THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-regulated learning (SRL) in learning English. Using simple random sampling, 189 male and female undergraduate students were selected. These students were pursuing a general English course in Islamic Azad University of Marvdasht, Iran. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EQ-I, Bar-On, 1997) and Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ, Pintrich, 1991) were used to collect data. The results showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between EI and SRL. There was also a significant and positive relationship between EI and motivation as well as learning strategies scales. EI was also positively and significantly correlated with learning strategies subscales including resource management, cognitive and metacognitive strategies as well as motivation subscales except test anxiety.

Keywords: *self-regulated learning, emotional intelligence, learning English*

INTRODUCTION

Learning strategies, according to scholars such as Ellis (2004), are among the factors which in addition to emotional intelligence (EI), learning style, motivation, anxiety, personality, and learner's beliefs, play an important role in language learners' success. Learning strategies are all a sub-part of a larger domain of learning processes which according to Dornyei (2005, cited in Griffith, 2008) involves the management of one's cognitive, motivational, metacognitive, behavioral, and environmental areas. This domain is called by educational theorists as self-regulated learning (SRL). Zimmerman (2001) defines self-regulated learners as those who "are motivationally, metacognitively and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process" (p.5). Such learners are equipped with strategies that help them manage their own learning process and therefore, achieve their academic goals. Based on a social-cognitive approach to learning, Pintrich (1991) divides SRL scales into motivational and learning strategies of which the second one includes learning strategies used in learning English as well. What matters here is that if language learning strategies, or in a more general sense, SRL strategies are effective in individuals' learning achievements, so why are these skills and strategies not used by all language learners? What motivates and helps successful language learners to use these strategies in learning a foreign language while unsuccessful language learners lack such skills?

Salovy (1992, cited in McCombs, 2001) believes that the central core of SRL involves a self-referent process called EI. EI is a person's ability to sustain motivation, persist in difficulties, control impulses, delay gratification, regulate one's own psychological manners, empathize with others, and to be hopeful (Goleman, 1995). In addition, Salovy and Mayer (1990, cited in Goleman, 1995) consider EI as a sub area of social intelligence and define that as one's ability to monitor his/her own feelings and emotions as well as those of others, distinguish between these emotions, and use these information to direct his/her own thoughts and behaviors.

From a phenomenological perspective to the concept of SRL, McCombs (2001) notes that awareness of one's own positive and negative emotions through self-monitoring and self-reflection helps the individual

direct his/her thoughts and behaviors. According to such a perspective, EI can be considered as a prerequisite for SRL skill. If this perspective is correct, then it can be hypothesized that higher levels of EI among successful language learners may be the cause of their more skillful use of self-regulatory strategies in comparison to unsuccessful learners. However, such a conclusion is just a conjecture and hypothesis. Therefore empirical research is needed to prove it and it is what this study tried to investigate. It investigated the relationship between EI and SRL in learning English as a foreign language. Two pertinent questions were addressed in this study. The first question is "Is there any significant relationship between EI and SRL in learning English?" The second question is "Is there any significant relationship between EI and SRL scales and subscales in learning English?"

METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive and correlational study. The independent variable was EI and the dependent variable was SRL and its scales and subscales. The research sample included undergraduate students from different majors studying a general English course in Islamic Azad University of Marvdasht, Fars, Iran. The participants included 189 male and female students selected through simple random sampling. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EQ-I; Bar-On,1997) and Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich, 1991) were used to collect data. EQ-I was first developed in 1980 and then revised in 1997. Finally, a general scale for EI and five mixed scales as well as fifteen subscales were developed. The reliability of the questionnaire with temporal stability coefficient after one month and after four months was reported by Bar-On as 85% and 75%, respectively. The validity was also confirmed by experts. In 2006, the questionnaire was translated into Farsi by Dehshiri. The Cronbach Alpha for the Farsi transcript was reported as 93%. MSLQ was also developed by Pintrich (1991) to measure individuals' use of SRL strategies. The questionnaire included a motivational and a learning strategies scale and consisted of 81 items. It was translated into Farsi by the researcher and its content validity was confirmed by five experts in the field of education. The Alpha Cronbach was 86%. Both questionnaires were distributed among the participants and 189 completed questionnaires

were returned to the researcher. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 19 software and by computing Pearson correlation coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between EI and SRL and its scales and subscales in learning English as a foreign language. The results are presented in line with the research questions.
Research Question 1: Is there any significant relationship between EI and SRL in learning English?

The relationship between EI and SRL was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. Primary analysis was done to ensure the assumptions of correlation. As evident in Table 1, the results showed that there was a significant and positive and relatively moderate correlation between EI and SRL, r= .37, p< .000. It means that higher levels of EI are related to higher levels of SRL.

Table 1: Correlation between EI and SRL

		EI	SRL
EI	Pearson Coefficient	1	.376**
	Sig. level		0.000
SRL	Pearson Coefficient	.376**	1
	Sig. level	0.000	

N=189 (** correlation is very significant at the level of .05)

This finding is in line with Mabekoje's (2011) study on 467 students which showed a moderate, positive and very significant relationship between EI and SRL, too. However, the present study was done exclusively in English classes and among university students. On the other hand, such finding confirms the positive and significant relationship that McCombs (2001) considers between EI and SRL. However, it should be taken into account that McCombs' claim regarding the central role of EI in SRL may refer to a strong type of correlation between these two variables while the present study shows only a moderate correlation. What matters here is that

despite different levels of correlation that may be reported by different studies for EI and SRL, regulation and management of emotions cannot be considered as distinct from self-regulatory processes. As Vohz and Baumeister (2011) note, EI and SRL processes are intricately intertwined since people in the process of self-regulation often encounter situations which stimulate emotions and therefore, a need to manage them. The importance of this issue is the extent that Corno (2001) enumerates emotion regulation as one of the main SRL components. And finally, the positive and significant relationship between EI and SRL as evident in this study is in line with the findings of Bown and White (2010) showing that affective domain plays an important role in learning a foreign language and language learners' emotional and affective experiences should be taken into account and dealt with at a larger and deeper perspective and through approaches such as self-regulation.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant relationship between EI and SRL scales and subscales in learning English?

The relationships between EI and SRL scales and subscales were also determined by computing Pearson correlation coefficient. The results showed that there was a moderate, very significant and positive relationship between EI and the motivation scale, $r = .42$, $p < .000$ (Table 2). The relationship between EI and motivation according to the findings was of a moderate level. What should be considered with regard to this is that motivation itself includes other domains such as cognitive and social too, and therefore, there may be other factors as well that contribute to the maintenance and promotion of motivation. However, the positive and significant relationship between EI and motivation in this study is consistent with the findings of Maheshwari et al. (2013), Nga and Leung (2011) and Maraichelvi and Rajan (2013). It is also in line with studies that show such a correlation in the context of learning English such as Rostampour and Niroomand (2013) and Prieto (2010).

Table 2: Correlation between EI and Motivation Scale and its Subscales

	Motivation	Task value	Self-efficacy	Intrinsic goal orientation	Extrinsic goal orientation	Control of learning beliefs	Test anxiety
EIPearson Coefficient	.424**	.452**	.426**	.335**	.324**	.162**	-.101
Sig. level	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.026	.166

N=189 (** correlation is very significant at the level of .05)

Table 2 shows the results of the relationship between EI and the scale and subscales of motivation. As evident, task value had the highest level of positive and significant correlation with EI in comparison to other motivational subscales, r= .45, p< .000. EI helps individuals control their negative impulses and emotions while facing a learning task and deal with it with a better mental status. This is an important point since educational theorists like Sergiovanni and Starrat (2008) consider learner's mental status as one of the key factors in his/her motivation for doing the task and achieving success in it. The study also showed a positive, moderate and very significant relationship between EI and self-efficacy, r=.42, p<.000, which is in line with the findings of Chan (2004) and Rastgar and Memarpoor (2009) as well as the study done by Hashemi and Ghanizade (2011) on language learners. This may show that individuals' and particularly language learners' beliefs about their own capabilities are related to their ability and skill in managing their own emotions, something which is in agreement with the views of those like Bandura (Schunk, 2001) who believes that human functioning of which learning is a part, is the result of interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors that all influence one's self-efficacy.

The study also showed a positive and significant correlation between EI and intrinsic goal orientation, r= 0.33, p<.000, as well as extrinsic goal orientation, r=.32, p<.000. In other words, EI was positive, moderate and very significantly related to language learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are in fact two aspects of motivation which according to the findings of the present research

had approximately equal correlation with EI. EI was also positively and significantly but weakly related to control of learning beliefs, r=.16, p<.026. However, the relationship between EI and motivational components indicated that there was no significant correlation between EI and test anxiety. Studies done by Malek et al. (2012), Khaledian et al. (2013), and Gupta and Duta (2012) all showed a negative and significant relationship between EI and test anxiety; findings which are not in line with the results of the present study.

Learning strategies scale is the second key component of SRL of which the relationship with EI was determined. Data analysis shows a weak, positive and very significant relationship between EI and the learning strategies scale, r=.27, p<.000. In line with these findings are the studies by Nga and Leung (2011) on university students and Nosratinia et al. (2013) on language learners that showed a positive and significant relationship between EI and learning strategies. It should be noted here that learning strategies include techniques which are used by learners in order to learn or manage learning and are often acquired through direct or indirect instruction.The acquired nature of learning strategies can be the reason for the weak correlation of this scale with EI, since learners need instruction and training to be equipped with these strategies and use them even though their EI may be high. Table 3 shows the level of correlation between EI and learning strategies scale and its subscales.

Table 3: Correlation between EI and Learning Strategies Scale and its Subscales

	Learning strategies	Resource management strategies	Metacognitive strategies	Cognitive strategies
EI Pearson Coefficient	.279**	.281**	.242**	.239**
Sig. level	.000	.000	.001	.001

N=189 (** correlation is very significant at the level of .05)

With regard to learning strategies, Table 3 indicated a weak, positive and very significant relationship between EI and resource management strategies, r= .28, p<.000, and a weak significant and positive correlation was also indentified with cognitive strategies, r=.23, p<.001. Among

resource management strategies and also among all learning strategies, a moderate and very significant and positive relationship was identified with EI which was related to effort regulation strategy, r=.38, p<.000 (Table 4). Pintrich's (1991) definition of effort regulation can be helpful in understanding and explaining such a finding. Pintrich defines effort regulation as a commitment to achieving one's learning goals even in the face of difficulties and distractions; effort regulation not only shows goal commitment but also regulates the continuous implementation of learning strategies. Based on such a perspective, effort regulation can be considered as related to goal setting, specifying long and short-term goals and the steps to achieve them as well as the persistence in achieving those goals. Such persistence in the learning process is important and critical. In this regard, Corno (2001), assuming a volitional perspective to SRL, cites from Ach (1910) that motivation provides the primary stimulus for an action while volition controls and manages the individual's impulses and tendencies and protects motivation so the action is sustained and ultimately done. Considering the role that Ach assumes for volition, it can be concluded that volition is directly related to EI which is defined by Goleman (1995) as a person's ability to sustain motivation, persist in difficulties, control impulses, delay gratification, regulate one's own psychological manners, empathize with others, and to be hopeful. Accordingly, it is understood that effort regulation as a strategy to persist in the learning process, achieve one's goals, and to prevent demotivation and frustration, which all have great importance in the process of learning a foreign language, requires emotion management skills and is related to them.

In addition, the study showed a positive and significant correlation between EI and study time and place management strategy, r= .23, p<.001; a relationship which is confirmed by Kavousy et al. (2010) in a study on medical students. However, it is necessary to note that time management plays an important role in effort regulation and goal achievement and perhaps it can be considered as an element of effort regulation strategy and therefore related to EI skills.

In spite of the significant relationship between EI and effort regulation and time and place management strategies, the study shows no such correlation between EI and peer learning and help seeking strategies which in fact refer to social dimensions of resource management. Regarding such

strategies, the researcher believes that learners' and language learners' social experiences in the instructional context should be taken into account. Students' lack of such experiences in traditional contexts of language classes or other classes which do not encourage learning through social and interpersonal interactions may be the reason for their reports showing these strategies were not used by them. Given the interpersonal skills (Bar-On, 1997) and relationships management (Goleman, 1998) components of EI and according to what was discussed above, it is understood that EI cannot be considered unrelated to participatory and cooperative learning just based on the findings of the present study but it may be needed to systematically and purposefully situate learners' language learning activities and experiences in a social and interactive context.

Table 4: Correlation between EI and Resource Management Strategies

	Effort regulation	Time and place management	Help seeking	Peer learning
EI Pearson Coefficient	.388**	.230**	.104	.092
Sig. level	.000	.001	.153	.207

N=189 (** correlation is very significant at the level of .05)

Metacognitive strategies component is another group of learning strategies which was positive and very significantly related to EI based on the results of the study, $r=.24$, $p<.001$ (Table 3). This group of strategies is concerned with the management of learning process through techniques such as self-evaluation and self-monitoring. The positive and significant relationship between EI and metacognitive strategies was also confirmed by Sharei et al. (2012) in learning mathematics as well as Alavinia and Mollahossein (2012) in learning English; studies which are consistent with the present one. However, Fouladi (2012) showed no significant relationship between these two variables in his study on language learners.

As Tables 3 and 5 show, cognitive strategies and its components including rehearsal, critical thinking, organization, and elaboration also correlated positively and significantly but weakly with EI according to the present study. Again it must be noted that learning strategies and particularly, cognitive strategies such as elaboration or critical thinking are

techniques which demand direct or indirect instruction and higher levels of EI cannot by itself ensure the implementation of such strategies by the learners, a point completely evident in the findings of the present study.

Table 5: Correlation between EI and Cognitive Strategies

	Rehearsal	Critical thinking	Organization	Elaboration
EI Pearson Coefficient	.263**	.237**	.179**	.148**
Sig. level	.000	.001	.014	.042

N=189 (** correlation is very significant at the level of .05)

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between EI and SRL and its scales and subscales in learning English as a foreign language. The analyses of the collected data showed that there was a positive, very significant and relatively moderate relationship between EI and SRL in learning English. There was also a positive, moderate and very significant relationship between EI and scales of motivation and learning strategies. In addition, EI was weakly to moderately, positively and very significantly related to motivational subscales except test anxiety. A weak, positive and very significant relationship was also found between learning strategies subscales including cognitive, metacognitive, and resource management strategies. Among resource management strategies, help seeking and peer learning were not correlated significantly with EI.

The findings of the study shows the importance of EI skills in promoting SRL skills in the process of learning English as a foreign language. Learners in today's world must be equipped with skills and strategies to be able to assume the responsibility of their own learning and become independent learners. According to Bandura (1995), the realities of the educational systems in the modern world require individuals to acquire self-regulatory skills in order to be able to meet life demands in modern societies. Accordingly and in line with what was discussed,

implementing such skills and strategies in the process of learning a foreign language is of great importance since a large part of the responsibility for learning a language is on the learners themselves who must acquire the essential language skills through active participation in the learning process. Therefore it is very important to provide the essential conditions for learners to acquire self-regulatory skills. As a result of this and based on the findings of the present and other studies, instruction of EI skills and equipping language learners with such skills can promote their self-regulatory skills and help them manage their learning of a foreign language. The findings of this study help language learners provide the required conditions for better acquisition of language skills and also help language teachers and instructors act more effectively in improving learners' self-regulatory as well as EI skills and therefore, their language learning capabilities.

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