



**Ferdowsi University of Mashhad**

# **The Role of Emotional Intelligence in EFL Teachers' Success at Schools and Language Institutes**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

The major aim of this study was to determine the relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) and their pedagogical success at schools and in language institutes. In addition, the relationship between teachers' EI and the students' grades was also studied. For this purpose, 83 EFL teachers (60 females and 23 males) and 1461 students (1019 females and 442 males) were chosen from four language institutes and 21 schools in the sixth district of Mashhad. Teachers were asked to complete the Bar-On's "EQ-i" questionnaire. Simultaneously, a questionnaire entitled 'Characteristics of successful EFL teachers' was filled in by the students of each teacher with the aim of evaluating the teachers' performance. The quantitative study was conducted administering the two questionnaires to all certificated teachers and their students. The data from both instruments were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment.

The result of data analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between teachers' success and EQ at high schools. The same result was found between teachers' EI and the students' grades. In addition, the role of gender was also examined and no difference was found between males and females. On the contrary, a significant relationship was found between teachers' EI and their success when considering the role of degree (BA / MA) and major (English / non-English). Moreover, another correlation was also found between teachers' EI and their students' grades in institutes. The role of gender was not considered in institutes since there was not enough number of teachers in each sex.

Therefore, the present study indicated that the role of EI can be different in different contexts and further research is needed in order to see its effect when taking into account other variables. The discussions, the differences of the two educational contexts and also the implications are provided.

*Keywords:* Emotional intelligence (EI); Bar-On EQ-i; Success, Effective teaching; Characteristics of successful Iranian EFL teachers' questionnaire.

Chapter One  
Introduction

## **1.0. Introduction**

This chapter starts with a background of studies and information related to the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their success. After that, the problem that has encouraged the researcher to do the study is presented. In the next part, the significance of the present study is discussed. Then, the research questions and research hypotheses are introduced. After that, definitions of the key terms are followed. The last part of this chapter deals with the limitations of the study.

## **1.1. Background**

Traditionally, many people considered "Intelligence" as a crucial and influential factor in all aspects of human's life, including language learning. Mostly, people's disability or failure in language learning was associated with their inadequate innate ability or intelligence. In this regard, since intelligence was thought to be a fixed and unchangeable concept, learners with low IQ were condemned to be unsuccessful language learners for their whole life. Neisser et al. (1996) believed that "the study of intelligence does not need politicized assertions and recriminations; it needs self-restraint, reflection, and a great deal more research" (p. 97). There exist other forms of intelligence about which less research has been conducted and understood (cited in Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004).

However, Intelligence has undergone different definitions throughout ages, from a uni-dimensional to a multi-dimensional concept. After all the advancements, Salovey and Mayer (1990) promoted the idea that our notion of intelligence should be expanded to include "Emotional Intelligence" (EI), which is generally considered as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one's emotions. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso believe that it has been our goal to learn more about one of those less understood intelligences called "emotional intelligence" (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004).

More promising than “intelligence” (IQ), “EI” can be improved and enhanced. Therefore, it would be possible to educate those who are low in their emotional competencies in order to equip them with more enhanced capabilities in recognizing, expressing, and regulating feelings (Mayer & Geher, 1996).

The field of emotional intelligence began in psychology, but it is now a subject dealt with by those in education, human resources, and psychiatry, among others (Ciarrochi, Forgas & Mayer, 2001).

Generally, the notion of “EI” invalidates all the traditional beliefs which assumed that emotions stand in the way of cognition. Traditionally, it was believed that when it comes to logical thinking and problem solving, people should put aside their emotions and solely rely on their cognition. These beliefs can be traced back to the early Greek thoughts such as Aristotelian view about the undependability of emotions (Rouhani, 2008). Thus, intelligence was traditionally considered as a concept devoid of emotion. However, researches have presently proved that emotions, not only do not disorganize thought, but also potentially contribute to promoting intelligence. Rather than characterizing emotions as chaotic and haphazard, today emotion is considered as a motivating derive which can guide and direct thought. Therefore, it can be concluded that despite the traditional views, recent investigations (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Goleman, 1995) have convinced us to accept the fact that “emotions make thinking more intelligent”.

Goleman’s definition of EI in 1995 can help us realize the importance and effects of the concept in the field of language teaching. Goleman (1995) defined Emotional Quotient (EQ) as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, to control impulses and delay gratification; to regulate one’s mood and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope”(p. 34). According to this definition, “EI” can be considered as a contributing factor to second language learning and teaching from multiple aspects. This fact is witnessed by the pervasive attention that has recently been paid to the effect of emotional intelligence on language achievement and success.

Goleman (2001) maintained that EI predicts success more strongly than IQ; moreover, he suggested that it is needed to take this concept into schools since it has some practical implications for curriculum designers and teachers as well. It can be considered as a contributing factor to second language learning and teaching too. EFL learners usually find it difficult to express themselves and can not have an effective communication with their teachers. Teachers should know that lack of effective communication skills in schools can lead to very unsatisfactory outcomes. Weisinger (1998), a leading authority on the application of emotional intelligence, believed that "emotional intelligence" is the key to make relationships and interactions successful so that everybody benefits. According to him:

.....How you put your EI to work is by recognizing and responding to the emotions and feelings of others, guiding those emotions toward productive resolution of a situation, and using those emotions to help others help themselves (p. 6).

Academic performance is often referred to as achievement, or alternatively, the level at which a person has learned to perform a particular skill (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Scholars have found a positive relationship between achievement in the classroom and a variety of factors, such as high school GPA, educational level of parent, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. (Brooks & DuBois, 1995; Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; Gupta et al, 2006; cited in Jaeger & Eagan,2007).

If teachers work on the tips to have more effective communications and try to consider different emotional dimensions of their students, they will have more successful classes. As noted earlier, some researchers and practitioners (e.g. Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000) have explored the possible link between academic achievement and EI. They all addressed the relationship between EI and academic performance by focusing on the effect of non-cognitive variables especially EI; however the question still hold as to how it is possible for a teacher with a low emotional intelligence to satisfy the students' emotional needs and solve their emotional problems.

The important fact here is that teachers can not satisfy their students' emotional needs unless they themselves work on their own emotional needs first. It seems

that the term emotional intelligence is one of the key factors that can have an effect on teachers' success. Therefore, in this study, the researcher attempts to examine the role of teachers' emotional intelligence on their success and its subsequent effect on the performance and success of their students in the process of EFL learning.

In general, teacher effectiveness and success are still vague concepts and can be defined differently by different people. Teachers' performance, students' view points and their GPA, etc., all can be considered as criteria in defining success; however, this study is going to consider an effective and successful teacher according to students' view which plays a great role in classrooms. Newton and Braithwaite (1988) suggested that regarding the time individual students spend in the classroom, they probably provide more evidence in order to find the evaluation judgments than any other evaluator. Savage (1982) also emphasized the use of student evaluations. He further claimed that the means of students' evaluations provide a reliable and valid assessment of a teacher. The point will be elaborated in more detail below

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Teacher and learner interaction in an ELT environment has been the focus of attention for many years and a great deal of time and energy has been devoted to discover more effective ways of teaching and learning foreign languages. Different aspects of language learning process have been investigated in order to find the involved debilitating and facilitative factors.

For example Horwitz and Cope (1986) and Gardner (1993) believed that apart from classroom anxiety, foreign language learners are faced with “test anxiety” or apprehension over academic evaluation (cited in Brown, 2007, p. 162). This kind of anxiety at test situations may block learners’ memory and prevent them from making an effective use of their knowledge and their learnt stuff. This may lead to some significant problems in the process of language learning and teaching. On the other hand, affective variables can be facilitative and influence the success of language learners. Some of the affective factors related to L2 or foreign language

learning are emotions, empathy, attitude and motivation (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

However, since such studies are always in progress, it seems that there still exist some problems. Moreover, the need for finding an easier way of language learning that guarantees learners' success seems to be unsatisfied yet. Among the vast number of studies accomplished in the field (Malewski & Phillion, 2008; Tuncay, 2002), it has been revealed that language learning is also related with a number of affective variables, the state of which can easily influence learners' success.

Krashen's views (1987) support the influence of affective variables on students' performance. The existence of an "affective filter" in his "Monitor Model" is assumed to control the efficacy of the FL acquisition process and enables the learner to utilize comprehensible input to acquire the L2 (Krashen, 1987). Moreover, about 2000 years ago, Plato's definition of learning "*all learning has an emotional base*" led us to think of our teaching considerably with regard to learners and teachers (cited in Raasch, 2007).

According to Ingleton (1995), "research addressing learning that maintains the split between the affective and cognitive aspects of a person's experience missed the cognitive component of emotion and the affective component of cognition" (cited in Jaeger & Eagan, 2007, p. 514). EI was first defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as a type of social intelligence that involved the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions. The ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem solve on that basis, was the result of EI (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000).

Being aware of emotions could provide people with valuable information about themselves and how they relate to others. Mayer and Geher (1996) noted, "People who are good at connecting thoughts to feelings may better 'hear' the emotional implications of their own thoughts, as well as understand the feelings of others from what they say" (p. 89).

Therefore, it seems that one important factor which can have influential results in teaching is "emotional intelligence". It's a term used by Goleman (1995) and

others to describe" how successfully people use an awareness and understanding of their emotions to enable them to function effectively as whole persons" (Matthew & Sayers, 2001).

Tuncay (2002) emphasized the implementation of EQ principles in ELT curriculum to pursue success. He said non-native learners' EQ awareness should be measured through various surveys and they should be evaluated in regard to EQ competencies. To implement these principles in ELT classrooms, teachers should first discover their own emotional intelligence. If they try to raise their own emotional competencies, they will be able to satisfy the students' emotional needs too.

Most of the studies in this regard (e.g., Tuncay, 2002; Pishghadam & Ghonsooli, 2008) focused on students' EQ and its effect on their academic achievement; however, a teacher with a low emotional intelligence can not understand and satisfy the students' emotional desires. Therefore, in this study the researcher wants to examine the role of English teachers' emotional intelligence in their success in language teaching. If the standards of English language teaching are met through developing and implementing EQ competencies and taking into account the emotional components of teaching-learning environment, it will be possible to help the students solve their emotional problems and communicate effectively and actively in their classrooms and as a result attain necessary skills of the target language.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

The present study will investigate the role of emotional intelligence in teachers' success. Since teachers are responsible for assisting others to learn, they should recognize the emotional component of the teaching-learning exchange in order to be able to work with it. According to Mortiboys (2005), teachers need to use emotional intelligence, by which he meant being able to respond to their own feelings and those of learners in order to be more effective in their roles (Mortiboys, 2005).



Using emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for having a good relationship with our learners and it will increase their engagement, motivation and readiness to take risks in their learning. Besides, it is necessary for English teachers to be familiar with emotional intelligence and to try to enhance it since it can be trained and increased; moreover, if they become familiar with this concept, they can work on the emotional aspects of their students too. It seems natural that a teacher with a low level of EQ does not satisfy the students' emotional needs, so he will be of little help to them and failing to increase their emotional intelligence (Fahim & Pishghadam, 2007).

According to Jaeger & Eagan (2007), teachers have a vital role in helping people develop their talents and satisfy their potential for personal growth and well-being; therefore, school teachers should be more aware of their new demands as the profession of teaching is becoming more complex.

Goleman (1995, p. 311) also used the term Emotional Literacy to express that:

emotional literacy changes our view of the task of schools, making them more explicitly societies agent. Apart from any specifics of curriculum, using opportunities in and out of class help students turn moments of personal crisis into lessons in emotional competence....

Emotional literacy plays an important role in ELT classrooms because of many reasons such as: " Misconception of target culture's values, learner's acquisition difficulty of the target language linguistic skills, individual motivation problems, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, personal and social skills" ( Goleman , 1998).

Therefore, if teachers take their emotional intelligence into consideration along with other factors that have an effect on their success, they can have more effective classes and satisfy their students ' needs too. If we make teachers aware of their emotional intelligence, it helps them enhance their emotional intelligence to better understand their own and learners' emotions. This will equip them with an ability to establish better interpersonal relationships with learners and as a result, teach in a more influential way. It will also contribute material developers and syllabus designers to develop materials and syllabuses which are more congruent with techniques that enhance emotional intelligence in the classroom.

Our purpose is to offer some specific guidelines for teacher training and success in ELT because the essence of teaching is human interaction through a balance of interpersonal, technical and emotional competence; moreover, since language learning is a collaborative and also stressful task, the concept of emotional intelligence and its necessity for teachers to be aware of that will be significant in our field in the following vital ways:

- Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to express one's feelings and to perceive others' feelings. This ability will enable teachers to establish and maintain relationships with their students in an easier and more effective way and try to improve their students' emotional intelligence too. Therefore, it would also be easier for learners to cope, and to communicate in second language as a collaborative and communicative task.
- Emotional intelligence also refers to the ability to manage and regulate feelings based on the environmental demands to enhance and improve performance. So, through familiarizing this ability, learners will be able to cope with the stressful and highly demanding task of second language learning. Moreover, at test situations, emotional intelligence would enable learners to manage their anxiety and prevent it from lowering their performance.
- Since teachers have an influence on students through communication with them or with other students, they are considered as a role model for them on how to regulate their emotion appropriately in the classroom.
- Students function best in classrooms in which teachers enjoy working with students, care about student needs, and empathize with their problems (Million, 1987). Moreover, a teacher's personal interest and enthusiasm can do much to promote positive student attitudes about learning.

So when our teachers meet certain characteristics and become effective successful teachers, students will most certainly benefit and become successful. Considering the importance of EI in EFL teaching, the aim of the present study is

to find out whether teachers with higher levels of EI are more successful in their classes and their students are more satisfied or not.

#### **1.4. Purpose of the study**

The lack of investigation in the possible relationships between teachers' EI and their educational effectiveness is a clear evidence for a need to commence identical studies in this area. Thus, the major aim of this study was to advance the base necessary for understanding the relationship between EFL teachers' Emotional Intelligence (EI) and their success in language teaching in schools and institutes. Moreover, the role of gender was investigated. Specifically, to address the purpose of the study, the four following research questions were developed to guide its implementation.

##### **1.4.1. Research questions**

The present study addressed the following four main questions:

**Q1:** Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their success in language teaching at high schools?

**Q2:** Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their success in language teaching in language institutes?

**Q3:** Does the relationship between EFL teachers' EI and their success differ with regard to the contexts of education, i.e., schools and institutes?

**Q4:** Is there any relationship between gender and the type of EI with respect to teachers' success at high schools?

##### **1.4.2. Research hypotheses**

According to the mentioned questions, the four following null hypotheses were formulated:

**H0 1:** There is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their success in language teaching at high schools.

**H0 2:** There is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their success in language teaching in language institutes.

**H0 3:** The relationship between EFL teachers' EI and their success does not differ with regard to the contexts of education, i.e., schools and institutes.

**H0 4:** There is no relationship between gender and the type of EI with respect to teachers' success at high schools?

## 1.5. Definitions of key terms

### -Bar-On EQ-i:

It is a self-report scale originally designed by Reuven Bar-On in 1997. This test includes 133 items which measure five broad areas of skills or competencies and 15 factorial components.

The five broad skills and the subcomponents measured by Bar-On EQ-i are as follows:

#### 1. Intrapersonal EQ:

Emotional self-awareness: *To be aware of and understand one's emotions.*

Assertiveness: *To effectively and constructively express one's emotions and oneself.*

Self-regard: *To accurately perceive, understand and accept oneself.*

Self-actualization: *To strive to achieve personal goals and actualize one's potential.*

Independence: *To be self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others.*

#### 2. Interpersonal EQ:

Empathy: *To be aware of and understand how others feel.*

Interpersonal relationship: *To establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well with others.*

Social responsibility: *To identify with one's social group and cooperate with others.*

#### 3. Adaptability EQ:

Problem solving: *To effectively solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature.*