Spiritual Intelligence and English Language Learning at a Specific Grade in Secondary Education

Ebrahim Khodadady
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Ensiye Golbooie Moosavi
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, International Branch, Mashhad, Iran

Abstract—This study aimed to explore the relationship between spiritual intelligence and language achievement. To this end, the Persian Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI) designed by King (2008) and translated into Persian and validated by Khodadady and Moosavi (2014) was administered to three hundred forty four grade three senior highs school (G3SHS) students in Mashhad, Iran. The students' scores on Grade Three Final English Examination (G3FEE) held nationally by the ministry of education were also employed as indices of their English achievement. The correlation between SISRI and G3FEE did not reveal any significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and English achievement. Three out of seven factors underlying the SISRI, i.e., Transcending, Meta-conscious and Visionary, did, however, correlate significantly with the G3FEE. The results are discussed from empirical and theoretical perspectives and suggestions are made for future research.

Index Terms—intelligence, domain, genera, achievement

I. INTRODUCTION

MacDonald *et al.* (1995), MacDonald, Friedman, and Kuentzel (1999a, 1999b) reviewed the literature on spiritual intelligence and identified thirty instruments which measured the construct. According to MacDonald *et al.* (1999a), most of them dealt with "topics such as non-ordinary states of consciousness (e.g., meditative, hypnotic, dissociative, and the like), coping, health and wellness, and the implications of spiritual and transpersonal phenomena for therapeutic interventions ... (p. 147). Citing scholars such as Maslow (1971), Emmons (2000) and Noble (1987, 2000, 2001), Green and Noble (2010) attributed the diversity of the instruments to the observation that spirituality "defies easy definition or explanation" (p. 29). They do, however, believe that spiritual experiences are precursors to spiritual intelligence (SQ), "a construct that has both theoretical validity and practical implications" (p. 29).

In order to discuss the theory underlying spirituality or the SQ, Green and Noble (2012) referred to Mayer (2000) and Gardner (2000) who believed that spirituality is not an intelligent for two different reasons. Mayer defines intelligence as "an abstract reasoning ability" and believes that spirituality is not an intelligence but heightened consciousness because it involves other abilities. According to Green and Noble (2010), Gardner, however, "disputes the concept of spiritual intelligence in part because it cannot be supported by experimental psychological investigations or psychometric findings" (p. 30). The present authors argue that similar to other types of intelligences, the SQ measures should be approached as a reading comprehension ability whose construct validity can be established by applying schema theory to their validation and assessment.

According to Khodadady and Mousavi (2014), the linguistic phrase "spiritual intelligence", for example, represents a cognitive domain whose existence depends on the single/phrasal words a given person employs to define and operationalize it. King (2008), for example, defined it as

a set of mental capacities which contribute to the awareness, integration, and adaptive application of the nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of one's existence, leading to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, recognition of a transcendent self, and mastery of spiritual states (p. 56).

King's (2008) definition above showed that 44 words or schemata (Khodadady, 2013) represent his cognitive domain of spiritual intelligence. It is linguistically more complex than the definition provided by Amram and Dryer (2007) in 18 schemata, i.e., "the ability to apply, manifest, and embody spiritual resources, values, and qualities to enhance daily functioning and wellbeing" (p. 1). Based on his definition, King designed the 24-statement Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI) and validated it factorially with structural equation modelling (SEM) as well as Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax normalized rotation. He extracted four factors from his data, i.e., Critical Existential Thinking (CET), Conscious State Expansion (CSE)

Personal Meaning Production (PMP), and Transcendental Awareness (TA).

In order to establish the robustness of the SISRI, King (2008) empirically validated it with the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006), Mysticism Scale – Research Form D (MSD; Hood, 1975), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS; Diener et al. 1985), Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religiosity Scale (AUIE; Gorsuch & Venable,1983), Profile of Mood States Scale – Short Form (POMS-SF; Shacham, 1983), Assessing Emotions Scale (AES; Schutte et al., 1998), Multidimensional Aptitude Battery-II (MAB-II; Jackson, 1998), and Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1984).

Khodadady and Moosavi (2014) [henceforth K&M] employed the Persian version of the SISRI and explored its factorial validity within the religious context of Islamic Republic of Iran. They administered it to 344 female grade three senior high school (G3SHS) students in Mashhad and subjected their responses to Principal Axis Factoring and rotated the extracted factors via Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Their results showed that instead of four, seven factors underlay these students' SQ, i.e., Purposive, Transcending, Contemplative, Meta-conscious, Theo-meditative, Theorizing, and Visionary. In addition to establishing the factorial validity of the SISRI with G3SHS students, K&M employed schema theory to explain the SQ as a linguistic and cognitive ability whose factors or genera depend on a number of variables such as age and educational level.

According to K&M, as a linguistic ability, spiritual intelligence as measured by the SISRI requires its takers to be proficient in the language in which it is presented. It will reveal their SQ if they read its 24 statements and break them into their constituting schemata. In order to relate the schemata to their personal life, the SISRI takers must be able to assign them to three linguistic domains, i.e., semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic schemata. The linguistic classification of schemata into linguistic domains occurs as the takers decide what each schema represents not only by itself but also in combination with other schemata comprising each and all statements. This cognitive process does in fact allow them choose whether the statement they read is not at all, not very, somewhat, very, or completely true of them.

Statement (S) two, for example, reads: "I recognize aspects of myself that are deeper than my physical body". It consists of six syntactic schema *types*, i.e., "I", "of", "myself", "that", "than" and "my" which relate the five semantic schema *types* of "recognize", "aspects, "are', "deeper", "physical" and "body" to create a larger concept called *species* by Khodadady and Bagheri (2014). Khodadady's (2013) microstructural approach of schema theory thus helps place certain schema types within a single but larger concept called *species* in a hierarchical system. King's (2008) Canadian Undergraduate University (CUU) students' performance on the SISRI did in fact show that their spiritual intelligence consists of 24 species whereas that of Iranian G3SHS students comprises 21.

In addition to types and species, schema theory explains another layer of cognition which has alluded being addressed properly within a hierarchical system so far, i.e., genera. The CUU students were, for example, required to decide how true each of the 24 species established by King (2008) was to them. Statistical analyses such as PCA allowed King to decide how related the species were to each other on the basis of his students' responses. Their relationships were in fact determined by the loadings of species on four factors, i.e., CET, CSE, PMP, and TA. Thus schema theory, according to K&M, approaches each factor cognitively by treating it as a genus which embodies certain species as its constituting larger-than schema concepts. The CUU students' genus of TA, for example, consists of seven species.

The identification and classification of concepts under schemata, species and genera within a hierarchical system from the smallest to the broadest concepts measured by the SISRI establishing the CUU students' spiritual intelligence as a cognitive domain which consists of four genera, 24 species and 125 schema types. Schema theory also helps researchers realize that the validity of SISRI depends on the people who take it and the existence of an abstract macro-schema or domain called spiritual intelligence which is fixed in terms of its genera and schemata and therefore can be applied to all people throughout the world is a myth, if not a distortion of reality.

The Iranian G3SHS students' performance on the Persian SISRI, for example, showed that seven genera constitute their spiritual intelligence, i.e., *Purposive*, *Transcending*, *Contemplative*, *Meta-conscious*, *Theo-meditative*, *Theorizing*, and *Visionary*. A G3SHS students is *Purposive* if she makes decisions according to her purpose in life, develops her own techniques for entering higher states of consciousness (HSOC), finds meaning and purpose in her everyday experiences, enters HSOC whenever she likes, moves freely between levels of consciousness, adapts herself to stressful situations, finds meaning in her failures, is aware of a deeper connection between herself and other people and defines a purpose for her life.

Transcending G3SHS students, however, recognize aspects of themselves that are deeper than their physical body. They also recognize the nonmaterial aspects of life which help them feel centered. Through questioning or pondering the nature of reality they define themselves by their deeper, non-physical self. In contrast, *Contemplative* genus consists of only one species requiring female G3SHS students to frequently contemplate the meaning of events in their lives.

As the fourth factor, *Meta-Conscious* genus accrues via four species when G3SHS students deeply contemplate what happens after death while they are highly aware of the nonmaterial aspects of life and enter higher states of consciousness by contemplating the relationship between human beings and the rest of the universe. The fifth factor of the SISRI, i.e., *Theo-Meditative* genus, comprised one species by highlighting the G3SHS students' ability to deeply contemplate whether or not there is some greater power or force (e.g., god, goddess, divine being, higher energy, etc.).

Similar to *Contemplative* and *Theo-Meditative* factors, *Theorizing* and *Visionary* genera extracted as the sixth and seventh factors of the SISRI, respectively, consist of one species. The *Theorizing* genus, however, deals with the G3SHS students' ability to develop their own theories about such things as life, death, reality, and existence while the *Visionary* genus singles out the G3SHS students' ability to see issues and choices more clearly as they experience higher states of consciousness/ awareness. The present study is designed to find out whether the domain of spiritual intelligence measured by the Persian SISRI and its seven genera correlate significantly with G3SHS students' English achievement.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

Three hundred forty four G3SHS students took part voluntarily in this study. Their age ranged between 15 and 20 (mean = 17.19, SD = .58) and thus were far more homogeneous than King's (2008) *original* participants whose mean age was 25.40 years (SD = 10.82; range = 18 to 81). The students had enrolled in 12 schools scattered in the educational districts of one, two, three, four, five, seven and Tabadkan in Mashhad, Iran, in 2013. The majority spoke Persian (n = 331, 96.2%) and a few conversed in Arabic, English, Kurdish and Turkish as their mother language.

B. Instruments

Two instruments were employed in this study: the Persian SISRI and Grade Three Final English Examination.

1. Persian Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory

The Persian Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI) validated by K&M was utilized to measure the participants' SQ. It consists of two sections. The first section elicits the demographic information related to participants' age, mother language, field of study, type of school, and educational district. The second section consists of 21 species such as "I frequently contemplate the meaning of events in my life". (Out of 24 species forming the inventory, two, i.e., S3 and S20, did not load acceptably on any genera established by K&M. Statement six had an acceptable but *negative* loading on factor six and was thus removed). G3SHS students were required to read the species one by one and decide whether what the species brought up was not at all, not very, somewhat, very, or completely true of them.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics as well as reliability estimates of the Persian SISRI and its seven genera, i.e., Transcending, Contemplative, Meta-conscious, Theo-meditative, Theorizing, and Visionary. As can be seen, the SISRI is a highly reliable measure of SQ (α = .85). Its purposive, Contemplative and Meta-conscious genera have acceptable reliability coefficients as well, i.e., α = .76, .64 and .61, respectively. Contemplative, Theo-meditative, Theorizing, and Visionary genera, however, lack reliability because they consist of only one species. The seven species together explain 35.93% of variance in the inventory.

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SPECIES AND GENERA COMPRISING THE PERSIAN SISRI

No	Cognitive Genus	Species	Alpha	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
				Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	Purposive	7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 19, 23, 24	.76	2.343	9.764	9.764
2	Transcending	1, 2, 14, 22	.64	1.687	7.029	16.793
3	Contemplative	13	-	1.197	4.988	21.781
4	Meta-conscious	4, 5, 17, 18	.61	1.183	4.930	26.711
5	Theo-meditative	21	-	.798	3.325	30.036
6	Theorizing	9	-	.730	3.040	33.076
7	Visionary	16	-	.684	2.851	35.927
	SISRI		.85			

2. Grade Three Final English Examination

Every year the Education Organization in Iran requires a number of teachers to develop a written examination on the basis of the content of textbook *English Book 3* (Birjandi, Nouroozi, & Mahmoodi, 2010) taught to G3SHS students during the school year. The Grade Three Final English Examination (G3FEE) which was developed and held nationally in 2013 consists of 14 sections. The first section comprises eight sentences in each of which one letter of two words has been removed from their middles. The test takers have to restore the missing letters, e.g., "there are two kinds of illness, ph_sical and m_ntal". The second section contains nine words eight of which have to be chosen in order to be inserted in the eight sentences given below the words. The selection of the appropriate words depends on their meaning as contextualized in the isolated sentences.

Section three of the G3FEE requires changing the syntactic function of six words such as "hot" to complete six isolated sentences such as "the … of the sun makes the earth warm". In section four the test takers have to restore some missing words by themselves in order to complete sentences like "a lab is a suitable place to do some … on acid". Section five requires choosing one of the four syntactic alternatives such as "a. go, b. going, c. to go and d. goes" to complete six sentences such as "I didn't want to take my brother to work, but he insisted on … with me". Section six

calls for making two complete sentences with scrambled words while section seven requires changing two direct sentences to their indirect forms.

Two black and white drawings are given in section eight to provide the context necessary for answering two open ended questions dealing with the drawings. Section nine requires matching eight answers with eight numbered questions whereas two sets of four words are given in section 10 to find out whether the test takers could identity a word with a meaning different from the other three. Similarly, they have to identify two words in a set of four whose stresses are different. Section 11 consisted of four sentences whose meanings are raised as four choices from which the correct one has to be chosen. Section 12 is a six-item cloze multiple choice item test developed on a paragraph and the last section consists of one passage upon which two open ended questions, one multiple choice item and three true and false items have been made. The G3FEE is marked by two teachers and the total score is reported out of 20. The cut off score of 10 and higher determines whether the test takers have passed the English course successfully. The scores on the G3FEE were obtained from the Bureau of Education in Mashhad.

C. Procedures

Being an officially employed teacher of English in Mashhad, Iran, the second researcher of the present study contacted as many colleagues teaching in various schools as she could and asked for their help in talking their G3SHS students into taking the SISRI. Teachers offering English in twelve schools could secure 344 students' agreement and thus certain dates were set for the researcher to administer the inventory in person. As arranged, she attended the classes on the dates specified and explained the purpose of the study in details. To supervise the whole process the researcher walked along aisles and answered whatever questions they raised as she emphasized the importance of answering all the questions. Their main question dealt with higher states of consciousness. They were told that these states were attained when a person meditated and tried to make sense out of reality. They included "self-awareness, environmental awareness, spiritual awareness, or some combination of these" (King, 2008, p. 73). It was further elaborated that lucid dreams were, for example, considered as higher states of awareness (Tart, 1975). The completed inventories were collected after about 10 minutes. To explore the relationship between spiritual intelligence and English achievement the scores of the participants on the G3FEE were also obtained from the Bureau of Education at the end of the school year.

D. Data Analysis

The Persian SISRI and its Purposive, Transcending, Contemplative, Meta-conscious, Theo-meditative, Theorizing, and Visionary genera were correlated with the participants' scores on the G3FEE to find out whether the inventory and its genera relate significantly to G3HS students' achievement. For exploring whether achievement level relates to spiritual intelligence or not, the total scores on the G3FEE were converted to z scores and the participants who scored -1 and below, between -.99 and +.99, and +1 and above were treated as low, middle and high achievers, respectively. The performance of these achievers on the SISRI was then compared with each other by utilizing One-Way ANOVA analysis. All the statistical tests were conducted via IBM SPSS Statistics 20 to test the two hypotheses below.

H1: The SISRI will not correlate significantly with the G3FEE

H2: The seven genera forming the SISRI will not correlate significantly with the G3FEE

III. RESULTS

Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients obtained between the genera forming the SISRI and G3FEE. As can be seen, the inventory does not relate significantly to English achievement and thus confirm the first hypothesis that *the SISRI will not correlate significantly with the G3FEE*. This finding is in line with Khodadady and Mokhtary's (2013) study in which they administered the Persian cultural capital scale (CCS) to 310 G3SHS students. The correlations between the CCS originally designed by Khodadady and Natanzi (2012) did not show any significant relationship between cultural capital and self-reported English achievement.

TABLE 2.
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE SISRI AS WELL AS IT GENERA WITH G3FEE

No	Genera	G3FEE	No	Genera	G3FEE
1	Purposive	.028	5	Theo-meditative	.087
2	Transcending	.134*	6	Theorizing	-.046
3	Contemplative	-.018	7	Visionary	-.107*
4	Meta-conscious	-.170**	8	SISRI	-.003

English achievement, however, relates significantly to *Transcending* (r = .134, p<.05), *Meta-conscious* (r = -.170, p<.01) and *Visionary* (r = -.107, p<.05) genera. These results *partially* reject the second hypothesis that *the seven genera forming the SISRI will not correlate significantly with the G3FEE*. The three genera correlating significantly with English achievement, nonetheless, relate to it in different directions which seems to be a distinct characteristic feature of SISRI. While *Transcending* genus helps students achieve more in English, *Meta-conscious* (r = -.170, p<.01) and *Visionary* do the opposite. Several variables contribute to the opposite relationship found between the genera of spiritual intelligence and English achievement as discussed below.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Table 3 presents the linguistic analysis of schema tokens and types forming the twelve linguistic genera employed in the SISRI. As can be seen, it contains 302 schema tokens for CUU students which drops to 262 for G3SHS students, indicating that spiritual intelligence as measured by the SISRI provides a narrower cognitive domain for the latter. As it can also be seen in the table, the reduction of schemata shows itself most in semantic tokens, particularly in nouns (76 vs. 65), verbs (43 vs. 38) and adjectives (33 vs 30). Some of these semantic schemata are used just once and therefore have a token of one.

TABLE 3.
SCHEMA TOKEN (O) AND TYPE (Y) FREQUENCY (F) AND PERCENTAGE OF SCHEMA GENERA FORMING THE SISRI

No	Linguistic Schema Genus	G3SHS Students				CUU Students			
		OF	OP	YF	YP	OF	OP	YF	YP
1	Adjectives	30	11.5	14	12.4	33	10.9	16	12.8
2	Adverbs	6	2.3	5	4.4	6	2.0	5	4.0
3	Nouns	65	24.8	38	33.6	76	25.2	43	34.4
4	Verbs	38	14.5	20	17.7	43	14.2	21	16.8
5	Conjunctions	16	6.1	4	3.5	20	6.6	5	4.0
6	Determiners	21	8.0	5	4.4	25	8.3	6	4.8
7	Prepositions	31	11.8	10	8.8	35	11.6	10	8.0
8	Pronouns	30	11.5	7	6.2	36	11.9	9	7.2
9	Syntactic verbs	6	2.3	1	.9	7	2.3	1	.8
10	Abbreviations	2	.8	2	1.8	2	.7	2	1.6
11	Para-adverbs	9	3.4	6	4.8	10	3.3	6	4.8
12	Particles	8	3.1	1	.8	9	3.0	1	.8
	Total	262	100.0	113	100.0	302	100.0	125	100.0

The noun schemata "emotions", "personality" and "sense", for example, have all a token of one. They do represent important and relevant concepts which must bear on the cognitive domain of G3SHS students' spiritual intelligence as they have done to that of CUU students. The statements in which they appear do not, however, load on any of the seven factors extracted from the former's responses. These results show that the SISRI needs to be revised so that it can present spiritually relevant concepts at schema and species levels. The revised SISRI may then relate to English achievement significantly as research results found in similar questionnaires show.

Moafian and Pishghadam (2008), for example, developed and validated the 47-item Characteristics of Successful English Language Teachers (CSELT) to measure teacher success or effectiveness as a cognitive domain. Feizbakhsh (2010) administered the CSELT to 1461 learners and correlated it with their self-reported English achievement scores. She could, however, establish significant relationship neither between teacher effectiveness and English achievement nor between the twelve factors underlying the CSELT and the achievement.

Khodadady, Fakhrabadi and Azar (2012), however, developed the more comprehensive 102-item English Language Teachers' Attributes Scale (ELTAS) as a measure of teacher effectiveness and administered it to 1328 female G3SHS students. Not only did the scale itself ($r = .11$, $p < .01$) but also six out of eight genera constituting the domain correlated significantly with the students' self-reported English achievement scores. The ELTAS revealed even stronger relationship with English achievement when Khodadady and Dastgahian (2016) administered it to 1483 grade four senior high school (G4SHS) students and correlated it with their scores on the grade three final English examination ($r = .15$, $p < .01$).

Although spiritual intelligence does not relate to English achievement as a domain, its *Transcending* genus does, explaining 1.8% of variance in G3SHS students' learning of the language ($r = .134$, $p < .05$). This finding shows that this particular genus of SQ bears more on G3SHS students' English achievement than the *Proficient* genus of teacher effectiveness ($r = .08$, $p < .01$) as reported by Khodadady and Dastgahian (2016) does, explaining only 0.6% in their learning. Since the percentage explained by *Transcending* genus is almost three times more than that of teachers' proficiency as measured by the ELTAS, investing more time and energy on this particular genus of G3SHS students' spiritual intelligence sounds to be more justified than teacher education.

The *Meta-conscious* genus of SQ shows even stronger relationship with English achievement than the *Transcending* does ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$), explaining 2.9% of variance in the learning process. The relationship is, however, negative because low achievers have developed stronger *Meta-conscious* ability in themselves than the middle and high achievers have as shown in Figure 1. The One-Way ANOVA analysis shows that the difference in the mean scores is significant, i.e., F(2, 341 =3.25. $p < .04$). Post hoc comparisons using Scheffe test indicated that the mean score for high achievers (M=7.98, SD = 3.315) was significantly different from that of low achievers (M = 9.39, SD =3.20). Middle achievers (M=87.55, SD = 15.34) did not, however, differ significantly from either high or low achievers on *Meta-conscious* genus.
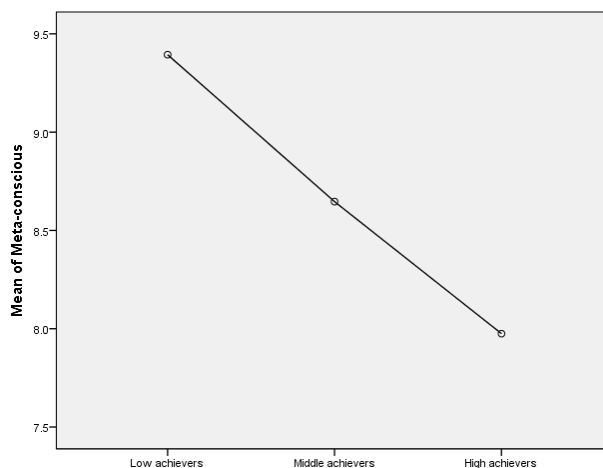
Figure 1. Mean plot for achievers' *Meta-conscious* genus

Similar to *Meta-conscious* genus, the *Visionary* factor underlying the SISRI relates *negatively* but significantly to English achievement as measured by G3FEE. It happens because low achievers employ their spiritual intelligence to "see issues and choices" such as language learning and its relation to the Iranian society "more clearly while in higher states of consciousness/ awareness" than their middle and high achieving classmates do as shown in Figure 2. The One-Way ANOVA analysis, however, does not reveal any significant difference in the mean scores of the three groups of achievers when considered separately because the *Visionary* genus consists of one species only
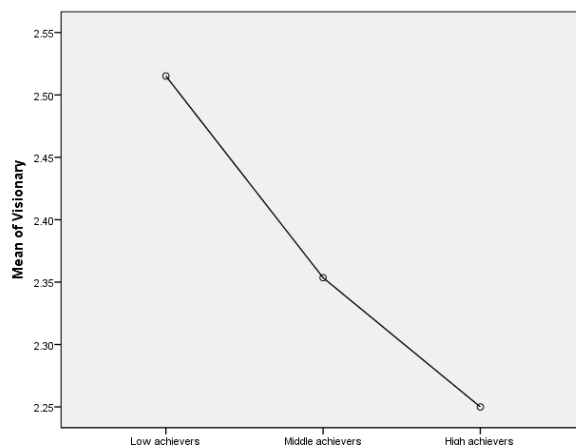

Figure 2. Mean plot for achievers' *Visionary* genus

V. CONCLUSION

The results found in this study are of great importance because they show the *Transcending* genus of spiritual intelligence must be emphasized at grade three senior high schools in order to help learners achieve their educational goals such as passing their courses successfully. As a cognitive domain, the spiritual intelligence itself does not, however, relate to English achievement. Future research must show whether revising the inventory by providing written description of key terms such as "higher conscious" will bring about any changes in the relationship as well as the structure of factors extracted from the Persian SISRI. It is also suggested that other measures of the domain such as the Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (Amram & Dryer, 2008) and Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire (Zohar & Marshall, 2000) be employed to study the relationship.

Not only different measures of spiritual intelligence but also achievement measures developed on different theories may shed more light on the relationship between spiritual intelligence as a domain and language learning as a learned ability. Khodadady and Dastgahian (2015), for example, showed that the domain of teacher effectiveness relates to English achievement when they are measured by ELTAS and G3FEE, respectively. The domain does not, however, show any significant relationship with the achievement measured by schema-based cloze multiple choice item test (S-Tests). While the G3FEE is a subjective measure of achievement by its very nature and scoring, the S-Tests are objectively developed on all the passages covered during the school year.

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Ebrahim Khodadady was born in Iran in 1958. He obtained his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Western Australia in 1998. He holds TESL Ontario and Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLPBPT) certificates and has taught English as a first, second and foreign language to high school and university students in Australia, Canada and Iran.

He is currently an academic member of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, International Branch, Mashhad, Iran. He was invited as a VIP by Brock University in Canada in 2004 and served as the Associate Director of Assessment Center at George Brown College in Toronto for almost a year. His published books are *Multiple-Choice Items in Testing: Practice and Theory* (Tehran, Rahnama, 1999), *Reading Media Texts: Iran-America Relations* (Sanandaj, Kurdistan University, 1999) and *English Language Proficiency Course: First Steps* (Sanandaj, Kurdistan University, 2001). His main research interests are Testing, Language Learning and Teaching.

Dr. Khodadady is currently a member of Teaching English Language and Literature Society of Iran (TELLSI), TESL Ontario and European Society for Translation Studies. He is on the editorial board of *Ferdowsi Review: An Iranian Journal of TESL, Literature and Translation Studies* and has reviewed some research papers for *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics* and *TESL Canada Journal* as a guest reviewer.

Ensiye Golbooie Moosavi was born in Iran in 1973. She is the MA student in Applied Linguistics in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, International Branch, Mashhad, Iran. She has been teaching English as a foreign language to junior and senior high school and pre-university students in the educational districts three and Tabadkan for 17 years in Mashhad, Iran. Ensiye has published two books in English, i.e., Golchin 1 and Golchin 2, dealing with materials taught at junior and senior high schools. She has participated in all educational programs related to the State Department of Education up to now. Her main research interests include Language Proficiency and Multiple Intelligences.