فصلنامه پژوهش در مسائل تعلیم و تربیت
شماره پیاپی ۵۳– دوره دوم، شماره ۳۶– بهار و تابستان ۱۳۹۴
مقاله شماره ۴– صفحات ۹۵ تا ۱۰۴

The Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Emotional Intelligence

Maryam Meshkat

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to find out whether an association exists between reading comprehension of EFL learners and their emotional intelligence (EI). Reading comprehension was measured based on grades acquired from Reading Comprehension courses 1-4. The Bar-on inventory was given to 46 students to complete in order to measure their emotional intelligence.Correlation was run between these grades and an r value of 0.081 at a level of significance of 0.591 indicating that an association does not exist between EI and reading scores. The study also wanted to find out whether there was a difference between the emotional intelligence of men and women. A correlation coefficient of -0.017 at a level of significance of 0.820 showed that a significant relationship does not exist between gender and EI. The results of this study can be used in reading classes in order to enhance comprehension.

Keywords:Reading Comprehension, Emotional Intelligence, Gender

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

1. Introduction

"The written word surrounds us daily. It confuses us and enlightens us, it depresses us and amuses us, it sickens us and heals us." (Brown, 2001; p. 298). At every turn, we who are members of a literate society are dependent on reading. Perfetti (1985, cited in Urquhart and Weir, 1998) has defined reading as thinking guided by text. Reading is the coordinated application of knowledge and processes to a text or texts in the service of a goal or purpose (Enright &Schedl, 2000 cited in Cohen and Upton, 2006). Reading is very much an individual, cognitive process – what Bernhardt (1991) has called 'an intrapersonal problem solving task' (p.6). From this perspective, task characteristics as well as reader's knowledge and personal abilities play a role in the degree of reading success. Performance variation in reading comprehension occurs, due to a large extent, to individual differences in linguistic knowledge and general and domain-specific background knowledge. Enright et al. (2000) noted other variables that can influence how first-language readers go about trying to understand an academic text and how successful those efforts will be: cognitive processing abilities (e.g., working memory efficiencies), text type (e.g., expository vs. narrative) reading task, strategy use, affect (e.g., motivation, anxiety), topic, and L1, among others. The interplay among these variables influences how individual respondents perform on given reading tasks as they seek to achieve a particular goal or purpose.

In looking for ways to describe the interaction between reader and text, researchers have also created models that describe what happens when people read. So far, models have been confined to the native language, and none has been comprehensive. Linguists and L2/FL professionals have, however, explored the similarities and differences between reading in the L1 and an L2/FL. Barnett (1989) enlists these models as bottom-up theory, top-down theory and interactive theory.

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

The interactive school of theorists – which most researchers currently endorse – argues that both top-down and bottom-up processes are occurring, either alternately or at the same time. These theorists describe a process that

1. Assistant Professor ,Shahid RajaeeTeacherTrainingUniversity,Tehran.
maryammeshkat@yahoo.com.

moves both bottom-up and top-down, depending on the type of text as well as on the reader's background knowledge, language proficiency level, motivation, strategy use, and culturally shaped beliefs about reading.

Each individual perceives experiences from family, community and schools and gains knowledge from them in different ways. The differences from one individual to another raise the question of nature vs nurture, a topic that has long been hotly debated in the field of education. Although L2/FL research investigates how motivation, learning styles, aptitude, and intelligence influence language learning, teachers need to consider how different readers read and how teachers can best facilitate that process. Brown (1987) details several individual factors that influence language learning including self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, and motivation. All of these factors operate in the reading classroom as well (Richards, 2005). Therefore, it is also possible for emotional intelligence which includes these factors to influence reading in a foreign language.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence (EI) as the capacity to process emotional information accurately and efficiently. It includes the capacity to perceive, assimilate, understand, and manage emotion. Salovey and Mayer (1990) also gave another definition of EI as a construct involving the ability of an individual to monitor their own and others' emotions, to discriminate among the positive and negative effects of emotion, and to use emotional

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

information to guide their thinking and actions(Jordan and Troth, 2002).In a recent work Mayer et. al. (2008) defined EI as the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that if reading is considered an interaction between top-down and bottom-up processes (Barnett, 1989), thinking guided by text(Perfetti1985, cited in Urquhart and Weir, 1998) and an intrapersonal problem solving task(Bernhardt, 1991), it may have a relationship with emotional intelligence which is the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about one's own and others' emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought (Mayer et. al., 2008). Since underlying both of these concepts is thought.

Goleman (1985) claimed that more than 80% of success depended on emotional intelligence. He believed this was why geniuses fail out of university and not very bright people can become very successful. This research wants to put this concept to test and see whether emotional intelligence does have a significant role in the reading comprehension of English language learners.

The following questions are posed in this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship between reading comprehension and emotional intelligence?
2. Is there a significant relationship between gender and emotional intelligence?

2. Methodology

Participants

In order to answer the research questions 46 university students were chosen. They had undergone instruction for at least two years at state universities. The participants were both men and women of 18-30. The subjects were 46 students studying at ShahidRajaeeUniversity.

Instrumentation

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

One of the instruments used in this study was the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). It is claimed that the EQ-i is the most comprehensive self-report measure of EI available (Bar-On, 1997; Bar-On, 2000; Dawda& Hart, 2000). It consists of 12 EI subscales, which include emotional self-awareness ("It is hard for me to understand the way I feel"), assertiveness ("It's difficult for me to stand up for my right"), and self-regard (e.g., "I don't feel good about myself"), independence (e.g., "I prefer others to make decisions for me"), empathy (e.g., "I am sensitive to the feelings of others"), interpersonal relationship (e.g., "People think that I'm sociable"), social responsibility (e.g., "I like helping people"), problem solving (e.g., "My approach in overcoming difficulties is to move step by step"), reality testing (e.g., "It's hard for me to adjust to new conditions"), stress tolerance (e.g., "I know how to deal with upsetting problems"), and impulse control (e.g., "It's a problem controlling my anger"). In addition to the subscales, the EQ-i contains three factors that are considered "facilitators" of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2000), which include happiness (e.g., "It's hard for me to enjoy life"), optimism (e.g., I believe that I can stay on top of tough situations"), and self-actualization (e.g., "I try to make my life as meaningful as I can"). The EQ-i yields a measure of overall EI as well as scores on each of the components. The Bar-On inventory also contains four validity indicators that measure the extent to which people are responding randomly or distorting their responses to appear favorably or unfavorably to the person administering the test Ciarrochi (2001). The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) used in this study was a Persian version. It has been translated and modified by RahelehSamooei et al. The scoring of this questionnaire is done on an item basis. The answers are given in a likert scale and each item can score between 1-5 marks. There are 90 items in this questionnaire so a subject can score between 90 the lowest score to 450 the highest.

In addition, in order to measure the reading comprehension ability of students their grades at the end of four semesters were also used.

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

These were grades scored on final exams in reading courses 1-4. The exams were reliable and valid.

Procedure

The Persian version of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) was found and used in this study. This questionnaire was given to the students to complete. Students chosen to take part in this study had undergone at least four semesters of training at university. The questionnaire was administered to the students in class and they were given thirty minutes to complete it. When EQ-i was completed it was scored by the researcher.

The grades scored on reading comprehension courses were extracted from the student files.This information was punched into SPSS for the statistical analysis.

Design

This study had a correlational design. Two sets of data on three different variables; emotional intelligence,reading comprehension and gender were obtained from the students. The relation between these sets of data was then compared. The purpose was to find the association between emotional intelligence and reading comprehension and gender.

Statistical Analysis

The following statistical analyses were run to find answers to the research questions. A Pearson correlation was run to find if there was any relation between emotional intelligence and reading comprehension of students of TEFL. In order to find out whether there is any difference in the emotional intelligence of the different genders a point-biserial correlation was carried out.

3. Results and Discussion

The first question of this study was whether there was a significant relationship between EI and the grades achieved by students on their reading courses. In order to answer this question a Pearson correlation was carried out between reading scores and EI.

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for EI andReading scores

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EI	329.8877	37.39549	187
Reading	15.5939	1.84395	46

Table 2: Correlation between EI and Reading scores

		EI	Reading
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.591
	N	187	46
Reading	Pearson Correlation	.081	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.591	
	N	46	46

As is shown in the table above, an r value of 0.081 at a level of significance of 0.591 indicates that an association does not exist between EI and reading scores. The researcher also ran a correlational analysis between the components of EI and reading, however, no significant relationship was found there, either.

A Spearman's rho correlation was run between the grades of reading comprehension and the components of emotional intelligence. The results can be seen in the following table.

Table 3: Correlation between components of EI and Reading scores

	Correlation Coefficient	Significance (2-tailed)	N
Reading Comprehension	1.000		46
Problem Solving	.160	.305	43
Happiness	.024	.878	43

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

Independence	-.074	.637	43
Stress Tolerance	.069	.658	44
Self-Actualization	.105	.500	44
Realism	.119	.470	39
Interpersonal	.016	.917	45
Emotional Awareness	.185	.224	45
Optimism	.031	.842	43
Self-Esteem	.096	.537	44
Impulse Control	.225	.136	45
Flexibility	-.250	.098	45
Responsibility	.062	.683	45
Empathy	.052	.731	46
Assertiveness	.203	.180	45

One of the reasons why this question was devised was because novels which are studied in reading classes usually emphasize emotions as is reported in reviews about the classic "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen (Mayer et. al., 2008). Literary references dating back to 1953 assert that this novel is said to richly possess EI, so the researcher speculated that an association may exist between the scores on reading acquired through such instruction and EI. However, it is important to keep in mind that the approach the instructor of the course has toward the material is very important as well. The emphasis of the course may not have been on this aspect of the material at all. Therefore, even though the texts were rich in EI, learning did not take place. Therefore, a study can be done to find out whether there will be a significant difference in EI if a reading course is carried out with an approach that stresses the elements of EI. Such an approach could also be using unconscious learning of vocabulary and grammar. As the students focus on the elements of EI such as responsibility, assertiveness, happiness, independence and tolerance; they could be learning words and structures without even noticing it.

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

The second question of the study was to find out whether there is a significant relationship between EI and gender. In order to answer this question a correlational analysis was run between scores attained on the EI questionnaire and the gender of the participants.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for EI and Gender

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EI	329.8877	37.39549	187
Gender	1.4332	.49684	187

Table 5: Correlation between EI and Gender

		EI	Gender
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	-.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.820
	N	187	187
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.017	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.820	
	N	187	187

As is seen in Table 5; a correlation coefficient of -0.017 at a level of significance of 0.820 shows that a significant relationship does not exist between gender and EI. Another analysis was also run between gender and the components of EI. This analysis showed no significant association between the components of EI and gender.

Bar-On (2000) notes no difference between males and females regarding overall emotional and social competence, though both gender groups do show slight differences (in their favor) in some domains. (Females score higher on interpersonal skills, men score higher on stress management and adaptation). In fact, existing personality data suggest that women score higher on some of the personality traits linked to EI, especially agreeableness and its components such as trust and tender-mindedness. Men, on the other hand, score higher on others, such as emotional stability.

Conclusions

The results of the present study are not completely in agreement with Bar-On (2000). In this study, as well, there was no significant difference between the two genders as to their overall EI. However, there is a difference in the results regarding the subscales of EI. In this study the participants showed no significant difference

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]

regarding the subscales of EQ-i as well. If the sentences written by Bar-On are read carefully he asserts that "women score higher on some of the personality traits *linked* to EI". The traits that he goes on to name are not part of the subscales, maybe he is talking about other traits that correlate with the traits on EQ-i but not on the subscales themselves. This is very interesting, because it shows that ultimately the results Bar-On is talking about are not different from what is found in this study and these two studies are in agreement in this outcome.

References

Barnett, M. (1989).*More than Meets the Eye: Foreign Language Reading Theory and Practice*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: CAL & Prentice-Hall.

Bar-On, R. (1997Bar-On, R. (1997) *The Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EQ-I): Technical manual*. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems, Inc.

Bar-On, R. (2000) Bar-On, R. (2000) Emotional and social intelligence; Insights from the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i).In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parker (Eds), *Handbook of emotional Intelligence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bernhardt, E. (1991) Bernhardt, E. (1991). *Reading development in a second language: Theoretical, empirical, and classroom perspectives.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Brown, H. D. (1987) Brown, H. D. (1987). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

Brown, H. D. (2001) *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. New York. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Cohen, D. A., & Upton, T. A. (2006) Cohen, D. A., & Upton, T. A. (2006). Strategies in responding to the new TOEFL reading tasks (TOEFL Monograph Series Report No. 33). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. http:// www.ets.org/Media/research/pdf/RR-06-06.pdf.

Enright, M. K., &Schedl, M. (2000) Enright, M. K., &Schedl, M. (2000). Reading for a reason: Using reader purpose to guide test design. Manuscript in preparation.

Goleman, D. (1985). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books

Jordan, P. J. and Troth, A. C. (2002)Jordan, P. J. and Troth, A. C. (2002) Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution: Implications for Human Resource Development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, Vol. 4, No. 1 26-79.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P. R., and Caruso, D. R. (2008) *Emotional Intelligence*.American Psychologist. Vol. 63, No. 6, 503-517.

Richards, J. C. (2005). *From Reader to Reading Teacher*. New York. Cambridge University Press.

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990).Emotional intelligence. Imagination, *Cognition& Personality,* 9, 185–211.

Urquhart, A. H. & Weir, C. J. (1998) Urquhart, A. H. & Weir, C. J. (1998). *Reading in a second language: Process, product and practice.* Harlow: Longman.

[Downloaded from isoedmag.ir on 2026-11-18]