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Emotional Intelligence and Beliefs about English Language Learning: A Case Study with Pre-service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This case study examines the connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and pre-service teachers' beliefs about English language learning within an Ecuadorian context. 317 participants enrolled in an undergraduate English teacher training program completed two validated instruments: The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire—Short Form (TEIQue-SF) and the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analyses were performed to explore potential relationships. Results showed no statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and beliefs about English learning ($r = 0.020$, $p = 0.730$), and regression analysis confirmed that EI did not predict BALLI scores. Subscale-level analysis revealed no significant associations, although minor trends were observed between emotionality and motivational beliefs. These findings contrast with previous studies indicating positive links between EI and learner beliefs, suggesting that contextual, curricular, and institutional factors may have a greater influence on shaping pre-service teachers' cognition. The study contributes to the current debate about teacher training emphasizing the limited impact of EI on belief systems and advocating for more comprehensive training integrating cognitive, emotional, and reflective components. Limitations include the sample s demographic homogeneity and the lack of qualitative data. Future research should include diverse contexts and mixed methods to further investigate these relationships.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Beliefs; Pre-service Teachers; Ecuador

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1. Introduction

Recently, emotional intelligence (EI), has gained relevance in teacher training as an indispensable component of effective teaching and learning. Traditionally, teacher training programs have focused on developing cognitive and didactic competency and have overlooked the crucial role of the emotional factor in creating a conducive environment for successful learning. The current emphasis upon emotional intelligence in teacher training reveals a renewed perspective of teaching as an affectionate, communicative practice, transcending sole content delivery, and considers the social and emotional dimensions of education.

This shift aligns with broader educational paradigms emphasizing the development of autonomous self-regulated learners. These paradigms highlight the need for emotionally attuned educators who foster trust, motivation, and a supportive classroom climate. Emotional intelligence, in this sense, not only facilitates better interpersonal relationships but also enhances classroom management, student engagement, and ultimately, academic achievement.

The emergence of more humane views about the nature of educational phenomena has raised the need to explore areas of human behavior that influence learning processes. Therefore, studies on emotional intelligence and its influence on education have gained relevance in the educational research panorama as one of the fundamentals in teacher training. For pre-service teachers who have not yet fully formed their professional identities and philosophies, EI becomes a tool to shape their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Managing EI allows pre-service teachers to reflect critically on their emotional responses, regulate stress, and remain open to feedback—skills that are essential during the formative years of teaching. Furthermore, EI encourages future educators to build strong rapport with students, empathize with their struggles, and view challenges as opportunities for personal and professional growth.

EI enables pre-service teachers to strike this balance, maintaining students well-being while also being responsive educators. It can empower them to maintain enthusiasm and optimism, even in difficult circumstances, thus creating more sustainable and effective teaching practices.

Prior experiences as language learners often shape the foundational beliefs pre-service teachers bring into training programs. These beliefs may include assumptions about the difficulty of English, the importance of grammar, the role of native speakers, and even fixed ideas about learners abilities. In this light, EI serves as a cognitive-emotional bridge that facilitates belief change and allows more tolerant and supportive classroom practices, aligning pedagogical beliefs with inclusive and growth-oriented instructional strategies.

Understanding the interface between EI and pre-service teachers beliefs about language learning enables approaching teacher training from a broader perspective. This perspective equips future graduates with cognitive and didactic strategies while cultivating the emotional and reflective skills necessary for insightful teaching. Despite growing interest in EI, the relationship between emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning remains underexplored, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. This gap is significant, as Emotional intelligence becomes a mediating variable helping pre-service teachers reframe rigid beliefs through increased self-awareness, self-confidence, and openness to alternative methodologies.

To bridge this gap, the present study examines the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on pre-service English teachers' beliefs about language learning, focusing on dominant beliefs related to learners, teaching methods, and learning outcomes. Using a quantitative case study design, the paper investigates whether higher levels of EI are associated with more flexible, student-centered pedagogical beliefs. Emotional intelligence and belief systems were measured using validated instruments, with data collected from 317 participants enrolled in an undergraduate teacher training program. Situated within the Ecuadorian EFL context, the research offers novel insights into how emotional competencies may influence instructional attitudes and decision-making, contributing to more adaptive and reflective teacher education practices.

2. Literature Review

The term emotional intelligence was introduced by Mayer and Salovey[1]. In 1997, Mayer and Salovey[2] expanded their definition to a four-branch model, including perceiving, understanding, managing emotions, and facilitating thought. Goleman[3] expanded the scope of EI to include

domains such as leadership and education. His model consists of five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills [3]. All of them play a crucial role in education.

EI is linked to teaching effectiveness, particularly in terms of classroom climate and emotional support. Emotionally intelligent teachers are more adept at managing student behavior, resolving conflicts, and creating inclusive environments [4]. They also enhance student engagement by modeling emotional regulation and fostering positive relationships between teachers and students [5].

According to scientific evidence, El is a learnable construct that can be reinforced alongside other areas of human intelligence, which makes it relevant and convenient for teacher training due to its influence on students and teachers well-being. Fostering preservice teachers EI may contribute to creating a conducive classroom climate for learning by developing preservice teachers stronger reflective capacity, empathy, and openness to change [6].

Exploring emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers beliefs posits the increasing interest in these two constructs in educational research. A closer analysis of these concepts reveals the nature of their relationship and the main trends in their study. EI emphasizes managing one s own emotions and those of others, as well as interpersonal relationships in the classroom. At the same time, beliefs held by teachers regarding teaching, learning, and their roles help shape their professional decisions and development.

2.1. Emotional Intelligence

According to Mayer and Salovey [2], EI is the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, which plays a crucial role in educational contexts where interpersonal dynamics are central. In pre-service teacher preparation, EI has been linked to enhanced classroom management, increased empathy toward learners, and more reflective teaching practices [7].

Recent literature has addressed cutting-edge topics related to emotional intelligence (EI) in education, particularly in the context of teacher training. The focus goes on how emotional competencies influence teacher performance, professional identity, engagement, motivation, and pedagogical beliefs. Few papers, however, address the direct impact of EI on pre-service teachers' beliefs about English Language learning, most offering relevant clues to how EI shapes teaching practices and classroom dynamics [8].

Four major trends are evident in the research on the topic: EI and teacher competence [9], whose studies reveal the ties between emotional awareness and regulation; EI and teacher efficacy and engagement [14–17], connecting emotional intelligence to motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy, all of which usually mediate teachers' belief systems. According to this trend, emotionally intelligent teachers are more engaged and confident; emotional competence development in preservice teachers [15–18]; and the fourth trend refers to emotions and beliefs in language teaching contexts [19,20]

These trends converge in emphasizing emotional intelligence (EI) as a determinant of teaching competence and performance, indicating a shift in teacher education that values emotional readiness alongside pedagogical knowledge. They suggest that adequate training and experiences, such as pre-service ELT teachers practicum periods, may shape beliefs about teaching and learning [11]. A positive correlation exists between pre-service teachers EI and their perceptions of self-efficacy, which is crucial for their confidence in teaching English effectively [21,22].

2.1.1. Neuroscientific Perspectives on Emotional Intelligence and Belief Formation

In this context of pedagogical evolution, where current trends seek a more integral and student-centered education, neuroscience offers a compelling framework for understanding the cognitive and emotional processes underlying meaningful learning and how EI interacts with belief formation. This section addresses the research question: How does emotional intelligence influence pre-service teachers' beliefs about English language learning? by exploring the neurocognitive mechanisms underpinning emotional processing and belief development.

Recent neuroscience research has explored how the brain functions as a dynamic mediator between emotional intelligence and belief systems [23–25]. Emotional intelligence is closely linked to neural systems involved in emotional and cognitive processing, specifically the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system, which includes the amygdala. These brain structures support the perception, regulation, and interpretation of emotions, directly influencing how individuals construct, modify, and internalize their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Mayer and Salovey's[2] four-branch model (perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions) can be mapped onto distinct but interconnected neural mechanisms. For example, the accurate recognition of emotional cues, governed by limbic areas like the amygdala, helps pre-service teachers interpret their own learning experiences and those of their students. Similarly, the regulation and understanding of emotions (functions of the prefrontal cortex) enable individuals to manage anxiety, persist through language-related challenges, and develop more adaptive learner-centered beliefs.

Neuroplasticity further supports the idea that beliefs are not fixed but can change through emotionally intelligent practices. When teacher education programs incorporate reflective exercises, mindfulness, and emotional regulation strategies, they activate neural pathways that promote metacognitive awareness and belief restructuring[26].

These emotional-cognitive interactions influence whether a pre-service teacher views language learning as an opportunity for growth or a source of failure. Emotionally intelligent individuals tend to exhibit more reflective and resilient beliefs because their brains are better equipped to process affective information and integrate it with pedagogical reasoning. As such, fostering EI in teacher training programs may enhance metacognitive awareness and shape more empathetic and constructive teaching beliefs. This brain-based understanding adds depth to the current investigation by situating EI not only as a behavioral or psychological trait but also as a neurocognitive capacity that directly informs beliefs about language learning.

By situating EI within a neuroscientific framework, this section reinforces the hypothesis that emotional competencies are not merely behavioral traits but neurocognitive capacities that shape how pre-service teachers perceive, evaluate, and respond to language learning challenges. This perspective adds depth to this study by showing that fostering EI in teacher training may lead to more reflective, resilient, and student-centered beliefs, directly addressing the research question and highlighting a critical area for pedagogical intervention.

2.2. Beliefs about English Learning

Teacher beliefs, the implicit theories and assumptions that influence how educators perceive teaching, learning, and students[20], have long been recognized as key determinants of instructional behavior. These beliefs shape how teachers approach communicative competence, language errors, learner autonomy in English language learning contexts and professional development[22]. Emerging research suggests that emotional intelligence may mediate the development of such beliefs, potentially fostering more empathetic, flexible, and student-centered perspectives[21].

Since 2018, the field of language teacher belief research has experienced an unprecedented rise in publications revealing the trends and influential aspects identified in language teacher beliefs, with a notable shift from cognitive to emotional dimensions in research and many contributions from the USA, China, and the UK[27].

Learning experiences, cultural influences, and personal reflections on their teaching practice provide opportunities for developing pre-service teachers' beliefs, which often shape their behavior. The most scrutinized aspects of pre-service teachers' beliefs relate to the influence of other factors on them, such as prior experiences, cultural context, educational programs, and beliefs about teaching practices.

Prior experiences can lead to a mix of traditional and modern teaching beliefs among pre-service teachers, as noted by Hen and Sharabi-Nov[28]. According to Wang et al.[29], pre-service teachers who acknowledge the importance of the target culture in language learning recognize the need for culturally relevant teaching. Lastly, the structure and content of teacher education programs can modify previous beliefs and encourage a more effective approach to language teaching over time[30].

Three major topics related to beliefs about teaching practices have garnered the attention of scholars: active participation, the role of grammar, and flexibility in teaching. Many pre-service teachers consider meaningful learning to require active student engagement, emphasizing the need for interactive classroom environments[31]. There is a notable divergence in beliefs regarding the role of grammar, with some pre-service teachers undervaluing its importance in favor of communicative approaches[32]. Ultimately, pre-service teachers often perceive themselves as flexible facilitators, adapting their roles to meet the diverse needs of their students[33].

Despite helping improve teaching effectiveness, beliefs can be challenging — some pre-service teachers hold unre-

alistic expectations about language learning, which could hinder their teaching effectiveness and student outcomes [23].

The analysis of the main trends in the EI and teachers beliefs research, evidenced by the lack of research exploring the relationship between these constructs, reveals a gap in the literature. Despite the existing consensus on the role of EI in shaping attitudes and behaviors within educational contexts, only a few studies have specifically investigated how pre-service teachers emotional competencies influence their pedagogical beliefs and strategies for learning English.

The absence of studies on this topic highlights the need for further research that examines the nature of the relationship between EI and pre-service teachers beliefs about English language learning and integrates EI problems into research on teacher training.

3. Research Questions

a) Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers beliefs about English learning?
b) Can emotional intelligence predict learners' beliefs about English learning?

4. Methodology

This quantitative case study aims to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers' beliefs about English learning by analyzing data from two different surveys: the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue). By choosing a quantitative approach, the study ensures objectivity and reproducibility, allowing for statistical analysis of trends and patterns between emotional intelligence traits and language learning beliefs. The use of standardized instruments such as BALLI and TEIQue enables comparability with previous research and contributes to the reliability and validity of the results.

The study employed a non-experimental, correlational research design, which is suitable for examining potential associations between variables without manipulating them. A case study approach was chosen to focus in-depth on a specific group—pre-service English teachers in a defined institutional and cultural context in Ecuador—thus enhancing the ecological validity of the findings.

4.1. Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a public university in the Los Ríos province, Ecuador, with students from the undergraduate English teacher training program. The participants were selected through voluntary response sampling, ensuring that only students willing to participate were included in the study. A total of N = 317 participants were involved; 75% were female, and 25% were male, comprising students from the program s first semester to the last semester (8th). Their ages ranged from 18 to 36 years.

Inclusion criteria required participants to actively enroll in the English teacher undergraduate training program and complete at least one semester of coursework. Exclusion criteria eliminated those who had already graduated, were not currently enrolled in the program, or failed to complete the surveys in full. Ethical approval was obtained from all participants, who provided informed consent before participating in the study.

The university where the study was conducted serves a largely rural and lower-middle-income population, with many students being first-generation college attendees. As a result, participants brought diverse educational experiences and often had limited prior exposure to English before entering the program. This linguistic background may influence their beliefs about language learning, particularly in terms of self-efficacy, motivation, and expectations for teaching careers.

The English teacher training program includes coursework in linguistics, pedagogy, teaching practicum, and general education, but it does not explicitly incorporate emotional intelligence development as part of its curriculum. Therefore, participants may not have received formal training in socio-emotional competencies, which is relevant to interpreting their emotional intelligence levels.

Participants represented a broad academic range: 32% were in their first or second semesters, 40% were in mid-program (3rd–5th semester), and 28% were in the advanced stages (6th–8th semester). This distribution enabled analysis across levels of academic progression to identify potential differences in beliefs and emotional intelligence scores; however, the results showed no significant variation by academic

level.

The majority of participants (approximately 68%) reported aspirations to teach at the secondary level, while the remaining 32% aimed for work in primary education or private language institutes. This professional orientation may also shape how they perceive language learning challenges, particularly when framed by institutional expectations and employment realities in Ecuador s educational system.

4.2. Data Collection Instruments

Data collection tools (BALLI and TEIQue) were translated into Spanish and administered electronically through Google Forms to ensure accessibility and ease of participation. Two experts in the field validated the translation into the participants mother tongue, which was then piloted with a group of students from other undergraduate programs to enhance reliability and validity. The translation process followed a back-translation protocol, in which the surveys were first translated from English to Spanish and then independently retranslated into English to verify the accuracy and conceptual consistency of the items. This step was critical to preserving the original meaning and minimizing potential linguistic and cultural biases that could affect participants' interpretation. Data collection was conducted between January 2025 and February 2025 in the faculty of education.

4.2.1. Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)

The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory, created by Horwitz[34], is a widely utilized tool to evaluate learners' beliefs regarding various elements of second language acquisition. This survey comprises 34 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The BALLI addresses four main dimensions: foreign language aptitude, language learning difficulty, the nature of language learning, and learning and communication strategies. A higher total BALLI score reflects stronger, more established beliefs about language learning. For this investigation, we used an adapted version focusing on beliefs about learning English.

This adaptation preserved the original theoretical structure of the instrument while modifying some lexical choices and cultural references to enhance relevance for Ecuadorian pre-service teachers. For instance, examples referencing language exposure or instructional methods were contextualized to reflect local classroom realities.

Additionally, internal consistency was evaluated during the pilot phase, yielding acceptable Cronbach's alpha values across subscales, supporting the tool's reliability in this context. The use of BALLI enabled the researchers to obtain insights into cognitive and affective orientations that pre-service teachers hold toward English learning, such as whether they view success in language learning as talent-based or effort-driven, or whether they prioritize grammar accuracy over communicative fluency. These beliefs are considered crucial because they can significantly influence instructional choices, persistence, and classroom interaction patterns once these individuals become active professionals.

4.2.2. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue)

The TEIQue-SF, developed by Petrides and Furnham[35], is a 30-item instrument designed to assess trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) across four broad domains: Well-being, Self-control, Emotionality, and Sociability. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree). Higher total TEIQue-SF scores indicate greater levels of emotional intelligence.

The short form (SF) version was selected for its practicality in large-scale studies and its proven psychometric validity across diverse cultural and educational settings. Each domain represents a cluster of related emotional traits: Well-being includes optimism and life satisfaction; Self-control addresses impulse regulation and stress management; Emotionality involves empathy and emotional expression; and Sociability reflects assertiveness and the ability to influence others emotionally.

For this study, the TEIQue-SF was translated and culturally adapted into Spanish following the same back-translation protocol applied to the BALLI. Expert reviewers ensured that each item maintained conceptual equivalence, and a pilot study with non-participant undergraduates confirmed its clarity and appropriateness. Internal reliability coefficients for each of the four domains were found to be within acceptable ranges ($\alpha > 0.70$), supporting the instrument's consistency. Incorporating the TEIQue-SF into this study allowed for a multidimensional understanding of how emotional traits may influence cognitive beliefs about language learning. Specifically, it enabled exploration into whether pre-service teachers

with higher emotional self-awareness, empathy, or stress tolerance also demonstrate more flexible and student-centered beliefs about English language instruction.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The statistical program SPSS, version 25, was used to examine whether a significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers beliefs about English learning. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between the total BALLI and TEIQue-SF scores. Additionally, a linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether emotional intelligence could predict pre-service teachers beliefs about English learning.

These statistical techniques were selected for their ability to explore both the strength and direction of relationships between continuous variables. The Pearson correlation test identified whether a statistically significant association exists between emotional intelligence levels and specific language learning beliefs. Following this, linear regression allowed for assessing the predictive power of emotional intelligence on belief systems, offering insight into which aspects of EI—such as self-control or emotionality—might influence pedagogical thinking.

Before conducting the analyses, data were screened for outliers, missing values, and normality assumptions to ensure the robustness and accuracy of the results. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were generated to provide an overview of participants' emotional intelligence and belief profiles. Effect sizes and significance levels (p-values) were reported to evaluate the practical importance of the findings. All analyses adhered to standard guidelines for educational research, enhancing the study s transparency and replicability.

5. Results

This study investigated whether emotional intelligence was related to or could predict pre-service teachers' beliefs about learning English. Two instruments were administered: the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire—Short Form (TEIQue-SF). The analyses included descriptive statistics, a Pearson correlation, and a linear regression analysis.

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the total scores of both instruments. The mean BALLI total score was M = 116.83, SD = 10.52, and the mean TEIQue-SF total score was M = 121.45, SD = 14.39.

Additional descriptive analyses was conducted to examine the distribution of scores across four subdimensions of emotional intelligence: Well-being, Self-control, Emotionality, and Sociability. Among these, Sociability recorded the highest mean score (M = 2.66, SD = 1.13), suggesting that pre-service teachers perceive themselves as relatively competent in social interactions and interpersonal communication. Conversely, Self-control had the lowest mean score (M = 2.54, SD = 1.08), indicating potential challenges in managing stress, regulating impulses, or maintaining composure in emotionally demanding situations. This profile highlights strengths in outward social engagement alongside areas for development in internal emotional regulation. **Figure 1** shows the mean and standard deviation of each category.

Similarly, the BALLI was broken down into its five categories (see **Figure 2**): foreign language aptitude (M = 1.84, SD = 0.89), difficulty of language learning (M = 2.65, SD = 1.23), nature of language learning (M = 2.65, SD = 1.13), learning and communication strategies (M = 2.83, SD = 1.11), and motivations and expectations (M = 1.94, SD = 0.94).

Learning and Communication Strategies received the highest average agreement, indicating that participants were confident in using strategies to enhance their English learning. This suggests an active and engaged approach to language acquisition, emphasizing self-regulated learning techniques and communication practices. In contrast, Foreign Language Aptitude showed the lowest average agreement, reflecting considerable skepticism or uncertainty about the idea that language ability is innate. This may stem from diverse educational or cultural experiences—some teacher candidates may believe language learning is talent-based. However, others view it as skill-driven and accessible through persistence and practice.

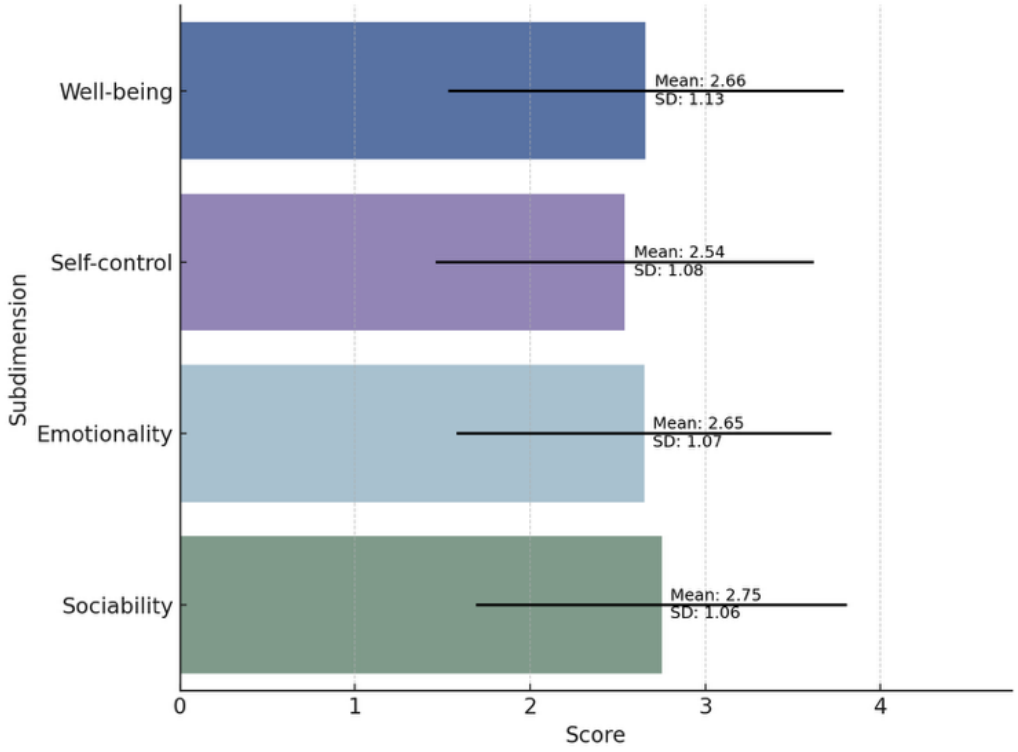

Figure 1. Emotional Intelligence Subdimensions (Mean ± SD).

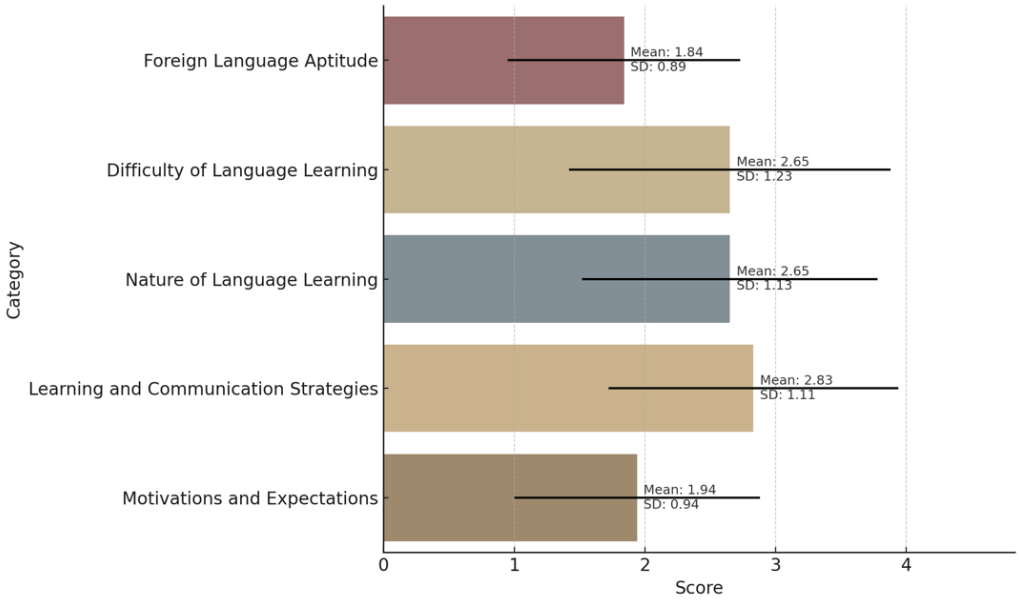

Figure 2. BALLI Subdimensions (Mean ± SD).

The relatively lower mean in Motivations and Expectations compared to Learning Strategies indicates that, although participants were somewhat motivated by the instrumental value of English, their belief in its personal or professional benefit is not as strong as initially assumed. Within the emotional intelligence framework, Sociability had the highest subdimension mean, contrary to expectations. This suggests that pre-service teachers perceive themselves as capable in social and communicative settings, particularly in assertiveness and classroom interaction. Self-control had the lowest mean, potentially signaling the need for targeted support in managing stress and emotional regulation in high-

pressure teaching environments. Together, these findings present a nuanced view of pre-service teachers' cognitive beliefs and emotional dispositions, informing how teacher education programs might tailor instruction to bridge gaps between strategic knowledge and emotional preparedness for the profession.

5.2. Correlation Analysis

To address the first research question, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and beliefs about English learning. The results (see **Figure 3**) indicated a very weak and non-significant correlation.

There was no statistically significant relationship between participants emotional intelligence and their beliefs about language learning ($r = 0.020$, $p = 0.730$). Thus, emotional intelligence is not associated with beliefs about learning English in this sample.

Additionally, subscale-level correlations were explored. None of the TEIQue-SF subdimensions showed statistically significant correlations with any of the BALLI subscales. The strongest—yet still non-significant—association was between the Emotionality subscale of EI and the BALLI category "Motivations and Expectations" ($r = 0.087$, $p = 0.142$), suggesting a minor positive trend that may warrant further exploration with larger or more diverse samples.

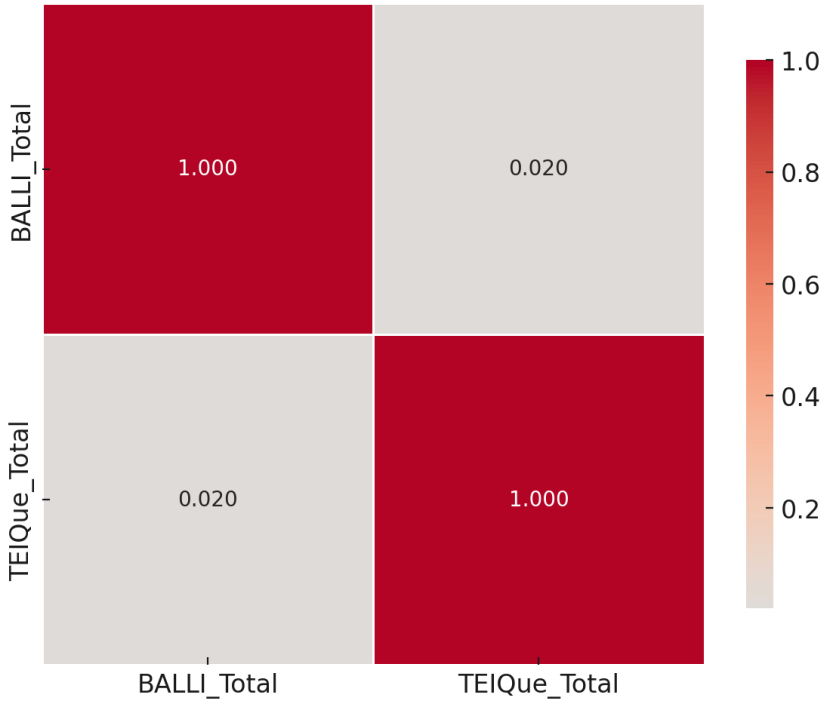

Figure 3. Pearson Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Language Learning Beliefs.

Although the overall correlations were weak, this does not negate the potential relevance of emotional intelligence in teacher development. The lack of significance could reflect the sample size, cultural or contextual factors, or limitations in the self-perception measures used. Future studies could consider incorporating qualitative methods such as reflective journals or interviews to uncover more nuanced interactions between emotional intelligence and pedagogical beliefs. Moreover, longitudinal research might reveal whether emotional intelligence influences belief transformation over time during teacher training, especially as pre-service teachers gain classroom experience. These considerations highlight the complexity of belief formation, and the multifaceted role emotional intelligence may play within it.

5.3. Regression Analysis

To address the second research question, a simple linear regression was performed to assess whether emotional intelligence (TEIQue_Total) could predict beliefs about English learning (BALLI_Total). The results are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Linear Regression Predicting BALLI Total Score from TEIQue-SF Total Score.

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	Std. Error	F	*P*
1 (TEIQue_Total)	0.020	0.000	−0.003	10.52	0.119	0.730

The model was not statistically significant, F (1, 288) = 0.119, $p = 0.730$, with an R^2 of 0.000, indicating that emotional intelligence explained 0% of the variance in BALLI scores. Emotional intelligence did not significantly predict beliefs about English learning.

A post-hoc power analysis was conducted to assess the sensitivity of the correlation analysis. The sample size (N = 290) had sufficient power ($\beta = 0.80$) to detect small effect sizes ($r \geq 0.15$), suggesting that the non-significant results are not likely due to a lack of statistical power but reflect a genuinely negligible relationship.

Furthermore, visual inspections of scatterplots and standardized residuals confirmed the lack of linear relationship and homoscedasticity between the predictor and outcome variables, supporting the conclusion that emotional intelligence does not function as a reliable predictor of language learning beliefs in this sample.

These findings highlight the complexity of the belief formation process, suggesting that emotional intelligence, at least as measured by self-report, may not directly influence cognitive orientations toward language learning. This calls attention to the possibility that other variables—such as prior academic experiences, teaching practicum exposure, cultural norms, or metacognitive awareness—may play more substantial roles in shaping pre-service teachers' pedagogical beliefs. Future research could benefit from exploring interaction effects or introducing mixed methods designs that incorporate narrative inquiry or classroom observations to triangulate findings and uncover deeper relationships that are not easily captured through quantitative models alone.

6. Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence (EI), as measured by the TEIQue-SF, was related to or predictive of their beliefs about English language learning, as assessed through the BALLI. Contrary to theoretical expectations and a substantial body of literature emphasizing the role of affective factors in language education [36,37], the results of this study revealed no statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers' beliefs about learning English in this particular Ecuadorian context. Furthermore, emotional intelligence did not emerge as an important predictor of language learning beliefs in regression analyses, accounting for virtually no variance in the BALLI scores.

This outcome contrasts earlier findings suggesting that emotional intelligence is positively associated with language learners' beliefs, self-efficacy, motivation, and academic achievement [38,39]. For instance, Alavinia and Alavinia and Ebrahimpour [40] found that higher levels of emotional intelligence in Iranian EFL teachers were significantly associated with increased self-perceived efficacy and more positive attitudes toward teaching practices, including language beliefs. Similarly, Rastegar and Karami [41] suggested that emotionally intelligent learners were more likely to adopt adaptive language learning strategies and maintain positive beliefs about language acquisition.

However, our results align with a smaller but growing body of research suggesting that the impact of emotional intelligence on cognitive aspects of language learning may be limited or context dependent. For example, studies by Bernat, Gvozdenko, Barcelos, and Kalaja [42,43] have reported weak or non-significant correlations between emotional intelligence and learners' beliefs or language outcomes in specific demographic or cultural contexts, implying that the role of EI may not be universally generalizable.

The absence of a significant relationship in this study may suggest that language learning beliefs are more influenced by socio-cultural, educational, and experiential factors than by affective personality traits, such as emotional intelligence. Beliefs about language learning, particularly those formed over years of exposure to language instruction, may become deeply entrenched and resistant to modulation by dispositional variables like EI [44,45].

Another plausible explanation is that emotional intelligence may exert greater influence on behavioral and motivational outcomes (e.g., classroom engagement, persever-

ance, willingness to communicate), rather than on abstract or metacognitive belief systems. Trait EI is more likely to facilitate coping strategies, resilience, and classroom interaction quality [37] than to directly shape cognitive frameworks or assumptions about how they are learned.

When pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs, their beliefs about language learning are relatively stable and may have been formed during earlier educational experiences. This suggests a critical period for belief formation that precedes formal teacher training, during which environmental, instructional, and cultural inputs may exert a more substantial formative influence than internal psychological traits [46].

Pre-service teachers' lack of training in emotional intelligence strategies is another possible explanation for this difference, as most studies related to emotional intelligence and beliefs about learning focus on young pre-service teachers, who may struggle to apply these strategies to their own beliefs [47].

There are also policy-related reasons for this insignificant relationship. The teacher training curriculum does not include emotional intelligence skills, and the focus on the emotional aspects of language training is limited [39]. Prioritizing cognitive and linguistic skills over socio-emotional competencies can lead to the belief that language learning is more coherent with traditional cognitive approaches rather than emotional intelligence models.

As a result, evaluation strategies in English teacher training typically focus on observable teaching practices rather than emotional competencies. Not including assessment practices oriented toward measuring emotional intelligence suggests that the relationship between beliefs and emotional intelligence is not considered or encouraged.

In addition, institutional perceptions of teacher effectiveness often emphasize test scores, lesson planning, and classroom management over emotional well-being and relational capacities. This may reinforce a disconnect between emotional intelligence and beliefs about teaching and learning, particularly for novice educators who model their beliefs on measurable, externally validated outcomes.

Finally, the linguistic ideology embedded in English language education, often oriented toward instrumental goals such as employability or global mobility, may itself marginalize emotional or affective considerations in both instruction and teacher cognition. This instrumental orientation could constrain the role of emotional intelligence in belief formation.

7. Conclusions

This study is among the first to empirically examine the link between emotional intelligence and pre-service teachers' beliefs about English learning using BALLI and TEIQue-SF in an Ecuadorian context. The findings provide a valuable reference for future investigations into the psychological and cognitive aspects of language learning.

Results showed a weak or no correlation between the two categories, suggesting that emotional intelligence may not be a reliable predictor of beliefs about language learning. Among the factors that may account for these results are language education policies and curricular frameworks, which appear to have a greater influence on shaping pre-service teachers' beliefs than their emotional capacities. When teacher education is strongly guided by standardized curricula, beliefs about language learning may not be connected to individual emotional traits.

These findings underscore the need to investigate further how teacher education programs can effectively integrate emotional competencies with pedagogical content knowledge. It is also important to consider broader structural and institutional variables, such as teacher education curriculum design, assessment policies, and the sociolinguistic realities of language teaching, that may enhance or hinder the influence of personal factors like emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, a multidimensional view of teacher cognition should be adopted, recognizing that beliefs are shaped not only by personality traits but also by broader ideological, political, and historical contexts within which teachers are trained. Emotional intelligence may still play an indirect or mediating role, especially when combined with reflective practices, mentoring, or emotional training modules integrated into the curriculum.

Future studies should investigate additional psychological and environmental factors that may better explain pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews or classroom observations, could provide deeper insights into how these beliefs develop in real educational settings.

After analysing the data, the study presented one limitation. The homogeneity of the sample, comprising pre-service teachers from similar academic and cultural backgrounds, may have constrained the variance in both EI and BALLI scores. The restricted range could have limited the ability to detect significant relationships, even if they exist in more diverse populations.

Subsequent research should aim to involve participants from a broader range of teacher education programs, regions, and linguistic backgrounds to assess the generalizability of the findings better. Incorporating longitudinal designs could also help determine whether emotional intelligence has a delayed or developmental impact on belief formation over time. In addition to addressing sample diversity, future research should also prioritize triangulation through the integration of multiple data collection methods. This approach would not only validate quantitative results but also enrich understanding of the complex relationship between emotional and cognitive dimensions of teacher development.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, J.C.S. and A.M.; methodology, J.C.S. and A.M.; software, J.C.S. and A.M.; validation, J.C.S.. and A.M.: formal analysis, J.C.S.. and A.M.; investigation, J.C.S. and A.M.; resources, J.C.S. and A.M.; data curation, J.C.S.. and A.M.; writing—original draft preparation, J.C.S. and A.M.; writing—review and editing, J.C.S. and A.M.; visualization, J.C.S. and A.M.; supervision, J.C.S.. and A.M.; project administration, J.C.S. and A.M.; funding acquisition, J.C.S. and A.M.. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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