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SUBJECT:

THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG EFL LEARNERS' CREATIVITY, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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In the name of God

the compassionate

the merciful

Dedicated to :

my beloved family

and

my precious professor

Dr.Mal-Amiri

for their love, patience and support

ABSTRACT

The Present Study is carried out in an attempt to investigate the relationship among EFL learners' creativity, emotional intelligence and language learning strategies at Islamic Azad University which is conducted on the basis of descriptive method, the correlation. To achieve the objective of the research, a group of one hundred and twenty male and female learners between the ages of 18 and 35 majoring in both BA and MA in English Literature, English Translation and English Teaching at Islamic Azad University Central Tehran were randomly selected and to obtain the required data, the following questionnaires were utilized: Persian Creativity Test validated by Zaker (2013), Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Test validated by Samooee (2003), and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford, translated and validated by Tahmasebi (1999).

The relationship among creativity, emotional intelligence and language learning strategy was investigated using Pearson's product correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. The results of this study revealed that there is no significant relationship between EFL learners' creativity and emotional intelligence (r=.17, p=.063), there exists a significant relationship between EFL learners' creativity and their language learning strategies (r=.33, p=.000), a positive small correlation exists between EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their language learning strategies (r=.180, p=.04) and finally EFL learners' creativity was a better predictor of their language learning strategies rather than emotional intelligence (B=.136, p=.124>.05).

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1.1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a substantial amount of interest in individual differences among learners. They bring to the language learning situation a wide spectrum of individual differences that influence the learning rate and the ultimate learning results. It is worth mentioning that intelligence is often thought to be one of the most significant predictors of language learning success (GU, 2003).

Students who receive higher intelligence quotient (IQ) scores are usually considered more intelligent. Intelligence as a general concept encompasses social and emotional factors besides the cognitive factors (Cantor & Kihlstorm, 1987; Sternberg, 1985). Goleman (1995) stressed that, IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success; the rest is related to other factors including EI. Emotional intelligence refers to the capacities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others. EI can be as much powerful, and at times, more powerful than IQ in predicting success in various life challenges (Goleman, 1995).

Emotional Intelligence (EI), a concept rooted in the theory of social intelligence, is the combination of factors which allows a person to feel, to be motivated, to regulate mood, to control impulse, to persist in the face of frustration, and thereby to succeed in day to day living also, EI is a different way of being smart (Goleman, 1995).

As Carmeli (2003, as cited in Salami, 2007) noted, emotionally intelligent individuals are expected to recognize, manage, and use their emotions to manipulate the ensuing obstacles and prevent their negative effects on attitudes towards their profession. Wolfradt, Felfe, and Koster (2001-2002) in two studies revealed that emotional intelligence is mainly associated with personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, self-perceived creativity), life satisfaction and thinking styles with only a low relation to verbal intelligence. The answer to the question of success or failure in scientific field is found in the works of some theorists such as Mayer and Salovey (1997) in EQ and its components. The studies show the role and importance of EQ in different aspects of people life including education, job, social environment and productivity and mental health.

By development of the concept of EQ, different issues and variables are attributed to it. Sternberg (1997) believed that academic achievement and intelligence are not measured only by academic scores, and we should consider people skills and attitudes. Sternberg researches on intelligence resulted into a new theory called "successful intelligence" and he (1997) believes that successful intelligent is required to achieve success in life and this theory is substantially broader than conventional theories of intelligence. It defines intelligence in terms of the ability to achieve one's goals in life Conventional views of intelligence favor individuals who are strong in memory and analytical

abilities, while to achieve success in life, practical and creativity abilities are important.

The study of creativity has drawn the attention of professionals and researchers in a variety of disciplines, as the concept is considered to be of central importance in many contexts (Runco 2004). There have been recent integrative efforts to describe and delineate the field of creativity research (Batey and Furnham 2006; Plucker et al. 2004). Creativity's multifaceted nature has been expressed as a constellation of factors such as personality traits, cognitive abilities, cognitive styles, and motivation (Amabile 1996; Eysenck 1993; Mumford & Gustafson 1988). There is a clear need to consider cognitive as well as non-cognitive variables in the study of creativity. Within the latter variables, personality and emotional aspects seem to play a central role (Batey & Furnham 2006).

From a psychological point of view, creativity is an important factor because it provides a framework for the description of an individual, and also specific differences between individuals. These individual differences are important because they can be used to predict future behavior such as academic success (e.g., Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir, & Kumar, 2009; Otto, 1998). Although many people might think that only the ingenious high-achievers are meant to be creative, some researchers (Harrington, Block, & Block, 1983) contend that the fundamental elements of creativity are normally distributed in the population.

All children are capable of thinking creatively irrespective of their IQ provided that their parents provide the appropriate climate so that children's creativity can flourish (Fisher, 2005). Therefore, creativity which involves sensitivity to problems, creative fluency of production, ability to come up with novel ideas, flexibility of mind, synthesizing ability, analyzing ability, reorganization or redefinition of organized wholes, a high degree of complexity of the conceptual structure, and evaluation (Guilford, 1950), might be a factor affecting second or foreign language learning.

In the area of teaching and learning a second/foreign language, there has been an increasing interest in changing the focus from the teacher-centered classroom to the learner-centered classroom by shifting the focus from the product-orientedness to the process-orientedness of language learning. In this view, the learners are considered as active participants that the effects of teaching will be partly dependant on what they know such as their prior knowledge, what they think about during learning, and their active cognitive processes (Dansereau, 1985).

Also, this has brought attention to learning strategies which an individual learner applies during the learning process to facilitate second language learning (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991b). That is, how learners' process new information and the kinds of strategies they use to learn, understand, or remember has been the major concern of the second or foreign language researchers. Language learning strategy (LLS) has been defined by many

researchers. According to Rubin (1987), language learning strategies are "strategies that contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and (which) affect learning directly" (p. 23). Oxford (1990) stated that "learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p.8). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) viewed learning strategies as ''the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information'' (p. 1).

Holec (1981) argued that learning strategies can foster learners' autonomy in language learning. Strategies can also assist learners in promoting their own achievement in language proficiency (Bremner, 1998; Green & Oxford, 1995; O'Malley et al., 1985; Oxford, 1990; Politzer, 1983). Learning strategies, therefore, not only help learners become efficient in learning and using a language, but also contribute to increasing learners' self-directed learning.

Learning strategies are important and should be paid attention to because they are one of the major applications of cognitive theory. Learning strategies are procedures undertaken by the learner, in order to make their own language learning as effective as possible. In O'Malley and Chamot's (1990, p. 52) view, learning strategies are complex procedures that individuals apply to tasks; consequently, they may be represented as procedural knowledge which may be acquired.

All language learners use certain types of language learning strategies to a certain level, but there are differences in the frequency and choice of use among different learners (Chamot & Kupper, 1989). It appears that successful language learners have the ability to orchestrate and combine particular types of language learning strategies in effective ways according to their own learning needs (Oxford, 1990). Thus, to facilitate the learners' language learning and to promote learner autonomy, language learning strategy is a key point for instructors to pay attention to.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the area of second or foreign language learning, however, creativity has almost been under-research (Dörnyei, 2005). There are few studies that take into account the role of creativity in language learning achievement (Albert & Kormos, 2004; Meera & Remya, 2010; Otto, 1998; Sutrisno, 2007).

In Kneller's (as cited in James 1999) argument, creativity is characterized by two factors, i.e. novelty and relevance. The first refers to the arrival of something new or original, and the second characteristic, relevance, reminds us that creativity is always in a context and a creative act is a response to a situation in which something requires a solution or at least clarification. Matsouka, Trevlas, and Zachopoulou (2003) assert that creativity is a multidimensional construct and may be measured as a personality trait or a creative style. Abutalebi and Costa (2008), who investigated the role of

creativity in entrepreneurship education, specify creativity as a unique ability of individuals and the undiscovered mystery of the brain as well.

Hadley (2003) was one of those who have reported the significance of the creativity effect in learning a second/foreign language and language use creatively. He maintains that students, who hope to make progress in their skills beyond the elementary phases, must learn to create with the language, or in other words make use of language creatively.

Recently more attention has been paid to the effect of emotional intelligence on academic success in education (Elias, Arnold, & Hussey 2003). Nevertheless, as Brackett and Katulak (2007) state, only few studies have been conducted to explore this concept in contexts where English is spoken as a second or foreign Language (ESL/EFL), given the idea that the emotional intelligence serves both internal mechanisms and external environment in the process of language learning.

Study of EI in the educational setting is a relatively new endeavor and, as such, few studies have focused on the overall effects of EI on second or foreign language learning. These few studies have been limited to certain dimensions as management, self-esteem, anxiety, strategy use, or motivation only. In ESL/EFL context, different studies examined the relationship between EQ and second language success (Chao, 2003; Clement, Dornyei, & Noels, 1994; Nelson & Low, 1999). For instance, Aghasafari (2006) found a positive relationship between overall EQ and language learning strategies. The growing interest

towards language learning, particularly English, has made the factors that could affect the learning effectiveness more important. Many factors influence the second/foreign language learning process. However, one of the most important elements for SLA research to explain is the specific strengths and weaknesses that individuals carry out with them in their second/foreign languages respectively.

Thus, knowing more about the influence of emotional intelligences on ESL/EFL learners is getting more important. Since late 1970s, there has been a bulk of research indicating that the focus of present educational systems is on rational and cognitive aspects such as memory and problem solving and that emotional mind has received little attention and its important contributions have been neglected (Epstein, 1998; and Nelson and Low, 2003).

Investigating whether or not there is any relationship between the use of Language Learning Strategy (LLS) and EQ scores of Iranian EFL learners, Akbari and Talebinezhad (2003) conducted a study in which they collected data from 128 (45 males, 83 females) English B.A. and M.A. students majoring in English translation and TEFL. The researchers reported that no significant relationship was found between the participants' strategy use and their IQ scores. Additionally, they reported that Iranian mostly use metacognitive strategy while affective strategy was used the least.

A study carried out by Razmjoo, Sahragard, and Sadri (2009) was aimed at identifying the relationship between EI, vocabulary learning knowledge and

vocabulary learning strategies among Iranian EFL learners. The subjects of the study were 100 senior students who were English language teacher trainees at Shiraz Azad University between 2006 and 2007. Data analysis of the findings (descriptive and inferential) revealed that there is a relationship between EI and vocabulary learning knowledge. It was also found that among different domains of intelligence, verbal-linguistic and naturalist intelligences made statistically significant contribution to the prediction of vocabulary learning knowledge.

To the researcher's knowledge, based on the study of different research findings in the field of creativity, investigating the effects of creativity and its relationship with different aspects of teaching and learning has been just recently coming to the focus of scholars' attention. While the relationship between creativity and many well-researched variables such as self-efficacy, aptitude, autonomy, critical thinking, cognitive styles and etc. has been investigated, a little attempt has been made to examine the relationship between creativity and learning strategies, especially language learning strategy. So this motivated the researcher to explore the relationship among Iranian university students' creativity, Emotional Intelligence, and their Language Learning Strategy in EFL context.

1.3. Statement of the Research Questions

To meet the afore-mentioned objective the following research questions were raised:

Q_1: Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' creativity and emotional intelligence?

Q_2: Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' creativity and language learning strategies?

Q_3: Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' emotional intelligence and language learning strategies?

Q_4: Is there any difference between predictability of EFL learners' creativity and emotional intelligence about their language learning strategies?

1.4. Statement of the Research Hypotheses

To provide answers to the questions empirically the following null hypotheses were formulated.

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between EFL learners' creativity and emotional intelligence.

H02: There is no significant relationship between EFL learners' creativity and language learning strategies.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between EFL learners' emotional intelligence and language learning strategies.

$H0_4$: There is no difference between predictability of EFL learners' creativity and emotional intelligence about their language learning strategies.

1.5. Definition of the Key Terms

1.5.1. Creativity: Creativity refers to the generation of ideas or products that are original, valuable or useful and also the ability of producing original, novel and useful work or idea (Amabile, 1996; Sternberg &Lubart, 1999). This construct is operationally defined in this study as the scores that participants gained in The Persian Creativity Test validated by Zaker (2013) in Iran with the reliability of .848 using Cronbach's alpha based on The Abedi-Schumacher Creativity Test by O'Neil, Abedi, and Spielberger (1994) which is in English. More descriptions of the test will appear in chapter three below.

1.5.2. Emotional Intelligence: An ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationships and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them, the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion related feelings, and understand the information of those emotions and manage them (Mayer et al., 1999). This construct is operationally defined in this