2011 International Conference on Social Science and Humanity
IPEDR vol.5 (2011) © (2011) IACSIT Press, Singapore

Emotional Intelligence and its Predictive Power in Iranian Foreign Language Learners' Language Achievement

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***Abstract*—The present study probes the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and foreign language learners' achievement in Iranian context. 111 High Intermediate language learners took part in this study. For the purpose of data collection, the researchers administered Bar-On questionnaire. The results show there is no relationship between total emotional intelligence and language achievement, but some of the main components of Emotional Intelligence, i.e. intrapersonal and general mood as well as some subcomponents of Emotional Intelligence, i.e. independence, self-assertion, and optimism have statistically meaningful relationship with language achievement at probability level of $p<0.05$. Moreover, regression analyses demonstrate two of the main components of emotional intelligence, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, can predict language achievement. The results also show emotional intelligence and age are positively correlated.**

Keywords- Emotional Intelligence; Language Achievement

I. INTRODUCTION

A bulk of research has indicated that the focus of present educational systems is on rational and cognitive aspects such as memory and problem solving and that little emphasis has been placed on the important contributions of the emotional mind (Epstein, 1998; and Nelson and Low, 2003). Students who receive higher intelligence quotient (IQ) scores are usually considered more intelligent. Recently, however, several researchers like Thorndike, Goleman, Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, Stern, Bar-On, to mention a few, have focused on a different dimension of intelligence called emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence refers to the capacities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others. EI can be as much powerful, and at times, more powerful than IQ in predicting success in various life challenges (Goleman, 1995). "In distinguishing successful people within a job category or profession, EI emerges as a stronger predictor than IQ of who, for instance, will become a star, salesperson, team head, or a top-rank leader," (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). Goleman states IQ can sort people before they start a career; it determines which fields or professions they can hold. To learn which individuals rise to the top or which individuals fail, however, IQ 'short circuit' and EI proves to be stronger predictor of success (Goleman, 1998, 2001).

Mayer and Salovey define emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (1990, pp. 189). They make a distinction between the existing EI models i.e. mixed and pure models. The advocates of the former say EI consists of an amalgamation of abilities, behaviors, personality attributes, and general disposition. The supporters of the latter, though, see EI as an array of cognitive capabilities. Goleman defines emotional intelligence as abilities "which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself" (1995, 28). His EI model includes: 1. Knowing one's emotions, 2. Managing emotions, 3. Motivating oneself, 4. Recognizing emotions in others, 5. Handling relationships

Thorndike (1920) first identified the aspect of EI, i.e. *social intelligence,* as he called it. He added social intelligence is one of the different capacities or intelligences individuals possess. He defined it as "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls—to act wisely in human relations" (cited in Goleman, 2001, pp. 3). Thorndike and Stern made several attempts to measure this capacity, but due to the complex nature of this variable they were not much successful. Reuven Bar-On (1988), too, attempted to assess EI in terms of a measure of well-being. Attempts by researchers to assess EI and its dimensions have brought about instruments such as Self-report Bar-On's EQ-I, the ability test of MEIS (Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale) or MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test), the ECI (Emotional Competence Inventory), EQ map, the self-report measure of Shutte et al., the ability test of SASQ by Seligman (Chermiss, 2009). Bar-On (2000) defines EI as a collection of emotional and social knowledge and skills. According to him, EI is an array of non-cognitive skills which increases one's success in life. His EI model includes five main domains or scales and fifteen sub-domains or sub-scales:

1. Intrapersonal skills (self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization)
2. Interpersonal skills (empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships)
3. Adaptability (reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving)

4. Stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control)
5. General mood (optimism and happiness)

Studies on EI indicate people who have higher EI are apt to be more socially competent. They have better relationships, and are more interpersonally sensitive than lower in EI (Bracket et al., 2006; Lopez et al., 2004; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). Just as higher EI predicts better social outcomes, lower EI predicts interpersonal conflicts and maladjustment. Studies by Bracket, Mayer, & Warner (2004) show lower EI teenagers were more aggressive than others and tended to engage in more conflict behavior than higher EI peers (mentioned in Mayer et al., 2008). The researchers also mention levels of drug and alcohol use are related to lower EI among males. They maintain many current problems such as underachievement, lack of motivation, violence, alcohol and drug addiction are indications of the need to include an emphasis on the education of the 'right mind', the emotional and experiential mind (Nelson and Low, 2006). Nonetheless, it seems people and students' efficacy are primarily defined based on their performance on standardized tests. Learners who can memorize great amounts of subject material and transfer them completely at the time of examinations are usually considered intelligent. That is, great emphasis is placed on cognitive development and neglect emotional development. The consequence of such educational system can be a number of emotionally illiterate graduates. Educational psychologists and researchers, nowadays, believe that a healthy school climate requires an emphasis on affective or emotional learning as much as on academic or cognitive learning (Low et al., 2004).

The goal of the present study is to investigate whether EI and its components, which are measured with Bar-On test in this study, are associated with language achievement and whether they can predict language achievement. The study is hoped to contribute to the educational systems and institutions. The researchers suggest that educators and educational policy-makers attend to emotional literacy and incorporate it in the school and college curriculums. The study addresses the following hypotheses:

1. There is no relationship between Iranian EFL [*] learners' total emotional intelligence and language achievement.
2. There is no relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EI scales and language achievement.
3. EI components cannot predict Iranian EFL learners' language achievement.
4. There is no relationship between EI components and language achievement in girls and boys.
5. There is no relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EI and age.

[*] English as a Foreign Language

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The study was done in an accredited language institute in Iran. 111 English language learners at intermediate levels aged between 18 to 40 years old participated in this study. They were 80 females and 31 males.

B. Measure

To evaluate the subjects' EI, Bar-On test was administered. Bar-On test is a self-report questionnaire which originally includes 133 items. However, the researchers used a shorter form of this test. The test was reduced to 90 items and customized for Iranian context by Dr. Samuee and et al. in 2001. The total reliability of the questionnaire estimated by Cornbach's alpha was 0.93. The test employs a five point response scale ranging from 'I completely agree' to 'I completely disagree.'

C. Procedure

Participants completed Bar-On questionnaire in half an hour. The participants' final grades of two successive terms were obtained from the office. Learners' language achievement (LA) was computed based on the average score of the final examinations of the learners' scores in these two successive terms. The final examinations of this language institute are general achievement tests consisting of listening, vocabulary, structures, and reading sections.

D. Analysis

To determine the role of learners' EQ in their language success, Pearson product-moment correlations were applied to the data. To find out which dimension of EQ has predictive power in the learners' language achievement, regression analysis was run.

III. RESULTS

A. *There is no relationship between Iranian EFL learners' total emotional intelligence and language achievement.*

To see whether there is any significant correlation between the learners' EQ and their achievement, Pearson product-moment correlation was employed. The result shows that there is no significant correlation between these two variables (Table I).

B. *There is no relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EI scales and language achievement.*

Table II shows the correlations between two of five EI main scales or domains, i.e. intrapersonal intelligence and general mood, and language achievement respectively at the levels of 0.005 and 0.048 are statistically significant.

Table III shows among the EI sub-scales, the relationship between independence (0.003), assertiveness (0.037), and optimism (0.024) and language achievement is significant. It is worth mentioning two other sub-scales, self-actualization (0.06) and self-regard (0.071), are very close to the significant level of probability.

TABLE I. TOTAL EI & LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT

	sig
Language achievement	
Total EQ	0.122

P<0.05

TABLE II. EI MAIN SCLAES (DOMAINS) & LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT

	sig
Language achievement	
Intrapersonal	0.005
Interpersonal	0.148
Adaptability	0.312
Stress management	0.430
General mood	0.048

P<0.05

TABLE III. EI SUB-SCLAES & LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT

	sig
Language achievement	
Independence	0.003
Assertiveness	0.037
Optimism	0.024
Self-actualization	0.060
Self-regard	0.071

P<0.05

C. EI components cannot predict Iranian EFL learners' language achievement.

To determine which dimension(s) of Emotional Intelligence can predict language achievement, multiple regressions were conducted. In table IV, R Square was 0.125, indicating that about 13% of the variances in language achievement would be determined by variances in EI dimensions. The ANOVA table shows the level of significance of their prediction power. According to the findings of the last step of regression analyses, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are predictors of the dependent variable (LA). Looking at the Beta value and the level of significant (0.001), we can say intrapersonal is a better predictor of language achievement (Table VI).

TABLE IV. MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354a	.125	.083	8.55424
2	.354b	.125	.092	8.51540
3	.352c	.124	.099	8.47888
4	.350d	.123	.106	8.44648

TABLE V. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1091.484	5	218.297	2.983	.015a
	Residual	7610.207	104	73.175		
	Total	8701.691	109			
2	Regression	1087.923	4	271.981	3.751	.007b
	Residual	7613.768	105	72.512		
	Total	8701.691	109			
3	Regression	1081.204	3	360.401	5.013	.003c
	Residual	7620.487	106	71.891		
	Total	8701.691	109			
4	Regression	1067.984	2	533.992	7.485	.001d
	Residual	7633.707	107	71.343		
	Total	8701.691	109			

a. Predictors: (Constant), MOOD, INTERPERSONAL, STRESSMANAGE, ADAPTABILITY, INTRAPERSONAL

b. Predictors: (Constant), MOOD, INTERPERSONAL, STRESSMANAGE, INTRAPERSONAL

c. Predictors: (Constant), INTERPERSONAL, STRESSMANAGE, INTRAPERSONAL

d. Predictors: (Constant), INTERPERSONAL, INTRAPERSONAL

e. Dependent Variable: AVERAGE

TABLE VI. COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	63.909	9.392		6.804	.000
	INTRAPERSONAL	.277	.126	.382	2.205	.030
	INTERPERSONAL	-.272	.118	-.241	-2.306	.023
	ADAPTABILITY	.038	.170	.033	.221	.826
	STRESSMANAGE	-.058	.131	-.055	-.444	.658
	MOOD	-.071	.237	-.050	-.300	.765
2	(Constant)	64.055	9.327		6.868	.000
	INTRAPERSONAL	.285	.120	.393	2.373	.019
	INTERPERSONAL	-.262	.109	-.232	-2.415	.017
	STRESSMANAGE	-.042	.107	-.039	-.390	.697
	MOOD	-.072	.236	-.050	-.304	.761
3	(Constant)	64.326	9.244		6.959	.000
	INTRAPERSONAL	.256	.075	.354	3.416	.001
	INTERPERSONAL	-.266	.107	-.236	-2.482	.015
	STRESSMANAGE	-.045	.106	-.043	-.429	.669
4	(Constant)	64.030	9.183		6.973	.000
	INTRAPERSONAL	.243	.069	.336	3.553	.001
	INTERPERSONAL	-.266	.107	-.235	-2.490	.014

a. Dependent Variable: AVERAGE

D. There is no relationship between EI components and language achievement in girls and boys.

To investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variables in different genders, Pearson product-moment correlation was applied. The results revealed 1. The relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and language achievement (LA) (p= 0.017) in girls is significant, 2. The relationship between interpersonal intelligence and LA (p=0.015) in boys is significant, 3. The independent variable of general mood has significant correlation with LA in girls (table VII).

E. There is no relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EI and age.

Table VIII indicates that generally emotional intelligence has positive correlation with age at the probability level of 0.030.

According to table IX, the results also indicate interpersonal intelligence (0.009), stress management (0.004), and adaptability (0.001) have meaningful relationships.

TABLE VII. EI MAIN DOMAINS & LA

			Sig
		Language achievement	
Intrapersonal	**Girls**		0.017
	Boys		0.124
Interpersonal	**Girls**		0.940
	Boys		0.015
Adaptability	**Girls**		0.256
	Boys		0.404
Stress management	**Girls**		0.286
	Boys		0.997
General mood	**Girls**		0.041
	Boys		0.837

P<0.05

TABLE VIII. TOTAL EI & AGE

	sig
Age	
Total EQ	0.030

P<0.05

TABLE IX. EI DOMAINS & AGE

	sig
Age	
Intrapersonal	0.898
Interpersonal	0.009
Adaptability	0.001
Stress management	0.004
General mood	0.848

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study intended to probe the relationship between emotional intelligence and language achievement in Iranian context. The findings indicate there is no significant relationship between total emotional intelligence and language achievement. However, two of the EI main components, intrapersonal intelligence (independence, assertiveness, self-actualization, self-regard, and self-awareness) and general mood (optimism and happiness), and language achievement are positively correlated. These findings, to a great extent, corresponds with the findings of Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) who showed educational success and intrapersonal, general mood and stress management dimensions have positive correlations. The results, also, partly corresponds with Parker et al. (2004) 's findings. They found positive relationship between success and intrapersonal, stress management and adaptability intelligences. We could conclude language learners who enjoy higher independence, are capable to express themselves, and are optimistic about learning a new language can be more successful. They accept a second language and its culture more easily and this attitude, in turn, helps them have better performance.

The present study, moreover, shows emotional intelligence in general and interpersonal, adaptability and stress management intelligences in particular increase with age. The finding is in accordance with findings of several researchers such as, Davies et al. (1998); Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) who believe EI is developmental. It gradually grows by gaining more experience. In fact, individuals learn social skills and understand they should exercise flexibility and adaptability to have effective relationships in social interactions. They maintain EI can be increased, trained, and schooled. According to Nelsons and Low, "If students are to develop essential life skills and the ability to think constructively and act wisely, the emotional mind must be understood and considered central to education for the 21st century" (2006, p. 1). Emotionally intelligent behavior is reflected in the ability to think constructively and behave wisely. Wise and effective behavior requires the ability to regulate and express emotions in healthy ways. EI skills synchronize the cognitive and emotional minds and are essential to effective behavior. EI skills help students to deal with stressful and conflict situations. Emotionally healthy students are happier, more cooperative and learn more effectively.

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