

The Study of Emotional Intelligence and Literature in Education: Gender and Major of Study

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Literature can establish a particular frame of emotions which allows deeper understanding into it and simulating our social relations. Also, emotional intelligence (EI/EQ) which seeks to fuse cognition and emotion interlocks with social and interpersonal mechanisms involved in language learning. Given the lack of empirical study, the present study is intended to explore the relationship between EI and interpretation of literature among 345 Iranian EFL graduate and undergraduate participants from six Iranian universities. As an additional goal, participants' major of study and gender are investigated to see how they relate to emotional intelligence skills. EI has been defined in terms of two instruments, based on two models of emotional intelligence, while literature has been limited to short stories and poems. To collect data, MSCEIT and EQ-Map measures of emotional intelligence as well as fourteen short stories and poems were selected and administered by the researcher among the participants, majoring in English literature, translation and teaching of English. Pearson Product correlation procedures and multivariate analysis were conducted. The results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between EI (MSCEIT and EQ-Map) scores and scores from the interpretation of stories and poems. Furthermore, the female participants were found to have higher EI than the male ones. However, the participants from the three English majors did not differ significantly in terms of EI scores. By implication, syllabus designers should orient a curriculum towards using language through literary genres such as short stories. Also, the tasks and problem-solving activities in the syllabuses should not be

necessarily be the same for both male and female EFL learners.

Key words: literature, emotional intelligence, gender, major of study

INTRODUCTION

Symposiums on intelligence over the years have repeatedly concluded that the first hallmark of intelligence constitutes “a high-level of mental ability such as abstract reasoning” (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000, p. 399). As Terman (1921, p. 128), a pioneer of IQ tests, states, “an individual is intelligent in proportion as he is able to carry on abstract thinking”. Moreover, within this mental ability framework, intelligence, which is conceptualized as abstract thinking devoid of emotional knowledge, is demonstrated to predict academic success.

In relating intelligence to second language learning, as Brown (2000, p. 100) states, it was generally conceived that a smart person would be capable of learning a second language because of greater intelligence. If a student was able to remember something he or she was exposed to, the student was considered to be a successful language learner only because intelligence was traditionally defined in terms of linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. Nonetheless, Gardner (1983, p. 9) in his influential book *Frames of Mind* took a rather different approach, putting forward a theory of intelligence, Multiple Intelligence (MI), which questioned the traditional thoughts about the paradigm of a monolithic general intelligence. He initially described seven *intelligences*, including intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, which paved the way for uncovering other intelligences including *emotional intelligence* or what is known as *EI/EQ*. However, the formal term and the first model of emotional intelligence were not revealed until 1990 (Mayer, 2001, p. 8).

EI is not being illogical or overly emotional; it is about the intelligent use of emotions and utilizing the information contained in emotions to make

effective decision; it operates on emotional information in the same manner that other types of intelligence might operate (Grewal & Salovey, 2005, p. 333). Although different competing and sometimes conflicting components have been integrated into EI since its *formal* introduction, this core construct itself has remained important because, as Ciarrochi and Mayer (2007, p. 145) state, it has offered the potential to integrate the reasoning of learners' cognition and emotion and predict academic success. The application of EI theory in a classroom can yield beneficial emotional and social changes and contribute to enhancing the school ethos (Kelly, Longbottom, Potts, & Williamson, 2001, p. 221). To move further, its potential to improve the acquisition of language in learners is claimed to be great as "language comes to have a distinctive emotional feel by virtue of being learned or habitually used in a distinctive emotional context" (Harris, Gleason, Ayçiçeği, 2006, p. 272). As Duraiswamy (1999, p. 1) states, learners remain unconscious of language until it is dealt with emotionally. This emotional awareness and experience could be the vehicle that evokes consciousness, enabling the learners to understand and communicate ideas better.

In relating literature to emotional knowledge, Oatley (2004, pp. 216-218) states, literature can serve as a diverse source of examples of emotional life because the authors of literary works have written about emotions that may have sufficient resonance with generations of learners. Literature does not represent psychometric science, but it helps us understand what EI actually is. Literature might provide a variety of contexts to encourage emotional development. In the light of these views, unfortunately little research has been conducted in this potentially fruitful area. Hence, this is the reason why this study seeks to shed some light on the relationship between EI and literature, forming two important concepts in the context of language learning.

Furthermore, it might be expected that the field/major of study might greatly, along with other factors, contribute to exhibiting differences in EI skills and, as a result, a strong prediction might be made concerning the relationship between a learner's major of study and his/her EI (Pishghadam, 2007, p. 200). Also, it might be expected that men and women would greatly

differ in the degree to which they exhibit EI skills. According to some ideas common in popular and perhaps scientific psychology, women are more competent than men in the emotional sphere. As Lyusin (2006, p. 64) states, it is a commonly-held belief that women have greater tendency towards manipulation of others' emotions, but they do not always have their own emotions under control. Such notions might be based on perceived stereotypes, but it is worth considering hypotheses stemming from these common beliefs against our research, given that the studies in gender differences are inconclusive. Therefore, the learners' majors of study and gender, forming two other variables, are explored in the present study to see how they relate to EI skills in the context of foreign language learning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ability and Mixed Models of Emotional Intelligence

The term EI was first used in an unpublished dissertation in 1986. However, the modern field of EI only saw its first scientific publication in a theoretical paper in 1990 (Grewal & Salovey, 2005, p. 333). Interested in helping the field of emotions, Salovey and Mayer (1990) developed the ability model of EI and used a two-part approach, speaking first of the general processing of emotional information and secondly specifying the skills involved in such processing. They enhanced the ability model by 1997, which continues to be influential, and described EI as (Mayer & Salovey, 1997):

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 intellectual growth. (p. 10)

Thus, this model is based on the capacity to reason in four interrelated

areas or branches: the perception of emotions, emotional facilitation of thinking, understanding and analyzing emotions, and reflective regulation of emotion. As Bar-On and Parker (2002) state, the first branch involves the perception and appraisal of emotions in oneself and others as well as in other stimuli, including stories and arts. The second branch refers to the ability to use or generate emotions to focus attention, communicate feelings, or engage in other cognitive processes such as reasoning, problem solving and decision-making. The third branch involves the ability to understand emotional information and the causes of emotions and how emotions combine, progress and change from one to another. The fourth branch entails awareness, acceptance and use of emotions in problem-solving. This ability model, as Mayer (2001, p. 27) states, does not provide evidence that EI is the best predictor of academic success, but emphasizes that there are individual differences in the emotional skills which can have consequences at school.

After the formal development of EI theory in 1990 in the field of psychology, some other scholars including Goleman (1995), Cooper (1996/1997; cited in Cooper & Q-Matrices, 1996/1997) and Bar-On (2000) expanded the meaning of EI by explicitly mixing in non-ability traits and diverse parts of personality; hence, they created the mixed approaches. These approaches study the multiple aspects of personality at once even though they might not be directly related to EI (Brackett & Katulak, 2007, p. 3). Although there are differences between the two models, both share a similar intention: to understand how an individual recognizes and regulates his or her emotions.

Literature on Emotional Intelligence

EI has stimulated considerable research in several fields. For instance, in the field of education, Stottlemayer (2002) in a study of EI and its relation to student achievement among 200 American students in Texas found that EI skills were significantly predictive of academic achievement. In the field of psychology, Wing, Schutte, and Bryne (2006) explored the effect of writing about positive emotional experiences on EI and life satisfaction. One hundred

and seventy-five adults wrote about one of following topics: positive experiences with a cue for emotion regulation reflection, positive experiences without this cue, or a control writing topic. The results indicated that positive emotional experiences with an emotion regulation cue led to significant increase in EI and life satisfaction at posttest and the increase in life satisfaction was maintained at a 2-week follow-up. In the field of second/foreign language teaching, Aghasafari (2006) in a correlational design investigated the relationship between EI and language learning strategies among 100 Iranian EFL sophomore participants at Ghazvin Islamic Azad University. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between overall EI and language learning strategies. Also, Pishghadam (2007) examined the relationship between EI and verbal intelligence, on the one hand, and second language skills and academic success, on the other, among 576 Iranian EFL students. In his study, the EI and verbal intelligence scores were correlated with the students' Grade Point Average (GPA) and scores obtained at the end of second year in listening, reading, speaking and writing. The results indicated that second language skills and GPA were strongly correlated with stress management and intrapersonal skills in his EI test. He also reported that higher levels of EI and verbal intelligence were related to second language learning success.

Commenting on the relationship between EI and literature, Ghosn (2001, p. 1) states that literature in a foreign language has the potential to foster emotional skills by providing vicarious emotional experiences that shape brain circuits for empathy. Drawing on the idea of mimesis and simulation between the text and the world, Oatley (1999, p. 105) also states that emotions aroused by fiction are related to individual goals which are important to readers and when emotions of reading are combined with contexts of fictional simulations, they help develop insight. Unfortunately, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the only study that empirically addresses the relationship between literature and EI is the one conducted by Chu (2005, p. 95) in Taiwan. He investigated the relationship among EI, self-actualization, the affective response to English literature, and personality

traits among thirty-two college students. To this end, he developed a behavioral measure to evaluate the subjects' response to a short story. The results indicated a positive correlation between EI and affective response to literature. In addition, self-actualization and affective response to literature were found to be significant predictors of EI. Thus, Chu called for more research on the relationship between literature and EI.

Emotional Intelligence and Gender

A few studies, mostly in the fields other than second/foreign language teaching, have addressed the concept of EI and gender differences. In the field of education, Stottlemayer (2002, p. 122), who investigated EI and its relation to student achievement in 200 American students, reported a gender difference in EI skills. He observed that female students were more aware of emotions, empathy and interpersonal skills. Likewise, Chao (2003, p. 71) in a study with 306 college students in Taiwan investigated EI across gender and language anxiety levels. His finding indicated that male participants of the study had better skills in leadership, decision-making, self-esteem and stress management, but female participants had a stronger level of empathy. In the same line, studies by Mayer et al. (1999, p. 267) and Mandell and Pherwani (2003, p. 387) found that women would be more likely to score higher on measures of EI than men, both in professional and personal settings. In contrast, Broidy (2005), who investigated the effect of gender and culture on EI in a sample of ninety-nine undergraduate American students, reported no significant difference on the interpersonal skill of EI. Further, both gender and culture failed to predict EI. In the same line, Lyusin (2006, p. 65), who investigated gender differences among Russian subjects in a likert-type questionnaire of emotional intelligence (EmIn), reported no significant difference on interpersonal intelligence and emotion management of intrapersonal intelligence. Finally, in a rather different study, Brackett and Mayer (2003) found that females scored higher than males on EI when measured by a performance measure. However, when using self-report

measures, they found no evidence for gender differences. It seems that the studies in gender differences are inconclusive and results are inconsistent. The significant amount of controversy supports the need for further study in a variety of contexts.

THE PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The broad purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between EI and literature. More specifically, this study is intended to investigate the relationship between EI and the interpretation of short story and poetry, which constitute two literary genres. To this end, literature was limited to a few selected English short stories and poems and other genres were excluded in this study. Given the cross-sectional design of this study, if other genres such as novels and dramas had been included, the participants should have been required to do the reading outside the classroom as that would take so long that the participants could not have done it and answered the corresponding test items in the classroom setting. Thus, it was very difficult to collect reliable data on novels and dramas and control intervening variables which could invalidate the results.

EI was operationalized in terms of two developed EI instruments (MSCEIT and EQ-Map), based on the ability-based and mixed approaches towards EI. Therefore, this research relied on both ability-based and mixed approaches towards EI to provide a more comprehensive and better-balanced picture of the participants. Also, the participants' *major of study* and *gender* were explored to see how they would relate to their EI. Accordingly, three research questions were developed:

1. Do the EI scores significantly correlate with the scores from the interpretation of literature (poetry and short story) among both undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) EFL participants of the study?
2. Do the participants' EI scores in three majors of English (*Translation, Literature*

and Teaching) differ significantly?

3. Do female EFL participants' EI scores differ significantly from the male EFL participants' EI scores?

Based on the research questions of the study, the following null hypotheses were addressed in the present study:

- HO1:** There is no significant correlation between EFL participants' EI (MSCEIT and EQ-Map) and poetry scores at both undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) levels.
- HO2:** There is no significant correlation between EFL participants' EI (MSCEIT and EQ-Map) and short story scores at both undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) levels.
- HO3:** There is no significant difference in the EI scores among three majors of English (*Translation, Literature and Teaching*).
- HO4:** There is no significant difference in the EI scores between the female and male EFL participants of the study.

METHOD

Participants

Three hundred and forty-five Iranian EFL students, including two hundred and eighty undergraduate junior, and sixty-five MA graduate students were selected as the participants of the study. They consisted of one hundred and ninety-three female and one hundred and fifty-two male students. They were majoring in English Translation (n = 145), English Literature (n = 95) and Teaching of English (n = 105). Their ages ranged from 23 to 30. The participants were selected through non-randomization sampling procedures from Shiraz, Allameh Tabataba'i, Isfahan, Shahrekord, Najafabad and Khorastgan Islamic Azad universities, which all are Iranian universities to

which the researcher had access.

Instrumentation

This study made use of the following instruments for data collection:

Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT Version 2.0)

MSCETT is a 141-item performance-based measure of EI. According to *MSCEIT User's Manual* (Mayer et al., 2002), this test is divided into four subscales that measure: perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions respectively. The test is a further development of the first model of EI, incorporating new literature reviews and considerations to divide EI into four branches in reference to the 1997 model of EI. There are two methods of scoring. One is to identify the correct answer as the one that is considered correct by the majority of the respondents in the research or standardized sample. This is the *general consensus* method. The second method is to invite emotion experts to judge which answers are correct and use the average response to a given alternative as a criteria. This is the *expert consensus* approach, which was used for scoring in this study. According to *MSCEIT User's Manual* (Mayer et al., 2002), the MSCEIT has a full scale alpha reliability of .91. Brackett and Mayer (2001; cited in Mayer et al., 2002) also found a test-retest reliability of .86, with a sample of 62. At its most basic level, confirmatory factor analyses are supportive of the methods of scoring used for this test (Ciarrochi et al., 2000, p. 539).

EQ-Map Questionnaire

EQ-Map is a likert-type scale coded on a 4-point scale ranging from “very well” (3), to “none/didn't occur” (0). The EQ-Map, developed jointly by Cooper and Oriolio (Cooper & Q-Matrices, 1996/1997), is theoretically based on the mixed approach to EI. In this measure, EI is divided into eight

parts: (a) self awareness, (b) emotional awareness of others, (c) emotional expression (d) resilience, (e) compassion, (f) creativity, (g) interpersonal connection and (h) personal power. This test was validated by Bahrami (2002) through concurrent correlation procedures. She also reported the test-retest reliability of .84 with a sample of thirty Iranian university students.

Interpretation Tests

To collect data on the interpretation of English literature, 14 poems (9 poems for undergraduate and 5 poems for graduate participants) and 6 short stories (4 stories for undergraduate and 3 stories for graduate participants, given that one story was shared) were selected and 140 multiple-choice items (70 short story and 70 poetry test items) were developed on them.

The poems selected for undergraduate participants included: Robert Frost's (1874-1963) *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*; D. H. Lawrence's (1885-1930) *City Life*; William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) *Daffodils*; William Blake's (1757-1827) *Chimney Sweeper*; William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) Sonnet 18, *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day*, and Sonnet 36, *Let me Not to the Marriage of True Minds*; Sir Philip Sidney's (1554-1586) *With How Sad, O Moon Thou Climb'st*; Teika's (13th) *A Travel Poem* and Yi Yung's (n. d.) *The River*; The short stories selected for the undergraduate participants included: John Collier's (1901-1980) *The Chaser*; Earnest Hemingway's (1898-1961) *Hills like White Elephants*; Richard Connell's (1893-1949) *The Most Dangerous Game* and Edgar Allen Poe's (1809-1848) *Tell-Tale Heart*. The poems selected for the graduate participants included: Robert Browning's (1812-1889) *My Last Duchess*; John Keats' (1795-1821) *Ode on a Grecian Urn*; John Donne (1572-1631) *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*; William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) Sonnet 73, *That time of Year Thou Mayest in Me Behold*, and Teika's (13th) *A Winter Poem*. The short stories selected for the graduate participants included: John Collier's (1901-1980) *The Chaser*; Kate Chopin's (1851-1904) *The Story of an Hour* and Edgar Allen Poe's (1809-1848) *The Cask of*

Amontillado.

The selection of literature in this study was basically focused on classical/traditional British and American poems and short stories, most of which were expected to be studied later in the poetry and short story or literature courses in the participants' language curriculum. Thus, it was believed that most participants of the study could benefit from reading the selected poems and short stories of the study. Besides, it was very important to make sure that none of the participants of the study had studied or read the selected poems or short stories before administering the interpretation tests. That is the reason why the poems and stories selected for the graduate and undergraduate participants were different. Upon examining the syllabuses at the undergraduate level, it was made clear that many graduate (MA) participants of the study had studied most of the poems and short stories, selected for the undergraduate participants of the study, in the literature-based courses.

Procedures

Fourteen poems and short stories were selected by the researcher after examining the participants' course syllabuses to make sure that they had not studied them before the main trial of the study. One hundred and forty multiple-choice interpretation test items concerning themes, characterization, settings, events, messages and figures of speech were developed on the selected poems and short stories. Care was taken to develop an equal number of test items for both genres (poems and short stories) and participants (undergraduates and graduates). Before conducting the main trial, twenty Iranian EFL university students (10 undergraduates and 10 graduates), who were similar to those in the main enquiry, participated in a pilot study to elicit their feedback concerning the appropriacy of test items in the interpretation tests. The poems and short stories, along with the newly developed interpretation test items, were administered to them in a number of sittings. The results showed the likelihood of conducting the main study. Meanwhile,

the test-retest and coefficient alpha estimates were obtained. The indices for the short story and poetry tests in both graduate and undergraduate groups were all found to be above .70, giving more assurance to proceed with the main trial. However, as to the EI measures, the pilot study was excluded since both EQ-Map and MSCEIT measures had already been piloted and the feasibility of results were confirmed by Bahrami (2002, p. 80) and Mayer et al. (2002, p. 35).

To collect data on the interpretation of literature, the selected short stories and poems, together with the interpretation test items, were administered to the graduate (MA) and undergraduate (BA) participants from the six above-mentioned universities in a number of sittings during the 2008 academic year. Meanwhile, they were asked to indicate whether they had read or studied the selected poems or short stories before the time of administration to see whether they should be included or excluded from the next stage of data collection. A week after collecting data on the interpretation of literature (poetry and short story), the EI measures (MSCIET and EQ-Map) were given to the same participants to indicate their responses to the likert-type scales and performance-based items of EI measures in one sitting. The data set was organized according to the research questions of the study. Then, the Pearson Product correlational procedures and multivariate analysis of variance were conducted through SPSS to address the corresponding research questions of the study.

RESULTS

Literature majors received the highest MSCEIT (44.18 and 47.10), EQ-Map (169 and 184.53), poetry (19.87 and 30.67) and short story (28.55 and 22.13) mean scores at both undergraduate and graduate levels, respectively. That is, they enjoyed both higher EI and interpretation mean scores. Teaching majors received the lowest EI (43.75 and 165.85) and interpretation (18.60 and 27.57) mean scores at the undergraduate level, but at the graduate level,

translation majors were the ones who received the lowest EI (44.65 and 181.05) and interpretation (25.85 and 17.45) mean scores. Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of EI measures and scores from the selected poems and short stories by the participants' majors and levels of the study.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of EI, Poetry and Story Scores

Variable	Level	Translation		Teaching		Literature	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
MSCEIT	Undgr	43.97	3.28	43.75	3.22	44.18	3.37
	Gr	44.65	2.27	46.35	3.70	47.10	3.66
EQ-Map	Undgr	167.34	18.45	165.85	17.85	169.00	18.42
	Gr	181.05	9.38	181.07	7.38	184.53	9.69
Poetry	Undgr	19.40	5.96	18.60	5.65	19.87	5.84
	Gr	25.85	3.06	26.10	4.89	30.67	3.22
Story	Undgr	28.13	6.25	27.57	5.55	28.55	5.77
	Gr	17.45	3.60	18.10	4.86	22.13	3.07

Note: See the Appendix for a list of some abbreviations

To investigate the first null hypotheses of the study, Pearson Product correlation coefficients between emotional intelligence (EQ-Map and MSCEIT) scores, on the one hand, and poetry scores, on the other, were obtained at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The results are reported in Table 2. As Table 2 depicts, correlation coefficients between EI scores and scores from the interpretation of poems ranged from .37 to .75, which were all positively significant, with the highest coefficient belonging to the graduate English Literature majors, $r(13) = .75, *p < .05$.

TABLE 2
Correlation Indices between EI Scores and Poetry Scores

Variable	Undergraduate			Graduate		
	Tr n = 125	Te n = 75	Li n = 80	Tr n = 20	Te n = 30	Li n = 15
MSCEIT	.37 (.000)	.38 (.001)	.40 (.000)	.66 (.002)	.59 (.001)	.75 (.002)
EQ-Map	.40 (.000)	.42 (.001)	.39 (.000)	.59 (.006)	.59 (.001)	.65 (.009)

To investigate the second null hypotheses of the study, Pearson Product correlation coefficients between emotional intelligence (EQ-Map and MSCEIT) scores, on the one hand, and short story scores, on the other, were obtained at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The results are reported in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Correlation Indices between EI Scores and Story Scores

Variable	Undergraduate			Graduate		
	Tr n=125	Te n=75	Li n=80	Tr n=20	Te n=30	Li n=15
MSCEIT	.42 (.000)	.31 (.006)	.41 (.000)	.70 (.001)	.57 (.001)	.65 (.009)
EQ-Map	.44 (.000)	.44 (.000)	.40 (.000)	.62 (.004)	.61 (.001)	.66 (.007)

According to Table 3, the correlation coefficients between EI and story scores were also positive and significant, with the highest coefficient belonging to the graduate English literature majors, $r = .66$, $*p < .05$. Compared with the correlation coefficients at the undergraduate levels, the correlation coefficients at the graduate levels were found to be higher.

Table 4 reports the means and standard deviations (displayed in parentheses) from two EI measures by the participants' gender and major of study. As observed in Table 4, the female participants of the study in English translation, literature and teaching of English majors received both higher MSCEIT and EQ-Map mean scores than the male participants in all three majors of English.

TABLE 4
Descriptive Statistics of EI Scores by Gender and Major

Variable	Male (n = 152)			Female (n = 193)		
	Tr n = 64	Te n = 47	Li n = 41	Tr n = 81	Te n = 58	Li n = 54
MSCEIT	43.26 (3.07)	43.54 (3.87)	44.18 (3.89)	44.70 (3.10)	45.27 (3.09)	45.00 (3.28)
EQ-Map	166.39 (17.61)	166.00 (17.67)	169.24 (19.08)	171.48 (18.26)	173.57 (15.84)	173.11 (17.53)

Finally, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to address the last two null hypotheses of the study. Emotional intelligence scores from the two EI measures (EQ-Map and MSCEIT) were considered as dependent variables and participants' *major of study* and *gender* as independent variables in the analysis. The error was originally set at .05 when comparing groups on EI variables. The results are reported in Table 5. As Table 5 displays, in all effect statistics (Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda and Hotelling's Trace), *the major of study* variable was not found to be significant, $F(4, 333) = .594, p = .667$. That is, the difference among the EI mean scores of participants from the three majors of English was not that *significant*. In contrast, the gender variable was found to be significant in this study, $F(2, 333) = 6.55, *p < .05$. Meanwhile, the interaction of the major of study variable with the gender one was not found to be significant either.

TABLE 5
Multivariate Analysis

	Effect	Value	F	df	Sig
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.994	28975	2	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.006	28975	2	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.171	28975	2	.000
Major	Pillai's Trace	.007	.594	4	.667
	Wilks' Lambda	.993	.594	4	.668
	Hotelling's Trace	.007	.594	4	.669
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.037	6.55	2	.002
	Wilks' Lambda	.963	6.55	2	.002
	Hotelling's Trace	.039	6.55	2	.002
Major by Gender	Pillai's Trace	.003	.296	4	.881
	Wilks' Lambda	.997	.295	4	.881
	Hotelling's Trace	.003	.294	4	.882

In order to observe the effect of gender and major of the study variables on each of the EI measures, two separate univariate analyses of variance were conducted. Again, the gender and major of the study were considered as independent variables in the analyses. The results of subsequent univariate analyses of variance for each of the EI measures are reported in Table 6. As

Table 6 demonstrates, the F values for gender variable in both MSCEIT and EQ-Map measures were found to be significant: $F(1, 339) = 13.09, *p < .05$ and $F(1, 339) = 8.00, *p < .05$, respectively. However, the F values for the major of study variable were not found to be significant: $F(2, 339) = 1.04, p = .353$ and $F(2, 339) = .455, p = .635$. Thus, Table 6 supported the findings displayed in Table 5.

TABLE 6
Analysis of Variance for Each EI Measure

Source	Dep Variable	Mean Square	df	F	Sig
Corrected Model	MSCEIT	37.95	5	3.41	.005
	EQ-Map	608	5	1.95	.085
Major	MSCEIT	11.61	2	1.04	.353
	EQ-Map	142	2	.455	.635
Gender	MSCEIT	2497	1	13.09	.000
	EQ-Map	146	1	8.00	.005
Major by Gender	MSCEIT	5.21	2	.469	.626
	EQ-Map	89.62	2	.287	.750
Error	MSCEIT	11.13	339		
	EQ-Map	312	339		

DISCUSSION

The results in Tables 2 and 3 have indicated that there was a positive correlation between emotional intelligence (MSCEIT and EQ-Map) scores, on the one hand, and the scores from the interpretation of the selected short stories and poems, on the other. The positive correlation was observed at both graduate and undergraduate levels. That is, regardless of their level of study, the higher EI scores were, the better the interpretation scores from the poems and short stories tended to be. It can be assumed that, amongst other factors, that a higher ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationships as well as a better ability to reason and solve problems on the basis of emotions might have helped both undergraduate and graduate participants better decode the meanings which were encoded in the literary

texts. As Miall, (2005) states, “so far as feeling drives interpretation, then, the text itself plays a significant role in shaping the meaning of language it comes to have for a given reader” (p. 3). Thus, it is not unlikely that both graduate and undergraduate participants with higher EI benefited from the particular frame of emotional knowledge and drove a more accurate understanding of the assigned poems and short stories.

The above issue on the correlation between EI and the interpretation of literature can have several implications. First, the capability to better interpret literary genres such as short stories and poetry might increase if we invest in EI. It is observed some Iranian EFL learners feel that they are unable to interpret English short stories and poems. They express disappointment in the short story and poetry courses when they are asked to interpret unseen poems and short stories. One possibility is that they do not have the emotional skills such as perceiving emotions, analyzing and understanding the information of emotions underlying the words, and integrating emotions with thoughts to solve the problems in the events in the literature. These skills might play a significant part in reading and understanding stories and poems. The problem might be overcome through emotional literacy awareness programs. As Tuncay (2002) states, EI awareness may help us to navigate our students’ emotional feelings, learning habits and strategies developed by themselves while learning takes place. In these programs, as Burton and King (2004, p. 155) suggest, students should try to imagine themselves at the ecstatic moments of their lives, including all feelings and emotions associated with the experience and then write in as much detail as possible, recreating such inspiring feelings in their lives. In doing so, they can learn to make use of emotional cues in the literary genres such as short stories to better understand and interpret them.

Second, given a *positive bilateral* relationship between emotional knowledge and interpretation of literature, it is also likely to claim that literary genres such as short stories or novels can provide a variety of contexts to foster emotional development besides the linguistic one which is emphasized by linguists. It can be assumed that reading about any

meaningful aspect of life in such literary genres can promote cognitive processing, encouraging the examination, understanding and assimilation of emotions that might otherwise be left unscrutinized (Pennebaker, 2002, p. 284). When learners read the literary genres such as short stories or novels that depict characters with a tendency to experience specific emotions, they can learn much about their own feelings. The more students read such literary genres, the more they can move into the minds of characters with whom they are not initially inclined to feel sympathy. Thus, they are more likely to develop a deep perception of human issues and reconstruct their viewpoints, which results in higher emotional knowledge/skills. Besides, the literary genres such as short stories, drama or novels are considered as materials which concern *representational* language, that is, the kind of language which appeals, in McRae and Clark's (2006) terms, to "the imagination and affective side of readers", helping teachers develop learners' linguistic skills/competence as well as emotional knowledge (p. 335). By implication, syllabus designers, amongst other things, should orient a curriculum towards using representational language through literary readings. Making use of some techniques such as brainstorming, journal writing and peer-discussion in their courses, whenever possible, teachers can develop not only the learners' language competence but also emotional knowledge.

Third, given the above issue, one can observe that students of English literature are more likely to be more successful in such courses as poetry, story and drama if they enjoy a higher level of EI. Unfortunately, in some countries such as Iran, the criteria for selecting literature majors into MA or PhD programs are based on the performance on traditional test items in the entrance examinations/tests. The items of such tests/examinations often focus on abstract thinking and mental abilities such as deductibility and memorization, where emotional knowledge for the evaluation of situations in the literary works is overlooked. Thus, it seems reasonable to include EI test items, together with other traditional test items, to better assess and select English literature majors into MA and PhD literature studies.

The results of Tables 5 and 6 have indicated that English literature,

translation and teaching of English majors did not differ significantly in terms of EI scores. The English literature majors received the highest EI mean scores from both MSCEIT and EQ-Map measures, as observed in Table 1, but the increase was not great enough to show a significant difference among different majors of English. This result does not contradict the aforementioned results. Rather, what it suggests is that any wild generalization or predication about the relationship between EI and learners' majors/fields of study be avoided. The literature majors can have more opportunities to develop emotional skills such as reading people's mood for feedback and creating the right feelings to assist in problem solving, but the extent that they employ them might not be great enough to make the field/major of study a significant predictor of EI. In addition, almost half of the academic courses among the three majors of English in the language curriculum in Iran are quite similar. The courses in the three majors of English at the undergraduate level do not differ much in the content in the first two years of study in Iranian universities. This issue makes the comparison among the three majors and any strong prediction about the relationship between the major of study and EI very difficult. Meanwhile, one of the limitations of this study might be that the level of study was not included in the multivariate analysis of variance. Adding the participants' *level of study*, as a variable, in the analysis of variance might have been another step to further clarify the relationship between the major/field of study and EI. Further study might be required to see whether EI improves significantly from the undergraduate to graduate levels through more exposure to literature in the majors of study such as English literature.

Brackett and Mayer (2003, p. 1147) found that females scored higher than males on EI when measured by a performance measure such as MSCEIT. However, when using self-report measures such as Bar-On's EQ-i, they found no evidence for gender differences. Accordingly, Styes and Brown (2004) have claimed that perhaps gender differences exist in emotional intelligence only when we define EI in a purely cognitive manner rather than through mixed approaches; "It could also be the case that gender differences

do exist but measurement artifacts such as over-estimation of ability on the part of males are more likely to occur with self-report measures” (p. 32). Nonetheless, the results of the present study have challenged their conclusion. As revealed in Tables 5 and 6, female participants enjoyed higher EI on *both* MSCEIT (an ability-based measure) and EQ-Map (a mixed-approach measure). Therefore, the discrepancy cannot be due to the measurement choice.

The findings on the gender variable, in general, have supported the results obtained by Mayer et al. (1999), Stottlemayer (2002) and Chao (2003), who observed gender differences. Goleman (1998) asserts that no gender differences in EI exist, admitting that while men and women may have different profiles of strengths and weaknesses in different areas of emotional intelligence, their overall levels of EI are equivalent. However, the present study and the study by Mandell and Pherwani (2003) have found that women are more likely to score higher on measures of emotional intelligence than men. The results of the present study further support the common view that women are better at sensing other people’s emotions and are more emotionally expressive. One reason for EI differences between male and female participants, other than biological/genetic differences, might be that there exist different social expectancies regarding the role of each gender in the classroom setting. Iranian culture may demand different roles for male and female EFL learners. Their roles in the different settings from society to classroom are expected to be somehow different. That is, they are positioned asymmetrically, expected to deal with linguistically-based situations differently. Iranian male learners, for example, are expected to be better leaders, problem-solvers and stress managers in academic settings whereas Iranian female learners are expected to show higher empathic skills in settings such as the classroom and demonstrate better interpersonal skills when confronted with a foreign language situation. That is, female learners are expected to have a better ability to create and sustain a network of people with whom they can express caring and appreciation and share their vulnerabilities and hopes. Hence, each gender might display different levels

of EI since, in Bar-On's (2000, p. 108) terms, the qualities of stress managements, empathy, problem-solving and interpersonal connection can be part of EI. The above issue on gender differences in EI suggests that female and male language learners not necessarily have the same tasks, group works, and problem-solving activities in EFL contexts, as commonly assumed by many language teachers. There are differences between male and female learners in the ability to perceive, understand, utilize and analyze emotional knowledge as well as the ability to regulate the emotional knowledge to solve language learning problems in the classroom. By implication, teachers of language should not expect learners of different sexes to provide the same types of feedback in the classroom. Also, syllabus designers, curriculum developers and intervention specialists should observe that the types of materials developed for each gender to promote second language leaning should not be necessarily be the same.

CONCLUSION

There is a growing body of research suggesting that EI skills are important for success in many areas of life (Cherniss, 2000, p. 9). Also, to fully enrich our lives and our inner and outer world, literature can offer diverse sources of examples of emotional life. It can create a specific frame of emotions that allows deeper understanding into it (Oatley, 2004, p. 216). In the light of these views and in line with the practice of EI which seeks to synthesize cognition and emotion, this study has presented a step to empirically explore the relationship between EI and interpretation of a few selected English short stories and poems. The results of this study have revealed a positive correlation between the two variables, bringing the role of each to the foreground to overcome some interpretive and emotional deficiencies observed in an EFL context. Further, the results have called for considering EI test items in the assessment and selection of English literature majors.

The results on the participants' gender and majors of the study have

indicated that female learners can enjoy higher levels of EI than male learners, but the major of study is not a very good predictor of EI. Hence, we should be cautious about any strong generalization about the relationship between learners' majors/fields of study and EI. The above result on gender differences can also highlight the differences in language feedback between males and females as well as types of tasks and techniques developed for each gender in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

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Appendix

TABLE 7
List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Words
Dep	Dependent
Gr	Graduate
Li	Literature
Te	Teaching
Translation	Translation
Undgr	Undergraduate