



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY IN THE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT. Current society demands people with different attitudes and competences who are able to thrive in the global world. Since its appearance in the 1990s, the relevance of the concept of Emotional Intelligence has only grown within the education system, as it is seen by recent research as an essential competence that needs to be developed to achieve the holistic training of students. This study was conducted in a high school of Spain with the participation of the English department and 49 English learners who answered some questionnaires to examine how teachers and students from a EFL classroom context perceive issues related with Emotional Intelligence such as the perception and expression of emotion, emotional facilitation of thinking, understanding of emotion and regulation of emotion. Besides, it spotlights their potential interest in working with some projects proposed following the Project Based Learning (PBL) approach. Results showed a growing awareness of own and other's emotions among the participants and their interest in developing the projects to work on Emotional Intelligence in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: EFL, Emotional Intelligence, PBL, emotions, TEFL.

ENCUESTA SOBRE LA INTELIGENCIA EMOCIONAL EN LA CLASE DE INGLÉS: PROFESORADO Y ALUMNADO

RESUMEN. La sociedad actual necesita personas con aptitudes y competencias que les permitan prosperar en el mundo global. Desde su aparición en los 90, la relevancia del concepto Inteligencia Emocional solo ha crecido en el campo de la educación y es considerada una competencia fundamental que debe ser desarrollada para lograr una formación integral de los estudiantes, tal y como sostienen recientes investigaciones. Esta investigación se realizó en un instituto de España con la participación del departamento de inglés y 49 estudiantes que contestaron cuestionarios diseñados para examinar cómo los profesores y estudiantes de un aula de inglés perciben temas relacionados con la Inteligencia Emocional tales como la percepción y la expresión de la emoción, la facilitación emocional del pensamiento, la comprensión y regulación de la emoción. Además, destaca su interés potencial en proyectos propuestos siguiendo el enfoque de aprendizaje basado en proyectos. Los resultados demostraron la creciente conciencia de las emociones propias y ajenas entre los participantes y su interés en el trabajo de la Inteligencia Emocional a través de proyectos en la clase de inglés.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera, inteligencia emocional, aprendizaje basado en proyectos, emociones, enseñanza aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera.

Received version 09 November 2021

Revised version accepted 19 December 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's society demands people with global competences and socio-emotional skills and attitudes to thrive in the interconnected world. Hence, the current trend in the Spanish curriculum is to include the working on students' capacities, respect different learning paths, to explore national and international matters, and engage in intra and interpersonal relationships. The role of teachers becomes then fundamental in the pursuit of providing the right and necessary tools to enable learners to make great improvements, not only in the academic field, but also in the personal one.

The concept of "Emotional Intelligence" (henceforth, EI) started to be investigated by authors such as Salovey and Mayer with their article *Emotional Intelligence* (1990) and was promoted later by Goleman (1995). The Spanish education laws have been somehow addressing EI, first the introduction of cross curricular elements with the Organic Law 1/1990, from the 3rd of October in 1990, and later with the introduction of key competences in 2006, with the Organic Law of Education 2/2006 (known as LOE) from the 3rd of May (Valle 2014: 2). In spite of this, EI remains to be a weak spot in Spain's educational system (Broc 2019: 77), and teachers perceive a lack of materials and training (Domínguez *et al.* 2020: 23) to be able to deal with it.

The objective of this research is focused on deducing, from a questionnaire, how teachers and students from a EFL classroom context perceive issues related with EI such as the perception of emotion, emotional facilitation of thinking, understanding of emotion and regulation of emotion. Besides, it spotlights the interest in working with some proposed projects. These projects follow the Project Based Learning (PBL) approach designed for the development of EI in the EFL classroom. The study was conducted with teachers and learners of EFL from a secondary school in Spain.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The concern about EI emerged in 1990 when Salovey and Mayer, who became distinguished figures of this field, published an article that introduced the first formal definition of the term: “the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (189). The popularization of the concept would not arrive until the publication of Goleman’s book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), which broadened its scope when it turned into a best seller and was mentioned in Time magazine. In this work, Goleman dealt with how work life and social relations could be improved through the development of EI. A couple of years later, the author reinforced his point of view regarding the fact that emotions and personality traits hinder or enhance our cognitive process and thus, they can determine the achievements reached (Goleman 1997).

Contributions to the field of EI kept being made in the following years, with different models of EI being developed. Bar-On defined emotional-social intelligence as a “cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them and cope with daily demands” (2007: 27). Furthermore, Bar-on and Parker explained how the notion was identified on four central components: the perception of appraisal and expression of emotions; emotional facilitation of thinking; understanding and analysing emotions and employing emotional knowledge; and reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (2000: 45).

All the authors herein considered some personality traits as part of their EI concept, but they also regarded EI as an ability that can be developed throughout life as all the experiences lived shape personality and influence human actions, choices, and interactions. In consequence, achieving a balance between cognition and emotions as Salovey and Mayer indicated, may help to tackle problems, or face any possible situation.

EI can be measured with the application of an Emotional Quotient (EQ) just as intelligence used to be measured with the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Moreover, as it will be later explained, recent research supports the correlation between having a

high EQ and an academic good result and affirms that the connection is even higher than the one between IQ and good academic performance.

2.1.1. *EI in Education*

Improving competences in the EI field becomes especially essential in the educational level when an achievement of the holistic development of the students is intended. Bar-On and Parker (2000) state some reasons to back this idea up, among which confidence, self-management, motivation, or teamwork are included as they allow the integral development of students. In the educational environment, children create their own academic self-concept that can lead to dangerous emotional conflicts if students do not feel successful or competent enough. Gallego and Gallego state the importance of addressing emotional development at school in order not to provoke negative effects on the individuals (2004: 206). The acquisition of self-esteem is strongly intertwined with the development of interpersonal relations. That is the reason why it is crucial to foster activities that imply cooperation and task distribution, as well as the promotion of a suitable environment for interaction and debate. This way students become more open-minded and respect different standpoints (Bar-On and Parker 2000).

Concerning teachers, they also have a host of knowledge and EI. Thus, it is essential that they are emotionally competent in order to get their students to achieve emotional competences (Aldrup *et al.* 2020: 1); therefore, they must empathize with them and make contributions to their emotional stability. Different tasks such as the detection of students' interests and motivations, rationalisation of the amount of new information, and diversification of tasks and types of learnings can ease the realisation of this. A good planification and deep auto-analysis for detecting own deficiencies can also be a highly valued aid (Gallego and Gallego 2004).

Regarding the legal implementation of EI in the education system, education has been a field largely conditioned by a traditional perspective that set the pace for a curriculum focused on the development of hard skills rather than on the individual as a whole. Nonetheless, the social demands of the 1990s gave room to a new standpoint in the education laws. In Spain, if attention to the different laws that governed education over the last decades is paid, the Organic Law 1/1990, from the 3rd of October, introduced the concept of cross-curricular elements in an explicit way in an attempt to achieve the personal and moral development of students; additionally, they are seen as common to all the areas. Later on, the Organic Law 2/2006, from the 3rd of May (known as LOE) introduced for the first time the basic competences in the curriculum, with an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular character, keeping the idea of an education based on values. It is the first law that mentions the intention to achieve a maximum development of individual, social, intellectual, cultural, and emotional abilities. Moreover, in the Royal Decree 1631/2006 that establishes the minimum teaching requirements for ESO, it is included a reference to the pursue of an acquisition of the own abilities, among which the emotional one is included. The passing of the Organic Law 8/2013, from the 9th of

December (known as LOMCE), went beyond the previous one and introduced on the curriculum cross-curricular competences such as critical thinking, diversity management, creativity, enthusiasm, or perseverance. It also mentioned the inclusion of civic and constitutional education in all subjects, so that social and civic competences are acquired in the daily dynamics of the teaching and learning process. Finally, the current bill, Organic Law 3/2020, from the 29th of December (known as LOMLOE) pursues an education that achieves the integral development of students and makes direct reference to the working on emotional education and an education in values.

2.1.2. EI and TEFL

The methods-era of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, TEFL) seems to be finally over and today there are many authors who affirm that only a combination of methods, activities and strategies can really bring about good results in the class, in contrast to using just one specific method (Pourbahram and Hajizadeh 2018: 44). The integration of EI in TEFL gained ground due to its integration in the humanistic approach, under the influence of humanistic psychology, which arouse widespread interest in the field of foreign languages. The humanistic approach tries to create the perfect environment for learners, so they feel confident and motivated to develop both the intellectual and the emotional facets. Within this approach, methods like the Natural Approach and Suggestopedia were brought about.

The “Natural Approach”, which was developed by Krashen and Terrell in 1983, is a theory that is based on the idea of encouraging communication rather than grammatical accuracy. The main point lies in orienting the process of learning to understand the message as an essential step to obtain production. In addition, lessons are thought to use optimal language adapted to them so that acquirers build up competence through comprehending input. The key for its success remains on the fact that learning takes place in a context where students have a low affective filter, which means that they feel free and comfortable to start using their input and acquiring progressively more (Krashen and Terrell 1998: 58). Krashen’s explanation of low affective filter comes to say that if a person feels secure of him/herself, motivated or comfortable in his or her learning environment, that person will acquire more input than a person who is not under those circumstances (Krashen and Terrell 1998: 38).

Likewise, the objective of achieving a low affective filter in order to acquire a foreign language is not only an issue of concern just in the method described above, but also in other methods such as Suggestopedia. In a subtle way, the idea developed by Krashen also has its presence. Suggestopedia was developed in 1970s by the Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator Lozanov and states its objective as orienting students towards the achievement of communication rather than to vocabulary memorization (1978: 109). It can be presented as a theory that intends to describe the manipulation over attentiveness in order to optimize learning and recall, according to Richards and Rogers (1986: 143). This means, the unconscious

acquisition of competences by learners thanks to a good use of suggestion by the teacher. There exist some ways exposed by Cevallos and Orbea through which suggestion can be made. Among them, it can be detected factors, such as motivation, attitudes, or the creation of interest (2020: 250). At this point, it is when the role of EI comes into play. In this way, teachers play an essential role when trying to avoid a state of tension and anxiety in class in order to achieve the creative and imaginative thinking that they are looking for, and that is reached thanks to the creation of a positive atmosphere in class (Cevallos and Orbea 2020: 252).

Some authors like Alrefaai and Shah also point out the influence of EI in other EFL methods, for instance, the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, and Total Physical Response. As for the first one, they indicate that it is grounded on the basis that the teacher must find ways to help students to overcome negative feelings. In the Community Language Learning students are encouraged to express how they feel, while in the Total Physical Response stress is reduced as students are not required to speak until they are ready for it (2020: 113).

On the other hand, within the communicative approach, PBL leads to the development of not only content skills, but also of the 21st century skills. These are highlighted by Kavlu as “teamwork, problem solving, research gathering, time management, information synthesizing, and utilizing high tech tools” that do also include “personal and social responsibility, planning, critical thinking, reasoning, and creativity or strong communication skills” (2017: 70). PBL is defined as “a systematic teaching method which engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks” (Markham *et al.* in Couto 2011: 275).

In some way, all the methods mentioned share the aim of acquiring a high-quality environment that allows to create healthy relations among students and teachers by the improvement of skills that are not directly tied to cognitive processes.

2.1.3. *State of the art*

The growing awareness of the relevance EI has on the teaching-learning process of EFL, and its relationship with academic success has galvanized researchers to conduct studies on the subject. Recent research includes the one carried out by Abdolrezapour (2018), which studied the relationship between EI and complexity, accuracy, and fluency in EFL learners’ oral performance with 102 high-school EFL learners. This research concluded that those students with a higher EI were able to produce more complex language ($r = 0.87$, $p = 0.00$). Similarly, Esmaeeli *et al.* (2018) decided to study the relationship between EI and speaking skills of advanced EFL undergraduate learners and commented their results in an article published in the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*. They analyzed the data obtained from an EQ Bar-on questionnaire and an IELTS speaking test of 96

EFL learners, and concluded that “the more emotionally intelligent the learner, the more proficient s/he is in speaking ability” (2018: 27).

Similar studies focusing on listening have also been conducted. Ebrahimi *et al.* (2018) examined the influence of EI enhancement on the development of EFL learners’ listening skill. The research consisted of a control group of 13 intermediate learners and an experimental group of 30 learners, this last group was instructed in EI during the whole academic year. The study included a Bar-On EI test and an IELTS listening test and found out that in the experimental group both the EI and the listening skill increased significantly after the academic course, whereas no significant differences were shown by the control group (EI $t = -2.68$, $p < 0.05$; listening $t = -5.08$, $p < 0.05$) (2018: 74).

With regard to the connection between writing and EI, Khalil (2019) developed a study with 50 high-school students divided into an experimental and control group during one academic term. In the experimental group, a brain-based learning and an EI programme were implemented; the analysis and comparison of the pre and post designed critical writing test, obtained by both groups, suggested that the instruction on EI had great results on the writing ability of the learners ($t = 8.284$, $p < 0.00$). The results are in line with those obtained by another study about the correlation of EI and the writing skill (KaiQi *et al.* 2012).

EI in teachers of EFL has also been the object of study of some research. Shabani and Ghodrati investigated the differences among 90 EFL teachers and observed that teachers with a high EI focused on fluency and applied story-telling activities, while those with a lower EI used information-gap activities (2018: 71-72). The study “EFL Teacher’s Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Support, and their Classroom Leadership: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach”, with 321 EFL teachers, found correlations among the three variables and concluded that “being aware of emotional skills and leadership behaviors, teachers and student teachers could better develop effective leadership skills in the class” (Khani and Ghasemi 2019:1). Moreover, large-scale empirical study conducted by Gkonou and Mercer with English language teachers worldwide examine teachers’ uptakes and practices in connection with EI. They found out that teachers scored highly on socio emotional competencies and “expressed a concern with creating and maintaining quality interpersonal relationships” (2017: 42).

The association of EI with academic success has been explored and proved by different studies. The authors Al-Quadri and Zhao (2021) found a correlation between the two variables with 303 high-school students ($p = 0.01$). Saud (2019) demonstrated the effect of EI on success in foreign language ($p = 0.003$) with 80 undergraduates. In addition, Costa and Faria (2020)’s research with 523 high-schoolers also proved correlation between high EI and the students’ academic achievement ($p < 0.05$).

As far as the use of PBL to develop EI is concerned, to our awareness, only studies on the use of Problem Based Learning (not Project Based Learning) were found and they were not conducted in the EFL classroom.

To finish with recent research, the effect of COVID-19 (context under which this study was conducted) on Language Learning in connection with EI has also been the object of study on recent research. Resnik *et al.* explore “if foreign language (LX) grit, learners’ passion and perseverance for LX learning, is a predictor of learners’ foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and their foreign language anxiety (FLCA) in LX classes taught remotely due to COVID-19” (2021: 99). They carried out a regression analysis and concluded that foreign language grit predicts students’ enjoyment in such learning environments and that trait emotional intelligence was partially responsible for that connection (2021: 112).

Despite the prolific number of research and literature being produced on the connection of EI and EFL learning, there is (to our awareness) no studies that would relate the possible interest of students’ in PBL projects that may help them develop EI. The current study proposed both students and teachers five different projects and measure the level of interest those could have in them. In addition, due to its recentness, there is still not much research on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in the EI of students in the EFL classroom. It is precisely in here where this small study wants to make some contribution. Both students and teachers were asked whether the health crisis has had an impact on their wish to understand emotions better, together with other questions to check their perceptions on the expression, recognition or understanding of emotions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This research was carried out via a questionnaire answered by the English teachers and students in a high school located in a rural area of Galicia (Spain) during the academic course 2021/22 in which face-to-face learning had been resumed but safe measures related to COVID-19 were still in place. Two different groups were created so as to attend to their specific casuistry. Group A was made of 4 teachers (2 female and 2 male) that constitute the whole school’s English teaching body. On the other hand, group B consisted of 49 students (26 female and 23 male) who were in their second year of high school, and whose ages ranged from 13 to 14 years old. The study was carried out in three out of the four groups of 2º ESO (which is equivalent to the 8th grade) due to time limitations. From these three groups, one of them had 20 students, another one 21 and the last one 12. That being said, some students missed the questionnaire due to COVID-19 reasons (n=49).

3.2. INSTRUMENT

Two different and anonymous questionnaires were created, one for each of the sample groups, and the questions were designed grouped in five sections (see appendix 1). These sections were based on the 4-branch model exposed by Salovey

and Mayer (1997: 10) that they include in their definition of EI. The sections are the following ones:

- Perception or expression of emotion
- Emotional facilitation of thinking
- Understanding of emotion
- Emotional regulation for intellectual and emotional growth

Besides the model of Salovey and Mayer, some questions were adapted from a questionnaire created by Gallego and Gallego (2004: 221) that goes in line with the 4-branch model aforementioned. Following the model, the questions were designed in an attempt to clear the objectives out. For this reason, based on the contributions of Salovey and Mayer (1997) and Gallego and Gallego (2004), the questionnaire was elaborated paying attention to a series of factors that provide accuracy and systematicity. The questionnaires included both open and closed questions. The closed ones included yes/no questions, multiple choice, and others based on the Likert technique which includes a scale ranging from one to five, being one the lowest and five the highest. In the perception or expression of emotion, a picture taken from Ekman (2003: n.p., disgust chapter) was used to check whether participants were able to perceive facial expression correctly.

The last part of the questionnaire was designed specifically for this research. In this fifth section, five possible projects designed to deal with EI following a PBL methodology for EFL were proposed, so that the interest and feasibility of them were to be measured by the students and teachers by giving them a score from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest).

The whole questionnaire was validated by three experts on the matter that correct it to make it more effective. Due to the small-scale of the study, no further reliability tests on the questionnaire were made.

PROJECTS

The projects were made up by the researchers based on some of the content included in the textbooks the students were using. Different projects were thought that could be implemented in the class after each of the units and bearing in mind that some of the activities in the unit would help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to do the projects (unit about food: project 1; unit about celebrities: project 2; unit about sport: project 3; unit about environment and social issues: projects 4 and 5). Furthermore, researchers had the opportunity to observe lessons during a month so they were aware of how two units had been developed. It was obviously intended that those projects were somehow related to raising the EI of students and that they were appealing to students. Hence, the use of new

technologies: design and creation of an online campaign, creation of a video, creation of a blog or an online magazine, etc. The projects were explained to the students and the teachers in person before they did the questionnaire.

1. A project about food where students learn about real food, ultra-processed meals and how mood can be affected by nutrition habits with the objective of creating a campaign to raise awareness on the issue.
2. A project about art in relation with music with a Project devoted to the creation of a campaign to give visibility to the essential role of artists during the lockdown and their current struggle.
3. A project about female sport with the aim of the creation of an online magazine to publish results of female competitions.
4. A collaboration with local NGOs to get students to know their work with the creation of a video to promote them.
5. A project which deals with means of transport and environment with the creation of a blog that publish a survey among teachers, students and parents of the most common commuting ways and their long-term effects on environment.

3.3. PROCEDURE

The purposes of the investigation together with a brief overview of what EI means were explained to all the participants in situ, guarantying them complete anonymity. Since students were minors, parents had to sign consent. Each of the four sections included questions referred to general issues about EI, and about the EFL context in particular. The questionnaires were designed with an online format using the google forms and they were distributed through a link. They could be completed in less than 20 minutes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results will be presented divided into the four variables presented for each of the groups. There will also be an additional division for the analysis regarding the projects presented.

4.1. FIRST VARIABLE: PERCEPTION OF EXPRESSION AND EMOTION

This first variable, which is related to the identification of emotions, music or stories, may suggest whether someone is able to reflect on his or her own emotions and worry about them as well as the perception of other people's feelings.

Group A

The data gathered from Group A (teachers) showed a general average perception of their own and others' emotions and an absolute agreement (100%) when they were asked if they felt able to recognise the reasons why they acted or responded sharply in specific circumstances in class. In this way, they would be able to achieve a good sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Kang 2020). In case the answer were negative, it could make them feel insecure about their validity for the profession, causing them emotional exhaustion. That could lead to a desire of resign from their jobs (Kang 2020: 11). In relation to this, the results to a question concerning whether the current health situation conditioned by COVID-19 had triggered their desire to give a name to certain emotions experienced, showed that this was not a determining factor for 50% of the surveyed.

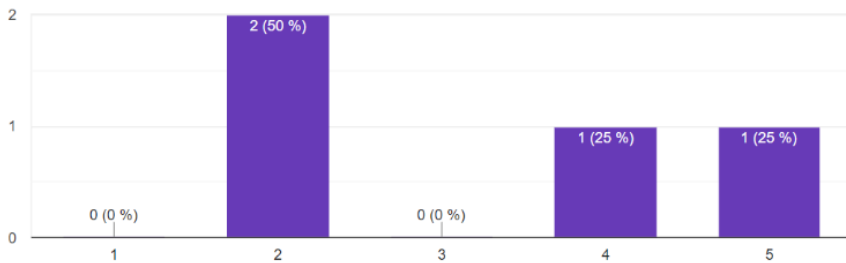


Figure 1. Answers to question 3 of the questionnaire from Group A, block 1.

Shifting towards a more student-centred perspective, the results from the questionnaire displayed an upwards trend regarding the detection of students' emotions, as it can be seen in the following chart (figure 2). This situation indicates that teachers do perceive their students' emotions, which is considered key for the development of an effective way of teaching. This is backed up by research such as the study by Valente *et al.* (2020: 18) or the one conducted by Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2009: 430) that related a high EQ of teacher (that includes the perception of emotions) with their success in teaching.

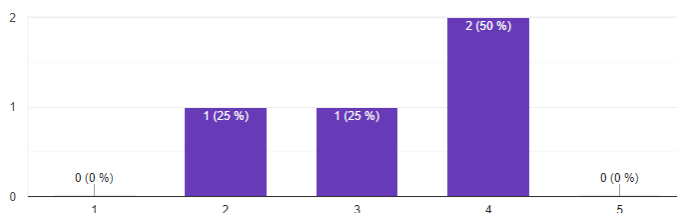


Figure 2. Answers to question 5 of the questionnaire from Group A, block 1.

Group B

In regard to the data gathered from Group B (students), more than half of the participants showed an increasing trend in relation to their intrapersonal relations (figure 3). The fact that they share their way of feeling with others also denotes their ability to perceive their own emotions. Moreover, researchers Bucich and MacCann indicate that “willingness to share emotions is related to a greater number of more intimate relationships” (2018: 25). The results of their study suggest that “people with higher ability EI are more aware of [the] social benefits [of sharing emotions with others]” (2018: 25). Nonetheless, it must be taken into account that in the current study there is still almost a 40% of students (cumulative percentage) who state they ‘never’ or ‘hardly ever’ speak about their feelings and emotions.

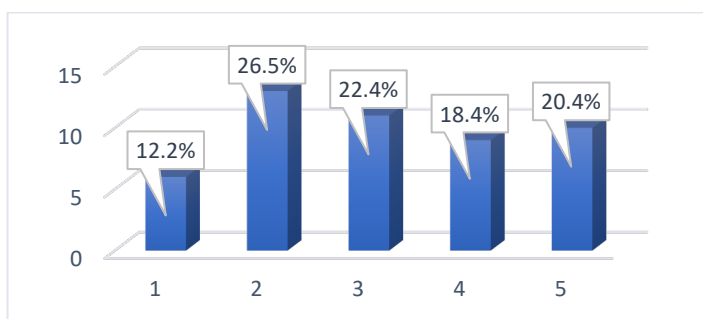


Figure 3. Answers to question 1 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 1.

Results from figure 4 display a great percentage of participants who felt they get to recognise other people’s feelings and states of mind. This probably leads to better communication as Wang’s research points out when stating that “EI is the key competency for mutual understanding, communication, and cooperation” (2019: 9).

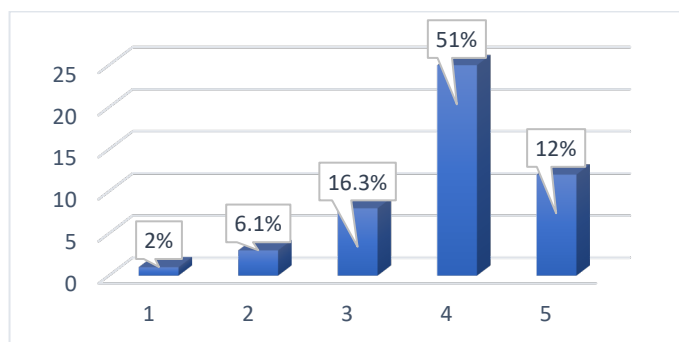


Figure 4. Answers to question 2 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 1

Teachers and students were asked to choose the emotion that matched the best with a girl's face. The image was taken from a test designed by Ekman (2003: 271-285) and it is part of a study to evaluate people's ability to read facial expressions. The right answer of the emotion reflected by the image is 'disgust' and just 25% of the teachers chose that, whilst 34.7% of students were right. A noticeable fact was that two thirds of the teachers thought of the girl to reflect 'fear' whereas just 2% of the students selected that option. The greatest majority of the youngsters did select the 'ire' one.

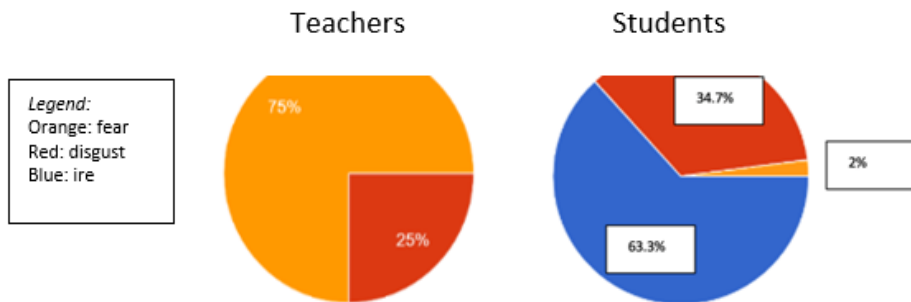


Figure 5. Answers to question 6 and 3 of the questionnaire from Group A and B respectively, block 1.

Finally, as it can be seen on figure 6, students showed a low-average trend regarding their desire to give name and understand their emotions after the current health situation conditioned by COVID-19. As it has been mentioned, no research has been found related to whether EFL learners have showed more interest in their understanding of emotions as a result from the pandemic.

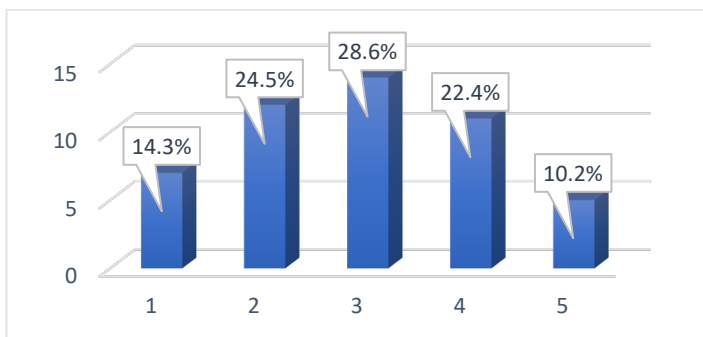


Figure 6. Answers to question 5 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 1.

4.2. SECOND VARIABLE: EMOTIONAL FACILITATION OF THINKING

The second variable involved according to Mayer *et al.* “the ability to access and use emotions to improve thoughts.” (2001: 134). Therefore, the results showed the control that people make of the emotions they experience. The aim was to understand the way they manage impulses, as well as their way of acting with other people impulses (Gallego and Gallego 2004: 226-227).

Group A

The results from this group revealed a high understanding and ability to deal with the situations provoked by others’ emotions, as well as to control their own impulses. 25% of the participants stated that they were able to manage their impulses when the behaviour of the students was not as expected, and the other two thirds agreed that they frequently felt able to control their impulses in those situations. Those results are in line with other research such as the one by Saleem *et al.* whose study showed that the participant teachers stated being able to self-control their emotions. Nevertheless, the participants of the aforementioned study recognized speaking loudly as a strategy to show some anger (2019: 187-189), while participants of our study claimed to be able to keep calm (question 1, block 2). In addition, there was a general agreement when they were asked if they knew how to raise students’ self-esteem when detecting some problems related to the subject. When the focus is set on their students’ reactions, there was a comprehensive accord (100%) regarding the importance they gave to the emotions and reactions that students had for the correct development of the lessons and for the well-being of the class as a whole. Furthermore, a high percentage of the participants stated they intervene during the lesson when they perceive negative emotions on their students and just 25% of them ignore the situation for not considering it a matter of concern for themselves (Figure 7).

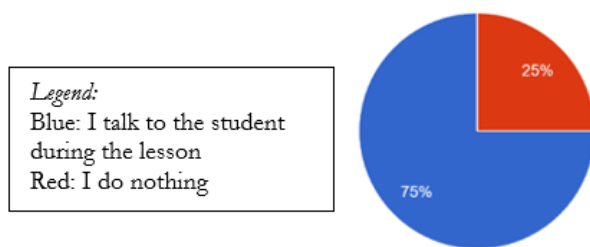


Figure 7. Answers to question 5 of the questionnaire from Group A, block 2.

As it has been aforementioned, having a high EQ is connected to leadership traits (Khani and Ghasemi 2019). Hence, the impulse to intervene as soon as they perceive a negative emotion of a student could be an indicator of a good EQ, although no absolute statement could be made based solely on that.

Group B

The results obtained from Group B revealed a pretty high trend (53.1%) on the control of the situations that their emotions can provoke, since more than half of the participants stated that they have the ability to control themselves when facing nerves (figure 8). Nevertheless, there is still a high percentage (46.9%) of those who do not, as seen in figure 8. When they were asked about their way of acting if they discover that someone they know spoke negatively about them, a great majority agreed they usually face the situation with dialogue (figure 9).

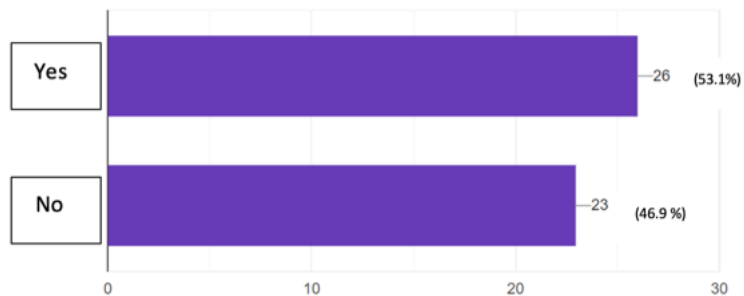


Figure 8. Answers to question 6 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 2.

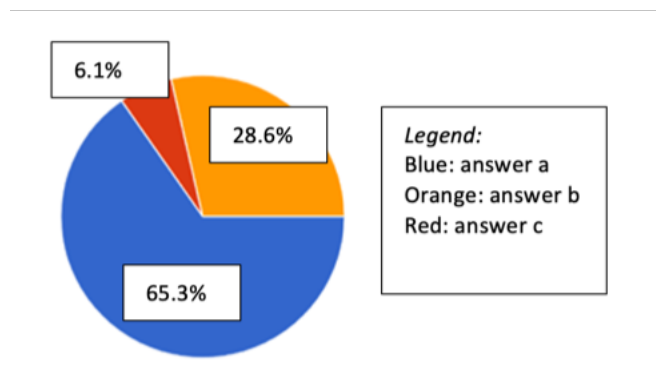


Figure 9. Answers to question 3 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 2.

In what concerns their way of acting with others' emotions, 91.8% of the participants revealed that they would help and calm a classmate when he or she is very nervous before an exam (question 2, block 2). Moreover, 30.6% would always and 38.8% would almost always congratulate somebody else when they had dealt correctly with a problem (question 1, block 1). Goleman (1995) mentioned recognizing others' emotions and establishing relationships as two of the fundamental traits EI consists of.

4.3. THIRD VARIABLE: UNDERSTANDING OF EMOTIONS

The third variable is referred to the knowledge we have to understand emotions and to reason about them (Mayer *et al.* 2001: 134), which provides information about the sense of communication and relation with others and the ability to comprehend different points of view (Gallego and Gallego 2004: 228).

Group A

In the teachers' group, the results obtained show flexibility (75%) when it comes to comprehend students' expression of stress and their demands regarding deadlines (question 1, block 3). On the other hand, the previous trend is also repeated when they were asked if they take advantage of the topics of discussion in class in order to reflect about their feelings with students, with 75% of surveyed answering positively (question 2, block 3). This situation can lead to a good and communicative atmosphere that helps to create free-flowing relations among teachers and students. In addition, the fact that most of the participants try to listen and implement any suggestion that students make, as it can be seen below, helps to create those types of relations previously mentioned, since students feel their opinion matters.

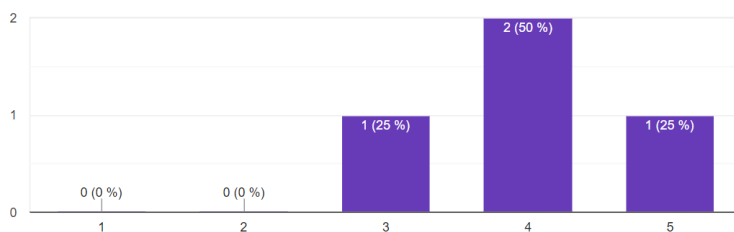


Figure 10. Answers to question 5 of the questionnaire from Group A, block 3.

Nonetheless, to create these ideal scenarios and achieve the objectives that can help to create those environments, a series of factors must be addressed. In connection with this, the vast majority (75%) of the participants of Group A felt the scarcity of time to address this type of issues in their classes even if they would like to (question 3, block 3). Furthermore, 20% of the participants stated that they do not know how to tackle emotional content in relation with that of the curriculum and just 25% does state having the knowledge to do so (figure 11). The remaining 50% reveals that they are not sure whether they are able to deal with it. Dubovyk *et al.* support the inclusion of training on EI in the academic training of pre-service teachers since teachers need “to achieve the(ir) harmonious inclusion [of EI contents] in the educational process” (2020: 433).

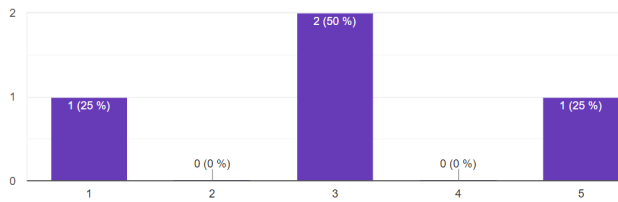


Figure 11. Answers to question 4 of the questionnaire from Group A, block 3.

Group B

The results gathered from Group B display students' perception of their own communication abilities. In this regard, the information provided by the following graphic allows to back the data obtained in figure 3 regarding the first variable of Group B. In both, the greatest percentage of the participants answered between 1 and 3. This situation reflects that most of them do not feel confident enough to achieve free-flowing relations in which they can talk openly about emotions. As stated above, it is important that students feel able to share emotions with others to develop a greater number of relationships, which is usually connected with a higher EQ (Bucich and MacCann 2018).

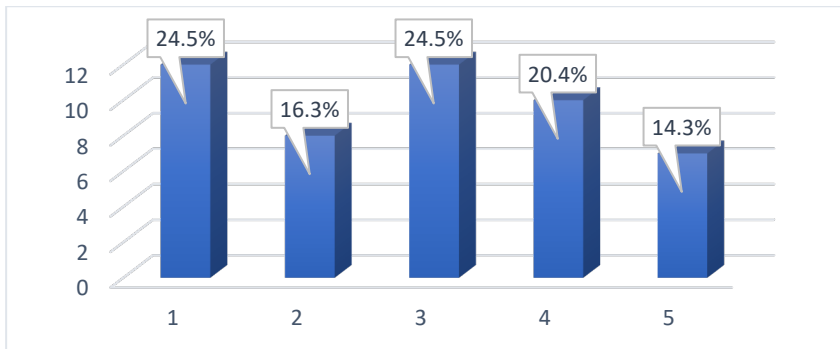


Figure 12. Answers to question 2 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 3.

In relation to this, 61.2% of the participants did declare having the ability to talk to others when their way of acting is affecting them (question 5, block 3). Likewise, as seen below (figure 13), the percentages did also reveal a high number of participants who feel able to understand different points of view in a discussion.

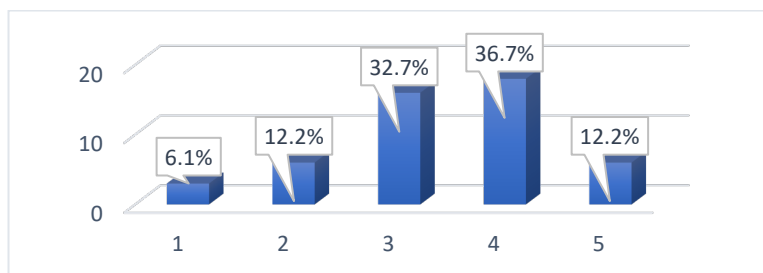


Figure 13. Answers to question 3 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 3.

Another factor that can affect the free-flowing relations in class is the attention to paying compliments to others. As it can be seen in the figure 14, the great majority of the participants stated that they do never or very rarely congratulate their teachers when they are happy about their way of teaching.

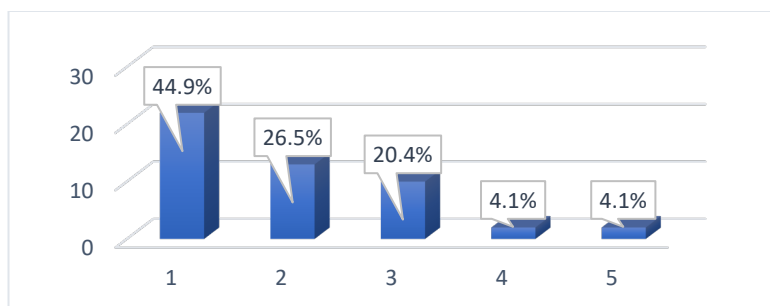


Figure 14. Answers to question 4 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 3.

Finally, when the participants were asked if they feel fear or embarrassment when speaking in English in the EFL class, almost half of the participants declared not feeling shy neither embarrassed when talking in this environment, while 8.16% did sometimes. In contrast, 40.81% stated feeling embarrassed. Concerning this, research (Esmaeeli *et al.* 2018; Abdolrezapur 2018) suggests the work on EI as a way to improve fluency in EFL.

4.4. FOURTH VARIABLE: EMOTIONAL REGULATION FOR INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

The fourth variable is summarised as the regulation of emotions regarding the information they provide and their control (Mayer *et al.* 2001: 134). The results regarding this branch provided information about the predisposition to solve any possible conflict and to look for possible solutions. In addition to the petition of others' help (Gallego and Gallego 2004: 228-229).

Group A

From the data obtained with Group A, it is remarkable the complete agreement (100%) regarding their attitude towards problem solving among their students, which revealed their willingness to solve problems and find the right solutions for them (question 4, block 4). Moreover, answer to questions two, three and five showed a general determination among the participants to create an environment in the English class where students learn how to face problems and detect the best way to solve them. Research has shown that “work attitudes and emotional intelligence are interrelated” and that “effectively nurtured emotional intelligence provides a good indicator of teacher's behavior” (Ahad *et al.* 2021: 20) so results from block 4 indicated participant teachers had a good level of EQ.

Group B

From Group B, the results from figure 15 showed an increasing trend where the vast majority of the participants revealed having interest in problem solving, not only of their own but also of the others. In addition, the aforementioned predisposition can be also seen in the results from Figure 15. The data revealed that most of the participants did have interest in trying to solve conflicts in an appropriate way (for instance, through dialogue), whereas 22.5% (cumulative percentage) of the participants showed a very negative attitude in trying to solve possible arising problems and would probably try to avoid being involved in the process of solving them.

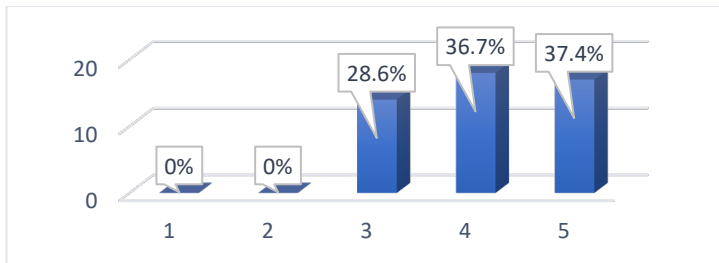


Figure 15 Answers to question 1 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 4.

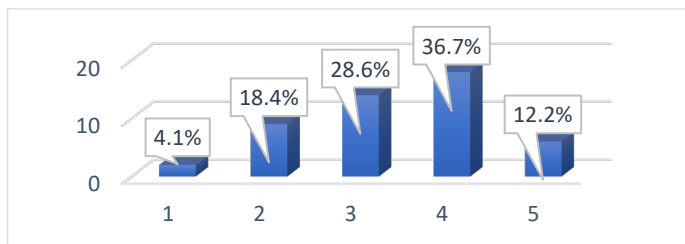


Figure 16. Answers to question 3 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 4.

Furthermore, regarding their interest in giving some thought about the possible outcomes that a conflict can provoke, almost 40% participants showed an intention to reflect on the situation 'always' or 'often'. However, 40.8% expressed they just did it 'sometimes'.

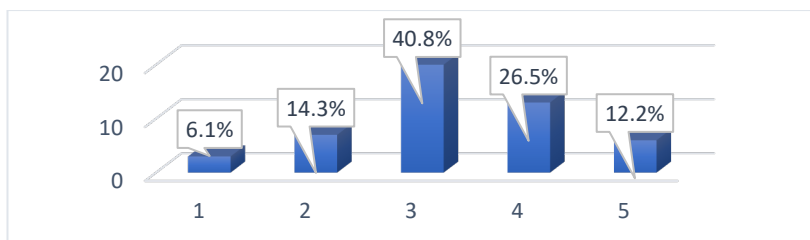


Figure 17. Answers to question 4 of the questionnaire from Group B, block 4.

Finally, most of the participants (87.8%) states that they would like to tackle this kind of situations in class through projects and debates (question 5, block 4). Those kind of projects could help develop the EI of the students and, at the same time, this might lead to enhance their academic performance as aforementioned research has shown (Costa and Faria 2020; Saud 2019; Al Quadri and Zhao 2021).

4.5. PROPOSAL OF PROJECTS TO WORK EI IN THE EFL CLASS

The fifth part were the projects presented to both groups, although different questions were designed to each of the groups.

Group A

In the teacher's group, regarding the applicability of the projects suggested in EFL, two thirds of the participants marked the projects with a 10 out of 10, and one third marked an 8/10. In addition, all participants (100%) agreed on believing the projects would motivate students. Group A was asked to rate each of the projects on a scale from 1 to 10 and the results displayed a general satisfaction with all of them.

Table 1. Answers to question 3 of the questionnaire from Group A, block 5.

		PROJECTS				
		1	2	3	4	5
Marks		10	10	10	10	10
		10	9	10	8	10
		9	9	8	7	8
		9	9	8	6	8

Nonetheless, and paradoxically, when they were asked which ones they would apply in case they had the materials needed to develop each of them available, they all agreed that they would carry out the fourth one, although it was the one that scored the lowest mark. Likewise, three out of four agreed they would also like to implement the third one and the first one.

Group B

Group B had to mark each of the projects on a scale from one to 10 in order to determine their level of interest with the possible development of each of the projects in class. The projects number one, three and four obtained the higher scores. Those were the ones that did also received a better mark on Group A.

5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

One of the main limitations of this research was the size of the study since it was a small-case study. Hence, no absolute conclusions could be reached since the sample of participants does not allow researchers to apply them to the whole Spanish population. Moreover, the lack of a pilot study could also be listed as a limitation. Nevertheless, this study could be taken as a starting point for similar future research. For instance, as a basis to conduct the same study with some corrections and with a larger sample of participants. A study comparing the results obtained in urban versus rural areas to check whether there are significant differences or not would also be appropriate. Furthermore, it would be interesting to research the impact of the implementation of the projects suggested in the students' EI with some pre- and post-tests. Similarly, more research could be conducted about the perceptions of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers regarding their training on EI.

6. CONCLUSION

The investigation was selected in an attempt to discover how teachers and students perceive issues related with EI in the context of EFL. Hence, if looking closely to the results, Group A showed a high level of self-perception of their own emotions. According to Dolev and Leshem, teachers need to be more competent in the management of challenges arising from both cognitive and emotional situations since schools seem to attend higher rates of children with problems such as depression or anxiety (2017: 23). The analysis of results also showed that the participant teachers think they are able to detect students' states of mind during lessons and making them aware of the fact that their emotions are important for the right course of the class.

In this way, although many participants from Group B revealed not having the confidence to talk to their immediate environment when their emotions affect their attitude, the results showed an increasing trend in the ability to control one's feelings

and to solve efficiently any problem that can arise at any moment. Therefore, these steps towards a higher emotional awareness of both their own selves and others could lead to enhance their academic performance as research has shown (Costa and Faria 2020; Saud 2019).

The results of the questionnaire disclose a high trend among Group B to feel secure and confident when taking part in class, although the number of people who do not is still high. In this regard, a possible approach for teachers to tackle this could be to implement more activities in the class that work EI since some studies show association between high EQ and fluency in the FL (Esmaeeli *et al* 2018; Abdolrezapour 2018). Furthermore, Shabani and Ghodrati (2019) mentioned storytelling as an activity frequently used by teachers with a high EQ so those kinds of activities could also bode well with the objective of improving the fluency and EI of the students.

Another interesting approach proposed is the PBL, since it may help develop the skills that the society of the 21st century demands. As Kavlu mentioned, skills such as strong communication, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving, reasoning, research, time management, and creativity can be worked with PBL (2017: 70). Both Group A and Group B stated that the projects proposed could be interesting and they would be willing to work with them. In this way, students could improve EFL and work on matters that could help them develop their EI.

On the whole, the aftermath of implementing EI could lead to class environments where respect, comprehension and confidence would be at the forefront of the education field.

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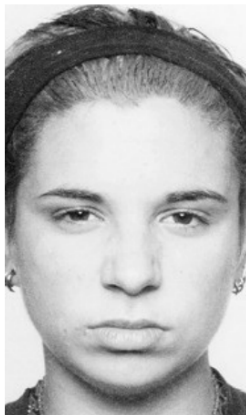
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APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE

Group A: TEACHERS

Block 1: Perception or expression of emotion

1. Do you think you are in possession of the necessary tools and knowledge to identify the emotions of your students? (Y/N) If yes, how did you acquired those competences? (Own training, training provided by the school...) (Open answer)
2. Do you feel that you are able to recognise the reasons why you act or respond sharply in specific circumstances in class? (Likert scale)
3. Do you believe that the current health situation conditioned by Covid-19 has increased your desire to name and understand the emotions you experience? (Likert Scale)
4. Do you devote a moment to reflection during your day, week or month in order to analyse your state of mind and the reasons behind it? (Likert scale)
5. I know how to figure out the anxiety that an exam can cause in my students. (Likert scale)
6. Choose the emotion that best suits, from your standpoint, the girl in the picture.



(Source: Ekman, 2003, n.p., disgust chapter)

- a. Ire
- b. Disgust
- c. Fear

Block 2: Emotional facilitation of thinking

1. I am able to control myself and keep calm when the behaviour of my students is not as expected. (Likert scale)
2. I find English lessons as an appropriate place to reflect with students on how to control their impulses when something bothers them. (Likert scale)
3. I take care to make my students realise that their state of mind is important to me. (Likert scale)
4. I consider the reactions of my students during class to be important. (Likert scale)
5. If I notice that a student is especially sad during a lesson, I talk to him/ her at the end of the session or, on the contrary, I do nothing because it is not of my concern. (Multiple choice: 2 choices)
6. I know how to raise a student's self-esteem if I detect subject-related problems. (E.g., for considering him/herself incompetent in relation to the rest of his/her colleagues). (Likert scale)

Block 3: Understanding of emotion

1. I try to be as flexible as possible when students express their stress and ask for an extension of the deadlines for handing in assignments. (Likert scale)
2. I try to reflect with the students on the feelings that the topics we deal with in class cause in us. (Likert scale)
3. I feel that time class is scarce to deal with cross-cutting topics and to relate them to the subject content. (Likert scale)
4. I do not know how to relate the subject content with the treatment of emotions in class. (Likert scale)
5. I listen, accept, and implement suggestions for improvement that I receive from my student's feedback. (Likert scale)
6. From my point of view, the creation of projects is ideal for working on content such as the treatment of emotions and to relate it to the subject. (Likert scale)
7. I find that dealing with emotions is an easy to deal with topic in the day-to-day classroom. (Likert scale)

Block 4: Emotional regulation for intellectual and emotional growth

1. In the presence of a conflict in class, I become nervous and feel unable to solve the problem effectively. (Likert scale)

2. I try to achieve a pleasant atmosphere in class so that all students feel comfortable to express themselves in English. (Likert scale)
3. If I detect teasing among students during class, I try to solve the situation, or otherwise, I leave it in the hands of other such as the school's principal. (Likert scale)
4. I like to discuss conflict situations with my students in order to bring different points of view and reach a consensus on the best course of action. (Likert scale)
5. I consider it important that students perceive English lessons as a place where they can develop their personality and critical thinking. (Likert scale)

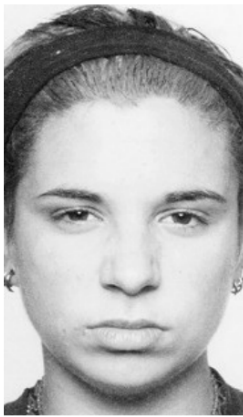
Block 5: projects

- 1) Score the following projects from 1 to 10 according to their level of applicability in an EFL class
 - 1- A project about food where students learn about real food, ultra-processed meals and how mood can be affected by nutrition habits with the objective of creating a campaign to raise awareness on the issue.
 - 2- A project about art in relation with music with a Project devoted to the creation of a campaign to give visibility to the essential role of artists during the lockdown and their current struggle.
 - 3- A project about female sport with the aim of the creation of an online magazine to publish results of female competitions.
 - 4- A collaboration with local NGOs to get students to know their work with the creation of a video to promote them.
 - 5- A project which deals with means of transport and environment with the creation of a blog that publish a survey among teachers, students and parents of the most common commuting ways and their long-term effects on environment.
- 2) Put the projects that you would like to implement in your class if you had all the materials to implement them. (Write them in order)

Group B: STUDENTS

Block 1

1. I usually speak with friends and relations about my feelings and emotions. (e.g., when something worries me, when I consider that something good has happened to me...etc.). (Likert scale)
2. I can identify the mood of my friends, relatives and classmates. (Likert scale)
3. Choose the emotion that best suits, from your stand point, the girl in the picture



(Source: Ekman, 2003, n.p., disgust chapter)

- a. Ire
 - b. Disgust
 - c. Fear
4. In relation to the project: creation of a podcast you carried out about famous women and their spirit of achievement, do you think that the stories of Ana Peleteiro, Maruja Mallo and J. K. Rowling made you reflect about your own emotions? (e.g. the fear of academic failure, desire for self-improvement...) (Y/N)
 5. Do you think that the current situation stemming from the COVID-19 and measures of self-distance have increased your interest in understanding better the emotions you are experiencing? (Likert scale)

Block 2

1. I congratulate friends, classmates, relatives... when they tackle a problem in the right way. (Likert scale)

2. Before an exam, one friend, classmate, relative... is very nervous and on the verge of crying, what would you do?
 - a. I try to calm them down.
 - b. I do not worry too much, it is not a big deal!
 - c. I laugh at them, nobody should worry about exams!
3. Imagine you find out that one of your friends, classmates, relatives... were talking about you behind your back, what would you do?
 - a. I would talk to them and listen to their point of view.
 - b. I yell at them and I refuse to listen to their justifications.
 - c. I ignore them and never talk to them again.
4. Would you like to work on your emotions in the English class? Y/N
5. Would you like to do role-plays like the following in the English class? (Y/N)
María gets up late to go arrive at school on time. Her father yelled at her and said she was a couch potato. María got angry and left the house. María had been studying for an exam until late and that's way she overslept but her parents did not know about it.
Imagine the conversation and role-play the situation with your partner for the class. Then, analyse: how could the situation being improved?
6. If I get nervous before an English exam, I know how to calm myself down. (Yes/No)

Block 3

1. Do you feel embarrassed when you have to speak English in public? (Y/N). If so, do you know why? (open answer)
2. I know when my feelings are affecting my behavior and I talk with my friends, classmates about it. (Likert scale)
3. In a debate, I can understand when my classmates have a very different opinion to mine. (Likert scale)
4. I congratulate my teachers when I have enjoy their lessons. (Likert scale)
5. I know how to talk to my classmates when I think their behaviour is affecting me (Y/N).

Block 4

1. I like helping my friends, classmates, relatives... when they have difficulties (e.g. they have a conflict/problem, they find the contents of an exam difficult to understand... (Likert scale)
2. When I see a conflict in the class, I know whom I should talk to solve the problem (e.g. bullying, a fight) (Likert scale)
3. When a classmate criticizes your attitude, do you try to talk to them in order to explain your point of view? (Likert scale)
4. I reflect on situations I see in the class and their effects. (e.g. when a classmate laughs at someone, I try to think how the person being laughed at feels) (Likert scale)
5. Would you like a project in the English class in which students had to debate a problem and state the pros and cons of some possible solutions and their hypothetical consequences? (Y/N)

Block 5: Projects

- 1) Score the following projects from 1(lowest) to 10 (highest) according to how interested you would be to do them in your EFL class.
 - 1- A project about food where students learn about real food, ultra-processed meals and how mood can be affected by nutrition habits with the objective of creating a campaign to raise awareness on the issue.
 - 2- A project about art in relation with music with a Project devoted to the creation of a campaign to give visibility to the essential role of artists during the lockdown and their current struggle.
 - 3- A project about female sport with the aim of the creation of an online magazine to publish results of female competitions.
 - 4- A collaboration with local NGOs to get students to know their work with the creation of a video to promote them.
 - 5- A project which deals with means of transport and environment with the creation of a blog that publish a survey among teachers, students and parents of the most common commuting ways and their long-term effects on environment.