

# The Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Critical Thinking Skills, Their EQ and Their Students' Engagement in the Task

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**Abstract**—This study attempted to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' critical thinking skills, their Emotional Quotient (EQ) and their students' engagement in the task. To that end, 20 EFL high school teachers completed "Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal" (Form A) and the "Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory". Furthermore, 600 male and female learners, the students of the teacher participants at the time, participated in the study by answering the Persian version of "Tinio High School Survey on Student Engagement". The findings of the study indicated that there was a significant relationship between teachers' critical thinking skills and their students' engagement in the task. However, the results did not show any meaningful relationship between teachers' EQ and their students' engagement in the task and also between teachers' critical thinking skills and their EQ, although the results pointed to a high degree of correlation between 'intrapersonal aspects of teachers' EQ' and 'students' behavioral engagement'.

**Index Terms**—critical thinking skills, emotional quotient, engagement in the task

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Overview

Teacher characteristics and how they may influence the learning outcomes have recently received considerable research interest in the field of education. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) believe that the teacher is an ultimate key to successful education and she or he has a fundamental role in educational reform. Therefore, it is very common that a widespread range of language education investigations have addressed the features of successful language teachers, and the ways language teachers' characteristics can influence the degree of students' collaboration in the learning process (Borg, 2006; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). Campbell (2000) maintains "teaching is a complex interaction among subject matter, content, teacher characteristics, student characteristics, pedagogy, resources, and learning context" (p.50).

The outstanding characteristics of a good teacher are defined by Korthagen (2004) in a five-layer 'onion model' as: performances, competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes), beliefs, personality and mission. Characteristics of a virtuous teacher can be described as a person who is well organized, is motivated, is optimistic toward students and is thoughtful (Kleiner, 1998; Santrock, 2008).

Many of such features have already been examined, but it seems that some such as critical thinking skills and Emotional Quotient deserve further investigation as they seem to affect students' engagement.

Ruminski and Hanks (1995) argue that instructors should have a strong perception of critical thinking before starting teaching and evaluation. According to Ennis (1987), good thinking is critical thinking which he defined it as: a reasonable reflective thinking which is dedicated to deciding what to believe or do. May and Chee (2008) assert that the ability to promote critical thinking is fundamental in teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, the most important factor for effective leaders in the workplace is emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2001). Brown (2007) regards emotions as dominators of all our thought, actions and reflections. In fact, we are influenced by our emotions.

Students' engagement in the task is formed by the students' interaction with teacher and other students (Ames, 1992). So, teachers' critical thinking skills and their EQ are studied in relation to students' engagement in the task.

As learning is a goal that teachers desire for their students, Bean (2004) believes that the student achievement in the task depends partly on how much the students are engaged in the learning process (students' engagement in the task). Some scholars state that students' success is linked to their engagement in the task (e.g. Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Students' engagement has principally and traditionally focused upon developing accomplishment and appropriate behaviors and a sense of belonging in the classroom (Willms, Friesen & Milton, 2009). Many studies show that the

consequences of not engaging students in learning are terrible and frustrating (Claxton, 2007; Gilbert, 2007; Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 1998; Willms, 2003 as cited in Taylor & Parsons, 2011). Willms, Friesen and Milton (2009) state that students' engagement is mainly focused on students in middle school and high school, where disengagement usually comes to be a concern.

Teachers extremely affect students' achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005) and some teachers are much more effective than others (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Additionally, a large number of researches have acknowledged the strong positive relationship between students' engagement and learning outcomes (Connell, Spencer & Aber, 1994; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Finn & Rock, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004; Marks, 2000 as cited in Kraft & Dougherty, 2013).

Cole (2001) believes that disengagement is particularly linked to lack of success in learners. Students' disengagement from their task disturbs the learning process and learning takes place when students are tied up in the learning process. Furthermore, teachers' characteristics are most likely to influence students' engagement (Goe, 2007).

This study aims at examining the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' critical thinking skills, their emotional quotient and their students' engagement in the task.

### *B. Statement of the Problem*

According to Mortiboys (2005), some practical domains of studying the teacher's influences on the EFL learners can be teachers' critical self-awareness and emotional intelligence quotient. Considering teachers' emotional intelligence can provide the basis for producing learners who have more engagement, better motivation and creativity, more positive attitudes, greater collaboration and readiness for risks taking (Mortiboys, 2005).

For this reason, Damon (2008) calls students' disengagement "the most pressing problem in education today" (p.61). Disengagement comes with a sense of emptiness, boredom and apathy (Damon, 2008). According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), students' achievement is related to their engagement in the task. Furthermore, engagement in learning is linked to decreased dropout rates of students (Kushman, Sieber & Heariold-Kinney, 2000). Accordingly, the problem of students' disengagement with the task encounters the students with the risk of dropping out of school that cause many social and personal problems. Rumberger (1987) stated that students who quit school are more expected to be unemployed, to participate in antisocial behaviors, to be in need of welfare and to experience health and affective problems.

Furthermore, teachers have come to be worried at increasingly "high levels of student disengagement, evidenced by early school leaving, poor student behavior, and low levels of academic achievement" (Harris, 2008, p. 1).

This study has a glance at the supposed problem to find out possible relationships between teachers' characteristics and their students' engagement. There are many studies that concentrate on "teachers' critical thinking", "teachers' EQ" and "students' engagement" in relation to other issues, but none of them has concerned the relationship between these three categories yet. In this way, the possible relationship of factors, namely critical thinking, Emotional Quotient and students' engagement will be investigated concerning Iranian EFL teachers and their students.

### *C. Significance of the Study*

Some of the significances of the present study are as follows:

1. Teachers transfer knowledge and ideas to students, prepare them for further education and for working life, and beside parents, they are the main sources of good education. Additionally, teachers as core contributors in learning process play a vital role in learning. According to Edge (1993), teacher as the most powerful person in the classroom has to take some very important things into consideration such as: organisation (supporting students and defining clear purpose), security (students have to feel safe), motivation (it increases their involvement in the task), instruction (preparing useful guidelines), modeling (learners need to be shown how to do something), guidance (a helping hand to discover new things), information (preparing source of basic and extra information for students), feedback (teacher's response), encouragement (learners need teacher's support) and evaluation (learners want to be informed how they have performed).

2. Wayne and Youngs (2003) examined the characteristics of effective teachers that are interrelated to student effectiveness. Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2003) believe that caring, supportive, knowledgeable teachers can effectively help students to learn. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) state that teachers come to the job with their personalities previously formed, but there are still abilities and attitudes which can be learnt and worked on. Additionally, Harmer (1998) mentions that the teacher's character and personality is a crucial issue in the classroom.

3. Some researchers point to the importance of some aspects of the current discussion. Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010) believe that teachers' critical thinking is highly intertwined with teachers' pedagogical success. As teachers' success is in some ways related to students' engagement, teachers' critical thinking which is interconnected with educational achievement may affect students' engagement subsequently.

4. Goleman (1995) even hypothesizes that the majority of a person's success in life is determined by his or her Emotional Quotient (EQ). Furthermore, Sharma and Bindal (2012) found a significant relationship between teachers' EQ and their prosperity. Teachers extremely affect students' achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005) and one of the factors that manifests teachers success is the degree of students' engagement in the task. So, teachers' EQ can affect their students' engagement in the task and prevent disengagement consequently.

5. Examining the possible link between teachers' critical thinking, their EQ and students' engagement in the task would be significant in foreign language acquisition, since it might have outstanding effects on teacher education programs, syllabus design and adapting methods for promotion of students' engagement and involvement in the task.

#### *D. Purpose of the Study*

The present research aims at investigating the relationship among EFL teachers' critical thinking, their EQ and their students' engagement in the task. Therefore, the basic issue is how much EFL teachers with more advanced critical thinking and EQ capabilities can be successful in pedagogical programs and be effective in students' involvement and engagement in the educational tasks.

#### *E. Research Questions*

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Are there any meaningful relationships between Iranian EFL teachers' critical thinking skills, their EQ and their students' engagement in the task?
2. Are there any meaningful relationships between EFL teachers' critical thinking skills and their EQ?
3. Are there any meaningful relationships between EFL teachers' EQ and their students' engagement in the task?
4. Are there any meaningful relationships between EFL teachers' critical thinking skills and their students' engagement in the task?

## II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Teaching as a complicated process is influenced by many different factors. One of the fundamental aspects of language teaching and learning is teacher (Campbell, 2000). According to King Rice (2003), teaching is influenced by different aspects of teacher quality and teacher quality can predict student performance in the task. Teachers' critical self-awareness and emotional intelligence quotient are two practical domains of studying the teachers' influences on the EFL learners (Mortiboys, 2005).

The literatures on critical thinking and emotional quotient have a long history. Critical thinking has its' roots in ancient Greek and emotional quotient traces back to 1920. As a main objective of education is to organize students in order to be successful learners, students' engagement in the task is noticed as one of the features of the present study. Students' engagement appeared as an educational notion during the 1970's and 1980's (Harris, 2008).

Boler (1999) argues that emotions indicate what deserves attention and moral scrutiny to the individual and emotional intelligence plays a critical role in decision making. Elder (1997) from the other point of view states critical thinking as the key to emotional intelligence indicating that emotional intelligence and critical thinking factors are cognitive and emotional based constructs.

Damasio (1996) found that certain aspects of the procedure of emotions and feelings are absolutely necessary for rationality. Emotions and feelings are interlaced with reason and there is mutual connection between cognition and emotions (Damasio, 1996). Brookfield (1987) and Paul (1987) argued that thoughts and emotions are inescapably bound.

Esmond Kiger, Tucker and Yost (2006) found that emotional intelligence is not the opposite of cognition. Some scholars identified two minds and two different kinds of intelligence that operate simultaneously (Goleman, 1995; Parkins, 2002) and that both emotional brain and thinking brain are involved in reasoning (Damasio, 1996; Gardner, 1993).

As Elder (1997) points out, teachers should make an appeal to the emotional lives of students and engaging them cognitively and emotionally as these two affective dimensions are interconnected. "In fact, critical thinking is the only plausible vehicle by which, we could bring intelligence to bear upon our emotional life" (Elder, 1997, p.5).

Student engagement promotes students' scholastic, emotional, social and behavioral achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004). Above and beyond, high engagement during tasks in the classroom has been a significant predictor of motivation and overall performance in school (Shernoff & Hoogstra, 2001). It also improves low levels of academic accomplishment, high levels of student boredom and disaffection (Steinberg, Brown & Dornbusch, 1996).

Student engagement is progressively seen as an indicator of successful classroom and engagement in learning have consistently been linked to reduced dropout rates of students (Kushman, Sieber & Heariold-Kinney, 2000). When students are engaged in learning activities, they attend as active participants rather passive ones.

Although not exactly the same studies, there are some specific related experimental findings in this area. Ghaemi and Taherian's study (2011) aimed to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking and their teaching success revealed a positive connection between the two variables. Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010) examined the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' critical thinking ability and their pedagogical success and they found a significant relationship between these two variables.

Khodabakhshzadeh and Ghaemi (2011) showed a significant relationship between IELTS instructors' critical thinking and their teaching success. Additionally, several researchers have recognized the significant role played by critical thinking in individuals' academic success (Fahim, Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010; McCutcheon, Apperson, Hanson & Wynn, 1992; Yeh & Wu, 1992).

Saeidi and RimaniNikou (2012) in their study indicated that there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their students' language achievement. Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) revealed a significant relationship between teachers' success and EQ in their study. Pishghadam (2009) could not find any significant relationship between the students' EI and their achievements.

EQ has been studied in relation to personality (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012), academic success (Meshkat, 2011) and achievement (Fahim & Pishghadam (2007). Furthermore, Studies by Hamurlu (2007), Haley (2004) and Emig (1997) designated that emotional intelligence-based teaching affected both EFL learners' language accomplishment and their positive attitude towards language learning experience. Den Brock, Brekelmans and Wubbels (2004) found important associations between interpersonal teacher behavior and student outcomes.

Guvenc and Celik (2012) found a substantial relation between sorts of emotional intelligence of teachers and their reflective thinking skills. A study by Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) indicated that there was a significant relationship between EFL students' critical thinking and their emotional intelligence. Vaezi and Fallah (2011) distinguished a negative relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and burnout. Besharat, Reza Zadeh, Firrozi and Habibi (2005) reported that EQ was positively correlated with academic success. Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan and Majeski (2004) indicated that academic success was strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence. Stottlemayer (2002) in a study of EQ and its relation to student achievement and engagement found that EI skills were significantly predictor of academic achievement.

In line with the studies of the kind reported above, the present study aimed at discovering the degree of EFL teachers' effectiveness with advanced level of critical thinking and EQ capabilities in students' engagement in the educational task.

### III. METHOD

#### A. Design

The study reported here is a multi-dimensional correlational study investigating the relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking, their EQ and their students' engagement in the task. The design of the present study is ex post facto because it is investigating the possible relationship between three variables i.e. teacher's critical thinking, teachers' EQ and their students' engagement in the task, all of which have already occurred.

#### B. Participants

The participants of this study were English as foreign language high school teachers and their students. 20 EFL teachers (8 male and 12 female) with Bachelor, Master or PhD degree (10 Bachelors, 8 Masters and 2 PhD teachers) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language were selected according to their accessibility (convenient sampling) to take part in this study. Their age and sex were not considered. Furthermore, 600 male and female high school learners out of 1500, the students of the teacher participants at the time, 252 male and 348 female; 211 grade one learners, 202 grade two learners, 100 grade three learners and 87 grade four learners, participated in the study.

#### C. Instruments

To collect the data for the study, the following instruments were used:

##### 1. Watson–Glaser (1980) Critical Thinking Appraisal-Form A (W-GCTA)

The Watson-Glaser critical Thinking Appraisal includes five subsections which practically measure the five characteristics of a critical thinker as defined by Watson and Glaser (1980):

- 1) Drawing inferences
- 2) Recognition of assumptions
- 3) Making deductions
- 4) Interpreting evidence to decide if conclusions are legitimate or not
- 5) Evaluating arguments as being strong or weak

The W-GCTA includes 80 statements each followed by two to five alternatives which can be completed in 60 minutes. Inferences statements are followed by five alternatives which are: T (True), PT (Probably True), ID (Insufficient Data), PF (Probably False) and F (False). Recognition of assumptions statements are followed by "Made" and "Not made" alternatives; deduction and interpretation by "Follows" and "Doesn't follow"; and evaluation of arguments by "Strong" and "Weak" alternatives.

In addition to the face, content, construct, and criterion validity of the appraisal, its test-retest reliability was calculated to be ( $r=0.81$ ) by Watson and Glaser (1980).

##### 2. Bar-On (1997) Emotional Quotient Inventory

Bar-On Emotional Quotient inventory (with the reliability of 0.85) in a likert scale ranging from "Very Seldom True" to "Very Often True" measure intrapersonal (self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization), interpersonal (empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship), Adaptability (reality testing, flexibility, problem solving), stress management (stress tolerance, impulse control), general mood components (optimism, happiness) of participants. The Persian version of this test with 90 questions, validated by Samouei (2003) was used in this study.

### 3. Tinio (2009) High School Survey on Student Engagement (HSSSE)

The High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) is the most comprehensive survey on student engagement and school climate issues available to schools. HSSSE works closely with individual schools, districts, state departments of education, state and national organizations, and foundations to investigate deeply the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that students have about their work, the school learning environment, and their interaction with the school community. Tinio (2009) HSSSE questionnaire including 120 items on likert scales, from “always” to “never”, available in Persian version was easy to answer for Iranian students. Fooladvand, Soltani, FathiAshtiani and Shoae (2012) investigated psychometric properties (Cronbach's alpha = 0.96) of Tinio students' engagement in the task and translated it into Persian.

#### D. Procedure

Several high school teachers and students contributed to this study. To achieve measures of teachers' critical thinking ability, the teachers were given the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal-Form A (W-GCTA) and the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory to fill out in their free time. Each was shortly introduced to the purpose of the research and provided with some brief oral instruction on how to complete the appraisal form. To obtain reliable data, the researcher explained the purpose of administering the questionnaires and assured the participants that all the data collected would be confidential. In other words, endeavor was made to observe the privacy and anonymity considerations.

Moreover, their students' engagement was evaluated by Tinio High School Survey on Student Engagement (HSSSE) in their regular class time. The importance of exact and correct fair responses to the questionnaires was explained to the students.

Having collected the data, the researcher worked on data analysis to answer the research questions to find out if there is any relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking ability, their EQ and students' engagement in the task.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data collected, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multiple regressions were used. In the Table (1), the results of the variance and model meaningfulness are explained simultaneously.

TABLE 1  
RESULT SUMMARY OF EXPLAINED VARIANCE AND MODEL SIGNIFICANCE

Model Summary						
Method	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
Enter	.26	.07	.07	71.41	22.53	.000

F ratio and its significance indicate meaningful effects of variables in regression equation. In this stage the regression effect is  $F=22.53$  which is meaningful in 0.01 level. Based on these two mentioned variables, the estimated  $R^2$  is 0.07. It means that these two variables explain 0.07 percent of students' engagement in the task's variance.

TABLE 2  
SIMULTANEOUS REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS OF PREDICTOR VARIABLES RELATED TO STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE TASK

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	201.963	34.40		5.871	.000
	Total critical thinking skills	2.605	.396	.260	6.573	.000
	Total EQ	.083	.091	.036	.910	.363

Table 2 indicates that the only variable which is a significant predictor of students' engagement in the task is 'total critical thinking' (sig = 0). It could be argued that total critical thinking explains 0.07 of student engagement in the task variance. This is the only predictor variable of students' engagement in the task and total EQ is not a significant predictor of this variable (sig = .363).

$$Y = a + b_1x_1$$

$$\text{Students' engagement in the task} = 201.96 + (2.60)(\text{total critical thinking})$$

Note that if you keep all the other conditions constant, by increasing teacher's total critical, students' engagement in task will raise too.

TABLE 3  
CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN EFL TEACHERS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND THEIR EQ.

	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Adaptability	Stress management	General mood components	Total EQ
Inferences	.075	-.323**	.087	.322**	-.100*	.019
Recognition of assumptions	-.046	-.037	-.245**	-.023	.154**	-.055
Deduction	.286**	.153**	.014	.260**	.270**	.261**
Interpretation	-.325**	-.129**	-.327**	-.165**	.133**	-.236**
Evaluation of arguments	.151**	.265**	.200**	.124**	.565**	.307**
Total critical thinking skills	.027	-.068	-.085	.172**	.280**	.069

\*\*p<0.01  
\*p<0.05

Table 3 provides the correlation between teachers' critical thinking skills and their EQ. The following results are taken from the above table:

A meaningful and negative relationship was observed between 'inferences' with two aspects of EQ which are 'interpersonal' ( $r = -.323$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 'general mood components' ( $r = -.100$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that by increasing 'inferences' skill 'interpersonal' and 'general mood components' will decrease. The above table shows a significant relationship between 'inferences' and 'stress management'.

A meaningful and negative relationship was noticed between 'recognition of assumptions' and 'adaptability' ( $r = -.245$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). That is, the 'adaptability' will reduce by increasing 'recognition of assumptions'. There was a positive meaningful relationship between 'recognition of assumptions' and 'general mood components' ( $r = .154$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

There was a meaningful relationship in  $p < 0.01$  level between 'deduction' and 'intrapersonal' ( $r = .286$ ), 'interpersonal' ( $r = .153$ ), 'stress management' ( $r = .260$ ), 'general mood components' ( $r = .270$ ), and 'total EQ' ( $r = .261$ ).

The mentioned table shows an inverse relationship among 'interpretation' and all aspects of EQ. It means that by increasing EQ elements, the 'interpretation' will decrease.

There was a meaningful relationship between 'evaluation of arguments' and all of the EQ aspects.

There is a meaningful relationship between teachers' critical thinking skills, 'stress management' ( $r = .172$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 'general mood components' ( $r = .280$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

TABLE 4  
CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN TEACHERS' EQ AND THEIR STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE TASK.

	Behavioral engagement	Emotional engagement	Cognitive engagement	Total students' engagement in the task
Intrapersonal	.194**	.113**	-.039	.086
Interpersonal	.033	-.037	-.079	-.024
Adaptability	.088	.007	-.067	-.003
Stress management	.124**	.085	.000	.053
General mood components	.121**	.085	.042	.089
Total EQ	.151**	.069	-.041	.054

\*\*p<0.01  
\*p<0.05

The results of correlation between teachers' EQ and their students' engagement in the task are provided in Table 4. As the table shows, there are meaningful relationships between 'behavioral engagement' with 'intrapersonal' ( $r = .194$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), 'stress management' ( $r = .124$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 'general mood components' ( $r = .121$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, there is a meaningful relationship between 'emotional engagement' and 'intrapersonal' ( $r = .113$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Generally, the highest degree of correlation is related to 'intrapersonal' and 'behavioral engagement' ( $r = .194$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

As a final point, there was not a meaningful relationship between teachers' EQ and students' engagement in the task.

TABLE 5  
CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN TEACHERS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND THEIR STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE TASK.

	Behavioral engagement	Emotional engagement	Cognitive engagement	Total students' engagement in the task
Inferences	.133**	.141**	.094	.126**
Recognition of assumptions	.260**	.305**	.222**	.268**
Deduction	.246**	.251**	.163**	.214**
Interpretation	.045	.136**	.175**	.131**
Total critical	.241**	.285**	.233**	.263**

\*\*p<0.01  
\*p<0.05

Table 5 provides the correlation between teachers' critical thinking skills and their students' engagement in the task. Based on the table, one could argue, with 95% confidence, there is not any significant relationship between 'interpretation' and 'behavioral engagement' and also between 'inferences' and 'cognitive engagement' ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, among other aspects of teachers' critical thinking skills and students' engagement including 'behavioral engagement' ( $r = .260$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), 'emotional engagement' ( $r = .305$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 'cognitive engagement' ( $r = .222$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) there are meaningful relationships with 'recognition of assumptions' and 'emotional engagement' reflecting the highest meaningful relationship ( $r = .305$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Finally, there was a meaningful relationship between teachers' critical thinking and students' engagement in task ( $r = .263$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## V. DISCUSSION

This study inspected the relationships between Iranian EFL teachers' critical thinking skills, their EQ and their students' engagement in the task. The results of this study suggested that there was a meaningful relationship between teachers' critical thinking skills and their students' engagement in the task ( $r = 0.263$ ). This finding is in line with Ghaemi and Taherian's (2011) and Birjandi and Bagherkazemi's (2010) findings who found a significant relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking ability and their pedagogical success.

This is also in line with Khodabakhshzadeh and Ghaemi's studies in (2011). Khodabakhshzadeh and Ghaemi (2011) investigated the relationship between IELTS instructors' critical thinking and their teaching success. The results suggested that there was a significant relationship between IELTS instructors' critical thinking and their achievement. Furthermore, Fahim, Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010), McCutcheon, Apperson, Hanson and Wynn (1992), Yeh and Wu (1992) recognized the significant role played by critical thinking in individuals' academic success.

Emotional quotient as one of the most important aspects of teachers' characteristics has also been investigated in relation to their students' engagement in the task. The present study also examined this issue and found that there was not any meaningful relationship between teachers' EQ and their students' engagement in the task. This is, in some aspects, similar to the findings proposed by Pishghadam (2009). Pishghadam (2009) could not find any significant relationship between the students' EI and their achievements.

However, this is different from that arrived at by Saeidi and RimaniNikou (2012), who found that there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their students' language achievement. Additionally, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) revealed a significant relationship between teachers' success and their EQ in their study.

In other studies, however, Hamurlu (2007), Haley (2004) and Emig (1997) found that emotional intelligence-based teaching affected both EFL learners' language achievement and their positive attitude towards language learning experience. Furthermore, Stottlemayer (2002) in a study of EQ and its relation to student engagement found that EI skills were significantly predictor of academic achievement.

The present study also indicated that there is a high degree of correlation between 'intrapersonal' (one aspect of teachers' EQ) and 'students behavioral engagement' ( $r = 0.194$ ). This runs contrary to Den Brok, Brekelmans and Wubbels (2004) who found important associations between interpersonal teacher behavior and student outcomes.

Another important issue in the present study was studying the relationship between teacher's critical thinking and their EQ. The present study also surveyed this issue and found that there was not any meaningful relationship between teachers' critical thinking and their EQ. The finding of this study is different from Guvenc and Celik's (2012) finding. Guvenc and Celik (2012) found a substantial relation between sorts of emotional intelligence of teachers and their reflective thinking skills. Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) with a slight difference studied this issue in relation to students and they indicated a significant relationship between EFL students' critical thinking and their emotional intelligence.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present study suggested that teacher's critical thinking is the only predictor variable of student engagement in the task and total EQ is not a significant predictor of this variable. It was explained that by increasing teacher's critical thinking, students' engagement in the task would raise too.

The finding of this study also showed that there was not a meaningful relationship between teachers' critical thinking and their EQ; also, there were some significant relationship among teachers' critical thinking sub-components and teachers' EQ sub-categories. Therefore, the answer to the second question is that there were not any significant relationships between teachers' critical thinking and EQ.

Concerning the third question, one can say that there were not any meaningful relationships between teachers' EQ and their students' engagement in the task. The findings of this study correspondingly showed that there were meaningful relationships between teachers' critical thinking and their students' engagement in the task. It was noticeable that 'recognition of assumptions' and 'emotional engagement' reflecting the highest meaningful relationship among teachers' critical thinking and students' engagement sub-components, all this points to the answer of fourth question.

## VII. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of the study, some practical implications can be provided which may be useful to EFL teachers and syllabus designers.

1. Concerning the effects of teachers' critical thinking on students' engagement, by increasing critical thinking skills in EFL teachers, their students' engagement will increase too. So, changes could be made in Iran teacher training programs. They could be trained as professional critical thinkers.

2. A critical thinker teacher can nurture critical thinker students. Since the future is in the hands of today's students, critical thinking can train successful individuals.

3. Since being critical thinker means creativity and dynamism, curriculum designers can allow more freedom for teachers and respect their autonomy in classroom management.

4. Activities need to be informative, useful and, relevant to students' current interests and future objectives.

5. The extent and quality of students' engagement should be monitored, and where there is evidence of low levels of engagement follow-up action should be taken.

6. As there was a meaningful relationship between teachers' critical thinking skills, 'stress management' ability (as one of the sub-components of teachers' EQ that includes 'stress tolerance' and 'impulse control') and 'general mood components' ability (as one of the sub-categories of teachers' EQ that includes 'optimism' and 'happiness'), by teacher training focusing on stress management and general mood components skills, the teachers' critical thinking skills will increase too and it will affect positively students' engagement in the task as well.

7. It was noticed that there was a high degree of correlation between 'students' behavioral engagement' and 'intrapersonal' ability (as one of the sub-categories of teachers' EQ that includes 'self-regard', 'emotional self-awareness', 'assertiveness', 'independence' and 'self-actualization'). In addition, there was a meaningful relationship between 'emotional engagement' and 'intrapersonal' ability of teachers. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that by increasing intrapersonal abilities in EFL teachers, the behavioral and emotional engagement of their students in the task will increase too.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The studies to inspect the effect of teachers' features and characteristics (cognitive, emotional, personal and social features) on students' engagement and achievement are infrequent in pragmatics area. More studies are required to consider these issues.

Another concern is studying the relationship between students' features (values, attitudes, behaviors, experiences and backgrounds) and their engagement and involvement in the task. Furthermore, finding the teachers' critical thinking and EQ subcomponents that load the students' engagement in the task is crucial. For more explanation, teachers' critical thinking consists of some sub-categories which are: inferences, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation and evaluation of arguments. Additionally, EQ is composed of intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management and general mood components sub-divisions. Therefore, focusing on these subcomponents and finding the aspects that may influence students' engagement in the task could be helpful in preventing students' disengagement and subsequently their dropping out from school.

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