





## The Predictors of EFL Students' International Posture at a University Context

### İngilizce Yabancı Dil Öğrencilerinin Üniversite Ortamında Uluslararası Duruşlarının Yordayıcıları

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**Abstract.** This study aimed to look at the uncertainty management and social-emotional competences of students at a university context to see if these are predictors of students' international posture. The data was collected from a sample of 214 students enrolled in an English Preparatory School at a university context in the spring term of the 2022-2023 academic year through three scales, including Uncertainty Management (UMS), Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning (SEFLLS), and Students International Posture Scale (IPS). The results yielded that there was a meaningful and positive relationship between the three variables. Moreover, it was shown that 48.3 % of the variability in the students' international posture variable could be explained by the variables of uncertainty management and social-emotional competences through linear regression. Regarding the path analysis, it was revealed that social-emotional competences could predict the international posture levels of students whereas uncertainty management indirectly affects university students' sense of international posture through social-emotional competences. The analysis concerning gender revealed that female students' UM, SEFLL, and IP levels were significantly higher than males. It can be concluded that if institutions empower learners' social emotional competences and uncertainty management skills, they will be more equipped to flourish in diverse cultures.

**Keywords:** Uncertainty Management, Social-Emotional Competences, International Posture.

**Öz.** Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerin belirsizlik yönetimine ve sosyal-duygusal yeterliliklerine bakmayı ve bunların öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşunun yordayıcıları olup olmadığını görmeyi amaçlamıştır. Veriler, 2022-2023 akademik yılı bahar döneminde üniversite ortamında İngilizce Hazırlık Okuluna kayıtlı 214 öğrenciden Belirsizlik Yönetimi (UMS), Sosyal-Duygusal Yabancı Dil Öğrenimi (SEFLLS) ve Öğrencilerin Uluslararası Duruş Ölçeği (IPS) olmak üzere üç ölçek aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar üç değişken arasında anlamlı ve pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca öğrencilerin uluslararası duruş değişkenindeki değişkenliğin %48,3'ünün belirsizlik yönetimi ve sosyal-duygusal yeterlilik değişkenleri tarafından doğrusal regresyonla açıklanabildiği gösterilmiştir. Yol analizine ilişkin olarak, sosyal-duygusal yeterliliklerin öğrencilerin uluslararası duruş düzeylerini tahmin edebildiği, belirsizlik yönetiminin ise sosyal-duygusal yeterlilikler aracılığıyla üniversite öğrencilerinin uluslararası duruş algısını dolaylı olarak etkilediği ortaya çıkmıştır. Cinsiyete ilişkin analizde ise, kız öğrencilerin UM, SEFLL ve IP düzeylerinin erkeklerden anlamlı düzeyde yüksek olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu bulgulardan yola çıkıldığında, kurumların öğrencilerin sosyal duygusal yeterliliklerini ve belirsizlik yönetimi becerilerini güçlendirmeleri halinde, farklı kültürlerde gelişmek için daha donanımlı olacakları sonucuna varılabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Belirsizlik Yönetimi, Sosyal-Duygusal Yeterlilikler, Uluslararası Duruş.



## Genişletilmiş Özet

**Giriş.** Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin belirsizlik yönetimi ve sosyal-duygusal yeterliliklerini inceleyerek, bunların öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşlarının yordayıcıları olup olmadığını ortaya koymaktır. Özellikle, yabancı dil eğitiminde öğrencilere genellikle çeşitli dilsel ve kültürel geçmişlerden gelen bireylerle etkileşimlere katılma sorumluluğu verilmektedir (Botes, Gottschling, Stadler, & Greiff, 2020). Bu nedenle, dil öğrenen öğrencilerin küresel bir bakış açısı geliştirmeleri zorunludur ve bu bakış açısı, çok çeşitli kültürel perspektiflere uyum sağlama ve bunları takdir etme becerilerini gerektirir. Denies ve diğerlerine göre (2005), bu kavram yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen bir kişinin uluslararası kariyer yollarını takip etme, uluslararası faaliyetlere aktif olarak katılma ve farklı kültürel geçmişlere sahip bireylerle etkileşim kurma eğilimini kapsamaktadır. Öğrencilerin akademik ilerlemeleri ise, dil edinimi sürecinde belirsizliği ele alma biçimlerinden doğrudan etkilenir ve bu da belirsizliğin etkili bir şekilde yönetilmesinde önemlidir. Belirsizliği etkin bir şekilde yönetmek için bireyler belirsizliği giderme, sürdürme, çözme ve görmezden gelme gibi çeşitli stratejiler kullanırlar (Brashers, 2007). Bunun yanı sıra, Yoder'e (2013) göre, öğrenciler sosyal ve duygusal becerilerini kullanarak da yaşadıkları zorlukların üstesinden gelebilmektedirler. Bu çerçevedeki beceriler arasında duyguların düzenlenmesi ve yönetilmesi, başkalarının duygularını anlama ve empati kurma becerisi, anlamlı kişilerarası ilişkiler kurma ve kararlar alma kapasitesi yer almaktadır (CASEL, 2013). Görüldüğü üzere, hem belirsizliği yönetme hem de sosyal duygusal öğrenme becerileri öğrencilerin hayatında özellikle akademik başarı elde etme kapasiteleri üzerinde derin bir etkiye sahiptir. Akademik bağlamda, öğrencilerin uluslararası yönelimleri, belirsiz durumları yönetme biçimleri ve sosyal-duygusal öğrenme yeterlilikleri arasında potansiyel bir ilişki vardır. Bu bağlantının önemi, son derece küreselleşmiş ve öngörülemez dünyamız çerçevesinde giderek önem kazanmaktadır. Belirsizlik yönetimi olarak bilinen, bir kişinin yeni veya yabancı ortamlarda belirsiz ve net olmayan durumları ele alma ve bunlara uyum sağlama becerisi, küresel bağlamda farklı kültürel geçmişlerden gelen insanlarla etkili iletişim için gereken becerilerin geliştirilmesinde esastır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı yabancı dil öğrencileri arasında belirsizlik yönetimi, sosyal duygusal yeterlilikler ve uluslararası duruş arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktır.

**Yöntem.** Araştırma yöntemi olarak korelasyonel yaklaşım seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmada iki bağımsız değişkenin (belirsizlik yönetimi ve sosyal-duygusal yeterlilikler) bir bağımlı değişken (öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşu) üzerindeki etkisi araştırıldığından, doğrudan veya dolaylı etkilerini ölçmek için yapısal eşitlik modellemesi kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, değişkenler arasındaki rastlantısal ilişkileri değerlendirmek için yol analizi uygulanmıştır (Daşdağ vd., 2006). Bu araştırma, 2022-2023 akademik yılı bahar döneminde Türkiye'nin güneyindeki bir şehirde üniversite bağlamında bir İngilizce Hazırlık Okuluna kayıtlı 214 öğrenciden oluşan bir örneklem ile işbirliği içinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada üç veri toplama aracı kullanılmıştır: Belirsizlik Yönetimi Ölçeği (UMS), Sosyal-Duygusal Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Ölçeği (SEFLS) ve Uluslararası Duruş Ölçeği (IPS)

**Bulgular.** UM, SEFLS ve IP ölçekleri arasındaki ilişkiler için korelasyon katsayıları istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunmuştur, bu da bu değişkenler arasında anlamlı ve pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu gösterir ( $p < .05$ ). Korelasyon katsayılarına göre, en yüksek ilişki UM ve SEFLS Ölçeği arasında ( $r = .618$ ;  $p < .05$ ), en düşük ilişki ise UMS ve SEFLS arasında bulunmaktadır ( $r = .247$ ;  $p < .05$ ).



Belirsizlik yönetimi ve sosyo-duygusal yabancı dil öğrenme değişkenlerinin uluslararası duruş üzerindeki etkilerini inceleyen regresyon analizi bulgularına göre ise, öğrencilerin uluslararası duruş değişkenindeki değişkenliğin %48.3'ü, belirsizlik yönetimi ve sosyo-duygusal yabancı dil öğrenme değişkenleri tarafından açıklanabilir. Çalışma modelinin doğrudan, dolaylı ve toplam etkilerine dayanarak, sosyo-duygusal yabancı dil öğrenme değişkeninin İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşu üzerinde yalnızca doğrudan bir etkisi olduğu sonucuna varılabilir. Dolaylı bir etki olmadığından, söz konusu değişkenin toplam etkisi, hesaplanan .621 doğrudan etkisine eşittir. Belirsizlik yönetimi değişkeninin İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşu üzerinde .043 doğrudan bir etkisi ve sosyo- duygusal yabancı dil öğrenme üzerinde .362 dolaylı bir etkisi bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, belirsizlik yönetimi değişkeninin İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşu üzerindeki birikimli etkisi .415 olarak belirlenmiştir. Kanıtlar, sosyo-duygusal yabancı dil öğrenmenin tam bir aracı değişken olarak işlev gördüğünü göstermektedir, bu da belirsizlik yönetiminin İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşu üzerindeki etkisinin yalnızca sosyo- duygusal yabancı dil öğrenme aracılığıyla olduğunu göstermektedir. Bunun yanısıra, İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin UM, SEFL ve IPS düzeylerini değerlendiren çalışma, kız öğrencilerin erkek öğrencilere kıyasla tüm ölçeklerde daha yüksek düzeylere sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

**Tartışma ve Sonuç.** Bu çalışmanın bulguları, uluslararası duruş kavramının derinlemesine anlaşılma konusunda önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır ve üniversite öğrencilerinin uluslararası duruşunu etkileyen faktörlere değerli bir öngörü sunmaktadır. Bulgular, öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşları, sosyal ve duygusal yetkinlikleri ile belirsizlik yönetme becerileri arasında anlamlı ve olumlu bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir. Öğrencilerin belirsizlikle başa çıkma şekli, belirsiz durumlar karşısında duygusal tepkilerini nasıl yanıtladıklarıyla bağlantılıdır, çünkü belirsizlik olumlu veya olumsuz duygusal tepkilere neden olabilir. Bu duyguların doğrudan bir sonucu olarak, öğrenciler belirsiz durumlarda duygusal olarak nasıl tepki verdikleriyle yakından ilişkili olarak belirsizliği yönetme stratejileri seçerler. Özetle, öğrenciler, geleceğin veya şu anın ne getireceğini bilememenin neden olduğu kaygı ve stresle başa çıkmanın yollarını ararlar. Bunun için de öğrencilere, kendilerini farkında olma, öz yönetim, sosyal farkındalık, kişiler arası beceriler ve sorumlu karar verme gibi sosyal-duygusal yetkinlikler aracılığıyla belirsizlikle başa çıkma yeteneği kazandırılması gerekmektedir. Özellikle öğrenciler, yabancı bir ülkeye seyahat ederken veya o ülkede ikamet ederken ya da kültürel kökeni kendi kültüründen farklı olanlarla konuşmaya çalışırken sosyal ve duygusal yetkinliklerini ve belirsizlik yönetme becerilerini kullanmak zorunda kalacaklardır çünkü konuştukları farklı kültürde kişilerin duygusal tepkilerini ve davranışlarını anlamaları, sorumlu kararlar almaları, onlarla empati kurup sağlıklı ilişkiler kurmaları gittikleri yerlere ya da buldukları ortama daha kolay alışmaları için önemlidir. Yapılan çalışmada da regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre, belirsizlikle başa çıkma ve sosyal-duygusal becerileri artırmaya yönelik müdahalelerin öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşlarının gelişimine olumlu katkıda bulunabileceğini ortaya koymuştur. Zins ve Elias (2007), küresel ölçekte etkili iletişim kurmak için bir kişinin belirli sosyal ve duygusal yetkinliklere sahip olması gerektiğini savunmaktadır.

Ayrıca çalışmada UM, SEFL ve IP düzeylerinde cinsiyete bağlı olarak herhangi bir fark olup olmadığı da araştırılmıştır. Bulgular, kız öğrencilerin tüm ölçeklerde, erkek öğrencilere kıyasla belirsizlik yönetimi, sosyo-duygusal beceriler ve uluslararası duruş açısından anlamlı bir şekilde daha yüksek düzeylere sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Hem erkek hem de kız öğrencilerin arka planlarındaki çeşitliliği, uluslararası duruşlarını, kültürlerarası kavramlara yönelik perspektiflerini ve tutumlarını etkileyebilir.

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Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın bulguları, sosyal-duygusal yeteneklerin değerini desteklemekte ve öğrencilerin uluslararası duruşlarıyla olan ilişkilerini aynı zamanda belirsizlik yönetiminin rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca uluslararası eğitim ve kültürel farkındalık konusundaki anlayışımızı genişletmeye de önemli bir katkıda bulunduğu gibi üniversite öğrencileri arasında küresel bir bakış açısını teşvik etmek için hem kişisel hem de kişilerarası becerileri geliştiren kapsamlı eğitim programlarına olan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır.



## Introduction

The importance of effective cross-cultural communication has been more pronounced in the modern day as a result of today's highly globalized world (Crystal, 2003). The aforementioned occurrence is regularly observed in the domain of English as a Foreign Language education, as learners are often assigned the responsibility of participating in interactions with individuals originating from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Botes, Gottschling, Stadler, & Greiff, 2020). Hence, it is necessary for English as Foreign Language students to develop a global perspective, and this global perspective entails their ability to adapt to and appreciate a wide range of cultural perspectives. International posture is defined as the positive attitude to cultural and linguistic varieties. In a different linguistic setting, learners may experience uncertain situations which may require learners to gain uncertainty management skills to tackle the uncertain situations in a new culture. Social emotional learning (SEL) constitute the emotional aspects and making informed choices of the language learning process. SEL competences encourage learners to develop a mindset that is resilient in appreciating cultural diversity while navigating uncertainties within the target cultures with confidence for more efficient - and fun-language learning. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between uncertainty management, social emotional competences, and international posture among foreign language students.

Researchers and educators increasingly acknowledge the importance of improving learners' international posture, as it facilitates their understanding and adaptation to cultural cues (Botes et al., 2020; Yashima, 2002). In other words, they want to train the language learners as global citizens who have both the language proficiency and the ability to adjust to a completely different cultural setting (Spiro, 2013). Considering this notion as a fundamental assumption, it is essential to recognize the distinctive setting of English as a language with worldwide reach. Within this particular framework, the conventional difference between integrative and instrumental orientations becomes less distinct, given that the group to which language learners must adapt has transitioned from a specific native-speaking community to a more conceptual worldwide community. Therefore, the idea of an international stance might be perceived as a contemporary version of Gardner's integrativeness construct and this revised framework incorporates multiple elements, such as integrative orientation, foreign language interest, and attitudes towards the second language community (Botes et al., 2020).

According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), integrativeness is defined as an individual's inclination and enthusiasm to actively engage in social interactions with individuals from various social groups. In contrast, the notion of international posture (IP) pertains to a learner's disposition towards the global community, as opposed to any particular second language (L2) cohort (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020). According to Denies et al. (2005), this concept is of great importance in the context of English as a foreign language because it encompasses a person's propensity to pursue international career paths, actively participate in international activities and affairs, and interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004) state that the way in which second language (L2) learners assimilate and employ the language in their exchanges with people from various cultural backgrounds is impacted by the international perspective. Furthermore, it is suggested that their international outlook influences their degree of receptiveness or absence of ethnocentrism toward diverse cultural perspectives. Indeed, considerable attention has been devoted to the notion

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of international posture (IP) on account of its correlation with motivation and the formation of an ideal self-concept among second language learners (Yashima, 2002).

It is critical to analyze the various factors that could influence one's international stance, as this is recognized as a catalyst for language skill development (Botes et al., 2020). One factor that can impact a student's ability to develop an international posture is uncertainty management. Uncertainty is an intrinsic and often inevitable aspect of human existence, particularly when it comes to making decisions related to health, business, and organizational settings. Uncertainty, as conceptualized within the discipline of psychology, refers to the cognitive and behavioural processes by which individuals perceive and react to situations that are marked by uncertainty (Smithson, 2008). Mushtaq et al. (2011) argue that uncertainty encompasses not only cognitive and behavioural aspects, but also emotional dimensions, notably in the realm of decision-making when faced with unclear circumstances. Within the realm of educational environments, the concept of "uncertainty" pertains to an individual's psychological condition characterized by a sense of uncertainty and the presence of doubt concerning present, past, and future circumstances (Jordan & McDaniel, 2014). According to Jordan and McDaniel, this state of uncertainty is influenced by several contextual and relational elements inside the domain of education.

The occurrence of uncertainty is an inherent aspect of the learning process, since it is influenced by the diverse variety of behaviours and unpredictable conditions that arise inside the classroom. Given the assertion put forth by Jordan (2010) concerning the inherent nature of uncertainty in the learning process, it is imperative to analyze the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions exhibited by learners when confronted with uncertain situations. Students' academic progress is directly influenced by the manner in which they handle uncertainty during the language acquisition process, making its effective management an essential component. To efficiently navigate uncertainty, individuals utilize various approaches, including reducing, sustaining and resolving, and ignoring (Brashers, 2007). When individuals are faced with unforeseen circumstances, it seems that they tend to emphasize the process of minimizing ambiguity. However, it is crucial to recognize that students tend to manage situations of ambiguity in order to align themselves with their individual objectives, taking into account the specific conditions they find themselves in (Author, 2018).

The aforementioned feature is particularly relevant in cross-cultural interactions, as it presents an opportunity for students to encounter and become acquainted with different cultural norms and practices. Therefore, it is essential to augment our comprehension of how students manage in the learning process, as stated by Jordan (2010). This holds special significance in higher education, since students are continuously presented with new and complex material. Neuliep (2015) posits that previous research has shown a positive correlation between individuals possessing effective uncertainty management skills and their likelihood to engage in intercultural communication. Additionally, these individuals tend to exhibit favourable attitudes towards cultural differences and approach unfamiliar situations with a flexible and adaptable mind-set.

When students start their education life at universities, they are faced with unfamiliar ideas, challenging tasks, and several other barriers that may create uncertainty about their ability to succeed.



University students who are in the process of acquiring a second language may face notable challenges, such as feeling overwhelmed by the vast amount of knowledge they need to absorb or experiencing uncertainty regarding their abilities in pronunciation and grammar. The management of uncertainty in the course of language acquisition might present difficulties due to the complex and multifaceted character of the process. According to the author (2019), the process of language learning requires students to improve their comprehension of grammar, vocabulary, and cultural norms, while also developing the confidence and competence necessary for successful communication in a foreign language. Interestingly, despite the inherent uncertainty that comes with acquiring language skills, a significant number of university students are able to overcome these challenges and make progress in their academic endeavours.

Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, and Gullotta (2015) assert that the social-emotional skills of students have a substantial influence on their academic performance. According to Yoder (2013), it is argued that learners possess the ability to overcome challenges presented by real-life situations through the utilization of their social and emotional skills. The competences encompassed within this framework include the regulation and management of emotions, the ability to comprehend and empathize with the emotions of others, the establishment of significant interpersonal relationships, and the capacity to make thoughtful and responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013).

Possessing social emotional competences is yet another crucial factor in developing an international posture. The cultivation of social-emotional competence is significant in facilitating effective communication in cross-cultural contexts, as it empowers individuals from different cultural backgrounds to establish and maintain relationships characterized by mutual respect and efficiency. According to Kramsch's (1998) research, the attainment of success in intercultural communication requires a thorough assessment of various crucial aspects. These factors encompass the fostering of heightened awareness in both personal and collective consciousness, the cultivation of proficient engagement in interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, the demonstration of respect for varying perspectives, and the acknowledgment and facilitation of the resolution of cultural disparities. These aforementioned attributes exemplify a strong correlation with social and emotional proficiencies.

Research has indicated that the cultivation of self-awareness in pupils has a positive impact on their capacity to adapt and make appropriate choices regarding behaviours and customs within a certain cultural context owing to the heightened sense of self-confidence they possess (Greenberg et al., 2003). Kramsch (1998) posits that the cultivation of heightened cultural self-awareness has the ability to generate a sense of connection with the language, hence resulting in improved language acquisition outcomes for students. The attainment of this particular state of consciousness can be realized by employing a diverse range of instructional methodologies within the parameters of the educational environment. The subject holds considerable importance for those involved in the field of English as a second language, as they often participate in contacts with individuals of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Author, 2023).

According to empirical evidence, the acquisition of social emotional competences has been determined to be important in assisting students in effectively navigating the difficulties associated





with language acquisition and effectively handling situations marked by uncertainty and ambiguity (Elias et al., 1997). The intricate relationship among social emotional learning and managing uncertainty is multifaceted and can have a profound influence on a student's capacity to attain academic success. For instance, those who possess the capacity to regulate their emotions and efficiently handle uncertain situations may demonstrate improved concentration on their academic endeavors and maintain a positive mentality, even when confronted with challenges in communicating. Similarly, it has been shown that students who exhibit high levels of social competence and display good skills in collaborating and communicating with their peers may encounter less difficulty in seeking assistance or support when confronted with difficulties (Author, 2018). Promoting learners' inclination to seek help from adults and embrace accountability for their own learning might provide favorable consequences.

Within the context of academic settings, there is a potential correlation between students' international orientation, the way they manage uncertain situations, and their social-emotional learning competences. The significance of this connectivity is especially pertinent within the framework of our highly globalized and unpredictable world. The ability of a person to skillfully handle and adapt to situations that are uncertain and unclear in new or unfamiliar environments, known as uncertainty management, is essential in developing the skills and confidence needed for effective communication and interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds in the global context. The enhancement of this capacity is achieved through employing social-emotional competences. The notion of international posture is widely recognized as the capacity to effectively navigate and accommodate multiple cultural perspectives and ideas. As a result, students who have a robust global perspective must adeptly negotiate situations marked by ambiguity, so requiring their ability to adapt to unfamiliar conditions. Moreover, students who possess social-emotional learning (SEL) competences tend to achieve high levels of proficiency in communication and teamwork. However, the scope of research conducted on these factors within the field of language acquisition has been limited. The social-emotional and uncertainty management skills exhibited by individuals learning a new language might be considered as important indicators of their international orientation, considering the points outlined earlier. In the light of these arguments this study aims address the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between uncertainty management, social emotional competences, and international posture among foreign language learners?
2. Is there a difference related to students' gender on their levels of uncertainty management, social emotional competences, and international posture among foreign language learners?

## Method

### Research design

The correlational approach was chosen as the research methodology because the goal of the study was to examine the uncertainty management and social-emotional abilities of students within the environment of a university, and to discover whether or not these are predictors of students' international posture. Since two independent variables' (uncertainty management and social-



emotional competences) impact on a dependent variable (students' international posture) was investigated in this study, structural equation modeling was used to measure their direct or indirect impacts. Moreover, path analysis was implemented to assess the casual relationships between variables (Daşdağ et al., 2006). Additionally, the variables above were compared in accordance with the demographic variables.

### Participants and settings

The current investigation was conducted with a sample of 214 students enrolled in an English Preparatory School at a university context in a city in the South of Turkey in the spring term of the 2022-2023 academic year. Given that the participants' native language is Turkish, the scales were administered in Turkish to facilitate the participants' comprehension and ensure accurate completion of the measures. *Uncertainty Management Scale* and *Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning Scale* were already translated into Turkish by the researchers who developed the scales. *International Posture Scale* developed by Yashima (2002) was also translated into Turkish by applying back-translation procedures. Colina et al. (2017) state that back-translation involves translating the source text into the target language, then back-translating it into the source language, and comparing the output text to ensure no discrepancies. The writers translated 19 articles from English to Turkish and then asked an independent multilingual translator to retranslate them back into English. The committee of two members who are also experts in translation assessed both the backward translation and the original form of the items before negotiating the final Turkish version with cultural adjustments. After this process, the validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the scale were examined using the study's data.

A total of 214 individuals, comprising 131 females (61%) and 83 males (39%) participated in the study. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 20 years. Regarding the departments, the Law faculty had the highest enrollment, with 94 students, accounting for 44% of the total student population. The remaining participants comprised individuals enrolled in several academic departments, including Psychology (n= 41, 19%), Translation and Interpretation (n= 35, 16%), International Relations (n=23, 11%), and International Finance (n= 21, 10%). The survey was administered via an internet platform, namely Google Forms, and distributed to participants after obtaining the necessary authorization from relevant authorities.

The research entailed the inclusion of participants who willingly chose to take part, as indicated by their explicit agreement demonstrated by signing a consent form. Furthermore, participants were also notified that their responses and personal data would be handled with the highest level of confidentiality.



Table 1.  
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Descriptors	Sub-descriptors	N	%
Gender	Female	131	61
	Male	83	39
Age	18 years and under	143	67
	19 years and older	71	33
University Department	Law	94	44
	Psychology	41	19
	Translation and Interpretation	35	16
	International Relations	23	11
	International Finance	21	10
Total		214	100.0

## Measures

The present study utilized three data collection instruments, specifically the Uncertainty Management Scale (UMS), the Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning Scale (SEFLLS), and the International Posture Scale (IPS). Moreover, before to the administration of the scales, participants were instructed to complete a "Demographic Information Form" including their gender, age, and university department.

### **Uncertainty Management Scale (UMS)**

The scale was developed by Dağtaş in 2018. The measurement instrument was designed using a Likert-type scale format, with five points response options ranging from "usually" to "never". The measurement instrument comprises a total of 13 items, which have been classified into three separate factors: Reducing Uncertainty, Maintaining and Resolving Uncertainty, and Ignoring Uncertainty. The reliability and validity assessments of the scale revealed internal consistencies of .85 for Reducing Uncertainty, .87 for Maintaining and Resolving Uncertainty, and .92 for Ignoring Uncertainty. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the UMS and its sub-dimensions, as determined in this study, yielded a value of 0.88, which indicates a high level of reliability for the scale.

### **Social-emotional Foreign Language Learning Scale (SEFLLS)**

The scale with 24 items was developed by Zaimoğlu (2018). The scale employed in this study assesses the social-emotional skills of students during the process of learning a foreign language. SEFLLS employs a Likert-type scale consisting of five points, with the options ranging from "1: strongly disagree" to "5: strongly agree." The scale incorporates three sub-scales, namely Self-Regulation, Social Relations, and Decision Making. The internal consistency of the subscales was assessed using reliability coefficients. The reliability coefficients for each subscale were as follows: Self-Regulation ( $\alpha=.81$ ), Social Relations ( $\alpha=.84$ ), and Decision Making ( $\alpha=.85$ ). Based on the obtained Cronbach's Alpha



coefficient of .83, it can be inferred that the scale exhibits a considerable degree of reliability within the current sample population.

### **International Posture Scale (IPS)**

To assess the participants' degree of international posture, they were provided with instructions to complete Yashima's (2002) revised 19-item international posture scale. The measurement instrument consists of four primary variables, specifically Intercultural Friendship Orientation, Approach-Avoidance Tendency, Interest in International Vacation/Activities, and Interest in Foreign Affairs. The participants employed a 5-point Likert scale to assess the items, where "1" represented "strongly disagree" and "5" represented "strongly agree".

The utilization of the international posture scale on the current sample produced notable findings, as demonstrated by a substantial level of consistency indicated by a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.85. This suggests that the scale exhibits a notable degree of reliability and consistency in assessing the attitudes of the participants across the four dimensions.

## **Results**

The correlation coefficients for the relations between UM, SEFFL and IP scales were given in Table 2. All correlation coefficients were found to be statistically significant, which means that there is a meaningful and positive relationship between these variables ( $p < .05$ ). According to the correlation coefficients, the highest correlation is between the UM and SEFFL Scale ( $r = .618$ ;  $p < .05$ ), the lowest relationship between the UMS and SEFFLS ( $r = .247$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

Table 2.  
Relationship between Students' UM, SEFFL and IP Levels

		UMS	SEFFLS	IPS
UMS	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
SEFFLS	Pearson Correlation	,618**	1	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	,000		
IPS	Pearson Correlation	,247**	,378**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	,000	,000	

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

Regression analysis findings for the effects of uncertainty management and social emotional foreign language learning variables on international posture were given in Table 3. In accordance with the ANOVA test, the model was found to be statistically significant ( $F = 78,054$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In addition, the adjusted R-square coefficient for the model was calculated as .483. This value shows that 48.3% of the



variability in the students' international posture variable can be explained by the variables of uncertainty management and social emotional foreign language learning through linear regression.

Table 3.  
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results on Predicting EFL Students' International Posture

	B	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	.085	-	.125	.714
UMS	.078	.051	1,102	.116
SEFLLS	.750	.412	10,665	.000

$F=78,054, p = .000,; adj. R^2 = .483$

When the estimation of the coefficients of the regression model was examined, the coefficient of the social emotional foreign language learning variable was found to be statistically significant ( $B = .750; p < .05$ ), and the coefficient of the uncertainty management variable was statistically insignificant ( $B = .078; p > .05$ ). According to the standard coefficients, one unit increase in the social emotional foreign language learning variable is expected to cause an increase of .412 units in the students' international posture variable.

When the results of the goodness of fit indices were analysed, it was clear that the model fit the index standards established in the literature (Kelloway, 1998), implying that the study delivers appropriate model fit values ( $X^2/sd < 5, RMSEA < .08, CFI < .97, NFI < .97, GFI < .97, AGFI < .90, RMR < .10$ ).

Table 4.  
Direct Effects of Independent Variables on EFL Students' International Posture

The dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta$	Standard error	p
IPS	SEFLLS	.621	.182	***
	UMS	.043	.14	.565
SEFLLS	UMS	.535	.070	***

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 4 presents the direct impacts of the research factors on the International Posture of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Based on the results, it was observed that the impact of the social emotional foreign language learning variable on EFL Students' International Posture ( $\beta = .621; p < .05$ ) and the influence of uncertainty management on social emotional foreign language



learning ( $\beta = .535$ ;  $p < .05$ ) exhibited statistical significance. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis revealed that the impact of the uncertainty management variable on the International Posture of EFL Students ( $\beta = .043$ ;  $p > .05$ ) was not deemed to be significant.

Table 5.  
Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Independent Variables on EFL Students' International Posture

Variable	Effects*		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
SEFLLS	.621	-	.621
UMS	.043	.362	.415

Table 5 presents the coefficients for the direct, indirect, and total effects of the study model. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the variable of social emotional foreign language learning has a solely direct impact on the international posture of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Given that there is no indirect effect, the total effect of the variable in question is equivalent to its direct effect, which is calculated to be .621. The variable of uncertainty management exhibits a direct effect of .043 on the international posture of EFL students, and an indirect effect of .362 on social emotional foreign language learning. Hence, the cumulative impact of the uncertainty management variable on the International Posture of EFL Students is determined to be .415. The evidence suggests that social emotional foreign language learning functions as a complete mediator variable, indicating that the impact of uncertainty management on EFL students' international posture is solely mediated through social emotional foreign language learning.

Considering EFL Students' Uncertainty Management (UM), Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning (SEFL), and Students International Posture (IPS) levels by gender, t-test was used.

Table 6.  
T-test Results for UMS, SEFLLS, IPS and Gender

Scales	Groups	N	Mean	SD	p
UMS	Female	131	3,65	0,82	0,001
	Male	83	3,51	0,95	
SEFLLS	Female	131	4,10	0,94	0,002
	Male	83	3,88	0,99	
IPS	Female	131	4,70	0,81	0,004
	Male	83	3,60	0,97	
Total		214			



In relation to gender, the study revealed that female individuals had comparatively high levels across all scales, in contrast to their male counterparts. For example, the mean grade point average of female students (M= 3.65) was found to be higher than that of male students (M= 3.51). Similarly, it was shown that the SEFLS and IP levels of female students were substantially higher (M= 4.10, M= 4.70) compared to the levels of male students (M= 3.88, M= 3.60). Furthermore, the findings indicated a statistically significant disparity in uncertainty management, social-emotional foreign language learning, and international posture levels among students of different genders.

## Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The primary aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between the constructs of international posture, uncertainty management, and social emotional language learning. When the collected data were analyzed, it was found out that there was a meaningful and positive relationship between the three variables. Regarding the path analysis, it was revealed that social-emotional competences could predict the international posture levels of students whereas uncertainty management indirectly affects university students' sense of international posture through social-emotional competences. The analysis concerning gender indicated that female students' UM, SEFLS, and IP levels were significantly higher than males.

The findings of this comprehensive study have a substantial contribution in thoroughly understanding the construct of international posture along with valuable insights into the factors influencing university students' international posture. In today's global world where cross cultural interactions are more important than ever before, it has become crucial to investigate the underlying factors that influence students' readiness to interact across borders. The diversity of students' background may have a significant influence on their international posture including their perspectives and attitudes to intercultural concepts. The related research on international posture demonstrated that the concept is potentially a motivating factor in EFL context as it has been proved to have a positive impact on ideal L2 self and willingness to communicate (Botes et al., 2020). In order to further promote the international posture of language learners, within the framework of the present study, it was attempted to explore its relationship to other variables such as uncertainty management and social emotional learning. The findings of the present study indicate that these variables can act as a catalyst to improve the international posture of language learners.

The study uses a rigorous quantitative research method and three different scales including the Uncertainty Management Scale (UMS), the Social-Emotional Foreign Language Learning Scale (SEFLS), and the Students International Posture Scale (IPS), each of which focuses on a different aspect of learners' experiences while learning a language. The results of the current study indicate that social emotional learning has a directly impact students' international posture while uncertainty management plays a more indirect role; it is mediated by social emotional foreign language learning and has a considerable impact on students' international stance. Gender disparities were also noted, with female students showing more proficiency in social emotional foreign language acquisition, international posture, and uncertainty management. The findings have provided light on the



relationships between international posture, social emotional learning, and uncertainty management at a university context.

To begin with, the findings showed that there is a substantial and favourable association between students' international posture, their social and emotional competences, and their ability to manage uncertainty. The way in which learners cope with uncertainty is closely tied to the way in which they react emotionally to uncertain circumstances, given that uncertainty can elicit both positive and negative responses. As a direct result of these feelings, the strategy that learners choose to manage uncertainty is intimately related to the way in which they react emotionally to uncertain conditions. In other words, individuals look for ways to deal with the anxiety and stress that comes along with not knowing what the future or the present holds as a direct result of these feelings. Individuals are provided with the ability to deal with uncertainty through the use of SEL competences such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making. One of the challenges that must be surmounted in order to improve students' language proficiency is the development of students' social and emotional competences, skills in uncertainty management, and international posture, all of which are linked to one another. A review of the research on international posture reveals that the concept has been related to both directly and indirectly to a number of other affective factors including the L2 willingness to communicate, motivation, and the ideal L2 self (Kong et al., 2018; Lin, 2019; Munezane, 2013; Peng 2015; Rieko, 2013). A detailed examination of the relevant literature revealed that there is a diverse array of affective elements that play a crucial role in language acquisition and communication, which are intricately connected to one's international posture, both in direct and indirect ways.

The results of the linear regression analysis indicate that the combination of uncertainty management and social-emotional competences significantly explained a substantial proportion (48.3%) of the variance in the students' international posture. This highlights the significance of considering both of these factors when examining the international posture of language learners. The findings imply that interventions that attempt to increase a student's ability to manage uncertainty and their social and emotional skills may contribute favourably to the development of a students' international posture. Yashima (2009) proposed the concept of a "international posture" as a means of characterizing the inclination to relate to the L2 community as a whole rather than to any single L2 group. According to Kong et al. (2018), the essential components of an international posture include an active participation in global or international concerns, a desire to travel, reside, or work in a foreign country, and an openness to engage in conversation with others whose cultural origins are different from one's own. Learners will need to make use of their social and emotional competencies as well as their skills in managing uncertainty as they use the language as part of the worldwide community for the reasons that were described above.

When it came to predicting language learners' international posture, the path analysis revealed some interestingly contradictory roles for students' competences in uncertainty management and social-emotional development. The ability to manage uncertainty did not demonstrate a significant direct effect, in contrast to social-emotional skills, which emerged as a direct predictor. Instead, it was discovered that students' international posture was indirectly affected by uncertainty management due to the impact it had on students' social and emotional skills. This is an indirect

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association, which highlights the interwoven nature of these elements and shows that developing strong social-emotional competences may operate as a mediator between uncertainty management and international stance of the learners. The primary aim of language learners is to gain native-like fluency and it is being supplanted by the goal of reaching fluency to the point where one can communicate internationally by taking part in an imagined community (Botes et al., 2020). This goal of achieving native-like fluency is being supplanted by the goal of achieving fluency to the point where one can communicate worldwide. According to Zins and Elias (2007), in order to communicate effectively on a global scale, a person has to have certain social and emotional competences and these competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making. As uncertainty management is constructed socially and emotionally, learners need to cope with the uncertain situations they face throughout this process. They need to understand and regulate their emotions and behaviours, make responsible decisions, empathize with others and establish healthy relationship with others. As they do so, they face numerous uncertain situations which need to be managed. They need to be able to comprehend and control their feelings and behaviors, as well as make responsible choices, empathize with others, and cultivate healthy relationships with those around them. As a result of this, individuals are put in a variety of precarious situations that require careful management of ambiguous circumstances.

In addition to investigating the primary predictors, we looked at whether or not there were any differences in the levels of UM, SEFL, and IP depending on the subject's gender. The findings revealed that in comparison to their male counterparts, female students exhibited significantly higher levels of uncertainty management, social-emotional skills, and international posture. Studies conducted on people from different countries have also revealed gender disparities in their posture (for example, Islam (2013) and Birdsell (2014)). These gender discrepancies could be ascribed to a variety of socio-cultural factors, all of which merit further examination because of their significance. According to Botes et al.'s research from 2020, there is also the possibility that the gender gap in international posture is more of a reflection of the cultural environment of the language that is being learnt than it is of true gender inequalities. For instance, in the research conducted by Islam (2013) in Pakistan, males had higher scores than females on international posture whereas Birdsell (2014) found that females had higher scores than males with Japanese participants. In order to provide more information, it will be necessary to do further research on the effects of gender and the cultural context on international posture. The findings also provide valuable implications for designing targeted interventions to address potential disparities and encourage male students' engagement in international experiences.

The findings of this study have significant implications for educators and curriculum developers in the field of language learning. These implications pertain to their efforts in equipping students with the essential skills required for effective cross-cultural communication in an increasingly interconnected global society. In general, this research contributes significantly to expanding our understanding of international education and cultural awareness in a global context. Because of the significant role that social-emotional competences play and the indirect effect that uncertainty management has on students' international posture, our research highlights the need for comprehensive educational programs that foster both personal and interpersonal skills to promote a global mind-set among university students.



Nevertheless, it is necessary to realize that this study has a number of drawbacks. The fact that the data came from a specific English Preparatory School at a single university may make it more difficult to generalize the findings to other educational settings than would otherwise be the case. To enhance the internal and external validity of the findings, further research might focus on recruiting larger samples from a wider range of academic institutions and fields of study. Furthermore, the research was conducted using a cross-sectional methodology, which makes it difficult to establish any causative correlations between the variables. This highlights the importance of conducting longitudinal research in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the maturing features of international posture. Additionally, future research might as well use the qualitative data gathering tools such as semi-structured interviews or focus group interviews in order to get in- depth perspectives of the students. Comparative cultural analysis could be employed to see how cultural diversity interacts with uncertainty management and social emotional competences in constructing international posture.

To conclude, the results of this study give evidence to embrace the value of social-emotional competencies and their relationship with students' international stance, while also stressing the role of uncertainty management. The implications that may be drawn from these findings for educational institutions that want to foster students who are culturally aware and knowledgeable about the world around them are significant. Students can be better prepared to flourish in interconnected and diverse cultures if institutions focus on developing students' social-emotional competences and teaching them how to manage uncertainty. Moreover, integrated educational programs can be fostered on the progress of social emotional competences and uncertainty management skills of the students which in turn influence language learners' international posture. Curricular improvements can incorporate global perspectives involving intercultural communication and social emotional learning and uncertainty management.



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