

The Effect of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in English Language Learning; A Case Study of Iranian EFL Students in Zahedan

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Abstract

For decades, schools have attempted to predict which students could do well in higher education and the workplace. The tools they used to make their best guess have been standardized achievement tests and IQ rankings. Recent studies, however, imply that there may be a better predictor--the measurement of a child's emotional intelligence. Experts now believe that success is influenced 20% by IQ and 80% by different factors that represent a person's character and personality or emotional intelligence. Consequently, if teachers are concerned with helping students increase their L2 abilities, they might need to enhance their emotional intelligence skills and reduce foreign language tension, if possible[1]. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the role of emotional intelligence in English language learning. To reach the goal of the study, 20 female students were selected at random from Farhangian University in Zahedan and were asked to complete the Emotional Intelligence questionnaire. Then the correlation of their emotional intelligence scores with reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills was evaluated. SPSS 24 was used to analyze data and calculate correlations between them. The results showed that there is a slightly significant relationship between the constructs of emotional intelligence (interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress control, and adaptability) with some skills. At the end, the results were discussed, the limitations of the research were expressed, and suggestions were presented to teachers and authors.

Keywords: English language learning, Emotional Intelligence

1. Introduction

Language is our essential source of communication. It is the strategy through which we share our thoughts and contemplations with others. There are thousands of languages in the world[3]. The English language has been the common language of the world for many years. It is presently inconceivable to discover a nation where learning English has not become a standard [10]. Within the worldwide world, the significance of English cannot be denied and disregarded since English is the foremost common language talked all over. English is one of the most utilized languages in the world [3].

The success of individuals in learning a second language varies greatly, with some finding it easier than others. Motivation, attitude, and personality play a role in language learning success, but one important factor is the level of intelligence a person possesses. Since the introduction of emotional intelligence in 1990, it has become a popular concept in psychology and applied in various fields such as education and management. Daniel Goleman, a well-known suggest for emotional intelligence, believes that many successes in different areas can be attributed to emotional intelligence rather than traditional IQ tests [12].

Learning English as a second language (ESL) in Iran requires formal education as it is not commonly spoken for communication or education. However, in countries like India, English is spoken as a second language for both communication and educational purposes [9].

Learning a second or foreign language is a difficult task. Over the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in finding the nature of getting to know strategies and identifying those strategies that can be most usually used by unique kinds of learners. Language learning strategies assist learners in retrieving and keeping materials and facilitate and even accelerate their learning. Therefore, experts have proposed several classifications and various definitions for language learning techniques which the only presented by Oxford has performed remarkable interest. In Oxford's taxonomy strategies are divided into six categories of strategies: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social [17].

Many researchers conclude that EI is related to getting to know, instructional achievements among students, and powerful coaching practices. Salovey and Mayer (1990) have provided valuable insights into the function of emotional intelligence in teaching and learning. Further, Pishghadam (2009) has explored the vital function of emotional intelligence in students' educational scores in listening, writing, and reading. His examination reveals that second language learning is strongly related to several dimensions of emotional intelligence. Moreover, Mohzan, Hassan, and Halili (2013) advise that emotional intelligence can improve academic and educational achievements. In this direction, Zarezadeh (2013) has investigated the function of emotional intelligence in learning English. The findings show that there is a strong correlation among emotional intelligence, speaking, reading, and intrapersonal skills. In some other research, Shao, Yu, and Ji (2013) have investigated the relationship between EFL college students' emotional intelligence and writing success among sixty - eight non-English primary beginners at a university in Hang Zhou. They've observed a relatively strong effective relationship between EI and writing achievement. Even though, extra attention is required to determine the methods which could help enhance foreign language learners' emotional intelligence [2].

1.1. English language learning

English isn't always the most effective use as a professional language in many nations, but it also has an impact on many unique cultures in a large number of countries; it's by far the primary language of communication inside the international-wide. It is present while a variety of humans in a country speak English as the first language including in us, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and others. The expansion of the English language has rapidly multiplied the need to advantage higher communication English throughout the world because the aptitude to use English is very much needed for further studies, trips to different countries as well as for social and professional worldwide contacts of various sorts [14].

Learning English as a foreign language allows you to completely recognize the culture and its context of a country, it widens your understanding. By understanding someone's culture, for example, you could avoid situations that could cause misunderstandings. Being capable of understanding other cultures and learning a foreign language you may bridge the distance between cultures, which could be an effective device in today's modern world. It also increases your understanding of your tradition. Studying a foreign language will give you the opportunity to step outside the

boundaries of your everyday life. Experiences of other cultures and your private improvement through the study of a foreign language will greatly form your identification and heighten your self-awareness [10].

A study achieved by Ton & Pham (2010), discovered that the English language is usually used as a global language for communication among humans from different language backgrounds in all parts of the world. Within the same vein, the English language is a worldwide language that can be used for communication with native speakers and non-local-speakers within the worldwide, mainly in the education section, all university students need it for their studies to look for information and obtain knowledge; consequently, lots of the universities throughout the world needs to use English language as one of its educational device requirements. English is frequently used because the medium of instruction in better education. On the other hand, the fact of the everyday approach to teaching and studying the English language is also related to many interrelated social and political uses [14].

1.2. Emotional Intelligence (EI)

For a long in the history of research on human mind and language learning, there have been several questions, some of which are nevertheless unanswered. The most common of these questions is what makes some people smarter than others and thus helps them be more successful in language learning; what kind of talents are smart people ought to assist them in keeping and retrieving linguistic information better; is there any way to exchange the capability of language learners' minds and make them smarter than they used to be; and, if there's any fixed place within one's mind in which memory is placed. Though lots of questions like those are subject to confrontation among neurologists, cognitive psychologists, and biologists, there exists an agreement on the definition of intelligence as a major common idea through these kinds of questions. The Dictionary definition of intelligence is "an underlying ability that causes someone to characteristic effectively in a certain situation." it's also the ability to realize, understand, and benefit from experience [4].

Intelligence is a group of cognitive abilities that permit us to become aware of the world around us and learn how to solve issues. Most people believe that successful learners are humans with an excessive intelligence quotient (IQ). According to Bechter et al, IQ can play a 20% role in predicting a learner's success, while the remaining 80% is attached to various factors that Bechter et al, cite as important factors such as emotional intelligence. According to Brackett Katulak and Haag et al, emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the use of feelings intelligently and drawing on the existing power or information in feeling to make efficient alternatives. Other parts of intelligence, including EI, demonstrate how effective an individual is [16].

In the last decades with the growing progression in psychology, they have completed research about the role of mental processes in human learning. In the 21st century, researchers, teachers, and educators have examined and emphasized a few factors that can be important in learning, especially scholastic learning. In this domain personality factors and emotional intelligence are two concepts that have absorbed much attention. Individuals need the skills to speak, work in teams, and permit go of the personal and family issues that get in the manner of working and learning. Such abilities add up to what is known as emotional intelligence, and they're even more important as educators understand that these skills are critical to academic achievement. Emotional intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our emotions and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for handling emotions properly in ourselves and in our relationships. Maurice Elias, a Rutgers College psychology professor, puts it, It's the set of abilities that helps us get alongside in life with other people in all kinds of life conditions [8].

Traditionally, enjoying a high level of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) would suffice to be academically successful in light of traditional wisdom. However, the function of IQ in academic success has been questioned. Not all talented people are those with high IQ rankings. According to Goleman (1995), this cognitive intelligence can only account for 20 percent of individual variations in academic success, with the remaining 80 percent of the variance being unaccounted for using cognitive intelligence or IQ exams. As Goleman (1995) states, this deficiency can be explained by other characteristics that might be subsumed below Emotional Intelligence (EI). An individual with a high Emotional Quotient (EQ) is endowed with a common feel and is sharp-witted in social relations. Bar-On's model of non-cognitive intelligence draws on 5 vast areas of skills and talents, with each subdivided into particular skills. Those include intrapersonal abilities (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, and independence), interpersonal skills (interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, and empathy), adaptability (problem-solving, fact testing, and flexibility), stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control), and general mood (happiness and optimism) [13].

Most universities focus significantly on academic attainment, but at the same time, little attention is given to the effective domain of English teaching programs. Even though academic achievement is significant, other areas such as teachers' and students' feelings ought to not be omitted. As a result, comes the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) and its significant role in the learning-teaching method.

According to Ensari (2017), the importance of emotional intelligence may be attributed to the following elements:

- EI affects a person's attitude and outlook on lifestyles.
- EI helps in decreasing anxiety and despair.
- EI has a high impact on social relationships.
- High EI helps humans to talk with others more effectively.
- High EI helps people to reduce procrastination and grow self-confidence.

EFL college students, in their endeavor to learn English, often engage with their classmates and instructors. Eventually, they face emotional challenges that need to be addressed in a classroom environment [2].

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence in English language learning in third-year students of English language teaching, at Farhangian University, Zahedan. To do that, the researcher determines and examines the performance of emotional intelligence in their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills by carrying out an emotional intelligence test.

2. Research question

Based on the above information the following research question is proposed: To what extent emotional intelligence can affect English language learning?

3. Research hypothesis

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and English language learning.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

A community sample of 20 people participated in this study, including 20 women between 20 and 23 years old. All participants were third-year students of Zahedan Farhangian University majoring in English language teaching. These were randomly selected from among 40 students.

4.2. Instrument

The participants were asked to participate in research for intelligence and English language learning. They completed the Bar-On emotional intelligence questionnaire. The EQ-i contains 133 items in the form of short sentences and employs a 5-option response scale with a textual response format starting from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). It takes approximately 40 minutes to complete.

4.2.1. Emotional intelligence test (Bar – On)

To measure the EQ of the subjects, Bar-On EQ-I (Bar-On, 1996), designed in 1980 by Bar-On, was used. It is a self-report scale with 133 objects which measures five large areas of abilities or talents and 15 factorial components. The primary is intrapersonal EQ (40 items), which is divided into emotional self-awareness (8 items), assertiveness (7 items), self-regard (9 items), self-actualization (9 items), and independence (7 items). The second is interpersonal EQ (29 objects), which is divided into empathy (8 objects), interpersonal relationship (11

objects), and social responsibility (10 objects). The third is adaptability EQ (26 objects), which is divided into problem-solving (8 objects), reality testing (10 objects), and flexibility (8 objects). The fourth is stress management EQ (18 objects), which is divided into stress tolerance (9 objects), and impulse management (9 objects). The fifth is general mood EQ (17 objects), which is divided into happiness (9 objects) and optimism (8 objects)[12].

5. Procedure

5.1. Data collection

The study was conducted in the final semester of university education and it took about 2 weeks to collect the data. To collect data, the researcher conducted an emotional intelligence test which had high validity and reliability. Due to cultural variations and to avoid any misunderstanding about the content of the questionnaire, the translated version of the questionnaire was used, which is similar to the original model of the standard.

The development of the EQ-i took happened over many years, starting with the development of a conceptual framework and important to the construction and refinement of scale objects. Validity scales and correction indexes have been added over time to improve measurement. A substantial body of research, summarized in the EQ-i guide, indicates that the scales commonly have good internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Component analyses also provide some aid for the construct validity of the questionnaire. Finally, the convergent and discriminant validity of the EQ-i has been evaluated in several ways. Many studies examined correlations among the EQ-i and numerous self-report inventories, including the sixteen personality element Questionnaire, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, and the MMPI-2. In general, EQ-i total scores are correlated surely with measures of emotional stability and negatively with measures of neuroticism and psychopathology [12].

5.2. Data analysis

First of all, the emotional intelligence questionnaire was scored based on the Bar-On test guide, and then the total scores and the scores of the five subscales were calculated. Since there was no need to convert crude grades to standard, raw scores were used in this study. To determine the role of emotional intelligence in learning a second language, the students' scores in the fields of reading, listening, speaking, and writing were taken, and since students are going through courses such as Reading 1, 2, conversations 1, and 2 and writing (paragraph writing, lettering, and advanced writing), the average of each skill was calculated and Pearson correlation was used for data analysis. The reason for using the average of each skill, in this research, is to increase the reliability and validity because some teachers are strict and some are easy in grading and presenting courses, which can affect the reliability and validity.

6. Result

The present study aims to analyze the effect of emotional intelligence on English language learning.

Table1. Correlation coefficient of emotional intelligence with English language skills

Skills/Components	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
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Total EQ	-0.02	-0.04	0.45	0.25
Intrapersonal	-0.05	-0.10	0.35	0.28
Interpersonal	0.18	0.14	*0.62	*0.54
Stress Control	-0.01	-0.21	0.08	-0.31
General Mood	-0.12	-0.07	0.20	0.19
Adaptability	-0.05	0.09	0.24	0.03

*P > 0.05

Number: 20

Table 1 shows the correlation degrees of emotional intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, stress control, general mood, and adaptability with the variables of reading, listening, speaking, and writing scores of sixth-semester students. According to this table, there is a moderate but significant correlation between speaking skills and interpersonal intelligence (correlation coefficient = 0.62), interpersonal intelligence and writing skills (correlation coefficient = 0.54), and also a small but significant relationship between emotional intelligence and speaking skills (correlation coefficient = 0.45). On the other hand, there is an inverse relationship between stress control and writing skills (correlation coefficient -0.31) and listening skills and stress control (correlation coefficient= -0.21). There is no significant relationship between types of intelligence and other language skills. According to these findings, it can be said that there is a slightly significant relationship between emotional intelligence and English language learning.

7. Discussion

Investigating the role of emotional intelligence in learning a second language based on the interpretation of variables has brought different results. When the relationship between all skills and emotional intelligence was investigated, speaking skills had a significant relationship with interpersonal intelligence and writing skills had a significant relationship with interpersonal intelligence. However, there was a negative correlation between writing skills and stress control, listening skills, and stress control, and these two skills have an inverse relationship with stress management. Of course, speaking skills have a great impact on people's interpersonal, intrapersonal, and general speaking skills because speaking is an ambivalent activity that requires having these skills. Writing skills correlate with interpersonal intelligence, meaning that people with emotional awareness, high interpersonal relationships, and empathy are more capable of writing skills. According to the results, there was no significant relationship reported between emotional intelligence and other language skills, which may be due to the small sample size.

Unlike IQ, contemporary research shows that EI levels may be expanded through the application of EI training programs. EI training programs ought to be followed by school systems to be used with their school principals. This should take place with a focus on the improvement of programs that are designed to (1) educate people concerning the relevance of emotional intelligence to their learning environment, (2) check their relative strengths and weaknesses, and (3) offer a framework to expand and enhance their capability to interact with others with greater emotional intelligence [1].

8. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence has a small effect on English language learning. This article, which examined the performance of emotional intelligence in learning a second language, had some limitations. The limitations of this study include the lack of determination of the language level of students and the low statistical community, and students had different language levels, therefore it is not acceptable to generalize this study in different cases.

The relation between second language learning and emotional abilities is not surprising, given the nature of English classes in EFL situations. Learning a second language seems to be difficult, demanding, and full of stress and pressure for learners, especially for adults, due to the fact learners have to speak in another language that isn't their mother tongue, make lots of errors, and may face setbacks. English is considered a foreign language to Iranians, due to the fact it is spoken only in class. It is prestigious to learn English in Iran and to acquire a native-like accent because people put more top class on learning English. Besides, many jobs in Iran require a good command of English. Because of the aforementioned reasons, English language teachers in Iran are perfectionists, stressful the correct use of the language, putting much pressure on students to apply English accurately and appropriately. English classes commonly create a kind of threatening environment in Iran; students' mistakes are corrected immediately in a direct way. Students typically suffer from error phobia, meaning that they do not write or speak until they suppose they are perfect. Consequently, it appears to be natural that emotional factors, specifically intrapersonal abilities and stress management abilities, can be of great importance in this context of learning [12].

The findings of this study can be of remarkable assistance to the English teachers who are busy presenting the language. If one accepts that it is possible to teach emotional intelligence and enhance it, one will then be capable of teaching it to learners who possess a low level of emotional intelligence. The coaching of emotional intelligence will enable weak learners to enhance their comprehension and production of emotions. English teachers are predicted to utilize an academic curriculum to promote and reinforce their learners' emotional intelligence so that they can expand the corresponding and relevant skills (which include understanding personal emotions and others, sympathizing with others, and controlling stresses.) English textbook compilers have to benefit from the techniques and strategies that highlight and signify emotional intelligence. They need to involve their teachers more with these concepts. Some of the effective strategies to raise emotional intelligence are as follows: classroom discussions, listening to soft songs, watching emotional movies, individual' self-revelations, designing questionnaires, and reading texts of psychology [18].

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