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Applied and Ecolinguistic Dimensions of Emotional Competence in Foreign Language Communication

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Abstract

The relevance of the present study arises from the fact that foreign language communication increasingly takes place in intercultural, digital, and educational environments in which linguistic correctness alone does not guarantee communicative success. Under such conditions, emotional regulation, the ability to sustain interpersonal contact, and the capacity to maintain a safe and constructive tone of interaction become especially important. The aim of this article is to identify the ecolinguistic and applied dimensions of emotional competence in foreign language communication, while the object of the study is foreign language discourse in written, oral, digital, and lingua franca formats. The study was conducted as a qualitative-quantitative corpus-interpretive analysis based on open corpus resources, emotion-lexical tools, and survey data, with descriptive statistics and coding across five analytical categories. The findings show that emotional competence is most frequently manifested through hesitation markers, self-correction, clarification, reformulation, mitigation, supportive responses, and re-

pair moves. The results further indicate that linguistic uncertainty and hesitation do not necessarily lead to communicative failure when they are accompanied by appropriate regulatory actions. An applied ecolinguistic model is proposed that encompasses emotional awareness, emotional regulation, communicative adaptation, ecological interaction, and communicative outcome. The practical significance of the findings lies in the possibility of using this model for the analysis of foreign language discourse, the development of educational tasks, and the design of digital language feedback. A promising direction for future research is to test the proposed model in authentic educational, online, professional, and intercultural communicative situations. The findings may also be useful for improving foreign language education and communication training in increasingly digitalized learning environments.

Keywords: emotional competence, emotional ecolinguistics, emotional regulation, communicative ecology, foreign language discourse, communicative strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language communication is rarely only a linguistic act. It is shaped by uncertainty, anxiety, politeness, empathy, the ability to maintain interpersonal contact, and the capacity to remain an active interlocutor even when the appropriate words do not immediately come to mind. In authentic educational or digital interaction, a grammatically correct statement may fail to achieve its communicative purpose if it disregards the emotional state of the interlocutor. Conversely, a linguistically imperfect phrase may sometimes function more effectively when it is accompanied by tact, an appropriate clarification strategy, self-control, and a willingness to restore disrupted contact. For this reason, emotional competence in foreign language learning cannot be regarded merely as an additional “soft” component. It is increasingly emerging as one of the conditions of communicative ecology, especially in multilingual, intercultural, and online environments, where misunderstandings can arise rapidly and are not always immediately recognized by the participants in the interaction.

Recent research confirms that emotions are deeply embedded in the processes of foreign language learning and communication. Dewaele & MacIntyre [1] showed that foreign language anxiety and language enjoyment should not be treated as secondary learning experiences because they directly influence learners’ willingness to engage in interaction, take communicative risks, and maintain participation. Deepika & Jennifer [2], for their part, systematized the relationship between emotional intelligence and the learning of English as a second or foreign language, emphasizing the role of emotional factors in learners’ motivation, adaptation, and engagement. In a more applied context, Alqarni [3] demonstrated that emotional regulation, enjoyment of foreign language learning, and academic stress can act as predictors of foreign language achievement. This point is particularly important for the present article because such an approach connects emotional regulation not with an abstract psychological state alone, but with observable outcomes of foreign language communication and learning.

At the same time, the ecolinguistic dimension adds another important layer to this problem. Stibbe [4] considers language to be a factor in the formation of stories, values, and relationships through which people make sense of their environment; this perspective can also be extended to the ecology of interpersonal and educational communication. In foreign language interaction, such ecology is not merely an abstract concept. It becomes visible in the ways participants mitigate disagreement, respond to mistakes, resolve misunderstandings, support their interlocutors, or, conversely, create tension and communicative distance. Mialkowska et al. [5] also draw attention to social networks as linguistic environments in which cultural-linguistic and cognitive manifestations of communication become particularly noticeable. This is important for the present study because foreign language communication increasingly occurs not only in the classroom but also in digital spaces, where emotional markers, communicative strategies, and episodes of communicative failure can often be traced with considerable clarity.

Despite the substantial body of existing research, a significant gap remains in the study of this issue. Emotional intelligence and emotional regulation are commonly analyzed as psychological or linguodidactic variables, whereas ecolinguistics is more frequently associated with discourse, values, sustainability, or ecological meanings. The intersection of these approaches remains less developed, particularly the question of how emotional competence functions as a practical mechanism for maintaining communicative ecology in foreign language discourse. In other words, it is still insufficiently clear how emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, strategies for reestablishing contact, and communicative support interact in specific episodes of foreign language communication, especially in situations that result in communicative success, partial success, or failure.

The aim of this article is to identify and characterize the ecolinguistic and applied aspects of emotional competence in foreign language communication. To achieve this aim, the following tasks are addressed: to clarify the theoretical relationship among emotional competence, emotional regulation, and communicative ecology; to describe the principal emotional markers and communicative strategies manifested in foreign language discourse; to determine how emotional competence contributes to communicative success or, conversely, why it may not always prevent communicative failure; and to propose an applied analytical model for interpreting emotional competence as a resource for ecological foreign language interaction. In this study, foreign language communication is considered not merely as the production of linguistically correct forms. Rather, it is viewed as a communicative space in which emotional regulation, respect, adaptation, interpersonal safety, and the maintenance of contact become essential components of communicative effectiveness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of emotional competence in foreign language communication has developed at the intersection of emotional intelligence theory, the psychology of foreign language learning, intercultural communication, and ecolinguistics. In the classical understanding, emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize, interpret, and regulate emotions, as well as to use emotional information in thinking and behavior [6]. In foreign language communication, these abilities have direct practical significance because speakers often act under conditions of uncertainty, linguistic error, cultural difference, and possible emotional tension. Gross [7] conceptualizes emotional regulation as a process through which individuals

influence which emotions they experience, when those emotions arise, and how they are expressed. Accordingly, emotional competence in the present article is understood not as an abstract psychological trait alone, but as a practical resource for sustaining and regulating foreign language interaction.

An important area of research concerns foreign language anxiety and foreign language enjoyment. Dewaele & MacIntyre [8] showed that language-learning anxiety and enjoyment should not be viewed simply as opposing emotional states, because they may coexist and jointly influence a learner's participation in communication. More recent evidence supports this logic. Dewaele et al. [9] demonstrated that foreign language enjoyment can attenuate the negative effects of anxiety and boredom on oral foreign language performance. Babanoğlu [10], summarizing the results of a systematic review and meta-analysis, also identified a consistent relationship between emotional intelligence and lower levels of foreign language anxiety. Similarly, Jin & Dewaele [11] connect trait emotional intelligence with foreign language success through the mediating roles of academic self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety.

Willingness to communicate is of particular importance because this construct connects an internal emotional state with an individual's actual readiness to participate in foreign language interaction. MacIntyre et al. [12] defined willingness to communicate in an L2 as a situational readiness to enter into discourse, a readiness that depends on confidence, motivation, interpersonal relationships, and contextual conditions. More recent empirical work has further developed this model by examining the role of emotional intelligence. Gao et al. [13] showed that students with different emotional-intelligence profiles demonstrate different levels of readiness to communicate in English. Wang et al. [14], Xiao & Jia [15], and Zhang & Zhang [16] further confirm that emotional intelligence, foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, boredom, and willingness to communicate form a complex system of interrelationships rather than a simple linear dependence.

Research also indicates that emotional competence is formed not only at the individual level but also within a specific educational and communicative environment. Li et al. [17] found that the classroom environment and trait emotional intelligence are related to foreign language enjoyment and anxiety, indicating that learners' emotional experiences also depend on the quality of interaction within the educational setting. Feng et al. [18] examine the relationship between language competence and intercultural communicative competence among EFL learners, which is particularly relevant to the analysis of foreign language communication as a culturally sensitive practice. Communicative failure in such contexts may arise not only from grammatical errors but also from an inappropriate tone, insufficient empathy, inadequate pragmatic adjustment, or an inability to adapt an utterance to the interlocutor. It is precisely in such situations that emotional competence acquires direct applied significance.

An ecolinguistic perspective makes it possible to broaden this interpretation. Micalay-Hurtado & Poole [19] connect eco-critical language awareness with the well-being, equity, and sustainability of the educational environment, thereby opening the possibility of understanding foreign language communication as a space in which communicative ecology can either be supported or disrupted. In the digital dimension, this issue becomes even more visible because online learning, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence are changing the forms of interaction, feedback, and professional language training [20]. A synthesis of the literature shows that emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, enjoyment, anxiety, and willingness to communicate have been investigated extensively from psychological and linguodidactic perspectives. At the same time, the question of how these factors function as mechanisms for maintaining communicative ecology in foreign language discourse remains less fully developed. This research gap determines the subsequent logic and analytical direction of the present study.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in 2026 as a qualitative-quantitative corpus-interpretive analysis of emotional competence in foreign language communication. The empirical stage of the research lasted from April to June 2026. The methodological logic was based on a secondary analysis of open corpus resources, emotion-lexical tools, and survey data, which together made it possible to trace emotional markers, regulation strategies, forms of communicative adaptation, and indications of successful or unsuccessful foreign language interaction. This design was selected in order to combine qualitative interpretation of communicative behavior with descriptive quantitative generalization of recurring features.

The material base consisted of three groups of sources. The first group included corpora representing foreign-language English communication: TOEFL11, International Corpus of Learner English: Version 3, Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage, ICNALE Spoken Dialogue, VOICE 3.0 Online, and Speak & Improve Corpus 2025 [21–27]. The second group comprised emotion-lexical resources used to clarify the emotional valence and intensity of linguistic units: the NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon, Mohammad's valence, arousal, and dominance resource, and the valence, arousal, and dominance norms developed by Warriner et al. [28–30]. The third group consisted of open survey data concerning foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety, which were used as an external contextual source for interpreting learners' emotional experiences [31, 32].

The analytical sample for the corpus component included $n = 300$ communicative fragments, with 50 fragments selected from each of the six corpus resources. The selection was purposive and was based on the presence of linguistic or

discursive indications of emotional reaction, emotional regulation, communicative adaptation, or communicative outcome. This balanced sampling procedure was used not for a direct statistical comparison of the complete corpora, but rather to support a comparative analysis of written, oral, academic, digital, and lingua franca communication. The Weng survey block was analyzed separately in accordance with the structure and variables available in the open dataset.

The unit of analysis was a communicative fragment, which could consist of a sentence, a single line, a short sequence of lines, or a written microfragment. The analysis included fragments containing markers of anxiety, uncertainty, satisfaction, support, frustration, empathy, hesitation, self-correction, repair moves, apologies, clarifications, mitigation, or signs indicating the maintenance or disruption of communicative contact. Fragments that lacked sufficient contextual information, isolated lexical items without an interpretable communicative function, and technical annotations without actual speech material were excluded from the analytical sample.

Coding was carried out according to five analytical categories: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, communicative adaptation, ecological interaction, and communicative outcome. The quantitative component of the study was deliberately limited to descriptive statistics, namely the calculation of frequencies and percentages within the sample of $n = 300$. A single fragment could contain several indicators simultaneously; therefore, the total number of recorded features was not treated as identical to the total number of communicative fragments. Regression analysis, factor analysis, and causal modeling were not employed because the corpora have different origins, different structures, and different initial research purposes, which limits the appropriateness of direct inferential modeling across all sources.

The research procedure consisted of five consecutive stages: selection of open corpus, lexical, and survey resources; formation of a balanced sample of $n = 300$ communicative fragments; coding of the selected fragments according to the five analytical categories; repeated examination of ambiguous coding cases; and generalization of the findings in tables, figures, and ecolinguistic interpretation. The emotion-lexical resources were used as an auxiliary interpretive framework rather than as a fully automated classifier. This decision preserved the role of contextual interpretation in cases where lexical meaning depended on discourse, interpersonal positioning, or the immediate communicative situation.

The methodological limitations are associated with the secondary nature of the empirical base, the absence of a primary experiment, and the fact that lexical resources do not always adequately capture irony, intonation, local contextual meaning, or culturally specific norms of politeness. These limitations were taken into account when interpreting the findings, particularly when discussing relationships between emotional markers, regulatory strategies, and communicative outcomes.

To ensure methodological transparency and reproducibility of the analytical logic, the codebook of coding categories is presented in Appendix A, the matrix of corpus sources is provided in Appendix B, and the aggregated table of coding results is presented in Appendix C. The complete texts of the communicative fragments were not reproduced in the article because of the secondary nature of the corpus resources used, the conditions governing their distribution, and restrictions related to copyright and source-use permissions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. EMOTIONAL MARKERS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE DISCOURSE

Coding of the corpus sample of $n = 300$ showed that emotional competence in foreign language communication is manifested not only through the direct naming of emotions but also through a range of indirect linguistic and discursive signals. The most frequently observed manifestations included markers of uncertainty, hesitation markers, supportive reactions, mitigation or softening of statements, self-correction, and signs of frustration. Importantly, emotional content was often not a separate thematic component of an utterance; rather, it formed part of the organization and regulation of the communicative process itself. In other words, speakers did not necessarily state explicitly, “I am nervous” or “I feel unsure.” Instead, they hesitated, clarified, reformulated, apologized, asked for confirmation, or supported their interlocutor in ways that helped prevent a breakdown in communication.

Within the analytical sample, 437 emotional indicators were recorded. This total is not identical to the number of communicative fragments because a single fragment could contain several emotional or regulatory indications at the same time. For example, a short spoken remark could include a hesitation marker, self-correction, and mitigation of the statement, while a written microfragment could simultaneously contain a marker of uncertainty and a supportive reaction. Such multilayering is methodologically important because it demonstrates that emotional competence in foreign language discourse does not operate as a single speech act or isolated emotional expression. Rather, it functions as a combination of small but interrelated regulatory manifestations that jointly shape the course and stability of interaction (Table 1).

The data presented in Table 1 show that the largest proportion of recorded emotional indicators consisted of markers of uncertainty, which accounted for 17.8%, followed closely by hesitation markers at 17.2%. Together, these two categories represented 35.0% of all recorded emotional indicators. This distribution indicates that foreign language communication frequently develops under conditions in which speakers experience incomplete confidence in their linguistic form, the

precision of their intended content, or the likely response of the interlocutor. Such uncertainty is therefore not an exceptional phenomenon but a recurring characteristic of foreign language interaction within the analyzed sample.

Table 1. *Distribution of emotional markers in the corpus sample (n = 300)*

Type of emotional marker	Number of recorded indicators	Share of all indicators, %	Typical speech manifestations	Most common communicative format
Uncertainty	78	17.8	maybe, I am not sure, I think, partial reformulation	oral and written speech
Hesitation markers	75	17.2	pauses, repetitions, unfinished constructions, fillers	oral speech/dialogue
Support	72	16.5	agreement, encouragement, clarification, supportive response	dialogue/ELF communication
Anxiety	64	14.6	avoidance, uncertainty, apology, defensive phrasing	oral speech/learning interaction
Satisfaction/positive engagement	59	13.5	positive evaluation, engagement markers, interest signals	educational communication
Empathy	51	11.7	softening, acknowledgment, attention to the partner's state	dialogue/online communication
Frustration	38	8.7	negative evaluation, interruption, refusal, tension markers	oral interaction
Total	437	100.0		

Source: Developed by the authors based on the results of coding a corpus sample of $n = 300$ communicative fragments.

However, uncertainty did not invariably lead to communicative failure. In many fragments, uncertainty or hesitation was accompanied by clarification, self-correction, reformulation, or a supportive response. These regulatory actions helped preserve interaction and allowed the speaker to continue participating despite temporary linguistic or emotional instability. This observation is important because it suggests that the presence of uncertainty alone is less decisive than the ways in which speakers respond to and manage that uncertainty during communication.

It is also significant that support markers accounted for 16.5% of all indicators, making support the third most frequent type of emotional manifestation in the sample. This finding provides grounds for interpreting emotional competence not only as the ability to control one's own anxiety or uncertainty, but also as a readiness to support an interlocutor during communication. In dialogic and lingua franca fragments, support frequently functioned as a communicative "bridge" that helped interaction continue after a pause, an error, an incomplete statement, or a moment of hesitation. Through supportive responses, participants could reduce tension and signal that continued participation remained acceptable and desirable.

Frustration, by contrast, had the lowest share, accounting for 8.7% of the recorded indicators. It occurred most frequently in fragments in which self-correction, clarification, or repair moves were insufficient or absent. This pattern suggests that the decisive factor is not necessarily the existence of a negative emotion itself, but rather the presence or absence of regulatory compensation. When frustration is not accompanied by repair moves, clarification, mitigation, or another strategy for restoring interaction, the risk of communicative disruption increases. This interpretation is consistent with the position of Caldwell-Harris [33], according to which the use of a foreign language can alter the intensity of emotional experience without eliminating the emotional dimension of communication.

To provide a visual representation of the distribution of emotional markers, a bar chart was constructed. The chart reflects the number of recorded indicators rather than the number of individual communicative fragments, because one fragment could contain more than one emotional marker.

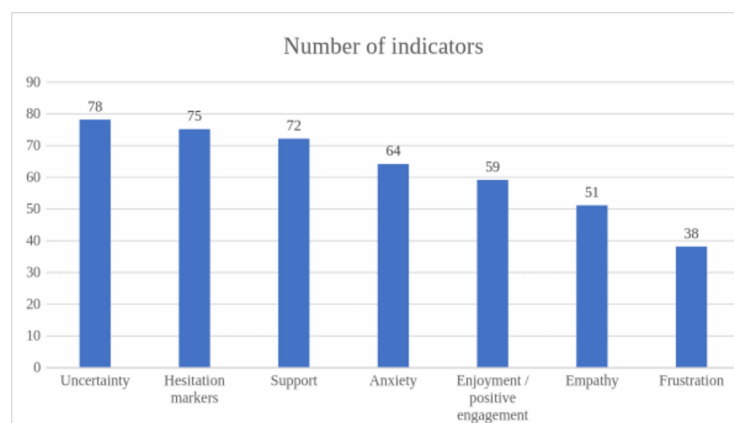


Figure 1. *Frequency of the main emotional markers in the corpus sample (n = 300). Source: developed by the authors based on a descriptive generalization of emotional indicators in the corpus sample.*

Figure 1 confirms that the emotional richness of foreign language discourse is particularly visible in the domains of uncertainty, hesitation, and support. This configuration is important for subsequent interpretation because it does not necessarily indicate a "weakness" on the part of the foreign language speaker. Rather, it reflects a normal working condition of communication in a second or foreign language, where speakers often construct utterances gradually and monitor them while interaction is already in progress.

A speaker may check an utterance, wait for the interlocutor's reaction, modify a phrase, pause briefly, or replace an inaccurate form with a more appropriate one. It is within these microprocesses that emotional competence becomes visible. Emotional competence therefore should not be equated with uninterrupted confidence or error-free performance. Instead, it is manifested in the ability to prevent interaction from collapsing at moments of linguistic uncertainty, emotional

instability, or incomplete expression.

The obtained data provide grounds for interpreting emotional competence not as an isolated psychological characteristic of an individual speaker, but as a practical mechanism for maintaining contact in foreign language discourse. This interpretation is consistent with the approach of Salovey & Mayer [34], who conceptualized emotional intelligence in terms of the ability to recognize, interpret, and regulate emotions in interaction. At the same time, the relatively high proportion of uncertainty and hesitation markers is consistent with the concept of foreign language classroom anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. [35], in which anxiety is associated with speaking, evaluation, errors, and the anticipated or actual response of the interlocutor.

The present results refine this perspective by showing that uncertainty and hesitation did not always produce communicative failure. In many cases, these emotional and linguistic signs were accompanied by clarification, self-correction, reformulation, mitigation, or support. Such accompanying strategies changed the communicative consequences of uncertainty by allowing the interaction to remain functional despite temporary difficulties.

4.2. STRATEGIES FOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND COMMUNICATIVE ADAPTATION

The second block of results focused on identifying the ways in which participants in foreign language interaction regulated emotional tension and adapted their utterances to the immediate communicative situation. A total of 384 instances of emotional-regulation and communicative-adaptation strategies were recorded. As in the preceding section, the number of strategies is not identical to the number of communicative fragments because a single fragment could contain several regulatory actions. For example, a speaker could first pause, then reformulate a thought, subsequently soften the utterance, and finally add a clarification intended to ensure that the interlocutor understood the intended meaning.

Emotional competence was most frequently manifested through self-correction, clarification, and reformulation. Taken together, these three strategies accounted for 52.3% of all recorded cases. This result indicates that emotional regulation in foreign language communication often occurred not through direct verbalization of feelings, but through speech actions aimed at stabilizing meaning, improving intelligibility, and preserving the continuity of interaction. In practical terms, these actions enabled speakers to remain engaged in communication even when an utterance was incomplete, imprecise, linguistically difficult, or emotionally tense.

Table 2. *Strategies of emotional regulation and communicative adaptation in foreign language communication*

Strategy	Analytical category	Number of cases	Share, %	Communicative function	Ecolinguistic significance
Self-correction	emotional regulation	71	18.5	reduction of uncertainty	maintenance of clarity
Clarification	communicative adaptation	68	17.7	restoration of mutual understanding	reduction of communicative tension
Reformulation	communicative adaptation	62	16.1	adaptation of the statement	enhancement of speaker adaptability
Softening the expression	ecological interaction	58	15.1	avoidance of excessive sharpness	maintenance of a safe interactional tone
Repair moves	emotional regulation/communicative adaptation	53	13.8	repair of communicative breakdown	restoration of contact
Supportive response	ecological interaction	47	12.2	maintenance of cooperation	support of continued communication
Apology	emotional regulation	25	6.5	compensation for error or tension	restoration of an acceptable tone
Total		384	100.0		

Source: Developed by the authors based on the coding of emotional-regulation and communicative-adaptation strategies in a sample of $n = 300$ communicative fragments.

Note: The sum of the shares may not equal 100.0% because of rounding to one decimal place.

Table 2 demonstrates that emotional regulation in the studied sample was predominantly operational in nature. Speakers did not primarily explain their emotional state explicitly; instead, they performed communicative actions that helped maintain intelligibility, reduce tension, and preserve an acceptable interactional tone. Self-correction, which accounted for 18.5% of all recorded strategies, was most often observed in fragments in which speakers recognized an inaccuracy, incompleteness, or potentially unsuccessful formulation in their own utterance and immediately modified it.

Clarification, accounting for 17.7%, was more directly oriented toward the interlocutor. It occurred when speakers needed to check understanding, specify or expand an idea, resolve possible ambiguity, or make their communicative intention more transparent. In this sense, clarification performed both a cognitive and an interpersonal function: it improved the precision of information while simultaneously reducing the possibility that misunderstanding would generate additional emotional tension.

Reformulation, which accounted for 16.1% of the recorded cases, performed an intermediate function between self-regulation and adaptation to the interlocutor. It allowed speakers to continue communication even when they lacked an exact lexical item, a preferred grammatical structure, or immediate confidence in the form of the original utterance. Reformulation therefore functioned as a flexible mechanism through which speakers could preserve the intended content while adjusting the linguistic form.

Softening of the expression, representing 15.1% of the cases, had particular ecolinguistic significance because it was oriented not only toward informational content but also toward the interpersonal tone of interaction. Through mitigation or softening, participants reduced the risk of harshness, excessive directness, unintended offensiveness, or interpersonal

pressure. Such strategies are especially relevant in intercultural and lingua franca communication, where norms of directness and politeness may differ among participants.

Repair moves, which were recorded in 13.8% of cases, further demonstrated that communicative uncertainty does not necessarily destroy interaction. On the contrary, the presence of repair frequently became a condition for the continuation of communication. When a misunderstanding, linguistic error, or incomplete statement occurred, a repair move gave participants an opportunity to restore intelligibility and reestablish the communicative sequence rather than abandoning the interaction.

Supportive responses accounted for 12.2% of all strategies. Although they were less frequent than self-correction or clarification, their communicative importance was substantial. In such fragments, a participant did not merely respond to informational content but also helped the other speaker remain engaged in the dialogue. Support could therefore function as an interpersonal resource that reduced communicative pressure, encouraged continuation, and signaled acceptance despite linguistic difficulty.

Apology had the lowest share, at 6.5%, but it performed a clearly identifiable compensatory function. Apologies tended to occur when speakers perceived a possible communicative failure, an inaccuracy, an interruption, or a deviation from the expected interactional tone. Through apology, speakers acknowledged the potential problem and created an opportunity to restore a socially acceptable and cooperative mode of interaction.

Taken together, these results show that emotional competence in foreign language communication is often realized through small but functionally important actions. It does not necessarily appear as consistently confident, fluent, and error-free speech. More commonly, it manifests itself in the ability to notice a potential breakdown, reduce tension, modify wording, clarify meaning, support an interlocutor, and create conditions that allow the interaction to continue despite difficulty.

This result is consistent with Gross's theory of emotion regulation [36], in which regulation is understood as the process of modifying an emotional response, its intensity, or the manner in which it is expressed. In the analyzed material, such regulation was visible not primarily through direct explanations of emotional states, but through specific speech acts and discursive actions, including correction, mitigation, re-explanation, reformulation, and repair. These findings also resonate with Dewaele et al. [37], who linked trait emotional intelligence with communication anxiety and foreign language anxiety among multilingual speakers.

The present study did not directly measure trait emotional intelligence. Instead, it demonstrated the discursive mechanisms through which emotional competence can become observable in actual foreign language interaction. This distinction is important because it moves the analysis from general psychological characteristics toward concrete communicative manifestations that can be identified, coded, interpreted, and potentially addressed in educational practice.

The practical significance of this set of findings is that emotionally competent strategies can be purposefully developed during foreign language instruction. The results of Li & Xu [38] demonstrate the importance of trait emotional intelligence and classroom emotions in EFL teaching, while the present findings make this position more concrete at the level of observable speech actions. Self-correction, clarification, mitigation, supportive responses, and repair moves can therefore be considered not merely as random manifestations of individual speakers, but as potentially teachable strategies that support the communicative ecology of foreign language interaction.

4.3. COMMUNICATIVE SUCCESS AND FAILURE AND THE APPLIED ECOLINGUISTIC MODEL

The third block of results concerned the relationship among emotional markers, regulatory strategies, and the outcome of foreign language interaction. Within the sample of $n = 300$ communicative fragments, three types of communicative outcome were distinguished: communicative success, partial success, and communicative failure. This classification was not intended to assess the speaker's overall level of language proficiency. Rather, it was designed to record whether communicative contact was maintained, whether the content remained sufficiently intelligible, and whether an acceptable emotional tone was preserved during the interaction.

Communicative success was defined as an outcome in which the content of the utterance remained clear, contact between participants was not interrupted, and the emotional tone of the interaction remained supportive or at least neutral. Partial success was recorded in fragments in which hesitation, linguistic difficulty, or tension was noticeable, but interaction continued because of self-correction, reformulation, clarification, or repair moves. Communicative failure was defined as an outcome involving loss of contact, avoidance of response, unrepaired misunderstanding, or increasing frustration that prevented the interaction from being successfully restored.

The data in Table 3 show that most fragments ended with either full or partial preservation of communicative interaction. Successful fragments accounted for 44.7% of the sample, partially successful fragments accounted for 37.0%, and unsuccessful fragments accounted for 18.3%. Thus, in 81.7% of the analyzed fragments, communicative contact

was preserved either fully or partially. This finding does not imply that communication in these cases was error-free or linguistically effortless. On the contrary, a substantial proportion of the partially successful fragments contained hesitation markers, self-correction, reformulation, uncertainty, or other indications of difficulty.

Table 3. *Indicators of communicative success and failure in foreign language interaction*

Communicative result	Number of fragments	Proportion of $n = 300$, %	Coding criterion	Typical indicators	Related strategies	Ecolinguistic interpretation
Success	134	44.7	contact maintained, content clear	clarification, support, repair, positive engagement	clarification, support, repair moves	interaction remains secure
Partial success	111	37.0	content partially restored, tension controlled	hesitation + repair, self-correction, reformulation	self-correction, reformulation	communicative ecology is partially preserved
Failure	55	18.3	contact disrupted or mutual understanding not restored	avoidance, refusal, unresolved tension, frustration	avoidance, abrupt change of subject	communicative ecology is disrupted
Total	300	100.0				

Source: Developed by the authors based on the generalization of the coding results for communicative fragments.

However, it was precisely these regulatory actions that frequently prevented a complete breakdown in interaction. Speakers were able to continue communicating because they corrected, clarified, reformulated, softened, or repaired their utterances. The findings therefore suggest that communicative effectiveness in a foreign language depends not only on avoiding error, but also on possessing strategies that allow participants to manage and recover from inevitable moments of instability.

The partial-success category is particularly informative because it represented more than one-third of the entire corpus sample. These fragments show that emotional competence does not always produce an ideal or completely problem-free outcome. Instead, it often helps maintain a minimally sufficient level of communicative stability. A speaker may make an error, hesitate, lose lexical precision, or experience uncertainty, yet through repair, clarification, or reformulation, the interaction can be returned to a workable state.

In contrast, fragments classified as communicative failures more frequently displayed a combination of avoidance, frustration, unresolved tension, and an absence of actions aimed at restoring contact. This contrast supports the interpretation that regulatory strategies play an important role in determining whether a difficult communicative episode remains manageable or develops into a more serious breakdown.

The results can be interpreted through Pekrun's control-value theory of achievement emotions [39]. When speakers experience incomplete control over linguistic form, communicative content, or the response of an interlocutor, uncertainty, anxiety, and hesitation may increase. However, when regulatory strategies are available, a temporary loss of control does not necessarily culminate in communicative failure. Through clarification, self-correction, mitigation, reformulation, or repair, speakers can partially regain control over the communicative situation and continue the interaction.

Accordingly, communicative success depends not only on linguistic correctness but also on the ability to manage moments of instability. This management includes recognizing that a problem has occurred, selecting an appropriate strategy, adjusting the utterance or tone, and monitoring the interlocutor's response. Emotional competence therefore becomes intertwined with practical communicative regulation rather than remaining separate from language use.

To summarize the relationship among the three types of communicative outcome, a chart was constructed. It presents the proportions of successful, partially successful, and unsuccessful fragments within the total sample of $n = 300$.

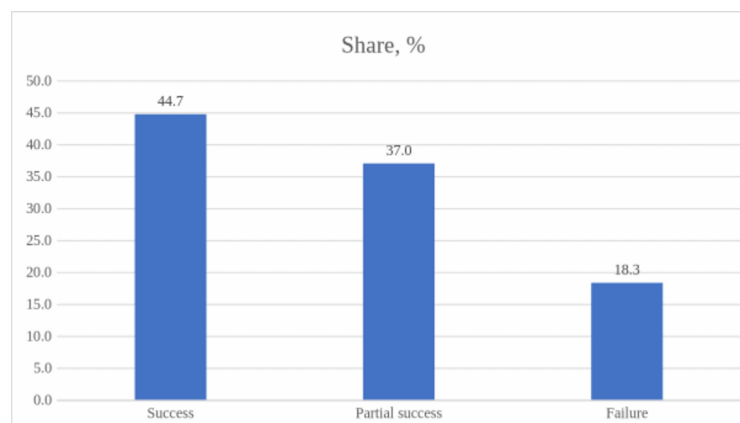


Figure 2. *Proportions of the types of communicative outcome in the sample ($n = 300$).*

Source: Developed by the authors based on descriptive statistics obtained from the coding results for $n = 300$ communicative fragments.

Figure 2 clarifies the principal empirical trend of this analytical block: communicative failure was not the dominant outcome even when anxiety, hesitation, or linguistic uncertainty was present. In most cases, foreign language interaction was maintained through regulatory and adaptive actions. This finding makes it possible to interpret emotional competence as a resource for communicative stability rather than as a guarantee of absolute linguistic correctness.

In other words, the applied function of emotional competence is not to eliminate all errors, moments of hesitation, or

episodes of uncertainty. Its practical function is to help participants preserve contact, maintain a workable emotional tone, and prevent the collapse of mutual understanding when linguistic or emotional difficulties occur.

Based on the generalization of the coding results, an applied ecolinguistic model of emotional competence in foreign language communication was developed. The model does not constitute a new analytical method and does not introduce additional variables beyond those specified in the methodology. Rather, it represents a structured generalization of the five coding categories used in the study: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, communicative adaptation, ecological interaction, and communicative outcome.

Table 4. *Applied ecolinguistic model of emotional competence in foreign language communication*

Model component	Content	Practical manifestation in discourse	Expected result
Emotional awareness	recognition of one's own or another person's emotional state	markers of insecurity, empathy, tension	awareness of the communicative situation
Emotional regulation	control of reactions and reduction of tension	self-correction, apology, mitigation	stabilization of interaction
Communicative adaptation	adjustment of the statement to the context	clarification, reformulation, repair moves	maintenance of clarity
Ecological interaction	safe and supportive interaction	support, tact, avoidance of harshness	preservation of contact
Communicative outcome	result of foreign language interaction	success/partial success/failure	assessment of communicative effectiveness

Source: Developed by the authors based on the generalization of the coding results for $n = 300$ communicative fragments.

Table 4 summarizes the corpus-analysis findings in an applied form. The model indicates that emotional competence has a consistent but not mechanically predetermined structure. First, the speaker or interlocutor must recognize an emotional state, tension, uncertainty, or interpersonal difficulty within the communicative situation. This recognition creates the basis for an appropriate response rather than an automatic or uncontrolled reaction.

Second, regulation of the response is required. Such regulation can take the form of self-correction, apology, mitigation, clarification, or another action intended to reduce communicative risk. Third, the utterance may need to be adapted to the immediate context, linguistic limitations, or the interlocutor's reaction. This stage involves practical adjustment of the form, content, or tone of the message so that communication can remain intelligible and socially acceptable.

If these actions are effective, interaction can move toward an ecological mode in which a safe, supportive, or at least sufficiently neutral and non-destructive tone is maintained. The final communicative outcome then depends on whether participants succeed not only in conveying the intended content but also in preserving mutual understanding and continued contact.

For this reason, emotional competence in the present study appears as an applied resource for ecological foreign language interaction. It does not guarantee complete communicative success and does not eliminate all linguistic difficulties. Nevertheless, it increases the speaker's capacity to manage uncertainty, emotional tension, linguistic error, and temporary misunderstanding in ways that allow interaction to remain possible and potentially recoverable.

The ecolinguistic significance of the findings lies in the interpretation of emotional competence as a condition supporting the preservation of communicative ecology. In this study, ecological interaction did not mean perfect harmony or the absence of disagreement. Rather, it referred to the ability of participants to maintain an acceptable, safe, supportive, or sufficiently neutral tone even in the presence of linguistic difficulties and emotional instability.

This interpretation is consistent with Zheng's approach, which views languaging as a dynamic process occurring in social, digital, and educational environments. Within such a perspective, emotional competence is not only an individual characteristic but also a practical means of sustaining healthy, workable, and adaptive forms of interaction between participants.

The digital and media dimensions are also important for interpreting the results. In contemporary foreign language discourse, a substantial proportion of communication occurs in online environments in which reduced access to nonverbal cues can increase the risk of misunderstanding. Under such conditions, support, mitigation, clarification, and repair moves acquire additional importance because they compensate, at least partially, for the absence or reduction of face-to-face interactional signals.

This interpretation is consistent with the research of Mialkovska et al. [40], who emphasized the importance of pragmatic and emotional mechanisms in contemporary English-language media discourse. In addition, the findings of Mialkovska et al. [41] highlight the importance of communicative resilience in crisis-related educational settings. The present results make these broader propositions more concrete by showing that emotionally competent strategies can help speakers maintain contact even when speech is incomplete, inaccurate, uncertain, or emotionally tense.

However, the findings must be interpreted in light of several methodological limitations. The study was based on secondary analysis of open corpus and survey resources, did not involve a primary experiment, and did not employ causal modeling. Consequently, the obtained data do not establish a direct causal influence of emotional competence on the success of foreign language communication. Instead, they identify descriptive patterns and recurring relationships among emotional markers, regulatory strategies, forms of communicative adaptation, and communicative outcomes within the analyzed material.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research made it possible to demonstrate that emotional competence in foreign language communication should not be regarded merely as an auxiliary psychological characteristic of the speaker. Rather, it functions as a practical mechanism for maintaining intelligible, safe, adaptive, and ecologically sustainable interaction. The initial expectations of the research were confirmed in a broader dimension than anticipated because emotional competence was manifested not only through markers of anxiety, empathy, or positive engagement, but also, and especially, through recurring microstrategies of self-correction, clarification, mitigation, reformulation, support, and restoration of communicative contact.

The novelty of the obtained results lies in interpreting emotional competence as a sequence of interrelated communicative actions: recognition of an emotional state or tension, regulation of the response, adaptation of an utterance, maintenance of communicative ecology, and achievement of either a full or partial communicative outcome. This sequence does not imply a rigid or automatic progression in every communicative episode. Rather, it provides an applied framework for describing how emotional and communicative regulation can become visible in actual foreign language discourse.

The practical significance of the proposed model lies in the possibility of applying it to the analysis of foreign language discourse, the development of speaking and writing tasks, intercultural interaction training, and the design of digital language feedback. The model may also help educators identify not only whether learners produce linguistically correct forms, but also whether they possess strategies for managing uncertainty, repairing misunderstanding, supporting interlocutors, and maintaining interaction under emotionally or linguistically difficult conditions.

An important conclusion is that linguistic uncertainty, hesitation markers, and anxiety do not necessarily destroy foreign language interaction when they are accompanied by regulatory actions aimed at preserving contact and restoring mutual understanding. The findings indicate that a temporary difficulty can remain communicatively manageable when speakers employ self-correction, clarification, reformulation, mitigation, supportive responses, or repair moves. In this sense, communicative competence includes not only the avoidance of error but also the ability to recover constructively from error and instability.

The limitations of the study are related to the secondary nature of the corpus and survey data, the absence of a primary experiment, and the resulting inability to draw causal conclusions concerning the influence of emotional competence on communicative success. These limitations restrict the strength of causal interpretation but do not eliminate the value of the identified descriptive trends and recurring communicative relationships.

Further research should therefore be directed toward testing the proposed model in authentic study groups, digital language-learning platforms, professional communication settings, and intercultural communicative situations. Particular attention should be given to determining how emotionally competent repair moves, mitigation strategies, clarification practices, and supportive responses can be purposefully developed as learning strategies rather than remaining incidental or individually variable manifestations of particular speakers. Such research could clarify the extent to which these strategies can be systematically taught, practiced, and transferred across different communicative environments.

AUTHORSHIP AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Natalia Kyseliuk: Conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, supervision, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing.

Viktoriia Prykhodko: Conceptualization, investigation, data curation, analysis, writing—original draft.

Vita Sternichuk: Investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing.

Iryna Voitenko: Methodology, formal analysis, interpretation of results, writing—review and editing.

Valentyna Tryndiuk: Investigation, interpretation of results, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing.

Mariana Lukianchuk: Resources, visualization, writing—review and editing.

All authors contributed substantially to the conception and development of the study, critically reviewed the manuscript, approved the final version, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH CODE BOOK

Table A1. Codebook of categories for the analysis of emotional competence in foreign language communication

Encoding category	Working definition	Main indicators	Examples of markers/speech manifestations	Coding rule
Emotional awareness	The ability of a speaker or interlocutor to recognize their own or someone else's emotional state in the process of foreign language interaction.	uncertainty, tension, empathy, awareness of difficulties, attention to the interlocutor's reaction	I am not sure; maybe; it is difficult this explain I understand; I see your point	A fragment was coded in this category if it contained direct or indirect signs of awareness of the emotional state, linguistic uncertainty, or state of the interlocutor.
Emotional regulation	The speaker's ability to reduce tension, correct a breakdown, or change a response so that communication is not interrupted.	self-correction, apology, repair moves, mitigation, anxiety control, response modification	sorry; I mean; let me say it again; maybe it is better this say; not exactly	The fragment was coded as emotional regulation, if the speaker performed an action aimed at correcting, mitigating, or stabilizing the interaction.
Communicative adaptation	Adapting the utterance to the context, the interlocutor, the speech situation, or one's own language limitations.	clarification, reformulation, change of wording, explanation in simpler words, adaptation of tone	in other words; I mean that; for example; do you mean; can I explain it differently	A fragment was coded in this category if the speaker changed or clarified the utterance to maintain clarity.
Ecological interaction	Maintaining a safe, relaxed, respectful, and mutually acceptable tone of foreign language communication.	support, tact, agreement, attentiveness to the partner, avoiding harshness, maintaining cooperation	yes, I agree; that is a good idea; thank you you for explaining I understand; maybe we can	The fragment was coded as ecological interaction, if the speech act supported cooperation, reduced the risk of conflict, or helped maintain contact.
Communicative outcome	The final result of foreign language interaction in terms of maintaining contact, intelligibility, and emotional tone.	success, partial success, failure, restoration of mutual understanding, avoidance of response, communicative break	clarification followed by continuation; hesitation with repair refusal; silence unresolved misunderstanding	The fragment was coded as an outcome after analysis of its completion: contact was maintained, partially maintained, or broken.

Source: developed by the authors based on the methodological logic of the study and the results of preliminary coding of the corpus sample

APPENDIX B: EMPIRICAL CORPUS MATRIX

Table B1. Matrix of corpus sources used in the study

Source	Material type	Number of selected fragments	Communicative format	Role in research
TOEFL11	written speech	50	academic writing	analysis of written foreign language production of candidates with different linguistic backgrounds
International Corpus of Learner English : Version 3	written speech	50	learner writing	analysis of academically oriented writing, argumentation, self-presentation, and mitigation of claims
Leuven International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage	oral speech	50	interview	analysis of hesitation markers, self-correction, repair moves and oral foreign language interaction
ICNALE Spoken Dialogue	oral speech	50	dialogue / interview	analysis of dialogical adaptation, the interlocutor's reaction and the maintenance of communicative contact
VOICE 3.0 Online	ELF communication	50	language French interaction	analysis of intercultural foreign language interaction, clarification, support and adaptation in English as a language French
Speak & Improve Corpus 2025	digital L2 speech	50	speech assessment	analysis of digital foreign language speech, speech insecurity and interaction in assessment and feedback conditions
Total		300		

Source: Developed by the authors based on a matrix of open and publicly documented corpus resources selected for secondary analysis

APPENDIX C: AGGREGATED CODING TABLE

Table C1. Aggregated results of coding emotional markers, regulation strategies, and communicative outcomes

Coding block	Category / subcategory	Number	Share, %	Calculation basis	Related to communicative outcome
Emotional markers	uncertainty	78	17.8	437 emotional indicators	success / partial success
Emotional markers	hesitation markers	75	17.2	437 emotional indicators	partial success / failure
Emotional markers	support	72	16.5	437 emotional indicators	success
Emotional markers	anxiety	64	14.6	437 emotional indicators	partial success / failure
Emotional markers	pleasure / positive engagement	59	13.5	437 emotional indicators	success
Emotional markers	empathy	51	11.7	437 emotional indicators	success / partial success
Emotional markers	frustration	38	8.7	437 emotional indicators	failure
Regulation strategies	self-correction	71	18.5	384 regulatory strategies	partial success
Regulation strategies	specification	68	17.7	384 regulatory strategies	success / partial success
Regulation strategies	reformulation	62	16.1	384 regulatory strategies	partial success
Regulation strategies	softening of expression	58	15.1	384 regulatory strategies	success
Regulation strategies	repair moves	53	13.8	384 regulatory strategies	success / partial success
Regulation strategies	supportive response	47	12.2	384 regulatory strategies	success
Regulation strategies	apology	25	6.5	384 regulatory strategies	partial success
Communicative outcome	success	134	44.7	300 communicative fragments	maintaining contact and clarity
Communicative outcome	partial success	111	37.0	300 communicative fragments	partial restoration of mutual understanding
Communicative outcome	failure	55	18.3	300 communicative fragments	a breakdown in contact or an unresolved misunderstanding

Source: developed by the authors based on the aggregated results of coding a corpus sample of n = 300 communicative fragments