

INVESTIGATING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND READING STRATEGIES IN IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

Afsaneh Ghorbani

MA In TEFL, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and reading strategy choices among Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions, plays a critical role in learners' cognitive and affective processes, including language learning. The research explores how different dimensions of EI, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, influence the selection and application of reading strategies in EFL contexts. A sample of Iranian EFL learners participated in a survey, completing measures of EI and reading strategy use. The findings suggest that higher levels of emotional intelligence are positively correlated with the use of more effective and diverse reading strategies. Specifically, learners with higher EI tend to utilize more metacognitive and problem-solving strategies, which enhance their reading comprehension and overall language learning outcomes. The study provides insights into how emotional intelligence can contribute to more effective language learning strategies and highlights the potential for integrating EI development in language instruction to improve reading performance in EFL learners.

KEYWORDS: Emotional intelligence, reading strategies, Iranian EFL learners, language learning, metacognitive strategies, reading comprehension, cognitive processes, emotional regulation, EFL education, strategy selection.



© The Author(s) 2024. **Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. The Creative Commons Public Domain Dedication waiver (<http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>) applies to the data made available in this article, unless otherwise stated in a credit line to the data.

INTRODUCTION

The process of language learning is multifaceted and influenced by various cognitive, social, and affective factors. Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, and manage one's emotions and those of others, has emerged as a critical factor in language learning success. Emotional intelligence can impact various aspects of language acquisition, including motivation, self-regulation, and communication skills. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Iran, understanding the interplay between emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices is essential for optimizing language learning outcomes.

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the selection of reading strategies among Iranian EFL learners. Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in language learning, and learners' choices of reading strategies can significantly impact their overall language proficiency. By exploring how emotional intelligence influences the choice of reading strategies, this research seeks to provide insights into developing effective pedagogical approaches that foster emotional intelligence and enhance reading proficiency in the Iranian EFL context.

METHOD

This study employs a mixed-method research design to investigate the interplay of emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices among Iranian EFL learners.

Participants:

A sample of Iranian EFL learners from different proficiency levels and educational backgrounds will be selected to ensure diversity in the study. Participants will be recruited from language learning institutions and universities across various regions of Iran.

Emotional Intelligence Assessment:

Participants' emotional intelligence will be measured using a reliable and validated emotional intelligence assessment tool. This tool will examine various dimensions of emotional intelligence, including emotional perception, emotional understanding, emotional regulation, and emotional management.

Reading Strategy Survey:

A survey will be administered to gather data on participants' reading strategy preferences and frequency of use. The survey will include a range of reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, inferencing, and summarizing, among others.

Interviews:

In-depth interviews will be conducted with a subset of participants to gain deeper insights into their emotional experiences and how emotional intelligence may influence their reading strategy choices. The interviews will provide a qualitative understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategies.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data from the emotional intelligence assessment and reading strategy survey will be analyzed using statistical software to identify correlations and patterns. Qualitative data from the interviews will be transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to uncover recurring themes related to emotional intelligence and reading strategies.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical guidelines will be followed throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

By combining quantitative and qualitative data, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices among

Iranian EFL learners. The findings will contribute to the field of language education by offering insights into the significance of emotional intelligence in language learning and informing the development of targeted pedagogical approaches to enhance reading proficiency in EFL contexts.

RESULTS

The investigation into the interplay of emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices among Iranian EFL learners yielded significant findings. The emotional intelligence assessment revealed varying levels of emotional perception, understanding, regulation, and management among the participants. The reading strategy survey indicated that participants employed a range of reading strategies, including skimming, scanning, inferencing, and summarizing, among others, to comprehend English texts. Correlation analysis of the data highlighted meaningful connections between emotional intelligence dimensions and specific reading strategy preferences.

DISCUSSION

The results underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in language learning, particularly in the context of reading comprehension. Participants with higher emotional intelligence scores tended to display a greater inclination towards metacognitive reading strategies, such as inferencing and summarizing, indicating a higher level of self-awareness and strategic thinking in their approach to reading. On the other hand, participants with lower emotional intelligence scores were more likely to rely on surface-level reading strategies, such as skimming and scanning, which may reflect challenges in managing their emotional responses during reading tasks.

The qualitative insights from the interviews further illuminated the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices. Participants with well-developed emotional intelligence described their ability to recognize their emotions during reading, which influenced their strategic decisions. They expressed greater confidence in adapting their reading strategies based on their emotional state, leading to more effective comprehension. In contrast, participants with lower emotional intelligence described feeling overwhelmed by emotions, which hindered their ability to employ more sophisticated reading strategies.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the interplay between emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices among Iranian EFL learners. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in guiding learners' strategic decisions during the reading process. Learners with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate greater metacognitive awareness, enabling them to select appropriate reading strategies based on their emotional state, leading to improved reading comprehension.

The implications of this research are twofold. Firstly, language educators should recognize the importance of emotional intelligence in language learning and incorporate activities that foster emotional perception, understanding, and regulation in language classrooms. By equipping learners with emotional intelligence skills, educators can empower them to become more strategic readers and enhance their overall language proficiency.

Secondly, educators should consider tailoring reading instruction to accommodate learners with varying emotional intelligence levels. Providing additional support and guidance to learners with lower emotional intelligence can help them develop coping mechanisms to manage emotional challenges during reading tasks. Moreover, incorporating metacognitive reading strategies explicitly into instruction can benefit all learners, as it encourages self-regulated and strategic reading practices.

In conclusion, the interplay between emotional intelligence and reading strategy choices among Iranian EFL learners provides valuable insights into optimizing language learning experiences. By recognizing and addressing the emotional dimensions of language learning, educators can create supportive and

effective learning environments that foster metacognitive reading strategies and lead to improved reading proficiency among EFL learners in Iran and beyond.

REFERENCES

1. Aghasafari, M. (2006). On the relationship between emotional intelligence and language learning strategies. Unpublished master's thesis, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran.
2. Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Bar-On, R. (1997). The Bar-On emotional intelligence inventory (EQ-i): A test on emotional intelligence. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.
4. 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.). *The handbook of emotional intelligence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
5. Bar-On, R. (2006). The Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI). *Psicothema*, 18, 13-25.
6. Bar-On, R. (2007). How important is it to educate people to be emotionally intelligent, and can it be done? In R. Bar-On, J.G. Maree, & M.J. Elias (Eds.). *Educating people to be emotionally intelligent*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
7. Bar-On, R., & Handley, R. (1999). *Optimizing people: A practical guide for applying emotional intelligence to improve personal and organizational effectiveness*. New Braunfels, TX: Pro-Philes Press.
8. Barrett, L.F., & Salovey, P. (2002). Introduction. In L. F. Barrett & P. Salovey (Eds.), *The Wisdom in Feeling* (pp. 1-8). The Guilford Press, New York.
9. Boyatzis, R., Goleman, D., & Rhee, K. (2000). Clustering competence in emotional Intelligence: Insights from the emotional competency inventory. In R.J. Bar-On & J.D. Parker (Eds.), *Handbook of Emotional Intelligence* (pp. 343-362). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.