



University of Sistan and Baluchestan
Faculty of Humanities
Department of English Language and Literature

Exploring the Relationship Between Iranian EFL Learners' Multiple Intelligences, Locus of Control and Reading Proficiency

M.A. Thesis

Submitted to the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities,
University of Sistan and Baluchestan, in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign
Language

Supervisor: Dr. Farrokhlagha Heidari

Advisor: Dr. Abdollah Sarani

BY

Najme Khorasaniha

Zahedan, Iran

January, 2012

In the Name of God



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We hereby approve that this thesis by Najme Khorasaniha entitled:

**Exploring the Relationship Between Iranian EFL
Learners' Multiple Intelligences, Locus of Control
and Reading Proficiency**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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چکیده

تفاوت‌های فردی، به عنوان خصوصیات روانشناختی غالب، باید در سطوح مختلف تدریس و یادگیری زبان کاملاً مورد ملاحظه قرار گیرند. از میان تاثیرگذارترین سازه‌های روانشناختی که منجر به تفاوت‌های فردی می‌شوند، می‌توان از هوش چندگانه و منبع کنترل نام برد. هوش چندگانه با جنبه‌های متفاوتی از هوش سر و کار دارد که ممکن است هر شخص از آن برخوردار باشد. منبع کنترل، به عنوان مفهوم روانشناختی دیگر، به استنباط افراد از دلایل اصلی و شالوده‌ای رخداد‌های زندگی‌شان اطلاق می‌شود. این تحقیق نتایج مطالعه‌ای برای بررسی هر گونه ارتباط بین هوش چندگانه و منبع کنترل از یک سو، و از سوی دیگر هر ارتباط ممکن بین هریک از این دو سازه و مهارت خواندن به عنوان یک جزء زبانی را گزارش می‌دهد. هفتاد و شش پاسخ دهنده در رشته‌های ادبیات انگلیسی، آموزش زبان انگلیسی، و مترجمی زبان انگلیسی، که از دانشگاه سیستان و بلوچستان و دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی زاهدان انتخاب شدند، به پرسشنامه‌ی ۹۰ سؤالی هوش چندگانه، پرسشنامه‌ی ۲۸ سؤالی منبع کنترل، و بخش درک مطلب یک آزمون تافل پاسخ دادند. نتایج به دست آمده حاکی از هیچ ارتباط معناداری بین هوش چندگانه و منبع کنترل نبود. به هر حال، ارتباط معناداری بین هوش چندگانه و مهارت خواندن مشاهده گردید. از میان حیطه‌های مختلف هوش، هوش دیداری بیشترین سهم را در پیش‌بینی مهارت خواندن داشت. ارتباط بین منبع کنترل و مهارت خواندن نیز معنادار نشان داده شد. به بیان دیگر، همبستگی معنادار مثبتی بین سویگری درونی و مهارت خواندن و همچنین بین هوش دیداری و نمرات خواندن تشخیص داده شد. چنین می‌توان نتیجه‌گیری کرد که هوش چندگانه و منبع کنترل متغیرهای مهمی در خصوص توانایی خواندن هستند و هنگام پیشبرد راهبردهای آموزش خواندن باید عمیقاً مورد توجه قرار گیرند.

Dedications

To my dear parents

whose endless love and support throughout my life is the greatest blessing

and

my dear husband

who was kindly beside me during this long journey

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Abstract

Individual differences (IDs), as dominant psychological characteristics, must be highly considered during the various stages of language teaching and learning. Among the most influential psychological constructs that lead to IDs, one can name multiple intelligences (MI) and locus of control (LOC). MI deals with the various aspects of intelligence each individual may possess. LOC, as another psychological construct, refers to individuals' perceptions about the underlying main causes of events in their lives. This study reports the results of a study designed to examine any relationship between MI and LOC on the one hand, and any possible relationships between each of these two constructs and reading proficiency, as a language component, on the other. Seventy-six respondents majoring in English Literature, English Language Teaching, and English Translation, chosen from University of Sistan & Baluchestan and Islamic Azad University of Zahedan, answered a 90-item multiple intelligences questionnaire, a 28-item LOC questionnaire, and a reading comprehension section of a TOFEL test. The results indicated no significant relationship between MI and LOC. However, a significant relationship was observed between MI and reading proficiency. Among the different domains of intelligence, the visual intelligence made the greatest contribution in predicting reading proficiency. The relationship between LOC and reading proficiency was also significant. In other words, a significant positive correlation was found between internal orientation and reading proficiency as well as visual intelligence and reading scores. It can be concluded that MI and LOC are significant variables regarding reading proficiency and should be highly considered while developing strategies for reading instruction.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Educators all over the world are in search of teaching methods or strategies that may increase learner achievement. Factors influencing learner achievement must be highly considered when it comes to second language learning investigation. Among the many factors that might have direct influence on language acquisition are learners' individual differences in terms of psychological variations. Based on Dörnyei (2005), the field of psychology has two objectives: to find out the general principles of human mind and to explore the uniqueness of the individual mind also called differential psychology or individual differences (IDs). IDs refer to characteristics unique to each individual. However, IDs are the "most consistent predictors of L2 reading success" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 2).

Recently much attention has been given to such variations and many scholars have been seeking to find out whether there is any relationship between students' performance in a second language (L2) and their individual variations. In other words, they are seeking to explore whether learner differences, mostly psychological, have anything to do with language proficiency. This study aims to investigate the relationship between two of the most dominant psychological constructs, namely locus of control (LOC) and multiple intelligences (MI), which lead to IDs.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Traditionally, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), students were judged based on logic and language only with the assumption that intelligence is a unitary quality and also an innate capacity. Any poor performance in such tests was a symptom of disability (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 115).

Alfred Binet, a French psychologist, was the first one who designed the first intelligence test in order to discriminate between the sharp students and the slow ones. He ascertained questions that predicted success if answered correctly and those that "foretold school difficulties" if answered wrongly (Gardner, 1999a, p.67). However, based on Hoerr (2000), a single test and a single score may not feasibly capture all the individuals' potential and abilities.

Howard Gardner's proposal of Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) in 1983 challenged the traditional notion of intelligence as a unitary concept. Gardner (1983) believed that intelligence has to do with the capacity for problem-solving and fashioning products in a natural setting. Therefore, sitting students at their chairs, asking them to take an intelligence test and deciding on the students' abilities on the basis of the scores does not seem logical.

He suggested the existence of 7 areas of intelligence. The eighth and the ninth intelligence profiles were also added later on. Gardner enumerated these intelligences as linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and existential intelligences. He suggested that the individuals do

not possess the same profile of intelligences and no intelligence type is considered to be superior to others (Gardner, 1983).

Early decades of studies on IDs labeled learners as good or bad, intelligent or dull, motivated or unmotivated ones (Horwitz, 2000). Recently more research has concentrated on considering why some learners are more successful than others (Fatemi & Elahi, 2010). In other words, the way in which individuals perceive the world and themselves plays a crucial role in their learning. One important area which is related to the individuals' belief about themselves and the world around is Locus of Control (LOC), which is derived from Rotter's (1966) social learning theory. LOC is " a generalized expectancy reflecting the degree to which individuals perceive consequences as contingent on their own behavior and abilities (internal control) rather than on some external force such as luck, chance, fate, or powerful others (external control)" (Janssen & Carton, 1999, p.1).

The sense of control that individuals believe they have over their academic performance is a crucial factor to take into consideration when working towards improving academic achievement. Therefore, LOC was chosen as a variable worth investigating in this study. A need also exists to investigate students' potential based on their intelligence profiles to predict any possible contribution of MI to second language learning. The crucial role of individuals' control belief over their language learning achievement on the one hand, and the significance of considering IDs in terms of dominant intelligence types on the other, urged the researcher to conduct this study to tackle any possible relationship between these two cognitive variables, MI and LOC, and between each of these constructs and reading proficiency as a component of second language ability in an EFL context.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Nowadays, English language teaching plays a crucial role in educational system of Iran. MI theory and language studies seem to be interrelated. There are a number of researches done on the relationship between MI theory and language studies. Akbari and Hosseini (2008), for example, investigated the relationship between MI and language learning strategies in an EFL context. The result showed some relationship between the use of language learning strategies and MI. Musical intelligence did not correlate with any aspect of strategy use, and kinesthetic intelligence correlated only with memory learning strategies.

Although many scholars are going ahead with MI theory, Gardner himself believes that his theory lacks experimental research: "while MI theory is consistent with much empirical evidence, it has not been subjected to strong experimental test" (Gardner, 1993, p.33).

Rotter (1966) has empirical support for hypothesis that internals have stronger academic motivation. However, studies attempting to establish the relationship between LOC and academic achievement have reported conflicting results.

Eisenman and Platt (1968), for instance, found no correlation between grades, as evidence of achievement, and LOC scores, while Brown and Strickland (1972) found internality to be positively correlated with higher grades in males.

Reading ability as a skill in language instruction is the focus of attention for most educators that is worth considering and improving. Investigating the theory of multiple intelligences, LOC and their relationship to reading proficiency can be both theoretically and practically

significant. There are a couple of studies done investigating the relationship between either MI or LOC and some other factors. To the best of my knowledge, no comparative study in Iran has concentrated on the relationship between MI and LOC in an EFL context. Consequently, this study aims to focus on the relationship between these two psychological constructs on the one hand, and the influence they may have on reading proficiency as an inseparable skill from the phenomenon of language on the other.

The results of this study may be worth considering for policy makers, curriculum designers, tertiary education specialists, educational organizations, academic specialists, textbook developers, language instructors, classroom teachers as well as the students. Applying the findings of such an investigation in hierarchical stages of policy making and language instruction would improve learners' status, increase their motivation and pave the way for them in the process of language learning.

1.4 Research Questions

Within the scope of this study the following research questions are concerned to be answered:

Q1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' different types of multiple intelligences and their reading proficiency?

Q2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' LOC and their reading proficiency?

Q3. Is there any significant difference between internalizers and externalizers' reading proficiency in Iranian EFL context?