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## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### ÖZET

### İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİNDE DUYGUSAL ZEKA

Gardner'ın Çoklu Zeka Kuramı, İngilizce öğretmenlik alanında oldukça geniş olarak araştırılmıştır. Ancak, Goleman'ın Duygusal Zeka görüşü hakkında aynı şey söylenemez. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Duygusal Zeka'nın temel görüşleri için zemin hazırlamak, bu görüşlerin İngilizce öğretmenliği alanı ile bağlarını göstermek, ve bu alanda yapılan çalışmalarını gözden geçirmektir. Çalışma, Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin kullandıkları yabancı dil ders kitabından alınan bir konunun Duygusal Zeka'ya göre uyarlanması ile sonuçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal Zeka, İngilizce Öğretmenliği

### ABSTRACT

There has been extensive research on the application of Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory to English Language Teaching. The same, however, cannot be said for Goleman's concept of Emotional Intelligence. The purpose of this paper is to provide an introduction to the basic concepts of Emotional Intelligence, to show how some of these concepts relate to those of the field of ELT and then to review some of the studies carried out in the field. The paper concludes with an example activity adapted from a coursebook used to teach English as a Foreign Language to Turkish university students.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, English Language Teaching

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## 1.0 Introduction

Traditionally, intelligence has been defined and measured according to its logical-mathematical and linguistic terms. It was the research of Alfred Binet in the early twentieth century which led to the concept of IQ (intelligence quotient), and people have been determined intelligent or otherwise according to achievement on IQ tests.

With his Multiple Intelligence theory, in 1983 Howard Gardner changed the traditional view of intelligence by suggesting at first seven, then later eight, types of intelligence. Even more recently, in 1995 Daniel Goleman suggested that it is not rational intelligence which drives our mental processing, but the management of a few basic emotions, that is our *emotional intelligence*, arguing that the emotional mind works much more quickly than the rational mind. He claims that the lack of success in education or employment of people with high IQs is due to an undeveloped emotional intelligence.

While Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory has had an extensive effect in the field of English Language Teaching, the same cannot be said for Goleman's Emotional Intelligence. The purpose of this paper is to provide an introduction to the basic concepts of emotional intelligence, to show how some of these concepts relate to those of the field of ELT and then to review some of the studies carried out in the field. The paper concludes with an example activity adapted from a coursebook.

## 2.0 Defining Emotional Intelligence

A good point to start with is a definition of the word 'emotion'. Etymologically, the word is derived from the Latin root '*motere*', which means 'to move'. The addition of the prefix 'e-' to this verb gives the idea that emotions are directed to action (Goleman, 1996: 20). Goleman (359-360) lists the basic sets and subsets of emotions, anger, sadness, fear, pleasure, love, surprise, disgust, embarrassment, while emphasising that such a list is neither exhaustive nor definite.

What, then, is emotional intelligence? In a conversation with John O'Neil (1996:6), Goleman defines the term as follows:

“Emotional intelligence is a different way of being smart. It includes knowing what your feelings are and using your feelings to make good decisions in life. It's being able to manage distressing moods as well and control impulses. It's being motivated and remaining hopeful and optimistic when you have setbacks in working towards goals. It's empathy; knowing what the people around you are feeling. And

it's social skill-getting along well with other people, managing emotions in relationships, being able to persuade or lead others.”

In other words, it is the *identification* and *control* of emotions in oneself and in others.

Goleman then contends that both emotional intelligence and the traditional concept of IQ are important, but in different ways, claiming that the latter contributes at best twenty percent to the factors that determine success in life. Being a behavioural psychologist, it seems that Goleman's prime concern is with behavioural problems, particularly those of adolescents. However, he claims there is also a relationship between emotional skills and academic achievement. The “marshmallow” study at Stanford University tested emotional intelligence in terms of self-control. Preschool children were brought into a room one at a time and left with a marshmallow, the researcher telling them that they could eat the marshmallow now, but if they waited fifteen to twenty minutes for the researcher to come back, they could have two. It was found that about a third grabbed the marshmallow straight away; a third waited a little longer; and a third was able to wait for the researcher to return. Fourteen years later, the researchers found that the children who waited, when compared with those who grabbed the marshmallow immediately, were more emotionally stable and popular with peers and teachers, and more interestingly, scored an average of 210 points higher on the SAT, the university entrance exam used in the United States (in O'Neil, 1996).

Goleman attributes this outcome to two factors, the first being emotional habits. Those of the successful children were more conducive to studying—a child who sticks with a task can complete an assignment much better than one who is easily distracted. The second factor is the physiology of the brain and the relationship between the emotional centre and the executive areas of the brain (O'Neil, 1996).

### **3.0 The Nature of Emotional Intelligence**

To understand the nature of emotional intelligence, it is necessary to refer briefly to Multiple Intelligence theory. Goleman (1996) mentions the Spectrum Project initiated by the Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner, the brain behind MI theory, which included a syllabus aimed at the deliberate development of different types of intelligence. Goleman (54-55) quotes Gardner as having told him:

“The time has long come for us to expand our opinions on the range of abilities. The biggest

contribution to the development of the child the school can make is to direct him or her to a field in which he or she can be the happiest and most adequate in terms of his or her abilities. We have completely forgotten this. Instead, we subject everyone if they are successful to an education more suitable for a university lecturer, and evaluate them according to whether or not they meet this limited standard of success. We should now spend less time lining up children according to their grades, and more helping them to discover and develop their own individual abilities and characteristics. There are hundreds and thousands of ways to be successful, and there are many different abilities to help children reach their targets.”

Gardner recognised the limits of the traditional view of intelligence as measured by IQ tests, saying that according to this view people were either intelligent or not, and that there was not very much that could be done to change the situation. He purports seven types of intelligence: logical-mathematic; linguistic; musical; kinaesthetic; special; interpersonal; and intrapersonal. It is from these final two personal intelligences that Goleman takes as his basis for emotional intelligence. Gardner describes the basis of interpersonal intelligence as the ability to understand the moods, temperament, instincts and wishes of others and respond accordingly; while that of intrapersonal intelligence is being able to reach one’s own feelings, to distinguish between them and to direct behaviour accordingly (Goleman, 55-57). Goleman, however, claims that Gardner’s explanation of the personal intelligences does not take into consideration the role of emotions. He therefore suggests that what needs to be studied is how intelligence has a place within emotions and how we can place intelligence in our emotions.

The reason for the lack of emphasis on the role of emotions in Gardner’s theory, according to Goleman (58-59) is its basis in cognitive science. He reminds us that the “cognitive revolution” came about as a response against behaviourist psychology, which claimed anything that could not be observed or measured (i.e the inner world of people, including intelligence and emotions) was not scientific. Cognitive scientists focused on how knowledge is stored in and recalled from the mind, making the analogy of the mind as a computer. Emotions still had no place. Goleman claims that emotions enrichen this cold cognitive view of the mind, and that a model which omits emotion is an impoverished one.

Having ascertained that personal intelligences exist, the question to consider next is whether or not they are hard-wired or if they can be developed. Goleman tells O'Neil (1996: 8) that the fortunate thing about emotional intelligence is that it is almost all learned. The traditional IQ approach that claims someone is either intelligent or not is no longer valid. He continues to say that the emotional centres of the brain are among the last to become anatomically mature. They continue to develop into adolescence. It has been found that the repeated emotional lessons that children experience shape the brain circuits for that response. If a child learns to manage his/her intelligence well early on, it will stay with him/her for life.

#### **4.0 Emotional Intelligence in ELT**

Of the literature available on the subject of emotional intelligence, both in published form and on the internet, there are very few works directly concerned with the field of ELT. However, the inclusion of emotion (or affect) in foreign language learning theories is not a new occurrence, and many parallels can be observed between Goleman's notion of emotional intelligence and existent theories and concepts in the ELT field. The first part of this section will deal with these parallels, while the second part will look at some of the studies that refer directly to the role of emotional intelligence in ELT.

#### **4.1 Emotion in ELT**

Earlier behaviouristic views of learning were concerned only with outwardly observable and recordable data, and therefore rejected emotion as unscientific. The cognitive approaches, which arose as a reaction to these behaviouristic approaches, dealt with the mental processing involved in learning but still ignored emotion. However, as Brown (2000: 142) notes, to formulise foreign language learning theories based on cognitive considerations alone would be to omit the "most fundamental side of human nature". He continues to say that the affective domain of human behaviour is difficult to define scientifically, but that we should not be deterred from searching for answers, because understanding how humans feel, respond, believe and value is a very important aspect of foreign language learning. He then lists the following personality factors in human behaviour and how they relate to foreign language learning: self-esteem; inhibition; risk-taking; anxiety; and empathy.

From this list, we can link risk-taking, anxiety, and empathy to what we know about emotional intelligence. Brown (149-150) refers to works suggesting that risk-taking is an important factor in foreign language learning, although people with a high motivation to achieve are generally moderate, not high, risk takers-people who like to be in control. This corresponds to Goleman's self-control component. Anxiety is generally considered to be a negative factor. However Brown (151-152) distinguishes between *debilitative*

and *facilitative* anxiety, the former being 'harmful' and the latter 'helpful'. Both too much and too little anxiety may hinder the foreign language learning process. The parallel here is with Goleman's component of managing emotions, which is the capacity to shake off *excessive* anxiety, among other negative emotions. The notion of empathy, or handling others' emotions, has an obvious place in foreign language learning, because, as Brown (153) points out, in order to communicate effectively it is necessary to understand the other person's affective and cognitive state. Foreign language learners have to do this in a language, in which they may be insecure, which places an extra burden on them. He then emphasises the cross-cultural aspects of empathy.

Another notion concerning emotion in foreign language learning which springs to mind is that of an "affective filter" as suggested by Dulay and Burt (1977, cited in Krashen, (1981). This is a filter which delimits input before it is processed by the "cognitive organiser". To quote Krashen (110):

"some potential intake may not make it to the 'language acquisition device': acquirer's motivations and attitudes, if they are less than optimal, may filter out certain aspects of the input, so that they are no longer available to the acquirer as intake, even if the requirements for intake...are met...If the affective filter is 'up', no matter how beautifully the input is sequenced, no matter how meaningful and communicative the exercise is intended to be, little or no acquisition will take place."

This description is reminiscent of Goleman's description of the limited capacity of the working memory mentioned earlier. If the working memory is preoccupied with emotional thoughts that is if the affective filter is 'up', not enough space is left for learning.

Finally, in her work on language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) identifies affective strategies as a separate category. Here are the three sets of affective strategies she identifies (1990: 163):

1. *Lowering your anxiety*: Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation; using music; using laughter.
2. *Encouraging yourself*: Making positive statements; taking risks wisely; rewarding yourself.
3. *Taking your emotional temperature*: Listening to your body; using a checklist; writing a language learning diary; discussing your feelings with someone else.

Although Oxford proposed these strategies five years before Goleman's study, the similarities are striking.

#### **4.2 Studies on Emotional Intelligence in ELT**

In this part, studies by Christison (1997) and Çakır (1996) on the application of emotional intelligence in foreign language teaching; and by Ghosn (2001) on the application of emotional intelligence in foreign language literature teaching will be dealt with.

Christison (1997) states that management of emotions leads to "more positive relationships with students and colleagues and greater satisfaction, success, and contentment in their lives outside of the educational setting" for EFL educators; and "more positive and rewarding relationships and more success academically" for EFL students. She then suggests activity types that correspond to the five components of emotional intelligence. To summarise:

1. *Knowing one's emotions*: design and implement activities for recognising feelings as they happen
2. *Managing emotions*: design activities that give students the opportunities to understand the consequences for taking certain actions, such as problem-solving activities with several possible outcomes.
3. *Motivating oneself*: give the opportunity for students to set goals for themselves.
4. *Recognising emotions in others*: develop scenarios that ask students to make predictions about how others would feel.
5. *Handling relationships*: create conflict scenarios and ask students to discuss what they would do to mediate

Çakır (1996: 69-74) applies the same five components to the teacher's point of view. In summary:

*Knowing one's emotions*: the foreign language teacher should recognise that he/she exists as a human being first, and should identify his/her own emotions, needs, values, strengths and weaknesses.

*Managing emotions*: The foreign language teacher should not only know him/herself, but should also be able to keep his/her emotions in check. He/she should be careful of his/her reactions in order not to disturb the emotional security of the students.

*Motivating oneself*: One of the most important factors of success. The typical behaviour of a motivated foreign language teacher is the desire to improve his/her knowledge and teaching of foreign language skills and components.

*Recognising emotions in others:* The foreign language teacher should try to empathise with the students, to recognise their reactions to the challenges of learning a foreign language. They should also try to understand the cognitive and emotional states of their co-workers in order to create a cooperative environment.

*Handling relationships:* Çakır (1996: 73) points out the importance of the balance between autonomy and mutuality, saying that while learner autonomy is a desirable outcome; it should not be fostered at the expense of sharing relationships.

Ghosn (2001: 10) emphasises the importance of the role of literature in fostering emotional intelligence in children. She says that literature provides emotional experiences that “shape the brain circuits for empathy” and help children to gain insight into human behaviour. Literature also promotes language learning by expanding the learners’ vocabulary and providing models for new language structures. It can also create a motivating and low-anxiety context for language learning.

To conclude this section, it can be said that the notion of emotional intelligence is not a new concept in the field of ELT. Many of the activities we already use act to foster certain aspects of emotional intelligence. However, being aware of emotional intelligence as a separate entity in its own right can help us as language teachers to systematically develop the capacity in our students to recognise their own emotional makeup and that of others in order to help them to learn the foreign language to communicate effectively, which is our ultimate aim.

#### **4.3 An example activity**

It is possible to enrich existing coursebook activities by using techniques that appeal to students’ emotional intelligences. Appendix 1 shows an original activity from a coursebook (Yorgancı and Keskil, 2002) used in the compulsory English Language lessons given in all departments of Turkish universities. This activity provides an opportunity for students to +practice referring to predicted future activities using “*will*” by asking them to respond to particular situations using the given structure.

With a few simple changes it is possible to transform this activity, which largely stimulates the cognitive aspect of learning, to one which involves the students’ emotions (Appendix 2). The character of Mrs Tiger can be brought to life either by the teacher or by a student, who mimes Mrs Tiger’s day thus making Mrs Tiger “real” as well as giving coherence to the given sentences. By observing the body language and facial expressions of “Mrs Tiger” and emphasising with her apparent feelings, the students can predict orally what they expect her to do. “Mrs Tiger” stops at each given situation to give a realistic



chance for the students to predict her actions. As the mime continues, the students predictions are either confirmed or rejected. The end of the activity is developed by asking the students to develop a short dialogue by empathising with both Mr and Mrs Tiger. The learning experience is made more effective by bringing coursebook characters to "life" and by asking students to both tune into their emotions and to empathise with them.

### 5.0 Conclusion

This paper has presented a brief introduction to the concept of emotional intelligence as proposed by Goleman (1996) and how it can be applied in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is not intended to rival the traditional concept of IQ, but to complement it. Similarly, an approach to English Language Teaching that takes into consideration only the cognitive aspects of learning is incomplete. The emotional aspects of students' learning need to be attended to in order to make the learning experience complete. While the concept of emotion, or affect, is not new in the field of ELT as it has been shown, English Language teachers can benefit from a systemized approach in order to foster effective communication skills in students. We should, however, take care not to enforce or prescribe our own or somebody else's accepted view of what is the correct emotional response, and to take into consideration the cultural setting in which we are teaching.

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### APPENDIX 1

Guess what Mrs Tiger will do in the following situations. Write your answers in the spaces provided:

e.g. *The neighbour fell down and broke her leg.*

*Mrs Tiger will call an ambulance.*

1. She wants to make a cake for her husband, but there is not enough milk.

.....

2. She has worked all day and now she is very tired.

.....

3. Her husband calls and says that he will come home late.

.....

4. Her daughter is feeling ill.

.....

5. There is an interesting film on TV.

.....

6. It's almost midnight and her husband isn't at home yet.

.....

7. Her son suddenly wakes up and says he's thirsty.

.....

8. She is bored of waiting for her husband and she is hungry, too.

.....

9. The doorbell rings .... It's her husband at the door.

.....

10. Her husband tells her that he is very hungry, too.

.....

(Yorgancı and Keskil, 2002: 191-192)

**APPENDIX 2**

You will watch Mrs. Tiger waiting for her husband. The following things happen to her while she is waiting. Each time Mrs Tiger stops, try to guess what she will do. Then watch and see if your guesses are correct.

1. She wants to make a cake for her husband, but there is not enough milk.  
.....
2. She has worked all day and now she is very tired.  
.....
3. Her husband calls and says that he will come home late.  
.....
4. Her daughter is feeling ill.  
.....
5. There is an interesting film on TV.  
.....
6. It's almost midnight and her husband isn't at home yet.  
.....
7. Her son suddenly wakes up and says he's thirsty.  
.....
8. She is bored of waiting for her husband and she is hungry, too.  
.....
9. The doorbell rings .... It's her husband at the door.  
.....
10. Her husband tells her that he is very hungry, too.  
.....

**What do you think Mrs. Tiger will say to her husband?**

**Write a short dialogue with your partner and prepare to act it out for the class.**

Feedback

**Compare your notes with your partner. Did Mrs. Tiger do anything you didn't expect?**

How do you think Mr. Tiger feels? What kind of day did he have?

