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Emotional Intelligence as a Driving Force in the Study of Foreign Languages in Higher Education

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Abstract

The study of foreign languages in the era of the third millennium is perhaps one of the most important, life-affirming competencies for the modern man. One of the effective ways to maintain motivation among university students to learn a foreign language, do their language tasks and attend practical language classes is to establish a special emotional connection with the student, i.e. to activate emotional intelligence in the process of L2 learning and the teacher - student interaction.

The main goal of this research is to study the relationship between the level of development of a teacher's emotional intelligence (L2 teacher at the university) and the success of mastering a foreign language by students of linguistic specialties in a higher educational institution.

The variety of methods for diagnosing emotional intelligence were used in this work (EmIn questionnaire by D. Lyusin; N. Hall and empathy level estimate by V.V. Boyko). Methods of statistical data processing - factor, correlation and regression analyses - allowed measuring and establishing a teacher's ability to understand students' emotions, manage their emotional sphere in order to achieve the most effective teaching result in foreign language classes. 22 senior students from the Institute of Foreign languages at Moscow State Pedagogical University participated in the experiment. The study made it possible to establish a significant correlation between the parametric data on the teacher's emotional intelligence and the academic success of a student studying a foreign language. A system of recommendations was introduced on the level of development of L2 teachers' emotional intelligence with the aim of establishing a positive emotional connection with students and creating a favourable learning atmosphere in L2 classes as well as achieving effective learning outcomes.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, foreign language, teacher, student, empathy, emotions.

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Introduction

Teaching foreign languages is one of the most challenging professions that requires a lot of enthusiasm, inspiration and creativity. Probably, it can be compared with the profession of an actor who needs to reembody into different personalities in order to reach other people's mind, emotions and feelings. Most scholars in the field of a foreign language (L2) acquisition confirm that studying foreign languages is emotionally driven (Dörnyei, 2005; Imai, 2010; López, 2011; MacIntyre, MacKinnon, & Clément, 2009; Oz, Demirezen & Pourfeiz, 2015) both for students as well as for teachers and tutors. Therefore, one can assert that managing proper human emotions in the process of L2 learning is an indispensable component of the efficient academic communication between a teacher and a student. And consequently, this will lead to a more successful foreign language acquisition process. Thus, a remarkable feature of being emotionally intelligent at a foreign language class is a better level of academic productivity, more positive emotions and motivation to continue the second language acquisition.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Hence, the purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between the level of development of a teacher's emotional intelligence (L2 teacher at the university) and the success of mastering a foreign language by students of linguistic specialties in a higher educational institution.

In fact, this study purported to reach the following objectives:

1. To identify whether L2 teacher's EI level defines his or her successful foreign language teaching career.

2. To understand if an L2 teacher's EI affects the development of a student's EI in the L2 acquisition.

3. To estimate whether an L2 teacher's EI level makes a direct impact on a student's motivation to learn a foreign language and his or her zeal to acquire new L2 knowledge.

Literature review

The notion of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has generated an expansive interest in a modern scientific field. Research shows that social and emotional skills are correlated to success in many areas of life, including effective teaching, student learning, quality relationships, and academic performance (Sutten & Weatley, 2003).

According to Goleman (1995), a distinguished psychologist and professional in the field of emotional intelligence, a person can attribute 80% of the reasons for any success to the emotional intelligence (Zarezadeh, 2013). Research has demonstrated that EI more than IQ accounts for success in life and education (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Salovey, Brackett & Mayer, 2004). Much research findings suggest that emotional intelligence is important for work settings (Carmeli, 2003) and classrooms (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004), and enhances performance in interviewing (Fox & Spector, 2000), cognitive tasks (Schuttes, Malouff & Bhullar, 2009) and contextual performance (Carmeli, 2003).

In the broadest sense emotional intelligence combines the personality's ability to communicate effectively by understanding the emotions of others and the ability to adapt to their emotional state. All this gave many researchers the basis to believe that the ability to control oneself and competently organize interaction is essential in the field of activity, that implies direct communication with others, which is fundamental in the work of a teacher.

Investigating the role of emotional factors in second language learning is not something novel in modern social sciences and humanities.

Traditionally, when analyzing the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on students' foreign language learning, the research focus has always been particularly on the level of the learners' EI in L2 acquisition (e.g. Oz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2015; Zarezadeh, 2013; Pishghadam, 2009). Zarafshan and Ardeshiri (2012) investigated the effects of emotional intelligence and use of language learning strategies on English language proficiency among Iranian students learning English as a foreign language. Their study showed that metacognitive, affective and social learning strategies, in addition to emotional intelligence, contributed positively to English language proficiency. In another research attempt, Shao, Yu and Ji (2013) investigated the relationship between English as a foreign language (EFL) students' emotional intelligence and writing achievement among 68 non-English major freshmen in a university in Hang Zhou. They found that there was a relatively strong positive relationship between EI and writing achievement.

Therefore, the research examples introduced above demonstrate that affects and emotions have been the object of a scientific focus in the field of foreign languages in relation to the students' successful L2 acquisition. However, there is another important side of the studies dedicated to the emotional intelligence phenomenon. We suggest that it is also essential to take into account a foreign language teacher's level of EI development (Sutten & Weatley, 2003) which directly correlates with the success of the student's foreign language acquisition and his further amateur or professional interest in foreign language education.

Methodology

To achieve the main goal of our research and its objectives, we interviewed 22 senior students from the Institute of Foreign languages at Moscow State Pedagogical University who became the subjects of this study. We selected only those students who are combining both study and work. Our respondents' future specialization is the teacher of the English and Italian languages as well as the teacher of the Chinese and English languages. At the same time, they are teaching part time at private language centers and acting as private language tutors and trainees (interns) in state schools.

The respondents were asked to take part in an EI research which consisted of three surveys. The subjects completed three questionnaires which were focusing on their EI estimate (method for diagnosing the level of empathic abilities by Boyko; emotional intelligence questionnaire by Lyusin and diagnostics of emotional intelligence by Hall).

The first questionnaire designed by Boyko contains 36 items and 6 scales: the rational channel of empathy; the emotional channel of empathy; the intuitive channel of empathy; empathy attitudes; empathy penetrating ability; empathy identification. The number of correct answers on each scale is calculated, and then the total score is determined. Assessments on each scale can vary from 0 to 6 points and indicate the significance of a particular parameter in the structure of empathy.

The second EI development questionnaire designed by Lyusin is a 46-item measure of emotional intelligence which represents four inter-related dimensions: interpersonal emotional intelligence; intrapersonal emotional intelligence; emotions recognition; emotions management. The participants were required to rate the statements on a 4-point (ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) scale. With the help of this test, a person can determine how much he or she has developed the ability to understand and manage their emotions, as well as how much one can determine the emotions of others and influence them. According to Lyusin, this is the essence of emotional intelligence quotient.

Finally, the measurement of the respondents' emotional intelligence was based on Nicolas Hall emotional intelligence test. The technique is proposed to identify the ability to understand the relationship of the person, represented in emotions and manage the emotional sphere based on decision-making. Hall's test demonstrates how people use emotions in their life, and how they take into account different aspects of emotional intelligence: attitude to yourself and others, ability to communicate, attitude to life and the search for harmony. The test consists of 30 statements and contains 5 scales (emotional awareness; emotions management; self-motivation; empathy; recognition of other people's emotions). Levels of partial emotional intelligence in accordance with the results: 14 and more – high; 8-13 – medium; 7 and less – low. Integrative level of emotional intelligence is determined by the following quantitative indicators: 70 and more – high; 40-69 – medium; 39 and less – low.

Overall, it took participants around twenty minutes on average to complete the surveys. Data analysis was

carried out in order to address the research questions formulated for the present study. The statistical analyses were performed using Statistica 13.3. Inferential statistics including Pearson product-moment correlation test, factor and regression analyses were used to examine the probable relationship between multiple variables and the effect of EI profiles on the success of foreign language learning. Statistical tests conducted for this study were assessed at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Our primary data analysis demonstrated the average level of English language teachers' EI development. At the same time one can observe high correlation links between separate variables that represent EI development of foreign language teachers (see table 1 below).

There are strong correlations between interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional intelligence as well as between emotions perception and control - 0,67; 0,85; 0,77 (var 1, 2, 3 and 4 correspondingly). Successful foreign language acquisition is primarily based on effective communication and interaction between a teacher and a student. Therefore, being able to understand a student's physical and emotional state in the class is of high importance. There are different students with different characters, spirits, temperament and levels of knowledge. Sometimes it is not easy to "be on the same wavelength" emotionally with the students at once. Anyway, a professional L2 teacher (English language teacher in this case) tries to self-motivate to feel the learners' mood and interests to organize the work more effectively in the classroom – 0,64; 0,54; 0,42 (var 1, var 7, var 8 and var 9).

Table 1. Correlation matrix of the level of ESL teachers' EI development and the success of a foreign language acquisition

Variable	Correlation (Spreadsheet) Marked correlations are significant at p < ,05000 N=22 (Case wise deletion of missing data)														
	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10	Var11	Var12	Var13	Var14	Var15
Var1	1,00	**0,67**	**0,85**	**0,77**	0,33	0,36	**0,64**	**0,54**	**0,42**	-0,39	-0,20	-0,30	0,12	**0,56**	**0,47**
Var2	**0,67**	1,00	**0,83**	**0,83**	0,18	0,39	0,18	**0,66**	0,09	-0,16	-0,39	-0,17	0,17	**0,51**	**0,47**
Var3	**0,85**	**0,83**	1,00	0,71	**0,41**	0,20	**0,56**	**0,69**	0,29	-0,27	-0,20	-0,32	0,15	**0,57**	**0,49**
Var4	**0,77**	**0,83**	**0,71**	1,00	0,14	**0,43**	0,27	**0,57**	0,17	-0,26	**-0,43**	-0,15	0,08	**0,55**	0,37
Var5	0,33	0,18	**0,41**	0,14	1,00	0,28	**0,52**	**0,48**	**0,45**	-0,20	0,17	0,06	**0,40**	0,37	**0,50**
Var6	0,36	0,39	0,20	**0,43**	0,28	1,00	0,02	**0,51**	0,39	-0,20	-0,29	0,05	0,06	0,23	0,17
Var7	**0,64**	0,18	**0,56**	0,27	**0,52**	0,02	1,00	0,33	**0,62**	-0,18	0,32	-0,26	0,42	**0,50**	**0,39**
Var8	**0,54**	**0,66**	**0,69**	**0,57**	0,48	**0,51**	0,33	1,00	**0,41**	-0,07	-0,11	-0,11	0,30	**0,45**	**0,44**
Var9	**0,42**	0,09	0,29	0,17	0,45	0,39	**0,62**	**0,41**	1,00	0,02	**0,54**	**-0,36**	0,29	**0,43**	0,36
Var10	-0,39	-0,16	-0,27	-0,26	-0,20	-0,20	-0,18	-0,07	0,02	1,00	0,35	-0,15	0,25	-0,32	0,18
Var11	-0,20	-0,39	-0,20	-0,43	0,17	-0,29	0,32	-0,11	**0,54**	0,35	1,00	-0,26	0,36	-0,06	0,11
Var12	-0,30	-0,17	-0,32	-0,15	0,06	0,05	-0,26	-0,11	-0,36	-0,15	-0,26	1,00	0,03	0,06	-0,06
Var13	0,12	0,17	0,15	0,08	0,40	0,06	**0,42**	0,30	0,29	0,25	0,36	0,03	1,00	0,19	**0,49**
Var14	**0,56**	**0,51**	**0,57**	**0,55**	0,37	0,23	**0,50**	**0,45**	**0,43**	-0,32	-0,06	0,06	0,19	1,00	**0,43**
Var15	**0,47**	**0,47**	**0,49**	0,37	**0,50**	0,17	0,39	**0,44**	0,36	0,18	0,11	-0,06	**0,49**	**0,43**	1,00

Correlations, which are under 0,4, are not taken into account.
Var 1 – interpersonal emotional intelligence; Var 2 – intrapersonal emotional intelligence; Var 3 –

emotions perception; Var 4 – emotions control; Var 5 – emotional insight; Var 6 – managing your emotions; Var 7 – empathy; Var 8 – self-motivation; Var 9 – emotions recognition; Var 10 – rational empathy channel; Var 11 – motional empathy channel; Var 12 – intuitive empathy channel; Var 13 – empathy attitudes; Var 14 – empathy penetration; Var 15 – empathy identification

Reporting the results from our correlation matrix we have concluded that empathy is an integrative part of L2 teacher's emotional intelligence and it also plays a significant role in productive language learning. Through variables 14 and 15 that represent the category of empathy we were able to identify rather strong positive correlations (more than 0,47) with emotional intelligence and emotions (variables 1, 2, 3 and 4 correspondingly). Therefore, we may assume that L2 teachers should be trained to maintain their empathy level adequately to succeed in educational process.

When analyzing the influence of a foreign language teacher's EI development on effective language acquisition, it is necessary to consider the factors that may explain this correlation. For this purpose, we carried out the factor analysis (see table 2 below) that helped us identify 4 important reasons (factors) affecting the success of L2 acquisition under the impact of L2 teachers' EI development.

Table 2. Factors influencing the success of a foreign language acquisition under the effect of ESL teachers' EI development

Variable	Factor Loadings (Spreadsheet) Basic components, N=22 (Marked loadings are > ,700000)			
	Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**	**Factor 4**
Var1	**0,788801**	**0,424841**	-0,178289	-0,202893
Var2	**0,943889**	-0,036362	-0,043741	0,108031
Var3	**0,845509**	0,330542	-0,200095	-0,046208
Var4	**0,910700**	0,027763	-0,042198	-0,081692
Var5	0,219343	**0,691517**	0,386424	0,150308
Var6	**0,490806**	0,108496	0,351769	-0,016922
Var7	0,242907	**0,841808**	-0,171210	-0,026521
Var8	**0,715791**	0,291605	0,120242	0,245564
Var9	0,131840	**0,806709**	-0,193027	0,136523
Var10	-0,239484	-0,225805	-0,274592	**0,810320**
Var11	-0,515796	**0,573899**	-0,316501	0,380674
Var12	-0,163072	-0,176335	**0,875663**	-0,044076
Var13	0,093811	0,425486	0,189606	**0,668975**
Var14	0,543648	0,500024	0,186846	-0,119806
Var15	0,480263	0,373838	0,102701	**0,551853**
Expl.Var	4,820133	3,208522	1,453384	1,733837
Prp.Totl	0,321342	0,213901	0,096892	0,115589

Var 1 – interpersonal emotional intelligence; Var 2 – intrapersonal emotional intelligence; Var 3 – emotions perception; Var 4 – emotions control; Var 5 – emotional insight; Var 6 – managing your emotions; Var 7 – empathy; Var 8 – self-motivation; Var 9 – emotions recognition; Var 10 – rational

empathy channel; Var 11 – motional empathy channel; Var 12 – intuitive empathy channel; Var 13 – empathy attitudes; Var 14 – empathy penetration; Var 15 – empathy identification

We named the factors according to the maximum weight of a significant variable (var 2 – 0,94 (factor 1); var 9 – 0,81 (factor 2); var 12 – 0,88 (factor 3) and var 10 – 0,81 (factor 4)). Therefore, the factors that explain the correlation between the L2 teacher's EI level and their successful foreign language teaching career are the following: intrapersonal emotional factor (factor 1); empathy factor (factor 2); intuition factor (factor 3) and rational factor (factor 4).

The first, *intrapersonal emotional factor* (0,78; 0,94; 0,84; 0,91; 0,49; 0,71), suggests that a foreign language teacher should manage their own emotional state when communicating with his/her students. In a way the role of a teacher is similar to an acting career. An L2 teacher is an actor in the classroom who expresses gamut of emotions and share them with students inspiring and motivating them to study a foreign language.

The *empathy* factor (0,42; 0,69; 0,84; 0,81; 0,57) proves the idea that a professional teacher is an experienced listener and a psychologist. A student should trust their tutor and feel confident during learning process in the classroom. L2 learners should express their ideas openly and be sure that their teacher will understand them and support their L2 motivation.

The *intuition* factor (0,88) explains that an L2 teacher should always listen to his or her "sixth sense" in their communication with the students. It is especially important to avoid conflict situations or other misunderstandings in the classroom.

The *rational* factor (0,81; 0,67; 0,55) highlights the impact of a foreign language teacher's reasoning ability in the classroom. Modern students are characterized by a high level of curiosity, quick thinking and decision-making due to multiple information technologies and interactive forms of digital communication. Therefore, L2 teachers' rational thinking will help them strategically plan and build their educational trajectory and handle their interaction with the learners effectively and productively.

To sum up, our research has outlined that L2 teacher's rational use of emotions, intuition and empathy in the classroom may positively affect the learner's motivation to acquire foreign language knowledge. It also makes a significant impact on the development of students' emotional intelligence because an inspired learner usually experiences positive emotions in communication in academic environment.

In order to confirm our research idea about four factors defining the success of a foreign language teacher's EI development level on students' L2 acquisition, we also conducted a regression analysis (table 3).

Table 3. The probability of L2 teachers' EI influence factors on learners' foreign language acquisition (regression summary)

Regression Summary for Dependent Variable: Y * (Regression analysis table) R= ,82128046 R?= ,67450159 Adjusted R?= ,65822667 F(1,20)=41,444 p<,000005 Std.Error of estimate: 1,7371						
N=22	**b'**	**Std.Err. of b'**	**b**	**Std.Err. of b**	**t(20)**	**p-level**
Intercept			3,833285	1,716174	2,233622	0,037090
Var 2*	0,821280	0,127573	0,288027	0,044741	6,437720	0,000003

*Var 2 – Intrapersonal Emotional Intelligence *Y – the average value of EI influence assessment on the success of students' L2 acquisition

Table 3 demonstrates that the key variable that confirms the importance of emotional intelligence both for foreign language teachers and their students is var 2 (intrapersonal emotional intelligence). Moreover, this variable also has the maximum weight (0,94) in our factor analysis (table 2) and defines the leading factor in the group of EI factors correlating with successful foreign language acquisition. The regression summary shows that the coefficient of determination (R^2) is equal to 0,67. Hence, our 4-factor model (the rational use of emotions, empathy and intuition) for teaching as well as learning foreign languages effectively and with enthusiasm is almost 70% reliable. Emotions do play a significant role in foreign language education but they must be wisely controlled in teachers-students cooperation.

To sum up, foreign language teachers should develop their emotional intelligence level in case they want to build a successful teaching (tutoring) career and share their L2 knowledge with learners more effectively on emotional and intellectual levels.

Discussions

There is an increasing acceptance that emotional intelligence is a key factor which can not only influence the quality of people's lives but the chances of success in any area of endeavour. This is possibly even more so in the area of language teaching and learning than in many other spheres. The reason for this is because the language we use is so closely related to who we are and who we aspire to be. Therefore, we suggest that emotional intelligence is the corner stone, the most fundamental element, the very basics of foreign language learning. This idea has already been proved in a number of researches dedicated to the study of emotional intelligence and its role in language learning. Most studies were fully concentrated on analyzing the level of the student's EI individual development during the L2 acquisition (Besharat et.,

2005; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018; Pishghadam, 20009; Stottlemayer, 2002). It was stated that basically most learners possess the average EI score which indicates that the participants need to improve it to achieve better academic results (Tevdovska, 2017). However, on the other side of the learning process, there is the figure of an L2 teacher / tutor whose EI level also plays a crucial role in the success of the students' foreign language acquisition. Therefore, our research was totally focused on measuring a foreign language teacher's emotional intelligence level and its effect on the learners' results and further desire to study a foreign language as lifelong occupation.

The results of our research highlighted that L2 teacher's (tutor's) EI indicator is built on four psychological factors - intrapersonal emotional factor (the leading one), empathy factor, intuition factor and rational factor. Our experiment confirmed that the success of the student's foreign language learning is defined by an L2 teacher's (tutor's) emotional intelligence and its wise management by 70%. Although the respondents demonstrated the overall average level of EI development, the results of this study have further strengthened our conviction that emotional intelligence is fundamental for a professional foreign language teacher's career. It is of a critical value because its positive and constructive manifestation affects a student's motivation to study and to learn a foreign language. Besides, there is a significant correlation between the level of a teacher's EI and its influence on a student's emotional intelligence coefficient. Therefore, it is highly recommended for foreign language teachers to focus on their EI development so as to feel more comfortable in their interaction with learners. Moreover, it is obvious that emotionally intelligent individuals have better prospects in terms of successful careers, job satisfaction and work commitment.

Conclusion

The results of the theoretical and empirical research helped develop a system of recommendations on the level of development of L2 teachers' emotional intelligence with the aim of establishing a positive emotional connection with students and creating a favourable learning atmosphere in L2 classes as well as achieving effective learning outcomes.

Firstly, it is important to love the profession of a teacher of foreign languages. If a person does not feel like being someone who instructs others, especially in the field of linguistics and languages, one can hardly experience some positive emotions on professional and personal levels.

Secondly, an L2 teacher is an extremely creative job which requires lateral thinking. Emotional intelligence and being able to think "outside the box" are interrelated with each other. That is why, developing creative skills is an effective tool to increase a teacher's EI level as well.

Thirdly, an L2 teacher is a professional who should share the knowledge with the students and receive some new knowledge in return. Foreign language teachers are mistaken if they consider that teaching is a one-way process. On the contrary, professional L2 teachers should always try to learn something useful from their students and receive positive emotions during their academic exchange. This is one of the most effective ways to develop a teacher's EI level and to affect constructively the learners' emotional state.

We aware that our research may have some limitations. The first one is that our respondents are young individuals who are still students obtaining professional knowledge at the university. Since they are not full-time professionals, their EI level may be different from the emotional intelligence of an experienced L2 teacher. The second limitation is related to the gender issue because most of our respondents are females. Therefore, female's EI results may differ from the emotional intelligence of L2 male teachers.

Nevertheless, these facts do not diminish the importance of continuing to study the emotional intelligence of the teacher and its role in the pedagogical process when interacting with students of different stages of education.

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