

Integrating Emotional Intelligence into English Language Teaching: Theoretical Models and Classroom Applications

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Abstract

As English language classrooms become increasingly diverse, multicultural, and emotionally complex, the importance of emotionally intelligent educators and learners has been more increased. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is particularly in the domain of self-awareness offers a powerful theoretical lens through which to enrich pedagogical practices, enhance learner engagement, and strengthen classroom dynamics in English Language Teaching (ELT). This article explores the interface between EI and language education, contending that fostering emotional competencies, especially self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, significantly enhances communication, cultural adaptability, and reflective teaching. This article examines the intersection of EI and language education by drawing on the theoretical models of Daniel Goleman and Reuven Bar-On. It synthesizes existing literature and recent research to argue that emotional competencies play a central role in improving communication, fostering cultural adaptability, and supporting reflective teaching. Drawing on the frameworks of Daniel Goleman and Reuven Bar-On, the paper synthesizes literature supporting the integration of EI into ELT and emphasizes its role in cultivating emotionally resilient, socially competent, and linguistically effective individuals. Implications for teacher education, curriculum design, and classroom interactions are discussed, positioning emotional intelligence not as an auxiliary trait but as a central educational philosophy essential for 21st-century ELT.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), English Language Teaching (ELT), Daniel Goleman, Reuven Bar-On, self-awareness, language education.

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, English Language Teaching (ELT) functions not only as a means of linguistic instruction but also as a vehicle for fostering cultural empathy, interpersonal understanding, and effective international communication. Traditionally, ELT has emphasized the development of cognitive and linguistic proficiencies in the areas of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and phonology. Language acquisition has been viewing as largely through the lens of structural mastery and communicative competence. However, recent shifts in educational paradigms highlight the inadequacy of purely cognitive models in capturing the full scope of language learning. Language acquisition is now widely understood as a deeply human process, one that is shaped by learners' emotions, social identities, motivations, and interpersonal interactions. Emotional factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, frustration, enthusiasm, and empathy frequently determine the success or failure of language learning, particularly in culturally diverse and emotionally charged classroom environments.

In this context, the integration of Emotional Intelligence (EI) into ELT pedagogy is no longer optional but an essential requirement. As defined by Mayer and Salovey (1990) and popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Goleman further breaks EI into five core dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These emotional capacities play a crucial role in shaping how language learners navigate complex social situations, respond to feedback, and manage the emotional demands of language acquisition that includes public speaking, peer assessment, and communicative failure.

Language learning is more to know subjective world than to know objective world so emotional learning is basically a crude necessity to know the subjective world of ours. In this scenario Emotional Intelligence is basic criteria for language learning. Language is not just about expressing the external world of objective reality, but about articulating our internal, emotional experiences of the subjective world. Emotions, desires, identity, and memory all find expression through language. In this view, emotional intelligence becomes a foundational capacity for meaningful language acquisition. Lev Vygotsky (1962) argued that language is a tool of thought that mediates internal mental processes. His concept of inner speech shows how language structures subjective awareness. Stephen Krashen (1982), in his *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, he emphasized that emotions directly impact language acquisition. A high affective filter (anxiety, fear) blocks learning; a low filter (motivation,

confidence) facilitates it. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) viewed language as deeply dialogic and personal and it is rooted in the social and subjective worlds of speakers. His theories show that every word carries emotional and ideological weight. The seminal writer in EI, Daniel Goleman (1995) states in his book on *Emotional Intelligence*, “emotions are basic tools for rational thoughts. We feel before we think.” Language learning, therefore, must acknowledge the primacy of emotion.

Emotional expression precedes linguistic competence in human development. Infants, for instance, communicate needs through cries, facial expressions, and emotional cues long before they acquire words. This foundational role of emotion in early communication reflects the intrinsic connection between affect and language. Michael Tomasello (2003) in his work on *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* explains that communication begins with intention-reading and emotional signaling, even before speech. He emphasizes on emotional signals come first before language signals in the minds of the humans. Noam Chomsky argued for a universal grammar that emotionally imprinted in every human being. Jerome Bruner emphasized the pre-linguistic communication of infants, which relies heavily on emotional and social cues. Colwyn Trevarthen (1998) coined the term ‘intersubjectivity’ to describe the emotional coordination between infants and caregivers that lays the groundwork for language through emotional synchrony. Emotions can be understood as internal mechanisms of the psyche that find structured expression through language. Language serves not only to convey meaning but to externalize internal emotional states, making emotional intelligence a core requirement for both language comprehension and expression. Wilhelm Dilthey, philosopher of hermeneutics emphasized that language is the medium through which inner life becomes accessible as both to the self and to others. This shows the importance of emotional intelligence which plays key role to understand self and others. Reuven Bar-On defined EI as the interplay of emotion and cognition that enables effective communication and functioning. Bar-on affirmed with his research on EI, it has great level of achievement possible in language learning. Susan Ervin-Tripp (1991) explored sociolinguistics of emotion, showing how emotional norms are embedded in language practices across cultures.

Literature Review

Schumann (1998) emphasized that emotion filters all learning and cognition. If this is true then the study of affective factors in second language learning is important. The role of emotional intelligence plays major factor in English language teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper is to conduct a critical review of empirical studies on the role of EI factors in the English language acquisition. Schumann

research affirms that Emotional Intelligence (EI) helps learners manage their emotions, which mean they can handle frustration, build motivation, and relate better to teachers and peers. So, EI is central to effective ELT. Noels (2000)'s research based on Gardner (1984, 1990) proves that emotions are as important as language ability. Noel's Research shows that attitudes, motivation, anxiety, and emotions are just as important or sometimes more important than a person's raw ability or talent for languages. Even if someone has natural ability, if they feel anxious or unmotivated, they may not learn well. This demands the need of teaching students how to recognize and manage emotions (EI) can boost their motivation and reduce anxiety, making them more successful language learners. Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (1985) introduced the idea of an 'affective filter.' He says that the brain sometimes blocks learning when a student is nervous, bored, anxious, or uninterested. When a student is motivated, relaxed, and confident, their brain allows language input to become real learning. This is to be implemented for developing students' EI, that can lower the affective filter by helping them feel emotionally secure, confident, and motivated in the ELT classroom. Emotional factors have long been recognized as crucial to second language acquisition (SLA). Schumann (1998) argued that emotions form the foundation of all cognitive activity and claimed that variable success in SLA is emotionally driven. Supporting this, Gardner (1984, 1990) and Noels (2000) emphasized that affective variables such as motivation, attitude, and anxiety are as significant as cognitive aptitude in predicting language achievement. Krashen's (1985) *Affective Filter Hypothesis* further explains how emotional states like fear or confidence can either block or facilitate language input. These perspectives collectively underscore the necessity of integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) into ELT, as EI equips learners with self-awareness, emotional regulation, and motivation and these factors that directly affect their language performance. So, all three thinkers Schumann, Gardner/Noels, and Krashen are highlighting the same idea from different angles. They confirmed that language learning is not just mental but it's deeply emotional. Therefore, Emotional Intelligence is a necessary tool for both learners and teachers in ELT classrooms.

Another key research by Krashen on *Applications of Psycholinguistic Research to the Classroom* reveals that:

Emotion is a subject which has received even less objective study in the field of language learning, although it may underlie cognition. There is a link between the physical pathways in the brain for transmitting emotions and the chemicals the brain produces for everyday learning and memory.□
(Christison, 1999, p. 8) In addition, negative emotions cause blood to flow

away from the neocortex (area of logical thought) to the limbic area, making rational decisions impossible (8). Schumann (1998) also cites the importance of emotion to the cognitive process of learning. The amygdala, a structure in the temporal lobe, assesses the motivational significance and emotional relevance of stimuli. On the basis of such appraisals, the brain allocates attention and memory resources to various problems. (xix)

This recent research in psycholinguistics reveals the deep neurological connections between emotional states and language learning processes. Christison (1999) highlights how positive emotional states promote the release of brain chemicals that facilitate memory and learning, whereas negative emotions redirect blood flow from the neocortex is responsible for logical thought and to the limbic system, impairing rational decision-making. These findings echo Schumann's (1998) argument that the amygdala evaluates emotional relevance and allocates cognitive resources accordingly. In this context, emotionally intelligent learners and teachers are better equipped to manage anxiety, enhance motivation, and create meaningful learning experiences. As Krashen (1983) emphasized, the emotional climate of the classroom significantly affects language acquisition outcomes. Collectively, these perspectives emphasize that Emotional Intelligence is not peripheral but central to effective English language instruction.

Schumann's (1998) work, *The Neurobiology of Affect in Language*, is central to understanding how emotion drives learning, particularly Second Language Acquisition (SLA). His approach merges neuroscience and language education in a way that helps us to see Emotional Intelligence (EI) not just as psychological or pedagogical but as biological and essential. Schumann's (1998) neurobiological theory of affect represents a watershed moment in understanding the role of emotions in second language acquisition. Moving beyond purely cognitive frameworks, Schumann argues that emotional processes underlie and shape all cognitive activity. Central to his theory is the role of the amygdala, a brain structure that evaluates the emotional relevance of stimuli. This emotional appraisal determines how the brain allocates attention and memory resources, directly influencing learning outcomes. Language learners who perceive linguistic tasks as emotionally engaging are more likely to retain input and apply it effectively. This view is supported by Christison's (1999) findings, which note that negative emotions divert blood from the neocortex, the site of rational thought and to the limbic system, thereby reducing a learner's ability to process language logically. Schumann's theory thus provides a compelling neuroscientific foundation for integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) into ELT, positioning emotion not as a distraction from learning, but as its very foundation.

These cross-disciplinary insights from psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics collectively underscore a powerful conclusion: emotions do not merely influence language learning and they are the medium through which learning occurs.

Sucaromana (2012) in the research article *Contribution to Language Teaching and Learning: A Review of Emotional Intelligence* offers a comprehensive synthesis of key theoretical models of Emotional Intelligence and their relevance to English Language Teaching. Drawing on the seminal frameworks of Goleman (1995) and Bar-On (1997), the article positions EI as a multifaceted construct essential to both intrapersonal and interpersonal functioning. Goleman's five-component model, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills highlight emotional intelligence as central to personal and social efficacy. In parallel, Bar-On (1997) expands this understanding by emphasizing adaptability, stress management, and mood regulation alongside interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities. Sucaromana argues that these emotional competencies underpin successful communication and cognitive performance in language learning environments. She notes that EI operates at two levels: the internal self-regulation of emotions and the external navigation of social relationships. This dual focus is particularly crucial in ELT, where learners must manage linguistic anxiety, cultural adaptation, and interpersonal interaction. By integrating these perspectives, Sucaromana strengthens the argument that emotional intelligence is not a peripheral element, but a foundational prerequisite for meaningful language acquisition and pedagogical success.

Despite a growing body of research highlighting the critical role of emotional intelligence (EI) in language acquisition, the ELT curriculum still predominantly emphasizes cognitive and structural aspects of language learning, often at the expense of affective and social dimensions. Emotional and interpersonal competencies remain underrepresented in mainstream pedagogical design, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language. Recent studies, such as Abdullah, Altun, and Hama (2022) in their research work *The Effect of Language Learning Anxiety on English Oral Performance*, underscore the need for a more affective-oriented curriculum in ELT. They highlight that second language learning is not merely an individual cognitive task but a profoundly social process that unfolds within dynamic interpersonal relationships. Referencing Hu and Wang (2014), the authors stress that learners' personality traits significantly influence the second language learning process, suggesting that effective communication and oral proficiency are tied closely to the emotional landscape of the learner. However, this insight remains marginal in curriculum frameworks, where little emphasis is given to

structured emotional or social learning interventions that could help mitigate negative emotional states such as anxiety. Indeed, Zhang's (2004) seminal work identified a clear inverse relationship between language anxiety and oral performance—anxiety reduces fluency, confidence, and learner willingness to communicate. This insight has been echoed by several subsequent studies, which recognize anxiety as a core affective barrier to successful language use. However, despite the well-documented correlation between emotional states and language performance, especially in speaking and listening skills, ELT programs continue to prioritize grammatical mastery and lexical accuracy, rarely acknowledging how these outcomes are influenced by the learner's affective well-being.

Abdullah et al. (2022) also delineate the three major categories of challenges encountered in L2 acquisition: learner-related, teacher-related, and language-related factors. Within the learner-related domain, psychological elements such as anxiety, motivation, and emotional regulation emerge as pivotal, yet under-researched and under-taught components. Historically, language education research has focused heavily on cognitive domains—aptitude, memory, and study habits—as predictors of achievement. While these remain important, the field is only beginning to appreciate how emotional variables such as resilience, empathy, and stress tolerance can either catalyze or obstruct language learning. Yassin and Razak (2018) further confirm this trajectory by noting that although emotional variables are now entering the research dialogue, their practical integration into classroom instruction remains limited and uneven. This scarcity between empirical findings and pedagogical application exposes a critical gap in ELT curriculum design. Despite mounting evidence on the influence of emotional and personality traits on L2 acquisition, most curricula remain structurally rigid, evaluation-driven, and emotionally neutral. There is insufficient emphasis on how to equip both learners and teachers with the socio-emotional tools necessary for creating inclusive, emotionally responsive, and anxiety-reduced learning environments.

Moreover, the role of teachers as emotionally intelligent facilitators has not been adequately addressed in teacher training programs. Educators are seldom trained to recognize, interpret, or respond to emotional cues from students, nor are they supported in developing their own emotional competencies. Consequently, teachers may inadvertently reinforce high-anxiety classroom climates that hinder risk-taking and oral participation. The absence of EI-informed pedagogy and SEL (Social Emotional Learning) frameworks in teacher education reinforces the existing academic bias toward cognitive expertise over emotional adaptability.

Therefore, an urgent pedagogical imperative arises: the ELT curriculum must evolve to holistically integrate emotional intelligence as a foundational pillar, not merely an auxiliary concern. Doing so will require curriculum developers, policy makers, and teacher educators to incorporate well-researched emotional learning models such as those proposed by Goleman (1995) and Bar-On (1997) into practical language teaching frameworks. A revised curriculum should also include affective assessment tools, emotionally supportive materials, and classroom strategies aimed at reducing anxiety and promoting emotional resilience among learners. Hence this review of literature reveals emotional and interpersonal variables significantly influence language learning outcomes, especially in oral proficiency and learner motivation. However, existing ELT curricula do not adequately reflect these insights, resulting in a pedagogical gap that undermines learner potential. To bridge this gap calls for a paradigm shift from a narrowly cognitive model of language teaching to a more emotionally intelligent, learner-centered, and holistic approach to ELT.

Goleman's and Bar-On's Models of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been studied through different theories and models, each offering unique ways to understand and measure how emotions affect our thinking and behavior. Although these models may differ in their approaches, they all agree on one basic idea that recognizing, managing, and using emotions wisely helps people succeed both personally and professionally. These models give us helpful tools to better understand EI and how it plays an important role in language learning. In this paper, the focus is on two major models of emotional intelligence: Daniel Goleman's model and Reuven Bar-On's model. Their ideas will be explored to see how they can be applied effectively in English language classrooms.

Before focusing on the two main models of Emotional Intelligence (EI) discussed in this paper Goleman's and Bar-On's, it is important to understand the broader range of EI theories that have shaped the field. These include the ability model, trait model, Genos model, and mixed models. The 'ability model' was developed by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004), who originally introduced the term 'emotional intelligence' in 1990. This model defines EI as a set of mental abilities. It explains emotional intelligence through four main skills, recognizing emotions, using emotions to think, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. The focus here is on EI as a measurable mental ability, much like IQ. In contrast, the 'trait model' views emotional intelligence not as a mental ability but as part of one's personality. Researchers like Petrides (2004) argue that because emotions are deeply personal and subjective, EI cannot be measured objectively like a skill. Instead, trait EI is based on how people see themselves in terms of emotional abilities. This is referred to as

emotional self-efficacy, meaning a person's belief in their own emotional skills. The 'Genos model', created by Ben Palmer and Con Stough, was designed specifically for workplace settings. It aims to help business leaders and HR professionals identify and improve emotional skills in employees. This model highlights six key emotional competencies needed for professional growth and effective teamwork. Lastly, the mixed models of EI combine emotional abilities with personality traits. This approach is best seen in the works of Daniel Goleman, who described EI as a set of personal qualities often linked to character. According to the mixed model, emotional intelligence includes both how well a person can manage emotions and certain personality features like motivation and empathy. Both Goleman's model and Bar-On's model are part of this category. These models often use a combination of self-assessments and performance-based tools to measure EI.

Goleman's model of Emotional Intelligence is often referred to as the "Performance Model" of EI. In his early work (1998), Goleman outlined five key components of emotional intelligence. These were grouped into two main areas: personal competencies, which focus on understanding and managing our own emotions, and social competencies, which focus on understanding and managing emotions in others. The personal side includes self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation, while the social side involves empathy and social skills. Later, Goleman, along with Boyatzis and Rhee (2000), revised the model into a more organized structure with four main categories, often shown as four quadrants, 1st quadrant is Self-awareness, 2nd quadrant as Self-management, 3rd quadrant as Social awareness and 4th quadrant as Relationship management. These categories reflect two core abilities: first, the ability to recognize or be aware of emotions in one self or others and second, the ability to manage or regulate those emotions. Simply having emotional awareness doesn't mean a person has already developed the full set of emotional skills. For instance, a person might recognize how others feel built up social awareness, but still need to learn more complex skills like empathy or understanding group dynamics built up organizational awareness. These advanced skills are built over time through experience or specific training.

Each of these four areas forms the foundation for developing more detailed emotional abilities. These aren't automatically present just because someone is emotionally aware; they must be practiced and nurtured. What sets Goleman's model apart from others is its focus on practical performance, especially in workplace and leadership settings. Unlike other models that discuss emotional intelligence in general life areas like well-being or adaptability, Goleman's approach is more goal-oriented. It looks at how EI contributes to effective functioning and leadership in professional

environments. This performance-oriented focus is highly relevant to English language teaching (ELT). Teachers and learners can apply these emotional skills to create a more supportive, empathetic, and engaging classroom atmosphere. Building these competencies in the language classroom can improve communication, lower anxiety, and boost learning outcomes, making this model a valuable tool for improving English language education.

Reuven Bar-On is credited with introducing the term “emotional quotient” (EQ)—a way to measure emotional intelligence, similar to how IQ measures cognitive intelligence (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003). In his definition, emotional intelligence is not just about emotions alone, but a broad set of non-cognitive skills and abilities that help a person handle everyday challenges, pressures, and social demands effectively (Bar-On, 2002).

According to Bar-On, emotional intelligence helps individuals adapt well to their environment, maintain their well-being, and perform successfully in personal and social settings. He described five key areas of emotional functioning, Self-awareness and expression gives understanding and clearly expressing one's own emotions. Interpersonal awareness and relationships helps in understanding and relating to others in a respectful, empathetic way. Emotional regulation and impulse control helps to deal with strong emotions and avoiding impulsive behavior. Adaptability and problem-solving helps in coping well with change and solving social or personal challenges and General mood and optimism helps in maintaining a positive outlook, feeling good about oneself and others. These five categories are further grouped into five main domains as Intrapersonal skills: Self-awareness and emotional expression, Interpersonal skills: Empathy and relationship-building, Adaptability: Problem-solving and flexibility, Stress management: Emotional regulation and impulse control and General mood: Optimism and life satisfaction.

Unlike some other models that focus mainly on professional or leadership success, Bar-On's framework emphasizes emotional well-being, personal growth, and healthy social functioning. This makes it particularly useful in educational settings especially in language learning environments where communication, self-confidence, and interaction are essential. From an educational perspective, Bar-On's model offers a holistic approach to emotional intelligence that is especially beneficial for both learners and teachers in English language classrooms. While Goleman's model focuses on leadership and performance, Bar-On's approach emphasizes self-development, resilience, and emotional wellness as great valid factors that are equally important in academic settings. In ELT classrooms, where learners face communication challenges, performance anxiety, and intercultural barriers, the skills

outlined in Bar-On's model can significantly enhance both language learning and personal growth.

Implications

Emotionally competent teachers significantly shape the classroom climate. Goleman (1998) emphasized empathy and relationship management as essential leadership skills. These attributes are equally vital in teaching. Empathy is the primary requirement for every Teacher and having with high emotional intelligence is better able to perceive student needs, respond to behavioral cues, and manage emotionally charged situations with sensitivity. As noted by Soran Abdullah et al. (2022), learners often experience anxiety linked to teacher expectations, peer pressure, or fear of making mistakes. Emotionally intelligent teachers can buffer these stressors by, creating a safe space for language risk-taking, using positive reinforcement over criticism, freedom giving to the students make mistakes learning from them and modelling empathy and respect, encouraging the same among students.

Bar-On's domains such as stress management and adaptability (1997) further suggest that emotionally aware teachers are more capable of handling curricular demands, student diversity, and classroom unpredictability effectively. Incorporating EI into ELT does not require overhauling the curriculum but integrating emotion-focused practices into regular classroom routines. Activities aligned with Bar-On and Goleman's models include, Role-playing social situations where learners practice both language and emotional responses (e.g., apologizing, showing gratitude, expressing disagreement politely). Group storytelling or peer interviews, promoting empathy and relationship-building. Emotion vocabulary exercises, where students label and express their feelings in English, fostering self-expression and vocabulary acquisition. These activities support both the language development and emotional literacy of learners, particularly in second language contexts where cultural and interpersonal dynamics often intensify emotional challenges (Yassin & Razak, 2018).

Curriculum Design Recommendations

Existing ELT curricula tend to focus primarily on cognitive and linguistic competence, often neglecting the emotional and social dimensions of language learning. As Abdullah et al. (2022) highlight, much of the research and course content has overlooked learner psychology beyond anxiety studies. Therefore, the curriculum should integrate emotional learning outcomes alongside linguistic goals. It must include project-based or task-based learning that encourages collaboration and emotional engagement. It is to build in structured reflection points for students to analyze their emotional growth. By doing so, emotional intelligence becomes not just a complementary skill, but a central feature of the language learning experience.

Changes should be highlighted EI based instructions in Teacher Training Modules. Given the influence of teacher emotional competencies, teacher education programs should incorporate EI development into training modules. Teacher trainees should receive, Workshops on empathy-building and self-regulation, Strategies for managing classroom emotions and conflicts and tools for assessing and supporting students' emotional needs. Such additions align with Goleman's quadrant of relationship management, as well as Bar-On's emphasis on emotional adaptation. Emotional intelligence training prepares teachers to cultivate supportive, inclusive learning spaces, particularly vital in diverse and globalized classrooms. EI plays an effective learning strategy in multicultural classrooms. Language classrooms are inherently diverse, often involving students from various cultural, linguistic, and socio-emotional backgrounds. Emotional intelligence supports inclusion by fostering, cultural sensitivity through empathy, conflict resolution through self-regulation, and collaborative engagement through social awareness. Bar-On's model, with its focus on interpersonal and adaptability skills, is particularly valuable in such environments. Empirical evidence from Sucaromana (2012) supports the notion that when emotional and social factors are embedded in classroom practice, learners demonstrate improved participation, tolerance, and communication across cultural lines.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence should no longer be seen as a supplemental or peripheral construct in English language teaching. As research by Goleman (1998), Bar-On (1997), and others demonstrates, EI has a direct influence on both language acquisition outcomes and classroom dynamics. From reducing anxiety to promoting empathy and effective communication, emotionally intelligent classrooms are more inclusive, engaging, and learner-centered. There is a strong case for further empirical studies on the direct applications of EI in ELT contexts, especially in multicultural and multilingual environments. Additionally, innovations in teacher education and curriculum design must prioritize the integration of emotional competencies to ensure that students are not only linguistically proficient but also emotionally resilient and socially aware communicators.

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