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Emotional Intelligence in the English Learning Process: A Bibliometric and Systematic Review

La inteligencia emocional en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés: Una revisión bibliométrica y sistemática

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Abstract

Even though cognitive and technical skills are essential factors when learning a new language, emotional intelligence plays an increasingly important role. Publications from Scopus and Web of Science from 2015 to September 2025 were considered in this review, which starts with a bibliometric analysis of 1224 articles to identify the dynamic and thematic evolution as well as the trends in the study of emotional intelligence in the English learning process. Then, following the PRISMA guideline, 52 articles were selected to know the methodologies and sample used and to recognize the thematic categories they conducted. Findings show there is a growth of scientific publications with a higher preference for empirical research over theoretical foundations. The analysis shows a predominance for quantitative principles and university students over qualitative research and school students which remain understudied. The analysis also presents five categories linking emotional intelligence to English learning.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; English as a foreign language; learning process.

Resumen

Aunque las habilidades cognitivas y técnicas son esenciales al aprender un nuevo idioma, la inteligencia emocional juega un papel cada vez más importante. Publicaciones en Scopus y Web of Science del 2015 hasta septiembre de 2025 fueron consideradas en esta revisión, la cual inicia con un análisis bibliométrico de 1224 artículos para identificar la evolución dinámica y temática, así como las tendencias en el estudio de la inteligencia emocional dentro del proceso de aprendizaje del inglés. Luego, siguiendo el protocolo PRISMA, se seleccionaron 52 artículos con el fin de conocer las metodologías y las muestras trabajadas y para reconocer las categorías temáticas que abordaron. Los resultados muestran que hay un crecimiento de las publicaciones científicas con una preferencia alta por la investigación empírica más que por los fundamentos teóricos. El análisis muestra una predominancia por principios cuantitativos y estudiantes universitarios sobre investigaciones cualitativas y estudiantes de colegio, los cuales permanecen poco estudiados. El análisis presenta cinco categorías que vinculan la inteligencia emocional con el aprendizaje del inglés.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia emocional; inglés como lengua extranjera, proceso de aprendizaje contemporánea

1. Introducción

Emotional Intelligence (henceforth EI) first appeared in 1990 with Peter Salovey and John Mayer. Authors such as Goleman (1995) explained it as the ability people have to control their emotions and reactions, understand others' feelings,

and establish respectful relationships. However, there is not a single meaning referring to EI; in the last 35 years, there have been different researchers studying, trying to understand and define the topic. Mayer (2005) described it as the ability for

reflecting on emotions and using them to organize the thinking process. Bar-On (2006) argues that EI is an integrated set of competencies and skills that influence people's ability to understand and express themselves, establish relationships, and face everyday life. Moreover, EI is understood as a measurable ability that uses response patterns when facing problematic situations (Mayer *et al.*, 2016). Hamid (2025), for his part, considers it as a part of the human being, which can be modeled.

Hence, considering the growth of EI, it has pervaded the educational field. Teaching and learning have been historically understood as integral processes leading to knowledge; however, when they integrate EI, they become meaningful. Students with high levels of EI elucidate, manage, and transform emotions to avoid increasing the anxiety levels present when learning (AL-Qadri and Zhao, 2021). According to Santander *et al.* (2020), EI supports students in stressful school situations and helps them to cope with hard decisions that come as peer or social pressure.

As shown above, EI is closely related to education, including the English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) learning process. That is, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2004) help at facing affective factors like anxiety, nerves, and stress while developing competencies in a language different from the mother tongue. Students with high EI control their emotions, and it conveys a meaningful EFL learning process since it is easier for them to communicate what they feel and understand others' feelings too (Yang & Duan, 2023).

Thus, this review has three main objectives: 1) to analyze through a bibliometric process the dynamic evolution of the studies related to EI in the EFL learning process as well as the thematic development in the field of study; 2) to know, through a systematic review, the methodologies and sample used when doing research about EI in the EFL learning process, determining the route that is following the field and identifying populations that remain unstudied; and 3) to study the thematic categories in which EI has been investigated in relation to EFL in empirical research.

2. Methodology

This review was focused on the exploration of scientific literature published in the last eleven years (2015-september 2025) and related to the integration of EI into the EFL learning process. The review was divided into two stages. First, a bibliometric analysis using the Bibliometrix R-package in order to identify the dynamic and thematic evolution as well as the trends in the field of study. In a second stage, a systematic review following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, which focused on research methodologies, samples, and categories.

Articles for the review were selected from Scopus and Web of Science, as they are databases recognized internationally for their scientific and academic excellence and accuracy. Besides, thanks to their rigorous peer-reviewed process, they offer high-quality articles that become a guarantee of integrity and validity of practices and, at the same time, furnish reliable results to be considered for a review (Mishra, 2025).

2.1. Search Strategy

For facilitating finding information that met the research objectives, the key concepts were rewritten using the Scopus AI tool to transform the natural language into a computational keyword search. Then, it was read and refined by the authors to get the final query: “emotional intelligence” OR “emotional competences” OR “emotional education” AND “English as a foreign language” OR “English as a second language” OR “English language learning” OR “English learning” OR “English” AND “students.” Finally, the query was run on the databases in October 2025.

2.2. Eligibility Criteria

Considering the first part of the review is a bibliometric analysis to understand the dynamic and thematic evolution as well as knowing the tendencies in the study of EI and EFL learning, inclusion criteria were flexible in order to have access to as much information as possible. Table 1 shows the eligibility criteria used during this stage of the review. After completing the bibliometric analysis, more rigorous inclusion criteria were added to avoid confusing features compromising the reliability of the outcomes. Table 2 shows the criteria used for the systematic review.

Table 1. Eligibility Criteria for the Bibliometric Review

Inclusion Criteria
Studies conducted from 2015 to September 2025
Scopus subject area: Art and Humanities & Social Sciences
WOS category: Education—Educational Research

Table 2. Eligibility Criteria for the Systematic Review

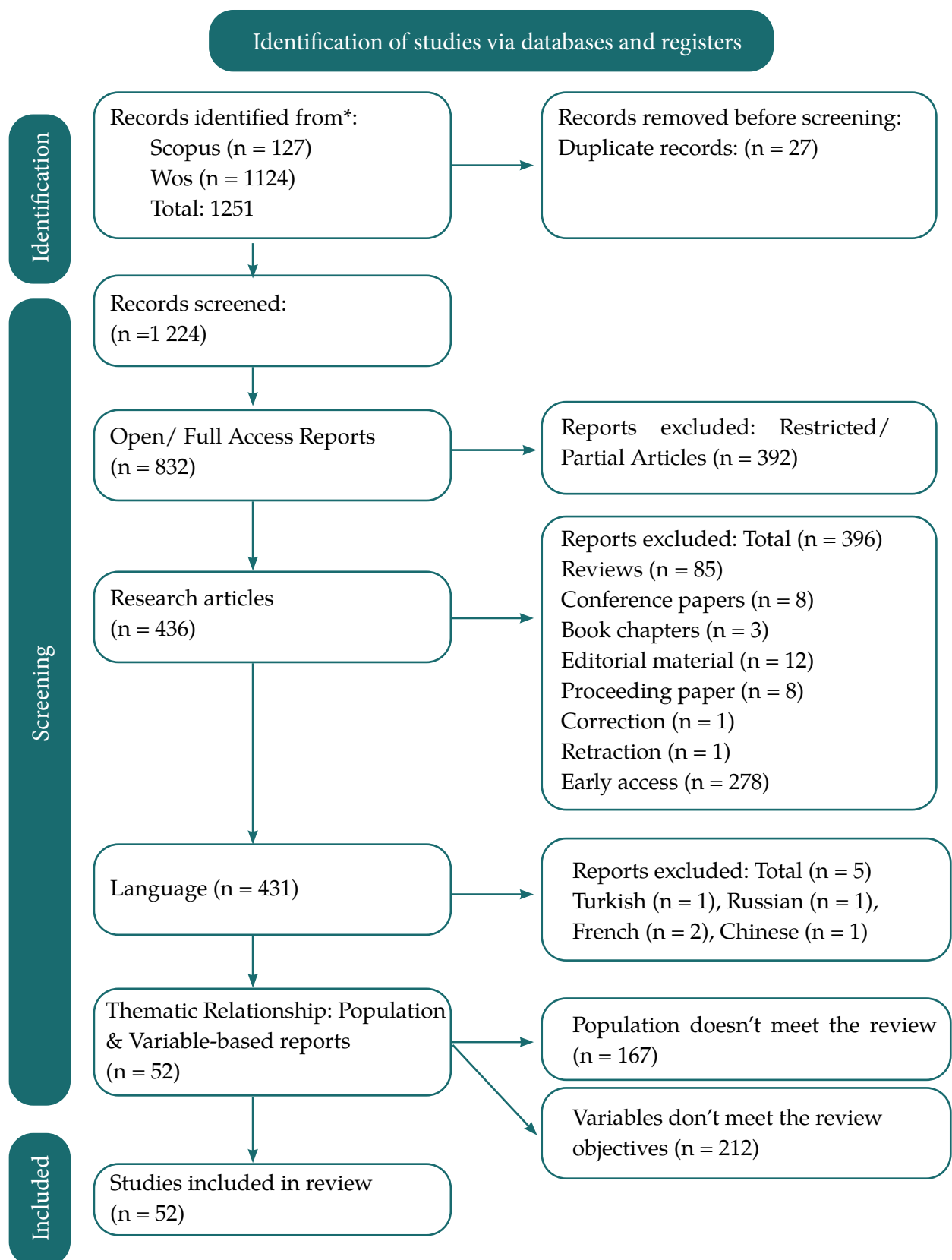
Inclusion Criteria
Open/full access research articles
Language: English and Spanish
Articles considering the variables of the study: EI & English language learning
Population: English learners whose mother tongue is not English.

2.3. Data Collection Process

For the bibliometric study, data were collected by applying the query and eligibility criteria in Table 1, obtaining 1224

articles, which were analyzed. For the systematic review, the eligibility criteria described in Table 2 were applied, and 52 studies were selected. Figure 1 shows the corresponding flowchart.

Figure 1. Flowchart



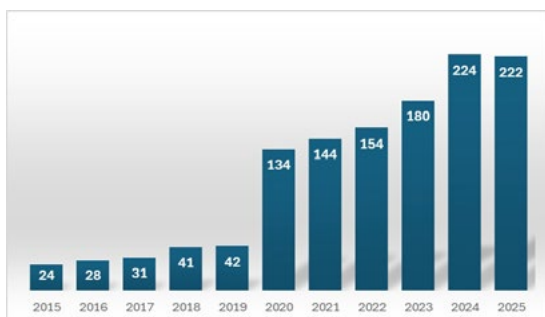
3. Results

3.1. Bibliometric Analysis

Once applying the eligibility criteria in Table 1, 127 documents from Scopus and 1124 from WOS were exported and analyzed using the Bibliometrix software. During the process of merging collections, 27 duplicated papers were deleted for a final amount of 1224 documents. Figure 2 shows the sustained and accelerated growth of scientific production related to EI and EFL learning processes.

Figure 2

Dynamic Evolution of Scientific Production on EI in the EFL Learning Process



Note: Based on data obtained from Bibliometrix

Information shown in the figure was analyzed in three main moments. A first period from 2015 to 2019 where it is possible to observe a moderate but progressive production expressed in a gradual annual publication increase. The studies are part of an exploratory stage supported by theoretical frameworks related to EFL learning and the recently emerging concept of EI. Based on the information from Bibliometrix, and after the analysis it is possible to conclude this period becomes crucial in the foundation of the theory which will contribute to the validity and reliability of future studies.

A second period from 2020 to 2024 with a marked expansion of research, expressed with a growth rate of over 300% in scientific production. This exponential increase suggests the strengthening of EI as a variable influencing EFL learning. On the other hand, this period of time coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic and the early post-pandemic years, when EI played an important role as a resource to cope with negative affective factors caused by the lockdown as well as fear of facing interpersonal relationships again once life went back to normal.

Finally, information presented and related to the year 2025 must be analyzed carefully since only scientific production up to September was considered. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe how the rate of growth remains constant and it is feasible that by the end of the year the highest level of scientific production will be reached. It would be an indicator for a stronger consolidation of the study of EI and its impact on the EFL learning process. This research and theoretical maturity pave the way for conducting systematic reviews with higher validity and reliability levels as well as longitudinal studies that identify patterns and tendencies throughout time.

3.2. Literature review

3.2.1. Methodologies and Samples in Research about EI and EFL

In order to know the main methodologies and sample used when doing research about EI and EFL learning and to determine the route that is following the field as well as the population that remains unstudied, Table 3 presents the articles analyzed with their corresponding methodology and sample.

Table 3. Methodologies and sample range used when doing research about EI and EFL

#	Research Article	Methodology	Sample (Educational level)
1	EI as a Predictor of L2 Communication.	Quantitative	University level
2	Trait EI and learning styles: the case of Iranian English for Academic Purposes learners.	Quantitative	Postgraduate students
3	Iranian EFL learners' EIs, learning styles, strategy use, and their L2 achievement.	Quantitative	University students
4	The Relationship between the EI and Reading Comprehension of Iranian EFL Impulsive vs. Reflective Students.	Quantitative	High school students
5	Social and EI: Empirical and theoretical relationship.	Quantitative	University students
6	Does EI Depend on Gender? A Study on Undergraduate English Majors of Three Iranian Universities.	Quantitative	Undergraduate and graduate university students
7	Investigation of the relationship among EI, foreign language anxiety, language proficiency, and achievement of Iranian EFL learners.	Quantitative	University students
8	EI Enhancement Impacts on Developing Speaking Skill among EFL Learners: An Empirical Study.	Quantitative	University students
9	The Impacts of EI Enhancement on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Writing Skills.	Quantitative	University students
10	Interrelationships of EI with the awareness of request and apology strategies in an EFL setting.	Quantitative	University students
11	Trait EI and classroom emotions: A positive psychology investigation and intervention among Chinese EFL learners.	Mixed methods	University students
12	EI and its relationship to academic performance among Saudi EFL undergraduates.	Quantitative	University students
13	Trait EI, positive and negative emotions in first and foreign language classes: A mixed-methods approach	Mixed Methods	Secondary & Tertiary students
14	Trait EI and second language performance: a case study of Chinese EFL learners.	Quantitative	Postgraduate university students

15	Exploring Learning Styles and Oral Communication Strategies and their Relationship with EI of EFL Learners.	Quantitative	University students
16	EI and self-regulated learning towards English examination stress: A comparative study between primary and secondary school students.	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school students
17	The relationship between EI and receptive English skills of Tunisian IT students: A preliminary study.	Quantitative	University students
18	An investigation into the impact of emotional quotient (EQ) on Iranian EFL learners' language achievement.	Quantitative	University students
19	EI and acquisition of English language oral communication skills.	Mixed Methods	University students
20	The effect of emotional scaffolding on language achievement and willingness to communicate by providing recasts.	Quantitative	University students
21	The relationship of metacognitive reading strategies used by Saudi EFL learners and their EI.	Quantitative	University students
22	Interactions of trait emotional intelligence, foreign language anxiety, and foreign language enjoyment in the foreign language speaking classroom.	Quantitative	Postgraduate EFL learners.
23	Using EI in an EFL integrated writing assessment.	Quantitative	University students
24	EI as a predictor of EFL learners' willingness to communicate.	Quantitative	University students
25	EFL students' EI management when taking speaking exams	Mixed Methods	University students
26	EI and students' academic achievement.	Quantitative	Basic school students
27	The predictive effects of classroom environment and trait EI on foreign language enjoyment and anxiety.	Quantitative	- Secondary School Students: 1,718 - University Students: 1,295
28	EI in Distance Learning: A case study of English as a second language via distance learning.	Mixed methods	University students

29	Joint Growth Trajectories of Trait EI Sub-domains Among L2 Language Learners: Estimating a Second-Order Factor-of-Curves Model with Emotion Perception.	Quantitative	Postgraduate university students
30	The predictive effect of trait EI on emotion regulation strategies: The mediating role of negative emotion intensity.	Mixed Methods	University students
31	EI survey in the EFL classroom: teachers and learners.	Qualitative	Secondary school students
32	The Impact of EI on Cognitive Strategy Uses of Saudi EFL Students' Vocabulary Knowledge.	Quantitative	Private language institute
33	The Relationship between EI, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Demotivational Factors in an English Preparatory Language Program.	Quantitative	University students
34	The Effect of University Students' EI, Learning Motivation, and Self-Efficacy on Their Academic Achievement in Online English Courses.	Quantitative	University students
35	The Effects of EI on Students' Foreign Language Speaking: A Narrative Exploration in China's Universities.	Qualitative	University students
36	Exploring the relationships among teacher-student dynamics, learning enjoyment, and burnout in EFL students: the role of EI.	Quantitative	University students
37	Impacts of Emotional Intelligence on Second Language Acquisition: English-Major Students' Perspectives.	Mixed methods	University students
38	The relationship between trait EI and English language performance among Chinese EFL university students: The mediating roles of boredom and burnout.	Quantitative	University students
39	Trait EI and foreign language performance: associations with academic self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety	Quantitative	University student
40	EI and Engagement in Language Learning: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Their Impact on English Language Proficiency	Mixed Methods	- High school - Bachelor's degree - Master's degree

41	Affective Factors of EI in Learning English among Saudi Female EFL Students.	Quantitative	University students
42	A structural equation modeling approach in examining EFL students' foreign language enjoyment, trait EI, and classroom climate.	Quantitative	University students
43	The role of trait EI in predicting academic stress, burnout, and engagement in Japanese second language learners.	Quantitative	University students
44	Speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners: The role of creative thinking, EI, and academic enthusiasm.	Quantitative	University students
45	The Interrelationships of L2 Willingness to Communicate, EI, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, and Teacher Immediacy.	Quantitative	University students
36	Tapping the alphabets of learning-oriented assessment: self-assessment, classroom climate, mindsets, trait EI, and academic engagement are in focus.	Mixed Methods	University students
47	How we are versus how we are feeling: The role of EI and mood in reactions to impoliteness in L1 and L2	Mixed Methods	No specified
48	Chinese EFL College Students' EI and Willingness to Communicate: A Latent Profile Analysis.	Quantitative	University students
49	How trait EI and emotions shape learners' self-perceptions in the target language.	Mixed Methods	Secondary & Tertiary Students
50	The impact of an emotional literacy intervention on students' composing processes in EFL integrated writing tasks	Mixed Methods	University students
51	Beyond Universal Models: Predicting Trait EI's Context-Contingent Effects on EFL Learners' Attitudes, Motivation, Anxiety, and Engagement.	Quantitative	University students

52	The impact of digital technology use on EFL students' English academic performance: The mediating roles of EI and learning engagement.	Quantitative	High school
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Table 3 establishes the predominance of quantitative research conducted to know the relationship between EI and the EFL learning process. Quantitative research provides tools to manage information objectively and make oriented decisions based on evidence (Morán *et al.*, 2025). Qualitative analysis of experiences, motivation, and emotions in the context has also been considered, although in a smaller size. Besides, there is a growing presence of mixed-methods studies that collect and contrast qualitative and quantitative data through triangulation processes.

3.2.2. Thematic Categories in Studies Related to EI in EFL Learning Processes

After a deep reading of the articles, five categories emerged to show how EI is linked to EFL learning in empirical research. 1) The link between EI and academic achievement, 2) EI and language skills. 3) EI as a resource to struggle with negative affective factors in the EFL process, 4) EI, learning strategies, metacognition, and 5) EI and classroom climate.

EI and Academic Performance

For years, cognitive abilities were understood as the main factors related to academic performance, and studies were conducted to know how intelligent people were depending on their IQ (Alavi & Esmailifard, 2021). However, this conception has changed, and learning is now understood in an integral way, more than just a cognitive competence (Saud, 2019). And integrating affective domains that are becoming increasingly important in achieving goals in the learning process.

These domains are related to EI, defined by AL-Qadri and Zhao (2021) as the ability to understand and process emo-

tions in the brain to use the obtained information for behaving in society. To simplify, cognition is important (Khodadady & Hezareh, 2016); however, people who can connect with their feelings and understand those of others are more likely to develop a social ability to communicate in any language. In that regard, Aljasir (2024) states that strengthening interpersonal abilities is linked to an improvement in academic performance in the EFL process. Teoh and Liao (2021) agree when saying that learning a new language may be challenging, and in case students do not develop their EI, they may feel isolated, become frustrated, or leave the learning process.

Academic performance requires motivation and self-control. Having this in mind, Chen and Zhang (2022) highlight the need for developing EI; they declare the higher the levels of self-confidence and motivation, the better the academic performance. Besides, Zokaee and Suzani (2020) go beyond and state that information goes first to the emotional center of the brain and then to the thinking part of it. That is, people aware of their emotions will drive them to achieve their learning

goals (AL-Qadri & Zhao, 2021). In the same way, Thao *et al.* (2023) affirm that EI is a decisive factor when learning a new language since self-confidence and motivation of students turn it into a rewarding learning experience.

In spite of these studies that confirm the direct relationship between EI and academic performance, there are authors who are cautious about making these kinds of inferences. Jin *et al.* (2024) are skeptical about the real impact of EI in the foreign language learning process. They argue that the effect is not significant. Rather than improving academic performance, EI promotes self-efficacy, which is the trigger to make learning happen. Chang and Tsai (2022) agree and put self-efficacy as the factor directly linked to academic performance. In a slightly different way, Shao *et al.* (2025), although they recognize the role of EI, state that emotions contribute but are not the unique factor in learning success.

EI and Language Skills

Learning English is related to developing effective reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills and is required for successful communication. However, those skills do not advance at the same time for everyone. For that reason, it is necessary to include a wider range of techniques and approaches to facilitate the learning process (Khasawneh, 2021). One of those strategies may be the integration of EI. For instance, texts with high emotional content and subsequent writing activities foster students' reflection (Ghanbari & Abdolrezapour, 2021) and promote meaningful and accurate compositions. Furthermore, writing about their own emotions makes students aware of their feelings (Ebrahimi

et al., 2018). That is, just writing is not as significant as writing with an emotional background. As stated by Abdolrezapour and Ghanbari (2025), emotions act as a connecting link between the writer and the reader, providing a new and more meaningful sense to compositions.

People are in a constant wish to communicate (Dastgoshadeh & Javanmardi, 2021). Writing is a formal way to do it, but speaking is more common. Considering this, speaking can also be improved through the integration of EI. About that, Ebrahimi *et al.* (2018) argue that every time students talk, they are making decisions and taking risks; for that reason, they have to feel confident and motivated to do it. Strengthening EI helps students to be more fluent since language is linked to positive affective factors that influence the effectiveness of speaking (Gao *et al.*, 2025).

Consequently, when people are aware of their emotions and use them in their speech, they feel more comfortable, even if they are using a foreign language (Andrienko *et al.*, 2020). In that regard, Ghe-naati and Naeini (2019) state that language users must be taught about how to use the rules for effective communication, understanding that those rules do not relate only to grammar but to management of emotions because a higher willingness to communicate emerges once students are able to identify how they feel and why (Zou & Park, 2024).

Bata and Castro (2021) also reflect on the importance of developing EI to help students face challenging speaking situations such as oral exams. This is important because there are students that use the language in a proper way, but they are extremely nervous in speaking tests. When

there is not such stress for the examinations, students feel optimistic and willing to talk (Zhang, 2023). So, the calling is to make students so emotionally intelligent that they feel relaxed and motivated to speak even when they are evaluated. Promoting self-awareness and social skills may help students to communicate in a more fluent way (Wang *et al.*, 2024).

Reading and listening skills have also been considered to be improved through EI. Tabrizi and Esmaeili (2016) conducted research to understand the relationship between EI and reading comprehension, while Ouaja *et al.* (2020) included both receptive skills in their studies. Findings showed that reading and listening are essential when communicating in English because they are in charge of getting and analyzing the information. However, these skills must be supported by affective factors that contribute to a proper understanding and lead to effective answers in written or spoken language. As a conclusion, integrating EI to the curriculum may improve communication (Oz, 2015), including productive and receptive skills.

❖EI as a Resource to Struggle with Negative Affective Factors

EFL learning requires strengthening the emotional competence of participants (Rashid & Malik, 2025). This is not immediate; however, a positive starting point is admitting that there are negative affective factors influencing the learning process and understanding how EI can help deal with them. For instance, learning anxiety requires attention because, as it was said by Mede and Budak (2021), it is the main cause for demotivation in the learning process. However, high EI, along with students' well-being, decreases the excessive

anxiety levels (Chen *et al.*, 2024) and increases students' emotions and fosters decision-making (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020).

Other affective factors risking EFL learning are boredom and burnout; for that reason, strengthening EI allows students to recognize when they appear and face them before they control the process (Zhang *et al.*, 2024). McEown *et al.* (2024) suggest the mere recognition is not enough; it is necessary to apply contextualized strategies to strengthen EI and reduce burnout and boredom. Thus, EI may be considered a mediator among students, teachers, and the learning environment to decrease negative affective factors (Li & Zhang, 2024).

A third feature affecting EFL learning is academic stress. On that subject, Owaidah (2024) states that learning a new language is not an easy task since it comprises grammar, linguistic rules, and knowing and understanding a completely different culture. In this case, when stress appears, developing EI helps students to feel more competent to face these challenges (Manzouri & Movahed, 2017). Management of emotions allow understanding changes (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017) and makes it easier to be open to new cultures (Taherian *et al.*, 2021).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that negative affective factors will always be present in the EFL learning process; however, students with a high EI will deal with them (Gao & Yang, 2023) by linking emotions and the cognitive process positively (McNab & Mavrou, 2025). Understanding and managing emotions promote the development of the self, allowing one to face affective factors and their influence in the language process (Resnik *et al.*, 2025).

Emotional Intelligence Learning Strategies and Metacognition

It has been proved through research that positive results in the EFL learning process are directly related to the strategies used by students to face the proposed tasks (Afshar *et al.*, 2016) as well as to the cognitive strategies they apply (Tilwani *et al.*, 2022). Considering this perspective, EI plays an important role in understanding and adapting these strategies. It has been widely shown that students with a high EI are more likely to recognize their behavior (Roohani *et al.*, 2020) and develop a metacognition process in a self-regulated way setting up their own objectives (Ramelí & Sinivashom, 2020). Metacognition is understood as the ability to be aware of one's own learning process and regulate it according to personal needs (Algraini, 2022). That's how understanding the influence of learning strategies and metacognition in students is necessary for teachers to develop an integral process (Aliakbari & Abol-Nejadian, 2015).

EI and Classroom Climate

Motivation and foreign language engagement are influenced by classroom climate (Wang & Wang, 2024). This climate refers to the learning environment where students learn English along with the relationship with their teachers and classmates and how all these elements work together. However, classroom climate can become a double-edged sword in case students feel uncomfortable because it promotes self-sabotage environments where motivation and learning decrease (Viñas & Blanco, 2022). To avoid it, it is necessary to think of strategies that promote a positive classroom climate, and EI becomes a

mediator to do so. In this regard, Li and Xu (2019) express that thinking in a positive way, working on improving one's mood, and strengthening self-confidence can help improve the classroom climate.

Moreover, having good communication contributes to improving the rapport between teachers and students, which translates into more inclusive classes where integral learning is promoted (Nazmaziandost *et al.*, 2024). Finally, when students work in a positive environment, they are more likely to be engaged, and negative affective factors such as anxiety or boredom tend to disappear. They become more conscious and emotionally intelligent individuals (Li *et al.*, 2021).

4. Discussion

Considering the results from the bibliometric review to better understand the dynamic evolution of the studies related to EI in the EFL learning process as well as the thematic development in the field of study from an evolutionary perspective, it is possible to affirm that there is a thematic movement from descriptive studies in the first period of time analyzed to more specialized research in the last six years. This pattern suggests that the scientific consolidation of the field is directed to integrate, explain, and apply the knowledge about EI in the language learning context. That is, the bibliometric study confirms that research of EI in the EFL context represents a well-structured and powerful field that is expanding constantly. The analysis also reveals that the annual growth rate strengthens the field validity and proves the need for constant reviews.

On the other hand, results referring to the systematic review reveal that the aca-

ademic performance can be affected positively when including EI principles in it. However, that is not taken as real for all researchers, and there are studies that show just an incidental effect of emotional factors in how students learn a foreign language. It indicates a requirement for continuing exploring the relationship between the aspects.

Another interesting point worth discussion is the way receptive and productive skills are included in the studies. In that regard, speaking and writing, considered the most challenging skills when learning a foreign language (Tovar Viera *et al.*, 2024), are receiving more attention in empirical research. Unfortunately, receptive skills such as reading and listening need further investigation, as studies related to them are limited. It is also possible to conduct studies to know the reason for the distinction between skills when integrating EI and how the predominance of investigation in productive skills can bias the understanding of how EI helps to improve language learning.

Besides academic performance and language skills, affective factors including anxiety, boredom, burnout, and stress have an important place in research related to the EFL learning process integrated with EI. This is a still-open discussion because authors such as Gao & Yang (2023) state that these factors will always be present in the learning process, and EI can act as a mediator to decrease their level in students. However, for that to happen, a guided process including students' metacognition and learning styles as well as a proper classroom climate where students can express themselves safely is required.

Finally, in spite of the positive results found out from the analysis of the studies,

there are some limitations and bias that should be considered. First, Table 3 shows most of the studies have been conducted with university students while children and adolescents need further investigation. This gap becomes an opportunity for applying the existing theory and creating new hypotheses, including them. Even more, later longitudinal studies could be conducted to analyze and make comparisons in the way EI is perceived according to age.

In terms of bias, it is important to highlight that the studies selected for the current review come from two databases, and even though they are internationally reliable, there are many other investigations published in different local databases that were not considered, and they might contribute to the understanding of the field and the discussion laid out before.

5. Conclusions

This bibliometric and systematic review shows how EI integrated into EFL learning has become an important field of study over the years and how it is in a constant transformation from an experimental phase to reach a maturity stage. However, the systematic review recognizes how research has been conducted mainly following quantitative parameters applied to university students, which generates a gap that needs to be considered with mixed-methods research that includes longitudinal studies and considers children and adolescents as a sample profile.

Lastly, five strong categories in the study of EI in the English learning process have been identified. First, EI and academic performance, where most in-

vestigations support the positive influence of emotions and their management in language achievement. Second, EI and language skills: understanding that the integration of EI in productive skills such as writing and speaking is wider than the one related to reading and listening what becomes a gap that needs further investigation.

The third category, related to EI as a resource to struggle with negative affective factors, shows how EI in the English class can help decrease anxiety, boredom, and burnout significantly. The fourth identified category links EI to learning strategies and metacognition. It confirms the crucial role of understanding emotions to make decisions in the learning process. Finally, the classroom climate in the English learning process was studied, highlighting that the identification and management of emotions can support foreign language enjoyment and the outcomes as a consequence.

To sum up, there is a strong influence of EI in the English language learning process since emotions facilitate communicative competence through motivation and interpersonal skills. However, it is possible that EI does not work in an isolated or direct way; it may operate through variables such as affective factors, classroom climate, and learning strategies. Thus, it is necessary to understand that the EFL process is multidirectional, and the last word about factors influencing it, including EI, hasn't been said yet.

6. Authors' contributions

AMFG: Research conception and design; development of the PRISMA protocol; literature search, selection, and analysis;

manuscript writing; preparation of tables and figures.

LHGM: Academic, conceptual, methodological, and theoretical guidance; critical review of the content; contributions to the discussion and conclusions.

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