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The Efficiency of Emotional Intelligence in Acquiring Foreign Languages

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Abstract: *The level of emotional intelligence is a key factor in the development of communication skills. The ability to understand one's own emotions and the feelings of an interlocutor plays a crucial role in effective interpersonal communication. This article analyses the process of developing students' emotional intelligence through the framework of its main components (emotional awareness, self-regulation of emotions, self-motivation, empathy, and managing others' emotions). Moreover, it examines their influence on foreign language acquisition by combining findings from theoretical and empirical research. The obtained results indicate that students with a high level of emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate superior outcomes in terms of learning motivation and engagement. They strive to cultivate those abilities and skills that increase the effectiveness of intercultural communication. It follows that a high level of emotional intelligence is necessary for students not only in personal communication but also in their future professional roles. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to fostering emotional competence across all subjects, including foreign languages. As part of the research, a set of exercises was developed to support the growth of students' emotional intelligence during English language learning. The ability to recognise and articulate one's emotions, to understand the feelings of others, express and justify personal viewpoints, respect different opinions, agree or disagree appropriately, and sustain friendly communication in English is fundamental to building professional foreign language competence.*

Keywords: *emotional intelligence; foreign language; self-regulation; learning motivation; interpersonal communication; cognitive activity; emotional support; language education.*

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1. Introduction

One of the most important non-cognitive competencies today is emotional intelligence. It refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others to achieve specific goals. Learning a foreign language plays a key role in developing students' emotional intelligence. It facilitates the development of one's self-regulation and, as a result, effective communication.

When improving communication skills, emphasis should be placed on the emotional aspect of language pedagogy. In fact, language learners may experience psychological problems that can negatively affect their ability to use a foreign language effectively. These barriers include uncertainty about their linguistic competence, reluctance, and anxiety regarding public speaking. As a result, teachers must be able to create a supportive learning environment to help students overcome these problems. This is possible through the use of educational approaches and strategies that recognise students' psychological characteristics. Particular attention should be paid to a learner-focused framework that provides favourable conditions for developing communication skills in a foreign language.

At the same time, it is essential to develop emotional intelligence in students. It enhances their communication skills, resulting in better interpersonal interaction, self-expression, and self-esteem. From a professional standpoint, emotional intelligence helps strengthen one's self-regulation.

Foreign language teaching is therefore a complex pedagogical activity. It supports active personal development, helps to reveal individual abilities and takes into account learners' interests and professional self-determination.

Vovchenko (2021) highlights the dual nature of foreign language teaching by distinguishing between communicative and reflective components of learning. Within the instructional process, educational goals are set and achieved not only in relation to vocabulary but also through broader language resources and the development of communicative competence. The communicative component treats communication itself as a means of learning. The reflective component, in turn, focuses on shaping and monitoring the learner's thinking process.

From this perspective, emotional intelligence may be viewed as a complex set of psychological abilities. It refers to the ability to identify, comprehend, interpret, experience, express, and regulate emotions in a foreign language across the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking. This also involves the appropriate expression of emotions in both oral and written communication. This view is supported by Vovchenko (2020), who stresses the role of non-verbal language and expressive communication as essential components of communicative activity in both native and foreign languages. The researcher views creative activity as a central component of foreign language learning, since creativity supports the active practice of language structures, phonetics, phrases and other linguistic elements. Therefore, the ability to creatively encode and decode emotions in the process of learning a foreign language may be regarded as an important manifestation of emotional intelligence.

2. Theoretical Framework

Karpenko (2020) examines the role of emotions in speech activity during foreign language learning, with particular attention to different forms of speech. Oral speech is viewed as an exchange of information expressed through a system of signs and symbols. It is directed towards establishing and maintaining contact, achieving mutual understanding and exerting communicative influence on the listener. In this regard, the development of speaking competence in a foreign language is the primary goal of teaching oral communication. However, this is not its only function; informational, regulatory, emotional-evaluative and etiquette-related roles should also be considered.

Brackett and Mayer (2003) identify the text-based approach as a principal method for teaching oral skills in a foreign language. This approach includes both monologic and dialogic

forms. Texts are analysed not only in terms of their content but also in relation to their emotional colouring. The emotional tone of oral texts may be reflected in the structure of utterances, intonation patterns and lexico-grammatical forms. For example, monologic speech differs from dialogic speech in its length, structure and the absence of features such as formulaic expressions, ellipsis and interjections. These features express various emotions in addition to conveying information.

It therefore follows that any utterance should be understood not only as an informative message but also as an emotional one. The emotional purpose of an utterance is to mobilise the listener to action and to evoke emotions, feelings, values and subjective evaluation. Monologic speech, as a subjective product, is rooted in the speaker's personal experiences and the speaker's value-based and moral orientations (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020).

The emotional content of foreign-language speaking also fulfils several specific functions in the development of foreign-language competencies, all of which should be taken into account. Another important category of competencies concerns listening skills, including the ability to perceive, decode and assimilate information transmitted by a speaker to an individual or a group. The success of this process depends on the characteristics of short-term and long-term memory, familiarity with the language material and the ability to recognise linguistic patterns (Makiabadi et al., 2019).

The affective impact of an oral text, often achieved through literary and stylistic devices, facilitates understanding of the content and the speaker's emotional stance. This enhances the meaning of the message and facilitates better understanding. Developing this competence also helps learners grasp the communicator's intention more clearly and fosters empathy.

In foreign-language reading instruction, the objective is to build skills that enable learners to comprehend, analyse, and engage with texts of varying complexity, including journalistic, literary, technical and scientific genres. Joseph et al. (2015) define reading as the process of recognising, processing and comprehending information presented in written form, in line with the conventions of the language. In contemporary practice, learners work with samples drawn from authentic texts in the target language. Alongside the primary goal of teaching students to work with foreign-language texts, there is a secondary aim: to perceive and interpret the emotional context of the text.

Mayer et al. (2016) note that this approach helps learners connect with the way of thinking of the ethnolinguistic community whose language they are studying. Paying careful attention to the emotional content of texts also supports the development of general language skills and communicative competence.

There appears to be a tendency to teach foreign-language reading mainly through literary texts. In contrast, journalistic, scientific, technical and other similarly complex genres are often treated as secondary and appear only when learners tackle specialised tasks, such as language learning within a specific field. This preference can largely be attributed to the cultural significance and emotional depth of literary texts. At the same time, developing the ability to work with complex, relevant texts is important, as it helps learners recognise and manage the emotions that arise when facing challenges.

There is also an increasing focus on everyday texts, such as social media posts and personal messages. Integrating such texts into foreign-language teaching is situationally appropriate because it supports the broader goal of developing key linguistic and communicative competencies. Learners not only practice communication with native speakers and understand cultural aspects but they also gain insight into the emotional behaviour of others.

Working on written language further improves learners' ability to organise their ideas and build arguments. This ability includes not only the presentation of logical, evidence-based arguments but also the expression of emotional and stylistic features. Berbets et al. (2021) highlight important distinctions between written and spoken texts, including structure, themes and content. The emotional dimension of writing is closely connected to the topic of the work and to learners'

personal experiences and interests. Teachers often prefer topics that align with these factors. Evidence for arguments is drawn either from the learner's personal experience or from literary and other texts with similar themes. Expressiveness achieved through literary and stylistic devices is viewed as pedagogically valuable.

Overall, the emotional component present in all forms of language activity is crucial for learners to develop the cognitive skills needed for effective communication. Emotional intelligence, which means recognising the emotional context, motives, intentions and needs of others as well as being aware of one's own feelings, enables learners to establish and maintain interactions from different perspectives. For teachers, this approach brings several benefits. It helps achieve educational goals, improves teacher-student communication, supports personal growth, encourages emotional awareness and reduces the risk of burnout.

According to Goleman (2005), emotional intelligence is the ability to stay motivated and pursue goals despite failure or disappointment. It also includes controlling emotions so that negative thinking does not weaken clear judgement, emotional stability or hope. As suggested by Vovchenko (2021), emotional intelligence reflects one's inner world and its connection to one's behaviour and interaction with reality.

Mayer et al. (2016) identify several core components of emotional intelligence: 1) awareness of one's own emotions; 2) emotional control; 3) self-motivation; 4) recognition of other people's emotions (empathy); and 5) relationship management. However, each stage of developing emotional intelligence entails certain barriers for students. These barriers manifest themselves especially in the context of foreign language acquisition. As noted by Joseph et al. (2015), students may find it difficult to choose correct lexical or grammatical units to reveal their emotions and feelings. It may also be particularly challenging for them to convey their viewpoints in terms of specific emotional aspects within a topic.

Managing emotions is one of the most complex aspects of emotional intelligence development. Most students feel apprehensive about poor performance, negative feedback from their teacher, or even teasing from other students. Anticipating a low grade can only increase their anxiety, thereby hindering their ability to speak freely. They also link their mistakes in tests and examinations to stress. Another key element of emotional regulation is the ability to accept criticism, since correcting mistakes is an essential part of the learning process (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020).

Cultivating communication skills, rather than striving for good grades, should be the priority of foreign language acquisition. Still, many students, especially those pursuing non-linguistic careers, tend to focus more on assessment results. Suldo et al. (2011) believe that such students consider a foreign language to be an academic requirement only. This attitude fosters negative emotions, which can block progress.

To overcome this, students need to embrace the full scope of language learning and see it as an engaging, motivating process. By becoming aware of their own emotions, they can then learn to recognise and interpret the emotions of others, which makes communication more effective (Makiabadi et al., 2019).

It is equally important for learners to understand that maintaining a positive attitude towards their interlocutor is fundamental to successful communication. To do this, one must consider conflicting ideas and make sure one's personal feelings do not hinder the understanding of someone else's points. Such skills offer advantages for individual relationships, as well as future career roles (Berbets et al., 2021).

3. Research Methodology

This research aims to analyse the development of emotional intelligence in future journalists. The sample consisted of 110 participants studying languages from different language families: English (Germanic group), Chinese, and Arabic (Semitic languages).

Methods. The research employed a combination of axiological and linguistic-cultural approaches. For comparative quantitative analysis, Hall (2022) online diagnostic test and the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) questionnaire were used. Hall's (2022) online diagnostic test was used to assess emotional intelligence and demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency within the sample ($\alpha = 0.81$). Cultural intelligence was evaluated using the CQS questionnaire (Ang et al., 2007), adapted by the authors and translated from English using the back-translation method. Scores were calculated as mean values across the four CQ domains. Both instruments were examined for content validity through expert review.

The research is based on the hypothesis that the type of language studied may influence specific components of emotional intelligence. The sample (N = 120) was selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were as follows: age 19–21 years, enrolment in humanities programmes, and native-speaker status in the respective language. Participants were divided into three linguistic subgroups with equal numbers in each group (n1 = 40, n2 = 40, n3 = 40). The equivalence of the subgroups in terms of age and prior educational background was confirmed through preliminary testing. This procedure helped minimise the influence of extraneous variables on the assessment of emotional and cultural intelligence. To test this hypothesis, the sample was divided into three subgroups:

- Group A (English). In this study, English-speaking cultures are regarded as predominantly low-context, with a prevailing tendency towards the direct verbalisation of emotional states.
- Group B (Chinese). A tonal language in which changes in pitch alter meaning. This feature may require a particularly high level of emotional auditory awareness.
- Group C (Arabic). This group comprises participants from Arabic-speaking cultures, traditionally classified as high-context. Despite substantial cultural variation across the Arab world, members of this group tend to prioritise non-verbal communication, convey meaning implicitly, and employ a rich array of emotionally expressive resources inherent in the language structure.

Measurement instruments. In addition to Hall's (2022) online diagnostic test, standardised instruments for assessing Cultural Intelligence (CQ) were applied. This approach reflects the close link between emotional intelligence and cultural understanding in foreign language learning. The methodological toolkit of the study was supplemented with the CQS (Ang et al., 2007). The questionnaire comprises 20 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale. Mean scores were calculated for the four factors: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural. The reliability of the overall CQ score, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.88, supporting the validity of the data obtained.

4. Results

Results and Analysis (n = 110)

To test the hypothesis concerning the effect of language type on emotional intelligence (EI), a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The analysis revealed significant between-group differences on the "Empathy" dimension, $F(2, 107) = 5.12$, $p = 0.007$. A subsequent post-hoc Tukey test showed that the English-speaking group achieved significantly greater gains in empathy than the Chinese-speaking group.

The comparative analysis revealed a significant association between language group and changes in emotional intelligence parametres. Table 1 presents the differences in mean emotional intelligence scores (ΔM) of participants, measured before and after the experimental period (training). Positive values represent an increase in the respective parametre. Negative values indicate a decrease that occurred during the acquisition of the corresponding linguistic-cultural competence.

Table 1. Changes in mean emotional intelligence (EI) scores across language groups

EI parameters	English	Chinese	Arabic	Significance level (p)
Emotional awareness	+1.48	+4.12	+2.10	$p < 0.05$
Self-regulation of emotions	+2.38	+1.15	+3.45	$p < 0.05$
Empathy	+5.82	+2.10	+4.20	$p < 0.01$
Managing the emotions of others	-2.20	-0.50	+1.10	$p > 0.05$ N/A

Source: the authors' own conception

Analysis of Results. The Chinese language showed the highest increase in emotional awareness. Students learn to recognise micro-intonations, which may enhance sensitivity to the emotional state of their interlocutor. Arabic is associated with higher scores in self-regulation of emotions and managing the emotions of others. This may be related to the complex rules of etiquette and the highly expressive nature of discourse. English shows comparatively higher gains in empathy, largely due to its emphasis on soft skills and open communication.

While B1 English students are capable of analysing media texts, second-year Chinese students often fail to progress beyond an A2 level. This may limit their ability to perceive deep emotional undertones in literature. Students studying Eastern languages also exhibit higher stress levels when managing others' emotions, as a result of a significant cultural gap.

The research suggests the need to combine Hall (2022) online diagnostic test with assessments of cognitive flexibility. Learning hieroglyphics or Arabic script may engage neural processes associated with self-regulation. Studying Eastern languages may contribute to the development of emotional awareness because students must decode context and tonal nuances. In contrast, English more effectively fosters empathy through direct communicative strategies.

Processing foreign syntax in Eastern languages (e.g., non-linear word order in Arabic or Chinese grammatical structures) requires strong focus and control from working memory in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dlPFC). The neural competition model suggests that an overloaded prefrontal cortex causes a reduction in the brain's ability to control emotions. This clarifies why students at a B1 level demonstrate lower performance in the context of emotion management, as decoding the linguistic code exhausts their prefrontal resources.

The amygdala reacts to new stimuli and potential challenges, including improper pronunciation in tonal languages. When language barriers are high, it may cause "emotional hijacking" and reduce activity in the prefrontal cortex. This leads to a feedback loop: stress complicates access to previously learned syntactic rules, while difficulties in sentence construction increase amygdala activation.

Due to the relative syntactic transparency and low contextuality of some languages, neural networks reach the automation stage more quickly. This frees prefrontal resources for empathic analysis and social interaction. Learning hieroglyphics and tonal systems also activates areas in the right hemisphere and occipital cortex, which handle visual processing of symbols. This activity has been associated with increased neural plasticity and strengthens connections between the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) and the amygdala. In the long term, this improves the biological basis for self-regulation. However, at early stages, it creates critical competition for dlPFC resources (Shao et al., 2019).

Constant switching between language codes (code-switching) and emotional contexts has been linked to activation of the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), which functions as a "conflict detector". This mechanism forms the neurobiological basis for the observed increase in emotional awareness. A neurocognitive perspective suggests that low emotion-regulation scores in students

are not a pedagogical failure. Rather, they result from temporary "neural competition", where complex syntax is prioritised over emotional regulation until language automation is achieved (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

The introduction of generative AI and emotion-recognition algorithms (affective computing) presents new challenges for students' emotional intelligence development. Although large language models (LLMs) can simulate empathy and generate stylistically flawless texts, they lack the neurobiological substrate for experiencing emotions. In this context, AI is considered a "cognitive prosthesis": it can reduce neural load in the prefrontal cortex and assist with processing complex syntax. As a result, this theoretically frees brain resources for deep emotional regulation. However, overreliance on AI tools for translating or editing emotionally charged texts may weaken activity in the anterior cingulate cortex and mirror neurons, which are essential for authentic empathy.

5. Conclusions

A foreign language has been shown to be an effective tool for exploring cultural diversity worldwide. This underscores the importance of studying linguistic norms and rules, as well as key aspects of foreign language acquisition. Success in intercultural communication also depends on how well interlocutors understand each other's emotions and can apply this knowledge when using a foreign language.

The role of emotions in learning new concepts and in interactions between individuals and groups has been relatively well studied. However, their manifestation within foreign-language competencies remains underexplored. This empirical study examines specific characteristics of both emotional intelligence and foreign-language competencies and suggests complex, sometimes ambiguous, relationships between them. The structure of foreign-language competencies includes the integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional intelligence. These forms of emotional intelligence are connected in different ways to various skills and do not represent a simple set of separate functions for perceiving, analysing, understanding and internalising experience in foreign-language learning. Exploring this integration is the focus of future research.

The article indicates that learning foreign languages in schools has considerable potential for developing emotional intelligence. This potential is associated with the communicative nature of language learning, and with various teaching materials, including authentic resources. However, the development of emotional intelligence continues to be investigated from psycho-pedagogical and career-related perspectives.

The findings also indicate that the evolution of emotional intelligence during foreign language acquisition is a complex neuropedagogical process. The linguistic specificity of the language group (Germanic or Eastern) may influence patterns of cognitive engagement associated with neural plasticity. The theoretical competition between syntactic processing in the prefrontal cortex and emotional regulation in the amygdala suggests that EI development is not linear. Instead, it may depend on the degree of automation of language skills.

Currently, this process is further influenced by interaction with artificial intelligence. Acting as a cognitive intermediary, AI both facilitates overcoming language barriers and simultaneously requires journalism students to possess a higher level of "digital EI" in order to verify the emotional authenticity of content. Therefore, the development of foreign language competence should extend beyond purely linguistic training. It should integrate neurocognitive strategies for self-regulation and ethical standards for hybrid human–AI communication. Such an approach supports the preparation of professionals who can function effectively under conditions of high cognitive load and global cultural diversity.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors confirm that artificial intelligence (ChatGPT, OpenAI) was used to assist with language refinement and text clarity. All analyses, interpretations and conclusions in this manuscript were developed exclusively by the authors.

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