



**SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY**

SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**EQ AND READING COMPREHENSION: A  
STUDY OF INSTRUCTORS' EQ, LEARNERS' EQ  
AND LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
ARTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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***In His Holy Name***

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussion.

**DEDICATED TO:**

***My Dear Family***

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**EI:** Emotional Intelligence

**EQ:** Emotional Quotient

**TEIQue-SF:** Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form

**GMA:** General Mental Abilities

**LI:** Linguistic Intelligence

**GPA:** Grade Point Average

## **Abstract**

Foreign language learners perform differently in reading comprehension for different reasons. We also know that learners' and teachers' different traits affect learners' learning. Along with the investigations about emotional intelligence and foreign language learning, the present study which was descriptive by nature aimed to investigate the extent to which EFL learners' reading comprehension is related to their EQ and their instructors' EQ. In addition, demographic variables such as EFL learners' age and gender were considered. The first group of participants were 205 upper-intermediate and advanced students aged 13-40, including 101 males and 104 females studying English at a language school. The second group of participants comprised 20 instructors, 12 males and 8 females, who were instructors of the first group of participants. The instruments employed were a Persian translated version of Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire- Short Form (TEIQue-SF) and four reading passages to measure the learners' EQ and reading skill respectively. The same EQ questionnaire was given to the instructors in order to measure their EQ. The findings of this study revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between EFL learners' reading comprehension and their EQ and their instructors' EQ. Also, a statistically positive correlation was observed between EFL learners' reading and EQ as regards their age and gender. The findings of this study will be of considerable interest to EFL learners and instructors.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1.Preliminaries**

Personality factors play an important role in second language learning. In recent years, there has been growing interest in investigating the role of learners' characteristics in the foreign language learning process and the reason why some EFL learners are successful and others are not, why some of them perform better than others. Brown (2007) argues that human beings' feelings are an important aspect of a theory of second language acquisition. In the same line, Brown (ibid) states that successful learners know their preferences, strengths, weaknesses, and they know how to utilize their strengths and compensate effectively and productively for weaknesses regardless of their natural preferences.

In educational contexts, both in schools and universities, the reading skill is of great importance. Students in university context and people with different majors need to read a lot of English texts and articles in their field of study. Despite all these serious demands, the educational system in Iran has had some shortcomings in teaching English as a foreign language; that's why many people participates in private English classes to improve their EFL skills. As Brackett and Katulak (2006) state, few studies have been conducted to explore the context where English is spoken as a foreign language.

This study intended to shed lights on the extent to which reading comprehension of the EFL learners as one of the important skills in foreign language learning is related to EFL learners' and instructors' Emotional Intelligence (EI) as one of the factors in affective domains.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

After Gardner's (1983) classification of multiple intelligences, Sternberg (2003 as cited in Brown, 2007) also demonstrates how practical and creative

intelligence can determine one's success in life. Goleman (1995) argues that "the emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind, springing into action without even pausing to consider what it is doing" (p. 291). He considers emotion as one of the most important human abilities. Emotional Quotient (EQ) suggested by Goleman (ibid) is considered as a crucial factor in foreign language learning.

Foreign language learners perform differently in reading comprehension for which there may be different reasons. We also know that learners' and teachers' different traits affect EFL learners' learning. As Brown (2007, p. 154) argues "understanding how human beings feel and respond and believe and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory of a second language acquisition". In line with the role of teachers' trait in learning Walsh and Maffei (1994, as cited in Raymond, 2008) emphasize that the student-professor relationship is important because it is closely linked to learning. Bracket and Katulak (2007) argue that teachers' and students' EI influence effective communication, management of stress, maintenance of a positive class environment and consequently academic and workplace success.

Studies reveal that there is a positive relationship between EQ and academic success (Besharat, 2005; Afghari & Bozorgmehr, 2008; Stottemayer, 2002), foreign language learning (Pishghadam, 2009), vocabulary acquisition (Skourdi & Rahimi, 2010). On the other hand, other studies reveal the positive impact of using short literary readings (Rouhani, 2008) and open-ended stories (Khazaenezhad, 2009) on improvement of emotional intelligence. Also some other researchers have investigated the role of EFL teachers' emotional intelligence in their success, in addition to the role played by their years of teaching experience in their EQ (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2009).



Considering the above mentioned points, difference in performance of learners has attracted the attention of the researcher to investigate why some EFL learners perform better in reading comprehension while their situation is somewhat the same. Referring to what was mentioned before and the importance of EQ in foreign language learning, the researcher planned to study EQ as a factor that may affect students' performances. Many studies have been done considering EFL learners' EQ in second language learning in academic context and EFL instructors' EQ in their own success but not considering instructors' EQ as a factor that may play role in their learners' performances.

In this respect, this study intended to investigate the extent to which EFL learners' reading comprehension related to EFL learners' and instructors' EQ and the extent to which EFL learners' EQ is related to their reading as regards their age and gender.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

This study intended to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is EFL learners' reading comprehension related to their EQ?
2. To what extent is EFL learners' reading comprehension related to their instructors' EQ?
3. How do EFL learners' reading performances correlate with their EQ as regards their gender?
4. How do EFL learners' reading performances correlate with their EQ as regards their age?

#### **1.4. Research Hypotheses**

To this end, the following null hypotheses were proposed.

Research hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation between EFL learners' reading comprehension and their EQ.

Research hypothesis 2: There is no significant correlation between EFL learners' reading comprehension and their instructors' EQ.

Research hypothesis 3: There is no significant correlation between EFL learners' EQ and their reading comprehension as regards their gender.

Research hypothesis 4: There is no significant correlation between EFL learners' and their reading comprehension as regards their age.

#### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

Since EFL learners' personality traits play an important role in foreign language learning, investigating the extent to which personality factors related to foreign language learning is of great value. Many studies have been done in this area and EQ as well in Iran and other countries; however, these studies fail to investigate the extent to which Iranian EFL learners' reading performances related to EFL learners' and instructors' EQ -taking into account learners' age and gender- in institutional context and these are the points this study has tried to explore.

#### **1.6. Definitions of the Key Terms**

**Emotional intelligence :** "Trait EI is defined as a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies and measured via the trait emotional intelligence questionnaire" (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007).

**Reading comprehension skill:** As Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p.554, as cited in Alyousef, 2005) state EFL/ESL reading theory has been influenced during the past decades by Goodman (1970s) who views reading as a “guessing game” in which the “reader reconstructs, as best as he can, a message which has been encoded by a writer”. In this research reading comprehension skill means how EFL learners are able to use their skills to answer the reading comprehension questions.

**EFL learners:** Brown (2007) has defined EFL as a generic term for English learned as a foreign language in a country or a context in which English is not commonly used as a language of education, business, or government, e.g., expanding circle countries (p. 381). In this research EFL learners are Iranian learners of English who study English in a private language context.

**EFL instructors:** Instructors who teach English to EFL learners in a private language school.

### **1.7. Outline of the Thesis**

This study includes five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, purpose of the study, research questions, and research hypotheses in addition to significance of the study. Chapter Two presents the related literature on Emotional Intelligence (EI), how different scholars define Intelligence and EI as well as ideas for and against the role of EI in foreign language learning. It also provides recent empirical research done in this area and what gap this research is expected to fill.

Chapter Three describes participants of the study, instruments applied to collect the data, and the procedure of data collection. Chapter Four shows the results and findings of the study. It includes tables related to data analysis. Chapter Five discusses the results based on the hypothesis, presents the implications and the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for further study.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**