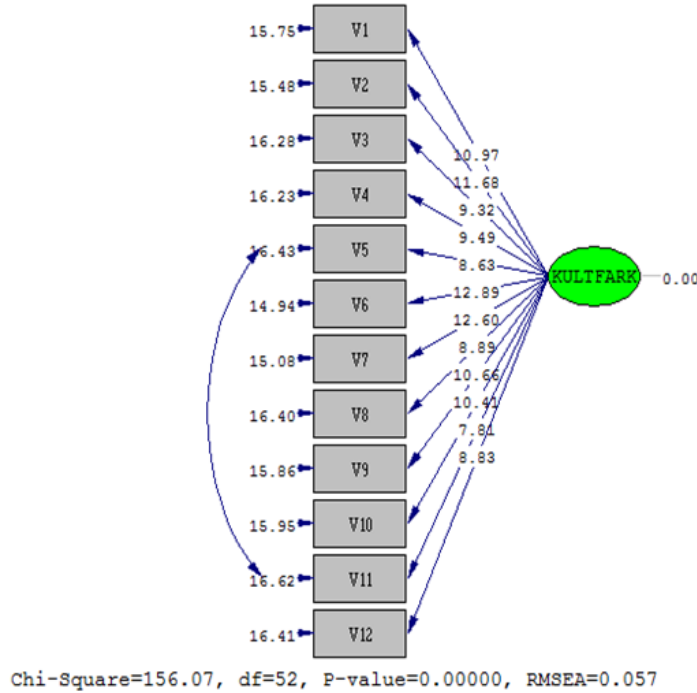
Intercultural Awareness Scale: The researchers conducted a scale development study to assess students’ intercultural awareness. This study utilized the “Intercultural Awareness Questionnaire” developed by Zorba in 2019, which consists of 31 items. The research involved a sample of 794 students who were in the 7th and 8th grades of secondary school.

- Internal consistency of the 31 items was evaluated by item-total correlation. The items having the values under .30 were excluded from the scale, which were the items 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 25, and 29.
- The 23 items were reanalyzed, and all the items had item total correlations higher than .30. The Cronbach Alpha was .92 for the scale.
- Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient (.928) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity [$X^2=3761.044$; $sd=66$ ($p<0.01$)] were calculated. The results were acceptable for the factor analysis.
- “Principal Axis Factoring” method was used and unrotated factor solution was selected in exploratory factor analysis. Four factors having eigenvalues higher than one were found. These four factors explained 53,69% of the total variance. The contributions of the factors were 37,74% for the first factor, 6,22% for the second factor, 5,12% for the third factor, and 4,63% for the fourth factor, respectively.
- The items (1, 3, 8, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21, 28) having low factor loadings were excluded and the factor analysis repeated. Two factors, with the first factor contributing 39,90% and the second factor contributing 3,89%, were found. Items 5 and 7 with low factor loadings were removed and reanalyzed.
- As a result of the scale development study, a one-dimensional 12-item five-point Likert-type scale explaining 41.374% of the variance was obtained. The internal consistency coefficient Cronbach’s Alpha value was found as $\alpha=.828$. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, the factor loading values of the remaining items in the scale were determined to be between 0,56 and 0,76.
- This one-dimensional scale was applied to a different sample group of 610 6th-grade students, and confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the data obtained. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, it was seen that the structure revealed in the

EFA was confirmed ($X^2=156.07$ ($sd=52$, $p<.01$), $(X^2/sd) =3.00$, $RMSEA=.057$, Standardized RMR=0.049, GFI=.96 and AGFI=.94, NNFI=.93, NFI=.92, CFI=.95). Figure 1 shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis of intercultural awareness scale.

Figure 1

Intercultural Awareness Scale Confirmatory Factor Analysis



Delaware Social-Emotional Competence Scale: The Turkish adaptation of the “Delaware Social-Emotional Competence Scale” by Filiz and Durnalı (2019) was employed to assess the social-emotional competence of students. As a result of the validity and reliability analysis of the scale adapted to Turkish, Cronbach’s Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .70. The scale was formed as 10 items with two dimensions. Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9 of the scale constitute the self-awareness dimension of the scale, while items 6, 8, 10, and 11 constitute the social awareness sub-dimension of the scale. There are no reverse-coded items in the scale. In this study, Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was found as 0.728. The Cronbach’s Alpha value of the self-awareness dimension was 0.616, and the Cronbach’s Alpha value of the social awareness dimension was 0.493.

Ethical Procedures

Before collecting the data for the research, Pamukkale University Ethics Committee Approval (including the Parent Consent Form) and the required permissions were obtained from Batman Provincial Directorate of National Education.

Data Collection Process and Data Analysis

The scales were administered to students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades within a classroom setting, with a duration of approximately 15-20 minutes for completion. The

statistical analyses for all data were conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software package. The statistical significance level was taken as .05. To examine the relationship between the total scores obtained from the three scales and the scores obtained from the sub-dimensions, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. Both “simple linear regression” and “multiple linear regression” analyses were employed to address the sub-problems regarding prediction.

Results

Attitude Towards English Language Teaching, Intercultural Awareness, Social-Emotional Competence Variables

The results of the correlation analysis for the solution of the sub-problem expressed as “What is the relationship between students’ perceptions of social-emotional competence, their perceptions of intercultural awareness and their attitudes towards English course?” are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation Analysis Results of Attitude Towards English Language Teaching, Intercultural Awareness, Social-Emotional Competence Variables

| | 1. Attitude scale (TAS) | | 2. Culture awareness scale (IAS) | | 3. Social-emotional competence scale (SCS) | | |
|--|-------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|--------|--|--------|-------|
| Scales | TAS | - AD | - BD | (IAS) | SCS | - SA1 | - SA2 |
| 1. Attitude scale (TAS) | 1 | | | | | | |
| - Affective Dimension (AD) | 0.940* | 1 | | | | | |
| - Behavioural Dimension (BD) | 0.833* | 0.594* | 1 | | | | |
| 2. Intercultural awareness scale (IAS) | 0.476* | 0.404* | 0.466* | 1 | | | |
| 3. Social-emotional competence scale (SCS) | 0.302* | 0.260* | 0.290* | 0.418* | 1 | | |
| - Self Awareness (SA1) | 0.280* | 0.234* | 0.280* | 0.426* | 0.923* | 1 | |
| - Social Awareness (SA2) | 0.254* | 0.229* | 0.230* | 0.300* | 0.851* | 0.584* | 1 |

* $p > .05$

When the Pearson correlation coefficients shown in Table 2 were examined, a significant positive correlation was found between the Intercultural Awareness Scale and the affective sub-dimension ($r=.404$), behavioural sub-dimension ($r=.466$) and total scores ($r=.476$) of the Attitude Towards English Language Teaching Scale ($p<.05$). A significant positive correlation was found between Intercultural Awareness Scale and Social-Emotional Competence Scale’s self-awareness sub-dimension ($r=.426$), social awareness sub-dimension ($r=.300$), and total scores ($r=.418$) ($p<.05$). There is a significant positive relationship between the affective sub-dimension of the Attitude Towards English Language Teaching Scale and the self-awareness sub-

dimension ($r=.235$) and social awareness sub-dimension ($r=.229$) of the Social-Emotional Competence Scale ($p<.05$). There is a significant positive relationship between the behavioural sub-dimension of the Attitude Towards English Lesson Scale and the self- awareness sub-dimension ($r=.280$) and social awareness sub-dimension ($r=.230$) of the Social-Emotional Competence Scale ($p<.05$). There was a significant positive correlation between Attitude Towards English Lesson Scale and Social-Emotional Competence Scale total scores ($r=.302$) ($p<.05$).

Intercultural Awareness and Attitude on the Attitude toward the English Course

The findings obtained from the simple linear regression analysis for the second sub-problem of the study, “Are students’ intercultural awareness perception scores a significant predictor of their attitudes towards the English course?” are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Attitude towards the English Course

| Variable | B | Standard Error | β | t | p |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------|---------|--------|------|
| Fixed | 22.450 | 1.430 | - | 15.694 | .000 |
| Intercultural Awareness | 0.719 | 0.031 | 0.476 | 23.326 | .000 |

R = 0.476 R² = 0.226
 F (1, 1862) = 544.103 p = .000

*p> .05

When Table 3 is analyzed, it is seen that intercultural awareness has a significant relationship with attitude towards the English course ($R = 0.476$, $R^2 = 0.226$, $p<.05$). Accordingly, intercultural awareness explains approximately 23% of the total variance in attitude towards the English course. When the standardized ($\beta = 0.476$) and t values are examined, it can be said that intercultural awareness is a significant predictor of attitude towards the English course.

Social-Emotional Competence on the Attitude toward the English Course

The third sub-problem of the study, “Are students’ social-emotional competence scores a significant predictor of their attitudes towards the English course?” is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Attitude towards the English Course

| Variable | B | Standard Error | β | t | p |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------------|---------|--------|------|
| Fixed | 34.148 | 1.573 | - | 21.713 | .000 |
| Social-Emotional Competence | 0.673 | 0.049 | 0.302 | 13.665 | .000 |

R = 0.302 R² = 0.091
 F_(1, 1862) = 186.721 p = .000

*p> .05

When Table 4 is analyzed, it is seen that Social-Emotional Competence has a significant relationship with attitude towards English course as a result of simple regression analysis (R = 0.302, R² = 0.091, p < .05). Accordingly, Social-Emotional Competence explains approximately 9% of the total variance in attitude towards English language teaching. When the standardized (β = 0.302) and t values are analyzed, it can be said that Social-Emotional competence is a significant predictor of attitude towards the English course.

Social-Emotional Competence and Intercultural Awareness on the Attitude toward the English Course

The findings for the fourth sub-problem of the study, “What is the predictive power of students’ social-emotional competence perception scores and intercultural awareness perception scores together with their attitude towards the English course?” are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Prediction of Students’ Intercultural Awareness and Social-Emotional Competence on Attitude Towards English Course

| Variable | B | Standard Error | β | t | p | Binary r | Partial r | Tolerance | VIF |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------------|---------|--------|------|----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Fixed | 17.287 | 1.691 | - | 10.226 | .000 | - | - | | |
| Intercultural Awareness | 0.640 | 0.034 | 0.423 | 19.019 | .000 | 0.476 | 0.403 | 0.825 | 1.211 |
| Social-Emotional Competence | 0.279 | 0.054 | 0.125 | 5.618 | .000 | 0.302 | 0.129 | 0.825 | 1.211 |

R = 0.489 C.R² = 0.238
 F_(2, 1861) = 292.298 p = .000
 CR²=Corrected R²

*p> .05

When Table 5 is analyzed, it is seen that intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence variables together show a moderate and significant relationship

with attitude towards the English course ($R = 0.489$, $D.R^2 = 0.238$, $p < .05$). Together, intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence variables explain approximately 24% of the total variance in attitude towards English course. According to the standardized regression coefficient (β), it is seen that the relative importance of the predictor variables on the attitude towards English language teaching is intercultural awareness ($\beta = 0.423$) and social-emotional competence ($\beta = 0.125$). These results show that the attitudes towards the English course of the students participating in the study were significantly predicted by intercultural awareness scores at the highest level and social-emotional competence scores at the lowest level.

Discussion and Conclusion

Results showed a positive and moderately significant relationship between the intercultural awareness of the students and the affective sub-dimension, behavioral sub-dimension, and total attitude scores of the attitude scale towards the English course. The study concluded that an increase in students' intercultural awareness leads to a corresponding increase in their attitudes towards the English course, or conversely, an increase in attitudes results in an enhancement of their intercultural awareness. In support of this research result, in a study conducted by Kafa (2016), it was found that a correlation exists between the attitudes of university students towards learning English as a foreign language and their level of intercultural awareness. The results indicated a positive correlation between these two variables. It is expected that intercultural awareness will increase or positive attitudes towards English will develop as intercultural awareness increases. Misunderstandings or intercultural problems are caused not only by the lack of language skills but also by cultural reasons, and having intercultural competence in overcoming this problem is very important for English speakers (Kramsch, 1998).

Another result of the current study points out a significant positive relationship between the intercultural awareness scale and the self-awareness sub-dimension, social awareness sub-dimension, and total scores of the social-emotional competence scale. No other study analyzing the relationship between the two variables was found in related literature. Findings revealed a positive and moderate relationship between students' intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence, so an increase in intercultural awareness would lead to an increase in social-emotional competence or an increase in social-emotional competence would lead to an increase in intercultural awareness. An individual with high intercultural awareness has the competence to easily recognize and solve the problem he/she experiences during communication. An individual with self-awareness and social awareness, which are included in social-emotional competences, will not have problems adapting to social life. Social-emotional skills are essential for life among the 21st-century skills (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). Increasing one's self-awareness can also lead to greater awareness in the social sphere. An individual who knows their strengths and weaknesses becomes proactive in pursuing their goals, generates creative solutions to problems, and manage their emotions in social settings without experiencing anxiety or worry (Turkish Industry and Business Association [TÜSİAD], 2019).

The study also found a positive significant relationship between the affective sub-dimension of the attitude towards the English course scale and the self-awareness

sub-dimension and social awareness sub-dimension of the social-emotional competence scale. Moreover, there was a significant positive relationship between the behavioral sub-dimension of the attitude towards the English course scale and the self-awareness sub-dimension and social awareness sub-dimension of the social-emotional competence scale. At the same time, a positive significant relationship was found between the total scores of the attitude towards the English course scale and the social-emotional competence scale. Based on the findings, a positive but low-level relationship exists between attitude towards the English course and social-emotional competence. Sevimbay (2016) concluded that 29% of the total variance of attitude depends on the sub-dimensions of self-efficacy belief (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Furthermore, Goleman (2021) stated that with the development of social-emotional competences, self-confidence increases, emotions and impulses are taken under control, as well as being beneficial for academic success.

In the study, when the predictive power of students' intercultural awareness on their attitudes towards the English course was analyzed, intercultural awareness had a positive and highly significant relationship with attitude towards the English course. According to the results, intercultural awareness explains approximately 23% of the total variance in attitude towards the English course. This result shows that intercultural awareness is a significant predictor of secondary school students' attitudes towards the English course. According to Cardona et al. (2015), culture teaching has gained importance by adopting a communicative approach in language teaching. Sensitivity to culture-based behaviors in communication is defined as cultural awareness. Cultural awareness plays an important role in language teaching, perceptions, and attitudes towards culture. Başbay et al. (2018) stated that the participants in the qualitative study conducted stated that it is necessary to include both the target culture and different cultures in foreign language lessons. Increasing students' intercultural awareness by including elements of different cultures in the educational process in English language teaching is important in terms of improving the attitude towards the course positively. While numerous factors influence English language learning, it is equally emphasized that there are several factors contributing to the formation of attitudes toward English. Çakıcı (2007) highlights the need to examine the key factors that impact successful language learning, emphasizing that research in foreign language acquisition should uncover these factors. This conclusion underscores the significance of intercultural awareness as a crucial factor in explaining middle school students' attitudes toward English lessons.

When the predictive power of students' social-emotional competence on their attitudes towards the English course was analyzed, results showed that social-emotional competence had a positive and low-level significant relationship with attitude towards the English course. According to the analyses, social-emotional competence explains approximately 9% of the total variance in attitude towards the English course. In this manner, social-emotional competence is a significant predictor of attitude towards the English course. Ertanir et al. (2021) found that social-emotional competence and language proficiency are positively correlated with each other and that students with high second language proficiency also have higher social-emotional competence. In other words, students who can understand and communicate are more cooperative, exhibit fewer problematic behaviors, and have emotion regulation skills. In their study,

Slot et al. (2020) also found that language skills were a stronger predictor of boys' socioemotional development compared to girls. In a longitudinal study conducted by Gut et al. (2012), it was concluded that high social-emotional competences can compensate for significant deficiencies in cognitive and language competences. What's more, Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) and Pishghadam (2009) found that English language learning achievement is strongly related to various dimensions of emotional intelligence. As students' social-emotional competence levels increase, their attitudes towards English language teaching can also increase positively. Therefore, it is important to consider students' social-emotional competence in English language teaching. Most of our students encounter English for the first time at school. Students may experience panic, anxiety, and feelings of failure in this situation. Such feelings may be effective in the formation of negative attitudes towards that course. In this case, social-emotional competences will play an important role in coping with students' negative emotions.

The results indicate that the combined intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence scores accounted for approximately 24% of the total variance in attitude towards English language teaching. The relative order of importance of the predictor variables on attitude towards English language teaching was found to be intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence. On this basis, intercultural awareness and social-emotional competence together have a significant effect on attitude towards English language teaching. Language learning is a social activity. Second language learning appears as "Sociocultural theory" as a social practice that takes place in cooperation with different people in sociocultural contexts (Melani et al., 2020). Family, peer groups, schools, and social activities that constitute social environments affect the attitude towards English. Social-emotional learning increases social interaction and facilitates language learning with the combination of both cognitive and affective factors by positively affecting students' attitudes towards language learning in the sociocultural environment. On the other hand, Young and Sachdev (2011) suggested that an English classroom is the best place to develop intercultural competence. With the increase in intercultural communication due to globalization, individuals may often reject or misunderstand the existence of different cultures based on their own culture. In order for intercultural communication to be healthy, foreign language learners should have intercultural awareness. In this way, they can both act with an awareness of different cultures and develop a sense of curiosity towards different cultures. Organizing activities aimed at increasing students' intercultural awareness and developing their social-emotional competences in English lessons can positively affect students' attitudes towards English lessons.

Along with all the results of the current study, there are some limitations that should be mentioned. The study is limited in its scope to data collected exclusively from students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades who attend secondary schools situated in the central districts of Batman province, which is located in the eastern region of Turkey. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the dimensions of the data collection instruments utilized in the study have certain limitations. As a consequence of the distance education provided during the pandemic, fifth-grade students were excluded from the sample due to their unsuitability for data collection at that particular level. Secondly, it is known that attitude towards the English course is also related to the

social environment. For this reason, it should be considered that the socio-cultural-economic structure of the students living in Batman province may also affect the results of the research and this should be considered as another limitation of the research.

Recommendations

According to the results of this study, English language teaching programs aiming to increase intercultural awareness, which was found to be a significant predictor of attitude towards English language teaching, should be developed. In order to enhance or increase students' intercultural awareness in English lessons, instructional designs can be developed to present different cultural elements in comparison with students' own cultures and at the same time integrate them with language skills.

Considering the effect of social-emotional competence on attitudes towards the English course, activities such as group discussions, role-playing scenarios, journaling, cross-cultural projects, peer support groups, community engagement, mindfulness exercises, conflict resolution workshops, guest speakers, and self-assessment and goal-setting into the curriculum can be designed to develop social-emotional competence along with students' language skills in English course curricula. An experimental study can be conducted to examine the effect of social-emotional competence and intercultural awareness development activities, which will be integrated with the English curriculum, on attitudes towards the English course.

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Statement of Responsibility

All stages of this research, such as conceptualization, methodology, data collection and analysis, data organization, references, and writing-original draft, were carried out by Fatma Sarıkayış under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. İbrahim Tuncel.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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