The journal of El-Ryssala for studies and research in humanities

Volume : 11 / N° : 03/ 2026. pp 64-76

PISSN : 2543-3938 - EISSN : 2602-7771

Emotional Intelligence and Handling Sensitive Topics in Algerian EFL Classrooms: Teacher and Student Perspectives

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Received: 23/05/2026 **Accepted**: 03/06/2026

Abstract:

The growing presence of culturally and socially sensitive discussions in EFL classrooms has increased the importance of emotional and interpersonal competences in educational settings. In Algerian university classrooms, teachers are often expected to manage classroom interaction carefully while maintaining respectful communication and balanced discussion. However, limited research has explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and the handling of sensitive topics from both teachers' and students' perspectives. The present study aims to examine the level of emotional intelligence among Algerian EFL teachers and investigate its role in managing sensitive classroom discussions. A quantitative descriptive design was adopted using two questionnaires administered to 36 Algerian EFL teachers and 94 university students from university of Ibn Khaldoun Tiaret Algeria. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed generally high levels of emotional intelligence among teachers, particularly in self-awareness and social skills. However, students reported more moderate perceptions regarding classroom openness, intercultural understanding, and emotional comfort during sensitive discussions. The study concludes that emotional intelligence plays an important role in classroom communication and sensitive topic management in Algerian EFL education.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; intercultural communicative competence (ICC); sensitive discourse; EFL pedagogy; teacher-student interaction.

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I. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching has evolved beyond the teaching of grammar and vocabulary to become a space of communication, interaction, and cultural exchange. In many EFL classrooms, students are encouraged to express opinions, discuss social issues, and engage with perspectives that may differ from their own. Consequently, classroom interaction has become more dynamic and emotionally demanding than before. In such contexts, teachers are expected not only to deliver academic content, but also to manage classroom relationships, encourage participation, and maintain respectful communication among learners.

Researchers such as Goleman (1995) and Salovey and Mayer (1990) highlighted the importance of emotional abilities including self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation in social and professional interaction. These abilities appear particularly important in language classrooms where communication and interpersonal interaction play a central role in the learning process. The concept of emotional intelligence later received growing attention in educational research after the works of Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995, 1998), who associated it with abilities such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills. In educational settings, emotional intelligence is often linked to effective classroom management, positive teacher-student interaction, and respectful communication. Mayer et al. (2004) also explain that emotional intelligence should be considered a meaningful psychological construct connected to social and professional behavior.

The importance of emotional intelligence becomes more visible in classroom situations involving disagreement, cultural differences, or emotionally sensitive discussions. In many EFL classrooms, discussions may involve cultural, religious, or social topics that can create disagreement or emotional tension among learners. Such situations require teachers to manage classroom interaction carefully and maintain a respectful learning atmosphere. In some cases, teachers may even avoid sensitive discussions altogether in order to prevent tension or misunderstanding inside the classroom. These challenges appear particularly relevant in the Algerian EFL context, where classroom interaction increasingly reflects intercultural and social diversity.

In the Algerian context, several studies highlighted the growing importance of intercultural sensitivity and emotional awareness in language education. Benosmane (2022), for instance, referred to “misunderstandings and clashes” during classroom discussions related to cultural and religious matters. Likewise, Sellami (2024) found that teacher training programs in Algeria remain largely theoretical and may not adequately prepare teachers for modern classroom challenges. As a result, many teachers may experience difficulty managing classroom interaction when discussions involve sensitive cultural, religious, or social issues. Despite the growing interest in emotional intelligence and intercultural communication in education, limited attention has been given to how emotional intelligence may influence Algerian EFL teachers’ handling of sensitive classroom situations. In addition, students’ perspectives regarding classroom climate, communication, and teacher interaction during such discussions remain insufficiently explored.

Previous studies in the Algerian EFL context examined emotional intelligence, intercultural sensitivity, empathy, and classroom interaction separately. Some researchers focused on emotional intelligence among teachers, while others explored intercultural communication or learners’ sensitivity toward cultural differences. However, to the

researcher's knowledge, few Algerian studies have examined emotional intelligence and sensitive classroom discussions together while also considering students' perceptions of classroom interaction. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by exploring the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and students' perceptions of classroom communication and interaction during sensitive discussions.

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the level of emotional intelligence among Algerian EFL teachers and explore its role in handling sensitive topics inside university classrooms. It also seeks to investigate students' perceptions regarding classroom communication, respect, participation, and teacher interaction during discussions involving sensitive cultural, religious, or social issues. To achieve these objectives, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence among Algerian EFL teachers?
2. How do teachers report handling sensitive topics in EFL classrooms?
3. How do students perceive teachers' management of sensitive topics and classroom interaction?
4. Is there a relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and students' classroom perceptions?

Based on these research questions, the study is built on the assumption that Algerian EFL teachers demonstrate a relatively high level of emotional intelligence and that teachers with stronger emotional and social competences are generally more capable of managing sensitive classroom topics effectively. The study also assumes that students tend to report more positive classroom interaction when teachers display higher emotional awareness, empathy, and communication skills. In addition, no statistically significant differences are expected based on gender or teaching experience. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Algerian EFL teachers demonstrate a relatively high level of emotional intelligence.
2. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence are more capable of handling sensitive classroom topics effectively.
3. Students tend to report more positive classroom interaction when teachers demonstrate stronger emotional and social skills.
4. There are no statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence based on gender or teaching experience.

The significance of the present study lies in the fact that it addresses an area that remains relatively underexplored in the Algerian EFL context, namely the relationship between emotional intelligence and the handling of sensitive classroom topics. The study may contribute to raising awareness about the importance of emotional and interpersonal competences in language teaching, particularly in classrooms where intercultural and socially sensitive discussions are becoming increasingly common. It may also help teachers, teacher trainers, and curriculum designers better understand the role of emotional intelligence in creating respectful and balanced classroom interaction. Furthermore, the study combines both teachers' and students' perspectives, which may provide a broader understanding of classroom communication and learning atmosphere during sensitive discussions. The findings may also encourage the integration of emotional and intercultural training within Algerian EFL teacher education programs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Emotional Intelligence: Conceptual and Educational Perspectives

The concept of emotional intelligence emerged mainly through the works of Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined it as the ability to understand, monitor, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Later, Goleman (1995) popularized the concept and associated it with several personal and social competences including self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills. Unlike traditional views of intelligence that focus mainly on cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence emphasizes the importance of emotional and interpersonal competences in social and professional life. Goleman (1998) further argued that professional success depends not only on academic knowledge or technical competence, but also on the ability to manage emotions and relationships effectively.

In educational settings, emotional intelligence has increasingly been linked to classroom management, teacher-student interaction, and learning atmosphere. Teachers constantly deal with situations that require patience, empathy, emotional control, and communication skills. Consequently, emotional intelligence may influence the way teachers respond to classroom tension, students' emotional reactions, and interpersonal conflicts. Mayer et al. (2004) explain that emotional intelligence should be viewed as a meaningful psychological construct connected to social adaptation and professional behavior rather than a vague personal quality. Similarly, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) associate teachers' emotional and social competences with positive classroom climate, student engagement, and effective learning environments.

The relevance of emotional intelligence appears particularly important in foreign language education because language learning itself depends heavily on communication and social interaction. Hannache and Boulkamh (2025) emphasize that foreign language teaching involves psycho-emotional interaction between teachers and learners rather than the simple transmission of linguistic knowledge. In the Algerian context, Atallah and Iddou (2024) also found that emotional intelligence represents an important characteristic of successful university teachers despite the stressful and demanding conditions of higher education. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence may play an essential role in maintaining balanced classroom interaction and supporting effective communication in EFL contexts.

1.1 Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Framework.

Among the different models of emotional intelligence, Goleman's framework remains one of the most influential in educational research because it connects emotional competences to professional and social performance. Goleman (1995, 1998) explains that emotional intelligence is not limited to recognizing emotions, but also includes the ability to regulate feelings, understand others, maintain relationships, and respond effectively to social situations. His model is organized around five main dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Figure 1. Core Dimensions of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Framework



Notes: Adapted from Goleman (1995, 1998).

As illustrated in Figure 1, self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize one's emotions and understand their influence on behavior and decision-making. Self-regulation involves controlling emotional reactions, managing impulses, and remaining calm under pressure. Motivation reflects the internal drive to achieve goals with persistence and commitment, while empathy refers to understanding others' feelings and perspectives. Finally, social skills include communication, relationship management, cooperation, and conflict resolution.

In educational settings, these competences may help teachers maintain balanced classroom interaction, encourage participation, and manage disagreement respectfully. Because the present study focuses on classroom communication and the handling of sensitive topics, Goleman's framework was considered appropriate for examining teachers' emotional competences in Algerian EFL classrooms.

2. Sensitive Topics and Classroom Interaction in EFL Education

EFL classrooms often include discussions that go beyond language structure and involve cultural, social, religious, or ideological issues. Such discussions may help learners develop intercultural awareness, critical thinking, and communicative competence. However, they may also create emotional tension, disagreement, or discomfort among students, especially when learners hold different beliefs or cultural perspectives. Hess (2009) argues that controversial discussions in classrooms require careful management in order to maintain respectful interaction and avoid exclusion or conflict among learners.

The teaching of sensitive topics becomes even more challenging in foreign language classrooms because learners are expected to express opinions and negotiate meanings in a language that is not their mother tongue. In such situations, emotional balance and communication skills become essential for maintaining positive classroom interaction. Benosmane (2022), reflecting on her experience in Algerian EFL classrooms, referred to "misunderstandings and clashes" during discussions involving cultural and religious

matters. She further emphasized the importance of empathy in reducing tension and promoting respectful classroom communication.

Several studies in language education also highlighted the importance of intercultural sensitivity in creating balanced and inclusive classroom environments. Haddaoui (2025), for instance, found that role-play activities contributed to improving learners' intercultural sensitivity, empathy, and classroom engagement. Likewise, Sellami (2025) reported that storytelling circles encouraged students to develop more positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and intercultural communication. These findings suggest that emotionally supportive classroom practices may help teachers and learners manage sensitive discussions more effectively in EFL settings.

3. Emotional Intelligence in the Algerian EFL Context

Research on emotional intelligence and intercultural communication in the Algerian EFL context has received increasing attention in recent years. Several studies emphasized the importance of emotional and interpersonal competences in improving classroom interaction, learner engagement, and communication inside EFL classrooms. However, most of these studies approached emotional intelligence, empathy, or intercultural sensitivity separately rather than examining their combined role in managing sensitive classroom discussions.

In the Algerian university context, Atallah and Iddou (2024) found that emotional intelligence represents an important characteristic of successful higher education teachers and highlighted the role of emotional competences in professional interaction and communication. Similarly, Mermoul and Bilouk (2022) reported a positive relationship between trait emotional intelligence and EFL learners' speaking achievement, suggesting that emotional factors may significantly influence language learning performance. In another Algerian study, Khiari (2021) demonstrated that emotional intelligence training helped reduce speaking anxiety among pre-service EFL teachers and improved their classroom confidence and communication abilities.

Other studies focused more specifically on intercultural communication and classroom interaction. Elbechir (2021), for example, examined teacher-student interaction in Algerian secondary school EFL classrooms and showed that classroom participation and social perceptions may influence interaction patterns inside the classroom. Likewise, Sellami (2025) and Haddaoui (2025) highlighted the growing importance of intercultural sensitivity and emotionally supportive classroom practices in Algerian EFL education. Despite these contributions, limited research has explored how emotional intelligence may influence Algerian EFL teachers' handling of sensitive topics while also considering students' perspectives regarding classroom communication and interaction.

III. Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design in order to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and the handling of sensitive topics in Algerian EFL classrooms. The study aimed to explore teachers' emotional competences as well as students' perceptions regarding classroom interaction and communication during discussions involving sensitive cultural, religious, or social issues. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to

collect measurable data and analyze relationships between variables using statistical procedures.

The study relied on questionnaire data collected from both teachers and students. The teacher questionnaire focused mainly on emotional intelligence dimensions based on Goleman's framework, particularly self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills in relation to classroom communication and sensitive discussions. The student questionnaire, on the other hand, explored learners' perceptions regarding classroom atmosphere, respect, openness, participation, and teachers' management of sensitive topics. Collecting data from both groups provided a broader understanding of the classroom environment from two complementary perspectives.

3.2 Participants

The study involved both Algerian EFL university teachers and students from university of Ibn Khaldoun Tiaret Algeria. The teacher sample consisted of 36 EFL university teachers who participated voluntarily in the study. The participants represented different genders and levels of teaching experience, which allowed the researcher to examine possible differences in emotional intelligence according to demographic variables.

In addition, the study included 94 EFL university students who responded to a separate questionnaire investigating their perceptions regarding classroom interaction, communication, respect, and the management of sensitive classroom discussions. The inclusion of both teachers and students aimed to provide a broader understanding of emotional intelligence and classroom dynamics from two complementary perspectives within the Algerian university EFL context.

3.3 Research Instruments

The present study relied on two separate questionnaires designed for both teachers and students. The instruments were administered using Likert-type scale items designed to measure participants' perceptions and classroom practices. The questionnaires aimed to collect quantitative data related to emotional intelligence, classroom interaction, and the handling of sensitive topics in Algerian EFL classrooms.

The teacher questionnaire was mainly based on Goleman's (1995, 1998) emotional intelligence framework and focused on three principal dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. The items investigated teachers' ability to identify culturally sensitive content, manage classroom discomfort, maintain respectful discussion, and understand the role of intercultural communication in language teaching. The questionnaire also included demographic information such as gender and teaching experience.

The student questionnaire was designed to explore learners' perceptions regarding classroom communication and teachers' management of sensitive discussions. The items focused on classroom respect, participation, openness to discussion, intercultural understanding, and students' comfort when discussing sensitive cultural or social issues. Together, the two questionnaires provided complementary perspectives regarding emotional intelligence and classroom interaction in the Algerian EFL context.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected electronically through online questionnaires distributed to Algerian EFL university teachers and students. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. The questionnaires were designed to gather information related to emotional intelligence, classroom communication, and the handling of sensitive topics in EFL classrooms.

After the data collection process, participants' responses were organized and prepared for statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The collected data were coded and classified according to the main variables of the study in order to facilitate quantitative analysis and interpretation. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were respected throughout the research process.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, group statistics, and inferential statistical procedures were used to examine teachers' emotional intelligence levels and students' perceptions regarding classroom interaction and sensitive discussions. The analysis mainly focused on the emotional intelligence dimensions adopted from Goleman's framework, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills.

In addition to descriptive analysis, inferential statistical procedures were also used in order to examine possible differences according to demographic variables such as gender and teaching experience. Group statistics and one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to identify statistically significant differences between participants' responses. The findings were then interpreted in relation to emotional intelligence, classroom communication, and the management of sensitive topics in Algerian EFL classrooms.

4.1 Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Levels

In order to examine the level of emotional intelligence among Algerian EFL university teachers, descriptive statistics were conducted for the three principal dimensions adopted from Goleman's framework, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table (1): Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Emotional Intelligence Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Awareness	4.39	0.75
Self-Regulation	4.16	0.77
Social Skills	4.56	0.84

As shown in Table 1, the participants demonstrated generally high levels of emotional intelligence across all investigated dimensions. Social skills recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.56), followed by self-awareness (M = 4.39), while self-regulation also showed a relatively high mean score (M = 4.16). These findings suggest that the participating teachers generally perceive themselves as capable of maintaining effective

communication, managing classroom interaction, and responding appropriately during discussions involving sensitive cultural or social topics.

The prominence of social skills may indicate that teachers place considerable importance on communication and relationship management inside the classroom. This finding appears consistent with Goleman's (1998) perspective that social competence plays a central role in professional interaction and conflict management. In EFL classrooms particularly, communication and interaction are essential elements of the learning process, which may explain the relatively strong scores obtained in this dimension.

The findings also support previous Algerian studies emphasizing the importance of emotional and interpersonal competences in language education. Atallah and Iddou (2024), for example, associated emotional intelligence with successful professional interaction among university teachers. Similarly, Hannache and Boulkamh (2025) stressed that foreign language teaching involves psycho-emotional interaction rather than the simple transmission of linguistic knowledge. The relatively high scores obtained in the present study may therefore reflect teachers' awareness of the emotional and interpersonal demands associated with handling sensitive classroom discussions.

4.2 Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence

In order to examine possible differences in emotional intelligence according to gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted for the three investigated dimensions. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table (2): Gender Differences in Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Emotional Intelligence Dimension	Male Mean	Female Mean	Sig.
Self-Awareness	4.52	4.31	.431
Self-Regulation	4.21	4.13	.773
Social Skills	4.71	4.45	.375

As shown in Table 2, male participants recorded slightly higher mean scores across the three emotional intelligence dimensions. However, the significance values for self-awareness ($p = .431$), self-regulation ($p = .773$), and social skills ($p = .375$) were all above the accepted significance level of .05. These findings indicate that no statistically significant differences were found between male and female teachers regarding emotional intelligence dimensions.

The absence of significant gender differences may suggest that emotional competences related to classroom communication and the management of sensitive discussions are not strongly influenced by gender in the Algerian EFL university context. Instead, emotional intelligence may develop through professional experience, classroom interaction, and continuous engagement with learners regardless of gender differences.

These findings also support the fourth hypothesis of the present study, which assumed that no statistically significant differences would be observed based on gender. Moreover, the results appear consistent with previous educational studies suggesting that emotional intelligence in teaching contexts is more closely related to professional and interpersonal practices than to demographic characteristics alone.

4.3 Emotional Intelligence and Teaching Experience

In order to investigate possible differences in emotional intelligence according to teaching experience, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted for the three investigated dimensions. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table (3): ANOVA Results According to Teaching Experience

Emotional Intelligence Dimension	F	Sig.
Self-Awareness	.593	.558
Self-Regulation	.261	.772
Social Skills	.760	.476

As presented in Table 3, the significance values for self-awareness (p = .558), self-regulation (p = .772), and social skills (p = .476) were all higher than the significance level of .05. Therefore, no statistically significant differences were identified among teachers with different levels of teaching experience regarding emotional intelligence dimensions.

Although slight variations in mean scores appeared between experience groups, these differences were not statistically meaningful. This finding may suggest that emotional intelligence competences such as communication, emotional regulation, and classroom relationship management are not necessarily dependent on years of teaching experience alone. Teachers with shorter teaching experience may still demonstrate strong emotional competences through personal communication abilities, professional adaptation, or previous educational exposure.

The findings also support the fourth hypothesis of the study, which predicted the absence of statistically significant differences based on teaching experience. In the Algerian EFL context, these results may indicate that emotional intelligence is developed through continuous classroom interaction and individual professional engagement rather than experience duration alone.

4.4 Students' Perspectives on Classroom Interaction and Sensitive Discussions

In order to explore students' perceptions regarding classroom communication and the management of sensitive discussions, descriptive statistics were conducted for the main variables included in the student questionnaire. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table (4): Students' Perspectives on Classroom Interaction and Sensitive Discussions

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Respect	2.86	0.85
Listening	2.69	0.86
Open Discussion	2.78	0.95
Student Voice	2.69	1.03
Safe Atmosphere	2.52	0.95
Sensitive Handling	2.77	0.93
Cultural Awareness	2.62	0.91
Neutrality	2.72	1.03
Intercultural Understanding	2.54	1.09
Critical Thinking	2.20	0.95
Communication Skills	3.31	1.06

Participation Comfort	2.92	1.27
Conflict Management	2.73	1.34
Emotional Regulation	2.95	1.20
Mutual Respect	2.70	1.36

As shown in Table 4, students' perceptions regarding classroom interaction and the handling of sensitive discussions were generally moderate. The highest mean score was recorded for communication skills (M = 3.31), suggesting that students believe classroom discussions may positively contribute to the development of their communication abilities. Participation comfort (M = 2.92) and emotional regulation (M = 2.95) also showed relatively moderate scores, indicating that some students feel reasonably comfortable participating in sensitive classroom discussions.

However, lower mean scores were observed in areas such as critical thinking (M = 2.20), intercultural understanding (M = 2.54), and safe classroom atmosphere (M = 2.52). These findings may suggest that although teachers generally perceive themselves as emotionally competent, students do not always experience classroom discussions as fully open, balanced, or emotionally comfortable. The moderate results may also reflect the sensitivity of certain cultural or social topics within Algerian university classrooms, where students may sometimes hesitate to express opinions freely.

The findings provide an interesting contrast with teachers' self-reported emotional intelligence scores, which were generally high across all investigated dimensions. This difference between teachers' self-perceptions and students' classroom experiences may indicate that emotional intelligence competences are not always perceived equally by both sides of the educational process. Consequently, the results highlight the importance of considering students' perspectives when examining classroom communication and the management of sensitive topics in EFL education.

4.5 General Discussion of Findings

The findings of the present study revealed generally high levels of emotional intelligence among Algerian EFL university teachers, particularly in the dimensions of social skills and self-awareness. These results suggest that teachers perceive themselves as capable of maintaining effective communication, managing classroom interaction, and responding appropriately during discussions involving culturally or socially sensitive topics. Such findings appear consistent with Goleman's (1998) view that emotional competences play an essential role in professional interaction and relationship management. They also support previous Algerian studies that emphasized the importance of emotional and interpersonal competences in language education (Atallah & Iddou, 2024; Hannache & Boulkamh, 2025).

The study also showed that no statistically significant differences were found according to gender or teaching experience. This may indicate that emotional intelligence in educational settings is not necessarily determined by demographic characteristics alone. Instead, emotional competences may develop through continuous classroom interaction, communication practices, and professional engagement with learners. These findings support the hypothesis stating that emotional intelligence remains relatively stable across different demographic groups within the Algerian EFL university context.

However, the students' questionnaire revealed more moderate perceptions regarding classroom atmosphere, openness, intercultural understanding, and the management of sensitive discussions. While students acknowledged the positive role of classroom discussions in improving communication skills, lower scores were recorded in variables related to critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and classroom comfort. This contrast between teachers' self-reported emotional intelligence and students' classroom perceptions represents one of the most important findings of the study.

Several interpretations may explain this difference. First, teachers may believe that they manage sensitive discussions effectively because they focus mainly on maintaining classroom control and avoiding direct conflict. Students, on the other hand, may evaluate classroom interaction based on their personal comfort, freedom of expression, and emotional security during discussion. In some cases, teachers may also avoid deeper discussion of controversial issues in order to prevent misunderstanding or tension, which may reduce students' perception of openness and critical engagement inside the classroom.

These findings appear particularly relevant within the Algerian EFL context, where discussions involving religion, culture, identity, or social values may require careful emotional and intercultural management. Benosmane (2022), for example, referred to "misunderstandings and clashes" during discussions related to cultural and religious matters in Algerian EFL classrooms. Similarly, Sellami (2024) argued that teacher preparation programs in Algeria still focus largely on theoretical aspects of teaching and may not sufficiently prepare teachers for emotionally demanding classroom situations.

Overall, the findings suggest that emotional intelligence represents an important component of effective classroom communication and sensitive topic management in EFL education. Nevertheless, the moderate student perceptions indicate that emotional competences alone may not be sufficient unless they are accompanied by classroom practices that encourage openness, intercultural dialogue, emotional safety, and balanced participation among learners.

V. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and the handling of sensitive topics in Algerian EFL university classrooms from both teachers' and students' perspectives. The findings revealed generally high levels of emotional intelligence among teachers, particularly in the dimensions of social skills, self-awareness, and self-regulation. The study also showed that no statistically significant differences were found according to gender or teaching experience. These results suggest that emotional competences play an important role in classroom communication and discussion management regardless of demographic variables.

At the same time, students' responses revealed more moderate perceptions regarding classroom atmosphere, openness, intercultural understanding, and comfort during sensitive discussions. This contrast between teachers' self-perceptions and students' classroom experiences highlights the complexity of managing sensitive topics in EFL education. Although teachers may consider themselves emotionally competent, students do not always perceive classroom interaction as fully open or emotionally comfortable. Consequently, the findings emphasize the importance of considering both teachers' and students' perspectives when examining emotional intelligence and classroom communication.

The study also highlighted the importance of emotional and intercultural competences in Algerian EFL classrooms where discussions may involve cultural, religious, or social issues requiring careful management and respectful communication. Based on the findings, the study recommends integrating emotional intelligence and intercultural communication training within Algerian EFL teacher education programs. Teachers may also benefit from professional development activities focusing on empathy, emotional regulation, classroom communication, and the management of sensitive discussions.

Despite its contributions, the present study has certain limitations. The research relied mainly on self-reported questionnaire data and involved a relatively limited sample of teachers and students. In addition, the study focused specifically on university EFL contexts, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Therefore, future research may consider larger samples, mixed-method approaches, or classroom observation in order to explore emotional intelligence and sensitive classroom interaction more deeply in Algerian EFL education.

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