

Pedagogical sciences

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SOFT SKILLS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: TOWARDS EDUCATION 5.0

Summary. *This article explores the integration of soft skills and emotional intelligence (EI) into English language teaching (ELT) within the context of Education 5.0. While traditional approaches to language instruction often focus on grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic competence, current global demands emphasize a more holistic model of education—one that includes empathy, communication, adaptability, and collaboration. The paper highlights the theoretical underpinnings of this shift and provides pedagogical strategies aligned with Education 5.0, aiming to develop not only language proficiency but also human-centered competences among university students.*

Key words: *Soft skills, Emotional intelligence, English language teaching, Higher education, Education 5.0, Language pedagogy, Student-centered learning, Task-based learning, 21st-century skills, Curriculum innovation, English philology, Intercultural competence, Holistic education*

Introduction. The concept of Education 5.0 marks a paradigm shift from a technology-centered to a human-centered approach in education. While Education 4.0 focused on digital literacy and preparing students for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Education 5.0 emphasizes sustainable development, emotional intelligence, and the cultivation of soft skills. These competences are increasingly valued in higher education as universities strive to prepare students for the complexities of a rapidly evolving global society.

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), the implications of this shift are profound. Traditional ELT often prioritizes linguistic accuracy and formal competence, but the needs of 21st-century learners go far beyond grammar and vocabulary. As English becomes the lingua franca of international communication, education must address the interpersonal, emotional, and intercultural dimensions of language use. This paper examines how the integration of soft skills and emotional intelligence into ELT aligns with the goals of Education 5.0, providing theoretical insights, practical strategies, and context-specific recommendations for higher education institutions.

Theoretical Framework. Soft skills refer to a set of personal attributes and interpersonal abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. These include communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, time management, and leadership. In the context of ELT, soft skills are not only valuable in their own right but also support the development of communicative competence—a key goal in language education.

Emotional intelligence (EI), as defined in contemporary educational psychology, comprises components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These elements are crucial for successful communication and effective learning. Recent studies have shown that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to perform better academically, experience lower levels of anxiety, and exhibit greater resilience in challenging situations.

Modern approaches to language education increasingly incorporate these theoretical constructs into classroom practices. For instance, communicative language teaching (CLT) naturally integrates activities such as pair work and group discussions, which not only enhance language fluency but also foster collaboration and active listening. Task-based learning, project-based approaches, and learner autonomy practices align closely with soft skills development. In parallel, socio-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks embedded

in language instruction help promote emotional regulation and empathy through storytelling, journaling, and peer feedback.

Education 5.0 builds on the principles of its predecessors but expands the vision to include holistic human development. It integrates cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions of learning, emphasizing inclusivity, collaboration, and real-world application. By situating soft skills and EI at the core of educational practice, Education 5.0 aims to produce graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also compassionate, self-aware, and socially responsible.

The Role of Soft Skills in English Language Teaching

Integrating soft skills into English language teaching supports the goals of Education 5.0, which values learner-centered and socially responsible education. Speaking activities like debates and presentations enhance public speaking and persuasive communication, while collaborative writing and peer editing develop teamwork and critical thinking.

Practical classroom examples include the project "Design Your Own Startup," where students collaborate on a business idea, write a pitch, and present it—practicing leadership, time management, and persuasive English. Another activity, "Editor-for-a-Day," builds empathy and analytical skills through structured peer feedback on writing.

Such tasks turn language classes into platforms for real-world engagement, aligned with Education 5.0's emphasis on communication, cooperation, and holistic development. Language learning becomes both a cognitive and emotional process that prepares students for success in diverse, global contexts. English language teaching offers rich opportunities for the development of soft skills, particularly when instructors move beyond textbook-based instruction and adopt more interactive, student-centered approaches. For instance, speaking activities such as debates, discussions, and presentations not only improve fluency but also enhance public speaking, critical thinking, and persuasive communication.

Collaborative writing tasks and peer editing foster teamwork, responsibility, and constructive criticism. Reading and analyzing literary texts can develop empathy, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to see issues from multiple perspectives. Role-plays and simulations allow students to practice real-life interactions, thereby improving both language skills and social competence.

Moreover, project-based learning (PBL) in ELT encourages students to engage in meaningful, interdisciplinary tasks that mirror real-world scenarios. Through group projects, learners practice leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution, and time management. These experiences are invaluable for preparing students to function effectively in multicultural, professional environments where English is the medium of communication.

Incorporating soft skills into language curricula does not require abandoning traditional objectives but rather enriching them. Language learning becomes not only a cognitive task but also a social and emotional experience that shapes the learner's whole personality.

Emotional Intelligence in the ESL/EFL Classroom.

Emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in second language acquisition. A classroom environment that promotes emotional safety, mutual respect, and trust enhances students' willingness to take linguistic risks and engage actively in communication. Teachers who model emotional competence can positively influence their students' attitudes, motivation, and interpersonal dynamics.

Strategies to cultivate EI in the language classroom include activities that encourage self-reflection, such as journaling or learning diaries, where students can explore their emotional reactions to language tasks or cultural content. Teachers can use storytelling to explore emotions and promote empathy, asking students to interpret characters' feelings or narrate personal experiences.

For example, one lesson scenario called "Culture through Emotions" asks students to watch a short film in English that portrays a culturally diverse

situation, then identify the emotions expressed by the characters and relate them to similar experiences in their own lives. Students work in small groups to discuss the emotional content, use emotional vocabulary, and reflect on how cultural values shape emotional expression. The lesson combines language input (adjectives, expressions for emotions) with empathy-building and intercultural awareness.

Mindfulness practices, such as short breathing exercises or guided visualizations, can help students manage stress and anxiety related to speaking or test performance. Peer interaction activities, when structured properly, develop social awareness and self-regulation, especially when students are encouraged to give supportive feedback and resolve disagreements respectfully.

Additionally, culturally responsive teaching, which acknowledges and values students' diverse backgrounds, supports emotional safety and identity affirmation. Recognizing and validating students' emotions as part of the learning process promotes resilience, persistence, and a deeper engagement with the language.

Pedagogical Strategies Aligned with Education 5.0.

To align English language teaching with the philosophy of Education 5.0, educators must adopt innovative and holistic pedagogical practices. These strategies should be inclusive, personalized, and oriented toward the development of both linguistic and human capacities.

Task-Based Learning (TBL): In TBL, students complete meaningful tasks that resemble real-life situations, such as organizing an event, conducting interviews, or solving a social problem. These tasks require collaboration, negotiation, and critical thinking—skills aligned with both language development and soft skills training. For instance, in one university-level English course, students organized a "Cultural Dialogue Week," where they conducted interviews with international peers, created multilingual posters, and facilitated intercultural presentations—all conducted in English. This project

developed not only fluency and accuracy but also intercultural competence and collaborative leadership.

Experiential and Service Learning: Incorporating real-world engagement into the curriculum, such as volunteering, community projects, or cultural exchanges, allows students to apply their language skills while contributing to society. These experiences nurture empathy, civic responsibility, and global awareness.

Personalized Learning and Learner Autonomy: Allowing students to choose topics, set learning goals, or reflect on their progress fosters ownership and intrinsic motivation. Technology can support this through digital portfolios, learning management systems, and adaptive learning platforms.

Blended and Hybrid Models: Using a mix of online and in-person learning enables flexibility and caters to diverse learning styles. Digital collaboration tools (e.g., Padlet, Trello, Google Docs) enhance communication, cooperation, and creativity.

Teacher as Facilitator: Rather than being the sole source of knowledge, the teacher in an Education 5.0 model acts as a guide and emotional coach. They help students navigate not only academic content but also social challenges, ethical dilemmas, and personal development.

These pedagogical strategies contribute to the formation of well-rounded individuals who are prepared to thrive in both academic and professional contexts [1; 2].

Challenges and Recommendations

Despite the clear benefits, integrating soft skills and emotional intelligence into ELT is not without obstacles. Institutional constraints such as rigid curricula, standardized testing, and limited class time often hinder innovative practices. Additionally, many educators lack formal training in emotional literacy or holistic pedagogy.

Resistance may also come from students who are accustomed to traditional, test-oriented models of instruction and may initially view soft skills training as irrelevant. Furthermore, assessing these non-cognitive outcomes presents methodological challenges, as they are not easily measurable using conventional tools.

To address these issues, several specific recommendations are proposed for programs in English philology:

Curriculum Reform: Revise course syllabi in English philology to explicitly include learning outcomes related to communication, collaboration, intercultural competence, and emotional awareness. For example, introduce a core course such as "English for Professional Identity and Soft Skills," integrating language practice with case studies and reflective tasks.

Teacher Training: Provide ongoing training for philology instructors in applying SEL techniques, managing inclusive discussions, and designing emotionally intelligent tasks. Encourage peer mentoring and interdisciplinary cooperation with psychology and pedagogy departments.

Innovative Assessment: Combine traditional evaluation with formative tools—such as student portfolios, reflective writing, and peer feedback—to track the growth of both language skills and personal competences.

Institutional Support: Create institutional frameworks that promote flexible teaching formats, cross-curricular soft skills modules, and student support initiatives, including emotional literacy workshops.

Through these targeted reforms, English philology programs can more fully align with the human-centered values of Education 5.0 and better prepare students for real-world challenges [6].

Conclusion. In the era of Education 5.0, the scope of English language teaching must extend beyond linguistic competence to embrace the full spectrum of human development. Soft skills and emotional intelligence are no longer optional add-ons but essential components of effective education. By embedding

these elements into ELT practices, universities can prepare students to be empathetic communicators, adaptive thinkers, and responsible global citizens.

This human-centered approach redefines the role of language learning in higher education, transforming it into a vehicle for personal growth, social cohesion, and global engagement. As educational paradigms continue to evolve, it is imperative that ELT professionals lead the way in creating inclusive, compassionate, and future-ready learning environments.

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