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Can EFL Learners' Emotional Intelligence Predict their Verbal Intelligence?

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Abstract **–** This study was conducted in order to find whether Iranian EFL learners' verbal intelligence can be predicted from their emotional intelligence. To do so, 120 intermediate EFL learners were selected based on convenient sampling procedure. Two instruments were used in this study: The Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS) and Bar-On's Emotional Quotient inventory (EQ-i). The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires and turn them back to the researchers at a specific date and time. The results of this study showed that EFL learners' emotional intelligence can significantly predict their verbal intelligence.

Keywords**:** emotional intelligence, verbal intelligence, multiple regression

I. INTRODUCTION

Intelligence is often thought to be one of the most significant predictors of language learning success (Gu, 2003). Intelligence was traditionally defined and measured as linguistic and Logical-Mathematical abilities. According to the Webster's American Dictionary: College Edition, intelligence is the "capacity for learning, reasoning, and understanding" (1997, p. 426). Who has this capacity and how does this definition of intelligence affect our students and their perceptions of themselves? If intelligence is the capacity of learning, reasoning and understanding, how can we define the amount of this capacity and how can we measure it? Can we reach to self-perception of our students by the help of intelligence? Our perception of intelligence is what we were told in our schools. We were told that if someone can do mathematics well, s/he is an intelligent person. However, Gardner (1983) has a wider and scientific definition for intelligence. He defines intelligence in a different fashion and in a way that no one has seen it before.

Hernstein and Murray (1994, cited in Cloverd & Hodgkin, 2011) state that "Intelligence is best thought of as a single property distributed within the general population along a bell shaped curve". They found that Intelligence is hereditary and comparatively few people have very high intelligence Quotient (IQ) over 130, and few people have very low intelligence, the IQ under 70, and most people are clumped together and have IQ 85 to 115.

In contrast, Gardner (1983) states that intelligence itself is not content, but is geared to specific contents. Linguistic intelligence is activated when people encounter the sounds of language or when they wish to communicate something verbally to others. Intelligences should be mobilized to help people learn important content and not used as a way of categorizing individuals.

Sternberg (2005) defines human intelligence as “mental activity directed toward purposive adaptation to, selection and shaping of, real- world environments relevant to one’s life”, in other words intelligence is how a person encounters with environmental changes during their life well. Sternberg’s (2005) “triarchic” model of intelligence includes three parts: componential, experiential and practical. He maintains that same components will operate whatever the kind of material is being processed. Sternberg’s work became very prominent to psychologists. He identified that intelligences do not have to operate independently, and there may be an overlap- for example, between mathematics and music. He further explained that human being don’t have a single unit of memory- like intelligence; that no separate artistic intelligence exists; and that all intelligences function artistically or non- artistically. The idea of multiple intelligence highlights the arts which will be discussed in next section.

Gardner (1983) declares that humans have different forms of intelligences or intellectual strengths and that each one of these strengths has its own developmental path. He describes intelligences as a bio-psychological potential of our species to process certain kinds of information in certain kinds of ways. As such, it clearly involves processes that are carried out by dedicated neural networks. Some of the processes might prove to be more customized to an individual. (Gardner, 1999). According to Gardner (1999), "intelligence is a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (p. 34).

During the 1970’s and 80’s, psychologists including Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer developed the early Emotional Intelligence theory or emotional quotient (Caruso & Salovey, 2004). Later in the 1990’s, a huge amount of research, regarding the interaction of emotion and thought, put it in the center of interest. The concept of social intelligence is the basis for emotional intelligence. In 1920, Thorndike viewed EI through social intelligence. In his point of view it is the ability to have empathy with other people and have wise action in relationships (Goleman, 1998). In the 1980’s, Howard Gardner made use of Thorndike’s view in his works. The Gardner’s approach was the basis for Mayer and Salovey in 1990 and they emphasized on individual differences and introduced their comprehensive model of emotional intelligence. The emotions are at the root of our doing, our moving towards or away from. Emotions do not occur just in the brain as has been commonly believed until very recently.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others. Also it is the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). There are a lot of methodologies such as Suggestopedia which address emotional and psychological issues in second language learning. Study of emotional intelligence in the educational setting is a relatively new attempt, and few studies have focused on the overall effects of emotional intelligence on second or foreign language learning. In the ESL/EFL context, different studies examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and second language success.

Success in language learning depends on the confidence of the learner; this confidence has a profound impact on the future personal and intellectual success of all of students. Iranian EFL teachers do not consider factors for empowering the emotions of the students and there is no attention to students' different intelligences. If teachers respect learners' ability, verbal Intelligence, they can empower their learners' emotions by paying more attention to their intelligence.

In most institutional classes in Iran, learners feel bored and are tired because there are some missing points from psychological point of view that make them biased towards their learning and classrooms. Most of the time, these missing points like verbal intelligence and emotions have a great effect on language teaching and learning in classroom and ignoring them lead to ineffective teaching strategies and wasting time. Taking the importance of language teaching and learning in today's world into consideration, and the importance of psychological matters, this study aims to determine the most important factors including verbal intelligence and emotional intelligence across different levels of proficiency. As a result, understanding students' needs and knowing psychological attitudes have always been one of the obsessing issues among language teaching experts.

In this study, the researchers will make a connection between Gardner's acknowledgement of intellectual diversity and Goleman's suggestions for empowering emotional intelligence of the students consequently. In other words, the research will try to see whether Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence can predict their verbal Intelligence in learning English.

To meet the aforementioned purposes, the following research question is proposed:

- Does Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence significantly predict their verbal intelligence?

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants of this study were 120 intermediate Iranian EFL learners who were learning English in language institutes of Tabriz city. The selection of the participants of this study was carried out based on convenient sampling procedure since the lack of access to EFL teachers imposed limitations on selecting the participants randomly. Their age range was from 18 to 32. Their native language was Persian and Azeri. The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires and turn them back to the researchers at a specific date and time.

B. Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study: The Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS) and Bar-On's Emotional Quotient inventory (EQ-i).

MIDAS consists of 119 Likert-type items. The goal is to provide a reasonable estimate of the person's multiple intelligence disposition in order to promote personal

satisfaction, academic and career success through enhanced self-awareness and differentiated instructional support. In this study, MIDAS was used to measure Iranian EFL learners' verbal intelligence.

The MIDAS provides a quantitative and qualitative multiple intelligence profile report that describes the person's strengths and weaknesses in everyday language. Extensive interpretative information and guidance is then made available for teachers, students and parents. The MIDAS Profile is not interpreted as the last word regarding the person's intelligence but rather is a starting point from which to embark on a productive discussion and critical reflection. It hopes to promote a discussion that serves to enhance Intrapersonal awareness and the creation of educational plans and strategies so that strengths may be used to maximize success in school as well as everyday life.

EQ-i consists of 133 Likert-type items. The overall emotional intelligence score and each of the subscales were very strongly related to other measures. In addition, each of the subscales is highly related to other measures. Participants are asked to respond to the items by indicating their degree of agreement with each of the 133 statements using a five- point Likert- type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The original Emotional Quotient inventory (EQ-i) had demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha ranging from .87 to .90), and good two- week test-retest reliability (r = .78) (across a wide variety of cultures) (Bar-On., 1997).

C. Procedure

In order to conduct the study and collect the required data related to the research questions and hypotheses, the following procedure was followed. The copies of the questionnaires were distributed among the participants of study. In this research, two questionnaires were given to EFL learners who were involved in teaching English at different levels in language institutes. Before administering the questionnaires, a complete explanation was given about the aim of the research, the questionnaires and how they should be answered. EFL learners were assured that the results would be used for this research and their views would be kept completely confidential.

III. RESULTS

In order to answer the research question of the study in finding whether or not Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence significantly predict their verbal intelligence, a regression analysis was performed. The details of analyses are provided in the following tables.

Table 1 provides the extent to which variability in the dependent variable (EFL learners' verbal intelligence) is accounted for by all of the independent variables (emotional intelligences) together.

Table 1: *Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.892[a]	.795	.794	21.45331
a. Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence				

As Table 1 shows, the coefficient of multiple correlations is presented in the "*R*" column. *R* is the measure of the prediction of the dependent variable; in this case, EFL learners' verbal intelligence. A value of 0.89 indicates a high level of prediction. The *"R Square*" or R^2 value is the proportion of variance in the verbal intelligence that can be explained by the independent variable (i.e., emotional intelligence). It indicates that the EFL learners' verbal intelligence can explain 79% of the variability of their emotional intelligences.

In order to determine whether the provided model (emotional intelligence as independent variable and EFL learners' verbal intelligence as dependent variable) is a good fit for the data, a one-way ANOVA was performed. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *ANOVA of regression model*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	484066.395	1	484066.395	1051.75	.000[b]
	Residual	124726.316	271	460.245		
	Total	608792.711	272			
a. Dependent Variable: verbal intelligence						
b. Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence						

The *F* value in the Table 2 shows the fitness of overall regression model for the data. The result showed that ($F = 1051$, $p < .05$) *p* value is lower than assumed level of significance (i.e., 0.05); therefore, the EFL learners' emotional intelligence can significantly predict their verbal intelligence (i.e., the regression model is a suitable for the data).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that EFL learners' emotional intelligence can significantly predict their verbal intelligence. The findings of this study partially support the results of the previous studies such as Pishghadam (2009) who examined the impacts of emotional and verbal intelligences on English language learning success in Iran. To this end, three classes were selected – emotional, verbal, and control groups. To fully understand the

nature of the learning, both the product and the process data were calculated and analyzed. The results of the product-based phase demonstrated that the emotional intelligence is effective in learning different skills, specifically productive ones. In the process-based phase, the analyses of oral and written modes of language exhibited the effects of emotional and verbal intelligences on turn-taking, amount of communication, the number of errors, and writing ability.

The results of this study acknowledged those of Vahdat and Khavangaran (2013) who investigated the relationship between two variables of verbal/linguistic and emotional intelligences on the skill of reading comprehension. The results elicited from data manifested that there was a meaningful relationship between the subject's verbal intelligence and their reading comprehension ability. Moreover, the results confirmed that linguistic intelligence is a relatively strong predictor of reading performance compared to emotional intelligence.

The results of this study partially support the findings of Rahimi, Sadighi and Hosseiny Fard (2011) who examined the impact of linguistic intelligence and emotional intelligence on the reading comprehension ability of the Iranian EFL learners. Data was gathered through two questionnaires and a reading test and analyzed through two-way ANOVA and Multiple Regression. The results revealed that the students with a high level of linguistic intelligence showed a higher reading ability than those with a lower level of linguistic intelligence. The results, however, showed no significant difference among the students with different degrees of emotional intelligence. Moreover, the results indicated that linguistic intelligence is a relatively strong predictor of reading performance.

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