

## The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Empathy of EFL Teachers Regarding to Gender

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**Abstract** – An attempt has been made in this study to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional empathy (EE) among EFL teachers in Isfahan. Furthermore, the relationship between EI and emotional empathy was examined with regard to gender. To this end, 100 (50 male, 50 female) Language Institute EFL teachers from Isfahan participated in this study. The instruments of data collection were the two questionnaires of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) Self-Report Scale, and Multi-Dimensional Emotional Empathy Scale. A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Independent-Samples t-tests and were conducted to analyze the data obtained from of the questionnaires. The amount of correlation showed that there was a weak positive correlation between EI and emotional empathy ( $r < .30$ ). The independent-samples t-test was employed to show that females had significantly higher EI scores than males and, males and females had roughly similar EE scores. Undoubtedly, the results of this study affect the pedagogical behavior of teachers in the classroom and EFL learners can benefit from it too.

**Keywords:** emotional empathy, emotional intelligence, EFL teachers, gender, language institute

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In relating intelligence to second language learning, Brown (1994, p. 93) states that in the past it was realized that "the greatest barrier to second language learning seemed to summarize to a matter of memory", in the sense that if a student could remember something he or she was exposed to, he or she would be a successful language learner because intelligence was traditionally defined and measured in terms of linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. However, Gardner (1983), in a rather different approach, advanced a controversial theory of intelligence, Multiple Intelligence which questioned the horizontal approach to intelligence and blew apart the traditional thoughts about monolithic general intelligence.

Howard Gardner is one of the first researchers to view intelligence broadly. In recent years, a growing number of psychologists have come to agree with his theory of multiple-intelligences (Goleman, 1999). Gardner's theory of multiple-intelligences (1983) is based on studies done not only on normal children and adults but also studies of gifted individuals (including so-called "savants"), who have suffered from brain damage, of experts, and of

individuals from many different cultures. This led Gardner to break intelligence down into a number of different components.

Regarding Salovey and Mayer (1990), it is the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. Bar-On (2000) had a more broadly defined interpretation of emotional intelligence. Bar-on explained that emotional intelligence includes one's emotional, personal, and social dimensions of general intelligence: emotional intelligence involves abilities, competencies, and skills related to understanding oneself and others, relating to peers and family members, and adapting to changing environmental situations and demands.

Intelligence was considered as a concept devoid of emotion and symposiums on intelligence over the years repeatedly concluded that the first hallmark of intelligence is high-level mental ability such as abstract reasoning (Sternberg, 1997). For instance, Terman (1921; cited in Sternberg 1997, p. 339), as a pioneer of IQ tests, states that "an individual is intelligent in proportion as he is able to carry on abstract thinking". Therefore, intelligence conceptualized as abstract thinking was demonstrated to predict academic success.

In ESL/EFL context, different studies examined the relationship between EQ and second language success (Nelson, Low, & Nelson, 2007). For instance, Aghasafari (2006) found a positive relationship between overall EQ and language learning strategies. Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), Aghasafari (2006) in a correlational design investigated the relationship between EQ and second language learning strategies among 10 sophomore participants at Islamic Azad University in Iran. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between overall EQ and language learning strategies.

This study tries to introduce emotional empathy as a separate related concept not a component part of the emotional intelligence construct. This premise is in accordance with Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999) who refer to emotional empathy as one of the concepts related to the mixed models of emotional intelligence. The impact of emotional intelligence on teaching is undeniable; it has been the focus of attention of many researchers. However, regarding this issue, based on the research's best knowledge little or no research has been conducted. This study attempts to examine EFL teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) and its relationship with empathy. In addition, this study takes age, gender, and teaching experience of the teachers into consideration and investigates their relations with respect to the correlation of EI and emotional empathy to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional empathy among EFL teachers of Isfahan language institutes?
2. Is there any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EI?
3. Is there any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EE?

Based on these questions, the following hypotheses are considered:

1. There is not any significant relationship between EI and EE of Iranian EFL teachers in Isfahan Language Institutes.
2. There is not difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EI.
3. There is not difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EE.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **A. Participants**

The participants of this study were 100 EFL teachers, including 50 male and 50 female, who were selected through simple random sampling from some Language Institutes in Isfahan. The age of teachers ranged between 20 and 50 and they had 1 to 20 years of teaching experience. All of them were had different majors of English (English Literature, English Teaching, and English Translation), and held BA, and MA degrees; moreover, they taught at different levels (elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced).

### **B. Instrumentation**

The instruments which were used in this study include:

**1. The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) Self-Report Scale:** This scale is normed on a large and representative sample of the North American population including nearly 4,000 participants in the United States and Canada and published in 1997 (Bar-On, 2000). It defines and assesses the skills that comprised emotional intelligence. It can assess an individual's general degree of emotional intelligence, potential for emotional health, and present psychological well-being (Bar-On, 2000). This scale has 133 questions to measure people's emotional intelligence and employs a five-point Lickert scale ranging from "very seldom or not true of me" to "very often true of me or true of me" (Bar-On, 2000).

Average and above average scores suggest that people are effective in emotional and social functioning and are emotionally and socially intelligent. High scores indicate the more positive prediction of effective functioning in meeting environmental demands and stressors (Bar-On, 2000). Low scores on this scale suggest that one may have difficulty succeeding in life and experience social, emotional, and behavioral problems.

**2. Multi-dimensional Scale of Emotional Empathy for Adolescents and Adults (MEE):** It uses to assess the participants' emotional empathy. The Multi-dimensional Empathy nature of the empathy concept has both an emotional and a cognitive component, but here the focus was on the emotional component of empathy. Also the Multi-dimensional Scale of Emotional Empathy for Adolescents and Adults (MEE), by Caruso and Mayer (1998) is consisted of thirty items. Six negatively-worded items were included in the scale in order to reduce response bias. An attempt was made to include positive as well as negative emotional situations. This scale which ranges from strongly disagree, at one end, to strongly agree, at the other end, includes thirty self-report likert-type items, each of which is rated from 1 to 5.

This scale is normed on a large and representative sample of the south Africa on 290 adolescents age 11 to 18 years with an average age of 14 years and 503 adults with an average age of 23 years (range from 17 to 70) The alpha reliability for the total 30-item scale scores was 0 .88 (Caruso & Mayer, 1998). Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999) also reported an alpha reliability of 0.86 for the scale's overall self-reported empathy score.

### C. Procedure

In order to answer the research questions of this study, 100 EFL teachers from some Language Institutes in Isfahan were selected randomly in this study. Teachers were asked to complete the Bar-On EQ-i Self-Report Scale and the Multi- Dimensional Scale of Emotional Empathy, which were personally distributed by the researchers. Participants were supposed to choose an option for each statement that they felt accurately described them. Teachers spent about 30 minutes for Bar-On EQ-i Self-Report Scale and 10 minutes for Multi- Dimensional Scale of Emotional Empathy to complete.

### D. Data Analysis

Data collected from this study were analyzed using Statistical Software for Social Sciences version 19 (SPSS). In order to investigate the first research question and to test the relationship between EI and emotional empathy Pearson Product Moment correlations were applied to the data. To examine the second and third research questions, independent t-tests were run.

## III. RESULTS

The first research question of the study asked “Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional empathy of EFL teachers in Isfahan language institutes?” Pearson product moment correlation formula was used in order to find the answer to the first question of the study. The results of this correlational analysis are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Results of Pearson Correlation for the Relationship between EI and EE**

		EI	EE
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.14
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.15
	N	100	100

The relationship between EI and EE was a weak positive one since  $r$  was found to be less than .30. This weak relationship between EI and EE was not statistically significant since the  $p$  values in front of Sig. (2-tailed) was greater than the level of significance ( $p = .15 >$

.01). The conclusion could be that high levels of emotional intelligence do not necessary entail high levels of emotional empathy.

The second research question of the study asked “Is there any difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EI?” Independent-Samples t-test was conducted to come up with an answer to this research question. The results of this t-test are shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2: Results of Descriptive Statistics for Comparing Males and Females in Terms of Their EI**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EI	Male	50	317.92	28.55	4.03
	Female	50	329.9	30.74	4.34

The mean EI score for the female participants (M = 329.9) exceeded that of males (M = 317.92). To find out whether there was a significant difference between males and females with regard to their EI scores; one should check the Sig. (2-tailed) value in the t-test table.

**Table 3: Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for Comparing Males and Females in Terms of Their EI**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
	F.	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.35	.55	-2.01	98	.04	-11.98	5.93	-23.75	-.2
Equal variances not assumed			-2.01	97.46	.04	-11.98	5.93	-23.75	-.2

According to Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference in the EI scores for males (M = 317.92, SD = 28.55) and females (M = 329.9, SD = 30.74) since the p value under the Sig. (2-tailed) column was less than the specified level of significance (i.e., .04 < .05). The conclusion that could be drawn from this analysis would be that females had significantly higher EI scores than males.

The third research question of the current study posed “Is there any difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EE?” To figure out the answer to this research

question, independent-samples t-test was employed again. The results appear in the following tables.

**Table 4: Results of Descriptive Statistics for Comparing Males and Females in Terms of Their EE**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EE	Male	50	109.92	13.64	1.92
	Female	50	113.48	15.12	2.13

As for the EE scores, the mean score of the female participants ( $M = 113.48$ ) once again surpassed that of males ( $M = 109.92$ ). To uncover whether there was a significant difference between males and females with regard to their EE scores, the Sig. (2-tailed) value in Table 5 should be checked.

**Table 5: Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for Comparing Males and Females in Terms of Their EE**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
	F.	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.13	.71	-1.23	98	.21	-3.56	2.88	-9.27	2.15
Equal variances not assumed			-1.23	97.97	.22	-3.56	2.88	-9.27	2.15

According to Table 5, there was not a statistically significant difference between males ( $M = 109.92$ ,  $SD = 13.64$ ) and females ( $M = 113.48$ ,  $SD = 15.12$ ) in the EE scores because the p value under the Sig. (2-tailed) column greater than the specified level of significance (i.e.,  $.021 > .05$ ). It could thus be understood that males and females had roughly similar EE scores.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Regarding the first research hypothesis of this study that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional empathy, this finding was not in line with the aforementioned hypothesis. Teacher empathy is the ability to express concern and take the perspective of a student, and it involves cognitive and affective

domains of empathy. Over recent decades, there have been researches which support the positive impact of teacher empathy on teaching and consequently on learning (e.g. Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). Furthermore, according to Bar-On (2000), EI develops over time and can be improved through training, programming, and therapy (as cited in Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009). Bar-On (2006) hypothesized that those individuals with higher than average EQ are in general more successful, while a deficiency in EI can mean a lack of success and endurance of emotional problems. In light of the obtained results and by considering Bar-On's views, we can justify exploiting and developing courses for EFL teachers focusing on skills associated with EI.

The results of this study rejected the second hypothesis that there is not a relationship between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their emotional intelligence. This suggests that male and females did not have the same level of emotional intelligence. The current study findings also were in line with Jamali, Safieddine, and Rabbath (2008). They suggested differences in EQ scores across different EQ competencies for males and females. Their findings revealed that males scored higher on self-regulation and self-motivation and females scored higher on self-awareness, empathy and social skills. These findings were in line with those reported by Chan (2004), Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008), Harrod and Scheer (2005) (as cited in Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009) which indicated that there were significant differences between females and males, with females reporting higher EI levels. However, the reason for this conflict may be related to such factors as culture, the kind of environment, and the nature of the population of the study.

Regarding the findings of the present study, the third hypothesis, there is not any difference between male and female EFL teachers in terms of their EE was supported. It was not revealed a great degree that female teachers were more empathic than males. But the majority of peoples' general opinion is that women have higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathy tendency than men (Stein, & Book, 2000), a lot of studies confirm this opinion. For example, according to Duru (2002), female teachers have higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency than male teachers (Barut, 2004; Çelik, 2008). In addition, candidates of pre-school teacher have higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathy tendency than other candidate teachers. There are two reasons for this situation according to Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi (2000). Women have high levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency because firstly they are very social, so they understand easily other peoples' situations. Secondly, women have these characteristics by birth.

Emotionally healthy behavior is reflected in characteristic ways of (1) thinking, (2) identifying, managing, and expressing feelings, and (3) choosing effective behaviors. Becoming an emotionally intelligent teacher is a journey and process, not an arrival state or end result. Emotionally intelligent teachers are active in their orientation to students, work, and life. They are flexible in response to negative stress and less likely to overwhelm themselves with pessimism and strong, negative emotions. Teachers who intentionally develop emotional skills and model emotionally intelligent behavior on a daily basis

experience more success and satisfaction in their professional career and life (Nelson, Low, & Nelson, 2007).

Investigations into emotional intelligence and empathy are just beginning to be part of the second language acquisition/learning. As in any new area of the study, several limitations in the research design make it difficult to make sweeping generalizations about the potential implications of this research. There are some limitations to this study, including the small sample size and lack of opportunity to generalize the findings which were based on the specific sample of institute EFL teachers in Isfahan. Another limitation was the limited number of above 40 years old EFL teachers (above 40= 10) and more experienced EFL teachers participating in this study (above 15= 12). Perhaps, if more from each group were in the sample population, the outcomes pertaining to each group may have different results.

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