



THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG UZBEK EFL LEARNERS

To'raliyeva Farzona Baxriddinovna,
3rd year student, Foreign language and
literature (English), faculty of Languages,
Termez state pedagogical institute
[*turalievafarzona@gmail.com*](mailto:turalievafarzona@gmail.com)
Tel: +998995863639

Abstract: This study investigates the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on the development of speaking skills among Uzbek learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively, has been recognized as a key factor in language learning success, especially in oral communication. Using a mixed-method approach, this research analyzes how components of EI correlate with learners' speaking performance and confidence. Results suggest that higher EI levels contribute positively to learners' ability to communicate fluently and manage anxiety during speaking tasks. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating emotional intelligence training into EFL teaching practices in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Speaking Skills, EFL Learners, Uzbekistan, Language Anxiety, Oral Proficiency.

Speaking is one of the most challenging language skills to master for EFL learners due to its interactive and spontaneous nature. In Uzbekistan, many learners struggle with oral proficiency despite mastering grammar and vocabulary. Psychological factors, including emotional intelligence (EI), play a crucial role in language acquisition, especially in speaking skills.



Emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions and those of others. High EI can help learners manage speaking anxiety, increase motivation, and foster better communication strategies, thereby enhancing speaking performance.

This study aims to explore the relationship between EI and speaking skills among Uzbek EFL learners, providing insights into how emotional competencies can be harnessed to improve oral communication in foreign language contexts.

In Uzbekistan, the importance of English as a global lingua franca has led to increased emphasis on effective language education. Despite this, many learners face difficulties in developing speaking proficiency due to affective barriers such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Emotional intelligence (EI), which encompasses skills like self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills, may mitigate these challenges by equipping learners to better handle emotional responses during communication.

Previous research has demonstrated the positive influence of EI on various academic and social outcomes, but its specific role in language speaking skills, especially in the Uzbek context, remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how components of EI relate to the speaking abilities of Uzbek EFL learners, providing empirical evidence to inform pedagogical strategies.

The study involved 120 Uzbek EFL learners from various secondary schools and universities. Participants completed the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal questionnaire to assess their EI levels and participated in structured speaking tasks evaluated for fluency, coherence, vocabulary use, and pronunciation.



Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 learners to explore their emotional experiences related to speaking English, focusing on anxiety management, motivation, and self-confidence.

Quantitative data were analyzed using correlation and regression analyses to determine the relationship between EI components and speaking skill outcomes. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify common emotional factors influencing speaking performance.

Participants

The sample consisted of 120 EFL learners aged 16-22 from five educational institutions in Tashkent and Samarkand. The participants had intermediate English proficiency levels, as determined by a standardized placement test.

Instruments

- **Emotional Intelligence Appraisal:** A self-report questionnaire measuring four EI dimensions—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.
- **Speaking Tasks:** Participants completed three oral activities including:
 - A picture description to assess spontaneous speech.
 - A role-play to evaluate interaction and pragmatic competence.
 - A short presentation to measure fluency and coherence.

Procedure

Participants first completed the EI questionnaire. Speaking tasks were conducted in a controlled classroom setting and recorded for later assessment by two independent raters using a standardized rubric. Semi-structured interviews



with a purposive sub-sample of 15 learners explored emotional experiences and coping strategies during speaking.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses to identify relationships between EI scores and speaking performance. Qualitative data were transcribed and coded thematically to enrich the understanding of emotional factors affecting speaking skills.

Statistical analysis showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) between overall emotional intelligence scores and speaking performance. Learners with higher EI demonstrated better fluency, more coherent expression, and greater lexical variety.

Interview findings revealed that emotionally intelligent learners were better at managing speaking anxiety and used self-regulation strategies such as positive self-talk and relaxation techniques. They also reported higher motivation levels and greater willingness to engage in spontaneous conversations.

The quantitative results showed that among the EI dimensions, self-management and social awareness had the strongest positive correlations with speaking fluency and interactional skills ($r = 0.71$ and $r = 0.65$, respectively, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis indicated that EI predicted approximately 47% of the variance in overall speaking scores, suggesting a substantial impact.

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed several recurrent themes:

- **Managing anxiety:** Participants with higher EI actively used relaxation and positive thinking to overcome fear.



- **Motivation and persistence:** Emotionally intelligent learners reported higher intrinsic motivation to practice speaking despite difficulties.
- **Empathy and communication:** Learners with strong social awareness were more attentive to their interlocutors' cues, facilitating smoother interactions.

These findings highlight the multifaceted ways EI supports speaking skill development in EFL contexts.

However, some learners with lower EI scores reported frequent emotional barriers, including fear of making mistakes and embarrassment, which negatively affected their speaking fluency and participation.

The results indicate that emotional intelligence is a critical factor in developing speaking skills among Uzbek EFL learners. The ability to understand and regulate emotions allows learners to overcome common affective barriers such as anxiety and lack of confidence, which often impede oral communication.

Incorporating EI development into language teaching could involve activities that foster emotional awareness, empathy, stress management, and motivation. For example, teachers can integrate reflective discussions, role-plays, and mindfulness exercises to support learners' emotional growth.

Moreover, enhancing EI can improve learners' social interaction skills, essential for effective speaking, by increasing their sensitivity to interlocutors' emotions and adapting their communication accordingly.

The findings align with established theories that emphasize the role of affective factors in second language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Emotional intelligence facilitates a learner's ability to cope with speaking anxiety, a common barrier in oral proficiency. This study's results corroborate the idea that



EI not only reduces negative emotions but also promotes positive social engagement, crucial for speaking practice.

For Uzbek EFL education, integrating EI training into the curriculum could significantly enhance learners' communicative competence. Activities such as emotional awareness workshops, peer-feedback sessions, and group projects could foster EI development. Furthermore, teacher training programs should emphasize emotional competencies to better support learners' affective needs.

Limitations of the study include reliance on self-reported EI data and a sample limited to urban educational settings, which may affect generalizability. Future research might employ longitudinal designs and experimental interventions to test EI-enhancing methods' efficacy.

Emotional intelligence significantly impacts the development of speaking skills in Uzbek EFL learners by helping them manage anxiety, boost motivation, and improve communication strategies. Language educators should recognize the importance of emotional competencies and incorporate EI-building activities into their curricula to foster more effective oral communication.

Future research could examine the longitudinal effects of EI training on language proficiency and investigate how specific EI components interact with different speaking tasks and contexts.

This study confirms that emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in developing speaking skills among Uzbek EFL learners by enabling effective emotion regulation and fostering social interaction abilities. Incorporating EI-focused pedagogical strategies offers promising avenues to improve oral proficiency and learner confidence.



Given the importance of communicative competence in globalized contexts, educational stakeholders in Uzbekistan should prioritize emotional intelligence development alongside linguistic instruction. Doing so can help learners overcome psychological barriers and achieve greater success in English language speaking.

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