

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Learning Strategies among Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract—The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their use of learning strategies. In so doing, one hundred English advanced learners of Iran Language Institute (ILI) at Shiraz branch (30 males and 70 females) were selected to participate in this study. The Bar-On (1980) Emotional Quotient Inventory questionnaire (EQ-I), and the Strategy Inventory for language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) were administered to determine the significance of the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies. The results of correlation showed that there were positive significant relationships between some components of the two variables. The intra personal skill had positive correlations with memory strategies ($r=.000$, $p<.05$), cognitive strategies ($r=.000$, $p<.05$), metacognitive strategies ($r=.006$, $p<.05$), and social strategies ($r=.02$, $p<.05$), which showed that learners with intra personal skill use different learning strategies. There were also a positive correlation between social strategies with adaptability ($r=.009$, $p<.05$), and stress management ($r=.004$, $p<.05$). A positive correlation was also seen between memory strategies and stress management ($r=.04$, $p<.05$). The results of this study clearly depicts that among the emotional intelligence variables, intra personal skill got the highest relationship with components of learning strategies. This study has some pedagogical implications for researchers, teachers, policy makers, and educators.

Index Terms—emotional intelligence, learning strategies, EFL learners

I. INTRODUCTION

It is crystal clear that Students with high intelligence quotient (IQ) scores can be considered as the intelligent ones. Lots of researchers such as Goleman (1995), Mayer & Salovey (1997), and Bar-On (1997) have mentioned that intelligence quotient (IQ) has a different dimension. They considered this dimension as emotional intelligence (EI). These researchers state that emotional intelligence (EI) is deeply refers to the individuals capabilities to understand and recognize their emotions. By comparing intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EI), emotional intelligence can be an effective predictor of success in different life challenges (Goleman, 1995). on the other hand IQ performs better in distinguishing successful people in various profession and jobs. According to (Goleman, 1995, p. 34), "EI emerges more effective than IQ in distinguishing the individuals talent. Goleman mentions that people can be sorted according to their IQ before they start a career; it determines which fields or professions they can hold (Goleman, 1998, 2001). Goleman 1998 made five basic emotional and social competencies for emotional intelligence which were self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. How we feel at the moment of any situation is our self-awareness which guides us in making decision. Having self-awareness helps us to have a realistic assessment about ourselves, our capability and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence. Self-regulation is how we handle our emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand. Self-regulation consists of being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals and recovering well from emotional distress.

In 1990, Mayer and Salovey tried to find the scientific way to measure individuals' emotions. They found that those people, who have emotional intelligence skills, can express themselves better than those who didn't have emotional intelligence skills. Those people with this skill can easily recognize emotions in others.

Mayer and Caruso (1999) state that individuals don't get emotional intelligence at birth but it can be developed through education and training. Perception, memory, attention, social judgment, and decision making which are the sub-categories of cognitive processes may be effected by emotions (Planalp & Fitness, 1999).

According to Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) positive and negative emotions can affect the learning process. The positive emotion can enhance the learning process by keeping the learner on the task. Positive feeling can perform as a stimulator to motivate the learner in doing and learning something. On the other hand the negative ones can distort the

perception and can undermine the will to persist. It is clear that lots of prolific researches have done in the last three decades on learning strategies and emotional intelligence in second and foreign languages.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is defined as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influences one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" and directly affect one's overall psychological well-being. In other words, one's knowledge, skills, and overall intelligence must be augmented by the ability to understand, perceive, and regulate emotions. (Bar-On, 1997, p.14).

Learning Strategies

Oxford defines learning strategies as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, more enjoyable, faster, directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations." (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

The teaching and learning processes are influenced by different cognitive variables, among which emotional intelligence and learning strategies are considered the most important ones. Over time human's understanding of himself grows better and better. By passing the time he understood that there is an inherent complexity in the process of human brain which leads to the confusion of him. This complexity not only hindered the researcher to search about what goes in this black box and what goes out of it but also it becomes a stimulator to seek ways of different studies about it. Since students are always at the risk of academic failure, explicit learning strategies are needed to support the ingredients of instructional success.

Persistent efforts of researchers in the realm of psychology have shown that students use various ways in their learning process which are note taking, memorizing, observing, reading, listening, speaking, writing, and doing thing. Based on the situation they use one or some of them. According to Brown (2004), describing of how students learn and why do they learn is not easy. Studies in this area resulted in different learning perspectives each of which shed some light on the mysterious process of learning. According to Rogers (1952, as cited in Maslow, 1943), the basic premise of humanistic perspective is that learning will be occur by a facilitator. Moreover, emotion can perform a great role in learning process. Researchers came to believe that having a good and successful life is not just limited to have an intelligent mind. They suggest that not only the emotional mind (Nelson and Low, 2005) but also the strategic mind (Leach, 2007) are necessary in learning processes. Each of them can be a great motivator and can open new doors. In this regard emotional mind can be the most effective one.

Due to the fact that over a decade of mechanistic instrumentalism, there is a significant shift toward a more human view, it is essential to understand the human's condition which is the most important factor for all of us who work in education system. Teachers always try to increase students' learning. To do this, teachers try to find the obstacles and reinforce the variables which can easily motivate the individuals' talent. Without doubt learning strategies and emotional intelligence are the important factors in this process.

Seeking out understandings of the human condition has always been important to those of us who work in education. For this reason it is believed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies can be important factors in educational setting. Learners vary enormously in different conditions in a second language. It is clear that some individual learn more easily than other individuals. The reverse is also true that some learners learn more difficultly than the others. Among so many factors contributing to second language learning success, including motivation, attitude or personality types, and so on it seems that two important factors which account for success in language learning are the intelligence of individuals and the strategies which are used in their learning. Regarding the importance of learning bears throughout peoples' lives, and understanding that learning as a complex process is the result of interactions of so many factors like cognition, emotions and strategies, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies of advanced ILI learners. To examine the effects and relationships of emotional intelligence and learning strategies one hundred ILI advanced learners participated in this study. The researcher hope the study will lead to highlight the necessity of incorporation of strategic learning and emotional intelligence in the curriculums, depending on the situation and needs. Also it will help teachers and learners better understand these variables and use this understanding to enhance classroom learning and teaching effectiveness. To achieve the objective of the investigation, the following specific research question was formulated:

RQ: Is there any relationship between individuals' emotional intelligence and their use of learning strategies?

II. METHODOLOGY

A. *Participants*

One hundred ILI English advanced learners at Shiraz branch (30 males and 70 females) were purposively selected to participate in this study. The participants were between 17 to 30 years old. All of them were native speakers of Persian

B. *Instruments*

The data was collected through using two instruments. The first instrument employed in this study was, the Bar-On EI test and the second one was, Strategy Inventory for language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990).

B1. Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory

The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) which was designed by Bar-On in 1980 is a self-report measure of emotionally and socially intelligent behavior that provides an estimate of emotional-social intelligence (Bar-On, 1997). After some changes in major content of questionnaire, like omission or alternation of questions and regulation of them, it was reduced into 43 questions. Hence the revised version of the questionnaire; in the form of short sentences which measured five broad areas of skills and 15 factorial components, was used in the study. To complete the questionnaire the respondents were given 40 minutes, and a five-point Likert-scale with a textual response format ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was employed. Each item had its own value.

Avoiding misunderstanding and cross-cultural differences regarding the content of the questionnaires, the translated Persian version of this questionnaires were employed in this study. The questionnaire was back translated into Persian by three EFL instructors. The three translations were compared and necessary changes and revision were made to make the scale more comprehensible to Iranian EFL learners. Then the scale was administered to 5 Iranian EFL learners as a pilot study. The Persian adapted form was finally reduced into 43 items. The Cronbach Alpha reliability index was reported to be 0.93 for the total test (table I).

TABLE I.
RELIABILITY OF EQ-I

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.93	43

EI Composite Scales and Subscales

1. Intrapersonal skills include:

-*Emotional self-awareness* (to recognize and understand one's own emotions)

-*Assertiveness* (to express one's own emotions, thoughts, ideas and defend his own individual rights constructively)

-*Self-management* (to be aware of, to understand, accept and respect oneself)

-*Self-actualization* (to actualize one's own potential)

-*Independence* (to pay attention to govern and one self-control own thought and action and free of emotional dependency)

Questions: 1-3-6-8-19-22-25-27-33-35-36-41

2. Interpersonal skills include:

-*Interpersonal relationships* (to be aware of, to understand others' feelings, and emotions, establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by emotional intimacy and dependency)

-*Social responsibility* (to be an efficient and useful member of one's social group, and show oneself as a good partner)

-*Empathy* (to be aware of others' feelings, understand how others feel and admire them)

Questions: 9-11-16-18-24-29-30-37-40

3. Adaptability includes:

-*Problem Solving* (to identify and define problems, as well as develop effective solutions)

-*Reality-testing* (to evaluate the correspondence between what is objectively and what is subjectively experienced)

-*Flexibility* (to adjust one's feelings, thinking and behavior to changing situations and conditions)

Questions: 4-10-14-20-21-26-31

4. Stress management includes:

-*Stress tolerance* (resistance to adverse events and stressful situations)

-*Impulse control* (resistance to impulse or denial of impulse)

Questions: 2-5-13-15-17-23-38-43

5. General mood includes:

-*Happiness* (to feel satisfied with oneself, to make oneself and others happy)

-*Optimism* (to see the brighter side of life and keep a positive attitude even in the face of adversity)

Questions: 7-12-28-32-34-39-42

B.2 The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

The second instrument in this study was the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990). First, this questionnaire was used in the Defense language Institute in Monterey, California (Chang, Liu, & Lee, 2007). then, the SILL was revised and two version of this exist. One which has 80 items currently use for foreign language learners whose native language is English and the other which consist of 50 items used for EFL/ESL. In this study the second version (50 items) was employed. The scale categorized into six subscales: (a) Memory strategies (items 1 to 9), (b) Cognitive strategies (items 10 to 23), (c) Compensation strategies (items 24 to 29), (d) Metacognitive strategies (items 30 to 38), (e) Affective strategies (items 39 to 44), and (f) Social strategies (items 45 to 50). These SILL items are evaluated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5. The number indicates how often the learner uses the strategies: Strongly disagree=1, disagree =2, I'm not sure=3, agree =4, strongly agree =5.

In order to calculate the reliability of the Strategy Inventory for language Learning (SILL) Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was run. The result indicated that the reliability of the instrument was 0.95 (Table II).

TABLE II.
RELIABILITY OF SILL

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.955	50

C. Procedure

One hundred English advanced learners were selected through purposive sampling (females =70 and males = 30) from Iran Language Institute, at Shiraz branch. The participants of the study were invited to complete two questionnaires. The participants were given instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and this took approximately 40 minutes for each participant.

D. Data Analysis Procedures

Our data consisted of the results of the questionnaires--the 'Bar-On EI test, also called as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) on the one hand, and the Oxford (1990) SILL questionnaire on the other hand. The obtained data from the questionnaires was entered into the computer item by item according to their own values, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 to get inferential statistics such as Pearson correlations was applied to find any significant relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies.

III. RESULTS

Data analysis was done by the SPSS software (Ver.16). This section includes the inferential statistics for the participants' performance on questionnaires.

The main trust of the present study was to scrutinize the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies of ILI advanced learners. To do this the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was run to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies. Basically, the correlation was run to find the relationship between these two variables components. The emotional intelligence components are intrapersonal skill, interpersonal skill, adaptability, stress management, and general mood and learning strategies components are memory strategies cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, effective strategies, and social strategies. The results were summed in table III.

TABLE III.
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

		Intra Personal Skill	Inter Personal Skill	adaptability	Stress Management	General Mood
Memory Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.434**	-.174	.188	.206*	.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.085	.063	.041	.938
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Cognitive Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.366**	-.054	.049	.151	.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.598	.630	.136	.849
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Compensation Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.062	.023	.077	.104	.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.540	.820	.450	.308	.515
	N	100	100	99	100	100
Metacognitive Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.277**	-.036	.008	.115	.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.722	.940	.255	.707
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Effective Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.142	-.119	.113	.163	-.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.161	.242	.266	.107	.781
	N	100	100	99	100	99
Social Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.225*	.032	.262**	.291**	.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.750	.009	.004	.815
	N	100	100	100	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis revealed that there was a positive relationship between memory strategies and intra personal skill at 0.000 level of significant. This means that higher memory strategies used is associated with high intra personal skill, in other words the learners' emotional self-awareness(to recognize and understand of one's own emotions)assertiveness(to

express one's own emotions, thoughts, ideas and defend his own individual rights constructively), self-management (to be aware of, to understand, accept and respect oneself), self-actualization (to actualize one's own potential) independence (to pay attention to govern and one self-control of own thought and action and free of emotional dependency) is highly associated with the use of memory strategies. The same positive relationships were seen between intra personal skill and other learning strategies variables such as cognitive strategies ($r=.000$, $p<.05$), metacognitive strategies ($r=.006$, $p<.05$), and social strategies ($r=.02$, $p<.05$).

As the table III indicated there was a significant positive correlation between memory strategies and stress management ($r=.04$, $p<.05$). This indicated that learners' stress management -stress tolerance (resistance to adverse events and stressful situation) and impulse control (resistance to impulse or denial of impulse) are associated with learners' used memory strategies.

According to the obtained results, there were positive significant relationships between social strategies, adaptability ($r=.009$, $p<.05$), and stress management ($r=.004$, $p<.05$). This revealed that if the learners are more adaptable, they will do better in social strategies such as pair work, group work, corporation, and clarifications. Besides, the learner will perform better in resistance to adverse events and stressful situations in social context by the suitable use of social strategies. According to reported results in table III no significant and meaningful significant relationship was found between the other variables.

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are divided into two main categories, direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are composed of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies are consisted of metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Indirect strategies provide indirect support for language learning by employing different strategies such as focusing, arranging, evaluating, seeking opportunities, and lowering anxieties. According to the table III effective strategies which are a sub-category of direct strategies and compensation strategies which are a sub-category of indirect strategies didn't have any meaning full relationship with other variables.

IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies. To do this, one hundred English advanced learners of ILI; Shiraz branch were purposively selected to participate in this study. The participants were 30 males and 70 female learners between 17 to 30 years old.

The needed data was collected through using two instruments. The first instrument employed in this study was, the 'Bar-On EI test, and the second one was the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990). The Pearson Correlation was applied to find any significant relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies.

Based on the procedure of the research the sub-scales of both emotional intelligence- intrapersonal skill, interpersonal skill, adaptability, stress management, general mood- and learning strategies- memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, effective strategies and social strategies were put in specific column. Then each column was added up and the results were put on the line marked sum then divided by the number under sum to get the average for each column. Then the Pearson Product Moment correlation was run to find the relationship among the variables.

The current study was, targeted toward pinpointing the would-be relationship between emotional intelligence and learning strategies among ILI English advance, at Shiraz branch. Based on the finding in Table III, the results of correlation showed that there were some significant positive relationships between the variables. The intra personal skill had a positive correlation with memory strategies ($r=.000$, $p<.05$), cognitive strategies ($r=.000$, $p<.05$), metacognitive strategies ($r=.006$, $p<.05$), and social strategies ($r=.02$, $p<.05$). The positive relationship showed that intra personal skill had a liable role in learners learning strategies used. There were also a positive correlations between social strategies with adaptability ($r=.009$, $p<.05$), and stress management ($r=.004$, $p<.05$). The last but not least a positive correlation was seen between memory strategies and stress management ($r=.04$, $p<.05$). As the results of the study showed it is clear that among the emotional intelligence variables, intra personal skill got the highest relationship with other variables. Furthermore, social strategies were also correlated with variables except for inter personal and general mood.

V. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present study may serve as recommendations to researchers, teachers, policy makers, and educators to modify instruction and offer various opportunities for learners in the classroom. It is necessary for the instructors to be familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence and learning strategies. They can also focus more on enhancing EFL learners' learning strategies and emotional intelligence. The findings might help educators in selecting appropriate material which can easily satisfy the learners' need. The results can be effective for syllabus designer to find the most appropriate ways for learners with different learning strategies and various emotional intelligences. Iranian teacher can use the findings of this study in their EFL classes and/ or in designing their own syllabuses. It is also important for the teachers to have a clear picture of learners' strengths and weaknesses in different intelligence areas to develop their intellectual capabilities accordingly. Planning the activities to connect both strategies

and learners' talents can lead to the enhancement and development of the individuals. The findings can be important for the individuals to have a clear picture of themselves in findings the strong points and reinforce the weak points.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The same as other studies, this research has several limitations. First, the participants of this study are natives of the same context, English Iran Language Institute at Shiraz; they speak the same language and have shared cultural practices, which may lead to similarities in their reports. Second, self-report instruments used in this study may not appropriately capture the participants' perceptions and feelings. In any research there is always the danger of misrepresenting beliefs of the participants especially when the scales of assessment are questionnaires. Participants sometimes report the desirable beliefs, rather than their true beliefs.

Third, the 'Bar-On EI test, also called as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) consists of only 43 items while the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) has 50 items may obviously not cover by the students' emotional intelligence and learning strategies use. This, to a certain extent, affects its reliability and the validity of the data in the study. Therefore a wider variety of assessment methods is recommended in future studies like interviews, observation, verbal report and diaries.

Forth, in this study, one hundred ILI advance English learners (70 females and 30 males) were involved. Perhaps the uneven number between male and female students may more or less influence the results. Finally, since this study has been limited to regular institute, ILI English advanced learners; at Shiraz branch, the findings cannot be generalized to the learners from the other higher education institutions. Future research could move some steps forward to examine the potential factors affecting the academic performance of basic, intermediate, and university students in Iran.

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