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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOFT SKILLS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Soft skills play a crucial role in language learning, as they contribute significantly to a learner's ability to effectively communicate, collaborate, and adapt in a multicultural and multilingual environment. This paper explores the intricate relationship between soft skills development and language acquisition. By analyzing the impact of soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, empathy, and cultural awareness on language learning outcomes, this study aims to shed light on the importance of integrating soft skills training into language education programs. Through a review of relevant literature and case studies, this paper highlights the positive influence of soft skills on language proficiency, intercultural competence, and overall learning success. The findings underscore the need for educators to foster the development of soft skills alongside language skills to empower learners to thrive in diverse linguistic contexts. Soft skills are essential to language learning success because they improve learners' ability to communicate effectively, collaborate, and adapt to diverse cultural and linguistic environments. This article explores the significance of language acquisition through soft skills using a questionnaire comprising 14 questions categorized into 3 main sections. Each section contains 4 questions about a particular aspect that was randomly assigned. Responses were gathered from a diverse sample of individuals from universities and colleges in Kazakhstan. The findings of this study offer a preliminary investigation into the effectiveness of language learning through soft skills and suggest potential avenues for future research.

Keywords: soft skills, language, communication, critical thinking, empathy.

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Introduction

In today's interconnected world, the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages has become increasingly important. Language learning not only enhances our understanding of different cultures but also opens up new opportunities for personal and professional growth. However, language proficiency alone is not enough to succeed in a globalized society. Soft skills, such as communication, empathy, and adaptability, play a crucial role in language learning and overall success.

Soft skills play a crucial role in language learning and development. The acquisition of soft skills is essential for graduate employability (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). Cinque (2016) discusses the development of soft skills in European countries and highlights the importance of best practices and methods for teaching and learning these skills at the university level.

One of the most important soft skills in language learning is communication. Effective communication is not merely being able to speak the language fluently, but also being able to listen, understand, and express oneself clearly. A communicative language learner can have meaningful conversations, ask questions, and seek clarification when necessary. They are also more likely to build good relationships with native speakers and other language learners, which helps them practice and improve their language skills.

Another important soft skill in language learning is adaptability. Learning a new language requires stepping out of one's comfort zone, making mistakes, and accepting new ways of thinking and communicating. Adaptive learners are able to adapt to a variety of language learning environments, including classrooms, online platforms, and immersion experiences. They are also open to trying new language learning strategies and techniques and can bounce back quickly from setbacks and difficulties. The development of soft skills has been linked to increased cultural competence and adaptability, which are essential components of language fluency.

In addition, language learners with strong interpersonal skills can collaborate effectively with others, share resources and knowledge, and provide support and encouragement to their peers. Collaboration is especially beneficial in language learning because it allows groups to practice speaking, writing, and listening skills, receive feedback from others, and learn from each other's experiences and perspectives.

Research question: How do soft skills affect language learning outcomes?



Literature review

The acquisition of soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and leadership, significantly impacts the foreign language learning process. For instance, effective communication abilities aid individuals in expressing themselves proficiently in a foreign language, while collaboration with others enhances group language learning.

The study examines the psychological aspects associated with developing soft skills in foreign language teaching, with an emphasis on communication skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, confidence and problem-solving skills (Table 1).

Table 1
Classification of The Relationship Between Soft Skills and Learning A Language

<i>Psychological aspects</i>	<i>Interpretation of the psychological aspects</i>	<i>Sources</i>
<i>Communication skills</i>	play a crucial role in language learning and are essential for effective language acquisition	Kirsanova & Lazarev, (2019)
<i>Interpersonal skills</i>	include social and emotional skills, such as emotional intelligence, with academic performance	Robles (2012)
<i>Adaptability skills</i>	develop the capacity to make appropriate responses to changed or changing situations	Godfrayet al. (2010)
<i>Confidence skills</i>	improve people's sense of competence and skill, their perceived capability to deal effectively with various situations	Sadler (2010)
<i>Problem-solving skills</i>	enhance the role of patience in goal pursuit and achievement	Javdani et al. (2015)

Table 1 indicates the various skills needed for effective language learning and the successful acquisition of communication skills. Communication skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, confidence and problem-solving skills are mentioned. The authors point out the importance of these skills for successful language acquisition and overcoming various situations in learning and life.

Communication skills

Communication skills play an important role in language learning because they allow students to effectively express their thoughts, understand others, and respond to them. The development of these skills is influenced by many factors, including teaching methods, student-teacher interaction, and the use of technology in language learning. Kirsanova and Lazarev (2019) focused on teaching English to students studying photonics at a technical university, paying special attention to communication skills. The results obtained by them indicate that teaching English with an

emphasis on communicative competence can contribute to the development of communicative competence in the process of learning a language.

Conversely, Ketebayeva et al. (2024) note that online education can create a happy environment for language learners; insufficient communication and interaction between teachers and students, excessive lectures under the guidance of a teacher and test teaching methods hinder the development of communicative competence in the process of learning a language. This highlights the importance of effective communication and interaction in the learning process. The role of the teacher and the use of technology also play an important role in language learning. For example, Boroughani, Behshad & Xodabande (2023) investigated the impact of language learning using mobile devices on an EFL course and found that language learning using mobile devices can contribute to the development of self-regulating attitudes to learning and skills. This suggests that technology can be used to enhance communicative competence when learning a language. In a similar vein, Mahardika, Rahmajanti & Suwastini (2023) developed a mobile-assisted synchronously collaborative translation–annotation system for English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension. Their findings revealed the potential of mobile-assisted systems in enhancing reading comprehension in EFL learners. This indicates that technology can be used to support specific language skills such as reading comprehension, thereby contributing to the overall language learning process. Oxford (2011)⁷ emphasizes the importance of strategies in learning a second or foreign language that can have a direct impact on the development of communicative competence in language learning. Understanding and using effective learning strategies contributes to the development of communicative competence. Elaish et al. (2019) conducted a review of the literature on mobile English language learning (MELL), highlighting the potential of mobile technologies in language learning. The use of mobile devices can provide flexibility and accessibility for students and contribute to improving communication competence. Monaghan, Christiansen and Fitneva (2011) argue that the use of signs is an arbitrarily important aspect of language acquisition, with a focus on structural advantages in vocabulary acquisition. The study suggests that the structure of the vocabulary is a crucial factor in learning, emphasizing the importance of linguistic structures in language learning strategies that consider socio-political contexts.

Interpersonal skills

Learning a language is a complex process involving the acquisition of language and interpersonal skills. This literature review summarizes the results of existing research on interpersonal skills in language learning and potential research directions in this area. The purpose of the review is to identify potential research areas in this area. Fluency of speech is recognized as an important component of language learning and is associated with both language proficiency and executive functioning. However, Whiteside et al. (2016) noted that the relationship between fluency and interpersonal skills in language learning has not been widely studied. Understanding how fluency and interpersonal skills interact during language learning can provide valuable insights into the communicative development of second language learners. The integration of behavioral and linguistic knowledge has been proposed as a roadmap for developing robotics Cangelosi et al. (2010) This concept can also be applied to the study of interpersonal skills in the process of learning a language. By studying how students integrate behavior and language knowledge in communicative interaction, researchers can better understand the role of interpersonal skills in the language learning process.

Arpentieva et al. (2021) highlight the importance of interdisciplinary teamwork in improving project-based learning in pedagogical sciences, emphasizing the need for collaboration and commitment to enhance people's growth. Nevertheless, additional research is necessary to explore how these interpersonal skills impact collaborative performance and team dynamics in various organizational contexts. By way of conclusion, the literature review presents a comprehensive overview of the research findings related to interpersonal skills in soft skills. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of several aspects of interpersonal skills, such as communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, healing, conceptualization, foresight, and stewardship.

Adaptability skills

Adaptation in language learning is a complex and multifaceted process involving various linguistic and cognitive motives. Puig-Mayenco, Rothman & Tubau (2022) identify the typological dominance model (TPM) of third language transfer (L3), emphasizing the importance of acquisition time and language proficiency level in language learning. This suggests that a person's adaptability in learning a new language depends on the stage of mastering and the level of proficiency in this language. Manning et al. (2020) consider emerging language structures in artificial neural networks trained in self-observation. Their results provide insight into the potential role of self-control in enhancing adaptability in language learning and suggest that people can benefit from self-control methods in learning. Westergaard et al. (2017) presented a "linguistic proximity model" that sheds light on the influence of different languages on the acquisition of a third language. She suggests that similarities and differences between languages affect adaptability in language learning, which emphasizes the importance of taking linguistic proximity into account when learning a new language. Lee et al. (2016) study the effect of corrective feedback time on the assimilation of new language structures. Their results highlight the role of feedback in the adaptive nature of language learning and indicate that feedback time can have a significant impact on the learning process.

Confidence skills

The acquisition of language skills is a multifaceted process influenced by various factors including implicit knowledge, executive control, motor abilities, and gesture. In this literature review, we integrate and synthesize the research findings to understand the complex nature of confidence in language learning, highlight knowledge gaps, and suggest potential future research directions. Sarikaya, Hinton, and Deoras (2014) emphasize that confidence in language learning is underpinned by implicit knowledge and input from higher-order systems of language and executive control. They assert that these factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' confidence in their language learning abilities. In a similar vein, Low (2010) discusses the implicit and explicit false-belief understanding of preschoolers and its relation to complex syntactical mastery, which provides insights into the cognitive processes underlying the development of language confidence in early childhood. Iverson and Braddock (2011) shed light on the compensatory role of gesture in language impairment, highlighting the intricate relationship between motor skills, gesture, and language development. Their findings suggest that motor abilities and gesture play a crucial role in shaping confidence in language learning, especially for individuals with language impairment. In addition, despite the increasing emphasis on soft skills, particularly in higher education, research is needed to evaluate how diverse and effective the various pedagogical approaches are at developing soft skills. According to Culpin and Scott

(2012), utilizing case studies as a means of improving knowledge and understanding of 'hard' and 'soft' skills in executive education is more effective. This opens up new opportunities for further research into innovative teaching methods that can help improve the development of soft skills in higher education settings.

Problem-solving skills

Problem-solving in language learning has been a topic of interest in recent research. This literature review aims to synthesize and integrate the findings from various studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research in this area. The review will also identify knowledge gaps and suggest potential future research directions. A study by Amini et al. (2019) focused on developing operation-based formalisms for math word problem solving. The research emphasized the importance of interpretability in problem-solving and highlighted the potential for using formalisms to enhance understanding and reasoning in language-based problem-solving tasks. Pratama et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of preparing teacher-students for twenty-first-century learning practices, which includes enhancing collaborative problem-solving, and digital and strategic learning skills. This suggests a growing recognition of the significance of problem-solving skills in modern educational contexts. These studies collectively indicate that incorporating specific prompting techniques, operation-based formalisms, and program-aided approaches can significantly impact problem-solving in language learning by improving reasoning, interpretability, and overall linguistic understanding.

Research Methodology

Population and sample

The selection of females aged 18-29 as study participants is interesting and can provide valuable information about the impact of "soft skills" on language learning in this demographic group. The respondents were randomly chosen and the number was 48 who have been learning English as a second language. Given that these women are mostly students and work in a wide variety of fields, this suggests that they are actively looking for educational and professional development opportunities.

The fact that they respond positively to learning a language with the integration of "soft" skills suggests that there may be a relationship between these two aspects. Soft skills such as communication skills, empathy and adaptability play an important role in making language learning more effective and enjoyable. Positive feedback may indicate that these women see the benefit of incorporating such skills into their language learning path.

Understanding how "soft" skills affect language acquisition by this group may have broader implications for learning strategies and programs aimed at improving language learning outcomes. By identifying the specific "soft" skills that contribute most to language acquisition, educators and language teachers will be able to adapt their approaches to better meet the needs and preferences of these participants.

Design of the study

The study utilized a survey with thirteen items, categorized into three sections, to collect data. The first section focused on how participants acquire soft skills during language learning, the second explored how soft skills enhance language proficiency, and the third examined the impact of soft skills on collaborative language learning. The survey was administered anonymously through Google Forms. The responses were visualized using pie charts and later converted into bar charts for detailed analysis in the next section.

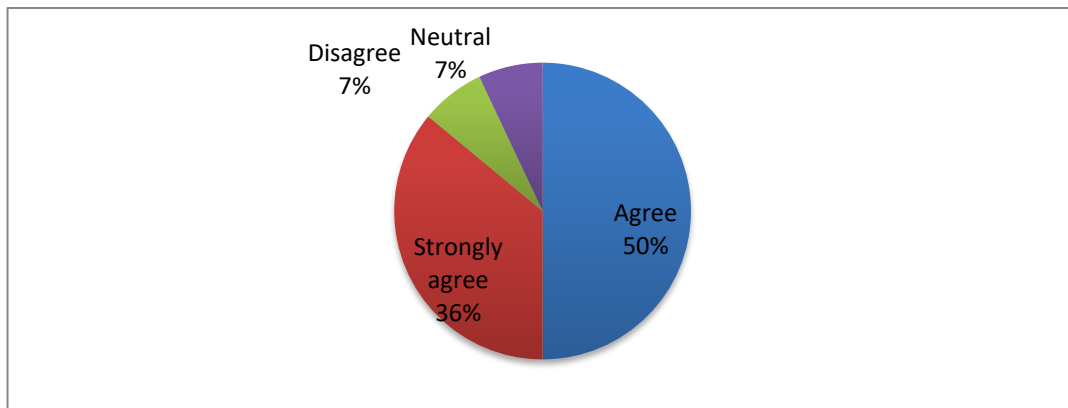
Research results

The "Results" showcases the respondent's three questionnaire categories. The research investigated how soft skills influence the process of language acquisition. Detailed paragraphs accompanied by bar charts provide an exhaustive analysis of how respondents answered the thirteen questionnaire items, effectively highlighting the application of soft skills in language learning.

The respondent's answers to the questionnaire about the first category (focused on how participants acquire soft skills during language learning).

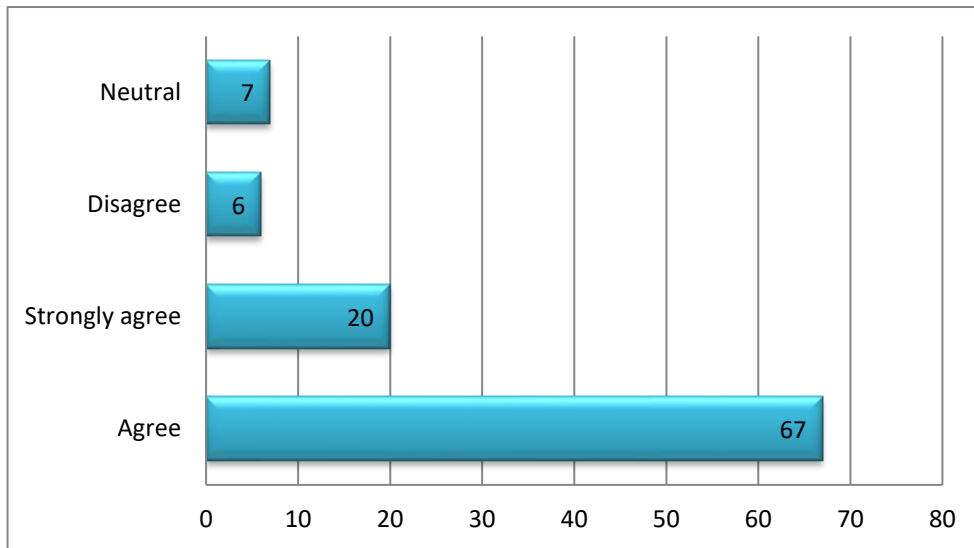
Figure 1

Good Communication Skills Can Be Effective Language Learning



The participants' responses regarding the influence of soft skills on language learning through communication include a significant number of respondents (50%) indicated that good communication skills are effective for language learning, while only (7 %) disagreed with this statement. The rest 36% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that good communication can be effective in the language learning process (Figure 1).

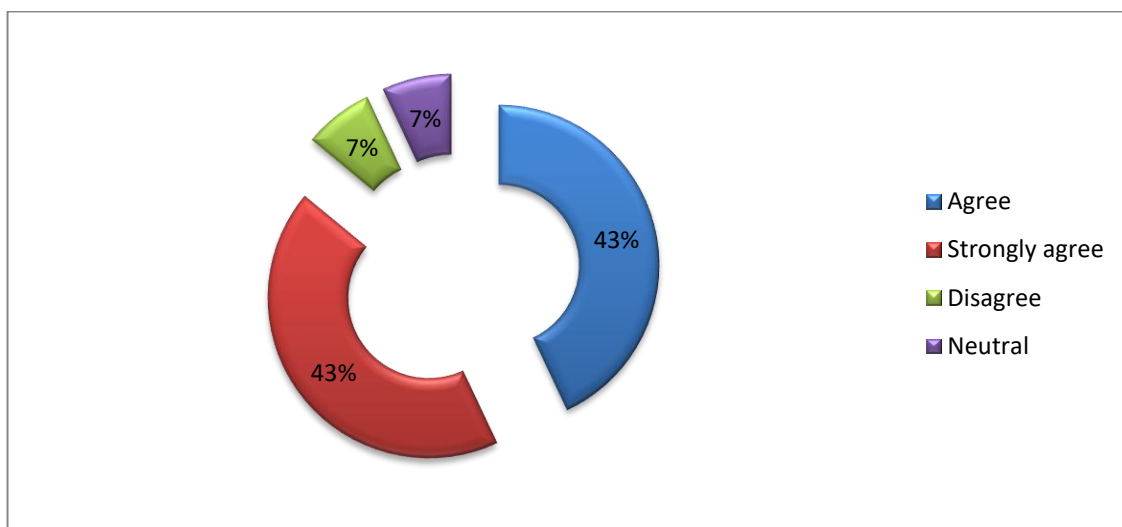
Figure 2
 The Benefits of Being Open-Minded and Curious About Other Cultures in Language Learning



Regarding the second statement, the majority of participants (67%) agreed that openness and curiosity about culture help to understand a foreign language. However, 7% of respondents were neutral. These results suggest that by interacting with native speakers and other language learners, they learn to understand and respect different points of view, thereby sharpening their interpersonal communication skills. Overall, language learning provides a rich context for acquiring the communication skills that are essential for success both personally and professionally (Figure 2).

The respondent's answers to the questionnaire about the second category explored how soft skills enhance language proficiency.

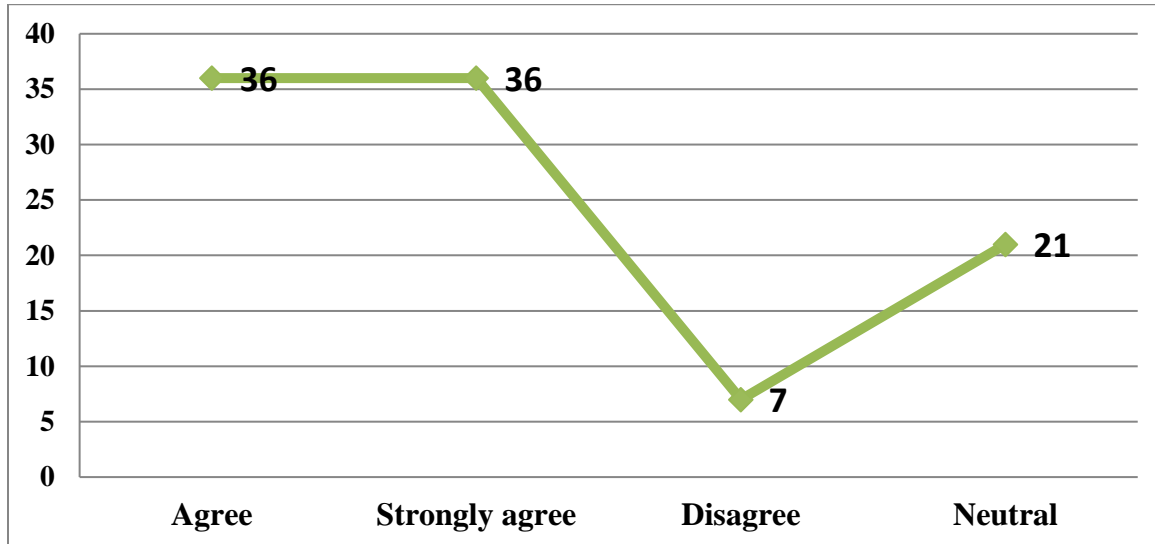
Figure 3.
 The Importance of Confidence and Risk-Taking in Language Learning Progress



The data in Figure 3 reflects the participants' explored how soft skills enhance language proficiency significant number of respondents (43%) indicated that being confident in expressing oneself and taking risks with the language, while only (7%) disagreed with this statement.

Figure 4

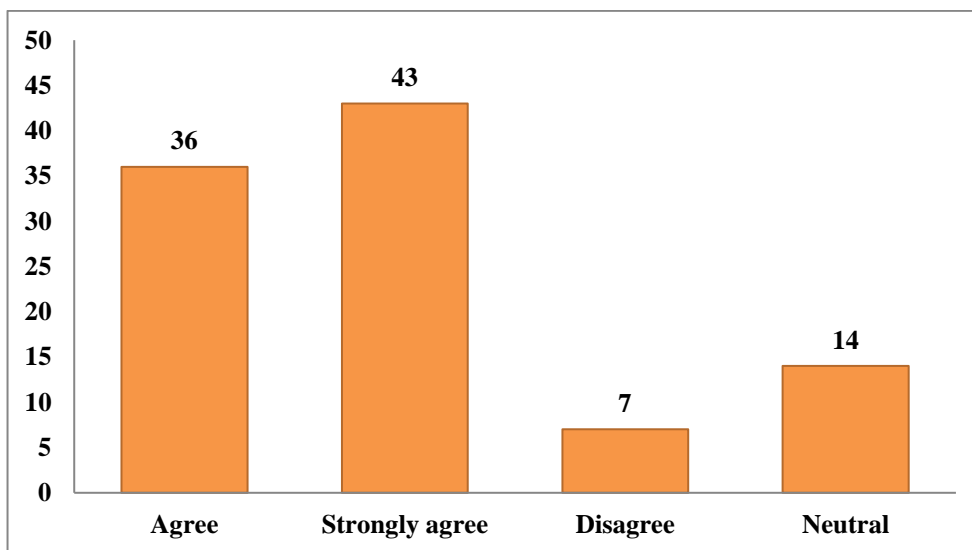
Having Good Problem-Solving Skills Helps in Overcoming Language Learning Obstacles



Regarding the second statement, the majority of participants (71,4%) agreed that openness and curiosity about culture help to understand a foreign language. However, 7.1% of respondents were neutral (Figure 4). These results underscore the significance of soft skills in language learning and highlight their positive impact on language proficiency. It is evident from the responses that participants perceive soft skills as essential components for successful language acquisition.

Figure 5

Good Time Management Skills Efficient Learning



The respondent's answers to the questionnaire regarding the third category examined the impact of soft skills on collaborative language learning. The data in Figure 5 reflect that a significant number of participants (43%) indicated that good time management skills enable efficient language learning, while only 7% disagreed with this statement, and 14% were neutral (Figure 5). This highlights the consensus of the majority of participants about the positive impact of time management skills on collaborative language learning. The findings highlight the important role of soft skills such as time management in contributing to effective and productive language learning in collaborative environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the existing literature suggests that language learning has a significant impact on emotional intelligence, which in turn affects various aspects of life, including academic performance, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being. However, further research is needed to fully understand the underlying mechanisms and to explore the moderating and mediating factors that may shape this relationship. Soft skills are inter related with language learning and contribute to learners' effective use of a new language, enhancing their communicative competence and facilitating their overall language acquisition journey.

Research recommendations

It is recommended to practice self-regulation by dedicating regular time to learning the language independently, establishing goals, and tracking your progress. This will enhance your organizational and study consistency. Enhance your communication skills by actively engaging in conversations in the target language, whether it's conversing with native speakers, utilizing online resources, or participating in language groups. This approach will aid in the development of your communication abilities and language proficiency. To improve your language skills, we recommend actively seeking out study partners or joining language groups to engage in meaningful communication and receive helpful feedback. Additionally, developing emotional intelligence by maintaining a positive mindset, managing your emotions effectively, and constantly striving for improvement will greatly benefit your language learning journey.

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