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The relationship between Trait emotional intelligence and experienced ESL/EFL teachers' love of English, attitudes towards their students and institution, self-reported classroom practices, enjoyment and creativity¹

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Abstract

An investigation into the relationships between global trait emotional intelligence (Trait EI), as well as the four factors that constitute it (well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability), and quantitative data from 513 experienced ESL/EFL teachers from around the world about their love of English, their attitudes towards their students, their institution, their self-reported classroom practices, their enjoyment, unpredictability and creativity showed significant positive correlations.

The analyses revealed that global Trait EI, well-being and sociability were significantly positively correlated with most dependent variables while emotionality and self-control were significantly correlated with a number of dependent variables. Global Trait EI and emotionality were significantly positively linked to the English proficiency of English foreign language users but not to that of the English L1 users.

The pedagogical implication is that having a sufficient level of Trait EI helps teachers deal effectively with their own and with their students' emotions.

Keywords: teachers, trait emotional intelligence, enjoyment, creativity, attitudes

1. Introduction

Farrell (2018) reminisces how after finishing teaching a lesson, he felt both better and exhausted because of the emotional experience. He regrets that professional and managerial discourse in TESOL has long viewed teachers more as well-oiled machines, paying relatively little attention to their "well-being in terms of their personal and emotional investment in their practice" (p. vii). Good teaching, he argues, involves much more than mastering the subject matter and delivering it through the appropriate techniques: "Good teaching is an emotionally charged event where teachers connect with each student as they passionately deliver their lesson in a pleasurable environment" (p. vii).

This is also the view of Dewaele, Gkonou, and Mercer (2018) who describe the qualities of a good teacher as follows:

Essentially, a good language teacher needs to be in a position to manage the emotional tenor of the classroom. This means not only should they be able to harness the emotions of their learners, but

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they should also be able to regulate their own emotions to ensure they are in the right frame of mind to create positive rapport with learners, generate enjoyment and manage any anxieties (p. 126).

Yet, as de Dios Martinez Agudo (2018) pointed out, educational psychologists have traditionally preferred cognitive approaches over affective ones, possibly because emotions have been seen as “subjective, irrational, exclusively female and hard to capture” (p. 1). This view has been evolving with a growing acceptance that cognition and emotion are related, and that both are intertwined in teaching (Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018) and that emotion has social and political dimensions in language teaching (Benesch, 2012).

The current study contributes to this field by expanding earlier work (Dewaele & Mercer, 2017; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele, to appear) on sources of individual differences in teachers’ self-reported classroom behaviour, feelings, attitudes and linguistic skills. In these earlier studies EFL and ESL teachers’ self-reported classroom practices were connected with their global trait emotional intelligence (global Trait EI), their English proficiency, the length of their teaching experience, and their gender. In the current study we focus on foreign language teachers’ attitudes and self-reported classroom behaviour and consider their relationships not just with global Trait EI but also with the four factors that constitute it, namely well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001). In doing so, we aim for more granularity and nuance in the understanding of the complex relationships between teachers’ psychological traits, attitudes, self-reported behavior and linguistic skills.

2. Literature review

This review is organized in three sections. After a general introductory section on research on psychology and emotion in learner and teacher populations, we will discuss the work on the concept of emotional intelligence including research in general education that considered the emotional intelligence of teachers. We will then focus on studies that have included Trait EI as an independent variable in research on foreign language teachers’ emotions and behavior.

We are witnessing a growing interest in the psychology of foreign language teachers in the field of applied linguistics (Mercer, Oberdorfer & Saleem, 2016; Mercer, 2016; Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018) in the wake of the wave of interest in the psychology of the foreign language learners and the various emotions they experience (Dewaele, 2005, 2011, 2015; Dewaele & Li, 2018; Dewaele, Witney, Saito & Dewaele, 2017; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Gkonou, Daubney & Dewaele, 2017; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Li, Jiang & Dewaele, 2018; Saito, Dewaele, Abe & In’nami, 2018; White, 2018). The focus on foreign language teachers is of crucial importance as teachers are the linchpin in foreign language learning. As Mercer et al. (2016) pointed out, there is an urgent need for more teacher-centredness in the field of language learning psychology. There is also undoubtedly a need for more research on teacher emotions (cf. Benesch, 2012), using a variety of perspectives including socio-political and socio-cultural approaches (de Dios Martinez Agudo, 2018; De Costa, Rawal & Li, 2018) and a wide range of methods (cf. Cuéllar & Oxford, 2018). One important point is that teacher emotions such as love and passion may be the basis of their motivation, commitment and self-efficacy but because they do not live in a social vacuum, these emotions can thrive or wither depending on the socio-political and administrative environment (Tsang & Jiang, 2018).

The concept of emotional intelligence and the nature of emotions are strongly debated among psychologists. Petrides, Pérez-Gonzalez & Furnham (2007) presented evidence for the incremental validity of trait emotional intelligence (trait EI), which is located “at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” (p. 26). They concluded that “trait EI has (...) effects that are incremental over the basic dimensions of personality and mood”. In a separate study, Petrides, Pita and Kokkinaki (2007) established that trait EI “encompasses affect-related variance that is not captured by existing trait taxonomies” (p. 285).

Feldman Barrett (2017a, b) proposed the theory of constructed emotion, urging scientists to abandon essentialism and to study emotions in all their variety. Her main argument is that “Emotions are constructions of the world, not reactions to it” (2017a, p. 16). She sees emotions as predictions based on bodily experiences which occur automatically and outside of one’s awareness, which are constructed in the moment and which form the basis for all experiences. Emotional intelligence is “about getting your brain to construct the most useful instance of the most useful emotion concept in a given situation” (2017b, p. 179). A person who is emotionally intelligent has a large store of rich emotional concepts that allow flexible and functional responses (p. 180). This person has high emotional granularity, meaning an ability to construct emotional experiences with subtle shades and differences, “like astonished, amazed, startled, dumbfounded, and shocked. For a person who exhibits more moderate emotional granularity, all of these words might belong to the same concept, “surprised.” And for someone who exhibits low emotional granularity, these words might all correspond to feeling worked up” (Feldman Barrett, 2017c). Feldman Barrett (2017c) also argues that broadening one’s emotion repertoire is the best way to increase one’s emotional intelligence. The learning of new (emotion) words in a first or foreign language—emotion-related or otherwise—boosts the brain’s microwiring allowing it to construct more complex emotional experiences, and allow more effortless future perceptions of others’ emotions (Feldman Barrett, 2017c).

There are several models of emotional intelligence in the psychological literature, among which the ability EI model and the trait EI model are the most prominent (Petrides, 2017). The models have important differences but also many similarities. Salovey and Mayer (1990) called their model an “ability” model. Using a deductive approach, they identified four branches: (1) the ability to perceive emotions accurately, (2) the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought, (3) the ability to understand emotions, and (4) the ability to manage emotions. The basic implication of this model is that EI, like any other cognitive ability, can be boosted as a result of focused training.

Petrides, Pita and Kokkinaki (2007) developed the Trait EI model, considering trait EI factors as personality traits and seeing EI as a constellation of emotional perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies assessed through questionnaires and rating scales. Trait EI essentially concerns people’s self-perceptions of their emotional abilities and their inner world. Trait EI rejects the notion that emotions can be artificially objectified in order to be made amenable to veridical scoring, along IQ lines. An alternative label for the same construct is trait emotional self-efficacy. Trait EI lies wholly outside the realm of cognitive ability and can be integrated into hierarchical models of personality. Petrides (2017) emphasizes that Trait EI is about perceptions and not about abilities or skills. A high scorer on Trait EI is not necessarily adaptive (good) and a low scorer is not necessarily maladaptive (bad) as the adaptive value depends on context and situational demands.

Trait EI consists of fifteen facets organized under four main factors: well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001). The factor well-being is characterized by the ability to feel cheerful and satisfied with life (happiness), to be self-confident (self-esteem), and to look at the bright side of life (optimism). The emotionality factor is related to the ability of taking

someone else's perspective (empathy), of being clear about people's feelings (emotional perception), of communicating feelings to others (emotional expression), and of maintaining fulfilling personal relationships (relationships). The self-control factor refers to the abilities to control emotions (emotional regulation), not to give in to urges (impulsiveness), and to withstand pressure and regulate stress (stress management). The final factor is sociability, and it refers to the ability to influence other people's feelings (emotional management), to stand up for one's rights (assertiveness), and to establish networks thanks to social skills (social awareness).

Petrides (2017) agrees that:

“trait EI is amenable to change, and that this change may lead to concomitant improvements in some of its correlates (thereby suggesting that trait EI is causally linked to these correlates). These changes are evident after a few weeks of training and are maintained for at least 1 year subsequently” (p. 6).

There is also evidence that bilinguals score higher than monolinguals on trait EI (Alqarni & Dewaele, 2018). The finding confirms earlier research that highlighted that constant exposure to multiple languages can shape certain personality traits such as openmindedness, cultural empathy, tolerance of ambiguity and cognitive empathy (Dewaele, 2016).

Research into Trait EI in applied linguistics remains quite scarce. Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) found that adult multilinguals ($N = 464$) with high Trait EI suffered less from communicative anxiety in all their languages in interactions with friends, colleagues, strangers, on the phone and in public speech. Differences between participants who scored low and average on Trait EI were small. Dewaele et al. (2008) suggested that the high Trait EI participants were better able to judge whether the interaction was going well, adjusting if necessary, which reduced their anxiety. Low Trait EI participants, on the other hand, experienced more anxiety across languages and situations because they were less sure about what their interlocutors felt, and how well the interaction was developing. Even if they suspected it was not going well, they had little capacity to adjust.

Research in general education has revealed that EI is a crucial personality trait for teachers. Those who score highly on EI are better equipped to deal with the challenges of working with diverse heterogeneous classes, managing group dynamics and resisting teacher stress and burnout (see, e.g., Chan, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Such teachers are better able to create engaging lessons that boost learners' motivation (Elias & Arnold, 2006; Graziano, Reavis, Keane & Calkins, 2007). Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes and Salovey (2010) report that teachers who struggle in regulating their emotions (and their classrooms) have more students experiencing negative emotions in class (e.g., sadness, shame, and guilt) (p. 4). The authors describe their EI Teacher Workshops which provides teachers “with a background on the importance of emotions in teaching and learning, an overview of the four EI skills, a set of tools to develop each EI skill and the Blueprint to help them handle difficult interpersonal situations more effectively” (p. 23).

High levels of Trait EI among foreign language teachers have been found to be linked to stronger teacher self-efficacy (Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009), better emotion-regulation skills during teaching (Gregersen, MacIntyre, Finegan, Talbot, & Claman, 2014). Gregersen et al. (2014) focused on one learner and one teacher, extracted from a group of 10 learners and 9 pre-service teachers. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the two participants “exercise EI to understand ways in which a wide range of emotional experiences, inside and outside the classroom, affect the language learning and teaching

process” (pp. 347-348). Strategic ordering of classroom activities led to a reflection upon daily events that could be transformed into springboards for learning optimism. The authors concluded that “the process of self-development is facilitated by using EI in effective ways” (p. 349). However, not all research uncovered a link between student teachers' levels of EI and their teaching performance (Corcoran & Tormey, 2013).

Teachers' gender and length of teaching experience have been linked to their levels of Trait EI (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017, 2018). Qualitative data showed that highly emotionally intelligent English teachers were able to draw on their rich teaching experience to interpret and respond to classroom challenges and to manage the class effectively. The combination of expertise gained through their teaching career and intuitive knowledge shaped their Trait EI and allowed them to make the right emotion-related decisions in class.

In a study based on data collected from the same 513 participants as in the present study, Dewaele and Mercer (2018) considered variation in teachers' self-reported attitudes towards their students. The authors found that high levels of global Trait EI corresponded with more positive attitudes towards students and higher enjoyment of lively students. The authors pointed out that the teaching profession might be unsuited to people with low levels of EI. More experienced teachers were also found to have significantly more positive attitudes towards their students although they did not explicitly enjoy working with lively students more. The authors speculated that longer teaching experience may boost emotional intelligence over time but acknowledged that a more neutral interpretation of the finding could be that teachers with lower levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to abandon the profession. Teachers with lower levels of English proficiency were found to have significantly less positive attitudes towards their students and enjoyed their lively students less. The authors speculated that this could be linked to teachers' linguistic insecurity, which could have generated a lack of confidence and a certain degree of defensiveness. Finally, the female teachers had significantly more positive attitudes towards their students but no such difference emerged for the enjoyment of lively students. This finding was linked to earlier studies where female teachers were found to have closer, less conflictual and less dependent relationships with students than male peers (Split, Koomen & Jak, 2012).

In a second study on the same database, Dewaele et al. (2018) focused on teachers' self-reported classroom behavior (creativity, un/predictability, classroom management, and pedagogical skills). A statistically significant positive relationship emerged between Trait EI and creativity, classroom management, pedagogical skills – and a marginal negative effect on predictability in the classroom. In other words, emotionally intelligent teachers reported being more creative, better at managing the class, having superior pedagogical skills, and being slightly less predictable in class. Length of teaching experience had effects that mirrored those of Trait EI. Teachers with longer experience reported more creativity in their classrooms, better management of classroom activities and stronger pedagogical skills. They were also marginally less likely to be predictable in the classroom. As in the previous study, a word of caution is needed as longer teaching experience might boost Trait EI but, alternatively, it is also possible that teachers with lower levels of Trait EI intelligence dropped out of the profession earlier.

In a third study on the same database, Dewaele (to appear) investigated relationships between teachers' Trait EI, as well as the four dimensions that constitute Trait EI (well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability) and teacher motivation (Intrinsic Motivation, Identified Regulation, Introjected Regulation, External Regulation and Amotivation) (Fernet, Senécal, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson, 2008).

Other independent variables included the number of years in the teaching profession, status of English as an L1 or a foreign language (LX)ⁱⁱ, general proficiency in English, age and gender. High levels

of well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability corresponded with high levels of motivation. Length of time in the teaching profession was unrelated to motivation. English LX users tended to have higher levels of motivation than English L1 teachers. Female participants, and those highly proficient in English were also more highly motivated.

It is important to point out that a teacher's personality can only explain a part of that person's classroom behavior and self-image. De Costa, Rawal and Li (2018) considered how two mathematics teachers, Grace and Bhim, dealt with their emotions in two private English medium of instruction high schools in China and Nepal. Analysis of in-depth interviews revealed three themes in the data: "(1) teacher emotional burn-out, (2) limited teacher agency, and (3) teacher anxiety over using English to teach math" (p. 96). The burn-out was linked power inequalities, more specifically stress in a hostile environment, low pay and low prestige. This was combined with a sense of powerlessness in the classroom because of obligatory textbooks which were highly exam-oriented and reduced teacher autonomy (p. 98). Anxiety about their use of English was linked to the "circulating ideology that assigned a higher value to English over the students' and their own L1s" (p. 100). In other words, their Trait EI may have made them resilient and allowed them not to be overwhelmed by negative emotions, but there are obviously limits to how much even a high Trait EI teacher can take, especially when that person's hands are tied and that anxiety is ever present.

In a final study that did not deal with trait EI but rather with "emotional competence", Hernández-Amorós and Urrea-Solano (2017) interviewed 122 first year Spanish student teachers who held a strong belief that teachers should help develop the emotional competence of their pupils. Participants emphasised the need to have activities that promote the development of emotions through expression, and the use of real or hypothetical situations that make them experience different emotions, or appreciate how other people deal with various emotional circumstances.

This short literature review shows that teachers' global Trait EI is an important personality trait which is typically linked to good teaching practices, positive attitudes and good relationships with students. It might also protect teachers against emotional burn-out. A more detailed view of Trait EI could throw new light on the effect of specific factors of Trait EI on teaching practices, feelings, attitudes and relationships with students. This is the gap that the present study will attempt to fill.

After introducing the three research questions, we will present the methodology for the study before conducting the quantitative analyses. The results will be discussed in the following section before pointing to the study's limitations and finally drawing some conclusion from the findings.

2. Research questions

The present study aims to address the three following research questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between teachers' global Trait EI and their scores on items reflecting feelings, attitudes and self-reported classroom practices?
- 2) What is the relationship between teachers' four Trait EI factors (well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability) and their scores on items reflecting feelings, attitudes and self-reported classroom practices?
- 3) What is the relationship between teachers' global Trait EI and four Trait EI factors (well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability) and their English proficiency?

3. Methodology

Data were collected through snowball sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling (Ness Evans & Rooney, 2013). An open-access anonymous online questionnaire was used. Calls for participation were sent through emails to teachers, students, and informal contacts asking them to forward the link to colleagues. The questionnaire remained online from April to September 2016 and attracted 513 valid responses from mono- and multilingual ESL/EFL language teachers across the world. Online questionnaires are ideal for collecting large amounts of data from participants from different parts of the world belonging to various age groups and language profiles (Dewaele, 2018b; Wilson & Dewaele, 2010). The geographical diversity boosts the ecological validity of the results, as the effects of local educational practices are averaged out. Finally, the psychometric properties of online versions of traditional questionnaires do not differ much from the pen-and-paper versions (Denissen, Neumann & van Zalk, 2010).

The research design and questionnaires received ethical clearance from the author's research institution. Participants started by completing a short sociobiographical questionnaire with questions about gender, age, nationality, country of residence, language history, and numbers of years in the teaching profession.

4.1 Participants

A total of 513 participants (377 females, 131 males) filled out the questionnaire completely. All were EFL/ESL teachers and their experience in the profession ranged from one month to 52 years. On average, participants had been teaching for 15 years ($SD = 10$). Only 25 participants (4.9%) had been teaching for less than 2 years. The mean age was 40 years ($SD = 10$). The majority of female participants is typical in web-based language questionnaires (Dewaele, 2018b; Wilson & Dewaele, 2010). The largest group were British ($n = 71$), Americans ($n = 40$), followed by Ukrainians ($n = 37$), Greek ($n = 30$), Azerbaijani ($n = 30$), Argentinian ($n = 30$), Chinese ($n = 30$), Indian ($n = 30$), Spanish ($n = 30$), Turkish ($n = 30$), Macedonian ($n = 30$), Canadian ($n = 30$), and smaller groups of participants with another 64 nationalities. The sample of participants consisted of 15 monolinguals, 113 bilinguals, 174 trilinguals, 104 quadrilinguals, 81 pentalinguals, 22 sextalinguals, and 4 septalinguals. English was the most frequent L1 ($n = 136$), the remaining 376 participants had English as an FL. A majority of participants were teaching English at university ($n = 290$), with smaller numbers teaching in secondary schools ($n = 154$), primary schools ($n = 63$), and nursery schools ($n = 6$). The largest group of participants were working in Ukraine ($n = 37$), Greece ($n = 32$), Spain ($n = 30$), Azerbaijan ($n = 25$), Japan ($n = 25$), UK ($n = 17$) and USA ($n = 17$). The remaining participants worked in 103 different countries.

4.2 Independent variables

Participants also filled out the short version of the Trait EI Questionnaire (Petrides, 2009), which contains a total of 30 items and yielded a global Trait EI score ($mean = 4.56$, $SD = .60$, with scores ranging from 2.7 to 5.9 (absolute min = 1, absolute max = 7)). The Cronbach alpha was .88. The Trait EI questionnaire also allowed us to calculate scores on the four main EI factors: well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability.

Well-being includes items such as “I generally don’t find life enjoyable” (reverse) and “I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life”. The mean score was 5.63 ($SD = 1.0$), with scores ranging from 1.2 to 7 (absolute min = 1, absolute max = 7). The Cronbach alpha score was .84.

Emotionality includes items such as “I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me” (reverse) and “Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me”. The mean score was 5.53 ($SD = .79$), with scores ranging from 2.6 to 7 (absolute minimum = 1, absolute maximum = 7). The Cronbach alpha was .71.

Self-control is measured through items such as “On the whole, I’m able to deal with stress” and “I’m usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to”. The mean score was 4.83 ($SD = .87$), with scores ranging from 1.8 to 7 (absolute min = 1, absolute max = 7). The Cronbach alpha was .65.

Sociability consists of items such as “I can deal effectively with people” and “I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights” (reverse). The mean score was 4.95 ($SD = .90$), with scores ranging from 1.3 to 7 (absolute min = 1, absolute max = 7). The Cronbach alpha was .70.

In order to identify potential confounding variables, we checked whether there were any gender differences on the Trait EI factors. A Mann Whitney test revealed that the only significant difference existed for emotionality where the female teachers scored slightly higher (mean rank females = 263, mean rank males = 229; Mann-Whitney $U = 21386$, $z = -2.3$, $p < .022$). Age was also linked to self-control and sociability ($Rho = .20$, $p < .0001$ and $Rho = .11$, $p < .0001$ respectively). The effect size is small for these independent variables (less than 4% shared variance). English L1 teachers did only differ from English LX teachers for sociability (mean rank L1: 279, mean rank LX: 249; Mann-Whitney $U = 22722$, $z = -2.0$, $p < .041$). Finally, global Trait EI was significantly correlated with the number of years in service ($Rho = .13$, $p < .0001$). Further analysis of the four Trait EI facets and number of years in service revealed significant positive correlations with self-control ($Rho = .17$, $p < .0001$) and sociability ($Rho = .12$, $p < .006$). This could be interpreted as evidence that experience boosts self-control and sociability, or that teachers who lack self-control and sociability leave the profession early.

4.3. Dependent variables

The dependent variables are the Likert scale responses to 11 items containing statements (5 point Likert scales ranging from “absolutely not” to “absolutely yes”). The first group of statements are related to love of the English language, attitudes towards the institution and the (lively) students. The second group of statements refer to habitual classroom practice and teacher profile.

1. I love the English language
2. I have a positive attitude towards the institution in which I teach
3. I have a positive attitude towards my students
4. I use English frequently in class
5. I frequently allow students to work independently in class
6. I see myself as a creative teacher
7. My classes are predictable (i.e., I stick to similar routines)

8. I enjoy having lively students
9. I have a lot of influence over the content and skills that are selected for teaching
10. I am a good English teacher in terms of classroom management skills
11. I am a good English teacher in terms of pedagogic or didactic skills

Table 1 provides the mean scores, the standard deviation and the Kolmogorov Smirnov values, which are all highly significant, meaning that these variables are not normally distributed. As a consequence, it was impossible to use a multiple regression analysis, and we had to restrict ourselves to Spearman rank correlation analyses. A Bonferroni correction was applied to avoid Type 1 errors in the second correlation analysis involving the four Trait EI factors. As a consequence, only p values below .013 (.05 / 4) will be considered significant in the second analysis.

Table 1: Mean scores, standard deviation and Kolmogorov Smirnov values for the 11 items

	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6	Item7	Item8	Item9	Item10	Item11
Mean	4.6	3.9	4.4	4.6	3.8	3.9	3.0	4.3	3.7	3.8	3.9
<i>SD</i>	.62	.97	.77	.62	.64	.81	.70	.70	.85	.72	.67
<i>KS</i>	.43	.27	.30	.42	.34	.24	.33	.30	.28	.29	.30

All $p < .0001$

The final dependent variable was English proficiency, based on the 60-item test developed by Lemhöfer and Broersma (2012):

“LexTALE takes only 5 min to complete, is free and easily implemented (on the Internet at www.lextale.com, as a lexical decision task in experimental software, or even on paper), making it a practically feasible addition to any psycholinguistic experiment. The target population of the test is adult learners who started learning English at school at an age of about 10–12 years, which is standard in many countries, and who continue to use English in daily life— for example, at a university or through the media” (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012, 326).

Its scores have been found to correlate highly with TOEIC test results, an established test of English proficiency (p. 328). Thus, even though LEXTALE was not designed to capture general English proficiency fully, it is recognised as a useful indicator of it for high proficiency LX users (p. 326). The English L1 users scored higher on the LEXTALE and their scores were less dispersed around the mean than the LX users (*mean* L1 users = 94.8, *SD* = 7.6; *mean* LX users = 83.5, *SD* = 12.9). The difference was significant ($t = 12.2$, $p < .0001$). The scores of L1 users can be interpreted as an indication of vocabulary knowledge rather than general proficiency. A total of 35 L1 users (25.5%) had the maximum score of 100 compared to only 20 LX users (5.2%). A Kolmogorov Smirnov test revealed that the scores were not normally distributed among the 137 L1 users ($KS = .26$, $p < .0001$) nor among the 382 LX users ($KS = .11$, $p < .0001$).

4. Results

To answer the first research question, we ran a Spearman rank correlation analysis between teachers' global Trait EI and the values on the 11 items. Significant positive relationships emerged for 10 out of the 11 correlation analyses. Only item 5 about students working independently was unrelated to global Trait EI. Item 4 about the teacher's frequency of use of English was significantly correlated with Trait EI but the effect size was very small (.088%). The other correlation coefficients range from .17 to .27, which can be described as small (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014, p. 889), as they explain no more than 7.3% of shared variance.

To answer the second research question, we used a Spearman rank correlation analysis with Bonferroni correction to establish the relationships between the four trait EI factors and the 11 items. Sociability was significantly ($p < .013$) correlated with 10 out of 11 items, sociability and self-control with eight items and emotionality with six items (see table 2).

Love of English, attitude towards the institution, attitude towards students, creativity, enjoyment of lively students, influence over content and skills were positively correlated with the **four** trait EI factors. Well-being produced the strongest correlation for four items, sociability for two items and self-control for one item. Effect sizes were small.

Statistically significant positive relationships emerged between **two** trait EI factors and classroom management and pedagogic/didactic skills (with sociability having the strongest relationship in both cases).

The item 'frequency of English use in class' was positively correlated with a **single** trait EI factor, namely sociability. Predictability was negatively correlated with a **single** trait EI factor, namely sociability.

Allowing students to work independently was unrelated to any of the four trait EI factors.

It suggests that teachers with higher levels of global Trait EI, and more specifically higher levels of well-being and sociability, were more likely to have positive attitudes towards different crucial aspects of their profession, namely the love of the English language, their institution, and their students. They were also more likely to feel creative, to enjoy lively students, to feel some degree of control over the curriculum, and to have good pedagogical skills as well as good classroom management.

Table 2: Spearman rank correlation analysis between Trait EI factors and 11 items referring to attitudes and self-reported classroom practices (*Rho*)

Dependent variables	Global Trait EI	Wellbeing	Self-control	Emotionality	Sociability
Love for English	.187*	.186**	.119**	.154**	.172*
Attitude institution	.235*	.251**	.251**	.129**	.112**
Attitude students	.266*	.247**	.175**	.198**	.231**
Frequency English use	.094*	.052	.049	.085	.148**
Students working independently	.066	.048	.031	.047	.093
Creative	.269*	.219**	.199**	.212**	.253**
Predictable	-.089*	-.074	-.021	-.082	-.122**
Enjoy lively students	.201*	.189**	.146**	.152**	.168**
Influence over content	.171*	.116**	.121**	.119**	.170**
Classroom management	.206*	.146**	.165**	.099	.295**
Pedagogical/didactic skills	.205*	.154**	.205**	.098	.233**

□

* $p < .05$

** $p < .013$

To answer the third research question we ran two separate Spearman rank correlation analyses with Bonferroni correction for the English L1 and the English LX participants in order to establish possible relationships between the four Trait EI factors and LEXTALE scores. None of the correlations were significant for the English L1 users: Global Trait EI: $Rho = -.096$, $p = ns$; wellbeing: $Rho = .123$, $p = ns$; self-control: $Rho = -.029$, $p = ns$; emotionality: $Rho = -.014$, $p = ns$; sociability: $Rho = -.159$, $p = ns$. Global Trait EI and the factor emotionality were significantly positively correlated with the LEXTALE scores of the LX participants ($Rho = .101$, $p < .048$ and $Rho = .153$, $p < .003$ respectively), the three other Trait EI factors were unrelated (wellbeing: $Rho = .060$, $p = ns$; self-control: $Rho = .083$, $p = ns$; sociability: $Rho = .038$, $p = ns$).

5. Discussion

Participants with high levels of global Trait EI, and more specifically with high levels of well-being and sociability were more likely to report being good teachers. However, the effect size was typically small. These findings extend previous observations based on the same sample of participants that showed positive relationships between global Trait EI and attitudes towards students as well as enjoyment of lively students (Dewaele & Mercer, 2018); global Trait EI and more creativity, marginally less predictability, better classroom management, better pedagogical skills (Dewaele et al., 2018); global Trait EI and more intrinsic motivation, more identified regulation and less amotivation (Dewaele, to appear). It is very likely that they also suffered less from communicative anxiety (cf. Dewaele et al., 2008).

Significant positive relationships between Trait EI and items were mirrored when considering the four factors of Trait EI independently. Six items were positively correlated with all four factors, with well-being and sociability having the biggest effect size, followed by emotionality and self-control. Two items, classroom management and pedagogical skills, were significantly linked with well-being, sociability and self-control.

The crucial role of well-being in teachers is not surprising, as teachers in front of their students need to be positive, calm and confident (among other things). They need to project cheerfulness and satisfaction with life, self-confidence and self-esteem, and optimism about students' ability to progress (Cuéllar & Oxford, 2018). Bajorek, Gulliford and Taskila (2014, p. 6) argued that a "teacher with high job satisfaction, positive morale and who is healthy should be more likely to teach lessons which are creative, challenging and effective". King and Ng (2018) pointed out that for a teacher to maintain a positive face can be mentally exhausting and can be described as emotional labor.

The importance of sociability is equally self-evident as teaching is essentially a social activity. A good teacher, like an orchestra conductor, enjoys social interactions, is able to influence and manage students' feelings, is assertive enough to be clearly in charge in the classroom, possesses the necessary social skills to create friendly relationships between the students, to strengthen group solidarity to have students accept a common purpose and to bolster positive emotions (Dewaele et al., 2018; Gkonou & Mercer, 2017).

Teachers who score high on emotionality also have key skills in interacting with students. Crucially, their empathic skills allow them to take their students' perspective and to understand their emotions (Mercer, 2016). Like the orchestra conductor, they can raise or lower the emotional atmosphere according to the needs. They are also able to communicate their feelings clearly and establish a good rapport with students.

Good teachers, in addition to parents, psychotherapists and martial artists need to have good self-control. They all need to keep their tongue (or fists) in check. By being able to control their own emotions and resisting impulsive reactions, they can function in occasionally noisy stressful situations and they limit the risk of buckling in the long-term from burn-out (cf. Brackett, et al., 2010; Chan, 2006; De Costa et al., 2018).

These findings reflect patterns uncovered in Dewaele (to appear) based on the same sample that showed that highly motivated teachers had high levels of global Trait EI, and more specifically high levels of well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability. These highly motivated teachers were most strongly convinced of their duty towards their students and about their mission as teachers. Dewaele (to appear) argued that the four factors of Trait EI are characteristics of natural teachers. These results thus contradict those of Corcoran and Tormey (2013) who found that Trait EI did not predict trainee teacher performance. The difference is that our sample consisted of a majority of experienced teachers close to middle age rather than young trainee teachers. In a recent study, Corcoran and O'Flaherty (2018) analyzed performance rankings resulting from classroom observations of 400 pre-service teachers and found that Big Five personality traits did not predict performance but that previous teaching performance had a significant effect. It is thus important to avoid oversimplifying a complex reality: just as there is no unique psychological profile for the ideal foreign language learner, there is no unique psychological profile for the ideal foreign language teacher but Trait EI is a desirable trait.

The final research question dealt with the relationship between global Trait EI, the four Trait EI factors and linguistic proficiency measured through the LEXTALE test. Separate analyses of the English L1 and the English LX teachers revealed that Trait EI was unrelated to vocabulary knowledge in the L1

group - possibly because too many participants performed at ceiling- but that a positive relationship emerged between global Trait EI and the LEXTALE scores of the English LX teachers. Further research could measure richness of emotional concepts of L1 users using more appropriate instruments. Emotionality turned out to be the only Trait EI factor to be significantly linked to linguistic proficiency. This finding makes sense as higher scores on global Trait EI, and more specifically on emotionality could be an indication of stronger emotional granularity (Feldman Barrett, 2017b, c).

The correlational nature of the present study means it is impossible to infer causation (Ness Evans & Rooney, 2013, p. 225). We have argued before that causation in personality and emotion research can be bi-directional (Dewaele, 2012). In the present study though, it is more likely that participants' Trait EI had an effect on their attitudes and their classroom behavior rather than the other way round. Indeed, personality psychologists argue that personality is more linked to nature (genetics) than to nurture. However, personality develops slowly over a lifetime, linked to environmental influences (Kandler, 2012). One such influence could be specific teacher training in social and emotional skills (Brackett et al., 2010; Chan 2006; Gregersen et al., 2014; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Petrides, 2017; Vesely et al., 2014). It is possible that the participants in the present study who had a longer teaching experience scored higher on global Trait EI as well as on self-control and sociability either because of an indication of personality change or because of a drop-out of low Trait EI teachers earlier in their career, altering the sample of more experienced teachers.

The main limitation of the present study is that because of the non-random sampling, the population is not a representative sample of the EFL/ESL teacher population. Participants were self-selected and hence more likely to be interested in the topics covered by the questionnaire and probably more likely to be good and enthusiastic EFL/ESL teachers. Indeed, it is unlikely that somebody hating their profession would be willing to spend 20 minutes answering a questionnaire on it. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole profession.

The next limitation is more an admission that the exclusive focus on a single personality dimension, and the finding of significant relationships with the dependent variables but with small effect sizes, means that a lot of variance is left unexplained. Years of teaching experience was also found to have a significant effect on attitudes towards students, creativity, classroom management, and pedagogical skills (Dewaele & Mercer, 2017; Dewaele et al., 2018). Further possible sources of variation include teacher training, cultural and institutional background (cf. De Costa et al., 2018).

The exclusively quantitative orientation in the present study could also be seen as a limitation. It was a conscious decision to complement the many studies in this area that are qualitative and small-scale (Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lythy, 2018; Gkonou & Mercer, 2018; Gregersen et al., 2014), which hinder generalizability. The present study is based on an unusually large sample from a wide and diverse population of experienced EFL/ESL teachers, which allowed solid statistical analyses, and permitted a certain degree of cautious generalization.

6. Conclusion

The originality of the present study lies in the choice of a quantitative approach using a large sample in a field characterized by case studies. Such an approach allowed us to identify relationships between multiple independent (psychological) and dependent variables (i.e. self-reported teacher behavior, emotions and attitudes).

The statistical analyses revealed significant positive relationships between 513 experienced EFL/ESL teachers' global Trait EI, as well as the four factors that constitute Trait EI, and the love of English, positive attitudes towards students, towards the institution, self-reported classroom practices, unpredictability, enjoyment and creativity. The factors well-being and sociability were significantly correlated with most dependent variables while emotionality and self-control were significantly correlated with fewer dependent variables. The positive relationship between global Trait EI, emotionality and English proficiency of English LX -but not L1- users lends support to Feldman Barrett's (2017a, b, c) view of emotional intelligence as emotional granularity.

These findings confirm Farrell's (2018) view that good teachers are more than well-oiled machines that deliver accurate linguistic information to their students. Teachers' psychological well-being is the basis of their personal and emotional investment in their teaching. Indeed, teachers that have sufficient emotional intelligence are more likely to be able to manage the emotional tenor of the classroom, establish strong social connections and teach with confidence, optimism and passion (Dewaele et al., 2018).

The main pedagogical implication of this study is that (trainee) teachers would benefit from training to deal with their own and their students' emotions (Brackett et al., 2010; Hernández-Amorós & Urrea-Solano, 2017) in order to become better teachers and to maintain good mental health during their teaching career. Boosting emotional granularity in English and broadening the overall emotion repertoire in order to increase emotional intelligence (Feldman Barrett, 2017c) benefits both teachers and their students.

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ⁱ The term “global Trait EI” refers to the total score for the 30 items of the TEIQ-SF.

ⁱⁱ We prefer the neutral dichotomy First Language Users (L1 users) versus Foreign Language Users (LX users) rather than the value-laden “Native versus Non Native Speakers” (cf. Dewaele, 2018a).