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The effect of emotional intelligence in English language learning

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to find out whether emotional intellgence affects English language learning. To that end 330 students were asked to take the EQ questionnaire, the correlations between EQ and reading, listening, speaking, writing, and GPA were then computed. The results revealed that there are significant, correlations between EQ, certain and some skills, and academic success. Finally, the results were examined in the context of English language acquisition and suggestions were made for teachers and authors.

1. Introduction

After its introduction into the field of second language studies in 1970s,Emotional intelligence has been the focus of many studies. Learning a second language is difficult, exhausting and replete with stresses and strains for the learners (Krashen, 1981).The problem even gets severe for the adults because they are expected to communicate with a language which is different from their mother tongue. Their attempt may as well lead to great mistakes and failures. English is considered as a foreign language in the countries where it is not an official language. It is used only in the classrooms. It is taken for granted that individuals'abilities to learn foreign languages tend to be different: some develop and articulate a foreign language without great deal of inconveniences while others always appear to fail or reveal little progress despite all efforts and strivings they invest.

One of the problems English teachers and university instructors encounter is the ability discrepancy among English learners. Undoubtedly, their levels of intelligence play a significant role in their English learning; however, their success or failure is not solely limited to the level of intelligence. Recently, psychologists point out another type of intelligence which performs a better function than the intelligence quotient in an individual's achievement, life and education. According to Goleman (1998), a distinguished and knowledgeable psychologist in the field of emotional intelligence, one can attribute 80% of the reasons for any success to the emotional intelligence. The position is confirmed by many English teachers and university instructors' findings and studies. Consequently, it can be argued that the more an English learner possesses emotional intelligence, the more successful he/she becomes. The present attempt aims at determining the role of emotional intelligence in learning a foreign language (i.e.

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English). To do that, the investigator specifies and examines the function of emotional intelligence in university students' grade-point averages, their speaking, reading, and writing skills.

2. Methodology

2.1. Subjects

The subjects of the study were 330 students from different universities in Hamadan, Iran. All samples were doing their last semester majoring both English literature and Teaching English as a foreign language. These were randomly selected from among 1200 students (both male and female).

2.2. Instruments and data collection procedure

The subjects (those who were majoring English literature and those who were majoring teaching English as a Foreign Language) were asked to take part in a research for intelligence and learning English. They took Bar-On's emotional intelligence questionnaire (EQ-i.). The EQ-i contains 133 items in the form of short sentences and employs a 5- point response scale with a textual response format ranging from "very seldom or not true of me" (1) to "very often true of me or true of me" (5). It takes approximately 40 minutes to complete.

The individual's responses render a total EQ score and scores on the following 5 composite scales that comprise 15 subscale scores: Intrapersonal (comprising Self-Regard, Emotional Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, independence, and Self- Actualization); Interpersonal (comprising Empathy, Social Responsibility, and interpersonal Relationship); Stress Management (comprising Stress Tolerance and Impulse Control); Adaptability (comprising Reality- Testing, Flexibility, and Problem Solving; and General Mood (comprising Optimism and Happiness). At the end of the test 15 items relate to the scales which assess the validity of the responses. The scales include the speed of deletion, the list of contradictions, and the negative effect.

An exemplary item of the questionnaire on emotional intelligence reads: It is convenient for me to abuse the individuals especially if they deserve. The subjects are required to respond to Likert's five-point scale .The high or low scores in the set of tests on emotional divided intelligence designed by Bar-On are based on their distance from the mean of 100. The scores which are one magnitude standard deviation (15 scores) nearer or farther from the mean fall in the normal boundaries of the scores.

With regard to the cultural discrepancies and to avoid the misinterpretation about the content of the questionnaire for lower level subjects, the researcher preferred to use the translated version of the questionnaire. Kronbakh alpha for the translated version is 0.76 in Iran and the results of factorial analysis of the construct validity indicate (Dehshiry, 2003) that the translated account of the questionnaire in the present study has a high degree of reliability (Kronbakh alpha 0.92).

2.3. Data analysis

Initially, the emotional intelligence questionnaire was graded on the basis of Bar-On test guidelines. Then the total scores and the scores of five-part minor scales were computed. Since it was unnecessary to convert the raw scores into the standard ones, raw scores were exploited in the study. To determine the function of emotional intelligence in learning English, the researcher took students' scores of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into consideration. Moreover, she obtained their course average from all colleges. The subjects had already passed their courses of General English, Special English I , Special English II, English conversation I&II, and Writing English (Simple Essay Writing , Letter Writing, Literary Composition) , because they were doing their last semester during the conduct of this study. Next, the mean of every skill was estimated while Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data. The reason why the mean of every skill was calculated in the study was, in fact, to raise the validity and the reliability.

3. The results of data analysis

As the data in table 1 reveals, there is a significant correlation between grade point average (GPA) and Stress Management intelligences (Correlation coefficient= 0.16) General Mood (Correlation coefficient=0.19) reading skill and Stress Management (Correlation coefficient=0.14) General Mood (Correlation coefficient= 0.19) and Adaptability (Correlation coefficient= 0.17) also between speaking skill and Emotional Intelligence Quotient (Correlation coefficient=0.13) Intrapersonal Intelligence (Correlation coefficient=0.16) and General Mood (Correlation coefficient=0.13).

Table1. Correlation coefficient of emotional intelligence with language skills and academic success

Skills/Components	GPA	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
Emotional Intelligence Quotient	0.11	0.18	0.10	*0.13	0.09
Intrapersonal	0.07	0.03	0.09	*0.16	0.05
Interpersonal	0.08	-0.05	0.07	0.04	0.08
Stress Management	*0.16	*0.14	0.11	0.04	0.09
General Mood	0.09	*0.19	0.06	*0.13	0.09
Adaptability	*0.17	*0.17	0.02	-0.05	0.08

*P > 0.05
Number: 330

4. Conclusion

On the basis of the results of this study, it can be climed that emotional intelligence affects English language learning. This article investigated the function of the emotional intelligence in learning English. It also revealed that there existed a significant correlation between subjects' achievement and Stress Management, Adaptability, reading skill and Stress Management, General Mood and Adaptability , speaking skill and Emotional Intelligence Quotient and Intrapersonal Intelligence and Stress Management .As the investigator found out , the emotional intelligence played an effective function in the speaking skill. Definitely, the intrapersonal intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence and General Mood have great effects on the speaking skill because speaking is a mutual performance and requires the said intelligences and conditions. The findings have also demonstrated that there exists a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and reading skills. The Stress Management, General Mood and Adaptability are among the aspects which can assist language learners a great deal. The learners must certainly manage their own stresses, have Good general Mood and adapt themselves to the content of the text they are busy to read. Finally, it seems that there is a correlation between the listening skill and Intrapersonal Intelligence; namely, the individuals, who are emotionally aware, have greater self-esteem and self-confidence. They are proficient listeners.

The findings of this study may be of remarkable help to the English teachers who are busy to present the language. If one accepts that it is possible to teach emotional intelligence and enhance it, (Elias, 1997) they will then be able to teach it to their learners who possess a low level of emotional intelligence. The instruction of emotional intelligence will enable weak learners to improve their comprehension and production of emotions. English teachers are expected to utilize an educational curriculum to promote and reinforce their learners' emotional intelligence so that they can expand the corresponding and relevant skills (such as understanding personal feelings and others, sympathizing with others and controlling stresses.)

English textbooks compilers ought to benefit from the techniques and methods which highlight and signify the emotional intelligence. They need to involve their teaches more with these concepts. Some of the effective techniques to raise the emotional intelligence are as follows: classroom discussions, listening to soft music,

watching emotional movies, individuals' self-revelation, designing questionnaires and reading texts of psychology.(Fahim & Pishghadam,2007).

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