



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultivating EFL Students' Emotional Domain via Translation Class

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Apr 30, 2024 Accepted: Aug 16, 2024	Research on incorporating emotional education into teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnam's social-cultural context is still relatively modest. The present study, therefore, aims to delve into this approach under the guiding research objective: the emotional lessons that students perceive from videos given in a translation class. Participants were 37 EFL junior students from a university in Vietnam, who partook in a regular translation class at this university. Data were collected from all essays written by the participants over the course. Then, the obtained data were qualitatively analyzed into five content themes corresponding to five constituents of the emotional domain, namely: self-management, self-regulation, making responsible decisions, empathy, and social skills. Results show that twenty-eight lessons were perceived by participants. These lessons cover all five emotional constituents. Therefore, it implies a strong validity of cultivating students' emotional domain by incorporating English input tailored to emotional education into different EFL learning courses. Future expanded research in this regard is also addressed.
Keywords Ability Competence Emotional domain Negative Positive	
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INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, the process of learning and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in particular, involves not only the learner's mental aspects but also their emotional domain (ED) (Astleitner, 2000; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2002). In this regard, across multidisciplinary educational fields, past research has widely and repeatedly underlined close interrelations between academic performances and ED competence from school graders to higher education at large (Albornoz et al, 2024; Chowkase, 2023; Cipriano & McCarthy, 2023; Corcoran et al., 2018; Elias et al., 1997; Elmi, 2020; Ferrándiz et al., 2012; Shakoor et al., 2012; Tsagem & Bello, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). The fact that the cumulated literature has documented such remarkable investigations over the past years globally does indicate the vital role of ED in learning and academic achievement. Attending to current research lines on these two variables of ED and educational achievement, coupled with other internal factors such as motivation and self-efficacy, various attempts across countries have been made to examine how ED shapes and predicts the achievement of EFL (Adams & Richie, 2017; Çelik & Erbay Çetinkaya, 2022; Cho et al., 2019; Kao, 2017; Le, 2020; Li et al., 2024; Sugandai et al., 2021; Wirajaya et al., 2019).

Although EFL education in Vietnam dates back decades and is now nationwide underway in an increasing direction (MOET, 2006/2018a,b), cases of pertinent research on ED associated with college EFL majors from Vietnam are still few, especially since the global covid-19 pandemic, which has brought about various changes in the traditional forms of teaching and learning with several

threats to disturb the learner's emotions (Bull et al., 2024; Cipriano & McCarthy, 2023; Harmandaoğlu Baz, 2024; Saxer et al., 2024; Zusho & Bondiec, 2023). The present study, therefore, aimed to fill this gap, scrutinizing the presence of ED in Vietnam's current higher education contexts. This is crucial because the target results gained from this study would provide (i) a more detailed understanding of the perceived role of ED inherently embedded in EFL students' learning processes and (ii) necessarily concrete directions for EFL teachers and course designers to incorporate emotional learning, which would soundly match Vietnam's post-pandemic educational contexts, social-cultural features, and students' current needs, including emotional intelligence and social life skills (Dang, 2023; Dinh, 2024; MOET, 2018a,b; Nguyen & Huynh, 2024; Tran, 2021). As Elias et al. (1997) denoted "social and emotional education aspire to teach our students to be good citizens with positive values and to interact effectively and behave constructively" (p.2). Underlining the significant role of ED, Fredrickson (2001) stated that "positive emotions are vehicles for individual growth and social connection: By building people's personal and social resources, positive emotions transform people for the better, giving them better lives in the future" (p.10). To its end, the present study is steered by the major question: What ED lessons do students perceive from videos given in an EFL translation class?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Working constituents of ED

The emotional domain (ED), also known as *emotional intelligence* (Goleman, 1996; Goetz et al., 2006), represents humans' internal worlds impacting their thoughts and behaviors alongside the flow of normal life. This hidden domain is a complex construct packed with multiple interplaying dimensions of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and strategic conduct connected with personal-interpersonal emotion regulation. Thus, the ED framework accommodates two fundamental subdomains of (i) *the self* which is made up of three major constituents of *self-awareness*, *self-management*, and *making responsible decisions*, and (ii) *the others* built on two major constituents of *compassion/empathy* and *social skills* (Bull et al., 2024; Chowkase, 2023; Broadhead et al., 2010; Caldwell & Gravett, 2009; Çelik & Erbay Çetinkaya, 2022; Dresser, 2013; Elmi, 2020; Elias et al., 1997; Gallagher & Stocker, 2018; Nguyen & Huynh, 2024; Sugandai et al., 2021; Van De Sande et al., 2022).

According to the existing literature (ibid), self-awareness displays itself by people being self-conscious of how they genuinely feel and knowingly labeling their informed emotions experienced in given situations (e.g., feeling *happy*, *gratified*, *contented*, *anxious*, *unsafe*, *angry*, *irritated*, *disappointed*). These differing states of emotion ranging from the positives such as happiness and contentment to the negatives like anger and frustration are human instances prevalent in daily life situations/events. These emotions may frequently fluctuate lasting a moment or longer depending on what is happening/happened and how the involved person perceives it. Being self-aware accurately of this affective repertoire and their possible moment-to-moment variations paves the way for the connected skill of self-management to be activated responsively. The self-management skill constituent in the self-subdomain can be recognized by adaptively-coping abilities such as self-control, stress/anxiety-regulate, challenge-persist, self-energize, and impulse-manage. These combined abilities empower people to firmly stay resilient amid frustrations and adversities to willingly go on towards their set goals rather than feeling impotent and giving up. Meanwhile, the third primary constituent of the self is *making responsible decisions* exhibited by critically setting feasible, realistic, valuable goals followed by goal-directed actions. It should be noted that although being descriptively separated the three aforementioned constituents are closely connected and synergistic for intended accomplishments. The baseline is rationally grounded on being able to precisely capture emerging emotions, position them unambiguously, and anticipate their possible impacts (either positives or negatives); accordingly, being able to respond productively by making flexible, strategic actions of regulation and responsibility.

The second subdomain of *the others* (such as family members, relatives, and friends) is also labeled as *social intelligence* (Bull et al., 2024; Caldwell & Gravett, 2009), which is concerned with how one notices another's feelings and expressing empathy with them via both verbal and/or non-verbal behavior (e.g., facial expressions and speech tones). The ability to precisely understand and share others' emotions likely helps people know how to approach a given situation for productive social interactions and positive relations. As a result, they can likely attain communicative intents, personally and collectively. This social-emotional constituent is a further characteristic of being able to listen attentively to others' ideas and accept different views because "Every one of us develops in different ways and at different rates, we each have our preferences, likes, and dislikes and no one else in the whole world is quite like us" (Broadhead et al., 2010, p.11). In addition, it includes the know-how to seek and offer directive, helpful assistance in need. One tends to seek emotional support from others (perceived reliable and capable of counseling) in cases of personal/interpersonal problems, and vice versa offer useful suggestions to help others in need. Thus, the others-subdomain competence promises success in social encounters, which also tacitly translates into generating positive social emotions for the community and some type of shield against anti-social behaviors (for example, harassment, bullying, hostility, fire-setting, human trafficking, aggression, cruelty, and massive shooting) (Kalokerinos et al., 2017; Zaki & Williams, 2013). As Pekrun et al. (2002) argued that:

Positive emotions are essential for human behavior and adaptation. They help to envision goals and challenges, open the mind to thoughts and problem-solving, protect health by fostering resiliency, create attachments to significant others, lay the groundwork for individual self-regulation, and guide the behavior of groups, social systems, and nations. (p.149)

Benefits observed

The holistic ED approach to human life is research-backed up by "Much evidence testifies that people who are emotionally adept—who know and manage their feelings well, and who read and deal effectively with other people's feelings—are at an advantage in any domain of life" (Goleman, 1996, p.75). Given its significant values in human existence at large, educational institutions can integrate ED values education into regular curricula and everyone can learn, utilize, develop, and gradually master it over years for academic, career, and life achievements (Bottaccioli et al., 2023; Caldwell & Gravett, 2009; Espinosa & González, 2024; Kalokerinos et al., 2017), ED has now widely taken its place in the classroom across levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary) for harnessing productively and optimally its educational benefits.

The robust benefits that social-emotional learning programs, built on ED principles and manipulated in jointly various modes of classroom lessons and extra-activities, likely bring up to the classroom-based setting are noticeable enhancements in the learner's emotional well-being and academic performances. These benefits are attested in studies by Bottaccioli et al., 2023; Broadhead et al., 2010; Chowkase, 2023; Caldwell and Gravett, 2009; Çelik and Erbay Çetinkaya, 2022; Dresser, 2013; Elmi, 2020; Elias et al., 1997; Gallagher and Stocker, 2018; Greenberg et al., 2017; Shahzad et al., 2024; Sugandai et al., 2021; Van De Sande et al., 2022; etc. This main streamline of ED-oriented research has widely documented that those schools deliberately designing, attentively implementing, and constantly boosting the ED approach across regular learning programs positively observed students' behavioral evolutions of becoming (i) more motivated and engaged in learning because students feel the sense of belonging, care, respect, and responsibility; (ii) more involved in collaboration, positive decisions, and pro-social activities (e.g., providing comforting messages and helping others in need); (iii) more resistant against anti-social behaviors (such as bullying and drug abuse).

A pertinent program lasting three consecutive years (2011/2014), for instance, was taught to primary school students (Lee et al., 2023). It was found that although it grew gradually over the three

years observed, student participants' social-emotional competence increased significantly during each school year and then half-dropped in the summertime. This, therefore, dictates a non-linear developmental pattern of ED, and some loss or decrease could occur when relevant interventions are somehow absent. Another emotional learning program (Chowkase, 2023) was delivered to Indian secondary school graders and reported rewarding results. This 10-session program was projected to teach students relevant skills of empathy, compassion, gratitude, interconnectedness, and community engagement. Each session lasting 45 minutes comprised an orderly consistent streamline of meditations, instructions, classroom practices, and homework assignments. In addition, participants undertook one field journey of community work. The program empirically reached its targets in significantly increasing participants' competencies of the others subdomain (e.g., mindfully accepting different views, avoiding hurting others in communication, and investing more effort in building positive relationships).

Still, a larger-scale study (Van De Sande et al., 2022) involving 739 low-achieving graders 10 and 11 from 12 schools reported that the emotional learning program implemented did not equally benefit all participants as expected. These secondary school graders were both European-based (e.g., Dutch, German) and non-European (such as Turkish and Pakistani); the former group appeared to gain far more from the learning program than the latter. This is because, as the study (ibid) pointed out in the final phase, the learning program was primarily Western European based, which seemingly felt alien to those from outside that cultural norm. As a consequence, sufficient caution should be taken into account in related issues to optimize intended ED programs by paying close attention to prospective participants' characteristics and common grounds, especially their present needs and interests.

METHODS

On the aforementioned premises concerning the ED framework and its viable benefits for students as well as participants' characteristics in mind, the present study was conducted as the first phase of a longitudinal research project underway. Therefore, this study was framed as qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Qoyyimah, 2023; Younas et al., 2023) and was guided by the research question raised above (What ED lessons do students perceive from videos given in an EFL translation class?) The study served fundamentally as a diagnosing step to reveal the intended student population's needs for ED improvement so that the subsequent phases can be projected and taken into concrete steps of operation. Subsequent phases will, for instance, include making decisions on selecting, structuring, and deliberately sequencing instructional English materials alongside the ED learning program effectively for practicing and enhancing emotional skills without hurting or negatively impacting regularly scheduled courses' objectives. This is pragmatically significant for EFL students as they need first to be provided with appropriate on-hand materials (either written or/and video-based) as English language input interesting enough to boost and sustain their proactive engagement in the input contents tailored to target learning skills.

Sampling

Since the researcher involved in this research project is a teacher of EFL, participants in the present study were 37 EFL-major juniors (25 females and 12 males, all aged 20 – 22) from a foreign language faculty of one provincial university in the southern region of Vietnam. These Vietnamese-speaking students with an English proficiency command of around the intermediate level (MOET, 2018a, b) were officially enrolled in one translation class run by the researcher in the 2023-2024 academic year at this university. It should also be noted that there has been no formally distinct ED learning program at this university.

Intervention Program and Data Collection

This translation class lasted 15 weeks of one 100-minute session per week. Apart from regular learning materials of English audio recordings and written texts, there were six videos. The contents of the six videos are particularly tapped on ED education. The video titles are as follows:

Video #1: *I'm going to miss Daddy*

Video #2: *How to be positive*

Video #3: *Step up to discover yourself*

Video #4: *Nothing is easy, nothing is free*

Video #5: *Whenever you feel sad, listen to this story*

Video #6: *Power of not reacting - how to control your emotion*

(These videos are available from www.EnglishCentral.com; www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ere9vouWmN4)

During each weekly session, the teacher guided the class to work on the given learning materials as sequentially scheduled in the class syllabus. Especially, for incorporating ED into this class, the six videos were delivered to the class, one video every two weeks. All the learning materials, including the videos, had been approved by the Faculty Dean and Division Leader, who are both experts in EFL. Working on each video given in class by the teacher, a 6-step flow was tentatively applied:

- 1) The whole class together watched the given video twice, about 10 minutes;
- 2) Students worked in groups of two or three, translating the English script from the video into Vietnamese (their first language) for about 15 minutes;
- 3) The teacher provided feedback to make sure all students acquired the content embedded in the video, which lasted approximately 20 minutes;
- 4) After that, as a home assignment, students each wrote a reflective essay in English approximately 200-300 words long under the question prompt: "*What wisdom/lessons do you learn from this video?*"
- 5) One week later, they had to submit the finished reflective essay to the teacher via email.
- 6) On obtaining the essays, the teacher examined them one by one to see whether they wrote on the question prompt given as mentioned above. If not, the teacher would email him/her to rewrite the essay. Since each finished essay accounted for 5% of their course grade, students had to complete this compulsory task. Then, the teacher synthesized the contents and gave feedback on the video at the following class session. In addition, the teacher required the students to confirm the truthfulness of their essays and the lessons they learned from the given video.

1) Data Analysis

Upon the Faculty's permission and the consent of the class students mentioned above, all essays submitted by the students (who already confirmed the essay contents as done in the class session) were legitimately used as the data for the present study. Concerning the procedure of data analysis in qualitative research, Timonen et al. (2018) posited that: "It is the researcher who codes, conceptualizes, and theorizes the data" (p.8).

Thus, as the researcher of the present study, the in-charge teacher again screened all the essays that students submitted. All of the essays were found sufficient and no student had to rewrite on any of the six assigned videos. Then, the step-by-step processes of coding, theme-categorizing, and interpreting the relevant data were deliberately and cumulatively conducted by the researcher. As addressed earlier, ED is made of two subdomains (the self and others) with three constituents for the former and two for the latter. Therefore, these five constituents are also the corresponding themes for data analysis. The concrete results are presented in the next section.

RESULTS

First, Table one below displays the lessons students learned and wrote in their submitted essays about three constituents of the self-subdomain. It should be noted that the lessons perceived by students in each constituent can be found in one or more of six given videos as seen below.

Table 1: Lessons perceived by students (N₀=37 in total) about the self-subdomain of ED

Constituents	Lessons	N ₀	%	From given video #
Self-awareness	1. One should know well his/her abilities, strengths, and weaknesses	37	100	3, 4
	2. People should have personal passions, desires, and goals for their lives	37	100	3, 4
	3. Being able to identify emotions and feelings in specific situations is advisable for all people	35	94.5 9	5, 6
	4. Positive emotions is deemed to provide more energy and optimism for life	33	89.1 8	2, 5, 6
	5. People should get out of comfort zone and overcome their weaknesses for self-identity and development	28	75.6 7	3
Self-management	6. Controlling emotions is beneficial to one's life	37	100	2
	7. Controlling emotions decently results in overall well-being and a better quality of life	35	94.5 9	5, 6
	8. Resisting anger and resentment gives the way to inner peace, freedom, and happiness	32	86.4 8	5, 6
	9. Keeping calm and not reacting impulsively to challenging situations helps avoid negative consequences	37	100	5, 6
	10. Thinking positively is advisable for everyone	25	67.5 6	2
Making responsible decisions	11. Practicing mindfulness is a learnable, useful skill to practice	21	56.7 5	2, 5, 6
	12. Setting feasible goals and taking action to meet the set goals	37	100	3, 4
	13. Learning and working diligently to meet the goals	37	100	3, 4
	14. Overcoming obstacles and challenges to obtain the goals	37	100	2, 3, 4
	15. Setbacks and failures are a part of life and one should consider them as opportunities to earn more life experiences	31	83.7 8	2, 3
	16. Self-motivating is essential in the face of failures and challenges	29	78.3 7	3

It is gratifying to see from Table One that the students have learned many necessary lessons about ED, covering all three constituents of the self. Especially, all of them (100%) appeared to perceive the

lessons of 1, 2, 6, 12, 13, and 14. Meanwhile, the rest of the lessons in the list were recognized by most of them from one or more videos given by the teacher.

Following is the results about ED lessons providing useful directions for social interactions that students perceived. These lessons are meaningful and practical because they will likely help people first and utmost maintain good relationships with other people around. In so doing, a desired living environment is secured for all people.

Table 2: Lessons perceived by students (N₀=37 in total) about the others-subdomain of ED

Constituents	Lessons	N ₀	%	From given video #
Compassion	17. Family members are valuable for all people	37	100	1, 6
	18. One should respect and nurture family relationships	37	100	1
	19. People should spare time and enjoy fun with family members	36	97.29	1
	20. Embracing compassion and learning how to understand others is advisable	27	72.97	6
	21. Providing comfort, encouragement, and support to others in need is prescriptive	24	64.86	6
	22. Taking proactive responsibility toward one's family	22	59.45	1
Social skills	23. People should recognize others' feelings and emotions in specific situations for adequate communication	21	56.75	2, 6
	24. Controlling one's emotions is a powerful tool to maintain good relationships with others	37	100	6
	25. It is unwise to get into arguments or say words that hurt others	32	86.48	6
	26. In tough times, it is advisable to timely seek assistance from others (e.g., relatives, friends, or psychological experts)	31	83.78	4, 5, 6
	27. Listening to others and respecting their different viewpoints	24	64.86	6
	28. Making effort to solve conflicts with others as well as among themselves	20	54.05	6

Like Table One, Table Two exhibits positive results about ED lessons that the involved students perceived from the given video. At the 100 percent are the lessons 17, 18, and 24. The majority underscored the rest of the listed lessons.

DISCUSSION

First, the results presented in Tables One and Two show that the approach applied by the present study viably benefits EFL students to cultivate their ED in one way or another. In one sense, students appeared to better recognize and understand that their emotions matter significantly, especially in maintaining overall well-being, good relationships with others, and making rational decisions about actions. Twenty-eight valid lessons were drawn out by the student involved, covering all five subdomains of ED theory (Goleman, 1996; Goetz et al., 2006; and others), with five or more lessons

for each subdomain. As an exemplar of evidence under discussion, the following extract is released in one of the essays, which manifested the student learned several integrated lessons listed in Tables One and Two presented above:

As a junior, I understand the importance of self-awareness and emotional management for young people and students like me in maintaining mental balance and happiness in life. Based on the given video #6, I have drawn the following lessons worth practicing as much as possible: 1. Enhancing stress management skills because, in life, students have to deal with pressure from work, study, and family. 2. Building better relationships helps young people. 3. Students should avoid negative emotional reactions and not be dominated by emotions, thereby creating a positive communication environment and building better relationships with others. 4. When young people and students know how to control their emotions, they are more likely to be highly focused, maintain a cheerful spirit, enhance logical thinking skills, and adjust emotions more systematically and maturely. 5. Developing decision-making skills: This emphasizes that students should not rely on others to solve their problems but should be proactive, confident, and determined to walk the path they have chosen. (Student/St.10, video #6)

Interestingly, another essay displays the fluctuating nature of human emotion: *“Emotions are like the tides of the heart, sometimes gentle and soothing; other times turbulent and overwhelming. While we can't entirely suppress or eliminate them, we can learn to navigate their currents with grace”* (St.25, video #6). This student emphasizes the nature and the necessity of controlling emotions (Lessons 6, 7, Table one) in specific daily life situations.

About the values of the family (i.e., lessons 17, 18, 19, and 20, Table two), St.17 shares how she grew up with the love, care, encouragement, and support of her family. More importantly, she highlights what she has to do, responding to all the precious things granted by the family:

My family passed on my passions and taught me about love, care, and mutual help for everyone around me. With positive influences from my family members, I was able to find the things I wanted to do and the goals I wanted to strive to achieve. They have also motivated me to constantly try to do it and not get discouraged or give up under any circumstances to achieve it. I always tell myself that I must always follow their example and constantly learn along with practicing the good things they have imparted and taught me so that I can become a useful person for society in the future. (St.17, video #1)

These family values which intensively nurture young generations for growth also reflect the cultural characteristics conventionally inherent in Vietnam's educational system (Dang, 2023; Dinh, 2024; MOET, 2018a, b; Nguyen & Huynh, 2024; Tran, 2021). It underlines “the values of self, family, hometown, and community, developing essential skills of learning and working responsibly under standard morals and laws” (MOET, 2018a, p. 25). That probably accounts for the fact that 100% of students perceived the lessons 17 and 18.

Learning the benefits of taking a positive attitude towards life (lesson 10), St.12 wrote:

As a student, practicing and learning a positive attitude and language use are crucial for development and success in both academics and life. A positive attitude helps you believe in your abilities and face challenges constructively. It enables you to maintain motivation and determination in your academic pursuits and achieve your goals. Practicing and learning a positive attitude and language use not only helps you thrive in academics but also has a positive impact on your daily life, career, and other people around you as well.

Meanwhile, St.11 suggests that *“It takes a diverse approach to cultivate and maintain a positive view, involving regulating and minimizing negative influences as well as choosing to concentrate on life's good points”* (lessons 3, 4); St.15 argues that *“Many people are not afraid of difficulties and hardship,*

especially when facing problems that are hindering their development. They will create many solutions and practice each one persistently until it succeeds" (lessons, 11 -15), and St.36 highlights that "Successful people have a positive lifestyle and mindset" (lesson, 10).

It then evidences that all participants did learn more or less from the given video content regarding ED covering those themes delineated in Tables One and Two above. It also implies that these EFL students found interest and motivation in accessing and processing ED input profoundly and meaningfully (evidenced by 100% of them completing the essays of six videos). During these processes of learning, as seen above they did practice English skills (as the target language) through communicative activities of listening to and translating six given videos from English into Vietnamese; and then writing essays to complete the given learning tasks. On top of that, being promoted by the given input, the participants ultimately perceived, reflected on, and evaluated their ED authentic practices internally and externally. Thus, the present study findings confirm the potential and significance of incorporating ED into regular classrooms for the learner's academic and non-academic benefits as have been reported in past relevant works (Bottaccioli et al., 2023; Chowkase, 2023; Greenberg et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2023; Van De Sande et al., 2022). What makes it different from past investigations is that the present study anchors ED contents into an EFL translation classroom in current Vietnam's social-cultural context, where English language skills are practiced explicitly and instrumentally to advance EFL students' English communication repertoire. In addition, a list of 28 distinctive lessons about ED is first generated by the present study involving EFL college students. These lessons perceived by the involved students have provided guidelines for the subsequent expanded research of intervention programs on related issues because these intervention programs will contribute to "the holistic development of students, fostering their moral and ethical growth and preparing them to become responsible and engaged citizens in Vietnamese society and international community" (Nguyen & Huynh, 2024, p. 54). Therefore, this approach is instructive and viable because ED education can be incorporated in other courses of EFL major training programs (for instance, English speaking and writing skills) in Vietnam and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The current study has arrived at its end. By processing the English input embedded in six given videos and reflecting on ED messages inherent in the videos by writing individual essays, the participants perceived 28 different lessons covering all five constituents of ED. Consequently, the present study does provide a specific way of incorporating ED input into EFL classrooms to benefit college students both cognitively, English linguistically, and emotionally. Yet, due to a limited sample and short period, more specific ways need to be figured out for longitudinal trials under the framework of episodically and intentionally incorporating ED-nurturing input into regular training courses as has been implemented by the present study in current contexts. Furthermore, English input should involve both written and visuals and integrate different English communicative skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Another aspect that should be taken into account is that the ED package of its core subdomains and constituents as discussed above should be practiced on a blended and iterated basis.

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