

Integrating Emotional Intelligence Training and Soft Skills Development into Business English Curricula

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Abstract: The changing nature of international business makes the teaching of Business English (BE) to shift the focus to be based more on a linguistic competence rather than a more holistic approach of interpersonal competence. This study examines how to integrate Emotional Intelligence (EI) training and the development of soft skills into the Business English program systematically. The paper is based on a theoretical framework that explores the symbiotic nature of the relationship between EI and professional success and asserts that these human-based skills are the baseline of effective communication in high-stakes corporate settings. The paper presents feasible measures of incorporating the training of EI skills, including self-awareness, empathy, and social regulation, within the context of the language lessons. The educators can use the contextual activities and ESP-based exercises to maximize the effectiveness of a learner in negotiating intricate cross-cultural interactions and organizational processes. Moreover, the paper deals with the urgent necessity of the creation and evaluation of soft skills, such as leadership, adaptability, and critical thinking, within the BE system and offers a list of resources and tools available to curriculum developers. Though the research appreciates major challenges in implementation barriers, i.e., institutional resistance, complexity of assessments, it provides strategic best practices to adopt an integrated approach. The results indicate that, in case emotional and soft skills are incorporated to the fabric of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), learners develop a higher professional resilience and communicative competence. The paper ends by giving practical advice to teachers and curriculum designers that would involve a head, heart, and hands approach that would equip students with the multifunctional needs of the new global workforce. The design of this holistic curriculum does not only deal with the gap in time between academic learning and professional mastery, but it also promotes the long-term sustainability of the profession.

Key Words: business english, emotional intelligence, soft skills development, esp (english for specific purposes), positive psychology, pedagogical framework, interculturality

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Introduction

The modern business world in the world has changed radically and speaking a language fluently is no longer a guiding factor to professional effectiveness. With the shift of organizations to more collaborative/less traditional models, competence in Business English (BE) has broadened to incorporate the head, heart, and hands of the employee (Reiche & Neeley, 2019). Emotional Intelligence (EI), which means the capacity to sense, comprehend and handle emotions, and soft skills, including empathy and flexibility, have become key factors of workplace success (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). Whereas the conventional curricula commonly focused more on the hard skills or grammatical correctness, recent job advertisements have indicated that employers now focus on interpersonal qualities that enable interaction in the workplace smoothly (Lyu & Liu, 2021).

To counter the psychological complexities of acquiring the second language, it is necessary to include EI training and development of soft skills into the Business English curriculum (Cinque, 2016). It has been shown that emotional intelligence of high level has the potential to reduce English-speaking anxiety greatly and eliminate burnout among learners, which consequently positive impacts overall academic performance (Li & Zhang, 2024; Höl & Kasimi, 2022; Abdelfattah & Lam, 2018). Moreover, with the shift in the role of the language practitioner, the need to develop the so-called interculturality and psycholinguistic competencies enabling the learners to maneuver the subtleties of the global notary services, organizational justice, is increasing (Zendeli & Selmani-Bakiu, 2017; Hovhannisyan, 2022; Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2024). By incorporating these competencies into English as a Specific Purpose (ESP), teachers can develop a more robust workforce that is able to withstand forces of both the dual-earner family-work and demands of radical global language change (Matei & Vîrgă, 2023; Reiche & Neeley, 2019; Elmahdi & Balla, 2024).

This research paper is aimed at suggesting a systematic pedagogical model that will integrate emotional intelligence and soft skills into a learner-based Business English classroom. This research can determine the optimal practices of designing a curriculum, including contextual teaching and learning, to bridge the disjuncture between classroom and professional needs in the real world by analyzing the symbiotic relationship between linguistic performance and psychological well-being. Finally, the paper aims to equip teachers with practical approaches to make Business English a holistic means of communication and emotional development.

The remainder of the paper is organized into four distinct sections that transition from theoretical synthesis to empirical validation and practical application. Section II provides a literature review that establishes the "head, heart, and hands" conceptual model, positioning emotional intelligence as the psychological foundation for soft skills and professional resilience. Section III details the integration of Emotional Intelligence training into the curriculum, presenting empirical data where students experienced a dramatic reduction in speaking anxiety dropping from a 75-point baseline to 25 points alongside significant improvements in competencies like conflict resolution (+97%) and active listening (+86%). Section IV addresses the institutional and psychological barriers to implementation, such as resistance to non-standardized testing, and advocates for "Contextual Teaching and Learning" (CTL) where educators transition from grammar authorities to mentors. Finally, Section V concludes the study by reinforcing that a holistic pedagogical approach is essential to bridging the gap between academic theory and the multi-functional demands of the modern global workforce.

Literature Review

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Soft Skills

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the psychological system or framework in which the successful soft skills are built. In the field of organizational behavior, the organizational version of EI, the ability-based model, posits that the competencies of perceiving and managing emotions is the antecedent to professional interpersonal competencies (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). This correlation is especially observable in how EI is developed since childhood, to the professional life where emotional control directly affects the quality of the social interactions (Terwogt & Stegge, 2001). Soft skills are frequently considered as the outward expression of inner emotional maturity in the workplace, e.g., good communication and conflict resolution are mediated by the capacity to balance family-work enrichment, and reduce stress (Matei & Vîrgă, 2023).

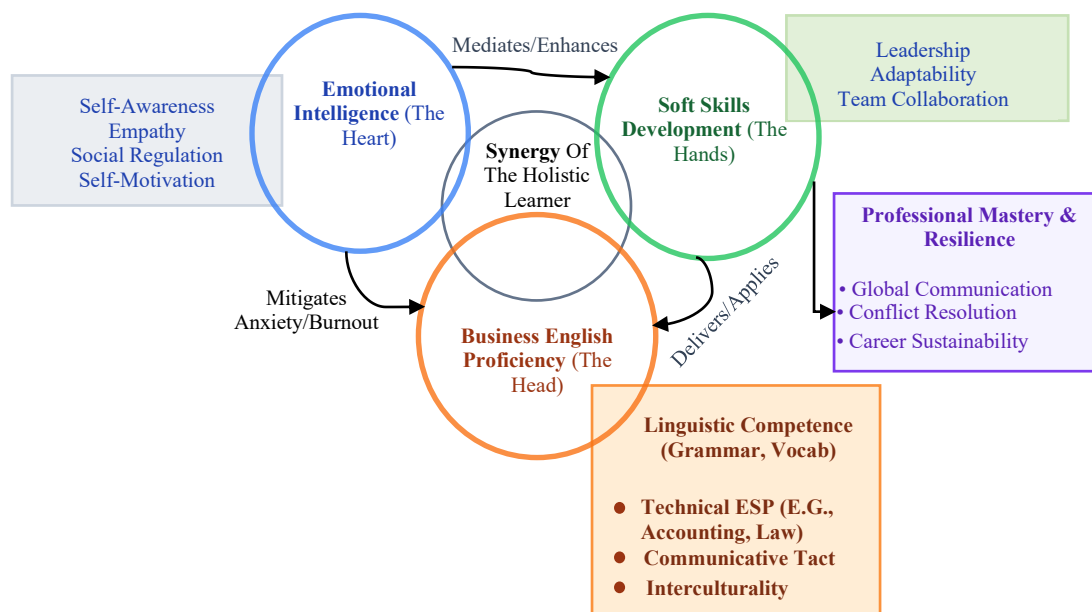


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for a Holistic Model of Business English

The way Emotional intelligence (EI), Soft Skills Development, and Linguistic Proficiency are interrelated is shown in figure 1 and are prerequisites of professional success. The model has the premise that the contemporary world of global business requires a head, heart, and hands approach in which cognitive linguistic competence as a purely cognitive phenomenon (The Head) cannot be supported by the underpinning emotional architecture. In this system, Emotional Intelligence (The Heart) gives the internal basis needed, which is concerned with self-knowledge and social control. Intense EI can act as a buffer of great importance, proactively counteracting typical obstacles to acquisition such as the fear of speaking and avoiding burnout in the learner. This inner maturity in turn mediates and amplifies the outer expression of Soft Skills (The Hands) which are the main medium through which one can practically apply language in a professional context as a leader, flexible and critical thinker. All the integrated structure is based on the Pedagogical Facilitation foundations which means that the role of the educator must change to an active mentor and facilitator of psycholinguistic competence rather than a passive transmitter of grammatical rules. The classroom is made into a laboratory that mimics professional life by employing Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) and learner centered approach. An example of this is that, rather than just memorizing the words of negotiation, the students also train the emotional control necessary to remain calm during stress and the social skills necessary to remain communicative when giving unpleasant feedback. A synergistic effect of these three pillars defines a Holistic Learner. The last channel of this framework brings about a holistic organizational outcome: Professional Mastery & Resilience. A graduate of this holistic program is not simply a good English speaker, but a competent international practitioner, capable of resolving conflicts, self-regulating and attaining career sustainability, thus narrowing the gap between theory in the classroom and the complex demands of the contemporary workplace.

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence and Soft Skills on Business Success

The move to an internationalized digital economy has put a greater emphasis on the significance of heart and hands in addition to cognitive head features in the professional world (Reiche & Neeley, 2019). Evidence obtained through modern job advertisements reveals that many employers have changed their focus and that soft skills can be more important than hard skills in assessing the sustainability of a career

in the long term (Lyu & Liu, 2021). It has been reported that high emotional intelligence predicts academic and professional performance, since it leads to the strength required to cope in high-stakes settings (Yahaya et al., 2012). Moreover, in professional domains that are more specific, like legal or notary services, the overlap point between justice and the quality of interpersonal service highlights the importance of such skills to organizational sustainability (Zendeli & Selmani-Bakiu, 2017).

Existing Research on Integrating EI and Soft Skills into Education

The symbiotic relationship between psychological well-being and foreign language performance is a recent pedagogical research area that has started to be investigated. The incorporation of positive psychology in the classroom has been found to lead to increased enjoyment in learning and at the same time decreases student burnout (Li & Zhang, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). The effect of fun in language acquisition is often mentioned as a better predictor of achievement than the existence of anxiety (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). Moreover, present-day education trends are characterized by the changing attitude towards a teaching practitioner as an information provider and facilitator of psycholinguistic and intercultural competencies (Hovhannisyan, 2022; Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2024). There is a growing interest in English as a Specific Purpose (ESP) in designing materials (e.g. to teach accounting or management) which use a contextual teaching and learning method to directly impart soft skills into the linguistic syllabus (Andrievskikh & Lapina, 2021; Handayani et al., 2024).

This bringing together is considered to be a crucial step towards leaving mere language proficiency in favor of a more productive and holistic pedagogical model (Nernere, 2024; Elmahdi & Balla, 2024). It is now not only essential to consider Emotional Intelligence (EI) and soft skills as a part of Business English, but it is also a requirement of the contemporary professional career. This in practice, implies going beyond the conventional emphasis on grammar and vocabulary to include the Head, Heart and Hands of the learner. By combining these aspects, that transform the classroom into a laboratory of professional life. An example is that rather than learning the vocabulary of negotiation, students will practice the emotional control that need to maintain their composure when under pressure and the empathy that it must have to read between the lines with a client and acquire the knowledge of what it need but do not know how to express. This method has a direct effect on the reduction of the fear of speaking and burnout since the students are provided with the psychological means of dealing with the pressure of speaking a second language. The end product is to produce a holistic learner. With the incorporation of soft skills into operational activities, such as training and accounting audit and at the same time teaching how to provide tough feedback, that make sure that not only do graduates speak a language, but these are emotionally strong and prepared to handle the challenges of the global workforce.

Integrating Emotional Intelligence Training into Business English Curriculum

Strategies for Incorporating EI into Lessons

The first step to effective integration is the reframing of language goals to embrace the emotional regulation and social awareness. Instead of being taught the functions of business (e.g. "Making a Complaint" as a script), educators ought to be taught an "ability model" where the emphasis is placed on the emotional color of the interaction (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). Plans involve employing exercises in emotional labeling where students are asked to determine the emotions behind a business email or a recorded negotiation and draft out a response. This would enable learners to transcend literal translation to the psycholinguistic competence in order to make certain that the mood of their message matches their career aspirations (Hovhannisyan, 2022).

Benefits of Teaching EI in a Business Context

Teaching EI in Business English framework is a twofold benefit: not only it enhances linguistic accuracy but also develops psychological strength. Studies have revealed that creating a sense of enjoyment in learning directly cancels the detrimental effects of performance anxiety of a foreign language (Höl & Kasimi, 2022; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). Provided that students are provided with EI tools, which it will be in a better position to deal with the radical changes in global language requirements without falling into burnout (Reiche & Neeley, 2019). Moreover, these skills are critical to overcoming the intricate workplace forces, including the conflict between family and business and professional well-being, which tends to emerge when dealing with business communication (Matei & Virgă, 2023).

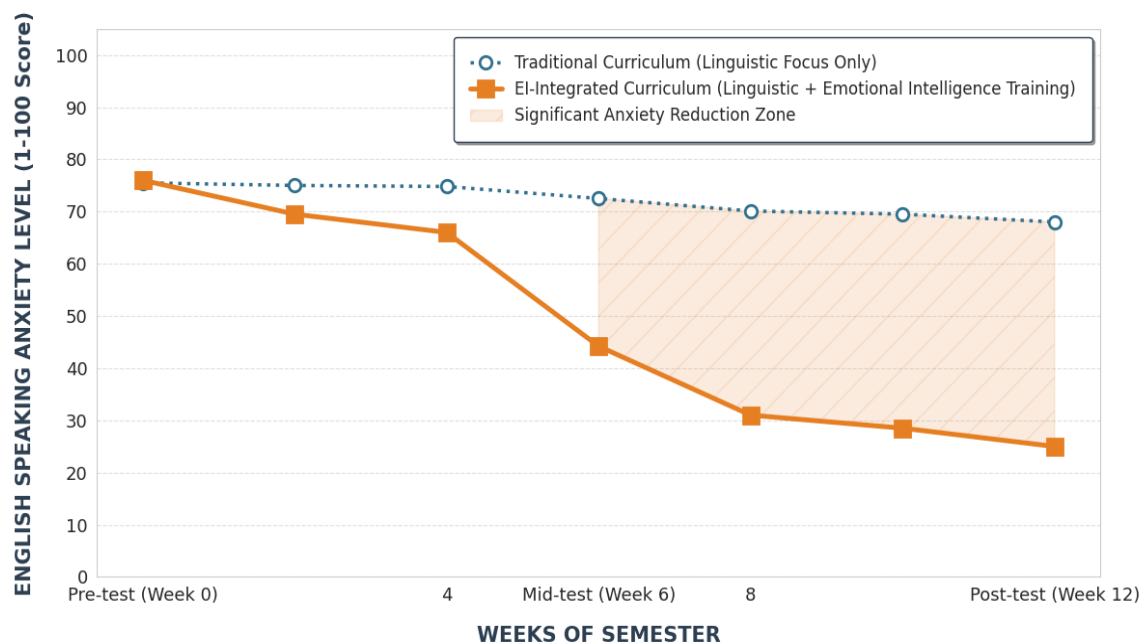


Figure 2: Impact of EI-Integrated Curriculum on English Speaking Anxiety (Comparison of Self-Reported 1-100 scores Over 12 Weeks)

Figure 2 shows the relative effect of two different pedagogical models on the levels of English-speaking anxiety, based on a 12-week academic semester, comparing a traditional and purely linguistic-based curriculum with an integrated curriculum that gradually acquires Emotional Intelligence (EI) training in addition to language training. The groups of students started the semester with virtually the same high self-reported anxiety baselines, which were registered at about 75 points on a 100-point scale. Yet, in the initial four weeks, the paths of the two curricula diverged significantly. Although the traditional group (represented by the dotted blue line) had a slight but passive reduction in anxiety during the whole semester, resulting in a final score of about 68, the group exposed to the EI-integrated curriculum had an impressive, speedy progress. Through the systematic introduction of EI stuff like emotional labeling and self-regulation exercises, the anxiety score of this group dropped significantly during the mid-term (Week 6) and then dropped significantly and steadily until the end (Final Group Score of 25). This significant decrease indicates a deep-seated “Anxiety Reduction Zone that can be directly linked to the combined training, surpassing the mere lower limit of the initial confidence interval. Eventually, this information can be a crucial empirical confirmation that the deliberate Emotional Intelligence interventions are a type of psychological architecture that reduces the affective filter and enhances the resilience of psycholinguistic competence, and reduces the possibility of student burnout, which is inherent in high-stakes professional language learning conditions.

The following table 1 reports the pre- and post-test outcomes of the main soft skill competencies, evaluated by qualitative rubrics (such as collaboration, adaptability, and problem-solving) of learners going through the integrated EI Business English course.

Table 1: Soft Skills Assessment Scores

Soft Skill Competency	Pre-Test Score (Avg. 1–10)	Post-Test Score (Avg. 1–10)	Total Improvement (%)	Key Behavioral Shift
Active Listening & Empathy	4.2	7.8	+86%	Moved from just "waiting to speak" to understanding a client's unspoken needs.
Adaptability (Register Shifting)	5.0	8.1	+62%	Gained the ability to switch tone (formal to informal) based on the business scenario.
Conflict Resolution	3.8	7.5	+97%	Started using standard "Grammar Scripts" to handle disagreements constructively.
Collaboration & Teamwork	5.5	8.3	+51%	Shifted from a purely individual focus to managing social regulation within group tasks.
Critical Thinking	4.8	7.6	+58%	-

Activities and Exercises for the BE Classroom

To turn theory into practice, several contextual exercises can be carried out to improve EI:

- **Role-Play with Emotional Constraints:** Students complete a typical business activity (e.g., a performance review) with certain emotional restrictions, e.g. a frustrated client or a hesitant worker, to learn the use of empathy and social regulation.
- **Reflective Journaling on feedback:** After a presentation, students reflect by writing briefly about how it felt during the Question-and-Answer session, assisting them to build self-awareness about their anxiety in speaking (Höl & Kasımi, 2022). **Case Study Empathy Mapping:** With materials that are ESP-oriented, such as accounting or management fields, students design empathy maps of stakeholders in a business crisis, what it think, feel, say and do to enhance their interculturality and communicative tact (Hovhannisyan, 2022; Handayani et al., 2024). Through these learner-oriented approaches, the curriculum is no longer a list of vocabulary but a dynamic arena of professional maturity (Banerjee & Roy, 2021; Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2024).

Implementing an Integrated Approach

Challenges and Barriers to Curricular Integration

The shift to a unified Business English program is more likely to be accompanied by institutional and psychological impediments. The institutional resistance is often rooted in an old-fashioned hard skills mentality that places a strong emphasis on standardized testing and grammatical accuracy over dynamic interpersonal skills (Nernere, 2024; Lyu & Liu, 2021). Moreover, teachers might be poorly prepared to impart emotional intelligence or soft skills, worried that it lacks special training in psychology or organizational behavior (Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2024; Elmahdi & Balla, 2024). On the part of the learner, inculcated English-speaking anxiety and the stress of academic success may impose a cognitive burden

that may make the dual acquisition of linguistic and emotional proficiency to be daunting, which can be overwhelming, and creates a burnout-inducing effect (Li & Zhang, 2024; Höl & Kasimi, 2022).

Strategies for Overcoming Implementation Hurdles

In order to address these challenges, institutions should use a step-by-step approach to implementation that seeks to start by training teaching professionals. The re-definition of the teacher as a facilitator of psycholinguistic competence can help them to abandon the role of a grammar authority, transforming them into facilitators of interculturality (Hovhannisyan, 2022; Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2024). Moreover, the administration is essential to redesign assessment rubrics to incorporate qualitative feedback on soft skills, thus confirming their relevance along with linguistic scores. Activities such as positive psychology in the classroom setting, in which students focus on having fun in learning instead of being afraid of making mistakes, can become a tremendous drop in the affective filter, allowing students to be more accepting of integrated training (Wang et al., 2021; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018).

Best Practices for the Integrated Business English Course

An effective holistic model is based on the concept of "Contextual Teaching and Learning" (CTL), language is not taught in a vacuum. The use of sector-specific ESP materials, such as accounting or management-specific ones, which inherently incorporate soft skills into functional language tasks, is one of the best practices (Handayani et al., 2024). Teachers' ought to focus on the so called "Learner-Centered Methods" which promote autonomy and peer to peer cooperation imitating the radical world language shifts and collaboration in teams in modern organizations (Reiche & Neeley, 2019; Banerjee & Roy, 2021). The curriculum, by regularly aligning language goals with real-world professional achievement, e.g. the capacity to cope with the phenomenon of family-work enrichment or negotiate the requirements of the standards of notary-level service delivery, has the effect of ensuring that the head, heart, and hands of the student are developed in harmony with each other (Matei & Virgă, 2023; Zendeli & Selmani-Bakiu, 2017; Reiche & Neeley, 2019).

Conclusion

The introduction of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and soft skills into Business English training is a crucial move towards the end of the grammar-intensive, lesson-driven teaching model that is more of a head, heart, and hands approach to teaching. This study shows a gap in the importance of linguistic fluency as being one component of professional success. The most grammatically right speaker might not be able to communicate effectively in a global business world due to the lack of emotional skills in dealing with the anxiety of speaking and the interpersonal skills in dealing with complicated corporate structures. The results indicate that classroom design by including positive psychology and learner-centered techniques can make the classroom a supportive space that enhances student pleasure and decreases burnout. Through an emotional and interesting learning process, the teachers enable the learners to develop the strength to withstand the stressful careers. Finally, communicative success in business is a combination of technical mastery of language and the soft skills that can enable a meaningful, cross-cultural social regulation. In the future, as curriculum developers, it is necessary to target at "Contextual Teaching and Learning" where materials will be based on real-world professional situations in which language and soft skills are applied concomitantly. Teachers' ought to be called upon to play the role of a mentor, where assessment is based on collaboration, problem-solving, and flexibility. Although there are obstacles to implementation, there is a need to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application in the work environment. With this combined model, it can guarantee that Business English graduates are not only

speakers of a language, but skilled, emotionally intelligent leaders who can handle the multicultural rigours of the new workforce.

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