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The Influence of Emotional Intelligence Enhancement on the Development of EFL Learners' Listening Skill

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ABSTRACT

English language as one of the most important international scientific languages used in Iran (and many other countries) is of crucial importance and a great amount of time and expenses are being invested on learning and teaching it. Increasing the speed of learning this language is certainly an urgent need, as many common people and academicians spend a lot of time on learning it, sometimes without a major breakthrough. Thus, the effect of increasing Emotional Intelligence on Listening Skill was examined in this study in an empirical way. An "Interchange Placement Test" was given to university students who studied English as a Foreign Language (EFL learners) in Iran. Subjects were Intermediate level students who also took an IELTS test, so that the researchers could more exactly evaluate their proficiency in listening skill at the beginning of the project. Next, the Emotional Intelligence of them was evaluated and consequently Emotional Intelligence (EQ/I) was taught. After a one educational-year course of concurrently teaching EI and listening skill, the same IELTS along with the EQ test was administered in treatment and control group. To observe the development in each category, the difference in scores of both EQ and IELTS test (pre-test and post-test) were statistically calculated. Ultimately, it was found that both EI and listening skill of the learners in treatment group were developed in a significant way whereas no significant change was detected in control group who did not receive any instructions on EI. The findings of the study can contribute in the promotion of the knowledge on the effect of emotional intelligence in language learning and also syllabus design.

Key words: EFL Learner, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence Enhancement, Emotional Quotient, Listening Skill

INTRODUCTION

Language aptitude embraces a set of factors which makes language learning easy to some learners or on the contrary, challenging to some others. Among the many influential factors on language learning, emotional processes involved in learning in the brain are discussed in the current study. For a long period of time, Intelligence Quotient or IQ tests were very prevalent for employment and judging the mental ability of applicants but they were gradually being criticized inasmuch as environment and culture are neglected in IQ tests and related studies (e.g.: Riggio, Murphy, & Pirozzolo, 2002). Among the many prerequisite factors of success, Davis (2004) uses the terms floor and ceiling for IQ and EQ respectively. Also Schmidt & Hunter (1981) argued that IQ contributes to approximately 20 % of success and 80% could be accounted for by other factors. The role of EQ has launched controversies surrounding success and the current study tries to empirically investigate it in language learning, insofar as it seems necessary to find the influence of such an important factor in language learning. To this aim, EQ was taught to EFL learners for one educational year in order to examine its probable impact on listening skill. The goal of the research was examining the possible role played by EQ in the world of language teaching, more specifically its role in developing listening skill. Thus, the research question and hypothesis were as follows:

Question: Does EQ enhancement have any impacts on Listening Skill development among EFL learners?

Ho: Emotional Intelligence Enhancement does not influence Listening skill.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The common features of emotional intelligence posed in different definitions could be enumerated as an individual's awareness of his emotions and those of others and the ability to recognize and control these emotions and ultimately, the ability to feel sympathetic toward others. EQ deals with evaluating aspects of a situation (positive or negative) and making suitable solutions in stressful situations (Mayer, Salovey,

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& Caruso, 2004). similarly, Emotional intelligence was defined as being able of recognizing emotions, having access and generating emotions to assist thinking, comprehending emotions and emotional knowledge, controlling them reflectively in order to advance emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional Intelligence is the ability to monitor feelings in the individual himself and in others, to distinguish feelings and to use the acquired knowledge in thinking and activities (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is linked to an individual's appraisal of emotions in himself and in others, expressing emotions in a right manner, processing emotional information and also regulating them to live better (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, Bown & White, 2010; Razavi, 2014).

More particularly and for the purpose of this study it must be mentioned that Bar-On (1997) explains EQ as a series of non-cognitive abilities, competencies and skills that influence an individual's level of adaptability to the demands and pressures of the environment. Bar-on claims EI could be subdivided into five categories: adaptability (problem solving, reality testing, and flexibility), stress management (impulse control and stress tolerance), intrapersonal (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-esteem, self-actualization and independence), interpersonal (empathy, interpersonal relationships and social responsibility), and general mood (happiness and optimism(.There are 3 main models of EQ: Ability model, Trait model, and also a model which is Mixed. One of the above mentioned models (i.e.: Bar-on model which was used in the current study) is discussed in more details in the next section.

Mixed Model of Bar-on

Bar-on developed the first model of measuring EI by using the term "Emotional Quotient". His model is process-oriented and not product-oriented since it is related to potential for performance not performance or success itself. The model is focused on a collection of social and emotional abilities. It embraces for example the ability to become conscious of, to comprehend and to express oneself, to handle feelings and adjust them (Bar-on, 1997). He outlined intrapersonal, interpersonal ability, stress management and general mood as five main components of the model, each composed of subcomponents. Components and subcomponents are outlined in table 2.1.

Why Bar-on Model was Preferred for the Current Study

The main reason that Bar-on model was utilized in the current study is that he argues that EI could be enhanced by therapy, training or programming (Bar-on, 2002). In his finding it could be observed that people of higher EQ than average are more successful in meeting environmental demands pressures. A deficiency in it could culminate in lack of success and emotional problems. He considers cognition, intelligence and emotional intelligence as equally important in success (Bar-on, 2001).

Mixed model of Bar-On (1997) made from a mixed approach to measuring emotional intelligence was utilized in the current research. It is defined in this model as "an integration of interconnected emotional and social competencies and skills determining how successfully we comprehend and convey ourselves, realize others and communicate with them, and deal with daily necessities and problems" (cited in Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011, p. 26).

Table 2.1. Bar-on's model of emotional intelligence components

Components	Sub-components
Intrapersonal	Self-regard Emotional Self-awareness Assertiveness Independence Self-actualization
Interpersonal	Empathy Social responsibility Interpersonal relationship
Adaptability	Reality testing flexibility problem solving
Stress management	Stress tolerance impulse control
General Mood components	Optimism happiness

Measure of Bar-on Model

The model for measuring EI which is called The Bar-on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) is a self-report questionnaire for people 16 years of age and over. It provides an estimate of emotional and social intelligence. The Bar-On (1997) questionnaire includes 133 questions.

An important consideration regarding the measure is that it does not estimate cognitive capacity or personality traits. Yet it deals with the ability to be successful in dealing with environmental demands and pressures (Dawda & Hast, 2000, Bar-on, 2002). 133 questions are asked for evaluating a total EQ (Total Emotional Questions). Questions are measured on a five point scale ranging from 1 (very seldom/not true for me) to 5 (very often/often true of me).

Programs for Developing EI

There are a lot of programs developed with the aim of improving EI, the effectiveness of some has been evaluated and many have been kept without any practical evaluation. Some of the evaluated programs are as follows: Mastering Emotional Intelligence Program.

Regarding teaching EQ it must be noted that the lesson plans were designed based on the existing literature. Instruction must not interrupt classroom activities or interrupt other students' learning. Interventions in some schools include: phone calls home, calming isolation rooms, time out areas within the classroom, hallways, or main office, and counselor assistance. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003) there are hundreds of programs in thousands of schools that profess to

enhance EI although not all are empirically verified to work (Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2002).

One specific way of improving emotional development of students as Cobb and Mayer (2000) state, is through social emotional learning (SEL) programs favoring interpersonal emotional development, done mostly by teachers. SEL is defined as the course through which children improve their capability to diagnose and manage their emotions, solve problems, and use a variety of interpersonal skills to handle tasks. The benefits of SEL Programs for students are numerous and proven (Cohen, 1998; Saarni, 1988; 1999; 2000; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2001(. Cobb and Mayer (2000) suggested that a method of enhancing EQ is through a special emotion processing curriculum. The Self Science program (1978), also referred to as Six Seconds (2001), implemented in California, is one example of an emotion processing curriculum. The goals of the curriculum included instruction of specific emotional skills for students. For example, the Self Science program teaches students the skills required for expression of emotional states, emotion vocabulary, alternate ways to feel, and the meaning of empathy. One such study highlighting student skill development of emotions by Heydenberk and Heydenberk's (2007) study focused on improving students' intrapersonal emotional intelligence skills using various methods. These methods included: modeling, role playing, circle discussions, listening exercises, picture interpretations, body language interpretation, check-ins, affective vocabulary building, the use of "I" statements, and journaling or drawing pictures. So the authors provided a lesson plan based on the existing literature and techniques for enhancing EQ, implemented in various related programs.

EI and Listening Skill

The relationship between EI and its components and oral task fluency, accuracy, and complexity among Iranian EFL learners was studied by Khooei. EI of 39 participants from two intact classes of Avayeh Zaban Institute, Tabriz, Iran, was calculated by Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory; then, the oral performance of them were transcribed and scored in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Correlation analyses showed that EI had a positive relationship with the complexity of learners' oral performance. And among five components of EI, stress management and interpersonal subcategories had a significant relationship with fluency as well as accuracy of oral performance and intrapersonal adaptability, and general mood components were found to be correlated with speaking complexity only.

Jahandar, Khodabandehlou, Seyedi, and Mousavi Dolat Abadi (2012) explored the impact of the Emotional Intelligence components on listening skill of the male and female students. To this end, they randomly selected 75 male and 93 female intermediate students from among English students of Rodaki and Shafagh Universities of Tonekabon. The results of the study revealed that Emotional Intelligence components have significant effects on listening skill of male and female students. Moreover, it was indicated that the impact of Emotional Intelligence components on female students was greater than males. By considering the effect of each component of Emotional Intelligence on listening skill of male and female students, it was shown that Stress Tolerance, Interpersonal Relationship, and Flexibility have great effect on listening skill of male and female

Mohammadi (2012) studied emotional intelligence's role and its subcategories to predict English learning as a foreign language in Islamic Azad University-Ardabil Branch. Participants of her study were 191 EFL learners who were selected from among 380 students through random sampling according to Kreschi-Morgan table. She used Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory and academic mean score of student as the means of collecting data and analyzed the collected data by multiple regression analysis in SPSS software. She found that emotional intelligence and its components predicted students‟ academic achievement. Zarafshan and Ardeshiri (2012) explored the influence of EI on English proficiency among Iranian EFL university students. 135 students of applied linguistics and translation studies participated in the study. They used Nelson English Language Test, Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory to gather the related data. After analyzing the collected data they came to the conclusion that EI negatively influences English proficiency. All in all, it appears that EQ influences success in life, in academic settings and particularly in learning, consequently in learning languages and ultimately in listening skill development.

METHOD

The present Quantitative study has a "Quasi Experimental Study" design and also it is co-relational. Questionnaires were used in the study both at the beginning of the experiment and at the end of the educational year which was the period that EQ was being taught to the EFL learners.

Participants

The subjects of the study were learning English in the same place (Gonabad University, Iran). For gaining a clearer estimate of learners' proficiency, they were carefully chosen based on "Interchange Placement Test". To ascertain that there were no outliers among them only 43 intermediate EFL learners were selected from among 56 EFL learners. The profile of the learners was freshmen students between 18 and 23 years old.

18 female learners and 12 male ones attended in the experimental group, out of 30 learners, and in the other group 13 students (7 male and 6 female) attended. The control group was composed of students who majored in literature while the experimental group majored in applied linguistics (i.e.: English teaching). None of the students experienced conversation classes, in a way that the proficiency of the participants was not significantly different at the beginning of the project.

Measurement

Likert scale was used; a score from 0 – 5 was given to each item in EQ questionnaire, which means that the items can be summed and then they can produce a total score (Coldwell

& Herbst, 2004). The higher the total EQ scores, the stronger the emotional intelligence skills would be.

Instruments

For the purpose of the study, the "Bar-On EI" test and a standard and IELTS test were run. Bar-On developed a 133-item self-report Emotional Intelligence scale to measure EQ. This emotional quotient inventory (EQ-I) provides an estimate of Emotional Quotient composed of 5 major scales and also 15 subscales. It has a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 'Never' to 'Always'). The Persian version of the test was applied in the present study. Validity and reliability of the Persian version of the test considering Iranian culture was claimed to exist by Dehshiri (2003). The total reliability of the questionnaire estimated via Cronbach's alpha, was 0.82.

Data Collection

State university of Gonabad, Khorasan-Razavi province in IRAN was the location of doing the research in a period of one educational year (2016-2017). In order to make learners more willing to participate in the study, they were made familiar with the questionnaire (the Bar-On EQ test), and the tasks they would do to develop their EI and also the benefits of EI. In the next phase of the study, "Interchange Placement" test was given to them in order to make sure that the proficiency level of the students is almost the same at the beginning of the study. After the evaluation of the answers few students who were very weak or very proficient, were eliminated from the study, and intermediate students were selected to participate in an IELTS test in order to more accurately measure their ability in listening skill. Almost the same results were acquired after administering IELTS test with the results of Interchange Placement test in regard to listening skill of the learners.

Afterwards, instructing them on EI was started. Some sessions were allocated to acquaintance with EI followed by practical experience in practicing it. The topics for listening practice were extensively selected based on emotional issues like: "Sadness and how to control it?" And questions like the above-mentioned one were composing their assignments. After practice on listening on topics which were mostly emotional ones, students were asked to discuss their feelings and experience inside the class and share their knowledge with classmates. Adjacent to this experimental group, a control group answered the same IELTS test as pretest and posttest in the same period of time.

Bothe the pretest and posttest of IELTS were scored by two raters in order to ensure inter and intra rater reliability. The average of scores given to each student was calculated in the study as the final score in each test. Thus, the study was done through enhancing EI in treatment group while measuring the progress in both EI and listening skill, and observing the progress of EI and listening skill in a similar classroom which is the control group and received no instruction on EI.

The materials were selectively chosen from a manual of teaching EQ to the leaders and some changes and adaptations were made to gear the manual to students who will be the leaders of their own classroom as teachers. The title of the manual is *"50 Activities for Developing Emotional Intelligence"* written by Lynn., A. B. As the author describes the book, it is a collection of activities perfect for skill-building on self-awareness and control, empathy, social expertness, personal influence, mastery of vision and more.

FINDINGS

The purpose of the current study was to teach EQ to EFL learners and examine its impacts on their listening skill development. To this aim, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22 was used in the statistical analysis) the level of significance 0.05.). Table 4.1. shows descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups in pre-test of EQ.

A Kolmogorov-Smirnovtest was run for checking the normality of the distribution of the two groups at pre-test. Normal distribution of scores existed in each group at pre-test (Control: N= 13, Statistic = 0.201, p = 0.155; Experimental: N= 30, Statistics = 0.109, p = 0.200). Therefore, the researchers decided to use parametric statistics. To compare the mean scores of the two groups at the pre-test, independent samples t-test was run. There was no significant difference between the EQ mean scores of the two group at the beginning (t= -1.986, p = .054). Table 4.2. shows descriptive statistics of both groups for listening skill at the beginning of the experiment.

Kolmogorov-Smirnovtest showed that normal distribution of scores existed in control group (N = 13, Statistics= 0.157, p = 0.200); yet, it was not normal in the experimental group at the pre-test (N = 30, Statistics = 0.224, P = 0.001). Non-parametric statistics was used, consequently.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' performance on EQ test (Pre-test)

	Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Pretest (EQ)	Control	13	317	377	450.61	55.44
	Experimental	30	511	572	483.56	47.50

Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics for the performance of experimental and control group on listening test (Pre-test)

	Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Pre-Test (Listening)	Control	13	3.75	5	4.21	0.36
	Experimental	30	3.25	6	4.23	0.73

A Mann-Whitney Test was run and the results for the performance of the experimental (Mean Rank= 21.42) and control (Mean Rank= 23.35) groups at the pre-test of listening showed that there was no significant difference between mean scores of the two groups (U= 177.5, P = 0.638).

Descriptive Statistics in post-test of Listening and Gain Score

Descriptive statistics for the two groups in listening skill at the post-test is revealed in Table 4.3*)*

Kolmogorov-Smirnovtest showed that normal distribution of scores did not exist in control group (N=13, Statistics=0.276, p=0.008); although, normal distribution in the experimental group (N=30, Statistics=0.153, p=0.069) exists at the post-test. Regarding the mean scores of listening, there is a significant difference between the two groups (Mean Rank of control group= 10.31, and for experimental group= 27.07) at the post-test (U= 43, p=0.000). Table 4.4. shows descriptive statistics of the control and experimental groups' listening skill gain scores.

In control group, normal distribution of the gain scores existed (N=13, Statistics=0.173, p=0.200) and also in experimental group (N=30, Statistics=0.143, p=0.123). Independent sample t-test for the performance of both groups in the gain scores of listening showed that a significant difference exists between the groups (t= -5.08, p<.05), thus the performance of the experimental group was better than the control group.

Obtained descriptive statistics from the experimental and control groups on the EQ test at the post-test is shown in Table 4. 5.

Kolmogorov-Smirnovtest revealed that there is a normal distribution in each group at the post-test both in experimental group (N= 30, Statistic=.071, p=0.200) and in control group (N= 13, Statistic=0.232, p=.054), (p>0.05).

Descriptive statistics for EQ Gain Score

Another important issue in the current study was Enhancing EQ. Independent sample t-test for the control and experimental groups performance at the post-test of EQ showed that there is a significant difference between the two groups in the mean scores of EQ at the post-test (t= -2.867, p<0.05).

Table 4.6 reveals the descriptive statistics for the gain scores in EQ test.

the distribution of the gain scores were normal in each group both in experimental group (N= 30, Statistic=0.128, p=0.200) and in control group (N= 13, Statistic=0.209, p=0.125). Independent sample t-test for the experimental and control groups' gain scores of EQ showed that there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding the mean scores of the gain scores (t= -2.68, p<0.05).

DISCUSSION

The study examined the influence of EI enhancement on developing listening skill. The research question was whether EQ enhancement improves listening skill or not?

EQ Enhancement Results

EQ increased significantly in this experimental study and it also influenced listening skill. The results are in agreement with the results of some investigations like what Goleman (1995), Mayer et al. (1999), Jaeger (2003) found. They showed that EQ is capable of being enhanced. EQ was

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' performance on the listening test (Post-test)

	Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Post-test (Listening)	Control	13	3.75	5.5	4.34	0.54
	Experimental	30	3.25	7	5.78	1.005

Table 4.4. Descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' gain scores on listening

	Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Pretest (EQ)	Control	13	–0.75	1	0.13	0.47
	Experimental	30	–2.75	3.75	1.55	1.34

Table 4.5. Descriptive statistics for the performance of experimental and control group on the EQ Test (Post-test)

	Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Post-test (EQ)	Control	13	321	516	455.30	56.87
	Experimental	30	397	607	506.86	52.98

Table 4.6. Descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' gain scores on EQ test

	Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Gain Scores (EQ)	Control	13	–23	39	4.69	16.73
	Experimental	30	–35	76	23.3	22.36

taught for one educational year course in the current investigation and the findings revealed that while in treatment group the EQ of the participants was significantly enhanced, in control group no significant change was observed. The results of the current study confirmed the findings of Bar-On (1997) who also suggested that EQ keeps up growing with age and maturity and therefore can be enhanced. Sala (2000) taught EQ in a training program and faced similar findings with what the researchers of the current study have found. A four-week-course of instructions for experimental group by Slaski and Cartwright (2002) also caused a significant change in the EQ; these results confirm what happened for the present study.

EQ Enhancement and its Influence on Listening Skill

After enhancing EQ, the study was supposed to examine its influence on listening skill; the results were in agreement with similar studies. Some longitudinal research like those of Vaillant (2000) and also Kagan (1998) were confirmed by the present research. Considering academic success in general, Salahi (1998), Aghasafari (2006), and Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) also found EQ to be linked with academic success which was confirmed in the present research. The findings of the current research confirm the study of Khooei in which the link between EI and its components and accuracy, oral fluency, along with complexity among EFL students in Iran was investigated. In that study EI had a positive relationship with the complexity of learners' oral performance. Also, stress management and interpersonal subcategories had a significant relationship with accuracy and fluency of oral performance and intrapersonal adaptability, and general mood components were significantly correlated just with complexity of speaking.

Jahandar, Khodabandehlou, Seyedi, and Mousavi Dolat Abadi (2012) studied the influence of EI on listening skill and results of the study revealed that components of EI have significant effects on listening skill of male and female students. Also, it was shown that listening skill of learners is greatly influenced by interpersonal relationship, stress tolerance, and flexibility. The results of their study were confirmed by the current study.

As it could be seen, EI shall not be claimed as unrelated to listening skill. Moreover, listening is a prerequisite of speaking skill, thus, it seems a very redeeming job to meticulously observe the issue of emotion and the development of listening skill.

CONCLUSION

Education and learning have been always appreciated by human being, from learning newer and easier ways to hunt animals for our cave dwelling ancestors, to newer ways to explore the unknown in space for astronauts. EQ as a factor directly related to the brain of human being _which serves as a panacea in many aspects of life, namely education and learning_ seems to be worthy of more investigations and inquiries. Developing EQ and consequently, developing the quality and quantity of education and learning seems to be enormously valuable. In recent decades there has been a tendency toward delving deeply into the concept of EQ along with ways to enhance it. On the other hand, the value of language learning continues to grow incredibly each passing day and the daily lives of members of any race, creed, and region of the world are influenced by it. Language is a passport to another world and also it is a sign of respect which creates instant connections. The present research tried to gather data on EQ and its enhancement and also its influence on language learning.

There is a lack of empirical research focusing on EQ and performance outcomes. The current research was after finding a partial solution for the problem of the existence of too many research on EQ enhancement, yet few empirical research on how to enhance it. Having knowledge on the importance of EQ and even knowing that it is worthier than IQ, is not enough. It is needed to enhance EQ to improve life, especially academic life.

Researchers of the current investigation presumed that enhancing EQ causes improvement in listening skill because language is dependent on affective factors. EQ was taught and at the end of the experiment the results of the data analysis indicated a significant increase in both EQ and Listening Skill.

The implications of the study are as follows: educational system (especially in Iran) can pay more attention to the issue of EI and after doing more thorough studies and checking the generalizability of the results of the current study by replicating it in different contexts with various participants) syllabus designers might reconsider the content of the syllabi. EQ can have room in new syllabi, regarding the influence of it on education. Secondly, it seems necessary to inform teachers and instructors in educational system of the influence of EQ, and thus making them informed of the role of EQ in education and success. Even if no change in syllabi would be approved, at least workshops on EQ for teachers or some in-service instructions seem to be fruitful.

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