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EFL students' Emotional Intelligence and  
Attitude Towards English Language Learning:  
An Exploratory Study

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*Alla mia testa dura,  
all'ansia e alla paura*

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## Abstract

Since Salovey and Mayer first introduced the idea of emotional intelligence (EI) in 1990, the topic has been extensively researched, particularly in relation to how it affects other facets of life. Although numerous scholars have tackled this issue within the educational setting, the relationship between EI and students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language (EFL) has not been the subject of any research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role that EI plays in learning a foreign language and to determine whether gender, age and nationality influence the potential relationship between these two factors. An exploratory study was conducted in order to provide answers to the research questions. Sixty-nine students from a high school in northeastern Italy participated in the study by answering to a questionnaire that measured their EI using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale and their attitudes toward EFL using the Abidin et al. (2012) proposal. According to the data analysis, students had low levels of emotional intelligence as well as a tendency for having a negative attitude toward EFL. Although future research is needed, it might be argued that these two factors have a positive relationship, with the former impacting the latter. The two factors may be related, and this relationship may be significant since putting an emphasis on EI development may positively affect attitudes about learning English. This would have important implications for students, teachers, and parents as well.

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## I. Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence (henceforth EI) has seen significant development since it was first proposed by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. Its impact on an individual's life has always been evident, even though scholars were unable to reach a consensus on a precise description. In actuality, the subject has been thoroughly studied, especially in light of how it impacts various aspects of life. This is a topic that has been extensively studied by academics, particularly in relation to students' academic performance in the classroom. Nevertheless, no research has examined the connection between EI and students' views regarding studying English as a foreign language (EFL). This study aims to explore the function that EI plays in learning a foreign language and to ascertain whether nationality, age, or gender affects the possible relationship between these two characteristics. An exploratory study was conducted to address the following four research questions:

**Q<sub>1</sub>:** Is there a relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards EFL learning?

**Q<sub>2.1</sub>:** Are there any differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between female and male students?

**Q<sub>2.2</sub>:** Are there any differences, in relation to attitudes towards EFL, between female and male students?

**Q<sub>3.1</sub>:** Are there any differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school?

**Q<sub>3.2</sub>:** Are there any differences, in relation to attitudes towards EFL, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school?

**Q<sub>4.1</sub>:** Are there any differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between Italian students and non-Italian students?

**Q<sub>4.2</sub>:** Are there any differences, in relation to students' attitude towards EFL, between Italian students and non-Italian students?

Following a thorough investigation of earlier investigations, the following theories were advanced:



**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards EFL learning.

**H<sub>2.1</sub>:** Female students are more emotionally intelligent than male students.

**H<sub>2.2</sub>:** Female students have a more positive attitude toward EFL than male students.

**H<sub>3.1</sub>:** There is no difference, in relation to emotional intelligence, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school.

**H<sub>3.2</sub>:** There is no difference, in relation to attitudes towards EFL, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school.

**H<sub>4.1</sub>:** There are some differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between Italian students and non-Italian students. In particular, Italian students will show higher levels of EI since they belong to an individualistic culture.

**H<sub>4.2</sub>:** There are some differences, in relation to students' attitude towards EFL, between Italian students and non-Italian students. In particular, Italian, Chinese, Romanian and Moroccan students will show a positive attitude but at different levels. Moldovan students will show an ambivalent attitude.

Given that placing an emphasis on EI development may positively improve attitudes about learning English, there may be a relationship between students' EI and attitudes toward EFL that is worth investigating. Parents, instructors, and students would all be significantly impacted by this. A questionnaire measuring students' EI using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale and their views about EFL using the Abidin et al. (2012) proposal was used to gather data for this study. The study's focus is on the examination of the sixty-nine responses from high school students in northeastern Italy who participated in the survey.

This thesis is composed of six themed chapter. The first and present chapter provides an introduction to the study. The most significant discoveries and terminology pertaining to attitude and emotional intelligence will be introduced in the second chapter, which will also serve as an illustration of the state of the art. Previous studies on the effects of age, gender, and nationality on the two elements will also be included. The third chapter will be

concerned with the methodology used for this study. Along with the questionnaire design, the study participants will also be presented. The data resulted from the questionnaire will be displayed using tables in the fourth chapter. Firstly, a broad summary of the results will be presented, which will be scrutinized with respect to each of the sixty-nine respondents' responses. Following that, these overall statistics will be disaggregated by gender, academic year, and nationality. In the fifth chapter, the results will be examined in the context of the literature review, and some theories regarding the causes and implications of the results are also proposed. The educational significance of the findings for students, teachers, and parents will be developed in the sixth and final chapter. Along with recommendations for additional research, it will also contain the final conclusions.

## II. State of the Art

This study aims to investigate the impact that emotional intelligence plays in learning a foreign language. This project specifically intends to ascertain whether there is a relationship between students' attitudes about EI and EFL. It also looks at how age, nationality, and gender affect the possible relationship between the two variables. This section provides an overview of the existing literature on emotion intelligence and students' attitudes, as well as on some instruments that have been developed to measure them.

### 2.1 Emotional Intelligence

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer introduced the concept of emotion intelligence, defined as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189). In 1993, Mayer and Salovey also claimed that their concept overlapped with Gardner’s (1983) [intra]personal intelligence. Bar-On considered the expression emotional-social intelligence more appropriate to refer to this framework (Bar-On, 2000). He described it as an interrelation of emotional and social competencies, abilities and behaviors that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with environmental demands (Bar-On, 1988, 1997, 2006). Goleman (1995) stated that emotional intelligence contributes 80% toward life success and only the remaining 20% is attributable to cognitive ability.

#### 2.1.1 Emotional Intelligence and Gender Differences

Since the introduction and establishment of the theoretical framework of emotional intelligence, the issue about the influence of the gender on EI has been raised. A common belief is that women are generally more caring, affectionate and emotionally responsive than men (Eisenberg, 1994). However, Goleman (1998) claimed that no gender is smarter than the other regarding emotional intelligence. BarOn (1997) affirmed that there may be some gender differences in some emotional capacities but there seems not to be any gender distinction in terms of total emotional intelligence. Studies over the past three decades have

attempted to investigate the relationship between gender and emotional intelligence. Most studies seem to agree with the common belief that women can deal better with their emotions (Ademeyo, 2008; Day & Carroll, 2004; Fida et al., 2018; Lumley et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2005; Feldman et al., 2000; Grewal & Salovey, 2005; Harrod and Scheer, 2005 Shahzad & Bagum, 2012).

Other researchers claimed that no significant differences in self-reported EI have been demonstrated among female and male participants (Aquino, 2003; Bar-On, 1997; Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy & Thome, 2000; Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Brackett et al., 2006; Brown & Schutte, 2006; Dawda & Hart, 2000; Depape et al., 2006; Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Jinfu & Xicoyan, 2004; Lumley et al., 2005; Palomera, 2005; Salavera, Usán, & Jarie, 2017; Schutte et al., 1998; Shahzad & Mahmood, 2013; Tiwari & Srivastava, 2004).

According to Ahmad et al. (2009, p.128) women and men are:

“Emotionally intelligent in different ways. An analysis of emotional intelligence was found in thousands of men and women which showed that women, on average, are more aware of their emotions, show more empathy, and are more adept interpersonally. Men, on the other hand, are more self-confident, optimistic, and adaptable. It was found that men are also able to handle stress better than women.”

A similar result was obtained by Nasir and Masur (2010). Their results showed no difference in the mean EQi scores of male and female students apart from stress management, where women scored lower than their male colleagues. Mandell and Pherwani's (2003), in their study on male and female managers' emotional intelligence, showed that women scored higher on certain aspects (such as social skills and empathy) but lower on others (including motivation and self-regulation) compared to men. There seems to be an agreement about women's better ability to pay emotional attention and be empathetic, and men's greater capability to regulate emotions better (Austin, et al., 2005; Bindu & Thomas, 2006; Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Fernández-Berrocal, Extremera, & Ramos, 2004; Goldenberg, Matheson, & Mantler, 2006; Harrod & Scheer, 2005; Pandey & Tripathi, 2004; Silveri et al., 2004; Van Rooy, Alonso, & Viswesvaran, 2005).

Additional studies showed that there is simply a tendency for women to have higher EI scores, but the results are not enough to draw any definitive conclusions (Katyal and Awasthi,

2005). This variety in the results may be due “to the sample’s socio-demographic characteristics or the kind of tool used. This is linked to the different skills comprising the construct, which depend on the theoretical model being dealt with” (Sanchez et al., 2008, p.463). In addition, “self-report EI measures may be influenced by gender stereotypes, which has relevant implications for EI researchers” (Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014). As far as EI self-awareness is concerned, on one hand, some scholars demonstrated that males believed they had higher EI than females (Petrides and Furnham, 2000a). As a matter of fact, “women underestimate themselves and men overestimate themselves as regards their emotional skills” (Sanchez et al., 2008, p.464). Furthermore, “studies carried out in Africa, East Asia (Singapore, China, and Japan), Europe, and the United States have nearly all shown male overestimation and female underestimation of their EI” (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017, p.3). On the other hand, others showed that women scored higher on emotional self-awareness (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017).

### 2.1.2 Emotional Intelligence and Age Differences

Another popular belief is that older people are more proficient in emotional intelligence since they are believed to be wiser. For this reason, a number of studies were conducted in order to verify the existence of a relationship between age and emotional intelligence. However, cross-sectional studies have given mixed results. On one side, researchers found no significant correlation between age and emotional intelligence (Atkins & Stough, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005; Nasir & Masur, 2010; Perry, Ball, & Stacey, 2004). Moreover, age does not seem to moderate the relationship between critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011). On the other side, some research showed a positive relation between EI and age, since the first is developed or increased with age and experience (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998; Maddocks & Sparrows, 1998; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Bar-on et al., 2000; Derksen, Kramer, & Katzko, 2002). EI increases with age at least up to 40-50 years of age (Bar-on, 2000; Bradberry & Greaves, 2005; Kafetsios, 2004; Singh, 2006; Stein, 2009). In some in-between cases, the effect of age on EI was only slight (Fariselli, Ghini, & Freedman, 2008). Age also helped to explain EI independently of the direct effects of gender (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2012), which was

in harmony with previous studies (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2009; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999).

Many studies divided the sample into three groups, according to different life stages: Young Adulthood, Middle age and Mature age. In some cases, younger and older adults scored lower on ability EI than middle-aged adults, except for the branch of understanding emotions (Cabello et al., 2016). Sharma's (2017) study indicated significant impact of age on the EI and its components. To be more precise, "Emotional-Competency decreased from young adulthood to middle age and then increased for mature age. Maturity was maximum for mature age, whereas competency and sensitivity were maximum for middle age" (Sharma, 2017, p. 18).

Goleman (1995) and Bar-On (2006) claimed that EI is acquired and increased through repeated exposure and experience. As a matter of fact, although some EI competences improve naturally through life experiences, others can be developed only with training (Fariselli, Ghini, & Freedman, 2008). Nevertheless, other studies indicated that there are some young people with higher EI scores than the oldest groups (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Cabello et al. 2014; Fariselli, Ghini, & Freedman, 2008). In particular, some meta-analysis concluded that older people face difficulties when they are asked to recognize (Ruffman et al., 2008) or to perceive emotions (Day and Carroll, 2004; Palmer et al., 2005).

### 2.1.3 Emotional Intelligence and Nationality Differences

Contrary to research on the influence of gender or age on EI, studies on the relationship between nationality and emotional intelligence seem to be more limited. Results from existing research suggest that nationality may have an impact on EI (Boehnke et al., 2003; George, 2000; House et al., 2004; Reilly & Karounos, 2009; Riggio, 2010; Shipper et al., 2003; Tang et al., 2010). Nevertheless, a study conducted by Nikoui (2015), aimed to identify the effects of nationality on the EI of managers of 10 companies from five countries (Canada, Mexico, Slovakia, Turkey, and the United States), showed that nationality had no influence on EI scores. The author asserted that:

"The most plausible explanation for the result was the failure to account for culture. Nationality and culture are two different dimensions. Nationality indicates belonging

to or identifying with a country; thus, the connection that an individual ascribes to nationality is based purely on physical location. Culture may be linked to EI in a way that nationality is not” (Nikoui, 2015, p.83).

Cultures differ, for example, in how much people “think and talk about different emotions” (Planalp, & Fitness, 1999, p.744). And in the same way, “cultural beliefs, values, and traditions impact the way an individual thinks and reacts to the stimuli around them” (Scott-Halsell, Saiprasert, & Yang, 2013, p.341). Bagheria, Kosnina, & Besharatb’s (2013) research indicated that the aspects of emotional intelligence which can be developed via learning and experience are “dominated by culture that provides the structures, guidelines, expectations, and rules to interpret behaviors” (p.123). The assumption that culture, not nationality, is the factor that may affect emotional intelligence has been strongly supported by a number of cross-cultural research. For example, in Johnsen et al.’s study (2012), maritime officers from Northern Europe, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Asia were compared in order to examine cultural differences in EI. On the overall emotional intelligence measure, Southeast Asian officers performed better than European officers. When the EI scale was separated into its various components, it was shown that Asian officers scored higher on "Utilization of emotions," "Handling relationships," and "Self-control." Mentioning Mesquita’s (2001) theory, authors concluded that this might be related to the differences in values between collectivist and individualist societies. As a matter of fact, according to Mesquita's (2001) view, emotions in individualist contexts are intrapersonal and subjective while they have been described as relational and contextualized phenomena in collectivist situations (Lutz, 1988). In other words, "self-focused" emotions are prevalent in individualist cultures while "other-focused" emotions are dominant in collectivist ones (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Past research has concluded that Italy is an individualistic country (Caffaro, Ferraris, & Schmidt, 2014; Ianole-Călin et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2021), while Romania (Ciochina & Faria, 2009; Dumitrescu, 2016; Ianole-Călin et al., 2020), Moldova (Baltador, 2016; Pirlog, 2021; Popa, 2020), and Morocco are collectivist societies (Balambo, 2014; Oumlil & Balloun, 2017; El Fasiki, 2015). Although China was considered a collectivist society, there seems to be a tendency towards low individualism (Chung & Mallery, 1999; Wong. 2001; Cao, 2009; Steele & Lynch, 2013).

The literary review has shown that research on the emotional intelligence of students residing in or arriving from a single nation has not been conducted. Nonetheless, certain research has examined the correlation between emotional intelligence and an additional characteristic, solely focusing on individuals belonging to a particular nationality. These studies will not be investigated any further, though, as they do not concern the main topic of the current thesis.

Furthermore, Ekermans (2009) noticed that EI self-evaluation questionnaires “are predicted to be susceptible to cultural bias based on the item content which, for example, taps some aspect of individualism or power distance (cultural dimension on which nations tend to differ)” (p.261) since “culture influences the transportability of instruments [from one culture to another] on various levels” (p.260). Therefore, “evidence of construct and item bias should be scrutinized to better uncover the cultural variability of the construct” (p.262). Bond and Yang's (1982) theory of the cultural accommodation effect received support from Gökçen et al. (2014), who also found evidence to support earlier studies showing the significant influence of language on bilinguals' replies to questions on cultural norms and values (Chen & Bond, 2010; Harzing, Maznevski, et al., 2002; Ralston, Cunni, & Gustafson, 1995; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006). As a matter of fact, Gökçen et al. (2014) claimed that “multilingual individuals respond in a manner that favours or conforms to the culture associated with the language of the questionnaire” (p.30). These two factors need to be taken into account, when administering a questionnaire to individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

## 2.2 Assessment of Emotional Intelligence

While the EI framework was gaining relevance, scholars have also developed a number of devices with the purpose of assessing it. These devices are different according to the theoretical framework to which they refer and to the measurement approach they use, namely performance tests or self-report inventories. Both have some advantages and disadvantages. Performance tests offer the possibility to be assessed against objective criteria and to directly evaluate a person's performance level on a task (Ciarrochi et al., 2001). Nevertheless, there are some issues regarding their psychometric properties (Matthews, Roberts, & Zeidner., 2004). In addition, they have a limited practicality since these tests require high costs in terms of money and time (Goldenberg, Matheson, & Mantler, 2006). Conversely, self-report



EI involve people's own account of EI (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Schutte et al., 1998). On one side, researchers have shown their validity, especially in those contexts where variance in outcomes should not be related to personality (Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003). On the other side, self-reported measurements are more subjected to social desirability motives (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000a; Schutte et al., 1998). Moreover, results might reflect perceived rather than actual levels of EI (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Flurry & Ickes, 2001; Tapia, 2001).

### 2.3 Assessment of Emotional Intelligence: Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale

Wong and Law (2002) developed a self-report EI scale based on the following four domains (Wong and Law, 2007, p.44):

“(1) Appraisal and expression of emotion in the self. This relates to an individual's ability to understand their deep emotions and to be able to express them naturally. People who have high ability in this area sense and acknowledge their emotions well before most people.

(2) Appraisal and recognition of emotion in others. This relates to an individual's ability to perceive and understand the emotions of people who are around them. People who are high in this ability will be much more sensitive to the feelings or emotions of others and to reading their minds.

(3) Regulation of emotion in the self. This relates to the ability of a person to regulate their emotions, which enables a more rapid recovery from emotional climax and distress. A person who has high ability in this aspect is able to control their behavior when they have extreme moods.

(4) Use of emotion to facilitate performance. This relates to the ability of a person to make use of their emotions by directing them toward constructive activities and personal performance. A person with great ability in this area maintains positive emotions most of the time. They make the best use of their emotions to facilitate high performance in the workplace and in their personal lives.”

Wong and Law (2002) verified both reliability and validity of their EI self-report scale for research purposes. Law et al. (2004) further demonstrated that it could also be used in other gradings of EI, such as life satisfaction and well-being (Urquijo, Extremera, & Villa, 2016; Wong & Law, 2002). Their scores are also negatively associated with psychological aspects such as depression, loneliness and stress (Rey et al. 2016; Shi & Wang, 2007) and different organizational results, for instance work satisfaction and performance (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006). Although Wong and Law's (2002) EI scale was originally developed in Asia, it has been further validated in other countries, covering all the five continents: Asia, Europe, (both North and South) America, Africa, and Oceania. Some examples of countries where the validity of WLEIS was corroborated are the following.

In Asian countries it has been validated in China (Wong & Law, 2002; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Shi and Wang, 2007; Kong, 2017), Japan (Fukuda et al., 2011), Korea (Kim et al., 2009; Fukuda et al., 2012), Turkey (Aslan and Erkus, 2008; Güteryüz et al., 2008; Bitmis, and Ergeneli, 2014), Malaysia (Sulaiman and Noor, 2015), Pakistan (Karim, 2010), Israel (Zysberg & Rubanov, 2010), Taiwan (Wang & Huang, 2009).

In Europe, its validity has been proved in Greece (Kafetsios and Zampetakis, 2008), Spain (Carvalho et al., 2016; Fernandez-Berrocal, Extremera, & Ramos, 2004), Belgium (Libbrecht et al., 2014), Hungary (Szabó et al., 2011) and Portugal (Rodrigues, Rebelo, & Coehlo, 2011; Carvalho et al., 2016), United Kingdom (Lindebaum & Cartwright, 2010) and Italy (Iliceto & Fino, 2017).

Reliability of WLEIS was confirmed also in America; and in particular, in Canada (Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006), the United States (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Whitman et al., 2009), Barbados (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010) and Colombia (Acosta-Prado, Zárate-Torres, & Tafur-Mendoza, 2022).

Furthermore, Wong and Law's (2002) EI scale was verified in Nigeria (Salami, 2009) and Morocco (El Ghoudani, Pulido-Martos, & Lopez-Zafra, 2018).

As far as Oceania is concerned, there is only one example of validation, which is a study conducted in Australia by Jiao et al. (2021)

## 2.4 Assessment of Emotional Intelligence: Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale – Italian Version

As it has been said in Section 2.3, the Italian version of the WLEIS (henceforth WLEIS-I) was developed and verified by Iliceto and Fino in 2017. The Italian version was the result of an agreement between the authors' translation and a professional English mother-tongue translator. Iliceto and Fino also analyzed WLEIS-I psychometric properties in the Italian adult community and tested its consistency with Wong and Law's (2002) original model. The sample for their study included 476 subjects from three Italian regions (Piemonte, Lazio, and Puglia). They were all Italian speakers, aged between 18 and 58. The sample was considered representative of the population since the participants came from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The results demonstrated that "WLEIS-I is an internally consistent tool in assessing EI in the Italian population, with capacity to discriminate individuals in four dimensions, namely SEA [Self-Emotional Appraisal], OEA [Others' Emotion Appraisal], UOE [Use of Emotion], and ROE [Regulation of Emotions]" (Iliceto & Fino, 2012, p. 277). Moreover, empirical evidence on its consistency and validity "will allow researchers, educators, and practitioners in the field of psychology to dispose of a reliable self-report measure for the assessment of EI and intervention in the community, with significant implications in terms of enhancement of individuals' subjective and psychological well-being" (Iliceto & Fino, 2012, p. 279).

## 2.5 Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success

Once the relevance of EI was established, several studies have investigated its role in students' academic success. Early research on the relationship between EI and academic success claimed a strong association (Goleman, 1995; Elias et al., 1997; Pasi, 1997). They also encouraged the development and adaptation of programs aimed to enhance students' EI (Elias et al., 1997). However, the efficacy of these strategies was nearly unknown (Mayer & Cobb, 2000) and reliable measurements were difficult to find (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2001). In the following years, scholars have long debated on the impact of EI on academic achievement. Although some researchers are in favor of this hypothesis (e.g., Parker et al., 2004), most of them reported no significant association between EI and academic performance (Austin et al., 2005; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000), nor in children

(Hansenne & Legrand, 2012) neither in adults (Austin et al., 2005; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000). Other studies have shown that EI could act as a moderator variable between intelligence and academic performance (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2006; Preeti 2013) rather than affecting academic results directly. In recent years, researchers have performed several experiments around the world in order to identify a possible relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. These studies are mainly localized in Eastern countries, such as Pakistan (Suleman et al., 2019; Malik, 2016), Iran (Pishghadam, 2022) and Sri Lanka (Wijekoon et al., 2017). They all had university students as participants, and in all cases a correlation between the two variables was shown. On the other hand, a study conducted with Malaysian students gave negative results (Mohzan, Hassan, & Abd Halil, 2013). Although the number of studies is smaller in the Western world, experiments were done there, too. Despite the change of location, the result was the same as the most popular one on the other side of the world; that is to say, positive. As a matter of fact, a longitudinal study in a Portuguese secondary school (Costa & Faria, 2015) and a study on undergraduate students in Barbados (Fayombo, 2012) showed that EI can predict academic achievement. Meta-analysis on the topic revealed a relationship between the variables both in secondary-education students (Sánchez-Álvarez, Berrios Martos, & Extremera, 2020) and in people of different ages (MacCann, 2020).

## 2.6 Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning

Gardner (1985) defines attitudes in the context of language learning as a person's beliefs or ideas in relation to the language that is being taught or learnt. Similarly, Crystal (2003) asserts that language attitudes are influenced by how someone perceives and interacts with language, either their own language or others'. Mathewson (1994) and Masgoret & Gardner (2003) claimed that students' attitudes towards language learning and their performance are closely correlated. A positive attitude makes learning a foreign language easier, while a negative attitude becomes a barrier to it (Dornyei and Csizer, 2002). For this reason, it can be said that attitudes have a major role in determining whether students succeed or fail in their attempts to acquire a language, as well as other subjects. According to Karahan's (2007) theory, having positive attitudes toward a language makes students raise their competence or accomplishment levels. Ellis (1994) points out that a student's attitude toward the

language, the language speakers' culture, and the social significance of learning that particular language can all have an impact on their capacity to acquire a target language. Brown (2009) asserted that these results are corroborated by the fact that these positive orientations increase students' self-esteem and confidence. A number of studies have been conducted to demonstrate the relationship between attitudes and a person's level of engagement during language learning, particularly in countries where English is not the native tongue (Al Mamun et al., 2012; Al Samadani & Ibnian, 2015; Bobkina & Fernandez, 2012; Chalak & Kassaian, 2010; Latifah et al., 2011; Tahaineh & Daana, 2013; Yang, 2012). Zeinivand, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) showed that attitudes impact students' academic performance since positively oriented people actively participated in their speaking exercises and employed more techniques to overcome obstacles in their speaking practices. According to results from another study, students' attitudes and their proficiency in English spelling and writing are significantly positively correlated (Al-Sobhi, Rashid, & Abdullah, 2018). Although the majority of students have a positive attitude towards learning English, they are not necessarily dedicated to learning it in the classroom. Burgos and Perez (2015) investigated how Chilean students felt about EFL and discovered that while learning English is important, students do not spend enough time studying the language at home. Additionally, despite being aware that school is the best location for them to study English, they object to receiving extra hours of English instruction per week. Conversely, according to Abolfazli & Sadeghi's (2018) study results, students declared that even if English wasn't required in the classroom, they would still take it. As a matter of fact, they had positive attitudes toward English because they were eager to learn it and they thought it was a valuable language that would help them become more educated and confident. Furthermore, students in several groups reported feeling good, proud, and enthusiastic about learning and using English, which improved their ability to communicate with friends and increased their knowledge and understanding. Moreover, they said that learning English increased their confidence in their ability to express themselves and helped them become more confident people, even though they still felt nervous when speaking the language. Students also stated that learning English and engaging in English-language activities were pleasurable, helped them generate fresh ideas and knowledge, and allowed them to connect it to their previous knowledge.

### 2.6.1. Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning and Gender Differences

Few research has reported conclusions regarding the association between gender and the attitudes of language learners. Siebert (2003) found that that U.S. male students were more likely than female students to rate their abilities highly. In the same study, male students were more likely to say (25%) that they had a special ability for language learning than female students (10%), with none of the latter grouping strongly agreeing. On the contrary, Burstall (1975) reported that female learners are more confident in their ability to master a second language. This is due to their more positive attitude towards both the target language (Burstall,1975) and L2 culture (Powell & Littlewood, 1983; Powell & Batters, 1985). Bacon and Finnemann (1992) examined gender variations in self-reported perceptions about learning a foreign language and authentic oral and written input. They discovered that female students reported higher levels of motivation and strategy use when learning a language, as well as higher levels of social interaction with the target language—in this case, Spanish—and greater use of global strategies when interacting with authentic input. In contrast, Tercanlioglu (2005) conducted an ANOVA and discovered no statistically significant variations in the attitudes on language acquisition held by 45 male and 73 female full-time undergraduate EFL teacher candidates at a large Turkish university. Similarly, Nduwimana (2019) demonstrated that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of men and women about learning English. According to Bernat and Lloyd's (2007) research, men and women usually had comparable opinions about language acquisition across all categories, except for two items. One was on the correlation between intelligence and multilingualism, with women more likely than men to believe that intelligence has a greater role in language acquisition. Another difference, albeit a very slight one, was in the report of enjoyment between individuals. As a matter of fact, males were more likely than females to report enjoying the experience of practicing their English with native speakers. Language learner beliefs have been found to be influenced by individual factors, including attitude, but also motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy, and language proficiency (Banya & Cheng, 1997; Huang & Tsai, 2003; Truitt, 1995). Howe (1997) conducted a study in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom and concluded that males contribute more than females in the whole class interactions. Holmes (1995) explained that the first group uses the interaction to share knowledge, whereas the second group uses it to interact with other people. He also claimed that males lead and regulate the interaction in the classroom with the support of the

teacher's behavior, who provides them with extra time and attention. Therefore, the female students are underprivileged in a mixed class because of the politeness of their participation. Despite the stereotype which associates talkativeness with women, Swann (1989) noted that men dominate classroom discourse due to their propensity for frequent interruptions. Some research has also focused on the gender differences in language skills' achievement. Ryan and Demark (2002) investigated the gender variations in language proficiency. Based on their higher assessment scores, they came to the conclusion that women were better writers than men, and they remarked that this indicates that women value writing more than men do. According to Graham (1997), male participants indicated a greater preference for speaking abilities than female participants, while female individuals indicated a preference for reading.

#### 2.6.2. Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning and Age Differences

The influence of students' age on their attitudes toward EFL learning has only been partially examined in research. Matsuda (2000) studied the effects of Japanese students' age and years of English on their views about EFL and showed a positive relationship between them. However, he stressed that instructors, parents and classmates have a beneficial impact on learners' attitudes too. In a similar way, Abolfazli & Sadeghi (2018) claimed that the starting age for learning English and the total years spent in learning English are also factors contributing to learners' attitudes towards English. Additionally, higher grade learners were shown to have more positive attitudes toward learning English than younger aged or lower grade children in another study on the English learning/motivation of 520 Taiwanese primary students and the influence of several social factors on their attitudes (Hou, 2015). Gömleksiz's (2010) study also found different attitudes towards English in terms of grade level. As a matter of fact, he found that "Sophomores' attitudes were more positive than freshmen in terms of interest, self-confidence, usefulness and teacher subscales" (p.917) and therefore he concluded that the inclination of sophomores to learn English was greater than that of freshmen. On the contrary, Akay and Toraman (2015) discovered that attitudes towards English did not significantly change with age.

### 2.6.3 Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning and Nationality Differences

It is important to notice that the students' attitude towards EFL might be influenced by their nationality or country of origin. In this section, literature results about Italian students' attitude are compared to those of Chinese, Romanian, Moroccan and Moldovan students.

Bagni's (2022) interview study examined the opinions and attitudes of Italian university students toward English. He came to the conclusion that most people had a positive attitude towards the language. The vast majority of the students accessed for this study claimed that the English language was a crucial instrument for social inclusion in contemporary society, despite the fact that only a small fraction of them actively employed it outside of an ELT context. The student sample can be divided into two sub-groups. On one side, some interviewees were "language enthusiasts who overemphasized the importance of English in society and attributed a special status to it, representing it as a sort of one-of-a-kind language" (p.201). Above all, these students' motivation to learn English came from a personal interest in the language, which encouraged them to continue their studies outside of the EFL classroom. Some of the interviewees who showed the most overt enthusiasm for English also exhibited a very positive attitude toward the use of anglicisms in casual conversations with their Italian peers. On the other side, someone also emphasized the benefits of multilingualism for their chances of finding employment in the future and noted that knowing extra- and other-European languages is a valuable talent in the Italian and global job markets. Despite having a positive attitude about English, they also implied that mastery of the English language does not always translate into opportunities. Additionally, these students voiced their worry for the preservation of linguistic diversity worldwide. The interview data in particular showed that strong feelings for one's own national language and culture may coexist with a preference for the English language. This interview also revealed that, in a society where English is valued for both practical and symbolic purposes, today's students are under pressure to become fluent in the language. Furthermore, a number of students lamented the fact that the EFL classroom places too much emphasis on teaching abstract grammar rules and does not help students develop their ability to utilize the language in authentic contexts, particularly when speaking. Some of them also made the argument that learners cannot become confident in their ability to utilize English outside of classroom settings if they are overly concerned with grammatical accuracy, which hinders speaking fluency. Compared to other languages, English is thought to be easy to learn by a number of



interviewees, who also cited this as one of the reasons for the language's widespread use worldwide.

The same positive attitudes towards EFL can be found in students belonging to different nationalities. In particular, according to Banya and Cheng (1997), Chinese students tend to have a positive attitude towards EFL. As a matter of fact, they feel self-confident when studying English, which may be related to their prior linguistic background. Moreover, Chinese students seem to emphasize speaking with an excellent accent, utilize more compensatory strategies, strongly memorize vocabulary and grammar for accuracy and proficiency. They also seem to worry excessively about making corrections immediately and enjoy conversing with native speakers.

Cozma (2017) investigated Romanian students' attitudes on EFL. Considering that subjects have a desire to build their identities as members of the global English-speaking society, he came to the conclusion that their attitude was positive. Many of his subjects also cited the important role of English for their future careers as a justification. English gave them also access to the Internet, the electronic devices, movies, and songs, as well as the opportunity to establish relationships with people from other countries. Additionally, students said that learning English altered their viewpoints on different cultures, helped them understand non-Europeans better, and even helped them to develop cognitively. Some respondents believe that having a solid knowledge of the English language can help one obtain a variety of advantages typically enjoyed by those from other nations. A student also said that “Once you know to communicate well in English, people might forget about your nationality and the bad reputation it brings along” (p.94). Pavelescu’s (2018) study on the foreign language learning emotions of four EFL adolescent students in Romania presented similar results. However, although all four participants expressed experiencing pleasant emotions during their language learning process, there was a distinction in the degree and consistency of their feelings. While two individuals enjoyed studying English but did not feel a strong emotional connection to the language, two of the participants reported a strong and consistent love for the language.

There are only limited studies regarding Moldovans' attitudes on EFL. These have shown that, despite its limited use, English is becoming more and more important in the country (Ciscel, 2002). According to Fonzari (1999), the majority of the Moldovan ethnic group has

adopted English as their primary language of communication because they are unwilling to learn Russian and because Russian residents are embarrassed and reluctant to use Estonian or Romanian. Cisel (2002) added that students in Moldova, however, appear to be motivated to switch to English, but they lack the means to do so. Specifically, the majority of Moldovans lack sufficient access to fluent English speakers to influence any kind of shift. In Moldova, English is also frequently taught as a foreign language, albeit infrequently by native speakers. It can be concluded that Moldovans' attitude towards EFL is ambivalent.

Ahmed (2016) showed that female rural students, belonging to two Moroccan high schools, had a positive attitude towards studying English. The author claimed that "this was remarkable in their preference to study English rather than other foreign languages at high school, high motivation and frequent participation in the English class, strong desire to improve their English communicative competence, negative attitude towards the culture used in the English textbook, and positive social value associated to a person who speaks English" (p.304). Khouya's (2018) obtained similar results in a study on 201 Moroccan baccalaureate students, aged from 16 to 18. According to this study, 74.6% of participants said they had no negative attitudes about English. One reasonable explanation for these findings could be because a large number of Moroccan students enroll in additional classes at English language centers, which helps them become more proficient in the language and perceive it as simple. Another reason could be that most Moroccan students are exposed to American society, and since learning English is an integral part of that culture, most of them have not developed a negative attitude towards it.

## 2.7 Assessment of Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning: Abidin et al.'s (2012) proposal

Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Alzwari (2012) proposed a questionnaire to measure students' attitude towards EFL. The questionnaire is based on the view that the attitude concept has three dimensions, i.e., behavioral, cognitive and emotional. The three theoretical approaches of behaviorism, cognitivism, and humanism, respectively, provide as the foundation for these three attitudes. Firstly, the behavioral aspect of attitude concerns the way someone acts and responds in specific circumstances. In fact, learning a language successfully helps learners identify more with the language's native speakers and acquire a variety of traits that people

in the language community share. Secondly, the cognitive side of attitude implies the beliefs that language learners hold regarding the information they are exposed to and the concepts they comprehend during the language learning process. Moreover, “The cognitive attitude can be classified into four steps of connecting the previous knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations” (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Alzwari, 2012, p.122). Thirdly and lastly, the emotional aspect of learning makes it possible for students to communicate their preferences for or dislikes of the objects in their environment. It is widely acknowledged that the internal feelings and emotions experienced by foreign language learners impact their viewpoints and attitudes regarding the target language. The questionnaire items, whose reliability and validity were investigated and confirmed, was utilized to conduct an investigation into 180 secondary school students’ attitudes towards learning English. The individuals' attitudes about learning English were negative in all three domains of attitude—cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. Furthermore, there were statistically significant changes in attitudes toward gender and field of study on the demographic profile, but not toward year of study or nationality.

## 2.8 Emotional Intelligence and Students’ Attitudes

A number of research has also focused on the influence of EI on students’ attitudes. In particular, researchers investigated EI impact on student’s attitudes towards (1) school in general, (2) mathematics and (3) new technologies. As far as school in general is concerned, studies investigated students’ attitudes towards life and the attainment of education goals (Wong, Wong, & Chau, 2001), attitude to study (Chinyere & Afeez, 2022) and examination (Adegboyega, Idowu, & Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 2017). With regard to one specific subject, researchers took into consideration mathematics, both in a general sense (bin Othman, 2014) and in a particular aspect; that is to say, solving algebraic problems (Abdullah et al., 2022). In respect of new technologies, research centered on the attitudes towards computers (Kumar, Muniandy, & Yahaya, 2012), e-learning (Behnke, 2012), computer-based instruction (Behnke, 2011) and ICT and media tools in learning English (Güven, 2016).

## 2.9 Emotional Intelligence and Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning

Up to now, far too little attention has been paid to the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' attitudes towards EFL learning, even though they are both pivotal aspects in the English learning, as this literature review has shown. As a matter of fact, the study by Oz, Demirezen, and Pourfeiz (2015) is the only one on the subject that was found in a search of the literature. They proved the relationship to be positive among students majoring in English as FL in a Turkish university. However, no studies have investigated the influence of EI on secondary school students' attitudes towards EFL learning yet.

The analysis of the literature review has shown that there is a gap in the studies concerning the relationship between emotional intelligence, students' attitudes and EFL learning. This thesis aims to explore the relationship among these three aspects.

### III. Methodology

This chapter covers the study's methodology as well as the rationale behind it. Along with the techniques and instruments created for data collection and analysis, it also describes the environment in which the study was conducted. About the latter, an explanation of the data gathering process is provided, along with a discussion of the research instrument development process. Additionally, the sample is discussed, with an emphasis on the demographic traits of the students.

#### 3.1 Setting

The study was carried out at an economic institute (Istituto Tecnico Commerciale, in Italian) in north-east Italy. This secondary school specializes in management and economics and provides a comprehensive theoretical education with a focus on particular areas like accounting, law, politics, and economics. There are five distinct study courses offered by this high school. The first specializes in administration, finance and marketing; the second in IT; the third in business and management; the fourth in international relationship and marketing and the fifth in banking and finance. At the time of the investigation, the school had a population of 1049 students, divided in 51 classes<sup>1</sup>. This school offers not only English classes, but also lessons of a second (and in some cases of a third) language among Spanish, French and German. Therefore, although learners are in contact with different subjects and languages, English is common to all students of all courses. Furthermore, since the courses the participants attended are meant to prepare students for professions in the domains of business and marketing, where the English language is crucial, every participant had the potential to use ELF in the future. For all these reasons, this school arguably offered a fresh perspective from which to investigate students' attitude towards the learning of English as a Foreign Language, as well as its correlation with students' emotional intelligence. Being a public school, this institute attracts students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, which was assumed to increase the relevance of investigation and unpredictability of the results. Additionally, attitude studies must limit their field of inquiry in order to comprehend the participants' perspectives and propose theories regarding the causes of their perceptions and attitudes. As a result, concentrating on a single particular

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Scuola in Chiaro. Available at: <https://www.miur.gov.it/-/scuola-in-chiaro>. Last accessed: October 2023.

context and having direct knowledge of it can produce more accurate and reliable results. As a matter of fact, not only has the author knowledge of the pedagogical models of foreign language instruction used during the whole secondary education cycle in the Italian system, but she has also attended the school which is under investigation in this research. Moreover, as a local citizen, she is well familiar with the socio-cultural setting of the area.

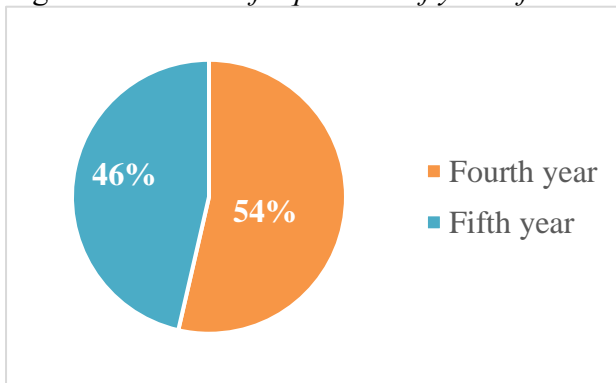
### 3.2 Participants

These paragraphs include some data coming from the analysis of the questionnaires collected, in particular as far as the demographic characteristics of the participants are concerned. The choice of anticipating some results come from the belief that these data are necessary to better explain and understand the participants' attributes. The same data are reported in Section 4 where they are analyzed taking into consideration all the other answers.

A total number of 70 students, belonging to four different classes (two fourth-year classes and two fifth-year classes), participated in the study. However, only 69 questionnaire responses were considered valid. As a matter of fact, the chronologic information about the data showed that one questionnaire was completed in the afternoon, while the others were all completed in the morning, during the lesson hours. Since it is not possible to establish the reasons for this difference and the student responded to the questionnaire under different circumstances than their other classmates, it was decided not to take into consideration the students' answer in the study. All the participants were attending the study course which focalizes in administration, finance, and marketing. Therefore, students were studying English and only another foreign language. Moreover, the focus of that course of study is on business administration.

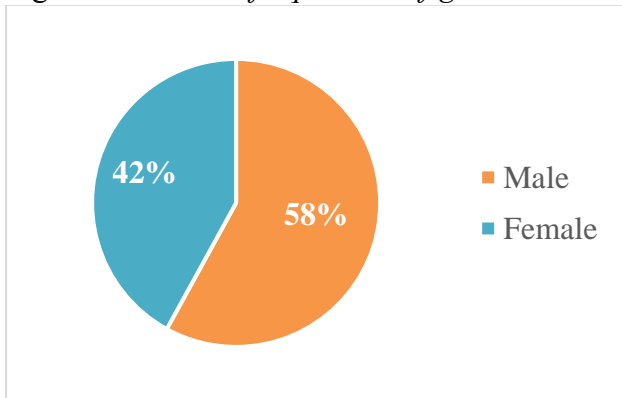
As can be seen in the following pie chart, out of the 69 respondents, 37 were enrolled in the fourth year of secondary school (46%) while the other 32 students were enrolled in the fifth year (54%).

Figure 1 - *Relative frequencies of year of secondary school*



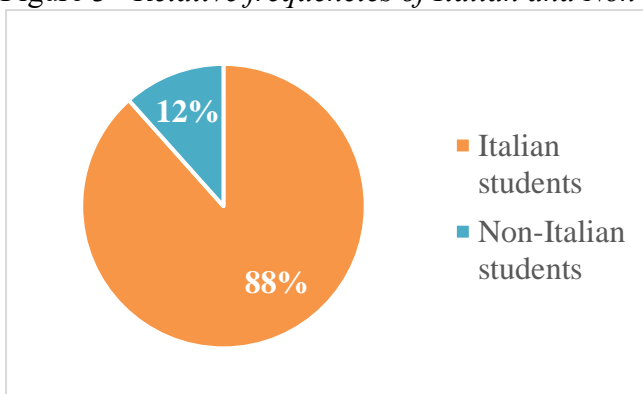
As the pie chart below reveals, the majority of the respondents were males (58%).

Figure 2 - *Relative frequencies of gender*



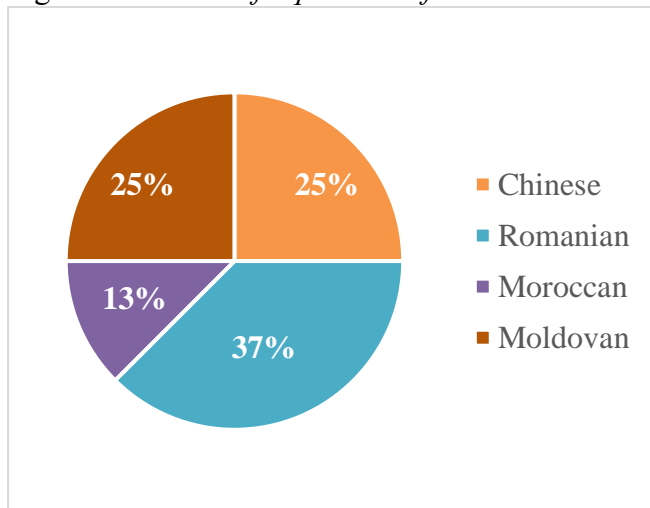
As far as nationality is concerned, the very broad majority of respondents were Italian (88%), as shown by the following graph.

Figure 3 - *Relative frequencies of Italian and Non-Italian students*



Additionally, the nationalities of the non-Italians students can be further specified. There were 2 Chinese, 3 Romanian, 1 Moroccan, and 2 Moldovan respondents.

Figure 4 - *Relative frequencies of non-Italian students' nationalities*



One participant claimed to have both the Italian and the Romanian citizenship. Since at least 4 years of uninterrupted legal residence in Italy are required for EU citizens to get the Italian citizenship, the student was considered Italian for the purposes of this study.

### 3.3 Design

This research aims to explore whether there is a relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards EFL. The only instrument utilized to get the data was the questionnaire. This tool was chosen with the understanding that it would enable the researcher to quickly and efficiently collect a substantial volume of easily analyzed data. Its goal was to gather as much information as possible to quickly comprehend specific trends and identify the main topics of interest that needed further explanation and confrontation considering the existing literature. The questionnaire was developed through Google Modules, using the scholastic Internet domain. Therefore, access to the online form was restricted to the students enrolled at the school under investigation. Furthermore, this ensured that the students' answers remained anonymous, and their participation remained



confidential. This may have reduced the likelihood of acquiescence and social desirability biases, which may have raised concerns about the validity of the findings. Before the students could access the questionnaire items, they had to consent to the confidentiality restrictions, which were made clear at the beginning of the questionnaire. According to Dörnyei (2003), respondents may begin to respond inaccurately as a result of tiredness or boredom if a questionnaire is too long or monotonous. By keeping the questionnaire as brief as possible, the risk might have been avoided. Eight separate students—three females and five males, all being the same age as the respondents under investigation—were asked to test the draft questionnaire by timing how long it took them to complete it and by making notes about any unclear or challenging issues. These students did not take part in the actual study. It was noticed that no more than 15 minutes were needed to complete the form and no particular difficulties were encountered. The questionnaire was divided into clearly defined distinct sections, each with a unique title. The instructions and items were written in Italian and were designed to be as clear as possible to prevent ambiguity.

### 3.4 Instrument

The measuring instrument was a questionnaire created by combining two questionnaires already existing in the literature: Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (See Sections 2.3 and 2.4) to measure student's EI, and Abidin et al.'s (2012) proposal for the assessment of students' attitudes towards EFL (See Section 2.8). The instrument was divided into four sections and each of them has a clear title which makes reference to the subtopics of the questionnaire.

#### 3.4.1 First Section: Consent acknowledgment

The first section includes the general title, which is the Italian translation of the present thesis; that is to say, *Intelligenza emotiva di studenti e studentesse e atteggiamento verso l'apprendimento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: uno studio esplorativo*. After a part dedicated to express gratitude to all the students who accepted to participate in the study, there is the clarification of how the collected data will be treated, namely anonymously, only for the research aim and in full respect of the *D.lgs 163/2017, Ex art. 13 D.L. 196/2003 and*

*ex art. 13 Regolamento Europeo 2016/679*. Prior to checking the consent option, students are unable to access the second section. This consent acknowledges their agreement to participate in the study, their knowledge of their right to refuse to answer some questions, and their possibility to withdraw from the research at any time without having to give a reason.

### 3.4.2 Second Section: General Information

The title of the second section is General Information. As a matter of fact, its purpose is to collect some general personal information of the respondents. The first question refers to the gender. Students need to choose among three options: ‘woman’, ‘man’ and ‘I prefer not to answer’. It was decided to include three boxes, given that gender minorities may find it challenging to respond to the usual dichotomous gender format and that it could make them feel disregarded (Ridolfo et al. 2011). In the second question, students are asked to express their nationality, choosing among ‘Italian’ or ‘Other’. In the latter case, they are kindly required to specify what country they are from. The third and last question makes reference to the year of enrollment, that is to say, ‘fourth year of secondary school’ or ‘fifth year of secondary school’. Having just two options allowed the creation of only two distinct groups. This question was preferred over the one asking for the age because that would have created many groups. As a matter of fact, in a class there might be students who are repeating the year of school and students who have started school earlier or later than their classmates. The three questions of the section about general information were included in order to provide an answer to, respectively, the second, third and fourth research question, which are “Are there any differences between female and male students?”, “Are there any differences between Italian students and students with migrant background?” and “Are there any differences between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year?”

### 3.4.3 Third Section: Questions on the Emotional Intelligence

The third section is called ‘Domande sull’Intelligenza Emotiva’, which translate to English as ‘Questions on the Emotional Intelligence’. It is based on the 16 items of the Wong and

Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong and Law, 2002), which refers to the ability model<sup>2</sup> of emotional intelligence. These items are divided into the four sub-categories conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The items were kept in the same order as the one designed in the original scale. Respondents were required to choose the one option in a 7-point Likert Scale that best aligns with their view. The Likert Scale was considered to be appropriate for the present study giving that it measures attitudes with a greater degree of nuance than a simple “yes/no question”. Students were asked to express the extent to which they agree or disagree with each item. They could choose among seven options:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree Slightly

3= Disagree 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree

5= Slightly Agree

6= Agree

7= Strongly Agree

As already anticipated, Salovey and Mayer (1990) conceptualized the emotional intelligence as being divided into four sub-categories. The WLEIS refers to this framework and,

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<sup>2</sup> In the years following the spread of EI framework, three versions of emotional intelligence have been developed. The first version is the Ability Model developed by Mayer & Salovey (1997). They believe that EI is a taught skill rather than an inherited trait. Moreover, this model emphasizes individual differences in the comprehension of impactful information. The second model is the Mixed Model designed by Bar-On (1997) and Goleman (1995, 1998). EI is defined as the capacity for social behaviors, traits, and competences. In this case, emotional abilities are incorporated along with attitudes, personality, motivation, and affective dispositions. The third and last version is the Trait Model produced by Petrides & Furnham (2001b). It relies on the belief that emotional intelligence is an aggregate of social and behavioral skills that allow one to understand and use emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2000b, 2001). It has been demonstrated that both ability and trait EI play significant roles in determining secondary school and university students' academic success (e.g., Austin et al., 2005; Downey et al., 2008; Parker, Creque, et al., 2004; Parker et al., 2006; Parker, Summerfeldt et al., 2004; Petrides, Fredrickson, & Furnham, 2004; Qualter, Whiteley et al., 2007; Qualter et al., 2009; Vidal Rodeiro, Bell, & Emery, 2009).

therefore, considers all four dimensions. In the questionnaire, each sub-category contains itself four items. They are divided as follow:

Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA). The idea of self-emotion evaluation pertains to a person's capacity to recognize and articulate their own feelings. Emotionally intelligent persons are able to detect and identify their feelings more quickly than most people. Emotional intelligence allows a person to effectively control, regulate, and direct their feelings. In addition to being able to control, identify, and evaluate their emotions—whether they be positive or negative—people with high emotional intelligence also play an innovative role. As a matter of fact, someone who is able to evaluate their feelings is also able to understand the causes and consequences of those feelings. When faced with situations that call for personal choices, people who are conscious of their emotions are also conscious of their moods and are able to make wise choices (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Othman et al., 2009). This section contains items 1 to 4.

Item 1: I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time.

Item 2: I have a good understanding of my own emotions.

Item 3: I really understand what I feel.

Item 4: I always know whether I am happy or not.

Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA). The concept of others' emotion evaluation refers to the ability to recognize and comprehend the emotions of individuals around oneself. Individuals that score well on this skill will be extremely perceptive of other people's feelings and adept at reading their emotional reactions. According to certain theories, people who score highly on this ability are more competent at differentiating between different emotions, understanding how emotions change over time, and knowing which emotion is most appropriate in a given situation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Wong & Law, 2002). Empathy is also frequently linked to the awareness of others' feelings (Reeves, 2005). This section contains items 5 to 8.

Item 5: I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.

Item 6: I am a good observer of others' emotions.

Item 7: I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.

Item 8: I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.

Use Of Emotion (UOE). people's capacity to channel their feelings toward productive endeavors and improved self-performance. A highly capable individual in this dimension would be able to motivate oneself to do better over time. Additionally, they would be able to channel their feelings in constructive and helpful ways. As a result, emotional intelligence can be employed to support cognitive functions. Because emotions and cognitions are closely related, emotions can be utilized to direct attention toward significant issues, help choose between opposing and similar options, facilitate specific types of information processing, and enhance information processing flexibility. (Mayer, 1986; Salovey & Mayer, 1989–1990). Emotions are essential and helpful for people with strong emotional intelligence because they help them process stimuli and information effectively and adjust to changing environments. Individuals with low emotional intelligence, on the other hand, may struggle to productively integrate how they feel with what they are doing and are unable to use their emotions to help cognitive processes. (Zhou & George, 2003). This section contains items 9 to 12.

Item 9: I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.

Item 10: I always tell myself I am a competent person.

Item 11: I am a self-motivating person.

Item 12: I would always encourage myself to try my best.

Regulation Of Emotion (ROE). The sub-category about regulation of emotion concerns an individual's capacity to control their emotions, hence facilitating a quicker recovery from psychological discomfort. Stated otherwise, someone with high ability in this domain would be able to smoothly transition from joyful or unhappy psychological states back to normal.

Additionally, such a person would be less prone to lose their temper and would have better emotional regulation (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Othman et al., 2009). Emotional regulation may be also defined as the extrinsic and intrinsic mechanisms in charge of observing, assessing, and adjusting emotional responses. Moreover, by keeping internal arousal within performance-enhancing bounds, emotional regulatory processes allow organisms to adapt quickly and effectively to changes in their environment and also give flexibility to the behavioral processes that emotions help to motivate and direct (Thompson, 1991). This section contains items 13 to 16.

Item 13: I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.

Item 14: I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.

Item 15: I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.

Item 16: I have good control of my emotions.

Wong and Law (2002) based their study on the Mayer and Salovey (1997) definition of EI which defines it as an interdependent skill concerning “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p.10). Moreover, they confirm this theory of interrelationship among the different dimensions by saying that:

“Before people can regulate their emotions, they should have a good understanding of these emotions (SEA). As many of our emotional responses are stimulated by the emotions of other individuals, our understanding of our own emotions is related to our ability to understand the emotions of others (OEA). Gross (1998)’s emotion regulation model prescribes that one can modulate how one experiences these emotions (ROE) as well as how one expresses them (UOE)” (Wong & Law, 2002, p.247).

#### 3.4.4 Fourth Section: Questions on attitudes towards EFL learning

The fourth section is called *Domande sull'atteggiamento verso l'apprendimento dell'inglese come lingua straniera*, which translate to English as 'Questions on attitudes towards EFL learning'. It is based on the 45 items of the questionnaire proposed by Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzwari (2012). This is a survey of attitudes with an emphasis on attitudes about learning English. The attitude questionnaire was itself constructed by combining items coming from different sources. The questions used in a study by Boonrangsri et al. (2004) served as inspiration for several of the items. The Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), created by Gardner (1985), contained additional items. Moreover, others were derived from the researchers' practical expertise instructing English. Between the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of attitude, there were a total of forty-five items that addressed language attitudes. In total, there were thirty positive and fifteen negative statements. As just said, the idea of attitude can be seen in three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and affective. The three theoretical stances of behaviorism, cognitivism, and humanism, respectively, provide as the foundation for these three attitudes. Each of these dimensions has unique characteristics that provide findings related to language attitude. They are seen in more details in the following paragraphs, alongside the items referring to each of them.

The behavioral aspect of language attitude focuses on how a person acts and responds in specific circumstances. In fact, learning a language successfully helps learners identify more with the language's native speakers and acquire or adopt a variety of traits that define the target language community's members. Another definition was provided by Wenden (1991), who stated that one's consistent acts or behavioral intents toward the item are referred to as the behavioral component. According to Kara (2009), students who have positive attitudes demonstrate positive behaviors toward their studies by immersing themselves in the material and making an effort to learn more. Additionally, it is noted that these learners are more willing to participate emotionally, learn practical knowledge and skills, and solve difficulties. The following items refer to this aspect.

Item 21: Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.

Item 22: Studying English helps me have good relationships with friends.

Item 23: I like to give opinions during English lessons.

Item 28: I am able to make myself pay attention during studying English.

Item 29: When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.

Item 33: Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself.

Item 34: Studying English helps me improve my personality.

Item 35: I put off my English homework as much as possible.

Item 41: I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.

Item 42: I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.

Item 51: I like to practice English the way native speakers do.

Item 53: I wish I could have many English-speaking friends.

Item 54: When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.

Item 58: I do not feel enthusiastic to come to class when English is being thought.

Item 61: I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.

The cognitive aspect of language attitude addresses the learners' beliefs on the information they are given and their comprehension during the language learning process. The four stages of the cognitive attitude are: tying new knowledge to existing knowledge, establishing new knowledge, verifying new knowledge, and applying new knowledge in various contexts. According to Wenden (1991), the beliefs and thoughts or views regarding the subject of the attitude comprise a cognitive component. The following items refer to this aspect.

Item 17: Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.

Item 18: Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.



Item 24: I have more knowledge and more understanding when I study English.

Item 25: I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.

Item 36: Studying English helps me getting new information which I can link to my previous knowledge.

Item 37: I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.

Item 38: Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.

Item 45: In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.

Item 46: Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.

Item 47: I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.

Item 50: Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts.

Item 52: I am able to think and analyze the content in English language.

Item 55: I am not satisfied with my performance in the English subject.

Item 56: In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.

Item 57: English subject has the content that covers many fields of knowledge.

The emotional aspect of language attitude deals with the emotions involved in the learning process. As a matter of fact, according to Feng and Chen (2009), learning is an emotional process as it is impacted by several emotional elements. Many emotional actions are undertaken by the teacher and their students, and a range of emotional outcomes are obtained. Learners can convey their preferences for or dislikes of the items or circumstances around them with the use of attitude. It is widely acknowledged that FL learners' internal sentiments and emotions shape their viewpoints and attitudes toward the target language (Choy & Troudi, 2006). Wenden (1991) claimed that the term "affective" describes how someone feels and reacts to an object—whether they like it or not, or are "against" it". The following items refer to this aspect.

Item 19: I feel proud while studying English language.

Item 20: I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.

Item 26: I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.

Item 27: Studying foreign languages like English is enjoyable.

Item 30: To be inquisitive makes me study English well.

Item 31: Studying English makes me have good emotions (feelings).

Item 32: I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.

Item 39: I enjoy doing activities in English.

Item 40: I do not like studying English.

Item 43: I wish I could speak English fluently.

Item 44: I am interested in studying English.

Item 48: Studying English subject makes me feel more confident.

Item 49: To be honest, I really have little interest in my English class.

Item 59: Knowing English is an important goal in my life.

Item 60: I look forward to the time I spend in English class.

The next table shows a summary of the items of the questionnaire with the related categories.

Numbers	Items	Categories
1	I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time.	SEA
2	I have a good understanding of my own emotions.	SEA
3	I really understand what I feel.	SEA
4	I always know whether I am happy or not.	SEA
5	I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	OEA
6	I am a good observer of others' emotions.	OEA
7	I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	OEA
8	I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	OEA

9	I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.	UOE
10	I always tell myself I am a competent person.	UOE
11	I am a self-motivating person.	UOE
12	I would always encourage myself to try my best.	UOE
13	I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	ROE
14	I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.	ROE
15	I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	ROE
16	I have good control of my emotions.	ROE
17	Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	Attitude – Cognition
18	Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.	Attitude – Cognition
19	I feel proud while studying English language.	Attitude – Emotions
20	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.	Attitude – Emotions
21	Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.	Attitude – Behavior
22	Studying English helps me have good relationships with friends.	Attitude – Behavior
23	I like to give opinions during English lessons.	Attitude – Behavior
24	I have more knowledge and more understanding when I study English.	Attitude – Cognition
25	I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	Attitude – Cognition
26	I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.	Attitude – Emotions
27	Studying foreign languages like English is enjoyable.	Attitude – Emotions
28	I am able to make myself pay attention during studying English.	Attitude – Behavior
29	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.	Attitude – Behavior
30	To be inquisitive makes me study English well.	Attitude – Emotions
31	Studying English makes me have good emotions (feelings).	Attitude – Emotions
32	I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.	Attitude – Emotions
33	Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself.	Attitude – Behavior
34	Studying English helps me improve my personality.	Attitude – Behavior
35	I put off my English homework as much as possible.	Attitude – Behavior

36	Studying English helps me getting new information which I can link to my previous knowledge.	Attitude – Cognition
37	I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	Attitude – Cognition
38	Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.	Attitude – Cognition
39	I enjoy doing activities in English.	Attitude – Emotions
40	I do not like studying English.	Attitude – Emotions
41	I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.	Attitude – Behavior
42	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.	Attitude – Behavior
43	I wish I could speak English fluently.	Attitude – Emotions
44	I am interested in studying English.	Attitude – Emotions
45	In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.	Attitude – Cognition
46	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.	Attitude – Cognition
47	I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	Attitude – Cognition
48	Studying English subject makes me feel more confident.	Attitude – Emotions
49	To be honest, I really have little interest in my English class.	Attitude – Emotions
50	Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts.	Attitude – Cognition
51	I like to practice English the way native speakers do.	Attitude – Behavior
52	I am able to think and analyze the content in English language.	Attitude – Cognition
53	I wish I could have many English-speaking friends.	Attitude – Behavior
54	When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.	Attitude – Behavior
55	I am not satisfied with my performance in the English subject.	Attitude – Cognition
56	In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.	Attitude – Cognition
57	English subject has the content that covers many fields of knowledge.	Attitude – Cognition
58	I do not feel enthusiastic to come to class when English is being thought.	Attitude – Behavior

59	Knowing English is an important goal in my life.	Attitude – Emotions
60	I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	Attitude – Emotions
61	I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	Attitude – Behavior

### 3.5 Administration

The administration of the questionnaire took place in October 2023. A total number of 70 questionnaires responses were collected. There was no attempt to ensure that the participant sample was representative of the larger population. That is, the sample selected for the study did not aim to represent the characteristics of the entire population studying English in secondary schools in north-east Italy, or even the entirety of secondary school students studying English in Italy. Because of this, convenience (non-probability) sampling was used to choose the study's participants (Given 2008, Creswell and Creswell 2017). This approach has no requirements other than that participants be willing to participate in the study and be accessible. The participants studying at the secondary school under investigation were reached with the help of a professor who was teaching English there at the time of the investigation. She was contacted by the author with an email in which the dissertation research and its objectives were briefly introduced. After stating her interest in and willingness to contribute to this research, she offered to be an intermediary with the school head teacher. After receiving a document with all the information about the study, the school principal gave his consent to proceed with the research at his school. The author sent the questionnaire she had prepared on a Google Module to the English teacher, so that she could be aware of the questions her students would answer. In accordance with the vice-principal, the teacher then contacted the Data Protection Officer (DPO). In this way, they wanted to ensure that the questionnaire did not violate any data protection laws. The DPO claimed that since the Google Module was used, the risk of information leakage was present. This made it impossible to guarantee the students privacy or the confidentiality of their responses. A possible solution was to use the school web domain to create the questionnaire. This solution was approved by the author, the teachers and the DPO. Two IT teachers volunteered to recreate the questionnaire on a Google Module in the exact same way but using the school

web domain. The school kindly asked the author to grant the permission so that the English teacher could administer the questionnaires whenever she deemed most appropriate during her lessons. After receiving the consent, the English teacher administered the questionnaires in her four classes. This process took about one week. She explained who needed the data and for what reason, that is to say a university student who attended their same school and who is writing the thesis for her master's degree. She also told the students that in recent years several researchers have focused on identifying relationships between emotional intelligence and different subjects, including foreign languages. She then sent them the link for the questionnaire. She did not set any time limit, but she noticed that the students completed it in twenty minutes. The students did not ask any particular questions, but they were curious about, and also surprised by, some items. The teacher added that they did not have to reflect too much on the items, but they were encouraged to choose the option that they considered as most aligned to their feelings.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The questionnaire was administered via a Google module form that automatically summarized the replies and displayed, in charts, the frequency distribution of the modalities taken by each item's variables or categories. After the data were corrected and verified, Microsoft Excel was also used to construct updated charts in order to obtain a summary of the findings. The Excel sheet was organized with each column containing an item from the questionnaire and each row including the replies from each participant. Indices of central tendency, i.e., mean and standard deviation, was utilized to analyze the responses and answer the first research question (Is there a relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards EFL learning?). The data were then disaggregated to identify whether there were any differences between males and females (second research question), between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of secondary school (third research question), and between Italian students and students with migrant background (fourth research question).

## IV. Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the questionnaire that was given to the 69 research participants, belonging to four different classes<sup>3</sup>. The mean and standard deviation—that is, descriptive statistics—are computed and the outcomes are shown in tables. This chapter is structured in the following way. At first, there is a general overview of the findings, which are examined taking into consideration the answers of all the 69 participants. Four tables display the results regarding the four aspects of emotional intelligence: Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, and Use of Emotion; and three tables show the outcomes concerning the three dimensions of students' attitude: behavior, cognition, and emotions. Subsequently these general data are disaggregated by gender (40 male and 29 female students), academic year (37 fourth year and 32 fifth year students), and nationality (61 Italian students and 8 non-Italian students). In the last case, a further disaggregation was thought in order to explore the answers of the students belonging to different nationalities (2 Chinese, 3 Romanian, 2 Moldovan students, and 1 Moroccan student). Each table is preceded by a paragraph discussing the presented data. In this way, each category of the questionnaire is described in detail.

### 4.1 Emotional Intelligence

This paragraph focuses on the results concerning the third section of the questionnaire, that is to say the one dedicated to the 16 items related to the students' emotional intelligence (See Section 3.4.3).

As Figure 5 illustrates, item #3 in the Self-Emotion Appraisal statement had the highest mean (of 3.32). Additionally, its standard deviation (of 1.18) was the lowest. Nonetheless, item #4, which had a mean of 2.81 but a standard deviation of 1.53, is the statement about which students disagreed the most. Consequently, even though students said they truly understand their emotions, they are not always aware of whether they are happy or unhappy.

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 3.2 for more specific information about the participants.

Figure 5 – *Descriptive Statistics of Self-Emotion Appraisal*

<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1.	I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time.	2.96	1.37
2.	I have a good understanding of my own emotions.	2.97	1.33
3.	I really understand what I feel.	3.32	1.18
4.	I always know whether I am happy or not.	2.81	1.53
	<b>Tot. Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>1.36</b>

Figure 6 illustrates that students scored better on their own emotional appraisal than on the emotional appraisal of others. The cumulative mean was 3.01 in the first scenario and 2.92 in the second. Item #7 in the OEA section had the highest mean (of 3.16) and standard deviation (of 1.54). In addition, the respondents' mean response to item #6, which was the lowest in this section, was 2.74. Students thus showed that while they are more perceptive to other people's emotions on some occasions, they are not adept at observing them.

Figure 6 – *Descriptive Statistics of Others' Emotion Appraisal*

<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
5.	I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	3.01	1.24
6.	I am a good observer of others' emotions.	2.74	1.34
7.	I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	3.16	1.54
8.	I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	2.77	1.20
	<b>Tot. Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>1.34</b>

Two items in the Use of Emotion section—item #11 (mean of 3.19) and item #10 (mean of 3.20)—had comparable means, as shown in Figure 7. Item #9 had the lowest score, with a mean of 2.72 with a standard deviation of 1.44. In summary, students claimed to be self-motivating individuals, particularly in terms of their competency, but they struggle to create and pursue personal goals.



Figure 7 – *Descriptive Statistics of Use of Emotion*

<b>Use Of Emotion</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
9.	I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.	2.72	1.44
10.	I always tell myself I am a competent person.	3.20	1.41
11.	I am a self-motivating person.	3.19	1.49
12.	I would always encourage myself to try my best.	2.80	1.31
	<b>Tot. Use Of Emotion</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>1.42</b>

As far as the category of Regulation of Emotion is concerned (Figure 8), students affirmed to be always able to calm down quickly when they are very angry. As a matter of fact, item #15 resulted in a mean of 4.04 with a standard deviation of 1.74. Respondents scored a mean of 3.20 both in item #14 and in item #16, claiming that they do not have emotional self-control.

Figure 8 – *Descriptive Statistics of Regulation of Emotion*

<b>Regulation Of Emotion</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
13.	I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	3.28	1.48
14.	I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.	3.20	1.47
15.	I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	4.04	1.74
16.	I have good control of my emotions.	3.20	1.24
	<b>Tot. Regulation Of Emotion</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>1.53</b>

Given that it had the highest overall mean (3.43), Regulation of Emotion was the category in which the participants did the best. It is noteworthy to note, nonetheless, that its standard deviation (1.53) was also the greatest. However, given that it had the lowest overall mean (2.92), the category in which the respondents performed the lowest is Others' Emotion Appraisal. Since none of the four emotional intelligence characteristics measured by the questionnaire had a value of four or above, it can be said that they all had low scores.

## 4.2 Students' Attitude

This paragraph focuses on the results concerning the fourth section of the questionnaire, that is to say the one dedicated to the 45 items related to the students' attitudes towards EFL (See Section 3.4.4).

Figure 9 shows the results concerning the Behavioral Aspect of Language Attitude. Students mostly agreed with item #61, which suggests that they pay little attention to their English teacher when they are presenting the lesson (mean of 5.19, standard deviation of 1.53). Furthermore, the majority of respondents (mean of 4.88, standard deviation of 1.61) agreed with item #29, saying that they like practicing speaking with their peers when they speak English fluently. However, they specifically disagreed with items #53 (mean of 3.13, standard deviation of 1.55) and #51 (mean of 3.62, standard deviation of 1.66). Therefore, students do not wish to have many acquaintances who speak the language, nor do they want to practice their English in the same way as native speakers.

Figure 9 – *Descriptive Statistics of Behavioral Aspect of Language Attitude*

<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
21.	Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.	4.58	1.74
22.	Studying English helps me have good relationships with friends.	5.00	1.65
23.	I like to give opinions during English lessons.	4.55	1.88
28.	I am able to make myself pay attention while I study English.	3.68	1.45
29.	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.	4.88	1.61
33.	Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself.	3.90	1.79
34.	Studying English helps me improve my personality.	4.58	1.74
35.	I put off my English homework as much as possible.	3.99	1.94
41.	I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.	3.80	1.95
42.	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.	3.97	1.89
51.	I like to practice English the way native speakers do.	3.62	1.66
53.	I wish I could have many English-speaking friends.	3.13	1.55
54.	When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.	4.00	2.00

58.	I do not feel enthusiastic to come to class when English is being thought.	4.01	1.83
61.	I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	5.19	1.53
	<b>Tot. Attitude – Behavior</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>1.83</b>

The findings pertaining to the Cognitive Aspect of Language Attitude are displayed in Figure 10. Students agreed most with item #47 (mean of 4.64, standard deviation of 1.71), as Figure 6 illustrates. Item #37, where students received a mean score of 4.58 with a standard deviation of 1.74, follows immediately. In the first instance, responses from students supported the claim that they are unable to apply the knowledge they learned in the English course to their everyday lives. In the second instance, students conveyed that they are unable to independently enumerate the key elements of the English course material. Additionally, participants believe that learning English will not improve their level of education and that it will not improve their ability to communicate in English. In actuality, items #17 and #46 had the lowest means, at 2.38 (with a standard deviation of 1.36) and 2.57 (with a standard deviation of 1.56), respectively.

Figure 10 – *Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Aspect of Language Attitude*

<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
17.	Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	2.38	1.36
18.	Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.	4.23	1.72
24.	I have more knowledge and more understanding when I study English.	4.12	1.71
25.	I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	4.23	1.79
36.	Studying English helps me getting new information which I can link to my previous knowledge.	3.72	1.52
37.	I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	4.58	1.74
38.	Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.	3.77	2.02
45.	In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.	2.97	1.66

46.	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.	2.57	1.56
47.	I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	4.64	1.71
50.	Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts.	4.38	1.70
52.	I am able to think and analyze the content in English language.	3.65	1.71
55.	I am not satisfied with my performance in the English subject.	3.07	1.78
56.	In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.	3.45	1.75
57.	English subject has the content that covers many fields of knowledge.	3.42	1.43
	<b>Tot. Attitude – Cognition</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>1.81</b>

Figure 11 presents the results for the Emotional Aspect of Language Attitude. The results of item #60 indicated that participants look forward to their time in English class (mean of 4.86, standard deviation of 1.48). Additionally, they largely concurred with the statement that learning English makes them feel proud, as evidenced by item #19's mean of 4.30 (with a standard deviation of 1.63). Item #31, which had a mean of 4.29 (with a standard deviation of 1.67), also showed that learning English makes them feel good. Conversely, item #43 (mean of 1.77, standard deviation of 1.29) and item #32 (mean of 2.72, standard deviation of 1.68) had the lowest means. It may be inferred from this that students would not want to learn in their native tongue over any other foreign language, nor do they wish they could speak English with ease.

Figure 11 – *Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Aspect of Language Attitude*

<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 69</b>			
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
19.	I feel proud while studying English language.	4.30	1.63
20.	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.	3.25	1.57
26.	I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.	4.12	1.93
27.	Studying foreign languages like English is enjoyable.	3.75	1.63
30.	To be inquisitive makes me study English well.	4.12	1.60
31.	Studying English makes me have good emotions (feelings).	4.29	1.67
32.	I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.	2.72	1.68

39.	I enjoy doing activities in English.	4.07	1.75
40.	I do not like studying English.	3.97	1.97
43.	I wish I could speak English fluently.	1.77	1.29
44.	I am interested in studying English.	2.78	1.45
48.	Studying English subject makes me feel more confident.	4.14	1.71
49.	To be honest, I really have little interest in my English class.	4.23	1.85
59.	Knowing English is an important goal in my life.	2.77	1.44
60.	I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	4.86	1.48
	<b>Tot. Attitude – Emotions</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>1.83</b>

In the following sections, the data collected in the questionnaire are disaggregated by gender, academic year, and nationality.

#### 4.2.1 Results: Gender

Figure 12 illustrates how the three categories with the highest scores are all connected to the respondents' attitudes toward EFL. The behavioral part of attitude had the highest value (mean of 4.10), followed by the cognitive (mean of 3.58) and emotional (mean of 3.58) aspects of attitude. As far as their emotional intelligence is concerned, male participants claimed to be able to regulate their emotions (mean of 3.26), but they are not very good at using them (mean of 2.82).

Figure 12 – *Descriptive Statistics of Male Students' results*

<b>MALES</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 40</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.87	1.30
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.91	1.27
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	2.82	1.33
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	3.26	1.60
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.10	1.80
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.65	1.85
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.58	1.80

The items on which male students performed best are shown in Figure 13. The information on emotional intelligence might be summed up by stating that participants claimed to not truly comprehend their own feelings or those of others. They also rarely convince themselves that they are capable individuals, but they can mostly promptly control their anger. Regarding their attitude toward EFL, students expressed excitement for their English courses even though they acknowledged that they could not use the knowledge they learned in English classes in their daily lives. They also seemed to desire to practice speaking English with those classmates who are very proficient in it.

Figure 13 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values - Males*

<b>MALES</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 40</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.25	1.10
<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	3.18	1.41
<b>UOE</b>	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.	2.98	1.37
<b>ROE</b>	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	3.75	1.82
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	29. When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.	5.15	1.44
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	47. I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	4.85	1.66
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	60. I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	4.63	1.55

The three categories that received the highest ratings in the responses from female respondents (Figure 14) are all related to their attitudes. Attitude's behavioral component had the highest mean value (4.33), followed by its emotional (3.82) and cognitive (3.72) components. Regarding emotional intelligence, female participants reported being able to control their emotions (mean of 3.66), but they scored poorly when it comes to identifying the emotions of others (mean of 2.93).

Figure 14 – *Descriptive Statistics of Female Students' Results*

<b>FEMALES</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 29</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	3.22	1.43
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.93	1.44
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	3.20	1.52
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	3.66	1.41
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.33	1.86
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.72	1.75
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.82	1.86

By paying particular attention to the questionnaire questions with which female participants agreed the most (Figure 15), it is possible to observe that they claimed to attempt to comprehend both their own and other people's feelings. They can also be self-motivated and quickly cool down when they are upset, demonstrating that they have emotional control. Although acknowledging that they don't pay attention to the teacher, they said they look forwards to their English class. Additionally, they mentioned how challenging it is for them to independently summarize the key ideas in the English course.

Figure 15 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values - Females*

<b>FEMALES</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 29</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.41	1.30
<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	3.14	1.73
<b>UOE</b>	11. I am a self-motivating person.	3.59	1.76
<b>ROE</b>	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	4.45	1.57
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	61. I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	5.52	1.30
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	37. I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	4.90	1.47
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	60. I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	5.17	1.34

#### 4.2.2 Results: Academic Year

The fourth-year students' results are shown in Figure 16. As can be observed, Others' Emotion Appraisal had the lowest mean (2.94), and Regulation of Emotion had the greatest mean (3.84) among the emotional intelligence aspects. Regarding the attitude of the students, the behavioral aspect received a higher mean score from the respondents (4.19), followed by the emotional aspect (3.83) and the cognitive aspect (3.16).

Figure 16 – *Descriptive Statistics of Fourth-Year Students' Results*

<b>FOURTH-YEAR STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 37</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	3.22	1.27
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.94	1.16
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	3.16	1.46
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	3.84	1.41
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.19	1.81
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.64	1.71
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.83	1.80

The items that fourth-year students agreed on the most are displayed in Figure 17. Regarding their emotional intelligence, they asserted that they sometimes could identify their own emotions as well as those of their friends by seeing how they behaved. Additionally, they mentioned that they can rapidly get over their anger and remind themselves that they are capable individuals. They also demonstrated a favorable attitude toward EFL since they understood that studying this language allowed them to think creatively and maintain positive relationships with their peers. They are excited about their English lessons as a result.

Figure 17 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Fourth-Year Students*

<b>FOURTH-YEAR STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 37</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.49	1.10



<b>OEA</b>	5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	3.11	1.13
<b>UOE</b>	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.	3.51	1.43
<b>ROE</b>	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	4.49	1.61
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	22. Studying English helps me have good relationships with friends.	5.19	1.75
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	50. Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts.	4.51	1.64
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	60. I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	4.92	1.61

Figure 18 reports the results of the students attending the fifth year. It shows that the category of EI with the highest mean is Regulation of Emotion (2.96), while the one with the lowest mean is Use of Emotion (2.77), even though there is only a slight difference with Self-Emotion Appraisal, which has a mean of 2.78. In terms of students' attitude, the behavioral aspect received a higher mean score from the respondents (4.20), followed by the cognitive aspect (3.72) and the emotional aspect (3.50).

Figure 18 – *Descriptive Statistics of Fifth-Year Students' Results*

<b>FIFTH-YEAR STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 32</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	2,78	1,43
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2,90	1,53
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	2,77	1,35
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	2,96	1,53
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4,20	1,85
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3,72	1,91
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3,50	1,84

The most commonly agreed upon items are displayed in Figure 19. In terms of emotional intelligence, the fifth-year students reported not really being able to identify their own emotions as well as those of their friends. In addition, they said that they are not self-motivating individuals, but they can control their anger more frequently. Participants have a

positive attitude and enthusiastically look forward to their time in English class. However, they struggle to independently enumerate the key ideas in the English course material, and they become distracted while their teacher explains the material.

Figure 19 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Fifth-Year Students*

<b>FIFTH-YEAR STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 32</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.13	1.26
<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	3.34	1.82
<b>UOE</b>	11. I am a self-motivating person.	3.00	1.41
<b>ROE</b>	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	3.53	1.78
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	61. I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	5.34	1.54
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	37. I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	4.94	1.93
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	60. I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	4.78	1.34

#### 4.2.3 Results: Nationality

Figure 20 presents the results of Italian students. Among the EI aspects, Regulation of Emotion had the highest mean (3.09), whereas Others’ Emotion Appraisal had the lowest one (2.97), even if there is only a slight difference with Use of Emotion, which had a mean of 2.98. The behavioral aspect is the dimension of attitude where students performed better (4.17) while the cognitive aspect is the one where students performed worse (3.69). However, even in this case, the difference with the mean of emotional aspect (3.67) is small.

Figure 20 – *Descriptive Statistics of Italian Students' Results*

<b>ITALIAN STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 61</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	3.05	1.32

<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.97	1.31
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	2.98	1.40
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	3.48	1.53
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.17	1.82
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.67	1.82
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.69	1.83

The items that are most widely accepted by Italian participants are shown in Figure 21. Italian students reported having problems to recognize both their own and their friends' feelings. Furthermore, they claimed not to be self-motivated people even though they have quick anger management skills. Students approach learning English with enthusiasm and a good attitude, eagerly anticipating their time in this course. When their teacher is explaining the topic, though, they become distracted. they also believe they won't be able to use what they are learning in real life.

Figure 21 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Italian Students*

<b>ITALIAN STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 61</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.33	1.14
<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	3.13	1.47
<b>UOE</b>	11. I am a self-motivating person.	3.15	1.49
<b>ROE</b>	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	4.16	1.72
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	61. I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	5.15	1.57
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	47. I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	4.57	1.72
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	60. I look forward to the time I spend in English class.	4.84	1.51

The results of non-Italian students are shown in Figure 22, where it is evident that these participants' emotional intelligence was the highest in Regulation of Emotion (mean of 3.09) and the lowest in Others' Emotion Appraisal (mean of 2.53). Furthermore, students proved

better in the behavioral dimension (with a mean of 4.38) than in the cognitive (3.71) or emotional (3.58) aspects of attitudes towards EFL.

Figure 22 – Descriptive Statistics of Non-Italian Students' Results

<b>NON-ITALIAN STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 8</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.75	1.63
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.53	1.50
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	2.97	1.62
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	3.09	1.51
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.38	1.90
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.71	1.72
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.58	1.80

Figure 23 displays the items that non-Italian students did the best on. One way to summarize the data on emotional intelligence would be to say that participants reported not being sensitive to their own feelings or to those of others. However, they persuade themselves that they are competent people, and they assert that they can manage their emotions in order to respond to challenges in a reasoned manner. Regarding their attitude toward EFL, they assert that they dislike learning English. Additionally, they lack the ability to independently summarize the key ideas in the English course material. Regarding their attitude toward EFL, they assert that they dislike learning English. Additionally, they lack the ability to independently summarize the key ideas in the English course material and are unable to recognize the application of the knowledge they have learned in the classroom to their everyday lives. Nonetheless, they enjoy sharing their thoughts in English lessons.

Figure 23 – Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Non-Italian Students

<b>NON-ITALIAN STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 8</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.25	1.58

<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	3.38	2.13
<b>UOE</b>	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.	4.00	1.77
<b>ROE</b>	13. I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	3.63	1.30
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	23. I like to give opinions during English lessons.	5.63	1.69
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	37. I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	5.13	1.36
	47. I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	5.13	1.64
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	40. I do not like studying English.	5.13	1.89

Below are the tables where the data of non-Italian students can be seen in more details.

Figure 24 illustrates the results regarding Chinese students. With regard to students' EI, they performed better in Use of Emotion (mean of 4.25) and worse in Others' Emotion Appraisal (mean of 1.88). As far as respondents' attitude is concerned, the means of all three elements were comparable. In actuality, the behavioral component had the greatest mean (3.57), followed by the cognitive (3.50) and emotional (with a mean of 3.40) dimensions.

Figure 24 – *Descriptive Statistics of Chinese Students' Results*

<b>CHINESE STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 2</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	3.75	0.89
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	1.88	0.83
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	4.25	1.04
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	4.13	1.25
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	3.57	1.38
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.50	1.31
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.40	1.22

As shown in Figure 25, Chinese students agreed that identifying their own emotions is easier for them than identifying those of their friends. They convince themselves that they are

capable individuals who can also regulate their emotions to deal with difficult situations. Furthermore, they assert that they learn more and comprehend more when they study English, despite the fact that they ignore their English teacher and believe they cannot use the knowledge they have learned in the subject in real life. Furthermore, students in their English lessons do not experience anxiety when they are asked to respond to questions.

Figure 25 – Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Chinese Students

<b>CHINESE STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 2</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	2. I have a good understanding of my own emotions.	4.00	1.41
	3. I really understand what I feel.	4.00	0.00
	4. I always know whether I am happy or not.	4.00	1.41
<b>OEA</b>	5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	2.50	0.71
<b>UOE</b>	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.	5.00	1.41
<b>ROE</b>	13. I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	5.00	0.00
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	61. I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	6.00	1.41
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	24. I have more knowledge and more understanding when I study English.	5.00	1.41
	47. I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	5.00	1.41
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	26. I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.	6.00	1.41

The results with relation to Romanian students are shown in Figure 26. Respondents' EI showed that they did poorly in Others' Emotion Appraisal (mean of 2.42), and best in two categories, that is to say Regulation of Emotion and Self-Emotion Appraisal (both with a mean of 3.25). Regarding students' attitude towards EFL, they scored the highest mean in the behavioral dimension (4.27) and the lowest in the emotional one (3.62), even if there is only a slight difference with the cognitive aspect (3.64).

Figure 26 – *Descriptive Statistics of Romanian Students' Results*

<b>ROMANIAN STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 3</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	3.25	1.86
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.42	0.79
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	2.75	1.29
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	3.25	0.97
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.27	1.68
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.64	1.43
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.62	1.53

Romanian students' results are further illustrated in Figure 27. They asserted that they are better at identifying their own feelings than those of others. They struggle, nevertheless, with self-control and self-motivation with their emotions. Given that studying EFL makes them feel happy and that they hope to study English more in the future, their attitude toward the subject appears to be favorable. Additionally, they would want to practice speaking with those peers who excel in it.

Figure 27 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Romanian Students*

<b>ROMANIAN STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 3</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	3.67	2.08
<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	2.67	1.15
	8. I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	2.67	0.58
<b>UOE</b>	11. I am a self-motivating person.	3.67	2.08
<b>ROE</b>	14. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.	3.67	1.15
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	29. When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.	6.00	1.73
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	25. I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	5.33	1.53
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	31. Studying English makes me have good emotions (feelings).	5.00	2.00

The findings pertaining to Moldovan students are shown in Figure 28. Students' emotional intelligence was highest in Others' Emotion Appraisal (mean of 2.88) and lowest in Self-Emotion Appraisal (mean of 1.13). Additionally, students' attitudes were found to be strongest in the behavioral component (5.13) and lowest in the emotional dimension (3.57). Furthermore, the cognitive aspect had a mean of 3.87.

Figure 28 – *Descriptive Statistics of Moldovan Students' Results*

<b>MOLDOVAN STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 2</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	1.13	0.35
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.88	2.36
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	1.88	0.99
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	1.38	0.52
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	5.13	2.30
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	3.87	2.32
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.57	2.36

Romanians' results are displayed in the next table (Figure 29). They asserted that although they are highly perceptive to other people's sentiments, they are unable to comprehend their own. Moreover, they do not utilize their feelings to convince themselves that they are capable individuals or to approach problems logically. Given that they stated they detested studying English, their attitude toward the language is negative. They find it particularly challenging to talk in public in English, both in class and in other places, and struggle to summarize the key ideas in English course material on their own. In addition, they try to avoid doing their English assignments. Still, Romanian students enjoy voicing their thoughts during English classes.



Figure 29 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Romanian Students*

<b>MOLDOVAN STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 2</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	3. I really understand what I feel.	1.50	0.71
<b>OEA</b>	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	6.50	0.71
<b>UOE</b>	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.	3.00	1.41
<b>ROE</b>	13. I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	2.00	0.00
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	21. Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.	7.00	0.00
	23. I like to give opinions during English lessons.	7.00	0.00
	35. I put off my English homework as much as possible.	7.00	0.00
	42. I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.	7.00	0.00
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	37. I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	6.50	0.71
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	40. I do not like studying English.	7.00	0.00

The data with reference to Moroccan students is shown in Figure 30. Students did the best in Regulation of Emotion (mean of 4.00) and the lowest in Self-Emotion Appraisal (mean of 2.50) in terms of emotional intelligence. Furthermore, students performed better in the behavioral dimension of attitudes toward EFL (with a mean of 4.87) than in the cognitive (4.00) or emotional (3.80) domains.

Figure 30 – *Descriptive Statistics of Moroccan Students' Results*

<b>MOROCCAN STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Number of respondents: 1</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Self-Emotion Appraisal</b>	2.50	1.29
<b>Others' Emotion Appraisal</b>	3.50	1.91
<b>Use of Emotion</b>	3.25	2.87
<b>Regulation of Emotion</b>	4.00	2.00
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	4.87	2.00
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	4.00	1.96
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	3.80	2.37

The Moroccan student's responses are displayed in Figure 31. It was not possible to compute the standard deviation because there was only one Moroccan student. They<sup>4</sup> asserted that they could identify other people's feelings better than their own. However, they are able to use their emotions to tell themselves they are competent. Additionally, as they can typically control their feelings, especially in the face of adversity or rage, they are able to regulate their emotions. In reference to studying English as a foreign language, they acknowledge its crucial role in fostering positive friendships. Even so, they said that learning the language is challenging and that they would rather study in their home tongue than any other foreign language. They also experience anxiety and embarrassment when speaking in English in class. They do not attempt to receive information about the classes they missed, and they postpone doing their English homework as much as possible. They acknowledged that they just studied English for their exams and could not see how having an understanding of the language would benefit them in their daily lives.

Figure 31 – *Descriptive Statistics of the Items with the Highest Mean Values – Moroccan Students*

<b>MOROCCAN STUDENTS</b>			
<b>Number of respondents: 1</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
<b>SEA</b>	1. I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time.	3.00	/
<b>OEA</b>	5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	5.00	/
	8. I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	5.00	/
<b>UOE</b>	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.	7.00	/
<b>ROE</b>	13. I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	5.00	/
	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	5.00	/
	16. I have good control of my emotions.	5.00	/
<b>Attitude – Behavior</b>	21. Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.	7.00	/
	22. Studying English helps me have good relationships with friends.	7.00	/
	35. I put off my English homework as much as possible.	7.00	/

<sup>4</sup> The neutral pronoun *they* was chosen to safeguard the student's gender details.

	41. I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.	7.00	/
	42. I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.	7.00	/
	54. When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.	7.00	/
<b>Attitude – Cognition</b>	38. Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.	7.00	/
	47. I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	7.00	/
	56. In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.	7.00	/
<b>Attitude – Emotions</b>	32. I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.	7.00	/

The data just provided are examined in greater detail in the upcoming chapter (See Section V), in order to find relationships and discuss the findings in the context of previous research.

## V. Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the questionnaire, presented in the previous chapter (See Chapter IV). The outcomes are discussed in the light of the literary review (See Chapter II) and some hypotheses about the reasons and consequences of the findings are proposed as well. This chapter is structured in the following way. At first, there is a discussion of the general results, which are examined taking into consideration the answers of all the sixty-nine participants. Subsequently, the chapter proceeds at commenting the disaggregated data to better investigate the differences between (1) male and female students, (2) fourth year and fifth-year students and (3) Italian and non-Italian students. In the last case, a further disaggregation into the different nationalities (Chinese, Romanian, Moldovan and Moroccan) is discussed. Additionally, this chapter includes the answers to the Research Questions presented in the Introduction (Chapter I).

### 5.1 Emotional Intelligence

The inquiry into the respondents' emotional intelligence, namely its four dimensions—Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, and Use of Emotion—was the focus of the first section of the questionnaire. Any of the four categories received high scores, according to the preliminary analysis of the findings (none of them are over the mean value of 4). This could be problematic for the students because, according to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence accounts for 80% of success in life, whereas cognitive ability accounts for only 20%. Furthermore, EI dictates how well we understand and relate to others, perceive ourselves, and handle the demands of our environment, according to Bar-On (1988, 1997, 2006). Since these are all significant facets of a person's life, it would confirm that inadequate emotional intelligence in students can contribute to difficulties. When examining the individual dimensions of emotional intelligence, the component with the highest mean value was Regulation of Emotion, which was followed by Self-Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion, and finally Others' Emotion Appraisal. The single aspect outcomes are discussed in more details in the paragraphs that follow.

### 5.1.1 Emotional Intelligence: Self-Emotion Appraisal

Self-Emotion Appraisal, according to Wong and Law (2007), is the evaluation and expressing of one's own emotions. This has to do with a person's capacity to recognize and appropriately communicate their innermost feelings. High achievers in this domain are able to perceive and identify emotions well ahead of the average person. However, the participants of this study claimed to have difficulties in understanding their emotions and the cause for them. In particular, they seem to find it difficult to understand whether they are happy. Furthermore, since “self-emotion appraisal may be considered in facilitating improvement of self-esteem among young adults at the developmental stage of increasing self-esteem” (Fakunmoju, Bammeke, & Maphosa, 2021, p.276), students who reported having low levels of Self-Emotion Appraisal may also struggle with the process of development in self-esteem. Additionally, people who are aware of their emotions are also aware of their moods and may make informed decisions when confronted with situations that need personal judgment (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Othman et al., 2009). This means that the study participants might not be able to make wise choices since they reported poor levels in this area.

### 5.1.2 Emotional Intelligence: Others' Emotion Appraisal

Others' Emotion Appraisal has to do with a person's capacity to recognize and comprehend the feelings of those in their immediate vicinity. High achievers in this skill will be far more perceptive of others' thoughts and feelings (Wong and Law, 2007). The study participants reported an inability to observe, as well as to understand, others' emotions. Additionally, they do not seem able to understand their friends' emotions from their behavior and to respond appropriately. This dimension is significant in our day-to-day interactions since the emotions of one person impact the emotions of another due to the impact on the assessments of the second person. Specifically, people may consider the emotions of other people when determining the emotional relevance of what is occurring (e.g., Manstead & Fischer, 2001). For instance, we may become more aware of the dangers we are facing if someone near to us experiences anxiety (Parkinson & Simons 2009). Moreover, high performers on this ability are thought to be more sensitive to the emotions and feelings of others, more likely to recognize others' emotions and feelings accurately, and more skilled at recognizing the

differences between various emotions, comprehending how emotions change over time, and determining which emotion is most appropriate in a particular situation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Wong & Law, 2002). Since being aware of other people's emotions is often associated with empathy (Reeves, 2005), the respondents may also perform poorly in empathy-related skills.

#### 5.1.3 Emotional Intelligence: Use of Emotion

Use of Emotion relates to the ability to channel one's emotions into productive endeavors and self-actualization. A highly skilled individual in this domain consistently experiences happy feelings and they are able to inspire themselves to perform better over time. Additionally, they optimize their emotional intelligence to enable optimal performance in both their personal and professional life. In this category, study participants also performed poorly since they described themselves as reasonably self-motivated individuals who constantly remind themselves of their abilities, but they also claimed to have difficulty in setting and achieving personal objectives. Therefore, respondents may find it difficult to effectively integrate their feelings with their work and may not be able to use their emotions to support cognitive functions. Moreover, they might not be able to properly digest information and stimuli and adapt to changing circumstances, since emotions are necessary and beneficial in these aspects (George & Zhou, 2003).

#### 5.1.4 Emotional Intelligence: Regulation of Emotion

Self-regulation of emotion refers to the capacity of an individual to control their feelings, allowing for a quicker recovery from emotional highs and lows. Students did better in this area since it had the highest mean out of the four EI elements. Specifically, many said they could quickly get calm after becoming enraged. Still, the results weren't good either. In actuality, respondents claimed that they struggle to keep their emotions in check and that they are unable to deal with challenges rationally. Since emotional regulation processes restrict internal arousal to limits that maximize performance (Thompson, 1991), students might not be able to respond to environmental changes with speed and efficiency. Furthermore, when in an intense mood, a person with good ability in this area can maintain

behavioral control (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Othman et al., 2009). Students with poor levels of self-regulation might also be worse at controlling their emotions and be more likely to lose their temper. Tamir (2016) asserts that social interactions, mental health, wellbeing, and cognitive performance are all strongly correlated with the ability to regulate emotions. It follows that the study participants' inability to control their emotions has an effect on other significant aspects of their lives.

As already anticipated in Section 3.4.3, previous research seems to agree that all the aspects of emotional intelligence are interrelated (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Wong & Law, 2002). It should not come as a surprise, then, that the results of the study have shown that all the four features have comparable final means. In fact, it is likely that if students had demonstrated high levels in one specific competency, then all the other dimensions would consequently have had higher means.

## 5.2 Students' Attitude towards EFL learning

The aim of the second part of the questionnaire was to investigate students' attitudes towards EFL learning. All the three dimensions of attitude, that is to say behavior, cognition and emotions, were explored in this study. The results pertaining to these three components were also not very good, in line with what the findings of students' emotional intelligence demonstrated. As a matter of fact, the final means for the behavioral component was 4,19, while for the cognitive and emotional aspects were 3,68. This might have some consequences for the respondents, in particular as far as their language performance are concerned since students' attitude has an impact on their language acquisition (Mathewson, 1994; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Moreover, students' negative mindset may create a barrier towards EFL (Dornyei & Csizer, 2002) and a reduction of their self-esteem and confidence (Brown, 2009). Negatively oriented people may not only be reluctant to actively participate in their speaking exercises and to use more strategies to overcome obstacles in their speaking practices (Zeinivand, Azizifar, & Gowhary, 2015) but they may also have low proficiency in English spelling and writing as well (Al-Sobhi, Rashid, & Abdullah, 2018). Taking into account the respondents' answers to the individual items, these theories seem highly plausible. They are illustrated in more details in the following paragraphs.

### 5.2.1 The Behavioral Aspect of Attitude towards English Language

It appears that participants are aware of how learning English can enhance personality and foster positive friendships. However, the majority of students stated that they do not, and are unable to force themselves to, pay attention when their English teacher is explaining the material. They also do not seem very interested in being informed on what has been done during the lessons when they are absent. Furthermore, they expressed no agreement or disagreement with the claim that they look forward to attending class while English is being taught. This could be connected to the nervousness people have in class. In fact, they enjoy voicing their thoughts during English classes and would like to practice speaking with classmates who they think are more fluent in the language. However, they get anxious and worried when they have to speak in front of other students. Speaking abilities therefore appear to be a challenge for them. Their disinterest in making plenty of English-speaking acquaintances and their refusal to use the language in the same context as native speakers both serve as more evidence of this. It might be said that, generally speaking, students do not have a positive attitude towards EFL since they do not take an active part in speaking exercises and do not use strategies to get beyond speaking practice barriers (Zeinivand, Azizifar, & Gowhary, 2015). Some of the respondents also mentioned that they try to postpone their English homework as much as possible, suggesting that this has some consequences on what happens at home as well. These outcomes are consistent with the research conducted by Burgos and Perez (2015). In actuality, they asserted that while most students have a favorable attitude toward learning English, they may not be wholly committed to doing so in the classroom. Furthermore, even though they believe that learning English is crucial, students rarely dedicate enough time to studying the language at home. This seems to be the exact behavior of the study participants. The results of this research are also in line with the findings of the study by Abolfazli & Sadeghi (2018). Studying English, according to their research participants, help them feel proud and enhance their capacity to converse with others.

### 5.2.2 The Cognitive Aspect of Attitude towards English Language

According to the study results, participants do not believe that learning English is vital since it will not advance their level of education. In actuality, they do not consider multilingual



individuals to be particularly knowledgeable. Since they claimed that learning English does not help them communicate in English effectively or that the knowledge from the English topic cannot be utilized in real life, it is highly likely that they believe the English they learn at school is not useful. Additionally, students believe that English does not help them study other subjects well, and new information learned in English cannot be connected to their prior knowledge. Because they feel that the content of English courses does not cover a wide range of topics, respondents do not believe that studying the language has increased their knowledge or understanding. They did, however, assert that they study English for reasons other than exam success; for instance, they seem to somewhat agree with the claim that learning the language helps them create new thoughts. Their biggest difficulty is summarizing the key ideas in the English text, but they also struggle with thinking and analyzing in the language. Still, they generally asserted that learning English is neither hard nor complex. Additionally, they are generally happy with how they perform in the English course, and they have a little preference for continuing to study the language in the future. Only one feature of these results appears to be consistent with those of Abolfazli and Sadeghi (2018), namely the students' agreement in both research that studying English aids in the generation of new ideas and knowledge. The other results, on the other hand, are entirely different. Indeed, the participants in Abolfazli and Sadeghi's (2018) study reported having favorable attitudes toward English because they are keen to learn it and believe it is an important language that will help them become more confident and educated. Students' knowledge and comprehension of English enable them to make connections between new and prior knowledge. This is not the case for the present study participants, as was previously stated. This might be due to the fact that in the fourth and the fifth year of this school, the English subject content is largely dedicated to the study of economics-related notions. As a result, learners may not immediately see the value of what they are learning. Furthermore, even though they believe that learning English is not difficult, their struggle with summarizing and interpreting the language may be related to the fact that it is employed in writings about economics.

### 5.2.3 The Emotional Aspect of Attitude towards English Language

This section presents contrasting results. Although students are not particularly interested in their English lesson, they actually enjoy the time they spend in it. They have differing opinions about EFL as well. On the one hand, individuals experience happy feelings because they take pleasure in learning the language and they like engaging in English-language activities. They also claimed that they enjoy learning different languages, such as English, and that they don't feel nervous when they have to respond to a question in their English class. There may be some questions about their latter answer, given that in the behavioral items they stated they have anxiety and worry when they have to speak in front of other classmates. One explanation could be that they are less anxious when asked to reply concisely in English than when they are allowed to speak more freely. Students also stated that learning English is not a major life objective, which is why they are not interested in studying the language. They do not, however, agree or disagree with two statements: the first asserting that learning English improves their emotional condition, and the second saying they dislike the English subject. These contrasting outcomes may suggest that they are unaware of their own thoughts and feelings. Regarding speaking English, participants report that they are not thrilled to converse in English with others and that they do not wish they could speak the language well. Furthermore, learners stated that they believe being curious helps them study English successfully and that they do not prefer studying in their own tongue over any other foreign language. The results of the present study are only partially in line with those of Abolfazli & Sadeghi's (2018). According to the findings of both research, students expressed satisfaction and enthusiasm for learning and using the language, and they enjoyed participating in English-language activities. But there are also some distinctions. On the one hand, students of Abolfazli & Sadeghi (2018) stated that they are anxious when speaking the language, but that studying English gives them more confidence, particularly in their capacity for self-expression. Conversely, the participants of this study did not agree nor disagree with either of these statements.

### 5.3. Emotional Intelligence and Students' Attitudes – Participants' Demographic Profile

The following paragraphs aims to investigate whether gender, year of study and nationality have any effect on the outcomes.

### 5.3.1 Emotional Intelligence and Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning: Gender

The forty male students who participated in the study have low levels of emotional intelligence, according to the results. Male participants indicated a lack of ability to both identify and use their feelings, despite appearing to be generally better at controlling their own emotions and identifying those of others. Moreover, males have a tendency to overestimate their EI (Sanchez et al 2008; Meshkat & Nejati, 2017) and, therefore, the results might be more optimistic than the reality. The assertion that they can always rapidly calm down when they are furious and that they comprehend what they feel was most strongly agreed with by male respondents. Furthermore, they seem able to use their emotions to achieve some goals by telling themselves that they are competent people. This could have a direct bearing on self-motivation, and it would support earlier findings that men are better at motivating themselves (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003) and have high levels of confidence in themselves.

When it comes to their attitudes toward EFL, particularly in relation to its emotional and cognitive components, male students likewise did poorly. Nevertheless, they performed slightly better in the behavioral dimension. Looking at the items with which they agreed the most, there seems to be contrasting results. They actually look forward to their English class time and would love to practice speaking with those students who speak the language well. This may be consistent with one of the outcomes of the study by Bernat and Lloyd (2007), which suggested that men are more likely to find practicing English with native speakers enjoyable. Male participants also asserted that they cannot use what they learn in English class in their everyday lives. It can therefore be claimed that even though they behave and feel positively about the English language, their lack of motivation prevents them from seeing the value of what they are learning. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Bacon and Finnemann (1992), who also found that male students are less motivated. In order to significantly change their complex attitude, it could be appropriate to set aside some time to help them reflect on the importance of English, especially in relation to their daily life. Additionally, because men tend to overestimate their English proficiency (Siebert, 2003), the responses they provided on the ability-related measures may have been more optimistic than reality.

The study involved 29 female students, and the findings indicated that their emotional intelligence is not very high as well. They claimed to be incapable of identifying the emotions of others, despite their capacity to control their own emotions. Regarding acknowledging and utilizing their feelings, they reported similar values. These results are not consistent with previous research. As a matter of fact, a review of the literature reveals that opinions appear to be in agreement on women's superior capacity for empathy and emotional awareness. Nonetheless, the study's findings indicate that this is the area where the female students reported problems. Moreover, they mostly disagreed with the statement indicating that they are sensitive to the feelings of others. This might be due to their young age and therefore this ability may also improve over the course of their life. Another important outcome concerns the ability of emotion regulation. As indicated in the State of the Art (See Section 2.1.1), previous research agrees with the fact that men are more capable of regulating their emotions. Nevertheless, in the present study not only did females report higher levels than males but this is also the ability in which they performed better, especially in relation to the ability to calm down when they are angry. Female respondents also claimed to be self-motivating people, demonstrating that they are more able than males to use intrinsic motivation to achieve their goals. This finding is contrary to previous studies which have suggested that women score lower on the motivational aspect (Mandell and Pherwani, 2003). Furthermore, female students may have higher levels of emotional intelligence than what they reported because they tend to underestimate it (Sanchez et al., 2008; Meshkat & Nejati, 2017).

In relation to females' attitudes towards EFL, no component received particularly high scores. Thus, it may be claimed that female students generally have a negative opinion toward the English language. The lowest mean is found, in particular, in the cognitive and emotional aspects of attitude. There appears to be contrastive outcomes when the items with the highest means are evaluated. Although students stated that they enjoy their time in English class, they also acknowledged that they do not pay attention when the teacher is presenting the material. This could indicate that they enjoy aspects about their English sessions more than the explanations, such as the class interactions. Should this hypothesis hold true, it would validate Holmes' (1995) theory, which posits that female students enjoy classroom encounters since they primarily utilize language for social connection. It would be interesting to elaborate more on these aspects, maybe with personal interviews with the

students. Furthermore, since they stated that they are unable to independently summarize the key ideas in the English course material, some class time could be dedicated to improving this skill. However, it might be important to organize that lesson in a way that allows the exploitation of students' motivation and prevents their distraction.

In conclusion, a comparison of the answers from male and female students reveals that, on the whole, the female students performed better in all categories, including the sections on attitude and emotional intelligence. Even yet, the results are comparable because, in relation to other aspects of emotional intelligence, both genders scored higher on the emotional regulation scale. Additionally, behavioral attitude scores for both genders of students are greater than other components of their attitude. There is a distinction between the emotional and cognitive aspects of attitude values between men and women. In actuality, female students performed better in the first dimension, whereas male students performed better in the second. The research questions and hypotheses related to the impact of gender on EI and attitude towards EFL were the following:

**Q2.1:** Are there any differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between female and male students?

**Q2.2:** Are there any differences, in relation to attitudes towards EFL, between female and male students?

**H2.1:** Female students are more emotionally intelligent than male students.

**H2.2.:** Female students have a more positive attitude toward EFL than male students.

The discussion has shown that the aforementioned value disparities are insufficient to prove the higher EI and the more positive attitude towards EFL of one gender in a definitive way. Therefore, it might be more appropriate to talk about a tendency of female participants to be more emotionally intelligent and to have a more favorable attitude toward EFL. For this reason, the hypothesis 2.1 is confirmed only partially.

### 5.3.2 Emotional Intelligence and Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning: Academic Year

Thirty-seven students attending the fourth year of high school agreed to participate in the present study. Their emotional intelligence is generally low, especially when it involves identifying the feelings of others. While self-emotion appraisal and use of emotion have similar values, the aspect related to the regulation of emotion is quite higher than the three other EI components. In relation to the single items, most of the students agreed with the claim stating that they can always calm down quickly when they are angry. Moreover, they understand their feelings and are used to telling themselves they are competent people. As already anticipated, they also mentioned having trouble telling their friends' moods from their actions, as was to be expected considering the results related to others' emotion appraisal. Previous research has not found an agreement on the relationship between EI and age, as illustrated in the State of the Art (See Section 2.1.2). Some studies (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998; Maddocks & Sparrows, 1998; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Baron et al., 2000; Derksen, Kramer, & Katzko, 2002) have concluded that EI develops with age. As a result, the students' reported findings may just be an indicator of their current emotional intelligence, which may increase and improve over time.

It may be possible to draw the conclusion that fourth-year students' attitudes toward EFL are typically unfavorable based on the results of their attitude survey. In actuality, their attitude scores were poor, particularly for the cognitive component of attitude but also for the behavioral and emotional aspects. However, the most-agreed items seem to suggest the opposite. In fact, they eagerly await their English class time, and they assert that learning the English language improves their ability to think creatively and build strong friendships. These findings imply that they understand the value and advantages of learning English, which may explain why they look forward to the English lessons. The literary review suggested that there is a positive relationship between students' age and years of English on their views about EFL (Matsuda, 2000, Abolfazli & Sadeghi, 2018). As a result, the students' knowledge of and contentment with English may be attributable to their several years of English study.

The results of the thirty-seven fifth-year students who consented to participate in the study indicate that their emotional intelligence is extremely poor. All four EI components were graded similarly by the students, although Use of Emotion and Self-Emotion Appraisal are

the areas where they performed the lowest. In both Others' Emotion Appraisal and Emotion Regulation, they performed marginally better. The items with the highest mean values (still very low results) appear to indicate that some fifth-year participants reported being able to control their anger almost instantly. They also mentioned that they have trouble sensing other people's feelings and comprehending their own. Furthermore, they lack self-motivation. These outcomes might seem to be in contrast with what has been claimed in previous research. Numerous earlier studies have found that emotional intelligence levels are positively impacted by age, even in minor ways (Fariselli, Ghini, & Freedman, 2008). Nonetheless, the current study's findings seem to indicate that fifth-year high school learners have poor EI scores, even lower than those of their fourth-year peers. Low EI inevitably affects all facets of life, since EI is defined as the interplay of emotional and social competencies, abilities, and behaviors that determines how well we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate to them, and cope with environmental demands (Bar-On, 1988, 1997, 2006). Therefore, there might be a few consequences for these students, which would be interesting to investigate further, particularly in light of the fact that they will soon be attending college or finding employment.

In relation to their feelings toward EFL, fifth-year participants' results seem to be relatively better than those of EI. It would still be more appropriate to speak of a negative attitude toward the English language, though, based on a general observation of them. Specifically, despite the fact that their behavior tends to be somewhat favorable, their emotions indicate that most of them feel negatively about English. The study of the individual items really suggests the opposite; therefore, this is not confirmed. In actuality, the majority of students stated that while they enjoy taking English classes, they actually do not pay attention to their teacher when they are presenting the lesson. Furthermore, they claimed that they find it difficult to summarize the key ideas in the English course material on their own. These outcomes seem to be in contrast with the studies mentioned in the literary review (See Section 2.6.2). Several studies have concluded that higher grade learners have a more positive attitude toward learning English than younger aged or lower grade students (Matsuda, 2000; Gömleksiz, 2010; Hou, 2015). Nonetheless, the study's findings imply that fourth-year students have a more positive attitude towards the English language than fifth-year students.

Regarding how age affects emotional intelligence and attitudes toward EFL, the following research questions and hypotheses were presented:

**Q3.1:** Are there any differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school?

**Q3.2:** Are there any differences, in relation to attitudes towards EFL, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school?

**H3.1:** There is no difference, in relation to emotional intelligence, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school.

**H3.2:** There is no difference, in relation to attitudes towards EFL, between students attending the fourth year and students attending the fifth year of high school.

To summarize, when fourth-year students' findings are compared to those of fifth-year students, the final means show that fourth-year students performed better both in EI and attitudes. In particular, they scored higher in all areas of emotional intelligence and in the emotional component of attitude. Students in their fifth year, however, performed better in the behavioral and cognitive domains of attitude. Looking at the single dimensions in details, both fourth year and fifth-year participants have higher values in Regulation of Emotion. However, fourth-year respondents scored higher in Self-Emotion Appraisal, followed by Use of Emotion and at last Others' Emotion Appraisal, whereas fifth year students scored higher in Others' Emotion Appraisal, followed by Self-Emotion Appraisal and at last Use of Emotion. Furthermore, there is no difference between fourth year and fifth year students as far as the behavioral aspect of attitude since in both cases it had the highest mean. Nevertheless, those in their fourth year of study scored higher in the emotional component of attitude, while those in their fifth year scored higher in the cognitive one. For these reasons, both hypotheses 3.1 and 3.2 were not confirmed because there are some differences between fourth year and fifth year students. Nevertheless, considering the heterogeneity of results, it is not possible to conclude that age has any direct and inevitable effect on EI or attitudes. Comparing the outcomes of students with a greater age gap, such as those of first-year students with those of fifth-year students may have been preferable. Additionally, it is important to evaluate the influence of other factors and variables. For example, studies have



shown that parents, professors, and classmates can positively influence students' attitudes (Matsuda, 2000).

### 5.3.3 Emotional Intelligence and Students' Attitudes towards EFL learning: Nationality

Sixty-one study participants are Italian (out of sixty-nine), indicating that this group constitutes the majority of the participants. Their poor EI was demonstrated by the outcomes, particularly when it comes to using one's own emotions and recognizing those of others. Moreover, self-emotion assessment received a low score as well. Regarding emotional regulation, the students' agreement was highest on this item, which led to a significantly better result, especially when it came to their capacity to quickly calm down when they are upset. The remaining single items supported the earlier discussion, which stated that students claimed to be insensitive to other people's emotions and incapable of understanding their own. Furthermore, they indicated that they lack self-motivation. Nationality does not appear to have as much of an influence on emotional intelligence as culture does, as mentioned in the State of the Art (See Section 2.1.3). Given that cultural beliefs, values, and customs influence how people think and respond to their environment, it may be more relevant to analyze the type of culture that students belong to (Scott-Halsell, Saiprasert, & Yang, 2013). A number of studies have classified Italy as an individualistic culture and, in these cultures, self-focused emotions are thought to be prevalent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This could help to partially explain the poor score in the category where people had to rate the emotions of others. But there is so little variation with the other categories that it is impossible to identify culture as a determining factor.

Only eight non-Italian students participated in the study. Specifically, there are two students from China, three from Romania, one from Morocco, and two from Moldova in this group. The values related to their emotional intelligence were very low, especially in relation to how well they assessed their own and other people's feelings. In other words, they asserted that they are unable to identify their own emotions as well as those of others. The single items support the data just mentioned. In actuality, the majority of students claimed that they are not sensitive to other people's feelings and that they do not comprehend their own. Nonetheless, a few of them asserted that they constantly convince themselves that they are capable individuals who can manage their anger to deal with situations calmly. People's EI

seems to be influenced by their cultures, as was already mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. It would seem more logical, therefore, to investigate the students' findings in more detail while separating the various cultures.

The two Chinese students reported modest levels of emotion use, use of emotion, and self-emotion appraisal. All these three factors can be considered more individualistic. However, when it came to the interpersonal dimension – the assessment of others' emotions – it received a very low score. Actually, they asserted that they have a solid comprehension of their feelings, particularly the happy ones. They also have self-control over their anger and constantly remind themselves of their abilities. Still, they find it difficult to infer their friends' feelings from their actions. These results might be surprising since China was considered a collectivist society and, therefore, the other-focused emotions should have been dominant. However, in last year there seems to be a tendency towards low individualism (Chung & Mallery, 1999; Wong, 2001; Cao, 2009; Steele & Lynch, 2013) and this might be the explanation of the results of this study. Nonetheless, since the individualistic Italian culture may have had some influence, it could be useful to discover how long the students have lived in Italy.

The three Romanian students expressed significant challenges in identifying other people's emotions. Additionally, they convey difficulties with self-emotion assessment and emotion regulation. It is reasonable to conclude that these results indicate a poor level of emotional intelligence. Specifically, they reported major difficulties in noticing and being sensitive to the feelings of others, despite their modest levels of self-motivation and emotional awareness and regulation skills. Romanian students were expected to be more adept in other-focused emotions since their culture is traditionally considered collectivist (Ciochina & Faria, 2009; Dumitrescu, 2016; Ianole-Călin et al., 2020). However, their stay in Italy may have altered their perspective on emotions, which could be one explanation for this. It could be interesting to investigate whether students from Romania who are living in Italy and those who are still in Romania vary from one another in terms of emotional intelligence.

Two Moldovan students participated in the study. Compared to all other nationalities, their emotional intelligence was the lowest, nearly at zero. Among the four components of EI, however, others' emotion appraisal was the highest. The individual items, which demonstrated their extreme sensitivity to other people's emotions, further support this. On

the other hand, they asserted that they lack the emotional intelligence or self-control to deal with challenging circumstances in a reasoned manner. They also have a tendency to deny to themselves that they are capable individuals. The better results in other-focused emotion skills might be due to their culture. As a matter of fact, they belong to a collectivist society, where relationships take precedence over objectives (Baltador, 2016; Pirlog, 2021; Popa, 2020). People would rather maintain friendships both within and outside of the workplace than pursue career objectives that can jeopardize them (Pirlog, 2021). It is possible to argue, therefore, that people care about other people's feelings and want to avoid harming them as a result. It could be interesting to investigate if Moldovans' time in Italy has mitigated their awareness and concern of other people's feelings in any way.

The study only included one Moroccan student, who demonstrated modest levels of emotional intelligence in regard to emotion control, followed by others' assessment and use of emotion. When it came to self-emotion rating, they did the worst. The individual items demonstrated that they consistently remind themselves of their competence. Furthermore, they asserted that they have good emotional regulation, saying that they can manage conflict logically by controlling their temper, but they can also swiftly calm down when they become very angry. Additionally, they are very perceptive of the emotions of those around them and are able to infer their moods from their actions. However, the Moroccan participant frequently lacks a clear understanding of the reasons for their feelings. The fact that they scored higher in the components related to others' feeling might have a connection with the fact that they belong to a collectivist society. Nonetheless, because there is only one Moroccan respondent, it is impossible to determine whether their responses are a reflection of their culture or personal traits, making it impossible to draw any inferences.

The research question and hypothesis that follow relates to the impact of nationality or culture on emotional intelligence:

**Q4.1:** Are there any differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between Italian students and non-Italian students?

**H4.1:** There are some differences, in relation to emotional intelligence, between Italian students and non-Italian students. In particular, Italian students will show higher levels of EI since they belong to an individualistic culture.

From the comparison of the results of Italian students with those of non-Italian ones, it has emerged that the former outperformed the latter in every aspect of emotional intelligence. Therefore, it might seem appropriate to state that Italian students have higher levels of EI. However, when the non-Italian students' data are disassembled, Italian students did worse than Chinese students in Self-Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion and Regulation of Emotion; than Romanian participants in Self-Emotion Appraisal; than Moroccan respondents in Others' Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion and Regulation of Emotion. Moldovan students had the lowest results than any nationalities in any EI categories. The outcomes do not appear to follow any clear path. In summary, just a part of the hypothesis 4.1 is confirmed. While there are some variations between Italian and non-Italian students in terms of emotional intelligence, Italian students did not demonstrate better levels of EI than students from other nationalities, and the results, therefore, do not appear to be related to cultural belonging.

The findings for Italian students demonstrate a negative attitude toward the English language, particularly when considering the cognitive and emotional aspects of attitude. Conversely, the behavioral aspect appears to be marginally more favorable. The great majority of participants look forward to their English classes, according to the examination of the individual items. However, when their English teacher explains the lesson, they do not pay attention. Furthermore, they said that they cannot use the knowledge they learn in English class in their everyday life. For these reasons, it might be possible to say that they do not feel motivated to learn English in class. This general tendency towards a EFL negative attitude is in contrast with previous research, which have concluded that Italian students are mostly positive towards English (Bagni, 2022). It is noteworthy, however, that several students in Bagni's (2022) study lamented the EFL classroom's overemphasis on teaching abstract grammar rules and its failure to foster students' ability to use the language in real-world situations, especially when speaking. Some of them also argued that if students are excessively preoccupied with grammatical correctness, which hinders speaking fluency, they will never be able to develop confidence in their ability to use English outside of the classroom. The majority of the Italian students in this survey agreed with the statement indicating that it is impossible for them to use the knowledge they have learned in English classes in their everyday lives, confirming Bagni's (2022) results on this aspect.

Non-Italian students' results indicate that they generally see EFL with a little more positive attitude. Specifically, non-Italian students performed better than Italian students in the behavioral and cognitive aspects of attitude, but not as well in the emotional one. It is important to note, nevertheless, that the two items pertaining to the cognitive component that the majority of students agreed upon state what the students are unable to achieve. More specifically, they acknowledged that they are unable to independently summarize the key ideas in the English course material and apply the information they learn in English classes to their everyday lives. They further stated that they dislike learning English. This could point to a propensity toward a negative attitude. Nonetheless, given that they claimed to enjoy voicing their thoughts in class, it appears that they value the interactions that occur there. Expanding the data further while accounting for a single ethnicity at a time might be an interesting idea. By doing so, it might be possible to identify any differences between various nations and contrast the findings with earlier studies.

The two Chinese students' attitude towards EFL can be considered mainly negative. In actuality, the three attitude components all received similar but low results. This does not seem to find support in the literature since Banya and Cheng (1997) concluded that Chinese students tend to have a positive attitude towards EFL. The participants of this study also asserted that studying English increases their knowledge and comprehension. This is consistent with the previous findings claiming that Chinese students feel self-confident when studying English (Banya & Cheng, 1997). However, the two Chinese acknowledged that they are unable to use the knowledge they have learned in this subject in their everyday lives. Regarding the English lessons, they claimed not to pay attention while their teacher is presenting the material. Moreover, they do not experience speech anxiety since they do not become nervous when they have to respond to questions in class. Banya and Cheng also concluded that the participants to their study emphasized speaking with an excellent accent and that they are focused on accuracy and proficiency but also enjoy conversing with native speakers. These factors explain why the findings of this study only partly agree with those of earlier research.

The three Romanian students performed better when it came to their attitudes regarding EFL, especially as far as its behavioral component is concerned. Despite the fact that the three components did not get very high results, the answers to the single items might suggest a

tendency towards a more positive attitude. They also stated that learning English makes them feel happy and that they look forward to learning more of the language in the future because they enjoy their English lessons much. Additionally, they want to practice speaking English with their more proficient classmates. This might indicate that they are interested in the development and improvement of their English skills in the future. It would be interesting to investigate the causes of this, whether it has anything to do with a specific job they hope to accomplish in the future or something else entirely. Romanian respondents' answers find support in previous research. As a matter of fact, both Cozma (2017) and Pavelescu (2018) concluded that Romanian students' attitude towards EFL is to be considered positive. The former claimed that English will play a significant role in the participants' future jobs since it will enable them to connect with people from around the world, access the Internet, and gain diverse perspectives on various cultures. Additionally, the latter stated that, like the study participants, the students in his research experience positive emotions when learning the language as well. Due to these factors, it might be concluded that the three Romanian students who agreed to be part to this study show a general positive attitude towards EFL.

The two Moldovan students who consented to participate in this study has a generally unfavorable opinion of EFL. It is not feasible to draw this conclusion from the overall findings because they display levels that are comparable to those of the other students. In fact, the behavioral component outperformed all other nationalities in terms of performance. Nevertheless, examining the responses for the individual questionnaire items provides additional clarification. As a matter of fact, they completely agree with the statements claiming that they do not like studying English or giving opinions during English lessons. Moreover, they are worried and embarrassed to speak English in front of other people and they find it difficult to summarize the important points in the English subject content by themselves. Their propensity to postpone their English homework is another aspect that demonstrates their aversion to the language. To gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind this negative attitude, it could be insightful to expand on this data further—perhaps through in-person interviews. For instance, students may find it difficult to learn English in Italy due to pedagogical differences or other personal reasons. Previous studies found that, despite the fact that English was growing more and more essential in Moldova, students lacked sufficient access to fluent English speakers to impact any form of improvement, leading to an ambivalent attitude among Moldovans toward EFL (Ciscel, 2002). For these

reasons, it might be crucial to discover if the Moldovan participants started learning English in Moldova or if they had their English initial instruction in Italy.

The one and only Moroccan student who participated in the study seems to have rather negative attitudes towards the learning of English as a foreign language. In actuality, the single items show that they have a propensity toward an aversion to EFL, even though their overall results are comparable to those of students from other countries. They stated that learning the language is difficult and that they would prefer to study in their native tongue rather than any other foreign language, despite acknowledging its critical function in creating strong friendships. When speaking in English in class, they feel embarrassed and anxious as well. They avoid asking questions about the classes they missed and postpone their English assignments as much as they can. They admitted that they just study English for their examinations and do not see how being able to communicate in the language can help them in their everyday lives. It may be feasible to infer from these facts that in addition to having a bad attitude, they lack motivation to alter their thoughts or produce better results. Determining if the student's poor attitude stems from personal reasons and whether the teacher can assist them in any way could be beneficial. This seems likely considering that previous studies concluded that Moroccan students tend to have a positive attitude towards studying English (Ahmed, 2016; Khouya, 2018). This seems due to the exposition to American culture, the strong desire to improve English communication skills and the positive social perception associated to a person who can speak English. Nonetheless, the fact that only one Moroccan student provided results prevents the possibility to generalize the data to all Moroccan students.

The following research question and hypothesis address how nationality or culture affects students' attitudes toward EFL:

**Q4.2:** Are there any differences, in relation to students' attitude towards EFL, between Italian students and non-Italian students?

**H4.2:** There are some differences, in relation to students' attitude towards EFL, between Italian students and non-Italian students. In particular, Italian, Chinese, Romanian and Moroccan students will show a positive attitude but at different levels. Moldovan students will show an ambivalent attitude.

When the students' results concerning their attitudes towards EFL are disaggregated by their various nationalities, we can compare them and find that there are some differences. Even though all students performed better in the behavioral section, and worse in the emotional area, the answers to the individual items allow the conclusions to be drawn that Italian students have a negative attitude toward EFL, and non-Italian students have more positive but still negative attitudes towards the English language. Students from Italy, China, Romania, and Morocco in particular display a negative attitude, while only students from Romania demonstrate a good attitude. For these reasons, the hypothesis number 4.2 is confirmed only as far as Romanian students' results are concerned. In the other cases, the outcomes of this study are not consistent with previous research and do not support the hypothesis. However, the study only included a small number of non-Italian students, making it challenging to link the findings to cultural identity. More studies including more non-Italians may be required to validate the current study's findings.

After a thorough analysis and discussion of all the data, the following research question (and related hypothesis) can now be addressed:

**Q<sub>1</sub>:** Is there a relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards EFL learning?

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards EFL learning.

The analysis of the results has shown that students have both low levels of emotional intelligence and a tendency towards a negative attitude towards EFL. It might be suggested that there is a positive relationship between these two aspects, with the former influencing the latter. However, the outcomes related to Romanian students showed that they have a positive attitude towards the English language despite their low levels of EI. This outcome might seem to be in contrast with the hypothesis but, as already said, only three Romanian students participated in the study and their results might be due to their personal motivation towards the study of the English language. Additionally, the idea that attitudes and EI have a positive association would be in line with the findings of Oz, Demirezen, and Pourfeiz's (2015) study, which came to the same conclusion. The possible existence of a positive relationship between the two aspects can be important because emphasizing EI development



may have a good impact on attitudes regarding learning English. However, further research is required to examine this subject properly and thoroughly. In the following chapter (see Chapter VI), the implications of this study as well as recommendations for additional research are covered.

## VI. Educational Implications and Conclusions

The study's data were presented and discussed in the preceding chapters, particularly in light of the earlier research that was referenced in the state of the art. In summary, the results indicate that the students have low levels of emotional intelligence as well as a propensity for having a bad attitude toward EFL. One could argue that these two factors have a positive relationship in which the former influences the latter. The present chapter aims to illustrate the implications that these findings might have for students, teachers, and parents. Moreover, some paragraphs are dedicated to explaining the limitations of the study, to suggesting further research and to presenting the conclusions.

### 6.1 Educational Implications for Students

Numerous significant parts of life have been shown to be impacted by emotional intelligence, with "life quality, academic/occupational success, resistance to stress, health, and the quality of social/marital relationships" being the most significant (Nelis et al., 2009, p. 36). Considering the age of the study participants, they might be interested in the effects of EI on the academic setting. A number of studies have linked students' academic achievement and commitment to EI. As a matter of fact, higher trait EI levels are associated with better test scores and grades for the individual (Jaeger, 2003). Moreover, the participants' age makes them interested into knowing the impact of EI on job performance. EI has been found to be associated with job performance and occupational success, especially for jobs involving high levels of interpersonal contacts (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004; Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). Therefore, it can be said that EI has an influence both on academic and job career. Students should be inspired and motivated to raise their EI levels because these two factors appear to be highly pertinent to them. Even more so if they take into account that this study raises the possibility that there may potentially be an effect on how they approach their EFL courses. Higher grades and a greater preparation in English may result from a more favorable attitude toward EFL and, as the language has become increasingly significant in people's life, this might have a great impact. It is important to say that students have the possibility to increase their emotional intelligence level. In actuality, a significant amount of research (e.g. Goleman, 1996; Cooper, 1997; Höpfl and Linstead, 1997; Martinez, 1997; Steiner, 1997) concurs that emotional intelligence is a trait or ability

that can be developed. Higgs and Dulewicz (1999)<sup>5</sup>, however, suggested that influence, self-awareness, and interpersonal sensitivity are the three areas of emotional intelligence that are more malleable than others. A subsequent investigation supported this theory (Higgs and Dulewicz, 2004). Furthermore, a large portion of the popular literature describes methods or initiatives meant to support people in enhancing their EI (Farnham, 1996; Cooper, 1997; Harrison, 1997; Martinez, 1997, for example). Although emotional intelligence can be developed, Goleman (1996) found that early interventions have the greatest impact. He was in fact quite skeptical of the effectiveness of learning interventions in later life. Nonetheless, a number of long-term studies have demonstrated that individuals can improve on these competences over a period of two to five years. There doesn't appear to be an issue with the students' age as they were twenty-seven years old on average when they entered the program (Boyatzis, 2001). What seems to be paramount and essential is the students' motivation, whatever it may be. In actuality, adults make decisions about what or how they will change, even in terms of their education. They might momentarily acquire concepts and habits that they are not interested in learning—for example, for an exam—but they will quickly forget them (Specht & Sandlin, 1991). Consequently, it would seem more reasonable to focus on self-directed modifications, which are deliberate adjustments to a feature of your identity—your real Self, your Ideal Self, or both. Self-directed learning can be defined as a change that is guided by oneself and in which the individual is conscious of and comprehends the process of change (Boyatzis, 2001).

In summary, it is critical that students understand how emotional intelligence affects their life and interpersonal connections and it is important to inspire students to raise their EI. If they lack motivation by nature, parents and educators should assist them in understanding its significance. It might be beneficial to urge them to engage in classes or programs designed to improve their emotional intelligence. It would be especially beneficial to encourage students who consistently perform below expectations or who generally have a bad attitude

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<sup>5</sup> The initial model devised by Higgs and Dulewicz (1999) has three main components: (1) the drivers (motivation and intuitiveness), (2) the constrainers (high conscientiousness and emotional resilience), (3) the enablers (self-awareness, interpersonal sensitivity and influence). The enablers are more amenable to development than the constrainers or drivers (Higgs and Dulewicz, 1999, 2004).

about learning the English language to enroll in these courses. In fact, the results of this study suggest that a higher EI may correspond with a more favorable attitude toward EFL. Schools may also arrange these courses; it would be ideal if they started in elementary school. Students and learners would be guided and assisted throughout the whole process in this manner.

## 6.2 Educational Implications for Teachers

Teachers, particularly those who teach English, can find great interest in the results of this study. In actuality, they can assist their students in enhancing their emotional intelligence and, as a result, their approach toward EFL. This suggests that educators need to be aware of this and ready to guide their students through it. According to Dubovyk et al. (2020), a beginner teacher at the start of their career needs to be fully immersed in the pedagogical process and provide excellent solutions for any issues pertaining to instructing students and helping them grow their abilities. Furthermore, these concerns are especially pertinent in light of the increasing incidence of severe psychological disorders among many students in today's schools. The teacher must establish contact and collaborate with these students in order to support their continued education as well as the growth of their creative faculties in general and emotional intelligence in particular. In the current educational system, students' emotional sphere construction is observed to be problematic. According to Kuznetsova (2011), modern schools are unable to guarantee that students' emotional spheres and emotional capacities are fully developed, even with a stated and continuous innovation focus. Antinienė and Lekavičienė (2017) added that the development of students' emotional intelligence receives very little emphasis compared to the primary task of imparting academic knowledge. Dubovyk et al. (2020) elaborated on these ideas and offered some recommendations. For instance, they believe it seems advisable to start children' emotional intelligence growth with future instructors' own emotional intelligence development. In actuality, the teacher must be able to recognize and consider the normal individual qualities of each student, as well as keep them in mind when planning training sessions. Additionally, playing activities that teachers engage in with their pupils play a significant role in the development of the children' emotional intelligence, particularly in the primary school years. They argue that in addition to teaching future educators how to play board games, where

players are expected to express their own emotions and assess those of their fellow players, they should also teach them how to read nonverbal cues from other players and make educated guesses about their intentions. Additionally, students' emotional spheres, capacity for hero empathy, and capacity for mental examination of the deeds of the heroes will all be enhanced by group analysis of classic literature. All of this has a good impact on pupils' overall development of emotional intelligence. They state in their conclusion that teaching specific exercises for the development of emotional intelligence should receive extra focus while teachers are being prepared for work with children. Students can complete these exercises in groups, with partners, or on their own. They aid in the growth of students' empathy, or their capacity to recognize and comprehend the emotions and suffering of others. Brackett and Katulak (2013) added that the ability of teachers and students to effectively communicate, manage stress and conflict, sustain a positive school climate, and succeed academically or professionally are all predicted to be influenced by their EI proficiency. When they are instructing and interacting with pupils, teachers go through a wide spectrum of positive and negative emotions (Hargreaves, 1998). Because of the nature of their work, they must manage not only the emotions of kids and parents, but also those of coworkers and administrators. Additionally, teachers are among the professions exhibiting the highest levels of occupational stress. In fact, the main causes of teachers' job dissatisfaction and eventual resignation are consistently identified as stress and inadequate emotion control (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Brackett and Katulak (2013) claimed that emotional skills training is useful both for teachers who can create a more stable, supportive, and productive learning environment – one that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement, and academic achievement among students and for students, who can stay more focused in class and handle anxiety-arousing situations such as taking tests (Lopes and Salovey, 2004). Additionally, they offer two ideas for incorporating EI skills into the classroom. The first approach is the Emotional Intelligence Teacher Workshop, which gives educators (and other faculty members) an overview of the four emotional intelligence skills, a toolkit to help them develop each skill, and the Blueprint to help them deal with challenging interpersonal situations more skillfully. The second recommendation is ELMS, an emotional literacy curriculum created to help children gain abilities connected to emotions. The four EI skills are the emphasis of the program's six steps and additional exercises, which are based on EI theory. Along with fostering self- and social awareness, empathy, healthy

communication, and student-student connection, the courses and activities also support the use of new language, abstract and critical thinking, creative writing, and problem-solving abilities. The administrator, teacher, parent, and student responses, together with the preliminary findings of their trials, indicate that these programs, which have been implemented in multiple schools, are well-received, fun, and yielding quantitative benefits.

After these considerations, it can be concluded that teaching EI would be very beneficial to instructors as it would make their jobs easier and more fulfilling, especially because it would also help students achieve better outcomes. Teachers can select the activities and programs that best suit their individual needs from a vast array of EI-related offerings. Teachers of English should also evaluate the findings of this study and focus on the areas in which the students struggle, as many of these areas are associated with speech anxiety and a lack of motivation. As a matter of fact, teachers can have an impact on both these aspects. In this way, students' performance would improve even further.

### 6.3 Educational Implications for Parents

As already mentioned, some researchers claimed that interventions on emotional intelligence during childhood are most effective (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1996). Since parents are arguably the first and most important educators in a child's life, parents should also be interested in the present study's findings. According to this research, future students would be more successful and have a relatively more favorable attitude towards EFL if parents intervened to raise their children's EI. As a matter of fact, parents are often the primary gatekeepers for their children's experiences within most microsystems<sup>6</sup> as they grow up. However, how parents deal with the microsystems their children pass through is probably heavily influenced by their own EI abilities. The EI skills that parents teach their children and the EI skills they exhibit on a daily basis are strongly correlated. Thus, parents would do well to employ the principles of EI to inform their parenting if they want children to grow

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<sup>6</sup> Some examples of microsystems are "households, childcare settings, classrooms, playgroups, camps, after-school programs and religious institutions" (Stern & Elias, 2007, p.38)

up to be emotionally intelligent (Stern & Elias, 2007). There are some actions that parents can do in order to support children in developing their emotional intelligence, for example engaging in greater emotional dialogue with them, acknowledging and empathizing with their feelings, and assisting them in expressing their emotions in healthy ways (Susanto, 2019). Numerous studies have discovered a positive correlation between parenting practices and children's emotional intelligence. These practices include parents' attitudes, beliefs, and reactions to their kids' emotional expressions (Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997), their encouragement, support, and teaching of emotion-related behaviors (Martinez-Pons, 1999), their monitoring and supervision (Liau et al., 2003), their availability and control (Alegre & Benson, 2010), and the time mothers and children spend together (Alegre, 2012). Parents need to understand how their actions affect their children's emotional intelligence. Realizing ideal educational objectives wherein the family and the institutional community share responsibility would be possible if parents received invitations to meetings held at educational institutions.

To summarize, parents have a responsibility to recognize the influence they have on their children's emotional intelligence and to know the various strategies that may be employed to raise it. While research indicates that parental interventions are most successful when implemented throughout childhood, there are still steps that can be taken in the years that follow. In addition, in order to intervene on their own emotional intelligence, parents should be taught the many advantages that a high level of EI can have on a person's life.

#### 6.4 Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusions

In the paragraphs that follow, the limits of the current study are examined, some recommendations for additional research are made, and the conclusions are illustrated. In the latter instance, the research questions and conclusions are restated together with a summary of the study.

#### 6.4.1 Limitations

This research presents some limitations which relate to different aspects of the study. This study was designed to be exploratory in nature, with the goal of shedding some light on the relationship between EI and attitudes about EFL. However, because only one questionnaire was administered, it was not feasible to determine whether the participants' perspectives alter over time. It was taken into consideration that some respondents might not have given accurate information about themselves, although this is a restriction inherent in any study involving human participants. The fact that the students' English instructor also served as the questionnaire's administrator added even more complications to this. The students' responses may have been influenced by their dread of the professors' disapproval. As a matter of fact, even though taking part in the research study was entirely voluntary, it is also possible that some respondents felt under pressure to finish the questionnaire—perhaps in an attempt to appease their teacher, who had requested their involvement in the study. In other words, it is possible that some respondents had fallen victim to the bias of acquiescence. In addition, a respondent may have completed the questionnaire carelessly due to a lack of interest in the subject matter. Alternatively, a possible unconscious desire to appease the researcher may have led the respondent to choose responses that seemed more in line with social norms or with how they thought the researcher would have used the data. Furthermore, social desirability may have influenced certain responses. Another limitation of this study is the absence of student interviews following the questionnaire. Because of this, certain questions about the responses or the causes of them remained unanswered. As far as the research questions are concerned, they aim to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' attitudes towards EFL. Therefore, participants' attitude towards other foreign languages is not taken into consideration. Regarding the respondents, the sample consisted of just four classrooms of the same school located in northern Italy. Moreover, every respondent was enrolled in the same study course. These could have affected the outcomes. Additionally, the results pertaining to individuals of other nationalities may be inaccurate due to the sample size being restricted to eight non-Italian students. In actuality, their responses can reflect personal characteristics and inclinations that may have nothing to do with their cultures or nationalities. In terms of data analysis, only descriptive statistics were used, meaning that only the mean and standard deviation were determined. Because of this, it was impossible to establish a solid link between students' attitudes and emotional



intelligence. It was therefore more appropriate to discuss tendencies. Moreover, the results cannot be generalized and extended to the population.

#### 6.4.2 Future Research

Further research that incorporates a larger number of participants and allows the results to be generalized beyond the initial sample is necessary to either support or refute the validity of the findings of this study. Thus, larger-scale, more methodical investigations that use probability sampling to choose participants would enable to compile more thorough and broadly applicable data. Research conducted over an extended period could be especially beneficial in examining potential shifts in perspectives. This research might also be repeated with the integration of a face-to-face interview with students since finding the backstory behind a participant's experiences and researching a topic in-depth are two areas where interviews are especially helpful. Therefore, after completing questionnaires, it may be helpful to continue with specific respondents through interviews to learn more about their responses. Future research may focus on the students' attitudes toward other foreign languages and compare them to their attitudes towards English as a foreign language. It might also include a broader sample, with participants coming from different regions of Italy and attending different study courses in order to exclude the possibility that these aspects might have an influence on the findings. Additionally, it could be interesting to incorporate students of varying ages to have a deeper understanding of how the age variable affects the outcomes. In relation to participants, further research including more students with different nationalities is an essential step in confirming that the results of the present study do not depend on personal characteristics. Inferential statistics may also be used in future research. In this sense, inferences and predictions about populations based on sample data would be feasible.

#### 6.4.3 Conclusions

The current study set out to investigate how students' attitude regarding English as a foreign language is influenced by their emotional intelligence. Following a basic analysis, the data were separated to see if there was any potential for age, gender, nationality, or culture to have

an impact on the outcomes. Specifically, the primary objective was to address four research questions. The first one sought to determine whether views about EFL and students' emotional intelligence are related. Students showed low levels of emotional intelligence as well as a propensity for having a negative attitude toward EFL, according to the data analysis. Thus, it was possible to hypothesize that these two factors might be positively correlated, with the former influencing the latter. Nonetheless, despite their poor EI scores, Romanian students' results indicated that they have a good attitude toward the English language. Since just three Romanian students participated in the study, the validity of this result may be called into doubt. Finding any discrepancies between the outcomes of males and females was the goal of the second research question. The results indicated that female participants tend to be more emotionally proficient and to see EFL more favorably. It could be countered, nonetheless, that these variations in values are not sufficient to conclusively demonstrate one gender's higher EI and more favorable attitude toward EFL. Participants' age was the subject of the third study question. Specifically, it sought to determine if any variations between students enrolled in the fourth and fifth years of secondary education exist. The results were too heterogeneous to draw a conclusion that age has a direct and inevitable impact on attitudes or EI, even if the final mean values indicated that fourth-year students did better in both categories. Perhaps it would have been better to compare the results of students with a larger age difference, like first-year students and fifth-year students. The goal of the fourth and final research question was to determine whether there are any differences in the EI and attitudes toward EFL between Italian and non-Italian students. Although all students did better in the behavioral section and worse in the emotional area, it was possible to conclude from the individual item answers that non-Italian students have more positive attitudes toward the English language, while Italian students have negative attitudes toward EFL. Only students from Romania have a positive attitude, with students from Morocco, Italy, China, and Romania showing very negative attitudes. Notwithstanding its limits and exploratory character, the study undoubtedly advanced our knowledge of how emotional intelligence affects students' attitudes. In addition, the study established a foundation for further investigation into the subject and offered thought-provoking questions for parents, instructors, and students.

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