

Emotional literacy in EFL classes: The relationship between teachers' trait emotional intelligence level and the use of emotional literacy strategies

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This study investigates the relationship between the levels of trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) of teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and the teaching strategies they use in the classroom to develop students' emotional literacy (EL). It also examines the influence of factors such as teaching experience and class size on teachers' choice of EL strategies. The study used a mixed methods design, first administering questionnaires to EFL teachers (N=102) within Cyprus and locations outside the country, followed by in-depth interviews with a smaller number of respondents (N=11). Overall, the questionnaire results indicated a correlation between teachers' trait EI and teaching practices. Furthermore, the content analysis of the interviews, showed that the level of educational sector (school vs university) plays a significant role in the use of these strategies and identified areas for improvement. The results form the basis for recommendations for an EL training program targeting the promotion of EL in the EFL classroom.

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is accompanied by various emotions, such as enjoyment, anxiety, boredom, anger, hope and pride (Pishghadam et al., 2016). The extent to which students manage such a wide spectrum of emotions is often determined by the classroom environment (Arnold, 2011). Moreover, the literature showed that if students are provided with the chance to reflect on their emotional experience in the classroom, they can channel these experiences into productive learning (Lopez & Gardenas, 2014; Aragao, 2011). Therefore, teachers as facilitators

of learning can empower students to gain control over their affective domain (Jordan & Le Metais, 1999) through the promotion of emotional literacy (EL) in the classroom.

Despite recognition of the role of EL in educational literature, its introduction in schools and universities has yet to be fully realized. In the Republic of Cyprus, the concept of EL is neither well-known nor commonly used (Pouyioutas et al., 2008). Teachers still rely heavily on their own experience, beliefs and intuition to create an environment conducive to learning and to support students' development of social and emotional skills. The English Curriculum for Primary School Teachers in Cyprus (MoEC, 2004), in particular, refers explicitly to the affective domain and stipulates that English should be taught in "a friendly and supportive atmosphere" (p.14), thus developing positive attitudes to learning foreign languages amongst students. As attention to the role of emotions is advocated in the existing literature and in educational policy documents, it is essential to examine how language teachers at different levels of education (school as well as university) promote EL among students in order to create a conducive learning environment in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. Therefore, the current study focuses on the relationship between the level of EFL teachers' EI and the strategies used to create a safe and productive learning environment. It also investigates the influence of various factors found to affect teacher behavior in the classroom, such as teaching experience and class size, on teachers' choice of strategies (Zahorik et al., 2000; Nikoopou et al., 2012).

The current study contributes to research on the characteristics of effective teachers. It also adds to the ongoing discussion about EL and EI as concepts and explores the need for EL training amongst EFL teachers nationally (Cyprus) and internationally. Importantly, the findings of this study can be used as a starting point for designing training programs aimed at raising teachers' level of EL.

2. Literature review

2.1. Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy

Even though the terms ‘emotional literacy’ (EL) and ‘emotional intelligence’ (EI) tend to be used interchangeably (Spendlove, 2008), some researchers make clear distinctions between the two. For example, Bocchino (1999) specifies that ‘emotional intelligence’ is a predisposition or “the potential for emotional fluency” (p.12). He also views ‘emotional literacy’ as a set of skills for understanding and managing emotions in order “to communicate effectively, and to become an autonomous person” (Bocchino, 1999, p.162). Haddon et al., (2005), on the other hand, define ‘emotional literacy’ as “a practice” of everyday interactions through which we learn to interpret our own and others’ emotions – interpretations which we consequently - use to make decisions about our actions. Haddon et al., (2005) suggest a framework for creating ‘an emotionally literate climate’ in schools based on three domains: relationships (e.g. teacher-student, student-student), communication (formal/informal), and organizational factors (e.g. teaching and learning, atmosphere). In this framework, the quality of relationships is emphasized as this is believed to have a direct impact on the emotional climate in schools. Therefore, in this study, based on approaches of Bocchino (1999) and Haddon et. al (2005), EL is defined as a set of skills that are developed through every day practice of interaction with others in social contexts.

The role of teachers in developing students’ levels of EL is emphasized in the literature. Based on the premise that children’s emotional education occurs through observing how others deal with emotions and stress and how they themselves respond to these emotions (Claxton, 2005), the promotion of EL in the classroom is most dependent upon teachers. The latter serve as classroom leaders who can bring about change in students’ learning through effectively accommodating students’ emotions. In other words, when teachers understand and regulate emotions, they “provide students with positive role models and the resources needed to thrive” (Brackett et al., 2009, p.335). Such teachers are more likely to help students develop EL.

In order to measure EFL teachers' socio-emotional potential in the current study, the trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) questionnaire by Petrides (2009) was chosen as it corresponds with the approach of Bocchino (1999) who sees EI as a given predisposition. Petrides views EI as a personality trait which describes social and emotional function as "a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at lower levels of personality hierarchies" (Petrides, 2011, p.660). This conceptualization of EI constituted the theoretical basis of this study and informed the methods used for data collection and analysis.

2.2. The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Language Teaching and Learning

A number of studies have investigated the role of affective factors in educational settings and the characteristics of teacher effectiveness (Marashi & Zaferanchi, 2010; Rodrigo-Ruiz, 2016, Tejada et al., 2016, Tran et al., 2017). A growing body of literature supports the claim that a teacher's level of emotional intelligence (EI) has an impact on teaching practice and student performance and behavior. For instance, Saeidi and Nikou (2012) identified a significant correlation between teachers' EI and students' language achievements. Teachers with higher levels of EI have students with more positive attitudes, which in turn advance the learning process. Barlozek (2014), working with English language teachers in particular, also found that English teachers with higher levels of EI received more positive student evaluations as they were more likely to promote healthy communication, exercise empathy towards students and create a friendly learning environment. A significant correlation between EFL teachers' EI and effectiveness in managing young learners in the classroom was also found by Marashi and Zaferanchi (2010).

In recent years, researchers have also investigated the relationship between teachers' EI and self-efficacy, teachers' subjective judgement of their capabilities to reach the desired learning outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), in engaging students, employing instructional strategies and managing classrooms (Nikoopou et al., 2012; Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009; Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009). These studies revealed a significant positive correlation

between levels of EI and self-efficacy. Contradictory findings, however, have been reported on the impact of teaching experience on teachers' EI and self-efficacy. Unlike Rastegar and Memarpour (2009), Nikoopou et al., (2012) found that teachers with more extensive experience had higher scores on EI and self-efficacy. Both sets of studies demonstrated that factors such as age and gender had no effect on either variable. Class size also seems to play an important role. Zahorik et al. (2000), for example, found that in reduced-size classes, teachers understood students better as a result of increased individual interactions and thus were better able to individualize instruction to meet students' needs.

Despite these findings, the research literature seems to be inconclusive about other potentially influential aspects. For instance, no study has been conducted that indicates a relationship between teachers' EI level and the use of instructional strategies aimed at creating a safe and productive learning environment in EFL classrooms. It is simply unknown whether teachers with high or low levels of EI employ the same strategies in the classroom. Investigating this potential could provide new insights into the characteristics of effective teachers and lead to further exploration into the possibility that more emotionally developed teachers provide more support to students (e.g. creating a conducive learning environment) than less emotionally developed colleagues. As previous studies have generated controversial results regarding the role of teaching experience on self-efficacy, the current study will further explore this factor. Moreover, as teachers in small classes have potentially more individual interaction with students (Zahorik et al., 2000), the effect of class size on the use of EI strategies will be also investigated. Finally, even though some studies have investigated the impact of emotionally learning programs in schools (Brackett & Katulak, 2007) and pre-service teacher education courses (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012), it is still unknown if in-service teachers are interested in such training. In order to explore these issues, this study will address the following research questions in the Cypriot and international communities of EFL teachers:

1. What EL strategies do EFL teachers use in the classroom?

2. Do factors such as teachers' trait EI level, experience or class size have an impact on the use of EL strategies in the EFL classrooms?
3. Are there any differences in the use of EL strategies between trait EI groups of teachers?
4. What kind of difficulties do EFL teachers experience when using EL strategies in the classroom?
5. Are EFL teachers interested in receiving training on promoting EL in their classrooms? If yes, what kind of training do they need?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

In order to address these questions, the current study employed a mixed-methods design aiming at triangulating qualitative and quantitative data in order to enhance the validity of the study (Creswell, 2015; Elsner & Viebrock, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The participants were 102 EFL teachers including 54 teachers recruited from schools and university language centers in Cyprus and 48 teachers from other countries (see Table 1). We were interested in sampling as widely as possible and comparing EFL teachers with their international colleagues. The overall cohort is characterized by a wide geographical distribution of participants (see Table 2).

Table 1. Place of work

Educational Institutions	Teachers from Cyprus (N)	Teachers outside Cyprus (N)
School	45	30
University	7	17
More than one educational institution	2	1
Total	54	48

Table 2. Geographical distribution of participants

Teachers from Cyprus (Cities)	N	Teachers outside Cyprus (Continents)	N
Nicosia	49	Europe	17
Pafos	2	Asia and Oceania	13
Limassol	2	The Middle East and Africa	10
Larnaka	1	America	8
Total	54	Total	48

Teachers sampled outside of Cyprus were contacted through social groups for English teachers on Facebook. Those language instructors expressed interest in the study and completed the survey independently.

The majority of participants (55.9%) reported having more than 8 years of teaching experience. One fifth of the respondents (20.6%) had 4-7 years of teaching experience and 14.7% 1-3 years while only 8.8% of participants were in their first year of teaching. With regard to class size, this ranged from 4 to 40 students per class. Many teachers in the cohort also worked with students of various age groups.

3.2. Instrument Development

The instruments chosen for data collection were a questionnaire and a follow-up interview with respondents (two weeks later). The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts (see Appendix B).

The first section of the questionnaire (*'Part I. Promoting Social and Emotional Learning'*) included 20 behavioral questions that explored the strategies that teachers use to create an emotionally literate climate in the classroom. The choice of strategies on how to create a conducive learning environment was limited by the three domains described in Haddon's Core Framework (2005): Relationships, Communication and Organizational factors. Moreover, as each domain was subdivided into many contexts, only contexts related to in-class interactions were taken into consideration: Relationships (student-student; teacher-student); Communication (formal); Organizational Factors (atmosphere, teaching and learning). Within these domains and contexts, the strategies mentioned most frequently in the literature (Spendlove, 2008; Mortiboys, 2012; Che

& Yuan, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005; Jordan and Le Metais, 2000) were singled out and classified into 5 topic areas: Relationships ('Establishing Relationships', 'Developing Cooperative Environment'); Communication ('Responding to Disruptive Behavior'); Organizational factors ('Establishing Learning Environment', 'Supporting Emotional Growth'). Each of these topic areas contained four questions.

The second section of the questionnaire (*'Part II. Teachers' Social and Emotional Skills'*) was based on the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) designed by Petrides (2009) for measuring participants' trait EI levels. In its complete form, the questionnaire consists of 153 items, which produces scores for 15 facets and 4 factors ('Emotionality', 'Sociability', 'Well-Being' & 'Self-Control') in addition to global trait EI (Petrides, 2009). A number of research studies have concluded that TEIQue has greater validity and reliability compared to many other tests of EI (Freudenthaler et al., 2008; Gardner & Qualter, 2010; Martins et al., 2010). Against these considerations, the TEIQue-SF (TEIQue - Short Form - Petrides, 2009) was selected in the current study. It includes 30 items and provides scores for 4 trait EI factors ('Emotionality', 'Sociability', 'Well-Being' & 'Self-Control'). Additionally, the items of the first and second part were presented as statements evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale to reduce completion time.

The third section of the questionnaire (*'Part III. Personal Information'*) was comprised of questions related to the general characteristics of participants and their interest in training to develop social and emotional skills in the classroom.

The second stage of the study involved semi-structured interviews in English based on an interview guide (see Appendix C). These interviews provided valuable insight into classroom practices. The interview guide contained a series of short, open-ended questions (n=16) informed by the same literature as the first section of the questionnaire (*'Part I. Promoting Social and Emotional Learning'*). Respondents were invited to participate in this phase using contact information provided at the end of the individual questionnaires.

The questionnaire and the interview guide questions were reviewed by two experts (one in Applied Linguistics and another one in information retrieval and data mining) and two English teachers (representative of the target population). The feedback received led to revisions such as reformulations of some of the questions and clarity of instructions.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data was gathered within a five-week period in 2017. The questionnaires were distributed to English teachers working in schools and university language centers in Cyprus and internationally through personal contacts, e-mails and social media (e.g. groups of EFL teachers on Facebook).

Questionnaire responses were collected both manually (12% of questionnaires) and online (88% of questionnaires). Teachers were given approximately two weeks to complete the questionnaire manually while the electronic version designed and administered via SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H2VJT75>) was completed on an ongoing basis. Informed consent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix A).

Upon completion, 38 of the participants who supplied an email address were contacted for a follow-up interview. Only 11 of the 38 accepted the invitation: 7 EFL teachers from Cyprus and 4 EFL teachers from other countries (Japan, Brazil, UK and Serbia). The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes and were recorded.

3.4. Data Processing

Incomplete questionnaires (23%) were excluded from the analysis and the final number used in the study was 102 (77.86%). The Cypriot and international groups of language instructors were unified based on the following grounds: the strategies most frequently mentioned in the literature (Spendlove, 2008; Mortiboys, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005; Jordan and Le Metais, 2000)

were selected for the investigation as these strategies are most probably employed by English teachers at any level of education and across different educational systems.

Descriptive statistics illustrating the influence of teachers' TEIQue scores on the use of EL strategies in the classroom and teachers' interest in EL training were calculated. Prior to the statistical analysis, the nature of data and its validity were checked. The results of Shapiro-Wilk Test, which rejected the hypothesis of normal distribution of data with parameters (N=102, calculated Shapiro-Wilk statistic $W=0.764251$, calculated Shapiro-Wilk p-value= -0.000000 , critical value of W (5% significance level) = 0.975014) informed the decision to use non-parametric statistics in the analysis. The results of Cronbach test (applied to Part II – Questionnaire) revealed that the data were valid for detailed analysis ($\alpha=0.91$).

Correlational analysis was conducted between the variables on 'Well-being' (items: 25, 29, 32, 40, 44, 47 from the Part II of the questionnaire), 'Self-Control' (items: 24, 27, 35, 39, 42, 50), 'Emotionality' (items: 21, 22, 28, 33, 36, 37, 43, 48), 'Sociability' (items: 26, 30, 31, 41, 45, 46), 'Total' (items: 23, 26, 30, 31, 34, 38, 41, 45, 46, 49 and all the items from the previous characteristics) and EL strategies (variables 1-20 from the Part I of the questionnaire). Correlations between teaching experience/class size (Part III of the questionnaire) and EL strategies (Part I of the questionnaire) were also calculated using Spearman's Rank Correlation Test. STATDISK software (Version 9.5; Triola, 2004) was employed to analyze the data.

Follow-up interviews were transcribed using Audacity software. This data was analyzed to indicate common difficulties in the use of EL strategies in classrooms. Thematic coding revealed salient tendencies in the following categories: 'Establishing Relationships', 'Developing Cooperative Environment', 'Responding to Disruptive Behavior', 'Establishing Learning Environment', 'Supporting Emotional Growth'. Finally, descriptive statistics and interview data were viewed together to investigate the possibility of differences in how EFL teachers in Cyprus and internationally employ EL strategies in the classroom.

4. Findings

4.1. *EL strategy use*

The comparative analysis of descriptive statistics between data from Cyprus and abroad revealed no significant differences in the employment of EL strategies in the classroom between these two groups. In line with the results of the questionnaire data, the comparison of the interview data from the Cypriot and international cohort of teachers did not show any difference. The results show that all the participating EFL teachers employed all of the strategies selected for the investigation in the current research study (see Table 3). This could be attributed to the fact that the strategies selected for investigation have become common in teaching practice in both contexts.

Table 3. Average rating of EL strategy use

Location	Band (7-point Likert scale values)
Teachers from Cyprus	4.19 – 6.23
Teachers outside Cyprus	4.2 – 6.19

Furthermore, the interviews revealed some differences in the use of EL strategies between university (n=5) and school (n=6) teachers. In language classes at school, discipline seems to come first, and a high degree of emphasis is placed on games to make learning fun. Good behavior and performance are also encouraged through verbal praise and small rewards. In language classes at a university, however, students' psychological comfort is prioritized, and values such as honesty, punctuality, reliability and resourcefulness are the basis for the relationship between a teacher and students—good work is praised verbally.

4.2. *Factors influencing Teachers' Choice of EL Strategies*

The results of the correlation test between Teachers' TEIQue scores and strategies for fostering EL in the classroom revealed that the level of trait EI influences the frequency of EL strategy use among English teachers. Table 4 demonstrates correlations between the use of EL strategies and the affective factors of respondents' personality, such as 'Well-Being', 'Self-

Control’, ‘Emotionality’, and ‘Sociability’. The last column ‘Total’ shows correlations between respondents’ overall emotional self-perceptions and the strategies they use.

More specifically, the analysis revealed that there was a correlation between teachers’ trait EI (Part II – Questionnaire) and 17 out the 20 EL strategies (Part I – Questionnaire). The correlations have been found at the level of individual factors (‘Well-Being’, ‘Self-Control’, ‘Emotionality’ and ‘Sociability’), as well as at the global (‘Total Score’) level. If dependence was revealed between teachers’ TEIQue score and their teaching strategies at both levels, this was defined as a strong correlation. Teachers with higher scores for trait EI employed EL strategies more frequently in the classroom.

The groups of strategies aimed at ‘Establishing a Learning Environment’ and ‘Supporting Emotional Growth’ were more highly dependent on trait EI as they had the largest number of correlations at both the global and individual factor levels. Correlations in the remaining strategies (‘Establishing Relationships’, ‘Responding to Disruptive Behavior’, ‘Developing Cooperative Environment’) were mostly identified at the factor level, which indicated a lower level of dependence on teachers’ trait EI.

Table 4. Correlations between Trait EI factors and Strategies¹

Strategies	Well-being	Self-Control	Emotionality	Sociability	Total
Establishing Learning Environment					
1. Specify the rules	0.1745	0.1158	0.1843	0.1276	0.1975
2. Emotionally engage students	0.1976	0.1672	0.1812	0.1725	0.2198
3. Use humor	0.2948	0.2850	0.3106	0.2583	0.3410
4. Use positive language	0.2985	0.1520	0.1435	0.2083	0.2320
Establishing Relationships					
5. Demonstrate personal interest	0.0253	0.1184	0.3050	0.0953	0.1385
6. Display empathy	0.1011	0.2131	0.2453	0.1024	0.1937
7. Ask how the lesson is going	0.0209	0.0463	0.1462	0.0045	0.0867
8. Responses make students uncomfortable ²	-0.0950	-0.1875	-0.1200	-0.1911	-0.1916
Responding to Disruptive Behavior					
9. Take misbehavior personally ²	-0.1940	-0.3376	-0.1538	-0.0824	-0.2590
10. Find reasons behind misbehavior	0.0850	0.0611	0.2227	0.2253	0.1870
11. Speak with students in private	0.0356	0.0470	0.2380	0.1916	0.1594
12. Re-establish positive relationship	0.1168	0.0330	0.1978	0.2120	0.1655
Developing Cooperative Learning Environment					
13. Encourage communication	0.2666	0.2986	0.1426	0.2041	0.2549
14. Teach how to work in groups	0.2078	0.2207	0.0503	0.1231	0.1833
15. Monitor group work	0.2092	0.2304	0.0110	0.0573	0.1459
16. Encourage giving positive feedback	0.2133	0.1172	0.0803	0.1323	0.1626
Supporting Emotional Growth					
17. Help develop personal responsibility	0.3290	0.1974	0.1987	0.2734	0.3037
18. Form positive thinking	0.2161	0.2239	0.0753	0.2017	0.2435

19. Do not help express emotions ²	-0.1525	-0.1740	-0.0705	-0.0367	-0.1317
20. Explain how to use a negative experience	0.2410	0.2036	0.3068	0.3122	0.3583

¹Critical two-tailed $r = +/-0.1950235$, sample size $n = 102$, significance = 0.05. Statements in the first column correspond to the strategies (Part I - Questionnaire) and values in bold show a correlation.

²The Strategies 8, 9 and 19 are negatively worded items in Part I – Questionnaire.

Overall, the results suggested that ‘Self-Control’ plays a significant role in how often teachers employed strategies for the promotion of emotional learning since this factor showed a correlation with at least one strategy in each group. ‘Self-Control’ had a strong influence on teachers’ tendency to *personalize students’ misbehavior* (9) as a correlation with teachers’ ability to cope with stress and resist external pressure (Petrides, 2009) was identified at both the factorial and global levels. While the factors ‘Well-Being’ and ‘Self-Control’ were the most frequent correlations related to ‘Developing a Cooperative Environment’, ‘Emotionality’ and ‘Sociability’ affected how often teachers use strategies for ‘Establishing Relationships’ with students and ‘Responding to Disruptive behavior’.

As Table 4 illustrates, affective factors did not influence the use of all the strategies equally. Instead, it might be the case that teachers were more adept at employing some strategies over others due to different stages of emotional developmental related to personality traits.

Table 5. Correlations between Years of Teaching Experience and Class Size and Strategies³

Strategies	Years of teaching experience	Class size
Establishing Learning Environment		
1. Specify the rules	0.0919	-0.0236
2. Emotionally engage students	0.0792	0.0720
3. Use humor	0.0304	-0.0651
4. Use positive language	0.1110	-0.0163
Establishing Relationships		
5. Demonstrate personal interest	0.0472	-0.2136
6. Display empathy	0.0890	0.0177
7. Ask how the lesson is going	-0.0271	-0.0880
8. Responses make students uncomfortable ⁴	0.0428	0.0175
Responding to Disruptive Behavior		
9. Take misbehavior personally ⁴	-0.1333	-0.1665
10. Find reasons behind misbehavior	0.0544	-0.1602
11. Speak with students in private	0.0029	-0.2653
12. Re-establish positive relationship	0.0406	-0.2174
Developing Cooperative Learning Environment		
13. Encourage communication	0.1350	0.0818
14. Teach how to work in groups	0.1200	-0.0006
15. Monitor group work	0.1007	0.0159
16. Encourage giving positive feedback	0.1078	0.0461
Supporting Emotional Growth		
17. Help develop personal responsibility	0.1622	0.0341
18. Form positive thinking	0.1279	0.0218
19. Do not help express emotions ⁴	0.0315	0.0950
20. Explain how to use a negative experience	0.2470	0.1469

³Critical two-tailed $r = +/-0.1950235$, sample size $n = 102$, significance = 0.05. Statements in the first column correspond to the strategies (Part I - Questionnaire) and values in bold show a correlation.

⁴The Strategies 8, 9 and 19 are negatively worded items in Part I – Questionnaire.

The influence of teaching experience and class size (Part III - Questionnaire), was reflected in only a small number of strategies. The results listed in Table 5 showed that experienced EFL instructors devoted more time to *the discussion of negative experience* (20) in language learning and how it might be used for students' benefit. Moreover, teachers in smaller classes had more opportunities to *demonstrate personal interest in their students* (5), *speak with them in private* (11) and *re-establish positive relationship* (12) (see Table 5). Correlation analysis revealed that, among all the factors in question, the trait EI factor had the strongest influence on the frequency of occurrence of EL strategies in the classroom. Some strategies, however, were influenced by more than one factor: in some cases (e.g. strategies 5, 11, 12, 20), teaching experience and class size played a role in how often EFL teachers employed these strategies.

4.3. EL strategy use between trait EI groups of teachers

According to Petrides (2017), the Trait Emotional Questionnaire measures self-reported levels of trait EI as 'high', 'low' and 'average' depending on overall scores for the datasets included in Part II of the Questionnaire. After the data was analyzed, the teachers were categorized into four groups ranging from 'high' to 'below average'. Respondents' assessment of their emotional capacities is presented in Table 6. As seen in Table 7, in some cases, a teacher's emotional profile determined how often they used strategies for promoting social and emotional learning.

Table 6. Teachers' Levels of Trait EI

Trait Emotional Self-Efficacy	Band	N (participants)
Below Average	2.03 – 3.9	6
Average	4.1 – 4.9	16
Above Average	5.03 – 5.9	56
High	6.0 – 6.7	24

Below average group. Respondents with ‘below average’ TEIQue scores were less active in *demonstrating personal interest* (5) in students and *displaying empathy* (6) towards them compared to teachers from the three other groups. English teachers in this group encouraged learners to *give positive feedback* (16) to each other less frequently while groups with scores of ‘above average’ and ‘high’ paid more attention to it.

Average group. The participants from the ‘average’ group placed less emphasis on *specifying rules to the class* (1) and *using positive language* (4) in contrast with the other groups. Moreover, teachers with ‘below average’ and ‘average’ TEIQue scores had a stronger tendency to *take students’ misbehavior personally* (9). These groups also devoted less time to *reflect on reasons for learners’ disruptive behavior* (10) in contrast to those with ‘high’ TEIQue scores.

Table 7. Influence of Trait EI on the Use of Strategies

Strategies for Establishing Learning Environment					
Trait-Emotional Self-Efficacy	N	Specify the rules (1) ⁵	Emotionally engage students (2)	Use humor (3)	Use positive language (4)
Below average	6	5.50 ⁶	5.17	6.00	5.00
Average	16	4.88	5.25	5.94	4.50
Above average	56	5.79	5.98	6.20	5.38
High	24	5.63	6.25	6.83	5.79
Strategies for Establishing Relationships					
		Demonstrate personal interest (5)	Display empathy (6)	Ask how the lesson is going (7)	My responses can make students feel uncomfortable (8)
Below average	6	5.00	5.17	4.83	2.17
Average	16	5.88	5.75	4.81	2.50
Above average	56	6.43	6.09	5.07	2.41
High	24	6.21	6.13	5.29	2.00
Strategies for Responding to Misbehavior					
		Take misbehavior personally (9)	Try to find reasons behind misbehavior (10)	Speak with students in private (11)	Re-establish positive relationship (12)
Below average	6	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.50
Average	16	3.19	4.88	4.31	5.75
Above average	56	2.89	5.52	5.41	6.05
High	24	2.13	5.92	5.58	6.42
Strategies for Developing Cooperative Environment					
		Encourage communication (13)	Teach how to work in groups (14)	Monitor group work (15)	Encourage giving positive feedback (16)
Below average	6	5.67	4.67	5.00	4.17
Average	16	5.69	4.75	5.44	4.88
Above average	56	6.02	5.20	5.95	5.41
High	24	6.58	5.63	5.92	5.42
Strategies for Supporting Emotional Growth					
		Help develop personal responsibility (17)	Form positive thinking (18)	Do not help express emotions (19)	Explain how to use a negative experience (20)
Below average	6	5.00	5.00	2.50	4.67
Average	16	5.69	4.88	2.13	3.81
Above average	56	6.00	5.43	2.21	4.79
High	24	6.42	6.04	1.88	5.75

⁵Number in brackets indicate the corresponding statement in the Part I – Questionnaire.

⁶Means. Value for mean for Tables 2-4 is calculated from a 7-point Likert scale. It included both positively and negatively worded items. For all the strategies except for three the best value is the highest. These exceptional strategies are as follows: *My responses can make students feel uncomfortable* (8), *I take misbehavior personally* (9), *I do not help express emotions* (19).

Above Average and High groups. Students seemed to be more regularly *emotionally engaged in lessons* (2) by teachers with high trait EI. In addition, these teachers *used humor* (3) more often to reduce tension and counteract boredom in the classroom. In the case of disruptive behavior, teachers whose emotional capacities were reported as ‘above average’ and ‘high’ were also more willing to give students a chance to *discuss the incident after class* (11) and *re-establish positive relationships* (12). Moreover, they reported providing students with opportunities to *work in groups and pairs* (13) and *give guidelines on group and pair work* (14) more often. Table 7 indicates that English teachers from these groups devoted more time to *the development of personal responsibility* (17) compared with teachers from the groups with lower scores. The results also showed that they placed more emphasis on *forming positive thinking in students* (18) and explaining *how to use negative experience in language learning* (20) to motivate them.

All groups. Irrespective of the trait EI levels, all participants checked equally with students on *how the lesson is going* (7) and ensured that *responses to students’ incorrect answers* (8) did not make students feel uncomfortable. All groups of teachers assigned almost equal importance to *the monitoring of students’ behavior* (15) while they were working in groups. Teachers in all of the groups felt that *helping learners to express their emotions* (19) was important.

4.4. Difficulties in the use of EL strategies

Although the EFL teachers used all the EL strategies selected for the current investigation, some questioned how to use them effectively. The data from the interviews revealed that, for instance, *the emotional engagement of students* (2) is viewed mostly (n=10) through playing games, making jokes or doing activities which bring about feelings of fun and enjoyment: “...if you provide them with some activity that is fun, then they will just go, enjoy and do it”. Arnold

(2011) stresses that emotionally engaging lessons can stimulate cognitive processes in learners and, as a result, enhance their language acquisition. Therefore, as Mortiboys (2012) also points out, teachers should incorporate emotional planning into the lesson design and include a wider emotional spectrum, e.g. feelings of safety, curiosity or inspiration.

While the strategy of having *a private conversation with a student* (11) was employed by many teachers to respond to students' misbehavior, only a few provided students with the chance to reflect on the choices they made in the classroom. Overall, English teachers in school settings (4 out of 6) found it challenging to deal with disruptive behavior. One of the participants said: "... especially for new teachers... If they could incorporate something like this in TEFL or CELTA: how to deal with horrible students and not to take it personally." Misbehavior causes a high degree of stress in teachers as "they feel poorly equipped" to respond to it (Martin et al, 1999, p.347).

Controversial data were obtained about the use of two strategies: *I ask how the lesson is going* (7) and *I explain how to use negative experience* (20). Even though these were not mentioned in the interviews by the teachers, they received fairly high scores for the frequency of use in the questionnaire: 5.07 and 4.85 respectively. Mortiboys (2012) and Spendlove (2008) claim that these two strategies contribute to the development of relationships between a teacher and students and to the establishment of a conducive learning environment.

Interviews also revealed the misconception among some EFL teachers regarding cooperative learning¹. For example, the majority (n=7) of teachers assigned students a task and asked them to work together, but did not provide instructions on how to do so: "I do not set any rules. I just tell them that it is time to practice English"; "I do not set any rules [except for] work together, make equal contribution". According to Koutselini (2009), this is a common problem amongst secondary school teachers, as they do not know "how to ensure collaboration, coherence

¹ Cooperative learning is "dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others" (Olsen & Kagan, 1992, p.8).

and interaction among members of the group” (p.34). Research on cooperative learning in schools in England has also shown that teachers pay little attention to group size and composition and provide little support for student interaction within group (Blatchford et. al, 2003). These difficulties are attributed to lack of knowledge and understanding on how to implement cooperative learning in the classroom (Koutselini, 2009; Blatchford et al., 2003; Gillies & Boyle, 2010).

4.5. Emotional Literacy Training Program

Teachers were divided in the third part of the questionnaire relating to training for emotional literacy: 52.9% of respondents were interested in receiving training on how to employ social and emotional skills in the classroom environment, while 47.1% did not consider this personally useful. In the interviews, one teacher explained he had taken this type of course already and another that she at that time was more interested in how to teach English more effectively.

Some EFL teachers (n=5) expressed a strong interest in emotional literacy, as they provided positive feedback on the study as a whole: “I am very happy to hear you are looking into this element of teaching, as it is something I place enormous emphasis on.” “It might help a lot of instructors. You may come up with definite features that make some teachers more effective in the classroom.”

Actually, most of the interviewees (n=6) viewed training in this area as a set of workshops spread over time. As teachers explained, this offered the opportunity to process new input, try new strategies in the classroom, and discuss difficulties with the instructor and colleagues afterwards. However, all respondents emphasized that interaction in EL training was very important, whether face-to-face, small group training or online: “I would like to have interaction with other people... By sharing stories, you can learn from other people”. In addition, teachers felt they should be given the opportunity to share ideas and classroom experiences: “Educators are very nice...if you ask questions, they give you ideas”. Some interviewees (n=2) also offered suggestions for creating an

online course for raising teachers' awareness about EL with a flexible schedule, minimum assessment and multimodal materials (e.g. videos, online articles, etc.). The rest of the teachers (n=3) found it difficult to comment on this aspect of the interview.

5. Discussion

Overall, the results showed that despite the fact that a relatively small number of English teachers are familiar with EL and EI concepts internationally and in Cyprus (Pouyioutas et al., 2008), they use all the strategies selected for the investigation. The questionnaires also showed that language instructors employ these strategies at all levels of education. This might be due to teachers' intuitive promotion of EL in the classroom (Mortiboys, 2012; Brackett & Katulak, 2007) or indeed familiarity with at least some EL strategies adapted from classroom management theory (Marzano et al., 2005) and collaborative learning theory (Blatchford et al., 2003; Gillies & Boyle, 2010).

In line with the studies on the impact of EI on teachers' effectiveness and self-efficacy (Nikoopou et al., 2012; Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009; Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009), the current study showed that trait EI had an influence on teachers' behavior in the classroom (in this case promotion of EL). The results also revealed that teaching experience did not significantly impact the use of selected EL strategies. A correlation was observed exclusively with the strategy *dealing with negative experience* (20), which agrees with the findings of Rastegar and Memarpour (2009) but contradicts the findings of Nikoopou et al., (2012) which indicates that "more experienced teachers were more self-efficacious" in student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management (p.1171). Moreover, the results of the current study support the findings of Zahorik (2002) who reported that in smaller classes, teachers individualize instruction. It was found that EFL instructors *demonstrated personal interest* (5), *spoke with students in private* (11) and *re-established positive relationships* with them (12) more often in smaller classes. However, these

strategies - as well as the strategy *dealing with negative experience* (20) - were also influenced by the trait EI factor.

This study also set out to examine the relationship between teachers' trait EI and specific strategies employed to create a conducive learning environment. The results showed a clear relationship between teachers' trait EI and 17 (out of 20) EL strategies. This suggests that the higher the teachers' trait EI, the more often they use EL strategies in the classroom. Descriptive statistics demonstrated that teachers with above average and high trait EI, for instance, put more emphasis on developing personal responsibility, positive thinking and skills to overcome negative experience. At the same time, participants with below average trait EI showed empathy and their personal interest in class less frequently. Taken together these results mean that teachers with higher trait EI are more likely to create a positive learning environment. These results support research that shows that EFL instructors with higher levels of EI received better evaluation from students (Barlozek, 2014).

The strategies employed for 'Establishing Learning Environment' and 'Supporting Emotional Growth' depended upon teachers' trait EI to a greater extent as the correlation existed at both the factor and global levels. The rest of the strategies ('Establishing Relationship', 'Responding to Disruptive Behavior', 'Developing Cooperative Learning Environment') were less dependent on teachers' trait EI, since these correlations were only found at the factor level.

Statistical analysis showed that strategies correlated with different affective factors. While strategies employed to 'Establish Good Relationships with Students' and to 'Deal with Their Misbehavior' are influenced by the factors 'Emotionality' and 'Sociability', strategies referring to the 'Development of Cooperative Environment' correlate with the factors 'Well-Being' and 'Self-Control'. These results are significant for further teacher development and, therefore, it would be beneficial to incorporate the test on trait EI (Part II – Questionnaire) at the beginning of teacher training programs and compare results with the EL strategies language instructors struggle to

employ. This kind of data could provide useful information on skills and affective factors that need attention within a training course.

Even though analysis of the questionnaire and interview data have demonstrated that all English teachers in the cohort generally use all the strategies identified to establish a conducive learning environment, the areas where teachers require improvement are: 1) encouraging learners' emotional engagement; 2) responding to disruptive behavior; 3) building a dialogue about the lesson; 4) providing instructions for cooperative learning; and 5) helping learners deal with their negative experiences. The lack of skills in these areas showed that the EFL instructors in this study placed more emphasis on cognitive rather than emotional aspects of learning. At times, building a dialogue with learners becomes a challenging task as teacher training courses devote substantial time to "how to speak to groups" while overlooking the development of active listening skills (Mortiboys, 2012, p.67). In addition, some teachers do not know how to facilitate interactions among students in the lesson. As a result, they plan primarily for teacher-student interaction (Blatchford et al., 2003). Moreover, EFL instructors are not always ready to deal with negative experiences effectively, since this requires some knowledge of "general strategies for problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution" (Kassem, 2002, p.369). Therefore, teachers should be offered off-line or on-line training where they are provided with guidelines on how to promote EL among students and an opportunity to share their experiences on integrating new classroom instruction in their lessons.

Several lessons derived from the results of this study. For example, compiling the samples for this research was time and labor intensive. Therefore, only limited generalization of the findings has been possible. To gain further insight into the promotion of emotional literacy in EFL classes, more studies that investigate trends in teaching practices of primary and secondary school teachers or university teachers are required.

Finally, the instruments of data collection employed in this study have some limitations. For example, questionnaires are criticized for social desirability of responses and false or

misleading accounts of experiences provided by respondents (Dorney & Taguchi, 2010; Datko, 2015). Therefore, further research should include classroom observations and, potentially, teachers' diaries as well, that could also be compared against student responses (via interviews or questionnaires) to gain a more detailed picture of teaching practices.

Despite these challenges, the study has contributed to a more detailed understanding of the important role that EI and EL play in developing teachers' professional behavior (Tuyan & Sadik, 2008; Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Corcoran & Tormey, 2012; Mortiboys, 2012; Spendlove, 2008; Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009; Nikoopou et al., 2012). For this reason, the concepts of EI and EL should be considered and included in training courses for novice English teachers in particular.

6. Concluding remarks

Considerable research has been devoted to investigating the emotional aspect of teaching, and this has resulted in the reconsideration of the role of a teacher in the classroom. Teachers are currently conceptualized as leaders who guide learners' cognitive as well as emotional development (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Goetz et al., 2006). This study presented the following additional evidence that EL plays an important role in teachers' professional development: 1) all teachers participated in this research study use EL strategies in their everyday practice; 2) teachers with higher trait EI use these strategies more often; 3) teachers have misconceptions about some of the strategies; 4) teachers are interested in receiving EL training. Therefore, EL should be a component of teachers' expertise together with subject knowledge and knowledge about learning and teaching methods (Mortiboys, 2012; Kassem, 2002). Pre-service and in-service teachers should be provided with training on how to promote EL in the classroom, taking into consideration the suggestions made by participants in this study.

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Appendix A

Consent to Participate in Research

Emotional Aspect of Teaching in EFL Classrooms

Researchers' names: xxx

Telephone: xxx

Email: xxx

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study about the strategies that English teachers use to establish a conducive learning environment and relationship with their students, manage disruptive behavior and support students' emotional and social growth. This study is conducted as part of a research project carried out by the researchers.

Confidentiality

Any information obtained during the research study will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only. This means your name will not be mentioned in any reports or publications that will be made based on findings of the current study.

Your participation

Participation in the study is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study any time without giving any explanation. You will not get any financial compensation for participation. The results of the research study can be communicated to you upon request.

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact the researchers

Participant's statement

I confirm that I have read and understood the explanations provided above and I have had all my questions answered. I understand that my participation in the research study is voluntary and there will not be any penalty in case of my withdrawal. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix B: The questionnaire

Emotional Aspect of Teaching in EFL Classrooms

This questionnaire is anonymous. Please read the instructions and write your answers accordingly. There are no right or wrong answers. Completing the questionnaire will take 10 to 15 minutes. The results of the survey will be used only for research purposes.

I. Promoting Social and Emotional Learning

Instructions: Please put a circle around the number that best corresponds to your situation. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from ‘Never (number 1) to ‘Always’ (number 7).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Never

Always

Establishing Learning Environment							
1. I specify the rules for acceptable behavior at the beginning of the course.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I emotionally engage students to facilitate their thinking and behavior.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I use humor to reduce tension and relieve boredom in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I use positive language to engage and challenge students, e.g.: <i>‘The last lesson was fantastic and I don’t expect anything less today.’</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Establishing Relationships							
5. I demonstrate personal interest in students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I display empathy towards the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I talk to students about how the lesson is going.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My responses to students’ incorrect answers can make them feel uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Responding to Disruptive Behavior							
9. I tend to take students’ misbehavior personally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I try to find reasons behind students’ misbehavior.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I offer an opportunity for a private discussion after class if a student is disruptive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I provide an opportunity to the student to move beyond the incident and re-establish positive relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Developing Cooperative Environment							
13. I encourage communication among students through pair and group work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I teach students how to negotiate, ask their classmates to contribute and recognize their contribution.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I monitor students’ behavior towards each other and their contribution to the group work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I encourage students to give positive feedback to their classmates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Supporting Emotional Growth							
17. I help students to develop personal responsibility for their own learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I form positive thinking in students, e.g.: “I can do it”; “Relax, breathe, I’m in control”.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I believe it’s unnecessary to help students identify and express their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I explain to students how to use a negative experience to motivate themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

II. Teachers' Social and Emotional Skills

Please put a circle around the number that best reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Do not think too long about the exact meaning of the statements. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from 'Completely Disagree' (number 1) to 'Completely Agree' (number 7).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Completely Disagree	Completely Agree
21. Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. I often find it difficult to see things from another person's viewpoint.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. On the whole, I'm a highly motivated person.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I generally don't find life enjoyable.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. I can deal effectively with people.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. I tend to change my mind frequently.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. Many times, I can't figure out what emotion I'm feeling.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. I'm usually able to influence the way other people feel.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33. Those close to me often complain that I don't treat them right.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34. I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35. On the whole, I'm able to deal with stress.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
36. I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
37. I'm normally able to "get into someone's shoes" and experience their emotions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
38. I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
39. I'm usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
40. On the whole, I'm pleased with my life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
41. I would describe myself as a good negotiator.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
42. I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
43. I often pause and think about my feelings.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
44. I believe I'm full of personal strengths.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
45. I tend to "back down" even if I know I'm right.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
46. I don't seem to have any power at all over other people's feelings.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
47. I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
48. I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
49. Generally, I'm able to adapt to new environments.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
50. Others admire me for being relaxed.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

III. Personal information

Please read the following questions and tick only one box.

51. Years of teaching experience:

1. 2. 3. 4.

This is my first year 1-3 years 4-7 years More than 8 years

52. Age of your students:

1. 2. 3. 4.

4-6 years 7-11 years 12-18 years 19 years of age or older

53. I teach English in a:

1. 2. 3. 4.

Private school Public school University Elsewhere

54. What is the average number of students in your English classes? (please specify): _____

55. Please indicate if you're interested in receiving training on how to employ social and emotional skills in the classroom environment:

1. Yes
2. No

56. Please indicate your e-mail if you want to participate in the follow-up interview. Participants for the interview will be chosen randomly.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Emotional Aspect of Teaching in EFL Classrooms

1. How many years have you been teaching English?
2. Where do you teach English?

Establishing learning environment

3. Do you think it is important to establish trust between a teacher and the students? Why?
4. Can you name some rules you set that ensure an atmosphere of comfort, safety, and order in the classroom?

Establishing relationship

5. What things do you do to develop good relationships with your students?
6. Do you feel the mood of the group? How do you respond to this mood?

Responding to disruptive behavior

7. What techniques do you use to address inappropriate behavior?
8. What techniques do you use to reinforce appropriate behavior?

Developing cooperative environment

9. Do you think it is important for students to work in groups and pairs Why? Or why not?
10. What rules do you set for pair and group work?

Supporting emotional growth

11. Do you allocate time to teach students strategies of personal development? What strategies do you teach? How frequently do you do this?
12. In terms of classroom management, why might it be useful to teach students about personal responsibility?
13. What questions or concerns do you have about using class time for these activities?

EL training

14. Are you interested in receiving training on how to employ social and emotional skills in classroom environment?
15. How long would you like this to be?
16. Any other comments?

Tables and figure captions:

Table 1. Place of work

Table 2. Geographical distribution of participants

Table 3. Average rating of EL strategy use

Table 4. Correlations between Trait EI factors and Strategies

Table 5. Correlations between Years of Teaching Experience and Class Size and Strategies

Table 6. Teachers' Levels of Trait EI

Table 7. Influence of Trait EI on the Use of Strategies