The Interrelationships among Emotional Intelligence, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Willingness to Communicate

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Abstract: The present study aimed to investigate the relationships among emotional intelligence (EI), foreign language anxiety, and willingness to communicate (WTC). To this end, 88 upper intermediate and advanced English learners from Azaran Language College and Avesta Language Institute were asked to complete 3 questionnaires: Bar-On's EQ-i, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLCAS), and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). The results of the correlational study indicated that there was a significant relationship between EQ, WTC, and FLCAS. The correlation between FLCAS and WTC was also significant. Several subscales of EQ were also related to FLCAS and WTC. To further analyze the data, regression analysis was run which indicated that FLCAS, EQ, and some of its subscales were predictors of WTC. Also, EQ and several of its subscales could predict FLCAS.

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1. Introduction

Intelligence has long been an important and controversial issue in education. It has long attracted scholars' and teachers' attention. The definition of intelligence has gone through changes since it first appeared; however, it is yet hard to define it (Illeris, 2008). Different scholars have defined it differently. Some believe that it is the ability to learn and think, to understand and solve problems (Illeris, 2008); others refer to it as the ability to learn (Dornyei, 2005).

Emotion and intelligence were considered separate areas for many years (1900-1969). In 1970-1989 the boundary between intelligence and emotion began to fade and research accounted for the way emotions interacted with thought. In 1990-1993, Mayer and Salovey wrote a series of articles about Emotional Intelligence and in 1994-1997 Goleman made it popular by writing his book *Emotional Intelligence.* He put too much emphasis on EI and considered it more important than IQ (Mayer, 2001).

Daniel Goleman (1995) considered Gardener a major inspiration, although he believed that Gardener and his followers had not pursued the role of feeling in intelligences completely and they had focused on cognition about feelings.

As Mayer and Salovey (1997) define it, "EI involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 10). Emotional intelligence is the set of abilities that account for how people's emotional reports vary in their truthfulness and how the more accurate understanding of emotion leads to better problem solving in an individual's emotional life. More formally, emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and control emotion in the self and the others (cited in Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000).

Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2002) also define EI as abilities that promote effective social functioning by skills for identifying, understanding and managing emotions (cited in Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2004).

Emotional intelligence is composed of two parts emotions and intelligence. It is the reasoning that takes emotions into account. *Intelligence* as part of EI pertains to abilities such as the "power to combine and separate" concepts, to judge and to reason, and to engage in abstract thought. *Emotions* belong to the second, so-called affective sphere of mental functioning, which includes the emotions themselves, moods, evaluations, and other feeling states. Definitions of EI should in some way connect emotions with intelligence if the meanings of the two terms are to be preserved (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Goleman (1995) believes that people have two minds: the rational and the emotional. The Emotional mind is the original and so he believes it matters more than IQ. He believes that a high IQ doesn't guarantee a good management of life instead the ability to control and use emotions is important.

EI correlates with other intelligences and is also distinct from others so we can call it a kind of intelligence. It can be considered an actual intelligence as opposed to a social trait (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Emotionally intelligent people know about the expression and manifestation of emotion, they are also sensitive to its false or manipulative expression. Feelings can be recognized not only in oneself but also in other people and objects. Reasoning about the progression of feelings in interpersonal relationships is central to EI (Mayer &Salovey, 1997).

Most skills can be improved through education, and EI is no exception. It can be improved, too and its improvement will promote both emotion and thought (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Bar-On (1997) developed the most famous questionnaire for measuring EI (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2004). Mayer, Salovey and Caruso also developed MSCEIT for measuring EI (Mayer, 2001).

Williams and Burden (1997) believe that anxiety is highly culture related and it is different in different cultures. In general, when an individual becomes anxious, negative self-related cognition begins and the person becomes cognitively paralyzed. They cannot use the resources available to them at other times (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004).

In educational research, anxiety is usually classified as being trait or state. Trait anxiety is a relatively stable personality trait. A person who is trait anxious is likely to feel anxious in a variety of situations. State anxiety, on the other hand, is a temporary condition experienced at a particular moment. A third type of anxiety is situation specific anxiety. This reflects a trait that recurs in specific situations (Spielberger, Anton, & Bedell, 1976). Research into language learning anxiety has indicated that language learning be classed as situation specific (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991; Horwitz 2001). That is, a trait which recurs in language learning situations, namely classrooms.

Woodrow (2006) has claimed that L2 anxiety hinders the oral performance of ESL speakers. Second language anxiety can predict oral achievement. Interacting with native speakers has been distinguished as the most frequent source of anxiety. Anxiety experienced in communication in English can be debilitating and can influence students' adaptation to the target environment and ultimately the achievement of their educational goals.

The use of the target language is one of the main purposes of second language learning and it is an indicator of success in learning the second language. Seliger (1977) has shown that it plays an important role in learning L2. Willingness to communicate (WTC) was originally introduced with reference to L1 communication but it was extended to L2 communication as well (MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, & Noels, 1998). In this model, the factors that affect WTC are social and individual context, affective cognitive context, motivational propensities, situated antecedents, and behavioral intention.

Although EI and foreign language anxiety have been center of attention in language learning and testing, their role in learners' willingness to communicate seems to have been ignored. In this study, the researchers attempted to see if there was a relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI), foreign language classroom anxiety and willingness to communicate.

So far, research has been done on the EI, L2 anxiety and empathy (Rouhani, 2008), the role of EI in learning English and academic achievement (Pishghadam & Ghonsooli, 2008), on the role of emotional, psychometric, and verbal intelligences in academic achievement (Fahim & Pishghadam, 2007) the impact of EQ and verbal intelligence on language learning (Pishghadam, 2009), and the effect of EI on performance on different test formats (Pishghadam & Tabataba'ian, 2011) but it seems no research has taken willingness to communicate and foreign language classroom anxiety into account in connection with EQ.

Therefore, this study aimed at seeking the relationship between EQ, foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate. In this study, the aim was to focus on emotional factors that hinder willingness to communicate and increase anxiety.

The researchers sought to answer the following questions:

- Is there a relationship between EQ and foreign language anxiety?
- Is there a relationship between EQ and willingness to communicate?
- Is there a relationship between foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate?
- Can EQ predict foreign language anxiety?
- Can EQ predict willingness to communicate?
- Can foreign language anxiety predict willingness to communicate?

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and Setting

Eighty eight upper-intermediate and advanced students from Avesta Language Institute and Azaran Language College in Mashhad, Iran took part in this study (51 females and 37 males). Upper-intermediate and advanced students were chosen as

they are able to speak and write English well and they have taken part in several classes. The participants' age ranged from 16 to 48.

2.2. Instrumentation

2.2.1. EQ Questionnaire

The Bar-On EQ-i was used. The questionnaire consists of 132 likert Scale items. Each item contains five response levels: never, seldom, usually, often, and always. The response levels are weighted according to their positive perception toward the kind of feeling that is questioned in each one, ranging from five (most positive) to one (least positive). Each question belongs to a certain feeling. There are five subscales- Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Adaptability, Stress management, General mood- which include fifteen categories: Emotional Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, Self-Regard, Self-Actualization, Independence, Empathy, Internal Relationship, Social Responsibility, Problem Solving, Reality Test, Flexibility, Stress Tolerance, Impulse Control, Happiness, and Optimism.

For the EQ-i (Bar-On, 1996) high and low scores are identified by their distance from the mean score of 100. Scores exceeding the mean or falling below the mean by 1 SD (15 points) are considered to be within the normal range. Since the test is timed, the participants were asked to complete it in 40 minutes. Because of the cultural differences and to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the content of the questionnaire, the translated version of this questionnaire (Samou'i, 2002) was employed.

2.2.2. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Test (FLCAS)

This test was designed to measure foreign language learners' anxiety level. It was designed by Horwitz in 1986. It is a 36-item questionnaire and specifically measures foreign language classroom anxiety.

2.2.3. Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

WTC was designed in 1998 by MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels. It is a self report which shows the degree the learners are willing to take part in class discussions and communicate with others. It is a 27-item self report.

2.3. Procedure

2.3.1. Data Collection

The participants were given the EQ test so that their EQ level is obtained. Their anxiety and willingness to communicate level were also obtained through FLCAS and WTC. The EQ-i is a self report and it takes about 30-40 minutes to answer it. FLCAS and WTC will also take about 10 minutes each.

2.3.2. Data Analysis

The results gained from the three tests fell within the interval data so the Pearson Product moment formula was used to calculate the correlation between these three tests.

Multiple regression analysis was also run to see whether any predictions could be made regarding these tests.

3. Results

The first three questions of the present study dealt with the interrelationships between EQ, FLCAS, and WTC. Table 1 shows the correlation between these three constructs.

Table 1. Correlation between EQ, FLCAS, and WTC

	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Adapt	Stress Manage	Mood	EQ	FLCAS
FLCAS	-.416*	-.342*	-.449*	-.646*	-.366*	-.520*	
	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	
WTC	.492*	-.025	.368*	.422*	.380*	.416*	-.454*
	.000	.814	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

As the table has presented there is a significant relationship between FLCAS and EQ ($r = -.520$, $p \leq .05$). All subscales of EQ also correlate negatively with FLCAS: Intrapersonal Skills ($r = -.416$, $p \leq .05$), Interpersonal Skills ($r = -.342$, $p \leq .05$), Adaptability Scales ($r = -.449$, $p \leq .05$), Stress Management ($r = -.646$, $p \leq .05$), and General Mood ($r = -.366$, $p \leq .05$).

EQ also correlates positively with WTC ($r = .416$, $p \leq .05$). Out of its subscales, Intrapersonal Skills ($r = .492$, $p \leq .05$), Adaptability Scales ($r = .368$, $p \leq .05$), Stress Management ($r = .422$, $p \leq .05$), and General Mood ($r = .380$, $p \leq .05$) also correlate with WTC.

Moreover, a significant negative correlation can be observed between FLCAS and WTC ($r = -.454$, $p \leq .05$).

To further examine the data and to answer the next three questions of the study multiple regression analysis was run. Table 2 shows the results of regression analysis using emotional intelligence as the predictor of WTC.

Table 2. Prediction of WTC by EQ

Predictors	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	P	B
Intrapersonal	.545	.298	.281	18.003	.000	.859
EQ	.416	.173	.164	18.043	.000	.218

The preceding table shows that EQ can predict willingness to communicate ($R^2 = .173$, $p \leq .05$). Intrapersonal Skills subscale of EQ is also a predictor of WTC ($R^2 = .298$, $p \leq .05$). Having a high

EQ and high Intrapersonal Skills were good predictors of WTC.

Table 3 shows the results of regression analysis using anxiety as the predictor of willingness to communicate.

Table 3. Prediction of WTC by FLCAS

Predictors	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	P	B
FLCAS	.454	.207	.197	22.383	.000	-.497

The table indicates that FLCAS accounts for about 21% of the variance in willingness to communicate negatively (R^2 = .207, $p \leq .05$). Therefore, the less anxious the students are, the more willing they will be to communicate.

Table 4 shows the results of regression analysis using EQ as the predictor of foreign language anxiety.

Table 4. Predicting FLCAS by EQ

Predictors	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	P	B
Stress Manage Interpersonal	.667	.445	.432	34.087	.000	-1.634 -.404
EQ	.520	.270	.262	31.811	.000	-.249

As it is shown in the table, EQ and two of its subscales can predict anxiety negatively. EQ accounts for about 27% of variance in anxiety (R^2 = .270, $p \leq .05$) and Interpersonal Skills and Stress Management subscales of EQ account for about 45% of variance in anxiety.

4. Discussions

The present study sought to investigate the relationships among EQ and its subscales, FLCAS, and WTC. Furthermore, it aimed to see whether EQ and its subscales could predict WTC and FLCAS and also whether FLCAS could predict WTC.

In the present study it was shown that EQ was related to both FLCAS and WTC. Its relationship to FLCAS was negative, i.e. the higher the EQ of language learners, the lower the level of anxiety they will experience while doing foreign language tasks, and while in language classrooms. All subscales of EQ also correlated negatively with FLCAS with Stress Management showing the highest correlation. The ability to manage stress and overcome stressful situations decreases the anxiety experienced by language learners.

The obtained results from regression analysis also indicated that EQ can predict the foreign language anxiety level of language learners. It was also shown that Stress Management and Interpersonal Skills were good predictors of foreign language anxiety. This finding shows that the higher the EQ, the lower the anxiety level. It was also shown that the higher the ability to manage stress and communicate with others, the lower the anxiety.

The results of the correlational analysis also indicated that there was a positive correlation between EQ and WTC. Also, four subscales of EQ correlated with WTC. These subscales included: General Mood, Stress Management, Adaptability, and Intrapersonal Skills. Learners' willingness to communicate in the foreign language was found to be related to these four subscales of EQ.

Those with more of these abilities are more eager to communicate. It seems that learners communicate when they are in the mood for it and when they can overcome their stress. The ability to adapt to the situation and others also affects willingness to communicate. Intrapersonal Skills which refers to learners' understanding of their needs, skills, and abilities also fosters willingness to communicate in the foreign language.

Interestingly, Interpersonal Skills did not correlate with WTC. It seems that factors other than the relating to others and understanding others' feelings are more important in learners' willingness to use the foreign language.

The regression analysis also displayed that EQ and Intrapersonal Skills are good predictors of WTC. The higher one's EQ and Intrapersonal Skills, the higher their willingness to communicate in the foreign language.

When the relationship between WTC and FLCAS was investigated, a negative relationship was found. A higher level of anxiety hinders communication and those who experience higher anxiety in language classrooms tend to be reluctant to communicate.

The results of the present study are in accordance with the previous research which has taken EQ into account in relation to learning, teaching, and assessment (Carmeli, 2003; Fox & Spector, 2000; Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2004; Pishghadam & Ghonsooli, 2008; Fahim & Pishghadam, 2007; Pishghadam 2009; Pishghadam & Tabataba'ian, 2011; Shuttes, Schuetplez, & Malouff, 2001; Fer, 2004; Mortiboys, 2005; Hawkey, 2006; etc). All of the aforementioned studies have indicated that EQ has a facilitative role in learning a foreign language, teaching a foreign language, and performing on different tests of foreign languages.

Due to EQ's facilitative role, it would be desirable to try to enhance it as it will help learners' learning and teachers' teaching. As it was mentioned earlier, EI can be improved like most skills. Therefore, its enhancement will decrease the amount

of anxiety learners experience in a foreign language class and it will also increase students' willingness to communicate in the foreign language they are learning.

As Woodrow (2006) maintains anxiety is an important issue in language learning and it can hinder speaking English for some students. Therefore, teachers need to be sensitive to this and provide help to lessen foreign language anxiety in classroom interactions.

As Dewaele (2007) has reported, learners experience higher levels of FLCAS when they learn foreign languages at later ages. He also concluded that levels of communicative anxiety and FLCAS could e linked to a lower order personality trait like EI. It has also been found out that learners who experience higher levels of anxiety make more errors while speaking (Oya, Manalo, & Greenwood, 2004). The results of the present study were congruent with these findings and indicate that teachers need to find ways to lower the debilitative effect of anxiety and to foster WTC especially with adult learners. These may be done through enhancing EI.

The present study has several implications for teachers and material developers. Teachers should include activities that help learners' emotional growth in the classroom and they should try to make the classroom a calm and enjoyable environment. Material developers are also advised to incorporate activities that enhance EI in the books. For example, as Rouhani (2008) has reported, employing literary texts in language classrooms decreases anxiety and augments EQ.

Like every other study, the present study also suffered some delimitations. Firstly, the data collection scope was rather limited so the sample might not be representative of the population. Moreover, the questionnaires used in this study were all self reports; therefore the study suffers the shortcomings of self reports.

Finally, it should be mentioned that to highlight the effects of emotional factors in education, more research is needed in the field. Research can take account of other factors that influence willingness to communicate as communication in classrooms and in the foreign language is crucial to learning the language. Also, factors that decrease the level of anxiety must be identified to make language learning experience an enjoyable one.

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