
English for Success: Emotional Intelligence for Professional Success

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Abstract

English is becoming more important than ever in an effective performance of working duties in the workplace in the context of Global, ICT-enabled, AI-driven, and culturally diverse workplaces, while Emotional Intelligence (EQI) is gaining in importance. The value of these skills in the workplace context, interpersonal relationships, adaptability, leadership and career development is discussed in this conceptual contribution. This article reviews the theories to contribute to the study of applied linguistics and employability and the relevance of those theories for the understanding of English as a universal professional skill focusing on English in international teams, intercultural negotiations, itself as a lingua-franca skill as well as in written communication. It presents the main theory constructs regarding emotional intelligence based on the ability model by Salovey and Mayer and the mixed competency model by Goleman. The analysis implies that although control of English language skills may provide some avenues for professional opportunities, it is not directly related to communicative competence and career advancement. In addition to the linguistic competence, self-awareness, emotional regulation is required along with an ability to take in and act on culturally different communicative cues, and to listen and understand. But there is a demand for support related to language in emotional intelligence (processes of emotion, intentions, disagreement and professional identity. This article, therefore, is not about the development of 'linguistic competence' or 'emotional competence' but about how professional success arises from the combination of these two competences rather than either one. It proposes a relationship between emotional and intercultural competences to be applied at both English-language training and professional development training of developing individuals for cooperation, workplaces connected with technology and other cultures.

Keywords: technology, EQI, professional development, culture, linguistic competence, self-awareness, work-place etc.

Introduction

Proficient communication and interrelation as well as technical competency is crucial for today's work world. In a world that is interwoven, two factors help to influence the career usually in every sector one can think of one's ability to communicate in the English language and having a strong emotional intelligence (EI). These skills are usually considered one way, either as a linguistic/communicative skill or a psychological/interpersonal skill; but the fact is that these are both contextual enablers that will impact an individual's capacity to communicate, collaborate, lead and adapt to the work context.

Beyond analytical and technological skills, the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report (2023) points to a group of “uniquely human skills” such as creative thinking, resilience, curiosity, empathy, active listening and leadership and social influence that are getting more vital to future job requirements. The finding arrives in a shifting paradigm of organizational relationships; as automation and AI grow to take over repetitive technical and analytical jobs, communication and emotional intelligence skills are coming to be seen as distinguishing great professionals. At the same time, the worldwide situation of language competence continues to confirm the importance of English as the language of international business, scientific communication and diplomacy (The EF Education First, 2023).

This article gives a broad survey of English as a skill which is used in the business world all over the world based on the most up-to-date information concerning business English usage. It examines the major theoretical conceptions of EI that are yet to be developed in contemporary research and practice and will analyse its manifestation in Twenty First century workplaces, both hybrid and digital. Towards the end of the article, a discussion on the connection between language skills and emotional intelligence is explored, and it is concluded that it is the combination rather than a dichotomy of the two competencies that is a key ingredient in the success of a career.

English Proficiency as a Global Professional Skill

English still dominates in the field of commerce, science and electronic communication. The EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) is an annual report of national

English proficiency ranking based on data from standardized tests taken by millions of people around the world, which relates to a number of indicators of national economic performance, such as gross national income, innovation capacity and quality of life measures (EF Education First, 2023). Despite its shortcoming in that the scales are scores of individuals who have chosen to take an online test, not a random sample of a larger population, the EF EPI stands between some of the most frequently referenced longitudinal data sets on global English proficiency trends and influences decisions by governments, schools and global employers (EF Education First, 2023). The report for 2023 shows that the gap between countries that have institutes and have invested heavily in teaching English and countries that have not is increasing, having consequences on international labour markets and economic competitiveness.

As the COVID situation has spread around the world, remote and hybrid work scales have become generally adopted, often consisting of multi-lingual, geographically-distributed teams working remotely. The process has reinforced the practical requirement of English throughout such ‘distributed teams’ particularly in technical, consultative and knowledge businesses. Building on survey results from more than 10,000 employers in 45 economies and 27 industry clusters, the survey reveals that, together with other core skills, that communication-related competencies are among the top skills that will be in demand in the “next few years” (World Economic Forum, 2023). Although the individual threads of this report do not catalogue the need for the ability to speak the international language of English, the idea of cross-cultural communicative interaction and collaboration among workforces spread around the world makes it clear that a shared language of international communication is key to effective cross-cultural coordination.

Literacy in English in the workplace is not limited to one context or another. Professional competence in English is not a single context, but has multiple compartments and they are relational. Ambiguity or an excessive informality during written communication (e.g. e-mail, reports, proposals) may cause misunderstandings especially when involved in cross-cultural communication where there are a lot of differences in the interpretations of directness and politeness. Oral and written communication skills are equally valued on the employer surveys: Regular surveys conducted by employers all highlighted the importance of being able to communicate clearly and confidently both orally and in writing, answer questions as well as attend meetings and negotiations. Communication is part of the required career readiness competencies required for graduations according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), a U.S.-based organization that surveys employers on what they want from the graduates in

the United States (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2023).

The ability to understand what people say and the range of accents is important too. English is used by a variety of people, and often in a second or foreign language context, and professional communication is thus often conducted between non-native speakers with varying accents and pragmatic norms. In this context, which in the field of applied linguistics is called English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), it becomes important for listeners to be flexible and tolerant to variation in contrast from a single 'native speaker' standard (Crystal, 2003). Another aspect of the competence is intercultural pragmatics, which concerns knowledge of how pragmatic aspects such as directness, hierarchy, conventions of humour, politeness vary across cultures to effectively communicate in professional situations in English. It is important to note here that there can be problems among fluent English speakers, if these areas are misaligned, which can cause friction in multicultural teams, for the reason that grammatical competence is not enough for crossing the liminal or "foreign" space of professional communication.

The ability to speak English opens doors to international education, professional networks, and jobs, but it is not enough to communicate effectively or to achieve career promotion. A person can be very well acquainted with the rules and vocabulary of the English language, and not be familiar with how to communicate with others professionally, communicate assertively, or with assertive style, and/or how to grasp interpersonal cues. The disparity between verbal skills and mental agility suggests an additional competence which is crucial, emotional intelligence.

Theoretical Foundations of Emotional Intelligence

Concepts related to emotional intelligence can be traced back before the term itself. Edward Thorndike (1920) brought up the concept of "social intelligence" that refers to one's ability to understand and manage interpersonal situations accurately, rather than abstract reasoning, which is assessed by typical intelligence tests. This early discrimination anticipated future researchers who tried to break down emotional and interpersonal strengths down into measurable variables.

It was in 1990 that the term 'emotional intelligence' was used in an article in the journal "Imagination, Cognition, and Personality" by writers Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. Salovey and Mayer equate the definition of emotional intelligence with three capacities to "perceive" emotions, both in oneself and in other people, categorize emotions, and understand how emotions can be used to "inform" thoughts and actions. They proposed their model, which reframed emotional intelligence as a real cognition, not a personality feature, as is traditionally defined as being smart.

Later, Mayer and Salovey identified this continuum as being expanded to a four-branch approach: accurately perceive emotion in oneself and others including tone of voice and body language; use emotion to enhance cognition, reasoning, problem-solving, and creativity, understand complex emotional configurations (how emotions develop, combine and change over time), and regulate emotion within oneself and others to support personal and intellectual growth. Instead of tasks requiring a self-assessment of one's capabilities based solely upon one's experiences, the model has been instantiated and operationalized in the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), which is a performance-based test where participants are to solve problems that contain emotional components (Mayer et al., 2004).

The idea of emotional intelligence finally came into the mainstream of organizational and public view with the publication of Daniel Goleman's (1995) book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Drawing on ideas from psychology and neuroscience, Goleman combined the work into a claim that the competencies of emotions make a substantial contribution to life and career outcomes that the traditional measures of IQ do not capture. Goleman (1998) suggests five component areas of his model: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness is the knowledge of one's own feelings, emotions, moods and drives, and how these feelings, emotions, moods and drives influence others. Self-regulation relates to the capacity to manage and/or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. In Goleman's theory, motivation means being passionate about working for more than just monetary or status reasons, and having the tendency to follow goals with energy and persistence. Empathy is understanding others' emotional 'nature' and good social skill is having 'skills' to deal with people and create networks.

Goleman's model differs from the Salovey-Mayer ability model, which is often referred to as a "mixed model," with a blend of personality, motivation, and behavioural competence with the cognitive-emotional ability. In later research, Goleman used the model specifically for leadership and works performance in the workplace and developed his concept of EI into the "Five elements of EI," a set of skills that he said accounted for effective management of self and others. Effective leaders excel as more than just technical workers or intellects, he said, because they are adept at managing themselves and adjusting their behaviour to others' emotions. (Goleman, 1998)

These basic models have been further developed and refined over the years with further studies. Researchers have been able to differentiate between emotional intelligence (either "trait" or "ability") as they consider it closer to personality psychology and

emotional intelligence as portrayed in a performance-based test like the MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2004). The difference is still relevant to the interpretation of scores from research for two reasons: first, reliance on trait-based instruments versus ability-based instruments of EI don't necessarily demonstrate a high correlation; second, the scores from trait-based instruments and ability-based instruments may be predictive of different outcomes. The studies that have been conducted to date using meta analytic techniques to examine how emotional intelligence relates to organizational outcomes have tended to report moderate or moderate positive correlation between EI and several work-related outcomes such as job performance, leadership effectiveness, job satisfaction (Mayer et al., 2004), though on some occasions the strength of the association varies with the type of job outcome examined and measurement approach used (Pruitt, 2006; Mayer and Salovey, 2000). The findings of this research confirm that emotional intelligence played a factor in job success (along with cognitive intelligence, technical skills and situational factors like job demands and organizational culture).

Emotional Intelligence in the Contemporary Workplace

The past decade, including the last few years since the COVID-19 pandemic, has seen a growing focus on the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace, and a strengthening of the need for workplace stress, enhanced awareness of employee mental health and well-being. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023 specifically mentions empathy, active listening, leadership and social influence as key skills that will become more important for the global workforce by 2027 alongside analytical thinking and technological literacy (World Economic Forum, 2023). The positioning is part of a wider understanding among employers about the growing significance of relational skills in the labour market, which is clearly associated with the relational skills assessed under the emotional intelligence umbrella of constructs. This report was drawn upon responses from more than 800 employers, with more than 11 million workers, and one of the more comprehensive a up-to-date sources for reporting the skill demands employers perceive (World Economic Forum, 2023).

As work has become a hybrid of remote and in-person, there are new communication challenges that demand a new type of EQ. Without face-to-face interaction, professionals need to adopt other approaches, like written communication, video conferencing, and asynchronous messages to share tone, empathy, and interpersonal awareness, which are rooted in the perception part of the Mayer-Salovey model of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). People who can effectively regulate their emotions and have a strong awareness of social cues tend to have more successful

relationships with others even when the common cues used to communicate interpersonal connection are missing, such as making proactive check-ins with colleagues, reading between the lines of communication (even if the intent is not clear), managing own frustration and/or feelings of isolation when working remotely or in remote areas.

There are still many studies on leadership that emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence in the context of effective management and organizational results. Leaders with high self-awareness and self-regulation tend to be in a better position to regulate their own stress and remain calm, even in moments of change and uncertainty for their organization. Leaders who can sense and react to the emotions of others have the ability to inspire trust and resolve conflict, while building inclusive teams' environments. Social skills (how a leader communicates effectively and persuasively, negotiates with others, and establishes collaborative relationships) have always been a primary attribute of a leader's ability to influence and bring together and involve diverse groups of individuals in support of a leader's organization goal (Goleman, 1998).

In addition to measurable performance, emotional intelligence has also been observed to have connections to the overall wellness in a workplace such as: Burnout, conflict resolution, and team management. A corporate organization that would like to invest in emotional intelligence training, may launch such training as a part of its organizational culture development, employee retention or employee psychological safety development initiatives. The number and kinds of these learning programs differ significantly in design and supporting research, but an increasing number of organizations feel that emotional competencies can develop and strengthen over time and that they are not genetically fixed and permanent. (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2004).

The Relationship between English Proficiency and Emotional Intelligence

English proficiency and emotional intelligence do not have the same academic origins, applied linguistics and psychology, respectively, but they relate to each other in ways that mean the understanding and skills students develop in one field are applicable in the other and that one field can also contribute to the other. While unrelated in terms of their origins, both English proficiency and emotional intelligence are related in ways that mean that the understanding and skills a learner develops in one area can be transferred to the other, and that the other area can be transferred to the first. Second or additional language communication is not usually just a matter of semantics; it is situated in linguistic, social and emotional contexts that demand an awareness of a speaker's emotional state, cultural convictions and communication intent.

One example is a non-native English speaker who is in a foreign business

negotiation. The ability to communicate grammatically and with a large vocabulary is an important part of the task, but also a grasp of non-verbal communication tone, hesitation, discomfort, enthusiasm, or scepticism, and a willingness to adapt accordingly. Such "reading and responding" to emotional signals is true of a linguistically challenging interaction and represents part of the Mayer-Salovey model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) functioning in combination with linguistic competence, coarsely called "reading and responding to language".

Likewise, in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) setting where English is a shared first language of speakers with widely varying norms of communicative style, emphasis, and pronunciation, empathy and social awareness is often necessary in order to adapt to different accents, communication and pragmatic norms (Crystal, 2003). A person who has high emotional intelligence might notice when conducting a multilingual meeting that he or she seems to be hearing words correctly and seems to understand them, but other participants are not. If despite his or her advanced knowledge of English language, the person interprets with high emotional intelligence might notice that the other participants don't seem to hear correctly and don't seem to understand what he or she is saying in the meeting. However, if the highly proficient monolingual speaker of English has not understood this interpersonal aspect, then he or she might unintentionally offend their colleagues by talking too fast, by using too much idiomatic expression, or by not noticing when they are not being understood.

This is especially important for any sort of written communication emails, reports etc. because tone can be hard to get across and get wrong, particularly between cultures and languages. An emotionally intelligent person is better able to read and understand the emotions of others and modify his or her message to be less likely to cause offense or misunderstanding to the other people that may not be of the same culture/ language background. To complement another type of language ability, social competence or linguistic awareness what Goleman (1998) calls "empathic accuracy" referring to the capacity to predict the emotional response of one's audience to linguistic communication; this can be defined more specifically as being socially aware or socially competent regarding the language of communication (Mayor et al., 2004).

This relationship has been tacitly taken up in modern workplace skills analysis list. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023 does not classify language proficiency and emotional-relational skills as separate categories, but rather categorizes all the skills listed under communication with other skills listed as core to the modern workforce such as empathy, active listening, and social influence (World Economic Forum,

2023). Together, these categories indicate that for the employer effective professional communication is conceived as a bundle of skills, made up of linguistic and interpersonal skills, rather than two traits that are unrelated instead.

Another point to consider is that learning English and developing emotional intelligence through one and the same process could be of complementary value to professionals working in multicultural environments. The acquisition of a second language may itself involve emotional stamina and self-knowledge: working with a second language is uncomfortable and often brings about a sense of feeling less skilled or competent in the language than in their native tongue, even when neither is one's primary language. This experience of vulnerability that is shared in learning a language might sometimes help to increase understanding and tolerance for people whose communicative situation is similar to that in which the language is being learned, an effect not systematically studied in large-scale empirical studies, but frequently noted anecdotally when conducting cross-cultural training or when engaging in business relations across the cultures.

Practical Implications for Professional Development

Given the interrelated connections between EI and fluency, a holistic method for increasing both skill sets might be more appropriate for professionals looking to advance their own careers in an international or multicultural workspace. Role-play learning, simulations on negotiating and cross cultural case studies can be used in language training to enable learners to not only learn/cling on the accuracy of language but also perceive and handle emotional cues accurately in the real professional context. Likewise, training programs on emotional intelligence in multicultural contexts at work or in multilingual settings may be enriched by introducing the topic of culturally and linguistically diverse norms, expressions of emotions, and expectations regarding interactions between people. For companies doing business abroad, additional factors to take into account in promotion and hiring decisions are inability to understand the person in foreign language and lack of inter-personal skills which are integral to effective cross-cultural working. The HR development systems that combine language with soft-skills training instead of delivering both separately may better suit employees to emerge pre-equipped to meet the needs of diverse multicultural teams that are distributed across the globe.

Self-directed development for individuals may involve frequent self-evaluation of language use, of interpersonal communication style, of listening actively in intercultural situations, or of developing self-awareness on the transmission of interpersonal communication style to colleagues of different language/cultural backgrounds. There can also be great opportunities for the development of both competences at once in mentorship

relationships with colleagues from other cultural and/or language backgrounds, with opportunities for real-world experience of how language and emotional awareness can interact when working professionally.

Conclusion

English competency and emotional intelligence are different modalities but well linked competencies which impact occupational achievement in the modern global economy. English continues to be the main language for international business, science and electronic communication, and industry experts who want to compete in international employment markets, multinational firms and cross-border partnerships will need to know and be able to read and write English (Crystal, 2003; EF Education First, 2023). Over the same period, many psychologists, starting with Thorndike's (1920) initial idea of social intelligence and extending down the decades to Salovey (1990), Mayer and Salovey (1997), and Mayer et al. (2004), have shown the importance emotional intelligence defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate and efficiently use emotions has for efficacy of leadership, success in working cooperatively, and overall performance in the workplace.

The current data of the workforce further illustrate the importance of both skills. The report reveals that communication, empathy, and social influence are key skills that will continue to see a rise in prominence by 2027, mirroring how employers see that skills guided by human relationships and interaction will be vital regardless of the growing technical and analytical part of their jobs being automated (World Economic Forum, 2023). Professionals and organizations can benefit equally if they see these skill sets as interdependent. Every aspect of the language is dependent on the emotional intelligence, and then, each interpersonal aspect of the language on such emotional intelligence. Effective communication in a global and multicultural workplace requires the language plus the emotional intelligence; it cannot stand on its own. In this context, achieving success in professional life is best achieved by developing the language and emotional skills together and not in isolation, or individually.

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