



EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (ESIALL): AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR HOLISTIC LANGUAGE

¹Mrs.Vasantharao Padmaja Udaya Purnima, ²Prof.Dr. Challa Krishnaveer Abhishek and ³Dr.N. Solomon Benny

¹Senior Assistant Professor, GVP College and Research Scholar, Department of English
 Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

²Professor, IIAM, Visakhapatnam

³Head, Department of English, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Abstract

Language learning is not exclusively a cognitive or linguistic process; it is also deeply influenced by learners' emotions, motivation, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, values, sense of purpose, and ability to derive meaning from experience. The present article proposes Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence Assisted Language Learning (ESIALL) as an integrated approach to language education that combines principles of Emotional Intelligence (EI), Spiritual Intelligence (SI), positive psychology, humanistic language teaching, and communicative language pedagogy. Emotional intelligence enables learners to recognize, understand, regulate, and appropriately express emotions, whereas spiritual intelligence encourages meaning-making, critical existential reflection, transcendental awareness, values, compassion, and purposeful engagement. Drawing upon existing theoretical and empirical literature, the study examines how these two dimensions can complement conventional language teaching. A literature-based qualitative methodology was adopted to synthesize research concerning emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, second/foreign language learning, academic engagement, motivation, and learner well-being. The analysis indicates that emotional intelligence has a generally positive association with language achievement and that spiritual intelligence may contribute to academic engagement, resilience, meaning, and learner development, although direct empirical evidence concerning SI and language achievement remains limited and mixed. Based on these findings, an ESIALL framework is proposed in which language classrooms incorporate emotional awareness, empathy, reflective practices, value-oriented communication, collaborative learning, purposeful discourse, and mindful self-regulation. The article concludes that ESIALL offers a potentially valuable holistic framework for transforming language education from the mere acquisition of linguistic competence into the development of communicatively competent, emotionally balanced, reflective, compassionate, and purposeful individuals.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Language Learning, ESIALL, Second Language Acquisition, Positive Psychology, Holistic Education, Communicative Competence, Learner Well-Being

Introduction

Language is more than a system of vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and syntax. It is one of the principal means through which human beings express emotions, construct identities, establish relationships, communicate values, negotiate meaning, and interpret their experiences. Consequently, successful language learning cannot be adequately explained solely through cognitive abilities such as memory, aptitude, reasoning, or linguistic intelligence.

The development of humanistic approaches to education and, more recently, positive psychology in second language acquisition has expanded scholarly attention to affective dimensions of language learning. Anxiety, enjoyment, motivation, self-confidence, empathy, resilience, interpersonal relationships, and emotional regulation can substantially influence learners' willingness and ability to communicate. Emotional Intelligence (EI) therefore provides an important conceptual framework for understanding the affective dimension of language education.



Salovey and Mayer (1990) initially conceptualized emotional intelligence as involving the appraisal, expression, and regulation of emotions and the utilization of emotional information. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) subsequently described EI as a set of abilities involving perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Goleman (1995) popularized the concept by emphasizing competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Language classrooms represent particularly fertile environments for emotional intelligence because language learning requires interaction. Learners encounter fear of mistakes, communication anxiety, peer evaluation, unfamiliar cultural situations, ambiguity, and the challenge of expressing personal meanings in a language in which they may have limited proficiency. Emotional regulation and interpersonal sensitivity can therefore become important resources for language learning.

A second, less extensively investigated dimension is Spiritual Intelligence (SI). Spiritual intelligence need not be equated with adherence to a particular religion. Within educational and psychological discussions, it may be understood more broadly in relation to meaning, purpose, values, transcendence, interconnectedness, self-reflection, compassion, and the capacity to view experiences within a wider existential framework. King and DeCicco (2009), for example, conceptualized spiritual intelligence through dimensions including critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion.

Research has increasingly explored spiritual intelligence in relation to education and academic engagement. However, its role in second and foreign language learning remains comparatively underexplored. Ma and Wang (2022) argued that spiritual intelligence may have relevance to L2 education because of its possible relationship with learner engagement and psychological variables.

The present paper therefore introduces Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence Assisted Language Learning (ESIALL) as an integrated conceptual framework. ESIALL proposes that language education should simultaneously develop linguistic competence, emotional competence, interpersonal sensitivity, reflective awareness, meaning-making, values-based communication, and purposeful engagement.

The major objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the relevance of emotional intelligence to second and foreign language learning.
2. To investigate the potential contribution of spiritual intelligence to language education.
3. To explore the complementary relationship between EI and SI in learner development.
4. To conceptualize Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence Assisted Language Learning (ESIALL).
5. To propose practical strategies through which ESIALL can be incorporated into language classrooms.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced emotional intelligence into psychological scholarship as a form of intelligence concerned with emotional information. Their model evolved into an ability-based conceptualization involving perception, facilitation, understanding, and management of emotions (Mayer et al., 2004).

Goleman (1995) brought the concept into wider educational and professional discourse. Although different EI models vary conceptually and psychometrically, they converge around the importance of recognizing emotions, managing affective responses, understanding others, and developing effective interpersonal behaviour.



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These competencies are directly relevant to language education. Communication involves not merely the literal meanings of words but also tone, intention, empathy, interpersonal context, and emotional nuance.

Emotional Intelligence and Language Learning

Second and foreign language acquisition frequently involves emotionally demanding experiences. Learners may hesitate to speak because of fear of errors, embarrassment, negative evaluation, or low self-confidence. Conversely, positive emotional experiences can increase participation, curiosity, motivation, and willingness to communicate.

Recent research provides substantial support for the relevance of EI to language achievement. Meta-analytic evidence has demonstrated significant positive relationships between emotional intelligence and language-learning outcomes. Peng and Shuhong (2025), synthesizing 47 independent studies and 18,649 participants, reported positive relationships between EI and both subjective and objective language achievement.

Research has also connected EI with EFL academic literacy. Wang et al. (2023) argued that enhancing learners' emotional intelligence can potentially support academic literacy development because learning is influenced by emotional as well as cognitive processes.

A systematic review by Deepika and Jennifer (2025) further demonstrates the expanding body of scholarship concerning emotional intelligence in ESL/EFL learning. Such evidence suggests that EI should not be treated as peripheral to language pedagogy.

Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence is a more recent and debated construct. It attempts to describe capacities through which individuals address questions of meaning, purpose, values, transcendence, consciousness, and interconnectedness.

King and DeCicco (2009) proposed four major dimensions:

- * Critical existential thinking: the capacity to critically contemplate existence, reality, life, and related existential questions.
- * Personal meaning production: the ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from experiences.
- * Transcendental awareness: recognition of dimensions of the self and experience extending beyond immediate material concerns.
- * Conscious state expansion: the ability to enter or regulate heightened states of awareness.

Within education, these dimensions may encourage reflection, purpose, resilience, ethical awareness, and deeper engagement with learning.

Spiritual intelligence in ESIAL is therefore not intended as religious instruction. A spiritually intelligent language classroom should remain inclusive and respectful of religious, non-religious, philosophical, and cultural diversity.

Spiritual Intelligence and Language Education

Compared with emotional intelligence, empirical research connecting spiritual intelligence directly with second-language achievement remains limited.



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Ma and Wang (2022) identified SI as a potentially significant construct for academic engagement and L2 education, while simultaneously emphasizing the shortage of empirical investigation in this field.

Earlier research has produced mixed findings. Khodadady and Moosavi (2014) investigated spiritual intelligence and English language achievement among secondary-school learners. Although overall spiritual intelligence was not significantly related to English achievement, particular underlying dimensions demonstrated significant associations. Such findings caution against assuming that spiritual intelligence automatically produces higher linguistic achievement.

The educational significance of SI may instead be indirect. Learners capable of identifying purpose, reflecting deeply on experience, developing inner stability, and relating learning to broader personal meaning may demonstrate greater engagement and persistence.

Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence as Complementary Constructs

EI and SI should not be treated as interchangeable.

Emotional intelligence asks:

What am I feeling? Why am I feeling it? What is the other person feeling? How can these emotions be understood and regulated?

Spiritual intelligence asks:

What does this experience mean? What values should guide my response? What larger purpose does my learning serve? How am I connected with others?

Thus, EI contributes primarily to emotional awareness, regulation, empathy, and interpersonal functioning, whereas SI contributes to meaning, purpose, values, reflection, and transcendental awareness.

Their integration potentially produces a more holistic learner.

Research outside language education also supports examining the constructs together. Zhou et al. (2024), in a systematic review and meta-analysis, reported positive correlations between emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and student achievement. These findings provide a broader educational basis for investigating integrated EI-SI interventions.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study employs a *conceptual qualitative research design based on integrative literature review and theoretical synthesis*. Rather than reporting a new experimental intervention, the study synthesizes established and emerging scholarship to construct a pedagogical framework for Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence Assisted Language Learning.

This methodology was selected because research on emotional intelligence in language education is relatively developed, whereas direct empirical research integrating emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and language learning remains limited.

Sources of Literature

Relevant scholarly literature was considered from the following interconnected areas:



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1. Emotional intelligence theory.
2. Spiritual intelligence theory.
3. Second and foreign language acquisition.
4. Positive psychology in language education.
5. Humanistic language teaching.
6. Academic engagement and motivation.
7. Learner well-being and resilience.
8. Communicative and interpersonal competence.

Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and foundational theoretical works.

Analytical Procedure

The literature was conceptually coded according to recurring pedagogical themes, including:

- * Emotional awareness;
- * Emotional regulation;
- * Empathy;
- * Language anxiety;
- * Learner motivation;
- * Interpersonal communication;
- * Resilience;
- * Meaning-making;
- * Purpose;
- * Reflective awareness;
- * Academic engagement;
- * Values and ethical communication;
- * Learner autonomy; and
- * Holistic development.

These themes were subsequently organized into an integrated pedagogical framework labelled *ESIALL*.

Results and Discussion

Emergence of the ESIALL Framework

The synthesis suggests that language learning can be conceptualized through four interacting dimensions:

Language Learning = Cognitive-Linguistic Development + Emotional Development + Social Development + Meaning/Purpose Development

Conventional language pedagogy often concentrates primarily on the first component. ESIALL argues for purposeful integration of all four.

The ESIALL Model

The proposed framework consists of five interconnected dimensions:



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1. Emotional Awareness

Learners identify and appropriately express emotions associated with language learning.

Classroom practices may include emotional vocabulary activities, reflective journals, mood descriptions, narrative writing, and discussions of emotions experienced during communication.

2. Emotional Regulation

Learners develop strategies for managing anxiety, frustration, embarrassment, and fear of mistakes.

Teachers can normalize errors as part of learning and establish psychologically supportive environments in which experimentation with language is encouraged.

3. Empathetic Communication

Learners practise perspective-taking, active listening, respectful disagreement, and compassionate interpersonal communication.

Role plays, dialogues, interviews, collaborative tasks, storytelling, and conflict-resolution activities can simultaneously develop language and empathy.

4. Meaning and Purpose

Language activities are connected with meaningful human questions rather than being restricted to decontextualized grammar exercises.

Topics may include friendship, responsibility, peace, environmental responsibility, gratitude, resilience, identity, service, aspirations, human dignity, and the meaning learners attach to important experiences.

5. Reflective and Values-Based Communication

Learners are encouraged to examine not only whether an utterance is grammatically correct but also whether it is contextually appropriate, respectful, responsible, and meaningful.

This dimension expands communicative competence toward reflective communication.

ESIAL Classroom Cycle

A practical ESIAL lesson may follow a five-stage cycle:

Connect → Feel → Reflect → Communicate → Transform

Connect

The learner connects the lesson topic with prior knowledge or lived experience.



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Feel

Learners identify emotions associated with the topic, situation, text, or interaction.

Reflect

Students consider meaning, perspective, purpose, values, or alternative interpretations.

Communicate

Learners express their understanding through speaking, listening, reading, or writing.

Transform

Students identify what they have learned linguistically, emotionally, socially, or personally.

This process transforms language from an object to be memorized into a medium for meaningful human communication.

ESIALL and Speaking Skills

Speaking is frequently associated with anxiety because learners must produce language immediately while being observed by others.

An emotionally intelligent speaking classroom recognizes fear and embarrassment rather than interpreting silence automatically as lack of ability. Learners can be gradually moved from individual preparation to pair work, small-group interaction, and finally public communication.

Spiritual-intelligence-oriented reflection may add purpose to speaking activities. Instead of repeatedly discussing artificial textbook situations, learners can communicate about meaningful experiences, values, goals, challenges, and solutions.

ESIALL and Listening

Emotionally intelligent listening extends beyond recognizing words. Learners attend to tone, intention, emotional cues, and context.

ESIALL therefore encourages *empathetic listening*. Students may listen to a narrative and identify:

- * What happened?
- * What did the speaker feel?
- * Why might the speaker have felt this way?
- * What values or beliefs influenced the speaker?
- * How could one respond empathetically?

Such activities simultaneously develop listening comprehension and interpersonal sensitivity.

ESIALL and Reading

Reading becomes an opportunity for cognitive, emotional, and reflective engagement.



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After reading a literary or non-literary text, learners may examine the emotions of characters, moral dilemmas, multiple perspectives, motivations, conflicts, values, and underlying assumptions.

Such activities encourage learners to move from:

Comprehension → Interpretation → Empathy → Reflection.

ESIALL and Writing

Reflective writing represents one of the most practical mechanisms for integrating EI and SI.

Possible tasks include:

- * Emotional diaries;
- * Gratitude narratives;
- * Autobiographical episodes;
- * Letters of appreciation;
- * Reflective essays;
- * Stories of resilience;
- * Descriptions of meaningful experiences;
- * Personal mission statements; and
- * Essays on peace, compassion, responsibility, or human relationships.

These tasks develop linguistic expression while encouraging self-awareness and meaning-making.

Role of the Teacher

The ESIALL teacher is not merely a transmitter of linguistic information. The teacher becomes a facilitator of communication and reflection.

The teacher should create a classroom climate characterized by:

Respect + Psychological Safety + Empathy + Dialogue + Reflection + Purpose.

This does not require the teacher to become a spiritual leader or counsellor. Rather, the teacher facilitates inclusive reflection while maintaining professional and educational boundaries.

Spiritual Intelligence Without Religious Imposition

An important implication of the proposed framework concerns inclusivity.

Spiritual intelligence should not be used to impose religious doctrines on learners. Spirituality within ESIALL refers principally to universal capacities for meaning-making, self-transcendence, values, interconnectedness, reflection, compassion, and purpose.

Learners should remain free to interpret existential questions according to their religious, philosophical, cultural, humanistic, or secular perspectives.



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Emotional Safety

Similarly, emotional intelligence activities should not compel students to reveal private or traumatic experiences. Learners must be allowed to choose the level of personal disclosure appropriate to them.

Thus, ESIALL should operate according to three principles:

Voluntary Reflection – Respectful Dialogue – Inclusive Meaning-Making.

Relationship with Positive Psychology

ESIALL has significant affinities with positive psychology in second-language acquisition. Positive psychology does not simply attempt to eliminate anxiety or negative emotions; it also investigates the development of positive resources such as enjoyment, hope, resilience, engagement, and well-being.

ESIALL extends this perspective by integrating emotional competencies with questions of meaning, purpose, interconnectedness, and values.

Proposed Outcomes of ESIALL

Based on the literature synthesis, the framework hypothesizes that sustained ESIALL interventions may contribute to:

- * Reduced language anxiety;
- * Increased emotional self-awareness;
- * Improved emotional regulation;
- * Greater empathy;
- * Stronger classroom relationships;
- * Increased willingness to communicate;
- * Enhanced learner engagement;
- * Improved resilience;
- * Deeper reflective thinking;
- * Greater sense of purpose;
- * Improved communicative competence; and
- * Potentially improved language achievement.

However, these should presently be understood as *testable propositions rather than established causal outcomes of ESIALL itself*. Controlled empirical research is required before causal claims can be made.

Conclusion

Language learning is simultaneously a cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, cultural, and meaning-making activity. Pedagogical approaches that focus exclusively on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and examinations risk overlooking significant dimensions of the learner as a human being.

The present study proposes *Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence Assisted Language Learning (ESIALL)* as an integrative framework for holistic language education.



Emotional intelligence assists learners in understanding and regulating emotions, managing communication anxiety, developing empathy, and strengthening interpersonal communication. Spiritual intelligence potentially complements these capacities by encouraging reflection, meaning-making, values, interconnectedness, resilience, and purposeful engagement.

The synthesis of existing research provides stronger empirical support for the relationship between emotional intelligence and language learning than for spiritual intelligence and language achievement. Therefore, ESIALL should be viewed as an emerging conceptual framework requiring systematic empirical validation.

Future studies could employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs comparing conventional language instruction with ESIALL-based instruction. Researchers could measure language achievement alongside emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, foreign-language anxiety, willingness to communicate, engagement, resilience, and learner well-being.

ESIALL ultimately proposes a movement:

from language competence to communicative competence,
 from communicative competence to emotional competence,
 and from emotional competence to meaningful and responsible communication.

The ultimate objective of language education should not merely be to produce learners who can speak another language, but individuals who can use language intelligently, empathetically, reflectively, and purposefully.

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