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Exploring the Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Interplay between Learning Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract
The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between learning motivation and Second Language Acquisition. It also investigates the moderating role of emotional intelligence on the link between learning motivation and Second Language (L2) Acquisition. For this study, two questionnaires, trait emotional intelligence and foreign language learning motivation scale were used to measure emotional intelligence and learning motivation. While second language as functional course grades were used to measure second language acquisition. Findings indicate that learning motivation plays a significant role in the acquisition of a second language. In addition, emotional intelligence significantly moderates the association between learning motivation and second language acquisition. The study findings indicate that emotional intelligence for learners helps to grasp the emotional aspects of L2 learning. The study also contributes to a body of knowledge by acknowledging the process of acquiring a second language (L2) which is influenced by both motions to learn and emotional intelligence. It highlights emotions, comprehends social cues, regulates one's own emotions, and responds appropriately in different cultural contexts in terms of emotional intelligence.
Keywords: Learning Motivation, Second Language Acquisition, Emotional Intelligence.

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Introduction:

The ability to communicate in multiple languages has become an essential skill

that has taken on a position of the modern era, which is characterized by a growing degree of global interconnectedness (Flew, 2020). In contrast to conventional research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which has predominantly focused on linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural aspects, contemporary literature has increasingly highlighted the pivotal influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on the language learning process (Wang & Liu, 2023). This is in opposition to conventional research, which has predominantly examined linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors. This stands in opposition to the traditional research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which has predominantly focused on these specific facets of the field (Forsberg Lundell & Arvidsson, 2021). Literature shows that motivated learners tackle second language learning more effectively. Therefore, this research aims to examine the complex link between learning motivation and SLA. It also examines how emotional intelligence impacts motivation and SLA throughout the second language learning process. It is also known that research in the context of SLA's psychological dynamics helps educationists and learners to navigate this problematic linguistic journey (Thao et al., 2023).

The process of second language acquisition involves individuals gaining proficiency in a language that is not their native or first language (L1) (Segalowitz, 2014). The process of acquiring a second language (L2) is influenced by a range of factors, including educational environments, social interactions, and immersion experiences (Paradowski et al., 2020). The development of linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural competencies in the acquired language is essential in SLA (Rosen, 2020). When it comes to second language acquisition, learners may encounter unique difficulties that differ from their experience with their native language. Understanding L2 acquisition is especially important in recent world, which is interconnected, where

communication effectiveness across various languages becoming more and more essential (Li & Jeong, 2020).

Motivation and Second Language Acquisition:

Motivation as a construct has been perceived as an interconnect in terms of social, contextual and cognitive factors (Zhang et al., 2021). Various theories have elaborated this concept such as self-determination theory and theory of expectancy. Literature also indicate that motivation has been neglected part of language teaching (Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017). Social psychologists initiated the early research on language learning motivation. They recognized the social and cultural dimensions of second language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2003). Understanding the complex construct of motivation is not easy to explain as what motivation reflect as language motivation model of Gardner (1985), depicts the influential framework in the domain of social psychology. While, in second language acquisition process, motivation proved to be a dynamic factor and it enhance the student's capabilities to boost their learning process in terms of engagement and activities (Shilova et al., 2020). According to (Csizér & Illés, 2020), individual motivation plays a significant role in determining the success of L2 learners. The amount of effort learners put into their L2 acquisition is influenced by their level of motivation to learn.

Motivation is commonly integrative motivation, which is influenced by the learner's interest associated with a target language group within a culture or a state. Students' motivation has been divided into three major constructs, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation and personal motivation (Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). Having an interest in learning a second language and a desire to understand and connect with the people who speak that language can be considered as an example of integrative motivation. Another type of motivation is instrumental motivation, which is linked to the aspiration of

learning a language to enhance career prospects and gain influence (Alimyar, 2020). In certain instances, the remarkable power of motivation which is evident related to older learners that manage to lower its challenges of acquiring native language pronunciation. In addition, study also shows that motivation is not a fixed trait that a learner possesses (Seven, 2020). It is important to view motivation mentioned above as working together, rather than being in conflict or separate, because learners can experience both instrumental and integrative motivation simultaneously (Seven, 2020).

Emotional Intelligence and Second Language Acquisition:

The understanding of emotions, both in oneself and others, along with the ability to empathize, comprehend social cues, regulate one's own emotions, and respond appropriately in different cultural contexts, is what emotional intelligence entails (Sfetcu, 2020). The term, first time was proposed by John Mayer and Peter Salvey (1990). They define emotional intelligence as the capacity to recognize, generate, and utilize emotions to enhance cognitive abilities, understand emotional experiences and knowledge, and effectively manage emotions to foster both personal and intellectual growth (Mayer& Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence surpasses natural intelligence as a more accurate indicator of success, including academic, professional, social, and interpersonal domains of an individual's life (Mccarthy, 2020).

The complex process of acquiring a second language (SLA), which involves becoming proficient in a language that is not native (L2), intersects with the ever-changing world of emotional intelligence (EI) (Mungongi, 2018). When individuals begin learning a second language, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping their learning experiences. Effective communication in language acquisition is closely tied to emotional intelligence, which is influenced by educational settings, social interactions, and immersive

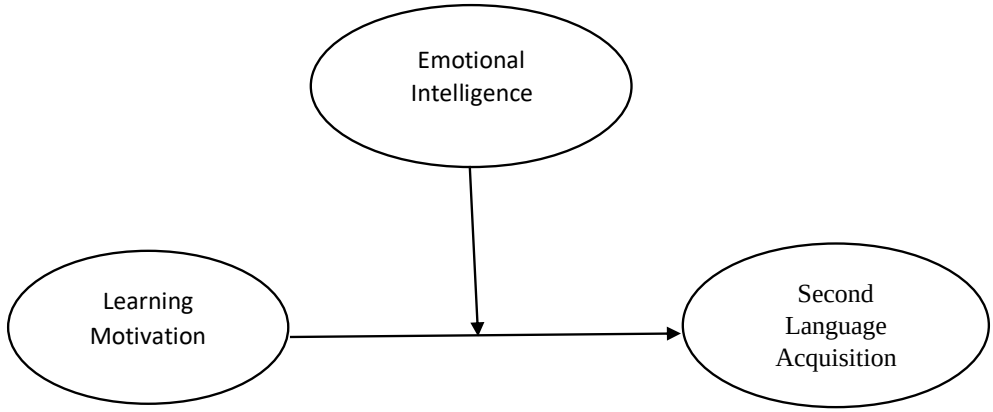
experiences. These factors play a vital role in learners' capacity to understand, control, and utilize their emotions (Zhu et al., 2022). The process of acquiring a second language encompasses more than just the cognitive aspects of learning. It also involves the emotional dimensions that greatly influence the overall experience. Acquiring a second language can present learners with emotional challenges that differ from those they faced when learning their first language (C. Li, 2020).

Emotional intelligence as moderator:

Emotional intelligence enriches the association between learning motivation and second language acquisition. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence may exhibit resilience in the terms of challenges, impacting motivation toward language learning (Resnik et al., 2021). Experts from various disciplines, such as foreign language education, child language studies, sociocultural research, and psycholinguistics, collaborate to explore the complex connection between emotional intelligence and second language acquisition (Peña-Acuña, 2023). According to Daniel Goleman, theory of emotional intelligence which indicates the ability to recognize, control one's own emotions, and emotions of others, to effectively motivate ourselves and to make relationships better (Cherniss & Roche, 2020). Hence, it becomes significant for learners to grasp the emotional aspects of L2 learning. Individuals with a strong emotional intelligence tend to excel in comprehending and valuing different cultural viewpoints, which in turn promotes empathy and successful communication in cross-cultural situations (King & Baxter, 2005). The current study aims to fill the gap by investigating connection between emotional intelligence and language learning outcomes, specifically among university students who are acquiring a second language as a course.

Theoretical Framework:

Theoretical Framework



Hypothesis:

H:1 Motivation will be positively correlated with second language acquisition among undergraduate students.

H2: Emotional intelligence moderates the link between learning motivation and second language acquisition.

Materials and Methods:

Samples :

The study included a sample of 178 (male 94 and female 84) undergraduate university students from the South Punjab region in Pakistan. Purposive sampling technique was employed to collect the sample, targeting students who had completed their first semester and successfully passed a Functional English as a Second Language (ESL) learning course. The participants represented diverse academic backgrounds, including Social Sciences and Arts & Languages. Students' ages ranged from 18 to 21 years. Demographic information was also taken.

Measurement:

The study utilized three questionnaires. The details are given below.

The study employed the abbreviated version of Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, that was developed by Petrides (2009). The scale assesses global trait emotional intelligence and comprises 30 items, categorized into four sub-facets: self-control, sociability, well-being, and emotionality. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point rating scale. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, the negative items were reverse scored during the assessment process. Petrides (2009) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.70 for the TEIQue-Sf, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The second language acquisition progress was evaluated by analyzing the grades of first-semester undergraduate students enrolled in an English learning course. Drawing upon previous research, which has often examined final course grades as a measure of overall achievement (Torrego-Seijo et al., 2021), our assessment involved a comprehensive breakdown of a 100-mark evaluation process. These marks were distributed across various skill areas, including presentation proficiency, midterm performance, completion of assignments, and performance on quizzes. Furthermore, the final examination encompassed an assessment of reading and writing abilities, in addition to a vocabulary test. To assess Language Learning Motivation Scale, motivation toward second language learning was evaluated utilizing the Foreign Language Learning Motivation Scale developed by Gonzales (2006), featuring a comprehensive set of 40 items. The scale adopts a 6-point rating response format. However, for consistency, all responses were adjusted to a 5-point rating scale sequence. 20 items were meticulously selected from the original pool, ensuring cultural alignment and relevance to the specific parameters of this study.

Findings:

A Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 IBM was used to conduct analysis in this study. Demographic information about the study's variables are presented in a table. To see the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and second language acquisition Pearson correlation was employed. In addition, a micro-process 4.0 was also used to examine moderation analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Main Variables

(Respondents *n*=178)	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Gender		
Male	94	52.8
Female	84	47.2
Age		
18	35	19.7
19	37.6	37.6
20	56	31.5
21	20	11.2
Discipline		
Social Science	90	50.6
Arts & Languages	88	49.4

The table shows the total number of respondents and their gender distribution reflecting 94 male (52.8%) while, 84 were female (47.2%). Regarding age group distribution, the larger proportion of age group was 20-year-old, followed by 19-year 37.6%, 19.7% of 18-year-old and 11.2% fall with age of 21-year. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 10 to 20 years.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, Alpha Reliability and Pearson correlation for study variables

Study Variables	*M*	*SD*	α	**1**	**2**	**3**
1. Learning Motivation	67.354	6.045	.83	1	-	-
2. Trait Emotional Intelligence	95.639	6.241	.81	.693**	1	-
3. Second Language Acquisition	59.22	4.824	-	.371**	.510**	1

*p<05. **p<01.

Note: Cronbach's Alpha: α

Findings in the table provide means, standard deviations, alpha coefficient and correlational information about the study variables. Additionally, the table also provides the correlation matrix indicating positive correlation with learning motivation and learning acquisition. The results indicate alpha reliability of learning motivation .83 and followed by trait emotional intelligence .81.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R-sq*	*F*	*df1*	*df2*	*P*
	.510	*.46*	*18.436*	*3.000*	*157.000*	*.000*

The table provides key summary statistics for the regression model, including measures of model fit (R, R-sq), overall significance (F), and the degrees of freedom. These results help to assess the strength and significance of the relationship between the learning motivation and second language acquisition. The coefficient of determination, indicating the proportion of variance in the

dependent variable explained by the predictor variables. In this model, R-sq. is .464, suggesting that approximately 46.4% of the variance in the dependent variable (Second Language Acquisition) can be explained by the predictor variables.

Table 4 Moderation Analysis of Emotional Intelligence on Learning Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

	β	*SE*	*T*	*p*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Constant	*123.627*	*29.907*	*4.133*	*0.001*	*64.516*	*182.738*
Learning Motivation (LM)	*4.156*	*1.528*	*2.719*	*0.004*	*-7.175*	*-1.137*
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	*2.434*	*.939*	*2.590*	*0.105*	*-4.291*	*-.578*
Interaction (LM*EI)	*.046*	*.0158*	*2.931*	*0.003*	*.0151*	*-.077*

The table shows moderation analysis of emotional intelligence on learning motivation and second language acquisition. The table presents the results of a moderation analysis examining the influence of emotional intelligence on the relationship between learning motivation (lm) and second language acquisition. Findings indicate that interaction of EI significantly moderates the relationship between learning motivation and second language acquisition.

Discussion:

The current study examined the link between learning motivation and process second language acquisition. The study also investigated the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator in the association between learning motivation and second language acquisition. In this study, Our first hypothesis sates about

association between learning motivation and second language acquisition among undergraduate university students. Our results provide empirical support for this hypothesis, revealing a significant positive correlation between motivation and second language acquisition. Learning motivation serves as the driving force that motivates individuals towards acquiring a second language (Ramzan et al., 2023). Individuals who have high level of motivation determining the success of L2 learners. The amount of effort learners put into their L2 acquisition is influenced by their level of motivation to learn. This suggests that students who are highly motivated to learn a second language tend to show more enthusiasm in second language acquisition. Moreover, finding also highlights that individuals with high level of learning motivation may be more motivated to engage in language learning activities, and vice versa.

Our second hypothesis proposes that emotional intelligence (EI) moderates the relationship between learning motivation and second language acquisition. The findings support this hypothesis indicating that emotional intelligence indeed plays a moderating role in the relationship between learning motivation and second language acquisition. As literature shows, emotional intelligence surpasses natural intelligence as a more accurate indicator of success, including academic, professional, social, and interpersonal domains of an individual's life (Mccarthy, 2020). Hence, this suggests that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence may exhibit more learning towards second language acquisition, particularly when their motivation to learn a second language is high. This finding supports the importance of considering emotional intelligence as a key factor influencing learners' attitudes towards language learning acquisition.

Limitations and Future Research Directions:

Despite the study providing valuable insights, few limitations should be

acknowledged. First, findings may limit to draw conclusion due to the cross-sectional nature of the study. Future research may employ longitudinal and observational designs that could provide better understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence, learning motivation, and second language acquisition. Second, the study sample comprised undergraduate students, therefore, findings may not be generalized, such as adult learners or individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Future research may replicate in a diverse sample to ensure the robustness of the results.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study contributes to our understanding of the relationships between emotional intelligence, learning motivation, and acquisition of a second language, highlighting the importance of considering emotional factors in language learning contexts. By employing emotional intelligence and learning motivation, enhances the learning process of a second language. The study findings have implications about theory and practice in the domain of second language acquisition.

Implications:

Regarding implications, Firstly, the study emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence as a trait factor in understanding second language acquisition and its overall score in acquiring a second language. Secondly, this indicates that emotional intelligences as a trait need further investigation in Pakistani society in terms of collectivist society. Finally, educators and policymakers should recognize the role of emotional intelligence in shaping learners' language learning experiences and incorporate strategies to enhance emotional intelligence skills within language learning programs.

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Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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