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The Interrelationship between Emotional Intelligence and Linguistic Awareness among Students at the University Level: Cognitive and Social Perspectives

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate the interrelationship between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness among EFL students, adopting both cognitive and social perspectives. Emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to identify, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively, while linguistic awareness involves the conscious knowledge of language structure and the ability to reflect on language use. This study examines whether students with higher levels of emotional intelligence exhibit greater linguistic awareness and how cognitive and social factors mediate this relationship. This study attempts to answer the question 'is there any relationship between students' emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness?'. The sample of present study is college students who study English at Garmian and Tikrit Universities college of Education for human sciences at the Department of English. The research adopts a correlational design, utilizing standardized assessments to measure both emotional intelligence and language awareness among the sample of the study. Findings from this study offer insights into how emotional and cognitive skills interact in language learning contexts, potentially informing teaching practices. Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for a holistic view of language education, where emotional intelligence is recognized as an integral component of linguistic and academic competence.

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العلاقة المتبادلة بين الذكاء العاطفي والوعي اللغوي لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية: من منظور معرفي واجتماعي

بان شهاب أحمد/ جامعة كرميان – كلية اللغات والعلوم الإنسانية

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الخلاصة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء العلاقة المتبادلة بين الذكاء العاطفي والوعي اللغوي لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية(EFL) ، من خلال تبني منظورين معرفي واجتماعي. يشمل الذكاء العاطفي القدرة على التعرف على المشاعر وفهمها وإدارتها واستخدامها بفعالية، في حين يشير الوعي اللغوي إلى المعرفة الواعية ببنية اللغة والقدرة على التأمل في استخدامها.

تسعى الدراسة إلى فحص ما إذا كان الطلاب الذين يمتلكون مستويات أعلى من الذكاء العاطفي يظهرون وعيًا لغويًا أكبر، وكيف يمكن للعوامل المعرفية والاجتماعية أن تتوسط هذه العلاقة. وتحاول الدراسة الإجابة عن السؤال: "هل توجد علاقة بين الذكاء العاطفي والوعي اللغوي لدى الطلاب؟."

تتكون عينة الدراسة من طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية – جامعتي تكريت وكرميان. اعتمد البحث على تصميم ارتباطي، باستخدام أدوات تقييم مقننة لقياس كل من الذكاء العاطفي والوعي اللغوي لدى عينة الدراسة.

تسهم نتائج هذه الدراسة في توضيح كيفية تفاعل المهارات العاطفية والمعرفية في سياقات تعلم اللغة، مما قد يُفيد في تطوير أساليب التدريس. وتسعى الدراسة في نهاية المطاف إلى الإسهام في الأدبيات المتزايدة التي تدعو إلى تبني رؤية شاملة لتعليم اللغة، حيث يُنظر إلى الذكاء العاطفي كعنصر أساسي في الكفاءة اللغوية والأكاديمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء العاطفي ، الوعي اللغوي ، المنظورات المعرفية ، والمنظورات الاجتماعية.

1.Introduction

Language learning is not only a cognitive task but also an emotional and social one. Emotional Intelligence influences how learners manage anxiety, build confidence, and engage in communication. Meanwhile, Linguistic Awareness enables learners to reflect on and consciously control their use of language. Understanding the relationship between these two variables can offer valuable insights into how emotional and cognitive factors support second language acquisition.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite growing interest in affective variables in second language acquisition, the specific relationship between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness in EFL university learners remains underexplored. Most existing research treats them

in isolation, ignoring how they might interact and reinforce one another within cognitive and social learning contexts.

1.2 Research Aim

This study aims to:

1.   measure levels of emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness among university-level EFL students.

2.   examine the correlation between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness.

3.   analyze how cognitive and social dimensions mediate this relationship.

4.   make comparison based gender related to students' emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the levels of emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness among EFL students at Tikrit University?

2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness?

3. How do cognitive and social factors influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness?

4. Is there any differences between male and female students regarding emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness.

1.4 Hypotheses

- H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness.

- H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of language learning by integrating affective, cognitive, and social dimensions. The findings

can inform EFL curriculum design, especially in integrating emotional intelligence training and fostering language awareness as mutually supportive domains.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

- Emotional Intelligence (EI): The ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively(Tanner, 2025).

- Linguistic Awareness (LA): Conscious understanding of the structure and use of language (Roehr-Brackin, 2024).

- Cognitive Perspective: Focuses on internal mental processes such as reflection and regulation(Zeigler & Shackelford, 2020).

- Social Perspective: focuses learning by social norms, and communication interaction (Carpentiero, Bordignon , Matta, & Sayed , 2025).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This study shows the theoretical bases that guide it. It gives outlines key theories associated with emotional intelligence   and linguistic awareness, and locate these within social and cognitive frameworks.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence

2.2.1 Definition and Models

Emotional Intelligence refers to the capacity to accurately perceive, assess, and regulate emotions in oneself and others, and to use this emotional awareness to guide thought and behavior. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI encompasses a set of skills that allow individuals to monitor their own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the emotional information to guide their thinking and actions. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in learners' ability to navigate academic and social environments, manage stress, and build positive interpersonal relationships (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Two prominent models of emotional intelligence have been widely recognized in the literature:

1. Ability Model (Salovey & Mayer, 1997)

This model conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a pure form of mental ability that is related to the processing of emotional information. It is structured around four interrelated branches:

 - Perceiving Emotions: The ability to recognize emotions in oneself and others through facial expressions, tone of voice, and other nonverbal cues.
 - Facilitating Thought Using Emotions: The ability to use emotions to prioritize thinking and engage in problem-solving and creativity.
 - Understanding Emotions: The capacity to analyze emotions, recognize their causes and trajectories, and understand how they may evolve over time.

 - Managing Emotions: The ability to regulate emotions in oneself and others to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer et al., 2004).

2. Mixed Model (Goleman, 1995):

This model integrates emotional abilities with personality traits and social behaviors. Goleman's framework expands the concept of EI beyond cognitive skills to include a wide range of competencies that affect performance at work and in life. The five key components are:
 - Self-awareness: Recognizing one's own emotions and their effects.
 - Self-regulation: Managing disruptive emotions and impulses.
 - Motivation: Harnessing emotions to pursue goals with energy and persistence.
 - Empathy: Understanding others' emotions and responding appropriately.
 - Social Skills: Managing relationships to move people in desired directions (Goleman, 1998).

These two models provide complementary perspectives on emotional intelligence. While the Ability Model emphasizes the role of emotional reasoning, the Mixed Model underscores the behavioral and interpersonal aspects of EI. Both frameworks have been influential in educational psychology and have been applied to understand learners' academic achievement, well-being, and social adaptation (Petrides et al., 2004; Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

2.2.2 Emotional Intelligence in Educational Contexts

Many previous studies have confirmed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and educational success (Pekrun, 2006). In EFL contexts, emotionally intelligent students can better control motivation, interpersonal communication, and anxiety, all of which are vital for language acquisition (Oxford, 2015). Such students are often more capable of managing the emotional demands of language learning, including frustration, embarrassment, or fear of failure. According to Pekrun (2006), emotions significantly influence cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and problem-solving, which are essential for learning. Therefore, students who can regulate negative emotions are better positioned to focus on tasks and retain new information. Similarly, Oxford (2015) emphasizes the importance of emotional factors in second language learning, arguing that emotional intelligence contributes to a learner's ability to stay motivated and engaged. By fostering emotional balance and resilience, emotionally intelligent learners create a more effective and enjoyable language learning experience for themselves and their peers.

2.3 Linguistic Awareness

Linguistic awareness is the sensible knowledge about language structure and the capability to reveal and treat linguistic components (Gombert, 1992). It represents a learner's conscious reflection on the forms and functions of language, enabling more strategic and effective language use. This field involves two key dimensions:

2.3.1 **Pragmatic Awareness**: This refers to the understanding of how language is appropriately used in different social and cultural contexts. It includes sensitivity to tone, politeness strategies, levels of formality, and the ability to interpret implied meanings or indirect speech acts. For language learners, pragmatic awareness is crucial in navigating real-life communication, avoiding misunderstandings, and expressing themselves in a socially acceptable manner(Gombert, 1992).

2.3.2 **Metalinguistic Awareness**: This involves the ability to reflect on and manipulate linguistic forms, including knowledge of phonological patterns, morphological rules, and syntactic structures. Metalinguistic awareness

enables learners to notice errors, analyze sentence construction, and understand how changes in form affect meaning. According to Gombert (1992), this form of awareness is essential for mastering reading, writing, and grammar, as it supports the learner's ability to decode and construct language at a deeper cognitive level.

Together, these dimensions form the foundation for a higher level of language proficiency, especially in EFL and multilingual contexts, where explicit awareness of how language works significantly enhances both learning outcomes and communicative competence.

2.4 Linguistic Awareness in EFL Learning

Studies suggest that linguistic awareness is critical to mastering second languages (Bialystok, 2001). Awareness of language use and structure helps learners avoid fossilized errors and improve communicative competence. When learners develop a conscious understanding of how language works such as rules of grammar, sound patterns, and appropriate word choices . They become more capable of monitoring their own output and making corrections where needed. This reflective ability enhances accuracy and fluency over time. According to Bialystok (2001), linguistic awareness also plays a significant role in distinguishing between surface forms and underlying meanings, which is essential for interpreting nuances in a second language. Moreover, such awareness supports learners in transferring knowledge across languages and across cultures, particularly when dealing with cross-linguistic influences or interference. By fostering analytical thinking about language, linguistic awareness becomes a foundation for lifelong language development and effective communication in diverse linguistic contexts (Abdalbaqi, 2024).

2.5 The Cognitive Perspective

The cognitive perspective emphasizes mental processes such as attention, memory, reasoning, and self-regulation in learning. In the context of this study, both EI and LA involve cognitive effort:

- EI requires cognitive appraisal of emotional experiences.
- LA involves metacognitive control and abstract reasoning about language.

Theories such as Information Processing Theory (Anderson, 1990) and Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) support the idea that learners use working memory and processing strategies to manage both language and emotion.

2.6 The Social Perspective

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is viewed as a socially situated activity (Vygotsky, 1978). EI is essential for successful interaction, and language is both a medium and outcome of social engagement.

• EI and social interaction: Empathy and emotion management influence group dynamics and communication.

• Language as a social tool: Pragmatic awareness is inherently social—it depends on norms, roles, and relationships.

Control-Value Theory of Emotion (Pekrun, 2006) explains how learners' emotional responses are shaped by their perceived control and value in academic contexts, influencing both motivation and performance.

2.7 Integration of Cognitive and Social Perspectives

This study adopts an integrated framework that views emotional intelligence (EI) and linguistic awareness (LA) as interdependent constructs supported by both cognitive and social mechanisms. Emotional intelligence supports cognitive regulation (e.g., reducing anxiety in problem-solving), while linguistic awareness is enriched by social interaction and cultural norms (Lindquist et al., 2015; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Pasquier et al., 2020).

Conceptual Integration

- *Cognitively*: EI supports metacognitive control in language learning (Anderson, 2002; Tunmer, Herriman & Nesdale, 1988).
- *Socially*: EI influences how learners interpret, produce, and respond to language in context (Moon, 2010; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).
- *LA, in turn*: Supports clearer, more context-appropriate emotional expression and interpretation (Lindquist et al., 2015; Clarke et al., 2014).

EI and LA are interconnected through cognitive (e.g., self-regulation, processing) and social (e.g., empathy, cultural norms) mediators (Salovey & Mayer, 1997; Earley & Ang, 2003; Lindquist et al., 2015).

Emotional Intelligence and Language Awareness and LA are interconnected through cognitive (e.g., self-regulation, processing) and social (e.g., empathy, cultural norms) mediators.
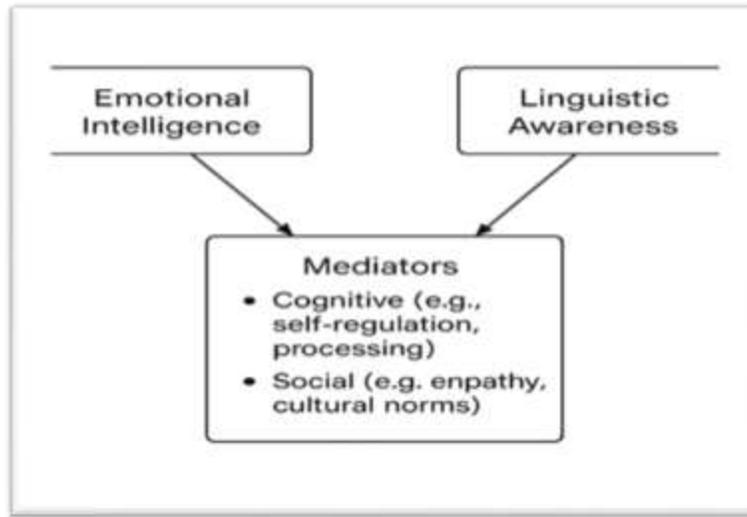

Figure (1) Conceptual Framework of Emotional Intelligence and Linguistic Awareness

2. Language as Emotional Medium :Language acts as a fundamental medium through which emotional intelligence is spoken and understood. It includes not only the words used, but also the nuances that carry emotions in different cultural contexts. Linguistic nuances enhance emotional expression and interpretation. Some cultures have specific phrases summarizing feelings others may not distinguish, thus shaping the emotional landscape (Lindquist et al., 2015; Pasquier et al., 2020).

2.8 Related Studies

- Hashemi & Ghanizadeh (2011): Found a significant correlation between EI and academic language performance among Iranian EFL learners.

- Chen (2018): Demonstrated that pragmatic awareness in ESL learners improves with higher emotional regulation.

- Alavinia & Mollahossein (2012): Reported that self-awareness and empathy predict language achievement in EFL students.

These findings reinforce the hypothesis that EI may play a role in developing both structural and functional language competence.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study presents a correlational, quantitative research design. It seeks to determine whether a significant statistical relationship exists between students' emotional intelligence and their linguistic awareness. No variables are manipulated, as the aim is to measure naturally occurring levels of each construct.

3.2 Population and Sample

Population consists of 3rd year undergraduate students who study English at the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, at Tikrit University and College of Education at Garmian University in the academic year 2024-2025.

100 students (50 males and 50 females) are selected to ensure a balanced representation. Students selected via stratified random sampling to ensure representation across academic years and gender.

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 Emotional Intelligence Scale

The researcher used elected model of fifty items which is combined from following two scales:

The first scale : adapted from the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT).

33 items, 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Subscales include:

- a- Emotional perception
- b- Emotion management
- c- Emotional facilitation of thought
- d- Emotional regulation

The second scale :adapted from Goleman's model of Emotional Intelligence. Comprised of 25 items, measuring five key domains:

-Self-awareness
-Self-regulation
-Motivation
-Empathy
-Social skills

Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (5).

3.3.2 Linguistic Awareness Test
Adapted from Gombert (1992) and Bialystok (2001) frameworks. 25 items, divided into:

- a- Metalinguistic Awareness (15 items)   A researcher-designed test that includes the mentioned items covering:
  -Syntax
  -Morphology
  -Phonology
  -Semantics

- b- Pragmatic Awareness (10 items)   tests understanding of language use in context.

From a cognitive perspective, language is built on multiple interlocking systems: phonetics and phonology handle how we physically produce and mentally categorize speech sounds; syntax governs how we combine words and morphemes into correct sentence structures; and semantics encodes the meanings of words and how meanings compose in phrases and sentences (Trask, 2007). These systems reflect the mental mechanisms our brains use to process, store, and generate linguistic information. Meanwhile, the social perspective, represented through pragmatics, emphasizes how context shapes meaning considering speaker intention, listener knowledge, social norms, speech acts, implicatures, deixis, and others . In other words, while syntax and semantics encode abstract structure and meaning in the mind, pragmatics embeds language in real social interaction, revealing how utterances do things (promising, requesting, implying) and how meaning shifts with social context(Trask,2007).

Item types included multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions to assess students' explicit knowledge of language structure

3.3.3 Validity and Reliability

Both instruments have been reviewed by a panel of five university professors specialized in methodology to verify face validity. Minor revisions were made based on expert feedback to improve clarity and relevance.

A pilot study was conducted on a group of 20 students. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient has been calculated:

- Emotional Intelligence Scale: 0.87

- Linguistic Awareness Test: 0.81

These results indicate strong internal consistency for both instruments.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

1. Permission obtained from the colleges administration and ethical approval secured.

2. Students have been informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained.

3. Students briefed and provided with consent forms.

4. Tests administered in a classroom setting over two 45-minute sessions.

5. All responses kept confidential and coded for analysis.

6.The Emotional Intelligence Scale and Linguistic Awareness Test have been administered in regular class sessions under the supervision of the researcher. 7. Data collection was completed over a two-week period.

3.5 Statistical Methods

1. Descriptive statistics: Mean, standard deviation to describe EI and LA levels.

2. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r): To measure the strength and direction of the relationship between EI and LA.

3. Regression analysis: (Optional) To predict LA based on EI levels.

4. SPSS software will be used for all analyses.

4. Data Analysis

This study outlines the practical procedures to focus on the methodology employed to investigate the interrelationship between Emotional Intelligence   and Linguistic Awareness among university students. It details the research design, population and sample, instruments used, methods of data collection, and statistical tools applied for data analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

After analyzing data it has been found out the mean score of Emotional intelligence (81.35) and linguistic awareness (76.90) as mentioned in table (1):

Table (1)

Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Emotional Intelligence and Linguistic Awareness

Variable	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Intelligence	81.35	10.21	100
Linguistic Awareness	76.90	8.95	100

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Person Correlation Coefficient has been computed between Emotional Intelligence & Linguistic Awareness , where the computed (r) is (0.615) and the tabulated (r) is (0.195) at level of significance 0.05, as mentioned in table (2) .

Table (2)

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Tabulated (r)	Degree of freedom	Level of Sig
Emotional Intelligence & Linguistic Awareness	0.615	0.195	98	0.05

A statistically significant moderate-to-strong positive correlation is found between emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness where (r) is (0.615) exceeds the tabulated (0.198) at level (0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis of the study is rejected.

4.3 Gender-Based Comparison

To achieve the fourth aim of the study a comparison between male and female students linguistic awareness and emotional intelligence is computed, as mentioned in tables (3) and (4).

Table (3)
Independent Samples t-Test Emotional Intelligence by Gender

Gender	N	Mean (EI)	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Male	50	79.80	10.54	2.103	0.05
Female	50	82.90	9.65		

- Emotional Intelligence: A significant difference was found between male and female students t = 2.103 is higher than the tabulated one at   0.05

level of significance , with female students scoring higher on average, as mentioned in table (4).

Table (4)

Independent Samples t-Test – Linguistic Awareness by Gender

Gender	N	Mean (LA)	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig
Male	50	74.60	9.23	2.527	0.05
Female	50	79.20	8.16		

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

- Linguistic Awareness: There was also a statistically significant difference the t value is 2.527 at level of significance 0.05, again with females scoring higher than males, as mentioned in table (4).

These findings suggest that female students in the sample exhibited both greater emotional intelligence and higher linguistic awareness than their male counterparts, as mentioned in tables (3 and 4).

4.5 Discussion of Results

The findings of this study provide important insights into the cognitive and social dimensions of university students' emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness . The positive correlation which is proved statistically ($r = 0.615$, $p < 0.05$) asserts that learners with better emotional intelligence get stronger linguistic awareness. This is proved with previous studies mentioning that emotional skills can increase communication, language use ,and cognitive processing .

The second comparison is gender-based comparison which indicates that female students scored significantly better than male students in both linguistic awareness (M = 79.20 vs. 74.60) and emotional intelligence (M = 82.90 vs. 79.80). This confirms the idea that females, on average, show more advanced emotional and linguistic skills, possibly due to socialization patterns, learning habits and styles, or cognitive-emotional combination. Another reason is that women show greater activation and stronger connectivity in key emotional regions like the

insula, anterior cingulate cortex, and mirror-neuron networks, supporting higher emotional awareness and empathy

Furthermore, the regression analysis reveals that emotional intelligence is a major predictor of linguistic awareness (B = 0.51, p < 0.05), the computed value is 37.8% of the variance in linguistic awareness marks. This result suggests that increasing students' emotional intelligence can be a strategic technique to stimulate students' language learning.

Moreover, the results highlight the necessity to consider emotional intelligence not only as a psychological feature, but by means of a vital factor of language learning. Programs that integrate linguistic and emotional progression can produce better communicative and academic outcomes among university learners.

5. Conclusions

According to the obtained findings, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. It has been found out a statistically significant correlation between linguistic awareness and emotional intelligence among university learners.
2. Female learners significantly outperform male learners in both linguistic awareness and emotional intelligence, indicating potential social-emotional advantages and gender-related cognitive.
3. Emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of linguistic awareness, approximately 38% of the variance, which confirms its role in increasing language usage and comprehension.
4. Early and advanced university level English language instructional programs ought to integrate emotional intelligence domain as part of their syllabus to enhance students' communicative development and linguistic.
5. Social-emotional learning approaches can assist decrease gender gaps and enable male learners to enhance stronger language skills and emotional.
6. Instructors and syllabus designers must consider psychological elements such as self-regulation, motivation, and empathy when preparing for effective language instruction methods.
7. Future studies can explore supplementary moderating variables for instance cultural background, personality, and traits educational performance to

extend the comprehension of how emotional intelligence and linguistic awareness interact in EFL environment.

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