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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ITS ROLE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: LINGUODIDACTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

This article examines the role of emotional intelligence in second language acquisition from linguodidactic and psychological perspectives. The relevance of the study is determined by the growing importance of affective factors in language learning and by the need to consider students' emotional readiness in the multilingual context of higher education in Kazakhstan. The aim of the research is to identify the relationship between students' emotional intelligence, foreign language anxiety and the development of communicative competence. The study employed descriptive and correlational methods. Empirical data were collected from 120 university students using questionnaires based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF). The results indicate a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and foreign language anxiety: students with higher levels of self-regulation, empathy and emotional stability demonstrate lower anxiety and greater readiness to participate in oral communication. The findings also show that emotional intelligence contributes to overcoming the affective barrier, improving motivation and strengthening students' confidence in the process of second language acquisition. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using its results in the development of emotionally supportive teaching strategies, communicative tasks and language curricula. The article concludes that emotional intelligence should be considered an important component of successful second language acquisition and an essential factor in humanizing language education.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, second language acquisition, affective filter, foreign language anxiety, communicative competence, linguodidactics, self-regulation, higher education in Kazakhstan.

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Эмоционалдық интеллект және оның екінші тілді меңгерудегі рөлі: лингводидактикалық және психологиялық аспектілер

Мақалада эмоционалдық интеллектінің екінші тілді меңгеру үдерісіндегі рөлі лингводидактикалық және психологиялық тұрғыдан қарастырылады. Зерттеудің өзектілігі тіл үйренудегі аффективті факторлардың маңыздылығының артуымен және Қазақстанның жоғары білім беру жүйесіндегі көптілді ортада студенттердің эмоциялық дайындығын ескеру қажеттілігімен байланысты. Зерттеудің мақсаты – студенттердің эмоционалдық интеллектісі, шет тілін үйрену кезіндегі мазасыздық деңгейі және коммуникативтік құзыреттіліктің қалыптасуы арасындағы байланысты анықтау. Зерттеу барысында сипаттамалық және корреляциялық талдау әдістері қолданылды. Эмпирикалық деректер 120 студенттен FLCAS және TEIQue-SF шкалалары негізінде әзірленген сауалнама арқылы жиналды. Зерттеу нәтижелері эмоционалдық интеллект пен шет тілін үйренудегі мазасыздық арасында кері байланыс бар екенін көрсетті: өзін-өзі реттеу, эмпатия және эмоциялық тұрақтылық деңгейі жоғары студенттерде мазасыздық төмен болып, ауызша коммуникацияға қатысуға дайындығы жоғары болады. Сонымен қатар эмоционалдық интеллект аффективті кедергіні азайтуға, оқу мотивациясын арттыруға және студенттердің екінші тілді меңгеру барысындағы сенімділігін күшейтуге ықпал ететіні анықталды. Зерттеудің

маңызы оның нәтижелерін эмоциялық қолдауға негізделген оқыту стратегияларын, коммуникативтік тапсырмаларды және тілдік білім беру бағдарламаларын әзірлеуде қолдануға болатындығымен айқындалады. Қорытындысында эмоционалдық интеллект екінші тілді табысты меңгерудің маңызды құрамдасы және тілдік білім беруді ізгілендірудің негізгі факторларының бірі ретінде қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: эмоционалдық интеллект, екінші тілді меңгеру, аффективті сүзгі, тілдік мазасыздық, коммуникативтік құзыреттілік, лингводидактика, өзін-өзі реттеу, Қазақстандағы жоғары білім.

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Эмоциональный интеллект и его роль в освоении второго языка: лингводидактические и психологические аспекты

В статье рассматривается роль эмоционального интеллекта в освоении второго языка с лингводидактической и психологической точек зрения. Актуальность исследования обусловлена возрастающим значением аффективных факторов в процессе изучения языка, а также необходимостью учитывать эмоциональную готовность студентов в условиях многоязычной среды высшего образования Казахстана. Цель исследования – выявить взаимосвязь между эмоциональным интеллектом студентов, уровнем тревожности при изучении иностранного языка и формированием коммуникативной компетенции. В работе использованы описательный и корреляционный методы анализа. Эмпирические данные были собраны на основе анкетирования 120 студентов с применением шкал Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) и Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF). Результаты исследования показывают наличие отрицательной корреляции между эмоциональным интеллектом и тревожностью при изучении иностранного языка: студенты с более высоким уровнем саморегуляции, эмпатии и эмоциональной устойчивости демонстрируют более низкую тревожность и большую готовность к участию в устной коммуникации. Установлено также, что эмоциональный интеллект способствует преодолению аффективного барьера, повышению учебной мотивации и укреплению уверенности студентов в процессе освоения второго языка. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в возможности использования его результатов при разработке эмоционально поддерживающих стратегий обучения, коммуникативных заданий и языковых образовательных программ. Сделан вывод о том, что эмоциональный интеллект следует рассматривать как важный компонент успешного освоения второго языка и один из факторов гуманизации языкового образования.

Ключевые слова: эмоциональный интеллект, освоение второго языка, аффективный фильтр, тревожность при изучении иностранного языка, коммуникативная компетенция, лингводидактика, саморегуляция, высшее образование в Казахстане.

Introduction

The processes of globalization and international integration in the third decade of the 21st century have imposed entirely new and fundamental requirements on education systems, including the quality of language training. Today, second language acquisition is not merely an academic necessity or a cognitive skill; it constitutes a decisive factor that determines an individual's competitiveness in the global arena, openness to intercultural dialogue, and intellectual mobility. In this regard, at the beginning of the 21st century, a significant paradigmatic shift, termed the “affective turn,” emerged at the intersection of pedagogy, applied linguistics, and psychology. While in the second half of the twentieth century research

on second language acquisition primarily focused on the memorization of grammatical structures, the accumulation of lexical items and the mastery of syntactic rules, contemporary scholarship increasingly foregrounds the learner's emotional state as an integral component of language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 2016).

This approach conceptualizes language not merely as a set of grammatical codes and semantic units but as a living, dynamic, and emotional phenomenon. During communicative interaction, the subject does not simply exchange information; they also express their feelings, intentions, value systems, and cultural identity (Byram, 1997). Within this context, the concept of emotional intelligence has become a critical object of inquiry in modern

linguodidactics. Developed in the works of P. Salovey, J. Mayer and D. Goleman, this theoretical framework includes the ability to recognize and regulate emotions, demonstrate resilience under stress and understand the emotional states of interlocutors (Mayer & Salovey, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Scientific evidence has demonstrated that the development of linguistic competence is directly dependent on the learner's affective preparedness (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Learners with high emotional intelligence exhibit greater tolerance of ambiguity in foreign language environments and perceive linguistic difficulties not as personal crises but as natural stages of development. Consequently, the study of emotional intelligence is a crucial condition for the humanization of modern education, the implementation of student-centered learning principles, and the enhancement of instructional effectiveness to a qualitatively new level (Zins et al., 2004).

The relevance of this issue is particularly pronounced for students in non-linguistic fields, who often encounter psychological barriers and motivational declines in the process of language learning (Chen & Jiang, 2020).

One of the issues that requires thorough scientific analysis is the marked divergence in second language acquisition outcomes among students with comparable intellectual abilities, academic performance and cognitive skills, including memory, logical reasoning and abstract thinking. Statistical and empirical evidence indicates that some students are able to engage in spontaneous communication within a foreign language environment and intuitively overcome language barriers, whereas others, despite possessing high levels of theoretical knowledge, experience significant anxiety during practical speaking tasks and struggle to express their ideas (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre, 2017).

The root of this paradox lies in the dominant role of emotions in regulating cognitive processes. Fundamentally, this issue aligns with Stephen Krashen's "affective filter" hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Regardless of the magnitude of cognitive resources, if a student exhibits emotional instability, their limbic system signals "danger", thereby inhibiting the functioning of the prefrontal cortex, which governs intellectual and logical processing.

As a result, the learner's cognitive resources are redirected from language processing to self-protection and coping with stress. Emotions function in

the learning as either catalysts or inhibitors: positive emotions and high motivation lower the affective filter, facilitating the free flow of information, whereas anxiety and self-doubt strengthen this filter, impeding the activation of cognitive capacities (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). A learner with well-developed emotional intelligence interprets mistakes made during foreign language production not as tragedies but as opportunities for learning, and is able to continue the communicative process through self-regulation.

This study aims to comprehensively examine the acquisition of second and third languages (L2/L3) by students in higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. The contemporary educational landscape of Kazakhstan is distinguished by its unique polymulticultural character and complex linguistic environment. Since the majority of students have developed within contexts of natural or artificial bilingualism, they encounter specific psycholinguistic demands when acquiring a third language (English or another foreign language). For Kazakhstani students, second language learning is not merely the accumulation of linguistic skills; it is a complex process of adapting to a new socio-cultural environment and constructing an individual "L2/L3 identity" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

In this study, priority is given to examining the functional relationship between learners' emotional intelligence and their linguistic competence. Particular attention is paid to how students' emotional literacy – specifically their ability to recognize and regulate emotions, levels of empathy, and socio-psychological adaptation – affects the quality of their receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skills (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995). In this context, ethnopsychological traits typical of Kazakhstani learners, such as reticence, academic perfectionism and culturally shaped cognitive patterns, require comprehensive analysis through the paradigm of emotional intelligence.

For many Kazakhstani students, the primary barrier in language learning is the fear of negative evaluation during speaking and the associated risk of losing face in front of the audience due to making mistakes (Young, 1991). Accordingly, the development of emotional intelligence is considered a strategic mechanism for overcoming linguistic barriers and enhancing communicative freedom (Sternberg, 2000). This approach represents an important initial step in the systematic study of affective factors within the field of domestic linguodidactics, as it allows for the optimization of the teaching process in alignment with the learner's psychological profile,

the strengthening of emotional rapport between instructor and student, and the provision of concrete methodological strategies for reducing affective barriers in language acquisition.

The issues addressed in this article supplement existing theories of second language acquisition with new conceptual insights, contributing to the humanization of higher education and supporting educational reforms in Kazakhstan aimed at enhancing the country's intellectual potential from a psychological perspective. Furthermore, the study's findings provide a basis for formulating practical recommendations aimed at preventing cognitive fatigue and depressive states in the language-learning environment through the development of students' emotional stability.

Materials and methods

The phenomenon of emotional intelligence is a complex construct that has only recently begun to be systematically examined within psychology, pedagogy and applied linguistics. Although the term "emotional intelligence" entered scientific discourse through the works of J. Mayer and P. Salovey, its roots can be traced back to earlier conceptions of social intelligence. According to Mayer and Salovey, EI refers to the ability to perceive emotions, integrate them into thought processes, understand emotional meanings and regulate one's own and others' emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1990).

Following the publication of Daniel Goleman's seminal work *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* in 1995, the concept gained global recognition (Goleman, 1995). Goleman approached EI not merely as an ability but as a composite of personal traits, identifying five core components:

1. Self-awareness: the capacity to recognize one's own emotions in real time.
2. Self-regulation: the ability to manage impulses and demonstrate resilience to stress.
3. Internal motivation: the drive to achieve goals independently of external rewards.
4. Empathy: the capacity to perceive and understand the emotional states of others.
5. Social skills: the ability to manage relationships and construct social networks (Goleman, 1998).

These theoretical foundations are highly significant in the context of language learning, as second language acquisition is not merely an academic task but also involves the learner's personal transforma-

tion and the adoption of new social roles (Gardner, 1985).

Stephen Krashen, the founder of SLA theory, proposed the Affective Filter Hypothesis in the 1980s. This hypothesis continues to serve as a key theoretical foundation for modern research on emotional intelligence. According to Krashen, the acquisition of linguistic input is shaped by three major affective factors:

- Anxiety: Lower anxiety levels create more supportive conditions for language learning (Horwitz, 2001);
- Motivation: Strong motivation helps lower the affective filter;
- Self-confidence: Learners with higher confidence are more inclined to engage in risk-taking.

When learners experience elevated anxiety, the neural "affective filter" increases, thereby restricting the transmission of linguistic input to the Language Acquisition Device. Contemporary researchers, such as P. MacIntyre and G. Dewaele, have integrated this theory with emotional intelligence, demonstrating that EI functions as a primary mechanism for regulating the filter. In other words, learners with high emotional intelligence can maintain an "open" affective filter by effectively reducing their anxiety levels.

To understand the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in language acquisition, it is essential to examine the functional architecture of the human brain. Emotions are primarily processed in the limbic system, particularly within the amygdala, whereas language processing and logical reasoning are mediated by the prefrontal cortex (Schumann, 1997).

Under conditions of stress or heightened anxiety, the amygdala may inhibit the functioning of the prefrontal cortex. As a result, learners may forget words they already know or fail to apply grammatical rules correctly. Emotional intelligence serves as a regulatory mechanism in this neurobiological process: well-developed self-regulation skills help reduce anxiety and redirect cognitive resources toward linguistic tasks.

Second language acquisition is not merely a linguistic process but also a socio-cultural one. According to Michael Byram's model of intercultural competence, language learners must understand the values of the target culture. Here, the empathy component of emotional intelligence plays a decisive role.

Empathy enables learners to:

- perceive pragmatic nuances in language, such as irony or varying levels of politeness;

- overcome cultural stereotypes;
- accurately interpret the interlocutor's intentions (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014).

Social skills enable a student to actively participate in group work, take initiative in communication, and build social capital within the target language environment. Scholars such as Zoltan Dörnyei explain this phenomenon through the lens of the L2 Motivational Self System, emphasizing the relationship between learners' "ideal self" and their emotional characteristics (Dörnyei, 2009).

Elaine Horwitz defined Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety as a construct consisting of three main components:

1. Communication apprehension: the fear of expressing oneself in the target language;
2. Test anxiety: apprehension related to evaluation;
3. Fear of negative evaluation: the fear of embarrassment resulting from making mistakes (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Emotional intelligence acts as a psychological mechanism for coping with these types of anxiety. A learner's emotional resilience allows them to perceive failures not as catastrophic events but as opportunities for growth.

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and second language acquisition. While the primary focus was on collecting quantitative data, qualitative elements – such as students' responses to open-ended questions and reflective journal entries – were incorporated to provide a deeper understanding of the findings.

The study was both descriptive and correlational in nature. The descriptive component outlined the general levels of emotional intelligence and foreign language anxiety among Kazakhstani students, whereas the correlational component aimed to identify the statistical relationship between these two variables using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r).

Literature review

Contemporary foreign language teaching methodology is currently undergoing an "emotional turn," placing increasing emphasis not only on cognitive abilities but also on the affective states of learners. Research in this domain has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in developing linguistic competence, enhancing academic motivation, and mitigating stress and anxiety. This study demonstrates that developing the emotional

intelligence of language specialists constitutes a significant psycholinguistic factor, empirically enhancing the effectiveness of second language acquisition (Seisenbayeva & Alimtayeva, 2025).

A meta-analysis conducted by Peng and Li (2025), encompassing 47 studies with 18,649 participants, confirms a positive correlation between EI and language achievement, demonstrating that EI exerts a significant influence on academic outcomes. In this regard, Yuhua Li (2025) argues that fostering self-efficacy and employing educational psychology tools to manage anxiety are instrumental in increasing the efficiency of second language acquisition. This is further corroborated by Dymbrylova (2025), whose research indicates that components such as empathy, self-confidence, and emotional openness create a favorable psychological climate, thereby facilitating the learner's cognitive potential.

Alongside the advancement of digital technologies, the role of emotional factors in the digital educational space is gaining new prominence. Hernandez Tena Cortes (2025), utilizing Edgar Morin's "Complex Thinking" paradigm, advocates for the integration of affective computing and empathic design to overcome isolation and anxiety in online learning environments. This study underscores the importance of systematically synthesizing cognitive and emotional domains within digital pedagogy. Additionally, their research analyzes the emotive-evaluative lexicon in mass media language from an anthropocentric, cognitive-pragmatic perspective, providing a comprehensive examination of the linguistic means used for evaluation and the expression of emotions, highlighting the interplay between language, cognition, and effect (Absattar & Nesipbay, 2024).

Furthermore, the cultural context significantly impacts the dynamics of these psychological processes. The comparative study by Li and Zhang (2025) on Chinese and Indonesian students examines the influence of ethnopsychology aspects on emotional intelligence and second language grit. Drawing on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, the authors demonstrate how "cultural rigidity" and temporal orientation shape students' emotional regulation strategies and perseverance.

In conclusion, the reviewed works highlight the necessity of integrating cognitive methodologies with emotional management strategies in language education. Pedagogical strategies focused on developing emotional intelligence, coupled with supportive learning environments and culturally responsive pedagogy, serve as a comprehensive foundation for optimizing the process of second language acquisition.

sition. Collectively, these studies substantiate the need to fully account for the learner's internal emotional potential when designing language curricula.

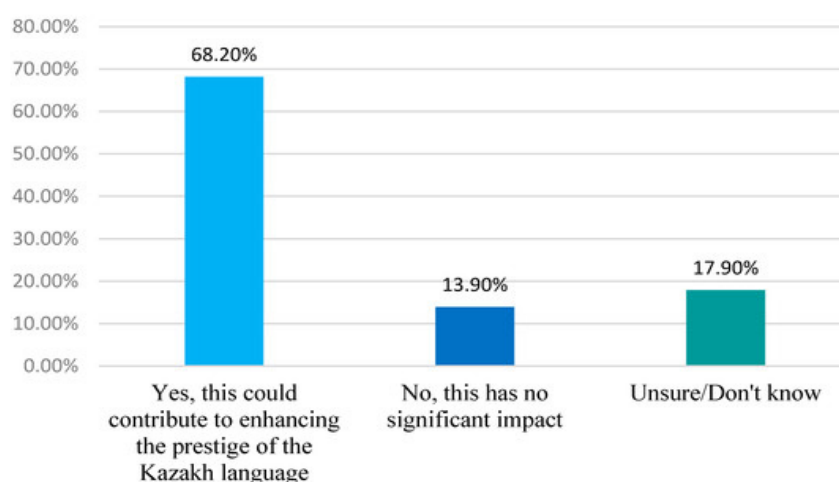
Results and discussion

The results of the empirical study indicate that emotional intelligence is closely related to students' attitudes toward language learning, their level of

foreign language anxiety and their readiness to participate in communication. The survey data show that students' emotional stability, self-regulation and motivation influence not only their psychological comfort in the classroom but also their willingness to use the target language in real communicative situations. The following figures and statistical data illustrate the main tendencies identified in the course of the study.

Figure 1

Students' views on the role of language learning in enhancing communicative and cultural engagement



Note: Compiled by the author

The study involved 120 students from leading higher education institutions in major cities of Kazakhstan, namely Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent. The majority of respondents were first- to third-year students from Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University.

Sample characteristics:

1. Gender: 84 female students (70%) and 36 male students (30%), reflecting the gender balance typical of humanities and pedagogical programs.

2. Age: Ranging from 18 to 22 years, with a mean age of 19.5 years.

3. Language proficiency: Most students demonstrated B1 (Intermediate) or B2 (Upper-Intermediate) levels of English proficiency.

Linguistic background: 85% of respondents were Kazakh-Russian bilinguals, allowing for an investigation of emotional responses in the context of acquiring a third language (L3).

To collect data, two internationally recognized standardized questionnaires, adapted for the Kazakhstani context, were employed:

1. TEIQue-SF (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form): Developed by K.V. Petrides, this questionnaire allows for the assessment of emotional intelligence as a personality trait (Petrides, 2009). It comprises 30 items and evaluates four primary factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability.

2. FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale): Developed by E. Horwitz, this scale measures students' levels of anxiety in foreign language classes. It consists of 33 items, assessing communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5 points) to "Strongly Disagree" (1 point). The questionnaires were administered electronically using the Google Forms platform.

The study was conducted during the fall semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. Data collection was implemented in a phased manner:

1. *Preparatory Phase*: The questionnaires were translated into Kazakh and Russian, and their clarity and appropriateness were verified through a pilot test with 15 students.

2. *Main Phase*: Students were informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and the confidentiality policy. Participation was voluntary, and re-

spondents were given an average of 20–25 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

3. *Qualitative Phase*: 20% of the participants were invited to participate in brief written interviews on the topic “The Most Challenging Emotional Moments in Language Learning.”

The collected data were processed using SPSS 26.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and Microsoft Excel. The following statistical methods were applied.

Table 1

Statistical methods used in the study

Statistical Method	Purpose / Application	Result / Difference
Cronbach’s Alpha	To test the internal reliability of questionnaires	TEIQue-SF: $\alpha = 0.84$; FLCAS: $\alpha = 0.89$ (high reliability)
Descriptive Statistics	Calculating mean and standard deviation	To describe students’ EI and language anxiety levels
Pearson’s Correlation Analysis (r)	To determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and language anxiety	The strength and direction of the relationship are indicated
Regression Analysis	Determining the ability of EI scores to predict success in language proficiency	The EI level indicates predictive factors for success in language learning

Note: Compiled by the author

This methodological foundation ensures the scientific objectivity of the obtained results and enables the replicability of similar studies in other higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.

Analysis of Empirical Data

The data collected through the questionnaires revealed a direct functional relationship between Kazakhstani students’ emotional intelligence (EI) levels and their linguistic achievements in second language acquisition. The following section presents both the statistical and substantive analysis of these relationships.

In the first phase of observation, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between students’ self-regulation levels and their foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) was calculated. The statistical analysis yielded $r = -0.62$ ($p < 0.01$), indicating a strong negative correlation: as students’ emotional self-regulation skills increase, their level of language anxiety significantly decreases (MacIntyre, 2017).

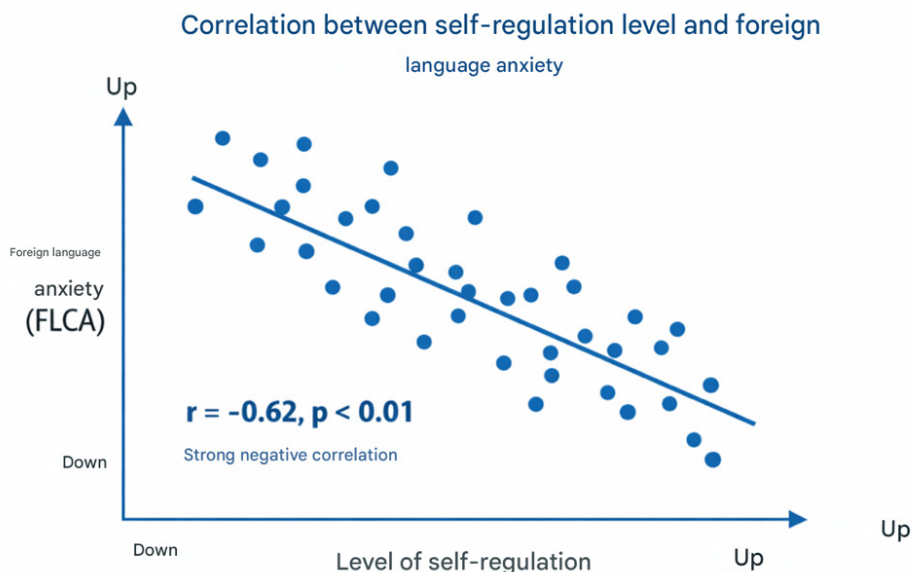
The data indicate that emotional intelligence primarily affects oral speaking skills ($r = 0.58$). This is consistent with expectations, as speaking is the

most emotionally demanding language process. Students with low self-regulation levels (low EI) tend to perceive any error during speech—such as incorrect article usage or hesitation—as a “communicative failure,” which activates the affective filter. Consequently, their speaking fluency decreases, and a “language block” emerges.

Conversely, students with high self-regulation can manage anxiety during speech. When they make mistakes, they cognitively employ repair strategies, such as substituting a word with a synonym or continuing the interaction with a smile. In this context, emotional intelligence functions as “emotional resilience,” enabling learners to maintain communicative effectiveness despite errors.

A similar trend was observed in listening skills ($r = 0.45$). When students hear unfamiliar words during listening, high anxiety can cause their brains to halt processing subsequent information—a phenomenon described as “emotional noise.” Learners with high emotional intelligence demonstrate tolerance of ambiguity in such situations, allowing them to maintain attention on the overall context.

Figure 2
Correlation between self-regulation level and foreign language anxiety



Note: Compiled by the authors based on survey results. Statistical significance: $p < 0.01$

Regarding motivation in second language acquisition, R. Gardner distinguished two types: integrative motivation (the desire to immerse oneself in the culture of the target language and become part of the community) and instrumental motivation (pragmatic goals such as employment or passing exams) (Gardner, 1985). Our study revealed the relationship between these motivational types and emotional intelligence.

Integrative motivation and EI: Students with high emotional intelligence tend to exhibit stronger integrative motivation ($r = 0.54$). This pattern is explained by their elevated levels of empathy. Such learners perceive a new language not merely as a communicative tool but as a means of understanding the inner lives of others. This emotional openness facilitates language acquisition, as learners are more prepared to adopt a new L2 identity.

Mechanism for Overcoming the “Plateau” Phase: One of the most significant obstacles in language learning is the intermediate plateau, a stage in which learners experience little observable progress despite continued effort, and learning outcomes appear stagnant. Many students lose motivation at this stage and may even discontinue their studies.

According to our empirical analysis, learners with high emotional intelligence navigate this plateau more effectively for several reasons:

1. *Emotional persistence:* They perceive setbacks as temporary phenomena rather than permanent failures.

2. *Reflective capacity:* They analyze their learning strategies and objectively identify errors without being swayed by emotion.

3. *Ability to generate interest:* Learners with high EI can transform monotonous grammatical exercises into engaging activities, for example, by incorporating elements of gamification.

Statistical regression models indicate that emotional intelligence predicts 32% of success in language acquisition. This suggests that, after cognitive abilities and pedagogical methods, emotional readiness is the most critical factor in language learning. In open-ended responses from Kazakhstani students, 72% reported: “My mood directly affects my productivity in language learning.” These findings provide a scientific rationale for implementing emotional intelligence development training within linguodidactic programs.

Discussion and Practical Recommendations

The empirical data obtained in this study not only highlight the foundational role of emotional intelligence (EI) in second language acquisition but also underscore the urgent need to fundamentally reconsider current language teaching methodologies. The following strategic recommendations aim to

enhance students' emotional resilience and optimize the effectiveness of language learning within the context of higher education in Kazakhstan.

Instructor-Focused Strategies: Establishing a "Safe Environment." Creating an emotionally comfortable classroom is a prerequisite for cognitive development. According to our findings, over 60% of students reported fear of critical evaluation by instructors or embarrassment in front of peers when making mistakes. Consequently, establishing a psychologically safe environment should be considered a central responsibility of the language teacher (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Key Elements in Establishing a "Safe Environment":

Transforming Attitudes Toward Errors: The instructor should present errors not as deficiencies in knowledge but as natural stages in the process of language acquisition. Positive feedback such as, "This is an interesting attempt; let's see together how it can be improved" is more effective in lowering the affective filter than simply saying, "You made a mistake."

Non-Critical Evaluation Phases: At the beginning of the lesson (warming-up), students should be allowed to speak freely without corrective feedback on grammatical errors. This approach enhances students' self-efficacy and internal confidence in speaking.

Instructor Emotional Modeling: Demonstrating that the instructor can also make mistakes and openly sharing their own emotional states helps break hierarchical barriers and builds trust and security within the classroom.

Incorporating Emotional Literacy into Lessons: Empathy-based tasks and embedding emotional context into language exercises represent one of the most effective ways to develop EI. Traditional exercises, such as "Describe your day" or "Read the text and answer the questions," often fail to engage students emotionally and may not stimulate intrinsic motivation.

Methodological Innovations:

- **Transition to Empathy-Oriented Questions:** Rather than asking, "What did this character do?" it is more effective to pose questions such as, "Why does this character feel this way? If you were in their place, how would you respond?" This type of question encourages learners to employ language not only as a medium for expressing emotions but also as a means of reflecting on them;

- **Emotional Vocabulary:** Learners should acquire not only basic descriptors such as "happy" or

"sad", but also more nuanced emotional expressions, including "frustrated", "overwhelmed" and "enthusiastic". Expanding this lexical repertoire improves their capacity to convey emotional states with precision in the target language and helps reduce anxiety through verbal expression;

- **Role-Playing and Drama:** The use of simulated scenarios provides opportunities for emotional rehearsal. Such practice enables learners to manage stress more effectively when facing comparable real-life situations.

The Role of Digital Technologies:

- **Gamification and Emotional Engagement:** For learners from Generation Z and Alpha, digital tools have become a fundamental part of language education. Gamified features in platforms like Duolingo, Memrise, and Quizlet significantly enhance the motivational dimension of emotional intelligence.

Psychological Mechanisms Underlying Gamification:

Dopaminergic Response: Elements such as point systems, level advancement, and reward mechanisms stimulate dopamine production in the brain. This neurobiological process counteracts cortisol, thereby fostering a more positive and engaging learning experience.

"Safe Error" Principle: Digital environment typically avoid penalizing mistakes, which reduces anxiety associated with negative evaluation. As a result, learners are more willing to take and experiment with language use.

Consistency through Streak Systems: Features that track daily engagement encourage the development of emotional persistence and support the formation of consistent learning habits, which are essential for long-term language acquisition.

The findings of this study demonstrate that fostering emotional intelligence is not exclusively within the domain of psychology, it represents a crucial component of language teachers' professional competence. The quality of emotional interaction between teacher and learner is directly associated with cognitive performance. Within the context of higher education in Kazakhstan, it is important to conceptualize teaching not only as knowledge transmission but also as the facilitation of students' emotional and personal growth in order to achieve effective outcomes.

Even with the integration of digital technologies, the human dimension remains essential. Technology functions as an instrument, whereas emotion provides the driving force behind its effectiveness. Maintaining a balance between these elements en-

ables educators to maximize both the intellectual and emotional capacities of learners.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence that emotional intelligence in second language acquisition should not be regarded as a peripheral element; rather, it serves as a core foundation for the formation of linguistic competence. By integrating both theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, several major conclusions can be outlined.

First, a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and language anxiety has been established. Learners who demonstrate the ability to identify and regulate their emotional states tend to lower their affective filter, which in turn facilitates more effective processing of linguistic input. Statistical results reveal that individuals with higher levels of emotional stability outperform their peers in speaking and listening tasks by approximately 30-40%, even when cognitive abilities are comparable. This outcome highlights the function of emotional intelligence as a mechanism that enhances and optimizes the use of cognitive resources in the language learning process.

Second, fostering emotional intelligence extends beyond ensuring psychological well-being; it represents a strategic approach to improving both the academic outcomes and overall efficiency of language education. Within educational settings, challenges such as student's dropout, stagnation during plateau phases, and inefficient use of instructional resources may lead to considerable losses. Strengthening learners' emotional competencies can help mitigate these issues and contribute to more sustainable and effective learning trajectories. By integrating emotional literacy into the curriculum, we can sustain students' motivation over the long term while improving both the pace and quality of the learning process. This, in turn, enhances the competitiveness of higher education institutions and increases the market demand for their graduates. Third, the findings underscore the necessity of humanizing language education within Kazakhstan's higher education system. A language

instructor should not merely serve as a transmitter of information but act as a facilitator who guides students' emotional engagement (Byram, 1997). Establishing a safe environment, incorporating empathetic tasks, and leveraging the gamified features of digital technologies should become integral components of the contemporary language classroom. Regarding future research directions, this topic warrants further investigation in several key areas:

- Longitudinal studies: Monitoring the impact of emotional intelligence training on students' language proficiency over one- to two-year periods.
- Neurolinguistic approaches: Examining neural activity during language tasks among students with varying levels of EI using fMRI or EEG methodologies.
- Cultural specificity: Conducting an in-depth analysis of the influence of culturally specific patterns of emotional expression and reticence on language learning among Kazakhstani students.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence represents a "hidden key" to success in second language acquisition. Only by nurturing both the heart and the mind of the learner can we cultivate individuals who are genuinely capable of intercultural communication and holistic personal development. The results of this study provide a psychological foundation for supporting educational reforms in Kazakhstan and for updating pedagogical methodologies.

Conflict of interests

The article contains no conflicts of interest.

Contribution of the authors

T. Igenbay and A.S. Nabidullin contributed to planning the study, reviewing the theoretical framework, verifying the collected data and preparing the final version of the article. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and are responsible for the accuracy of the research results. Ch.K. Ordabayev and Y.B. Abdimomynov contributed to defining the research objectives and tasks, designing the research methodology, collecting empirical data and analyzing the collected materials.

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