

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Language Learning in EFL settings

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Nota de responsabilidad

“Las ideas y conclusiones aportadas en la tesis de grado son responsabilidad exclusiva del autor”

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Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación bibliográfica presenta ideas que apoyan la existencia de una relación entre los elementos de la Inteligencia Emocional (IE) y el mejoramiento del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Asimismo, se analiza cómo el empleo, la comprensión y el manejo de los sentimientos y las situaciones pueden afectar las actitudes de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua y pueden mejorar la calidad de las actuaciones en dicha lengua, fomentando así mejores resultados. Por otra parte, en este trabajo se describe la relación entre la inteligencia emocional y la política de la enseñanza de idiomas en Colombia, y algunas de sus limitaciones. Finalmente algunas ideas son sugeridas con el fin de incorporar elementos de la inteligencia emocional dentro de las aulas en donde particularmente el inglés es considerado una lengua extranjera.

Abstract

This research paper presents ideas which support the existence of a relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) elements and foreign language learning enhancement. Likewise, it discusses how the employment, comprehension, and management of feelings and situations can shape the learner's attitudes towards the second language learning process and enrich the quality of language performances to foster better outcomes. Moreover, in this paper the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the Language Education Policy in Colombia is described, and some of its limitations are discussed. Finally, some ideas are suggested in order to incorporate EI elements inside EFL classrooms.

Table of Contents

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Language Learning in EFL Settings.....	9
Understanding Emotional Intelligence.....	11
Emotional Intelligence as Part of Humanistic Language Teaching.....	15
Involving Emotional Intelligence in Second Language Acquisition.....	17
Emotional Intelligence in EFL contexts	21
Emotional Intelligence and Language Education Policy in Colombia	27
Limitations of Involving Emotional Intelligence	32
Practical Actions to Integrate EI into EFL settings	35
Conclusions.....	38
References	42

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN EFL SETTINGS

For decades, human cognition had been measured through intelligence tests like the intelligence quotient (IQ) which mainly comprises high-level mental abilities such as abstract reasoning or memory. Those aspects were considered by psychologists and academics (e.g., Brody 1997), as the most important factors in predicting success in different life aspects, including the academic one. However, the contribution of emotional intelligence to the academic achievement seems to be gaining more attention in the last years (Elias, Arnold, & Hussey 2003). Some existing research on second/foreign language learning, however, shows that there is still a lack of awareness about the important contribution of the emotional mind to the intellectual field, since it seems to continue prioritizing the cognitive aspects (Low & Nelson, 2004).

Nevertheless, in the 1970s with the humanistic approach, the role of the learners' emotions in language learning and language teaching had already expanded. As a consequence, several humanist psychologists' theories (e.g., Maslow, 1970; Moskowitz, 1978; Rogers, 1989) found validation within those language learning methods like the community language teaching or Suggestopedia. These methods attempted to facilitate the second language learning mainly through the exploration of the emotional features of the learner's performances and the promotion of a positive classroom environment.

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) has to do with the effective use of emotions and use of the information confined in them to make successful decisions (Ciarrochi & Mayer, 2007). Nowadays, research into the extent to which Emotional Intelligence can be applied and used to improve the language teaching and learning process is relatively new attempt and few studies have focused on the effects of Emotional Intelligence on second or foreign language learning and

teaching. In the ESL/EFL context, some of the studies that have explored the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and second language accomplishment (e.g. Nelson & Low, 1999; Chao, 2003) have found a positive and significant relationship between them both. Moreover, Riemer (2003) found that the development of the foreign language learning potential is supported by emotional intelligence factors as they are related to the recognition and acceptance of other cultures.

As emotional intelligence (EI) may affect learner achievement, it may be important to integrate it into the language learning curricula. It can be said that part of the objectives that higher educative institutions should pursue entails an increase in the number of teachers who are better prepared to cope with classroom challenges, but above all an enhancement of learners, so they can learn in a more effective way. This can be achieved by paying more attentive attention to the vital role of emotions (Mortiboys, 2002). Moreover, it can contribute to the fostering of learners' motivation and active involvements in L2 learning. For instance, Meng and Wang (2006) cited in Khooei (2014), suggested that positive emotions can facilitate the process of language learning in which learners can improve their language performance, since "making a successful communication in a foreign language requires that the learner feels relaxed and overcomes negative emotions that impede language learning and reduce learners' capacity." (p. 77)

Following the earlier ideas, the purpose of this paper is to show the relationship between emotional intelligence and the enhancement of language learning, mainly in EFL contexts like the Colombian one. In order to fulfill this purpose, literature related to the implementation of emotional intelligence and how it affects second/foreign language acquisition will be introduced. The Colombian Education policy and its use of emotional intelligence, especially in the language

learning and teaching, areas will also be explored. Later, this paper will present some limitations about the implementation of EI in the Colombian context, and finally some strategies to incorporate elements of EI in EFL will be set forward.

Understanding Emotional Intelligence

Intelligence is a notion that has been differently defined through time; for instance Gardner and Hatch (1989), defined it as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting" (p. 5). Most of its explanations are associated with the concept of being able to be in harmony with the environment and being able to learn (Karaduman, 2010, as cited in Ergün 2011). Intelligence is, therefore, the ability individuals have to use the knowledge, which they have acquired through experience, with the purpose of having successful adjustments to novel circumstances and then produce new ideas. However, numerous conceptions of intelligence are no longer simply associated to rational and intellectual factors (such as the capacity of being able of thinking abstractly), but also take into account sensitive and emotional elements as part of them, which can contribute to the success of any activity. For example, Thorndike in 1920 argued that the term intelligence is related not only to an academic component but also to the emotional and social ones (as cited in Pishghadam, 2009). Thus, it can be said that the ability people have to organize and process information in convenient ways is the result of a combination of the cognitive system and the emotional system, which supports the emergence of the Emotional Intelligence notion (Salovey, 2005).

It is equally important to mention that in 1983 Howard Gardner set forward the Multiple Intelligence Theory (MI), which he believed to be "an increasingly popular approach to characterizing the ways in which learners are unique and to developing instruction to respond to this uniqueness" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.123). Gardner's theory illustrates that the

individual's cognitive ability cannot be general and one, rather it is varied. Gardner's theory illustrates that the individual's cognitive ability cannot be general and one, but rather that it is varied. Then that variety of possibilities to learn could allow people to make improvements if they had the possibility to use their strengths and be involved in those activities in which they feel, they are good at. In 1983, Gardner initially introduced seven types of intelligences in his theory, from which the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences seems to give basis and made possible the development of Emotional Intelligence (EI). According to him, interpersonal intelligence refers to the idea of understanding the feelings of other people and their intentions while the intrapersonal intelligence, denotes awareness of one's emotions and inspirations that means to be self-reflective. Both intelligences are present in social relationships where people cooperate with each other, and play a crucial role self-awareness and in problem solving situations. As a result, they are directly concerned with emotional variables, which are part of the core of the Emotional Intelligence (EI), and can maximize one's long life learning as they may support and simulate many learning factors such as memory and thinking.

In 1990, the psychologists and researchers Salovey and Mayer were the first to propose the ability model of Emotional Intelligence. They explored the two terms and determined that they are not actually in opposition to each other, though there is an adjacent relationship between thought and emotions. According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2002), the intelligence theory entails the capacity to accomplish abstract reasoning, and emotions conduct systematic and discernable meanings about relationships. In other words, people use their feelings to connect and organize data in order to understand, acquire, and retain new information. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso asserted that Emotional Intelligence is an "ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationships, reason and problem-solve on the basis of them, and the

capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion related feelings, understand the information of those emotions and manage them” (Mayer et al., 1999, as cited in Rouhani, 2004, p. 42). This definition involves the ability to use emotions in order to direct cognitive thinking to find solutions in a more easily and effectively way, associated with the ability of perceiving emotions, which demands finding out and discriminating among the emotions that people experience or note in others. The ability to understand emotions allows people to comprehend the causes of different emotions and to manage them in order to respond appropriately in social contexts. All of these elements make possible the emotional and intellectual development in different areas including daily life, school, and work. They can also serve as a tool to help individuals create and apply strategies to deal with their emotions during different processes and/or situations and can be effective to overcome problems people face.

Goleman (1998) suggested that Emotional Intelligence (EI) was “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those feelings in and of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing well the emotions in ourselves and in our relationships” (p. 317). That means that EI is connected to the idea of helping people to establish and maintain relationships with others, through mutual understanding and the idea of being aware and attentive to the emotions individuals generate in each other, in order to make better decisions about how to proceed in a determined activity or relationship. Similarly, Mayer and Goleman (1995, 2001 & 2002) stated that Emotional Intelligence includes five fundamental characteristics, which are:

a) Self-Awareness: individuals with high Emotional Intelligence can develop a better understanding and knowledge of their own emotions.

b) Self-Regulation: refers to the ability of being able to regulate emotions and impulses in order to make careful and thoughtful decisions.

c) Motivation: a stimulus that helps in achieving goals, and cope with challenges.

d) Empathy: the ability to understand someone else's feelings. Empathy allows ones to comprehend the wants, needs and point of view of others.

e) Social Skills: refers to the individual's communication abilities and the determination to work with others as a team.

These five features regarding the emotional side of the everyday life, are correspondingly present academic life and can also contribute to the attainment of educational tasks. According to Goleman (1998) individuals can attribute eighty percent of success to emotional intelligence.

On the other hand, Bar-on (2004) described Emotional Intelligence as “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (p. 111). According to his definition, it can be said that EI refers to the set of social and emotional abilities a person has, and his or her capacity to adapt himself or herself to the immediate surroundings and the demands of daily life, and deal with them effectively. After directing a research on more than twenty three thousand people, Bar-On (2007) determined that Emotional Intelligence has an important influence on individual's performance. He explained that emotionally intelligent individuals are expected to be better in some areas of life when compared to less emotionally-intelligent people. At this point, cognitive intelligence alone is not the main element in predicting success in an activity, due to the possibility of less cognitively-intelligent people being more prosperous individuals when compared to many cognitively intelligent people.

Since Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been acknowledged as the ability which triggers intellect through emotional processes, to take action and achieve something, it is a fundamental factor in all aspects of people's lives, and can be extended to language teaching and learning. For

example in 2005, Pandey claimed that Emotional Intelligence was significant, because it helps an individual to control feelings, so that they can cope with stressful situations and can also enhance social relationships. Therefore, EI can enable people to tolerate unfavorable situations and cope with them in a positive way, and it can serve as a means to create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom setting which can make learning easier. Since, language learning and teaching processes are linked with the affective dimension of human beings, it is possible to include the Emotional Intelligence inside the classrooms, because it can provoke less feelings of failure in students and can increase the assertiveness in academic competence. According to Kincheloe, (1993) cited in Kumaravadivelu (2003), nowadays one of the aspects of the teachers' roles tends to be concerned with fostering the emotional side, as well as the logical one of their learners. Management of feelings and relationships is included in the teaching practice and may develop a kind of Emotional Intelligence that helps individuals to be as successful in the academic area as in the social one. This issue will be discussed later.

Emotional Intelligence as Part of Humanistic Language Teaching

The learner's emotional attitude towards learning aims at the development of emotionally intelligent individuals who can be better prepared to deal with challenging situations in their concrete social group. However, in the language learning process, emotional intelligence (EI) cannot be only aimed at the improvement and management of the student's feelings as the key to the development of the whole person, but also has to facilitate and encourage the cognitive aspect in language learning through the use of emotions. For example, in 1986 Medgyes (as cited in Stevick, 1990) declared that in the Humanistic-Psychological Approach and the Communicative Approach:

Learners are seen not so much as full-time linguistic objects at whom language teaching is aimed, but rather as human individuals whose personal dignity and integrity, and the complexity of whose ideas, thoughts, needs, and sentiments, should be respected. . .

Foreign language teachers must contribute to the self-actualizing process. (p. 109)

In this sense, teachers can teach the foreign/second language in a way that encourages students to share who they are with others, while practicing grammatical structures, vocabulary, and many other linguistic aspects, through which they learn to recognize others and themselves as individual parts of a diverse community.

Emotional Intelligence could also integrate English teaching into a more humanistic education, since EI integrates the learner's knowledge, feelings and thoughts, with what they are learning in the target language. Besides, it takes into account the development of social relationships through cooperation, and intellectual encouragement and the improvement of the individual's self-esteem. According to Moskowitz (1978), Humanistic education "is concerned with educating the whole person - the intellectual and the emotional dimensions" (p. 11). The humanistic approach to learning is concerned with the learner's academic needs by means of the development of the human potential. For instance, through the help of humanistic approach and emotional intelligence, second language learners' self-esteem is raised and they find out their potential towards learning. Moskowitz (1978), also suggested that Humanistic education "takes into consideration that learning is affected by how students feel about themselves" (p.12). This means that learners' self-development is enhanced, and they become more self-motivated when their emotional and physical environment is improved.

The development of a healthier self-esteem that humanistic teaching promotes, helps students to overcome the inhibitions that delay the second language learning process. Since

people perceive the target language as self-enhancing, they will view it as appropriately related and important to their lives; besides, it can allow them to negotiate meaning harmoniously and provides exposure to very diverse personal and socio-cultural types of real language. Stevick (1996) claimed that “alongside linguistic meanings are personal meanings: how the activity relates to each learner’s immediate purposes, overall objectives, loyalties, self-image, emotions and the like.” (p. 253), this means that the stand point of humanism in English Language Teaching is to encourage learner’s inner selves, disposition for learning, and the development of linguistic knowledge and social and interactive skills.

Involving Emotional Intelligence in Second Language Acquisition

Since the late 1970s, there has been growing interest towards the integration of emotions in language learning, as the focus has changed from a product to a process-oriented, and from teacher-centered to learner-centered. According to Panju (2008) the learning process is influenced by emotions, as well as the behavior improvement, and physical health and social relationships aspects. Then, it may be possible to take care of second language learners’ psychological health to enhance learning while motivating them by meaning things through different tasks related to their emotions. Thus, the involvement of Emotional Intelligence can improve language acquisition, while supporting the development of their emotional areas, such as being aware of their own emotions, in order to express them by means of the second language. Taking into account that Rivers (1976) suggested that language teachers “are the most fortunate of teachers-all subjects... whatever [the students] want to communicate about, whatever they want to read about, is [teachers’] subject matter” (p. 96), it can be argued that at the same time the teacher provides a variety of language activities which stimulate the different emotional

areas, she or he is also helping the language learners to create multiple personal strategies which are necessary for continuous learning.

It can be said that the engagement and success in language learning is stimulated by the use of Emotional Intelligence, as it fosters an attractive, encouraging, and motivating atmosphere. Since second language acquisition (SLA) embraces communication, understanding and recognition of the others and their cultural background, emotional intelligence (EI) plays an important role because it serves both internal mechanisms and external environment in the learning process (Goleman, 2001). In other words, Emotional Intelligence is significant in the language learning process, because it allows people to acquire different elements of the target language, and at the same time individuals learn to know how to function and behave properly within behavioral and cultural system of that language. Emotional Experience could also help students to associate academic knowledge to everyday social experiences. The success in SLA goes beyond the cognitive and cultural factors. Likewise, Emotional Intelligence is beneficial because it is connected to the language learners' emotional struggle to deal with the challenges of language learning, and it helps them to create a nonthreatening atmosphere because learning a second language is difficult, exhausting and replete with stresses and strains for the learners (Krashen, 1981).

Although the idea of including Emotional Intelligence in the academic field is virtually new, (Elias, Arnold, & Hussey 2003) some methods regarding Second Language Acquisition have already alluded to some aspects of Emotional Intelligence. Lightbown and Spada (2013) have recognized the significance of emotional variables and learners' differences like motivation, aptitudes, empathy, attitude, personality, intelligence, and learning styles, generally believed to contribute to successful language learning. They discussed how these learner's aspects influence

and can help them to recognize, control and take advantage of the learning opportunities, and enhance their second language learning outcomes. Also, Ellis (1994), suggested that there are several aspects including emotional factors which encourage second or foreign language learning. For instance, some methods such as Suggestopedia, or Community Language Teaching, which aim at making use of emotional actions in order to remove psychological barriers to learning and to generate comfortable surroundings in order to reduce any fear of failure. Furthermore, Emotional Intelligence can support the advancement of a good study behavior, and make the learning experience more effective (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 92). This means that the integration of affective factors inside the classroom where there are learners of any subjects especially learners of a second language, have been claimed to be beneficial to promote a successful language performance with the help of an emotional involvement. Besides, the connection of words and expressions with affective experience provides them with meaning and the learners can be better equipped for the second language learning tasks and to be more effective communicators. For example, Reid (1999) asserted that “higher interest and motivation in the learning process, increased student responsibility for their own learning, and greater classroom community. These are affective changes, and the changes have resulted in more effective learning” (p. 300). In other words, fostering the learner’s awareness in the diverse emotional factors which can take place inside the classroom, can produce satisfactory outcomes.

The involvement of the learners’ emotional aspects in language learning can allow them to produce and share meaningful linguistic input. Krashen (1982), claimed that for acquisition to take place the input has to be comprehensible and has to be slightly superior to the learner’s current level of competence. Then, the teacher can offer his students opportunities to increase their understanding and exchange messages through the use of an affective context, concern

about the recognition, management, and use their emotions to cope with difficulties and reduce their negative effects on attitudes towards the learning process and sessions. Moreover, Krashen (1982), presented the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that the individual's mood affects the kind of input he receives. As a consequence, it is vital to provide an appropriate environment inside the classroom in order that learners can moderate and control their levels of anxiety, can feel motivated to increase their self-esteem, and as a result they can feel capable of learning another language. For example, according to research conducted by Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham in 2008, the group with the highest level of emotional intelligence showed the lowest foreign language anxiety, and that classroom-based language instruction was connected to higher levels of foreign language anxiety when compared to instruction that included a meaningful use of language that embraced aspects like emotion regulation, stress management, and assertiveness.

Here is where Emotional Intelligence could reclaim its place in the second language classrooms since it fosters meaningful, challenging, and interesting language tasks. Because of the fact that EI has to do with self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills and empathy as Goleman affirmed, it stimulates an effective communicate atmosphere where learners can be more open and relaxed and where they are given opportunities for the negotiation of meaning with others. Besides, this interactional engagement can reinforce an ideational aspect inside the classroom which “clearly, negotiated interaction is much broader than a mere linguistic construct. It entails a spectrum of individual, social, cultural, and political factors that create the very context and character of language communication” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; p. 112). Moreover, according to Heck & Oudsten (2008), and Salovey (2001), (as mentioned in Rey

et al., 2011) people who are capable of identifying and regulating their own emotions should be able to normally preserve a better psychological well-being and attitudes.

Goleman (1995) claimed that emotional intelligence skills can increase the possibilities to succeed in the academic fields, and advocated feelings and emotions as the most important elements involved in the performance and improvement of human abilities, affirming that “the emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind” (p. 291). Also, Brown (2000), when talking about the affective principles that should be involved in the language teaching and learning, is concerned about paying attention to the emotions implicated in Second language Acquisition such as “feelings about the self, about relationships in a community of learners, and the emotional ties between language and culture” (p. 61), and he proposes to reinforce them within the language lessons. These emotional aspects which Brown discusses can make learners take advantage of the learning opportunities and be aware of them. Promoting an emotional strengthening inside the classroom can allow students to believe that they are learning a useful linguistic code, which allows them to communicate with their classmates, and also that they are indeed capable of learning.

Emotional Intelligence in EFL Contexts

It seems that all learners’ performance and attitude towards the target language and their intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions inside the classroom can be influenced by the socio-cultural context in which they live, their background knowledge about certain issues, their learning styles, and the necessity to defend their social and self-perception and to maintain their self-esteem (Harmer, 2001). Emotional Intelligence attachment to language lessons seems to be pertinent for language learners and teachers, for it could offer a different way to interact with learning styles, can make room for the creation of positive attitudes towards learning inside the

classroom, and can increase motivation towards learning. It can be, therefore, said that the learners' attitudes or standpoints could have an impact on the way they become familiar with the language learning and the way they fail or succeed within this process. As Brown (2000) indicated, attitudes "form a part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living" (p. 180). For this reason it is important for teachers to offer their students opportunities to advance within an integrative learning environment where they can learn the target language while they learn contents and social strategies too, so that they can aware of their own needs, goals, weaknesses and differences and learn to deal with them. This could be done as a way to enable learners to construct positive attitudes towards learning the target language, in order to enjoy the process, address issues, stimulate reflection on them and achieve it successfully. Moreover, students could accept the new language and its culture in a stress-free way, helping them to achieve better performances.

The role Emotional Intelligence plays throughout language learning is significant because it tends to seek the promotion and practice of emotional and cognitive states that may activate the learners' learning motivation. In this sense, Schumann (1998), cited by Garrett and Young (2009) asserted that "emotional reactions influence the attention and effort devoted to learning, and . . . patterns of appraisal may underlie what has been considered motivation in SLA" (p. 210) . This is to say that Emotional Intelligence could facilitate the involvement of individual participation in the learning community, since it demands the use of social skills, in order to shape the behaviors and direct cognition. In other words, Méndez and Peña (2013) asserted that "the development of positive interpersonal relations in language learning processes is a core aspect of instilling motivation and effective ELT" (p. 113). These social skills could make much more achievable the target language communicative and socio-cultural competence

of the learners. For example, they may be more likely to encourage an understanding of the cultural factors of the language being learned, making it more comprehensible and easier to express. Likewise, López (2011) argued that inside the language classroom, a vast set of emotions are originated, both positive and negative, and those emotional experiences have an impact on the student's motivation. She argued that:

Attention to emotions engendered in language learning can help overcome problems of demotivation created by fear or anger which can risk foreign language learners' potential. In addition, trying to evoke emotions that enhance learners' self-esteem and promote empathy can contribute to reenergizing students' motivational energy and facilitating language learning. (p. 44)

The intention to foster a pleasant and caring learning atmosphere, through the enhancement of the Emotional Intelligence, is also an attempt to reinforce the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for knowing how to communicate in the target language. It has been said that compelling experiences contribute to the construction of long-lasting memories and understandings. As a result, the satisfactory language learning experiences could improve the learner's interest and attention, and finally their motivation. Likewise, emotional aspects that stimulate the students' motivation could increase their enthusiasm and therefore their performance could progress. Goleman (1995) asserted that the ability to motivate one-self is one of the main faculties, which is strongly associated to the intrapersonal area. Then if the students discover in the classroom interactions that they have an important reason to learn a new language, it could be directly reflected in the development of their language communicative skills, and they will be more aware of the aspects they need to improve to continue progressing.

In this sense, the importance of the elements proposed by Goleman regarding Emotional Intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and different social skills), in language learning support the creation of cooperative activities, which could make the learning and teaching process more attractive. By reinforcing social competency, learners can improve their language proficiency, since through the emotional intelligence practice, individuals should learn how to be more interpersonally sensitive, and then how to communicate positively. It can also trigger a learning environment of flexibility and mutual responsibility. For instance, in 2005 Bastian (as cited in Kaboudjoubee's paper, 2014), after doing his research about the relationship between the emotional intelligence and the students' perception towards the classroom atmosphere, determined that the learners with higher Emotional Quotient have a stronger self-confidence and ability to manage the cooperation with others so that they are more disposed to take part in language classrooms activities. Another study carried out by Shahmohamadi and Hasanzadeh (2011) entitled *Emotional Intelligence and its Predictive Power in Iranian Foreign Language Learners' Language Achievement*, found that some factors of the Emotional Intelligence such as intrapersonal intelligence and general mood are positively related to language achievement and that emotionally healthy learners are usually more comfortable and cooperative, and learn in a more effective way. Thus, it seems to be necessary to include emotional factors inside the language classroom, because it could allow students and teachers to more easily deal with the learning materials and topics, enhancing the relationships they establish with people, and which can help them to continue learning.

Few researchers have studied the influence of Emotional Intelligence on the positive and negative outcomes in adolescence, some of them have suggested that it is crucial for successful emotional performance in young people's life (Rey et al., 2011), including academic life. Thus, it

was identified by some studies that young people who have a good perception of their emotional skills show advanced life satisfaction and their stress levels were usually in a low level when they were able to control their feelings (Extremera et al., 2007). Besides, being Emotional intelligent seems to have an important connection with the reinforcement of a positive self-confidence. Being able to cope with Foreign Language Anxiety defined as a “distinct complex phenomenon of self-perception, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process...an apprehension about the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Horwitz and Cope, 1986.; cited in Kahraman 2013 p. 5) could lead to an improvement in the second language learning process. According to Zins, Elias and Greenberg (2003), “students who become more self-aware and confident about their learning abilities try harder, and students who motivate themselves, set goals, manage their stress, and organize their approach to work, perform better.” (p. 60)

Furthermore, teaching people the positive and encouraging skills that emotional intelligence implicates may result in long-term effect on learning achievement (Williford, 2000). As the language teachers make learners familiar with their internal mechanisms regarding feelings and beliefs, and also promotes a positive interpersonal interaction among students, the learners could increase their motivation towards learning at the same time they feel they are totally involved in the process, since their points of view and personalities are being taking into account. As a result, it is possible for teachers to influence their learners’ emotional side to incite a modification to the cognitive schemata, and the combination of affect with cognition, can enrich the learning experience. Then again, it seems that learning can occur better when the attitudes towards learning are encouraging. At that point, Elyıldırım and Ashton (2006) stated that “attitudes can be modified by experience, effective language teaching strategies can

encourage students to be more positive towards the language they are learning” (p. 3). Language teachers can help students create and to discover supporting conditions inside the classroom, in which they can see the use of the language as enjoyable, beneficial, and above all close to their culture and ways of seeing the world.

Since Emotional Intelligence abilities can denote the individual experiences in relation to the environment, it can also become an incentive for their personal and academic fulfillment. It has been claimed that all type of learning, especially the learning of a new language occur better when there is a vigorous social collaboration or interaction and there is an adequate adjustment to diverse settings. Then, in the EFL contexts, learning can be considerably altered by the social factors from inside or outside the classroom, that is the reason why the informal opportunities for language use and learning should be dynamic and flexible, they should take into account the uniqueness of the learners and the ways they have to cooperate with others. As the Emotional Intelligence skills tend to be personal and interpersonal, it can be said that meanwhile the individuals learn how to maintain and control their relationships during diverse linguistic circumstances and learn to realize what they want to achieve and why. They also could learn how to negotiate meaning and make better performances in the target language. In this sense, Maynard (2002) cited in Imai (2010) proposed the “linguistic emotivity” concept, which he explained as:

The function of language is not limited of referencing and conveying facts and propositions, but it also expresses and exposes human emotions, so that all linguistic systems are potentially emotional cross varied levels such as lexicon, syntax, text, and discourse. (p. 282)

Finally, fostering an emotion-management inside the EFL classroom could help an effective classroom management, since this could create a more open learning environment. Usually, when language learners are in a speaking class, mainly the young and adult ones, seem to be afraid of making any type of language mistakes, but also they seem to be anxious and afraid of judgement when expressing their opinions in front of the language teacher and their classmates (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). That is why it is necessary to develop the Emotional Intelligence skills of the learners in EFL settings, in order to help them work cooperatively with others and in a productive way. As a result students could learn how to respond appropriately when their classmates share their experiences. The enrichment of their emotional competency, could be achieved by combining the linguistic topics with diverse emotionally charged situations, which can help them to tolerate each other and to maintain a high level of motivation towards learning. Good management of the skills being emotionally intelligent is manifested with high levels of persistence and optimism (Goleman, 1995), this circumstance that would be beneficial in an EFL context, where it is possible to find people who can be frustrated regarding the language learning process.

Emotional Intelligence and language Education Policy in Colombia

The varied emotions and skills that language learners positively experience, practice, and reinforce inside the EFL classroom, are said to enhance their well-being and their educational adjustment, allowing for the opportunity to achieve their academic goals effectively. In Colombia, the National Ministry of Education and the Basic Standards of Competence in Foreign Languages, states the necessity to promote the learning of at least one foreign language and the development of the communicative competence according to the suggestions of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) respectively. Therefore, the strategic and sociolinguistic aspects

of the foreign language are likely to be related to the enhancement of the social and emotional skills, and then, they are the most notably aspects where the involvement of Emotional Intelligence should take place. The strategic and sociolinguistic competencies include defining and meaning the others' expressions, adjusting and clarifying them, establishing roles and responsibilities with others, and helping the language learners to be emotional intelligent. It can, therefore allow them to strengthen the ability to create and interpret discourse in the target language. Moreover, those interpersonal and ideational activities, which the Basic Standards of Competence in Foreign Languages proposed, can be said to be develop through the manifestation of the learners' own experiences about the their immediate milieu, what they feel and what they think, and believe. In this sense, Kumaravadivelu (2003) explained that every ideational exchange is concerned with "ideas and emotions participants bring with them based on their lived experiences, past and present. It also involves a cognitive awareness of, and a sociocultural sensitivity to, the external world and its impact on the formation of individual identities." (p. 102).

The National Bilingual Colombia program created in 2004, seeks to adapt the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF), which recognizes that the language learning activities and competences should be developed according to their cognitive, affective, and linguistic characteristics and needs. Thus, it is supposed that the understanding and adaptation of the CEF to Colombia, enables the Colombian language policy to seek the fostering of affective factors including emotional skills, in order to obtain a better sociolinguistic appropriateness and language performances as it is indirectly stated in the CEF. Moreover, it recognizes the importance of interaction in communication when learning a new language. It states that language competence is not merely just a question of knowing what

language form is used to convey a specific language function, though language use is about interaction. The CEF (2001) states that one of the language activities, it is expected for learners to be involved is interaction, and explains it as:

In interaction at least two individuals participate in an oral and/or written exchange in which production and reception alternate and may in fact overlap in oral communication. Learning to interact thus involves more than learning to receive and to produce utterances. High importance is generally attributed to interaction in language use and learning in view of its central role in communication. (p. 14)

This means that in Colombia, the foreign language teachers should encourage student's interactions in order to share meanings and effectively respond to the social demanded interactions. It is assumed that the kind of interaction the CEF argues for, and that should be implemented in Colombia, it is the one that pursues the learner's accurate linguistic performances into communicative contexts, taking into account their real-life opinions, ideas and experiences. Therefore, interaction inside the classroom cannot be imposed by the textbook because it usually depends on the teachers and students' real-life experiences. Consequently, it is expected that while the individuals are acquiring the target language and learning some aspects of it, they are also developing Emotional Intelligence skills as a means of maintaining the categories of the language proficiency, proposed by the CEF, which include co-operating strategies and sociolinguistic competence, Nelsons and Low (2006) argued that "if students are to develop essential life skills and the ability to think constructively and act wisely, the emotional mind must be understood and considered central to education for the 21st century". (p. 1)

The Law 115 (1994), the General Law on Education in Colombia in its twenty-first article, states that individuals should learn the communicative skills of minimum one foreign language, and in its first article claims that education (including foreign language teaching and learning) is “a permanent, personal, cultural and social process grounded in an integral formation of human beings, of their integrity, their rights and their duties” (p.1). In Colombia, foreign language teaching and learning procedures should not only be concerned with enabling learners to master the underlying system of the target language, but they should also pay attention to the learning conditions that are necessary for an effective learning and use of the new language. These conditions refer not only to the physical classroom context, but also to the psychological circumstances and social factors in which the learners are immerse. According to this article, helping the learners to be emotional intelligent, while practicing the new language, is valuable to allow learners to use their emotions to control the ensuing complications and to avoid negative attitudes towards their learning process. The definition of education this law provides, relates to the emotional education concept proposed by Goleman (1995) and Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (1999), since they are concerned with seeing the language students as human beings, which not only are taught logic knowledge, but also affective factors, so that they can achieve goals using their own opinions and feelings as a meaningful and authentic material, so that they can advance as human beings and as learners, that grow in an integrative way.

As a result, Saklofske et al. (2012) and Seligman et al. (2009) (as cited in Herrera et al., 2015) claimed that the institutions should pay attention to the learner’s social and emotional development, facilitating the global development of all learners, especially children. They stated that it is important to create a classroom atmosphere through which learners can feel safe and can generate happiness of students. Likewise, UNESCO (1996) reported on how education

worldwide for the twenty-first century should be, mentioned that education should go around four elemental aspects, to understand, to do, to live together, to be. This supports the idea of involving emotional education inside the classrooms, since it entails an understanding of the others ideas, in order to live and learn in harmony.

In spite of all the ideas mentioned before about the Colombian education policy and how it is related to the involvement of the Emotional Intelligence in an implicit way, it can be said that the vast majority of the objectives this policy pursuits, are not being completely attained. The main obstacles for which the project may not be working, spoiling the advancement of the learner's foreign language proficiency, and the immersion of the Emotional Intelligence skills, seems to be related to the unfavorable conditions in which learning and teaching take place, and the lack of language teachers' expertise. For instance, Cárdenas (2006) claimed that:

The reality established in the CEF would have to be contrasted with the conditions of Colombian educational institutions, namely infrastructure, curriculum organization, use of foreign languages in the academic and cultural domains of the country, working hours and competences of language teachers. (p. 3)

Therefore, the affective, self -awareness and social skills could be affected, as well as the design of the syllabus, learning tasks, lesson plans, and the learning and communicative opportunities can be frequently reduced.

The few hours of exposure to the foreign language, its socio cultural background and the language learning materials design could affect the way and level in which Emotional Intelligence and its pedagogical implications can be attained in the majority of the Colombian language lessons. The lack of time to implement techniques and procedures to reduce the psychological and social distance between teachers and learners, can make it difficult for

students to affiliate successfully to the language learning and participate and show familiarity and respect to the target language community. Besides, the design of materials, regarding the enhancement of emotional side of the learner as well as the logical side, make the development of the language learning demanding. Since it seems that some current text books and topics, which are used in Colombia, are not recognizable to the foreign language learners, for they do not belong to their experience and emotional background, it can be perceived as a tedious class for them, with useless and unknown topics.

It is important to reevaluate the way in which the Colombian policy is taking the CEF as a reference for learning languages, especially in the implementation and design of EFL materials. Dewaele (2005) stated that in SLA research “a focus on affect and emotion among researchers might inspire authors of teaching materials and foreign language teachers to pay increased attention to the communication of emotion and the development of sociocultural competence in a L2” (p. 2). Thus, it can be said that the materials should encourage learners to react cognitively, flexibly and effectively to social situations including the emotional ones as well as display familiarity with the system of the new language.

Limitations of Involving Emotional Intelligence in EFL Contexts

Although Emotional intelligence can be understood as the capacity all people have to manage different situations through the motivation, achievement of a practical emotional adjustment and sensitivity, some limitations in involving emotional intelligence in SLA especially in foreign language contexts have been identified. This does not mean that EI cannot be used in order to enrich the academic development at all, but that it could present academic challenges, which must be overcome.

First of all, it is necessary to remember that emotions in general are unplanned reactions that cannot be at all manipulated (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). This means, for example that as the emotional states can be inconsistent from moment to moment the learning environment could not only depend on the kind of communicative exchanges, but also on the learner's biological system. The involvement of emotions inside the learning process may not be managed accurately without a systematic observation and exploration of a variety of in-class and out-class circumstances, which can inform the language teacher of the individual differences and emotional background every student brings with her or him. That could be necessary in order to how to deal with student's negative attitudes and how foster and use their positive emotions to promote cognitive abilities.

However, some studies have found that there is not a completely correlation between all the skill factors implied in emotional intelligence and language achievement. They have concluded that intrapersonal aspects and general mood could be the key elements in helping a person to have better performances, rather than social or cultural skills (Shahmohamadi & Hasanzadeh 2011). In other words, the integration of emotional development inside the language classroom is beneficial only to those strong intrapersonal intelligent learners the most, affecting the academic progress of the rest of them. On the other hand, Goleman (2011) mentioned in Farjami and Gheballi (2013) suggested that possibly:

There is no necessary relationship between emotional intelligence and a cognitive ability like language learning... The neural circuits that govern self-management and relationship skills... are independent of the areas for verbal and other cognitive capabilities. On the other hand, it may depend on how you are learning the language. (p. 65)

This means that in EFL settings being Emotional Intelligent may not be crucial when learning a new language, since the neuro biological connection with the cognitive mind seems to be weak, so that their development may occur independently. However, in ESL settings, the relationship between the EI factors and the cognitive and logical capabilities through which the target language is being learnt may be reinforced through the real social interactions, which may direct naturally and unconsciously their emotional orientations. Moreover, some studies developed in second and foreign language contexts have not made it clear yet where the relationship between the EQ and second or foreign language enhancement takes place and which variables of both sides are implicated. (Safa, 2013)

According to Harmer (2001) there is some criticism about the way EFL teachers encourage learners to talk, using the target language, from their ‘inner’ selves. Some critics enquire whether it is appropriate for EFL teachers to focus on the student’s emotional side because they can be neglecting their learner’s cognitive and intellectual development. Also, learners can limit the range of language they use to communicate with each other.

An essential part of the involvement of EI inside the classroom community, it should be considered that teachers need to be concerned with the idea of being emotional intelligent since, as Abdolrezapour (2012) concluded “teachers and novice teachers may simply fail to achieve positive outcomes” (p. 11). It seems that the learning process within Emotional Intelligence is not just about providing affective, cultural, social or intrapersonal materials or tasks, but it is about establishing a positive interpersonal relationship with learners. This is necessary in order to increase their opportunities to receive comprehensible input, provide comprehensible output, and engage them in a cooperative language community, in which the teacher does participate.

Practical Actions to Integrate EI into EFL Settings

It can be said that the creation of a supportive and reciprocal emotional learning atmosphere inside the classroom is not only determined by learners' expectations and behaviors, but also by those emotional and academic ideas of teachers. For instance, Garret and Young (2009) mentioned that aspects such as the teacher actions, the emotional state of the language learner, and the interpersonal relations between students and teacher have an influence on learners' sense of well-being and therefore affects learning. In order to foster among learners a positive sense of belonging to a group, the EFL teacher needs to establish a healthy relationship with learners, mainly by showing genuine interest in their learning process at the same time she inspires a motivating learning atmosphere (Méndez & Peña, 2013). Besides providing cooperative activities to encourage students to know each other and work in an interdependent rather than in a competitive way can make students be more receptive and better prepare to assume and examine what learning they are being taught, however, the EFL teacher needs to inform their students the reason of their group so that they know what is expected from them. Therefore, the EFL teacher's assignment could promote learner's engagement with the target language process and EI factors and can bring the language learning material, content, and academic and social goals closer to their learners' needs and real interests.

In view of the Emotional Intelligence could have a significant relationship with second language learning success as shown earlier, following there are some useful ideas that can be taken into account in order to incorporate elements of Emotional Intelligence in English as a Foreign Language contexts in order to enhance the second language learning process.

Classroom Discussions

This is a type of Community Language Learning activities related to reflection, observation, and group work. These kind of activities could be originated when learners start to share their real world experiences, opinion related to certain topics and expressions of their feelings (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since these activities have a focus on interaction in the foreign language, they will help students to increase not only their language knowledge but also to strengthen their ideas about any topic as they share content using the L2. Moreover, learners may use and enhance self-regulation and social skills, critical thinking and conflict management, while practicing abilities such as listening and speaking and shaping their identity.

Writing Assignments

This activities could begin by suggesting the consideration of the feeling words of the day. Then, the students could be asked to write in the target language using those feeling words or about them (Brackett & Katulak 2006). With the help of this task, students express a broad range of emotions knowledge, their own thoughts and personal experiences, so that they can see things in a new way. For example, when encouraging learners to write poetry they can raise their creativity as ‘the difficulty of writing forces the new ideas to the surface’ (Scrivener, 2005 p. 361), then they can use a wide range of vocabulary regarding their affective side and remember them easily. Scrivener (2005) proposes an *Instant Poetry Activity*, which makes use of emotional components and skills as students need to look carefully, be aware of what is around them, be capable of understanding others, managing the situation, and following instructions in order to obtain a good piece of writing.

Games

Games with an academic purpose inside the classroom may be also a cooperative and experience-based language learning, which is effective to young people (Hromek & Roffey,

2009). They have an interactional nature so that learners can practice their target language skills with a real communicative purpose, which helps individuals to learn to keep a balance between: strategy, hope, competition, management of the idea of frustration among other Emotional Intelligence characteristics. Thus, games designed for foreign language learning achievement, could also use strategies such as role-play, problem-solving, and simulation in order to engage learners in solving social situations and rehearsing social and emotional skills. Also, teachers can make use of games for reducing their learners' anxiety levels while they are being evaluated; and this is an easy way to realize what students are learning or struggling.

Scrivener (2005) suggests some word games that serve as integrated practice activities, where learners can practice their language skills (lexis) and their Emotional aspects such as group work. He, for example, recommends to play *Word Seeds* game, in which the teacher

dictate a list of about twenty words which students all write down... students need to work in small groups and orally prepare a story that uses all the words...exactly in the order they originally came in. Finally each group tells its story. (p. 348)

Drama

The implementation of drama activities could be an opportunity to connect academic concerns and real life situations. It also reinforces the bond between thought and expression in the target language. Besides being a good way to motivate students to practice the new language (expressions, vocabulary etc.), it could offers possibility to support their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills as they interact cooperatively to orchestrate the dramatizations and improvisations. Learners also can assume roles and consider things from the point of view of another people. For example, Kayaoğlu (2009) suggested in her paper that drama can be seen as a:

Multi-sensory approach to language acquisition by involving second language learners physically, emotionally, and cognitively ...students are led to explore and experiment with the boundary of their anxiety and emotions, developing a sense of awareness of self in the target language culture. (p. 124)

In 2005 Scrivener recommended some drama activities that can be used to practice the target language and social abilities. For instance, he proposed *Interesting Situations Activities*, in which students are given a difficult situation which they have to look a solution for, while acting it “For example, a well-meaning hostess serving meat to a polite vegetarian” (Scrivener, 2005 p. 363). He also claimed that this activity depends on the degree of trust, acceptance and respect, which are clearly emotional skills. Then, the ability to comprehend the needs of others, to empathize with others' emotional states in appropriate ways are part of this kind of drama activities.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to show the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and language learning in EFL contexts. Most of the existing literature and research findings on the topic presented in this paper, have revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and second learners' language achievement since they can make a remarkable progress when components such as self-management, reciprocal learning and problem solving are added to the language learning curriculum.

In spite of the fact that research on the Emotional Intelligence effects on second language success is a relatively new issue, the current studies suggest that L2 process is based on an individuals' communicative purposes, and most of those purposes can be attained depending on that learners' management of his/her Emotional Intelligence.

Moreover, including Emotional Intelligence aspects such as self-Awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and, social skills inside EFL classrooms may enable learners to enhance their production of positive emotions and attitudes towards L2, therefore it can be possible to provide situations in which they can feel capable of express themselves, be optimistic about learning a new language, accept the second language culture easily, among other issues that helps them have better L2 performance.

Colombia should encourage within its educational project the added value of emotional competence of students. Colombian learners seem to be failing at the accomplishment of an integral human development because the education system appears to be focused on content acquisition too much, rather than on the mastering of skills, (critical thinking, collaboration, interpersonal, communication), needed in any community. The analysis of the current society indicates that many of the problems encountered by people, especially young people, have to do with their lack of emotional management (Herrera et al., 2015), this means that they are not being able to cope with real life situations in an effective way. Therefore, the Colombian education system needs to conceive education as a process affecting not only the cognitive area, but also which encompasses the affective, emotional, social, and rational aspects to help people to succeed individually and collectively.

In the Colombian context, the law seems to make it implicit the association of EI in the L2 classrooms, although it tends to be demanding to achieve a balanced integration of EI elements on L2 lessons. However, some aspects of EI may be improved and immersed by creating mainly cooperative activities which can make conditions for fostering an increase in academic success, help them to figure out and develop their intellectual capabilities, reduce problem behavior and improve quality relationships between teachers and students. Besides the

EFL teachers need to review their teaching practices, so that they can be more attentive to their students' emotional needs and address their emotional experiences in the classroom.

In this sense, it is necessary that EFL teachers be emotionally intelligent in a way that they can play a leading role in their students' learning process. Teachers should attain much more meaningful teacher-student and student-student relationships in the classroom to offer their learners the possibility to articulate their ideas in different ways, and thus, begin at the emotional side to then reach the logical side. Nevertheless, most of EFL teachers should receive training in Emotional Intelligence and be updated on it (Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009). Teachers who possess emotional management are less likely to experience failure in their teaching skills because they are able to work more effectively, particularly with challenging classroom issues and troubling students. In the Colombia context, EFL teachers could enhance their emotional competence with the help of psychologists, but most importantly with the help of their colleagues. Through class observations, teachers gain insight about what is behind their teaching style; reciprocal cooperation can help teachers become more assertive, decisive, and can empower them to find alternative solutions to challenges they face in their language teaching practices.

It is important for Colombian teachers, especially EFL teachers, to positively embrace these Emotional Intelligence ideas, for the country is expecting a post-conflict era in which the affective and the logical aspects cannot be segmented in subject-matters, but in which students are able to inter-relate them and find a balance between them. Foreign language teachers need to contribute their teaching practices to the creation and development of educational settings, where students can be motivated and oriented towards a responsible autonomy. That is to say they could monitor their own learning process and make assertive decisions. Teachers need to expand

learning possibilities that can both support learners to work for a better academic procedure, and allow them to be aware of the difficulties they could face in real life situations. In other words, teachers cannot only talk about peace, they need to teach about it as well. For that reason, it is essential to take into account Colombian culture in English language teaching materials, since it could expand their perspective of their individual, social and, cultural world beyond helping them to learn specific linguistic aspects of the L2. Using cultural content inside the language classroom could also foster learners' interest towards contents and therefore towards language.

Finally, including EI strategies in the Colombian language learning/teaching process is suitable since teaching is an interactive process between society and the classroom. Emotional Intelligence aspects (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills) allow teachers and students to re-conceptualize language education from a socio-cultural point of view. However it could present some difficulties, since it requires the EFL teacher to be aware of the emotional issues, levels of independence and socialization, and cognitive development of each learner, so that he can constantly adapt the learning materials and lesson plans according to the emergent academic and affective needs. The teacher could not simply accept materials from other educational systems that are designed using other cultural backgrounds within the language learning. The major difficulty however, is that Colombian education tends to constrain the room and the tools which support learners in their integral development. On the other hand, the way the educational process is achieved has to do with the way teachers understand the learning process. If a teacher does not have a positive attitude towards learning and teaching, they will find it hard to obtain good results with their students. Therefore, it is vital for EFL teachers to responsibly assume their roles as facilitators and guides, who can reflect critically about the teaching situation, identify problems, and create strategies to solve them.

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