

International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
 Vol. 24, No. 12, pp. 427-450, December 2025
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.12.19>
 Received Sept 12, 2025; Revised Nov 7, 2025; Accepted Nov 10, 2025

Exploring the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Language Proficiency, Engagement, and Motivation in University-Level ESP Classrooms

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Abstract. Emotional intelligence (EI) is critically important in educational contexts, particularly in language learning, where it aids learners in managing anxiety, building resilience, and sustaining motivation. However, it's a precise relationship with key learning outcomes within healthcare university-level English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms requires further investigation. This quantitative study, therefore, aimed to unravel the complex interplay between EI and English among university-level ESP students. In addition, it aims at identifying

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the effect EI components can have on the varying levels of ESP learners' engagement and motivation. This study involved 80 ESP healthcare university-level, randomly chosen to ensure the representation of learners from different fields of study. English language proficiency among ESP learners was measured using a standardized test designed to evaluate the four language skills, followed by administering the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory and the student engagement scale to measure the ESP students EI dimensions and their engagement levels. The findings demonstrated a significantly positive relationship between overall EI and language proficiency. Furthermore, results from Pearson correlation and regression analyses emphasized that specific EI dimensions, most notably self-awareness and empathy, served as major statistical determinants of improved academic performance and higher levels of classroom engagement. Consequently, this study advocates for the intentional integration of strategies oriented toward developing these EI dimensions into ESP curricula. Such an approach can enhance language skill development by fostering greater motivation and active participation, offering valuable guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in creating more effective and transformative ESP learning environments.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; English language proficiency; learner engagement; motivation; ESP

1. Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI), broadly defined as the capacity to perceive, use, understand, manage, and handle emotions, has been recognized as a critical factor in educational success. Since its popularization by Goleman (1995), building on the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI has been shown to contribute significantly to learning environments by fostering resilience, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. It helps students control pressure and inspire themselves, as well as handle related emotional problems like fear and low confidence (Hu & Chen, 2022). This established link between emotional competencies and learning outcomes underscores the relevance of EI in academic settings. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners in particular need emotional intelligence.

ESP students face pressure to quickly learn a new language and a complicated, specialized lexicon and discourse specific to their prospective careers, such as medicine, engineering, or business. This dual cognitive load and the high-stakes belief that language ability is crucial to academic and career success can increase anxiety, imposter syndrome, and frustration. Thus, these students need EI's emotional toolset as well as cognitive methods. Self-regulation helps manage the stress of learning difficult terminology, intrinsic motivation sustains effort through difficult and highly specific tasks, and empathy is essential for nuanced professional communication in their target fields. EI is not only useful but essential to a learner's capacity to traverse the specific psychological demands of an ESP setting.

The challenges associated with language learning are particularly acute in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. Unlike general English courses, ESP instruction demands that learners master not only fundamental language skills but also highly specialized terminologies and communicative practices unique to their professional or academic fields (e.g., engineering, medicine, business) (Li & Wei, 2023). This argument is substantiated by research findings that establish a positive correlation between high EI and effective management of emotional problems, leading to better concentration, motivation, and perseverance in learning a language (H. Wang et al., 2023).

However, even with these insights, little research has considered the functioning of emotional intelligence in ESP contexts, where language learning is connected to domain-specific demands and the development of professional identity. The novelty of this study lies at this intersection; it attempts to inquire into how and in what way EI may contribute to learner engagement as well as their language expertise in academic and professional English learning of a highly particularized nature. Hence, the concept of emotional intelligence automatically finds space in a system designed to integrate its components for enhanced mastery over language proficiency through academic achievement (Li, 2020).

Though emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a very powerful factor in predicting success within educational endeavors, there is scanty research on how it relates to the academic achievements of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners (C. Zhang, 2023). Traditional methods of language study focus on such cognitive abilities as memorization, grammar, and reading ability, without taking into consideration the many emotional and psychological problems students face that hinder their learning process (Ali et al., 2024; Kostić-Bobanović, 2020). This problem involves student language anxiety, low self-efficacy, and motivation; therefore, barriers cannot be broken by instructions focusing only on cognition. Consequently, students frequently encounter heightened language anxiety, low self-efficacy, and waning motivation, which are significant impediments to achieving the advanced proficiency required in their specialized domains.

Nevertheless, a big gap still lingers in the study about specific dimensions of EI, like self-regulation, empathy, or self-awareness, and their direct effects on English for Specific Purposes language learning results (Alfaeni et al., 2022). Most studies discuss the general effects of EI on academic achievement but not substantially its particular role in language acquisition within ESP classrooms (Thao et al., 2023; Yang & Duan, 2023). In other words, little focus is given to the separate effect of each component of emotional intelligence. Such a gap makes it imperative to move another step forward toward purposeful research-inquiry into whether and how EI relates to ESP learners' academic performance and how it can be developed to help learners challenge the social and emotional barriers to successful language learning. Filling these gaps may also inform ESP educators about which intervention related to EI would work best for student engagement and resilience improvement that individuals need.

The rising regard of Emotional Intelligence as a major factor in success at learning a language invokes its broader effects on humanity apart from mere linguistic prowess. Motivation and engagement are therefore issues highly relevant to considering the role of emotional intelligence in teaching ESP. This is because motivation and engagement demand much more than what general EFL classrooms require; strategies need to be fitted onto the learning needs that connect to professional or academic demands, making emotional and motivational involvement very critical for the fulfillment of intended results.

Previous research articles such as those by (Chang & Tsai, 2022; Herasni et al., 2021; Y. Wang & Yang, 2024) pointed out that high EI would raise self-awareness and sensitivity toward others while ensuring even more dedication to performing tasks related to study commitments. The analysis of effects that Emotional Intelligence could have on ESP learners' motivation and engagement offers an excellent perspective regarding ways through which learners could be actively involved. The current study seeks to shed light on the relationship between emotional intelligence and language proficiency among ESP learners while at the same time better understanding of how emotional intelligence competencies can motivate learners.

Motivation is one of the driving forces toward creating an effective learning experience hence centering feelings, emotions, and perceptions. As such, this study will include how self-awareness by dimensions in emotional intelligence that includes awareness about others (empathy) and control of one's own behavior (self-regulation) helps a learner overcome barriers in language learning such as anxiety or doubt about one's ability. Specifically, it has tried to account for which dimensions of EI, if any, have a statistically significant effect on raising the level of language proficiency among EFL learners. The findings have been hoped to enable this research to indulge encouragement benefits towards introducing EI development into ESP classes for student success practically by creating thoughtful curriculum designers and instructors behind the scenes.

This research addresses critical questions regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and language proficiency among ESP learners. By examining this link, the current research aims at answering the following research questions:

RQ1: Which dimensions of EI have the most substantial impact on ESP learners' language proficiency?

RQ2: To what extent does emotional intelligence impact ESP learners' engagement and motivation levels in language learning activities?

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Language Proficiency in ESP Classrooms

Proficiency in the English language is what most students want to learn when discussing English for Specific Purposes (ESP), with specific knowledge and skills related to their areas. Unlike general English courses, ESP focuses on specific contexts where language is oriented toward engineering, medicine, and business among others and vocabulary and terminology related to the field being used.

Recent studies emphasized the fact that ESP classrooms have different linguistic demands and hence required more functional proficiency by learners who should be able to communicate within their professional domains (Muttaqin & Chuang, 2023). This implies that ESP instructors are also required to adjust teaching methodologies according to such specialized linguistic needs by even more realistically involving real scenarios and technical content (Costa & Mastellotto, 2022).

Moreover, and according to a study by (Dafouz Milne, 2021), enhancing language proficiency in ESP involves a dual focus on general language skills and technical language comprehension; students in ESP classrooms benefit from instructional methods that address both language fundamentals – such as grammar, listening, and speaking – and discipline-specific skills, including technical writing and reading comprehension. This integration enables students to acquire language proficiency that is both comprehensive and directly applicable to their career paths, improving not only their academic performance but also their confidence in professional communication. Consequently, ESP courses increasingly utilize collaborative activities, case studies, and problem-solving exercises to bridge general English skills with specialized language needs, aligning linguistic instruction with students' future professional demands (Ali et al., 2024).

The role of language proficiency in ESP classrooms is weighed not just for academic success but by students' employability and career readiness. As put by Roquet et al. (2022), graduates who exercise higher competence in ESP are more oriented to acquire better placements in the international labor market since most employers give an offer to those applicants who can demonstrate strong communication skills in specific areas. Therefore, this result accentuated the need to encourage a high level of English mastery through ESP programs where more and more professions are demanding advanced skills in English communication. Hence, institutions have increasingly placed priority on ESP classes that would help students advance these particular competencies and therefore made such dual competency an important determinant of organizational promotion and success (Stan, 2022).

Non-cognitive skills, such as motivation and control of anxiety, are increasingly considered essential in acquiring a specialty language, since learners become more keenly aware of the difficulties associated with vocabularies and contexts pertaining to specific subjects (Xiao & Liao, 2023). Dalia Abbas et al., (2023), states that motivation is the basic driving force that keeps students interested and sustains their efforts despite imposing demands of language in an area like business or medicine. Setting academic goals for students and undertaking steps toward achieving proficiency in the special type of language motivating further learning by establishing goal-setting-accomplishing cycles (Liu et al., 2023).

Highly motivated learners will be in a better position to sustain the drill practice that is required to learn minute details related to English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Motivation emphasizes another non-cognitive skill that is very important for long-term retention and application of a language (Athena et al., 2023).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners face challenges that are naturally different and more particular due to the comparatively greater degree of specialization of their language needs when compared with general English. Orlando Sèna (2022) mentions that students should acquire vocabulary, language functions, and rhetorical patterns relevant to professional disciplines in which they plan to work or study-in most cases medicine, engineering, or law-and for which they need specialized terminological elements, syntactic structures, and discourse conventions; thus, making student learning highly field-specific.

Learning becomes even more difficult for the students when they do not possess the prerequisite knowledge of the content area. Most ESP learners also have to learn in a short time and learn at high levels of proficiency therein increasing pressure on quick assimilation of complex language. In this respect, the interplay between time constraints and field-specific language requirements makes learning in ESP more difficult than in general language programs (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021).

The relation between EI and English as a foreign language learning has gained a particular interest in recent researchers (Budak & Mede, 2022; Tingyu et al., 2024), whereby higher levels of emotional intelligence are proven to be positively related to EFL learners' English language performance, foreign language anxiety and attitudes towards foreign language learning.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence in Education

Emotional Intelligence is defined as the ability of an individual to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively utilize emotions; one's own emotions and the emotions of others. The term was first coined by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990 before being later popularized by Daniel Goleman. As described by many scholars, EI is often considered to be an important complement to cognitive intelligence or IQ for the determination of personal as well as professional success (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020). Salovey and Mayer described four basic aspects of emotional intelligence that Herrer et al. 2020 discussed in their paper: perceiving emotion accurately, eliciting emotion to facilitate thought, understanding emotion, and managing emotion.

Their model was later expanded by Goleman who included such components as self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills which enable people to navigate complex social interactions achieve objectives and respond constructively under stress. Therefore, Emotional Intelligence is highly appreciated wherever high interpersonal interaction takes place such as in educational systems that require cooperation between learners or teachers or when motivation is needed (X.Wang, 2023).

The cognitive and non-cognitive results of learning as influenced by emotional intelligence make an indication that students with high emotional intelligence would be adequate in coping with academic challenges, interpersonal conflicts, and related emotional strains (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). The level of resilience, adaptability, and persistence which some scholars have argued are possessed by students with high EI equal to the level of degree that can be related to actual

success in academic achievement (Forsberg et al., 2024). According to Greenier et al., (2021) that EI will enhance more communication skills, empathy, or social awareness among students and between students and instructors. The management of emotions that EI facilitates leads to academic success through low degrees of better environment creation in learning (MacCann et al., 2020).

Bani & Soliha (2024) stated that emotional intelligence is what makes the core of such fields as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) because, among a myriad of challenges, motivation and specialist knowledge that ESP students lack are paramount. In other words, in language-focused fields like ESP, EI can assist learners in controlling their emotional problems through better communication between people and by developing resilience. Major dimensions of EI include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These components articulate a dynamic interplay that speaks to the varied ways in which an individual may be called upon to exercise agency in meeting sundry academic and social demands (Paschal et al., 2025).

Self-awareness is commonly considered as the basic component of emotional intelligence. It means the individual's conscious recognition of their emotions and effects on thoughts and actions at any given moment. According to Kaugi (2024) self-awareness helps a person understand her strengths and weaknesses, thus developing a realistic self-image that is very critical in the realization of personal and academic development. More elaboration was provided by Bermejo-Martins et al., (2021) such self-awareness can better help learners understand the triggers to their emotions so that they can respond rather than react, i.e., responding with impulsive reactions especially in high-stakes environments such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Therefore, the promotion of self-awareness in learners may result in improved emotional regulation and cognitive focus in specialized language learning.

Self-regulation complements self-awareness because through self-regulation individuals can manage their emotions in a positive way. According to Elkot and Ali (2020), students who have high skills on self-regulation can control stress, maintain motivation at all times and focus on accomplishing academic tasks under challenging learning situations. The need for self-regulation is very apparent in ESP settings since learners' experience anxiety at its highest level due to the complex language as well as subject-specific terminology involved (Šafranĳ et al., 2024). Szcześniak & Tułeczka (2020) mentioned that self-regulation assists them put aside all emotional disturbances against academic work; thus, this competence is vital for sustaining productivity and perseverance. Self-regulation combined with self-awareness of students will facilitate the development of resilience among ESP learners which is also very instrumental in sustaining a positive learning trajectory.

Additionally, motivation, empathy and social skills complete the major dimensions of emotional intelligence by building personal will and creating good interpersonal relations. According to Izzatillayevna (2023) motivation inspires an individual to pursue an objective with determination and resilience. Eventually,

it can lead to better outcomes in language acquisition. On the other hand, empathy dimensions include sensitivity of feeling and social skills that are required for communication and cooperation as well as cultural understanding across language disciplines as learners work through different viewpoints (Qanwal & Ghani, 2023). Kharbanda (2023) stated that these social dimensions have a role in creating engagement that assists through peer support and adjustment where such communication is important in ESP situations. However, these form a basis for success in studies since they build emotional competence which brings learning obstacles to being managed better within a community setup.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence and Language Learning

Over the past few years, researchers have increasingly acquiesced in the role of emotional intelligence, or rather emotional intelligence-within a pluralistic linguistic context-in the learning of languages. Ruba et al., (2022) mentioned that a convincing body of evidence now exists demonstrating that higher emotional intelligence allows individuals to bring their feelings under control-because anxiety, as this feeling is called here, happens to be the most pervasive emotion associated with language learning. In other words, people who are more emotionally intelligent learners experience less disruptive effects from anxiety-therefore being able to concentrate better and hence more fully engaged in practice-that this anxiety precipitates. Thus, in learning a new language where initial anxieties are involved, emotional intelligence functions stabilizing confidence building progressively (Rogulska et al., 2023).

Resilience and motivation, factors that have been found in evidence to sustain the attainment of success over time, are also enhanced by emotional intelligence. Studies carried out so far indicate that learners who possess high scores in EI persist more, notwithstanding how demanding the environment for learning a second language is (Bećirović, 2023). This type of resilience is based on the regulation of emotions and intrinsic motivation; thus, the learners internalize setbacks as part of the process rather than considering them as failures. Other findings such as those by Hermessi (2023) re-emphasized that motivation is related to EI because emotionally intelligent students seem to be more self-driven to set personal learning goals and strive to fulfill them even when progress is slow.

Empathy and social skills, components of emotional intelligence, count very much in group work for language learning. According to Z. Zhang et al., (2022) that learners with high empathy abilities can understand the viewpoints of their fellow learners on the same material, thus improving cooperative learning and creating a better classroom climate. In the fruits of EI that can be harvested immediately are social skills; these fruits allow students to relate actively not only to their fellows but also to the teachers and elicit feedback for improvement in addition to discovering language practice opportunities. Lozano-Peña et al., (2021) stated that, these social contacts count very much in language acquisition because they provide real interactive practice within an encouraging environment.

Recent studies propose that EI is a multidimensional investment for language learners, feeding both the cognitive dimension and the emotional dimension in

the process of acquiring a language. Collectively, these results indicate that EI fosters not only individual persistence but also positive social dynamics which are, in turn, supporting factors for any level of achievement in learning a language. To educators and curriculum developers, this suggests an imperative need for the infusion of emotional intelligence into language programs so as to motivate learners positively toward achieving success in language acquisition.

Even though the body of research about emotional intelligence in educational settings keeps increasing, there is a huge gap in the literature about its function in English for Specific Purposes settings. Many studies such as those by Pal & Choudhuri (2024); Sánchez-Álvarez et al., (2020) have described the influence of EI on general academic achievement and language learning, but very few have focused on specialized language programs where learners face unique emotional and cognitive challenges concomitantly with discipline-specific language use.

Further, most existing research does not go much beyond general English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environments, thus leaving an enormous gap regarding the particular needs that ESP learners need to fulfill to acquire expertise within specific professional or academic fields. Therefore, more specific studies are recommended on how successfully EI can be incorporated in teaching ESP, with probable impacts on curriculum development, teaching approaches, and student support programs that would assist students in managing the cognitive and emotional problems they face within such an ESP learning environment.

2.4 Emotional Intelligence and Learner Engagement

Emotional intelligence is increasingly seen as a major driving force of learner engagement, particularly in the field of higher education. Recent studies underscore the important role that self-efficacy plays as a mediator between emotional intelligence and motivation; such students will better manage academic struggles and stay focused if they possess high emotional intelligence (Tang & He, 2023). Regulation of emotions gives an immediate feeling or disposition toward willingness to undertake learning tasks and persistence on task when confronting obstacles.

Additionally, the link between emotional intelligence and social support has come out as a very important aspect of learner engagement. Studies have described the ways emotionally intelligent students use social relationships to access support that improves their academic experiences (Mujidin et al., 2022). This interconnection not only boosts the confidence of students but also reduces their stress, thus leading to a healthy learning environment. Social support is very important in hard times like the COVID-19 pandemic because otherwise, the level of engagement will drop.

Also, the links between emotional intelligence and academic engagement have been proved through several dimensions. Recent studies vividly emphasize the potency of emotional intelligence in nurturing both behavioral and emotional engagements as it reduces behavioral and emotional disaffections toward learning. According to Y. Wang & Yang (2024) the influence of emotional

intelligence on the level of engagements cuts across different contexts-undergraduate education and professional education-thereby revealing its broad application in enhancing academic learning outcomes together with interpersonal learning outcomes.

Finally, the positive social factors enable intrinsic motivation and engagement, facilitated by emotional intelligence (Al Jaber et al., 2024). This study demonstrates that students with high emotional intelligence skills have the ability to develop more support connections which sustain their engagement and provide them with satisfaction in academic contexts. Inspired by this, educational practitioners may involve interactive lessons for students aimed at raising awareness regarding issues of emotional intelligence.

2.5 Impact of EI On Motivation in Language Learning

Growing recognition places at the core the interplay between emotional intelligence and motivation in language learning. Emotional intelligence covers such dimensions as self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation; it can therefore enhance learners' intrinsic motivation. Recent research findings indicate that individuals with high EI will most likely successfully surmount related challenges in learning a language and sustain interest and vigor in their studies. As has been established by Taherkhani & Moradi (2022), emotional engagement positively predicts motivation acting as a mediator of cognitive effort on academic success. These insights speak to the possibility that sustained learner motivation is precipitated by the infusion of EI-based strategies into language classrooms.

Additionally, motivation, in fact, in learning a second language is deeply tied to the feelings of learners. Emotional intelligence helps create positive learning attitudes which sustain involvement through time. For example, where control over emotions has been discovered, learners show high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Aljasir, 2024). This type of motivation will help them set attainable goals and keep on striving even when they have met with setbacks. The infusion of the development of EI into language learning curricula would result in better academic achievements together with higher degrees of confidence and contentment among the learners.

The effect of EI on the motivation factors towards language learning is very crucial in the management of language anxiety and resilience. Thao et al., (2023) found that learners with high EI do not evoke negative emotions, such as fear or frustration, that could impede their learning process. Rather, their feelings are most likely directed positively; thus, they create a good environment for learning. The social skills and emotional regulation of learners that develop resources psychologically to sustain motivation under taxing circumstances of language learning should be promoted.

The intersection of emotional intelligence and motivation in language learning speaks to educational policy and curriculum design. EI training programs and interventions in language learning significantly enhance motivational outcomes (Herut et al., 2024). Thus, findings advocate the integration of emotional

intelligence testing and activities into language programs as a way of keeping learners maximally engaged. With growing acknowledgment of the interplay between the emotional and cognitive domains, developing EI among learners is increasingly seen as opening new promising pathways toward motivation and attainment of linguistic competence.

With the positive effects EI has on language learning in general, due focus should be given to how it might relate to the ESP context. Learners of English for specific purposes usually encounter problems related to specialized vocabulary learning, academic writing skills and lack of authentic materials; thus, negatively affecting both motivation levels and language learning (Enesi et al., 2021). The adoption of EI activities might help increase ESP learners' emotional intelligence skills and hence their language proficiency.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used the quantitative method with a correlational design. Correlational designs are appropriate for this kind of study since there might be some association between the dimensions and levels of EI—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—and language proficiency and engagement. No variable will be manipulated hence natural conditions will be maintained. This provides the statistical background to determine the strengthening of relationships that are quite essential in understanding whether and how EI factors influence outcomes of language learning in specialized contexts.

The use of validated assessments for measuring EI and language proficiency would generate reliable data capable of revealing meaningful correlations that would illuminate dimensions of EI as possible predictors of success in ESP contexts. Also, the writers wanted to see how EI changes students' interest and drive to do well in language work. They hoped to find out if learners with high emotional intelligence keep up strong interest and purpose-driven actions in ESP settings.

3.2 Participants

The study engaged learners of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) who took language specialty courses at the university level, mainly focusing on major disciplines offered as part of healthcare. It used eighty students, between 18 and 20 years, selected using a stratified random sampling technique among various fields to ensure adequate representation. All the respondents had attained not less than an intermediate level in English language proficiency which was determined by conducting standardized placement tests within their departments.

This research employed a quasi-experimental research design whereby the participants were divided into two experimental groups (Group 1 and Group 2) based on their levels of emotional intelligence, that is, those with higher emotional intelligence and others with lower emotional intelligence. The choice of this sample was purposed to ensure heterogeneity in academic backgrounds so that

lessons about the effects of EI could be generalized across different ESP contexts. By including individuals at different levels of expertise and exposure, it attempts to raise the generalizability of findings and draw implications that would be meaningful for ESP instruction in various disciplines.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

3.3.1 Emotional intelligence scale

To measure emotional intelligence (EI) in this study, the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) was selected (with some modifications from the author of this study). The scale is a comprehensive self-report measure that assesses core dimensions of EI (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills). Its reliability and validity have been widely recognized across diverse populations, making it suitable for academic studies examining EI in various contexts, including English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The scale's content validity was confirmed by consulting a panel of experts in educational psychology and language learning. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure internal consistency. The overall reliability score for the scale was $\alpha = 0.87$, indicating high reliability.

3.3.2 English language proficiency test

In this study, English language proficiency among ESP learners was measured using a standardized test designed to evaluate the four language skills. By employing a standardized instrument, the study ensured both its validity and reliability making it suitable for all EFL learners, including English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners. Moreover, consistency and comparability in proficiency measurement across participants, enhancing the validity of the correlations drawn between emotional intelligence and language proficiency.

3.3.3 Student engagement instrument (SEI)

The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) is a widely recognized self-report tool for measuring cognitive and affective engagement in educational settings. Developed by Appleton et al. (2006), the SEI provides a comprehensive assessment of students' perceptions regarding their engagement levels, focusing on critical domains such as teacher-student relationships, peer support, and the value of learning tasks.

This instrument is particularly relevant for this study, as it aligns with the research objective of examining the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and learner engagement in ESP classrooms. By evaluating both emotional and cognitive dimensions of engagement, the SEI offers nuanced insights into how students' emotional competencies, such as self-regulation and motivation, influence their involvement in learning activities. The reliability and validity of the SEI demonstrated in diverse educational contexts make it a suitable choice for capturing the multifaceted nature of engagement, especially in specialized language programs like ESP.

The scale's content validity was confirmed by consulting a panel of experts in educational psychology and language learning. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure internal consistency.

Cronbach's alpha values for all dimensions exceed 0.80, indicating excellent internal consistency.

4. Results and Discussion

This study explored the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and both language proficiency and learning engagement among ESP learners. The aim is to analyze the potential correlations between the three variables, exploring how various EI dimensions might influence learners' proficiency and engagement in field-specific English skills. Through the Pearson correlation and regression analysis, the study evaluated the extent to which EI could predict language performance. Statistical findings offer insights into the direct relationships and predictive power of EI factors concerning language proficiency and engagement, thus contributing valuable data to the growing research on emotional competencies in specialized language learning contexts.

4.1 Emotional Intelligence Significantly Influences ESP Learners' Language Proficiency Across All EI Dimensions

The study participants were categorized into two groups based on the level of emotional intelligence, whereby Experimental group (1) exhibited low levels of EI and Experimental group (2) exhibited higher ones. In table (1), means of the study participants' scores on the Emotional Intelligence Scale were calculated. Differences in the means of the study participants' scores on the administration of the EI scale were calculated and tabulated.

Justification for Classifying Students into Experimental Groups 1 and 2:

Reasoning for Placing Students in Experimental Groups 1 and 2 The rating of Emotional Intelligence, or EI, placed students in Experimental Group 1 and Experimental Group 2. It was their scores on the Emotional Intelligence Scale that reported levels of EI, so categorization was needed to study how much a learner's language proficiency and learning engagement depend on varying degrees of EI among English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners.

Group 1 was made up of students who showed less emotional intelligence. Group 2 had students who showed more emotional intelligence. This setup helped compare how different levels of EI could affect the performance of learners in ESP contexts, covering both the linguistic and affective sides.

The reason for this grouping is based on the major goal of the current study, which is to find out whether and how emotional intelligence can be considered a predictor and enhancer for language proficiency as well as for engagement. By setting apart the participants according to levels of EI, it facilitated an empirical assessment of the predictive and mediating roles that dimensions of EI play in terms of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Also, statistical differences between the mean scores of both groups on the EI scale as indicated in Table 1 proved that indeed they had different emotional competence profiles. Therefore, this classification is an appropriate one to be used

as a meaningful basis for further comparisons. This grouping enabled the study to:

- State the variance in engagement due to different levels of EI (see Table 3).
- State which dimensions of EI play a major role in making the ESP learning endeavor fruitful.

Therefore, typology was not only a matter of methodology but also an issue with theoretical underpinnings, thereby offering an appropriate scheme in consideration of emotional intelligence as a function of linguistic achievement and involvement in specific scholarly and occupational undertakings.

With the highest mean value (Mean = 4.00), motivation has proven to positively affect the language proficiency levels of ESP learners.

As presented in table (2), the mean language proficiency test score for the higher EI group stood at (85.2), while the lower EI group garnered a mean score of (78.1), suggesting the positive relationship between higher EI levels and students' language proficiency.

Table 1: Comparison of emotional intelligence (EI) dimensions between experimental group (1) and experimental group (2)

Dimension	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t-value	Significance Level (p)
Self-Awareness	Group 1	40	3.10	0.75	78	-3.45	0.001**
	Group 2	40	3.85	0.62			
Self-Regulation	Group 1	40	3.25	0.68	78	-2.98	0.004**
	Group 2	40	3.80	0.59			
Motivation	Group 1	40	3.20	0.70	78	-4.10	0.000**
	Group 2	40	4.00	0.58			
Empathy	Group 1	40	3.15	0.73	78	-3.20	0.002**
	Group 2	40	3.85	0.61			
Social Skills	Group 1	40	3.05	0.74	78	-3.65	0.001**
	Group 2	40	3.90	0.60			

Table 2: Comparative analysis of language proficiency scores between experimental groups (1) and experimental group (2)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t-value	Significance Level (p)
Group 2	40	85.20	4.50	78	5.43	0.001
Group 1	40	78.10	5.50			

4.1.1 The First EI Dimension: Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a dimension of emotional intelligence that has more influence in this study. This can be proven by the mean score of experimental group (2) which is significantly higher than the score of experimental group (1) with a (t-value of -3.45 and $p = 0.001$). Self-awareness is assumed to seat at the base as a fundamental factor in improving language learning since it enables students to know their strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs.

The awareness inculcates a reflective process to learners acquiring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) because it encourages them to consciously determine their weaknesses in speaking and apply techniques corresponding to the requirements and difficulties they experience. Raising self-awareness would probably make these learners keen so that they could vary ways of learning languages hence achieving expertise in field-specific content.

4.1.2 The Second EI Dimension: Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is another major component of emotional intelligence with a positive effect on language proficiency. In the current research, Experimental Group 2 manifested significantly higher degrees of self-regulation than Experimental Group 1, and thus better control over cognitive and emotional energy that has to be invested in language learning (t-value = -2.98, $p = 0.004$). Self-regulation refers to the control of emotions together with goal setting and perseverance in difficulty; hence, it becomes highly relevant for learners under English for Specific Purposes (ESP) who are continuously confronted with complicated lexis and contexts.

Learners who practice self-regulation seem to be in a position to accommodate frustration while maintaining attention; therefore, accommodation does sustain the development of consistent progress regarding language learning. This aspect encourages more independent and strong learning which are very important factors in acquiring a new language, especially one that is related to a particular field of work or study. Therefore, the self-regulation factor can be considered as adding value to the effectiveness of the ESP training through the initiation of an active and disciplined way of learning.

4.1.3 The Third EI Dimension: Motivation

Motivation produced the highest mean score of the study from the experimental group (2) with a very high mean value (Mean = 4.00, $p < 0.001$). This finding explicitly brings out the fact that motivation is primarily and fundamentally responsible for driving language proficiency among ESP learners; motivated learners invest more effort, sustain over challenges, and constantly search for opportunities to use the language, thus, motivation as a dimension in the ESP

learning process. The great difference in motivation scores between two groups reveals that activities intended to inspire learners' drive to succeed in undertaking language tasks will garner support towards raising their overall proficiency; hence, such activities should be prioritized in raising motivation within an ESP curriculum to advance language learning.

4.1.4 The Fourth EI Dimension: Empathy

Empathy is often not regarded as a major factor in language learning, but it has great significance in the process of acquiring communicative competence. This is more so in ESP situations where communication and understanding related to field operations are required. The high mean difference in empathy scores between the two groups (t -value = -3.20, p = 0.002) supports that students with higher and keener feelings will be more aware of different points of view and situations demanding appropriate responses for effective communication.

Content begins to engage ESP learners with empathy as it makes them begin thinking about all cultural and contextual meanings that are always embedded within language usage; particularly helpful in professional situation content because learners have to adjust their linguistic behavior through sensitivity to new situations. Raising the level of empathy will allow ESP students to "feel" more effectively for their audience, thus making their communication sensitive and appropriate.

4.1.5 The Fifth EI Dimension: Social Skills

Social skills are a key dimension of EI, in which group (2) achieved better results than group (1) (-3.65, p =0.001). Thus, this finding reveals that social skills matter in such ESP contexts where communication or interaction is the main objective of the course. Good social skills of learners toward their colleagues, teachers, and professional materials will enhance the possibility to practice and apply language skills to real situations. These are more significant for learners in ESP classes since these are interpersonal skills that can help one work out contact and discussion. Accordingly, this may include activities regarding group work and others that may be sources for developing such social abilities leading to communicative competence responding to field-specific language use.

The results in Table 1 further highlighted the different impacts of EI dimensions on language proficiency for ESP learners, since all dimensions recorded statistically significant improvements from experimental group (2) when compared to experimental group (1). Motivation among these dimensions had the highest mean difference (M = 4.00, SD = 0.58) for experimental group (2) and (M = 3.20, SD = 0.70) for experimental group (1)), thus underscoring its role in the success of language learning.

This finding is also parallel to what has been suggested in the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), whereby intrinsic motivation is deemed necessary to maintain learning activities over time. A motivationally rich environment would likely be created by EI-focused interventions, thus making an impetus stronger for learners to challenge obstacles and sustain study engagement with ESP materials.

In addition, self-awareness and self-regulation were highly rated as essential components since scores for these in the experimental group were significantly high. This finding supports Mayer and Salovey's (1997) EI model which proposes that self-awareness would make learners realize their strengths and weaknesses while self-regulation would involve managing stress effectively as well as learning goals. In agreement with empirical studies such as those by (Alfaeni et al., 2022; Herut et al., 2024; Kharbanda, 2023) indicated that students with higher degrees of self-awareness and self-regulation perform better in academic and professional language tasks because they are less anxious and more focused.

Besides, empathy and social skills have improved very much since (t-values were -3.20 and -3.65) respectively for these two dimensions, hence their contribution to collaborative and communicative competencies in ESP contexts. These dimensions probably helped student-student interactions as well as group activities; thus, a climate of inclusion and support prevailed. Studies such as (Ming Qing Miranda Ming Miao Xin Mingfeng De et al., 2022; Tavares, 2023) focus on the role of empathy in effective communication, the main pillar of ESP learning, since through it learners will understand and adjust to different professional situations.

In this regard, EI training will not only raise the level of linguistic competence individually but also improve collective involvement, thus making its value fully comprehensive in a program for specialized language education. The results also demonstrate the major influence of EI dimensions on the linguistic achievements of ESP learners and hence call for designed interventions directed to both the affective and cognitive domains. The other outcome is a transformative effect that can be brought about by integrating EI into language learning, furnishing learners with the emotional and social equipment that can drive them academically and professionally.

4.1.6 Predictive Power of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions on Language Proficiency

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to figure out the contribution of each dimension of emotional intelligence in predicting language proficiency among English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners. Five dimensions—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—were used as independent variables in the analysis with the scores of language proficiency as a dependent variable.

The total regression model came out to be significant, $F(5, 74) = 9.82$, $p < 0.001$, and explained a fair amount of variance in language proficiency—specifically 42% or $R^2 = 0.42$. As concerns individual contributions from the EI dimensions, motivation emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). Self-regulation also shares significant predictive power and contribution to the total model with a value of $\beta = 0.26$, $p = 0.004$. Self-awareness contributes positively to the model at $\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.012$.

Empathy and social skills posted positive relationships with proficiency in the language, but such relationships were not significant. Empathy recorded a coefficient of 0.12 with a probability value of 0.08 while social skills posted a coefficient of 0.10 with a probability value of 0.10. It is, therefore, inferred that the motivational and self-regulatory dimensions of EI are very instrumental in determining the language performance of ESP learners. Practically, learners who sustain greater motivation and emotional regulation will more successfully surmount the challenges that pertain to field-specific English learning.

The results of the regression analysis not only confirmed what had earlier been found from t-tests that students with higher EI perform better than those with lower EI but went a step further to articulate the specific dimensions of EI which are critical predictors of success in ESP learning contexts.

4.2 To answer the second research question, to what extent does emotional intelligence impact ESP learners' engagement and motivation levels in language learning activities?

The SEI evaluated key aspects of engagement, including learners' emotional and cognitive involvement, emotional involvement and peer support.

Table 3 presents comparative engagement scores for the experimental groups, showcasing a clear outcome distinction. These findings underscore the role of emotional intelligence levels in fostering deeper engagement among learners.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of student engagement Instrument (SEI) between the experimental Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t-value	Significance Level (p)
Experimental Group (2)	40	82.3	4.2	78	6.87	0.001
Experimental group (1)	40	68.5	5.6			

The mean engagement score for the experimental group (2) was 82.3, significantly higher than the experimental group (1) mean score which was 68.5. This difference was statistically significant, as evidenced by a t-value of 6.87 and a p-value of less than 0.001.

These results indicated that the experimental group (2), that demonstrated higher levels of emotional intelligence, exhibited higher levels of emotional and cognitive engagement than their peers in the experimental group (1). Additionally, the experimental group (2) lower standard deviation (4.2) suggested greater consistency in engagement levels among participants, reflecting the positive effect by which the group's learning engagement is significantly affected by the high level of emotional intelligence. The above results prove that the EI strategies of English for Specific Purposes classrooms increase emotional and cognitive aspects toward learning activity. The findings support the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which argues that if autonomy, competence, and relatedness

are adequately encouraged, learners' intrinsic motivation and engagement would be improved.

In theoretical resonance, this study finds its place with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), reflecting thereby emphasizing the role of social interaction in learning. The heightened elements of EI – empathy and social skills – which raise engagement on the part of learners very energetically add up to components that facilitate fruitful peer collaboration leading to a positive classroom environment. This assertion is backed by empirical research such as those by (Tang & He, 2023b; H. Wang et al., 2023), which indicate the fact that emotionally intelligent learners are better at managing group dynamics and therefore able to derive a meaningful experience from collaborative learning.

Such results bear critical implications for educators and curriculum developers of an ESP course. By tending to students' emotional and cognitive needs, EI intervention improves academic achievements and also arms learners with interpersonal skills that are prerequisite tools outside in real professional situations. Thus, the infusion of emotional intelligence in ESP programs marks a revolutionary step toward the holistic approach to language education that would successfully bridge the gap between linguistic competence and emotional competence.

5. Conclusion

This study exhaustively ventured into the intricate linkages of emotional intelligence with language proficiency, engagement, and motivation of English for Specific Purposes learners. The study therefore quantitatively assessed and experimentally evaluated whether high levels of emotional intelligence would positively motivate ESP learners' language proficiency and their engagement levels as well as dynamics of motivation. This finding gives a synthesis between the academic performance facilitated by EI and the emotional plus cognitive dimensions, which are imperative to work toward holistic educational outcomes within specialized language programs.

In addition, the results of engagement, as measured by the SEI, showed a significant difference between experimental group one and experimental group two to further prove how effective E.I. is at getting people both emotionally and cognitively engaged in what they are doing when learning a language. Other frameworks proved this result true since E.I. helps to build intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy through positive peer interactions. Such theories coincide with the results, that it is true that EI empowers learners to manage challenges and keep focus or attention on learning activities. Recent literature has empirically validated such results and emphasized the implementation of approaches directed toward EI as a response to the specific requirements that characterize ESP learning environments.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends the following:

1. Incorporate EI in ESP syllabi: integrate emotional intelligence learning (self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social skills) into language programs to make their competence and keen interest better.
2. Implement EI-based teaching approaches: utilize interactive and collective class games that inspire learners to lessen fear, build strength, and gain freedom.
3. Instructor training and support: facilitate professional development for ESP instructors to identify, cultivate, and implement EI tactics in their pedagogy.
4. Advocate for policy-level integration: Urge curriculum developers and policymakers to embed EI-based methodologies throughout ESP programs as a comprehensive framework that caters to both cognitive and emotional learner requirements.

Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at Qassim University for their financial support (QU-APC-2025).

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

The authors obtained informed consent for publication from all individual participants included in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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