

Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate¹

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) as a recent notion in psychology has rightly found its way into studies related to foreign language learning (FLL). Appreciating its significance, the present study was conducted to test EI in relation to English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' willingness to communicate (WTC). To do so, 67 EFL learners filled out the EI questionnaire and WTC in a foreign language questionnaire. Pearson product moment correlation was employed to explore the existence of any possible correlation between the two variables, and Multiple Regression analysis was used to indicate the degree of prediction of each EI component in EFL learners' WTC. The results indicated a significant correlation between the participants' EI and their WTC. Among the six components of EI, Utilization of Emotions in Problem Solving (UEPS) and Emotional Regulation of Others (ERO) proved highly capable of predicting the participants' WTC. As it is plausible to promote and heighten emotional aspects alongside social interactional aspects in classrooms on the one hand and as EI facilitates communication considerably on the other, giving special consideration and importance to EI in EFL classrooms seems to be highly effective.

Resumen

La inteligencia emocional (IE) como una noción reciente en psicología ha entrado en los estudios relacionados con el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras (LE). Reconociendo su importancia, el presente estudio se llevó a cabo para evaluar la IE en relación con la disposición de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) a comunicarse (WTC). Para ello, 67 estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera completaron el cuestionario de IE y la disposición para comunicarse en un cuestionario de lengua extranjera. Se utilizó la correlación del momento-producto de Pearson para explorar la existencia de cualquier posible correlación entre las dos variables, y se utilizó el análisis de regresión múltiple para indicar el grado de predicción de cada componente de la IE en la disposición para comunicarse de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Los resultados indicaron una correlación significativa entre la IE de los participantes y su disposición para comunicarse. Entre los seis componentes de la IE, la Utilización de las emociones en la resolución de problemas (UERS) y la Regulación emocional de los demás (ERD) demostraron ser muy capaces de predecir la disposición para comunicarse de los participantes. Como es plausible promover y realzar los aspectos emocionales junto con los aspectos de interacción social en las aulas, por un lado, y como la IE facilita considerablemente la comunicación por el otro, otorgar especial consideración e importancia a la IE en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera parece ser muy eficaz.

Introduction

There is wide consensus on the importance of learners as individuals and their characteristics which significantly impact their learning (Brown, 2000). The Intelligence quotient (IQ) as a reflection of an individual's mental ability has traditionally been known as one of the determining psychological factors affecting learning. Many studies in psychology and psycholinguistics have proposed the presence of factors other than IQ affecting learning, and emphasized the crucial role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in the learning process (Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002; Fatemi et al., 2014; Lopes, et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2004; Saklofske et al., 2003; Zarafshan & Ardeshiri, 2012).

Furthermore, the concepts of linguistic competence, incentives facilitating, and obstacles hindering performance have long been controversial issues in Foreign Language Learning (FLL) studies (Cameron, 2013; Rouhani, 2008; Shah Hosseini, 2011; Tousei & Khalaji, 2014). Scholars have mentioned various sociolinguistic, psychological, situational, and individual causes of controversy, among which psychological traces can be noticed and are of determining significance. Among others, the effect of motivation on learners' achievement (Dörnyei, 2005), the role of learners' instrumental and integrative motivation types, and the effects of sociolinguistic context and social interaction on learners' internalization (Vygotsky, 1978) can be cited as examples. The increasing attention paid to psychological aspects in general and EI in particular in FLL studies is proof of this claim (Hashimoto, 2002; Motallebzadeh & Azizi, 2012). Since EI is a psychological element related to the mind of learners, it can affect one's performance and communication (Bora, 2012;

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Khooei, 2014; MacIntyre, 2007; Parker et al., 2006; Soodmand Afshar & Rahimi, 2014). Therefore, it is particularly important to investigate how and to what degree EI in general, and its components in particular, affect learners' performance in L2.

Emotional intelligence

EI, or emotional quotient (EQ) (Zarafshan & Ardeshiri, 2012), as a well-framed concept in the modern sense, was proposed and theorized by Salovey and Mayer (1990), taking both inter and intrapersonal ends of the continuum into consideration (Bar-On, 2006). They strongly emphasized the individual's ability in perceiving and analyzing emotional understanding in a way that they can employ it in intellectual activities in external contexts. In fact, they assumed individuals as possessing the capability to adjust and moderate emotions according to inner and outer circumstances.

Like other psychological concepts which have influenced language learning and teaching, soon after EI as a novel line of thought was developed, language researchers began to investigate its dimensions in education in general (Allen et al., 2014; MacCann, et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2006) and in learning a foreign language (Ahmadi Safa, 2013; Ghanadi & Ketabi 2014; Nadafian et al., 2015; Zarei & Taheri, 2013). EI has been defined as an ability to manage emotion (Barchard & Hakstian, 2004), and according to Mayer and Salovey (1995), EI is a combination of skills contributing to control and repression of emotions to elevate motivation that results in accomplishing our goals. Although various definitions have been proposed regarding EI so far, the most comprehensive one seems to belong to Bar-On (2000), in which EI is non-cognitive and influences a person's capabilities when he or she is faced with pressure imposed by the environment. Also, Bar-On (1997; 2000) is of the opinion that EI is important for perceiving emotions because interpersonal relationships are affected.

Several studies have tested the correlation between EI and academic achievement. Pishghadam (2009), for example, conducted a study on 508 English as a foreign language (EFL) university students to assess the correlation between their EI and language achievement on the four main skills. Findings indicated a profoundly close relationship between EI and language achievement. MacCann et al. (2011) also confirmed the beneficial effect of EI on the academic achievement of 293 middle school learners and 159 college students who participated in their study. In another study, Mohammadi (2012) examined the correlation between EI and English language learning among 191 students. The findings indicated the two variables correlated significantly. Abdolmanafi Rokni, et al., (2014) also tested EI and its impact on language achievement among 86 teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and non-TEFL university students. EI was confirmed to have a paramount impact on students' language achievement. Thus, it can be concluded that EI could positively affect learning in general and achievement of educational goals in particular.

Some studies, on the other hand, found no positive impact of EI on academic achievement. Newsome et al. (2000), for instance, reported no significant impact of EI nor its components on language achievement among 180 students who participated in their study. Meshkat (2011) also reported no positive impact of EI on 187 Iranian students' academic success. In her quest to uncover any possible effect(s) that EI might have on language learning and achievement of 65 EFL learners, Khalili (2013) similarly reported no correlation between EI, language learning and the total marks of the learners on an exam. The aforementioned studies show that students' inner feelings and thoughts are not always effective in their academic achievements.

A number of studies have tried to test a possible correlation between EI and willingness to communicate (WTC). Birjandi and Tabataba'ian (2012), for example, conducted a study on 88 Iranian English language learners to test a possible correlation between EI, foreign language anxiety, and WTC. To this end, they adopted Bar-On's EQ-i, foreign language anxiety and WTC questionnaires. Their study revealed a strong connection between EI, foreign language anxiety and WTC. Tabatabaei and Jamshidifar (2014) scrutinized the correlation between EI and WTC among 60 Iranian EFL learners, employing WTC and EI questionnaires and they found a strong correlation. Ketabdard et al. (2014) also conducted a broader study on 130 EFL learners using McCroskey's (1992) WTC and EI Samouei's (2002) EI questionnaires. The results similarly revealed a positive correlation between EI and WTC. In another study, Rahbar et al. (2016) tested the correlation between EI and WTC among 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners, employing WTC and EI questionnaires and they found a strong correlation. In a large scale study, Mehrpoor and Soleimani (2018) focused on the relationship among 340 EFL learners' communication-related variables, including WTC with their EI and EI was found to be positively and significantly correlated with WTC. Additionally, Mirzapour and

Chamani's study (2020) indicated that students with higher degrees of EI were more eager to communicate with others. Thus, it could be concluded that EI can facilitate students' WTC.

Willingness to communicate

Human beings commonly wish and need to share knowledge and seek information exchange. In fact, the primary goal associated with linguistic activities is communication. MacIntyre (2007) names language learning success as the ultimate end of all language programs that can be rightly guaranteed through applying WTC initiatives because it persuades learners to take an active part in linguistic communications both inside and outside the classroom. To him, elements facilitating and impeding WTC lie in both personal traits and context-related grounds.

Having personal traits in mind, Yashima et al. (2004) based their study on WTC as influenced by attitudes of 160 students. They claimed that WTC is enhanced by international posture, which is an attitudinal construct. Furthermore, in their article, Yu et al. (2011) tested personality-based variables in relation to WTC. This study illustrated a discussion on the correlation between WTC and psychological issues such as self-esteem, emotional stability, neuroticism, introversion, and extraversion. Beatty et al. (1998) claimed an intense correlation existing between communication apprehension and introversion and neuroticism. In another study, examining the relationship between international posture and WTC in the Iranian EFL context, Mahmoodi et al. (2013) tested the different components of attitude including international vocation/activities (IVA), intercultural friendship orientation in learning English (IFO), interest in foreign affairs (IFA) and intergroup approach avoidance tendency (IAAT), in relation to WTC. Five surveys were utilized to gather the data from 150 English language teaching (ELT) students. They found these components to be highly effective in WTC. Riasati and Rahimi's (2018) study found personality-related factors, perceived speaking ability, fear of negative evaluation and speech correctness to be the main individual factors influencing willingness to speak English.

Turning to context-related features affecting WTC, Barjesteh et al. (2012), for instance, examined WTC in relation to four context-types and three receiver-types utilizing a questionnaire consisting of 20 items. Results indicated that two context-types (Group Discussion and Meetings) and one receiver-type (Friend) strongly affect WTC whereas others failed to prove effective. The researchers claimed that Iranian EFL learners have not had the opportunity to be in communicative situations other than class interactions. It was further stated that Iranian EFL learners were not keen on speaking in unfamiliar circumstances, hypothesizing familiarity with context and receiver-types as determining factors in building a communication. Ghonsooly et al. (2013) also examined WTC among 243 learners. Findings demonstrated a positive correlation between WTC and classroom environment and perceived communicative competence. A negative correlation was detected for WTC and communication anxiety. Additionally, Riasati and Rahimi's study (2018) found seating location, teacher, classroom atmosphere, task type, topic, and interlocutor effects as crucial situational or environmental factors.

There are also a number of studies which link WTC to foreign language learning. Nagy and Nikolov (2007), for instance, examined 64 Hungarian students' WTC in English to identify the elements which make students most unwilling to communicate. The results revealed that students were most willing to speak English outside the class, whereas they felt most unwilling to speak in learning contexts. Amongst the reasons expressed, students' self-perception about their linguistic proficiency was the most conspicuous. Anxiety and apprehension were also identified as sources of unwillingness to communicate. In another study, Fu et al. (2012) investigated WTC as influenced by various factors in a Chinese EFL context. Including 100 Chinese participants, the researchers tracked their level of WTC as influencing class participation. According to the results demonstrated, the subscales of motivation, personality factors, self-confidence, and interest affect the Chinese students' class participation, while traditional Chinese culture hinders class participation. Additionally, Alemi (2012) explored WTC among 45 Iranian EFL engineering students. Results indicated low WTC among these students in and out of the classroom because there is no crucial need for these students to communicate in English. Moreover, in a large-scale study, Moazzam (2014) compared 232 EFL learners' WTC with that of 131 English for academic purposes (EAP) learners. He found that EFL learners were more interested in communicating with native speakers of English than with nonnative speakers, while for EAP learners converse results were reported.

Significance of the Study and Statement of the Problem

Language instructors commonly dream about their students taking part in class discussions and strive to arouse their WTC and lead them into verbal and written activities in one way or another. To this end, instructors have to possess knowledge about their students' inner thoughts and feelings to see which particular psychological dimension(s) has to be punctuated and emphasized to ensure learners' WTC in a foreign language context. Language researchers have well understood the significance of psychological dimensions in FLL studies and several studies have been conducted on EI in relation to EFL/ESL learning (e.g., Ahmadi, 2014; Alavinia & Agha Alikhani, 2014; Birjandi & Tabataba'ian, 2012; Ketabdar et al., 2013; Tabatabaei & Jamshidifar 2013). However, the aforementioned studies and other similar ones have taken EI as a whole, not decomposing and specifying its underlying subcomponents, which might be related to and/or influence EFL issues in general and WTC in particular. Hence, EI, as a psychological index consisting of multidimensional components, should be studied to find the relationship between different dimensions of EI and WTC, and explore which particular EI component(s) best predict(s) WTC in EFL. Therefore, this study addressed the following questions:

1. Is there a significant correlation between EI and EFL learners' WTC?
2. Which EI component(s) best predict(s) WTC in EFL learning processes?

Method

Participants

A total number of 67 EFL learners (25 male and 42 female), aged 18 to 32, constituted the research population. They were all senior BA students of English language and literature and had all passed basic general English credit courses. They were all upper intermediate and advanced language learners and had a thorough understanding of the issues under discussion. This study was conducted in a private university (Islamic Azad University in Sanandaj, Iran). The curriculum adopted for the English classes was based on the needs and demands in an EFL context such as Iran, where maximum exposure to linguistic input and interpersonal communication was of primary importance because there is almost no exposure to English outside of classes, and language exposure is only limited to the language classrooms. Students were found to be motivated and interested to participate in communicative exchanges, as is the case with any language learning context. In other words, participation in English classes was voluntary, and no students attended English classes out of a compulsory orientation. Therefore, the range and level of WTC of the participants was similar in the context of the study.

Instruments

Two adopted questionnaires, EI questionnaire and WTC in a Foreign Language questionnaire (WTC-FLQ), were utilized in this study. A detailed description of each is presented below.

Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ)

Bar-On's (1997) 133-item EI questionnaire, also called EQ-i, is widely utilized in Second language acquisition (SLA) and EFL-related studies. However, EIQ developed by Hall et al. (1998), consisting of only 33 items was adopted in the present study. With so many items in Bar-On's questionnaire, we would lose participants; therefore, to prevent attrition the latter questionnaire was selected. This test is a self-report of social and emotional behavior to provide a numerical description of an individual's EI. The test covers the following six main components: Appraisal of Emotion in the Self (AES), Appraisal of Emotion in Others (AEO), Emotional Expression (EE), Emotional Regulation of the Self (ERS), Emotional Regulation of Others (ERO), and Utilization of Emotions in Problem Solving (UEPS). These components roughly comply with Bar-On's five main sub-scales of intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. In Hall et al. (1998) two items are allocated to AES, seven items to AEO, two items to EE, eight items to ERS, five items to ERO, four items to UEPS, and five items are uncategorized. Responses are provided on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To check the validity of the EIQ, it was piloted with 60 EFL learners. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index for this questionnaire was 0.8 which is considered adequate (Vogt & Johnson, 2015). Bartlett's sphericity test was also run and the result was $p \leq .001$, showing that there was enough correlation between the items. Furthermore, using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the questionnaire was determined at .82, which is considered adequate (Ary et al., 2018).

WTC in a Foreign Language Questionnaire (WTC-FLQ)

The original and widely known version of the WTC questionnaire was first published by McCroskey and Daly (1987). It is a psycholinguistic questionnaire assessing the possibility of initiation and maintenance of a verbal communication. Covered items fall in two domains: a) context-type, and b) receiver-type. The context-type category holds items covering issues such as group discussion, meeting, interpersonal, and public speaking. The receiver-type category, on the other hand, deals with the sources of feedback, who are either strangers, acquaintances, or friends.

These items reflect situations one might encounter in which they might choose to communicate or not, without taking into account psychological factors and the complexity of the processes present in foreign language learners' minds. One of the crucial differences is the strategies foreign language learners use in their interlocutions. Learners' conception of error making, interlanguage, and individual differences has to be mentioned as well (Ellis, 2010).

Taking this into account, the researchers adopted a multidimensional version of the questionnaire under the name of WTC-FLQ (Baghaei, 2011), which best meets the demands of the present study as an FLL-related one. The aforementioned test is parallel to McCroskey and Richmond's (1987) original questionnaire tackling foreign language learners' engagement in native and non-native communicative activities. The version adopted in this study is made up of 20 items reflecting various situations foreign language learners might encounter. Receiver types are native speakers of English (items 1-6), non-native speakers of English (items 7-12), and pedagogical interlocutors (items 13-20). Context types vary from group and face-to-face to public. Responses are provided on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To check the validity of the WTC-FLQ, it was piloted with 60 EFL learners. The result of KMO was 0.8, which is considered adequate (Vogt & Johnson, 2015). Bartlett's sphericity test was also performed and the result was $p < .001$, indicating that there was enough correlation between the items. In addition, using Cronbach's Alpha, the questionnaire was shown to be reliable as its reliability index was .79, which is considered adequate (Ary et al., 2018).

Procedure

Two adopted questionnaires (EIQ and WTC-FLQ) were completed by the participants in three sessions (one single session for each of the three classes). Considering the number of items to be answered, 30-40 minutes were allocated for answering both questionnaires. However, there were no time limitations. They were provided with an explanation and clarification whenever needed.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the scores of 67 EFL learners who completed EI and WTC questionnaires are displayed in Table 1.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
AEs	67	3.00	10.00	7.68	1.74
AEO	67	10.00	33.00	24.84	4.41
EE	67	2.00	10.00	7.28	1.92
ERS	67	13.00	38.00	29.79	4.33
ERO	67	8.00	24.00	19.15	2.77
UEPS	67	4.00	20.00	15.70	2.95
WTC	67	36.00	99.00	75.40	11.95
EI total	67	49.00	149.00	122.85	17.30

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the EI components and WTC

According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), one of the assumptions of parametric tests is the normality of distribution of the data under investigation. In order to see whether this assumption is met in our sample, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test of normality of distribution was run for both WTC and EI variables. As the K-S results were .810 and .704 for EI and WTC, respectively and p values were .528 and .705, both variables could exceed a level of significance of 0.05. Hence, they meet the normality condition.

To examine the first research question, Pearson product-moment correlation was carried out between the EI and WTC. The obtained p -value for this analysis was 0.01, which proves significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be argued that the two instruments are inter-related. In other words, the degree of WTC of Iranian EFL learners correlates with their level of EI, and vice versa. Also, R^2 for the two instruments was 42%, which indicates a relatively good correlation.

In order to determine whether there is a relationship between the two variables, the correlation between each component of EI and WTC was probed. Table 2 illustrates the findings.

WTC	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
UEPS	0.59	0.027
ERO	0.62	0.025
ERS	0.56	0.028
EE	0.44	0.041
AEO	0.43	0.042
AEs	0.51	0.032

p<0.05

Table 2: Correlation between WTC and EI components

The results of correlation analysis showed that there are significant correlations between EI components (UEPS, ERO, ERS, EE, AEO and AEs) and WTC. The level of significance was determined at 0.01.

To answer the second research question as to what extent EI components can predict the degree of WTC among EFL learners, a multiple regression analysis was run.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.690	0.48	0.42	9.06

Table 3: Model summary for EI components in predicting WTC

In Table 3, the model summary of regression analysis for EI components' total score in predicting WTC is presented. According to the results shown in Table 3, the correlation coefficient between the total score of dependent and independent variables is 0.69 and R^2 is 0.48, which indicates the prediction degree of variance and the degree of changes in WTC by EI.

In Table 4, the result of the ANOVA test to examine the regression model in predicting WTC by EI components variables is indicated.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	3901.64	6	650.27	7.91	.000.
	Residual	4108.07	50	82.16		
	Total	8009.71	56			

a. Predictors: (Constant), AEs, EE, AEO, ERS, UEPS, ERO

Table 4: ANOVA results for the prediction of WTC by EI

As shown in Table 4, F-value is 7.9 ($p < 0.01$) which is significant at $\alpha = 0.01$. According to the results presented in Table 3, the accuracy of the regression model is substantiated and based on the results given in Table 4, it is revealed that EI components could strongly predict the degree of WTC. Therefore, the second research question is adequately addressed. Table 5 shows the results of multiple regression analysis for predicting the degree of WTC by EI components.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	18.30	9.17			1.99	.05
UEPS	1.16	.58	.28		1.97	.03
ERO	1.37	.72	.32		1.89	.04
ERS	.35	.43	.12		1.89	.41
EE	.75	.76	.12		.97	.33
AEO	-.32	.39	-.11		-.82	.41
AEs	.57	.99	.08		.58	.56

a. Dependent Variable: WTC

Table 5: Multiple correlations investigating the prediction of WTC by the components of EI

As indicated by standardized beta coefficients in Table 5, among all the components of EI, the two components of UEPS ($\beta=0.28, p=0.03$); ERO ($\beta=0.32, p=0.04$) could strongly predict the degree of WTC. Regarding t values of each variable which are significant at $\alpha = 0.05$, it can be concluded that these two components could strongly predict the degree of EFL learners' WTC. Beta coefficients also show the

relationship between each component and EFL learners' WTC. The beta values indicate comparison of the contribution of each independent variable. In this case, the larger beta coefficients are $\beta=0.32$ for ERO and $\beta=0.28$ for UEPS. This means that these two variables make the stronger unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable, which is EFL learners' WTC. On the other hand, the beta values for ERS ($\beta=0.12$), EE ($\beta=0.12$), AEO ($\beta= - 0.11$), and AES ($\beta=0.08$) were significantly lower, indicating that they made less of a contribution, though still hold a Pearson correlation.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the correlation between EI and WTC and to explore the extent to which each of the different components of EI would predict the WTC in an EFL context. The results obtained in this study provide a positive answer to the first research question, which addressed the correlation between EI and WTC. They also indicate that UEPS and ERO, as two components of EI, are the main predictors of the EFL learners' WTC.

These findings could generally be interpreted in the light of other similar studies that have provided support for the impact of EI on general performance, second language learning, and most specifically, WTC (e.g., Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre, 2007; Motallebzadeh & Azizi, 2012; Zarafshan & Ardeshiri, 2012). As such, this study endorses the assumption that EI constitutes a crucial factor facilitating performance in general, and the learning of and communicating in a second language, in particular. More specifically, with reference to the elements influencing the process and success in learning a foreign language, the congruence between the findings of this study and other similar ones (e.g., Alavinai & Agha AliKhani, 2014; Birjandi & Tabataba'ian, 2012; Ketabdar et al., 2013; Mehrpoor and Soleimani, 2018; Oz, 2015; Tabatabaei & Jamshidifar, 2013) could be interpreted as evidence supporting the role of EI as a significant predictor of the extent to which the L2 learner would be willing to engage in L2-mediated interpersonal communication.

Although this is a valuable finding to be considered in its own right, the study further pinpointed the nature of the relationship between EI and WTC to yield a fine-grained account of the contribution of each of the different components of EI in encouraging WTC in a foreign language. It provides the insight that, instead of relying on the correlation between WTC and EI as a unitary construct, we would better expect differential degrees of correlation between WTC and the sub-components of EI. That is, out of the six components of EI, four relating to interpersonal dimensions of EI and two associated with intrapersonal dimensions, the UEPS component and the ERO component were the first and second components accounting for most of the covariance between WTC and EI, respectively. Statistically speaking, this could mean that one interpersonal EI component (ERO) out of two interpersonal components and one intrapersonal EI component (UEPS) out of four intrapersonal components proved highly capable of predicting WTC. In other words, half of the interpersonal EI components claimed the highest predictive power of WTC while this portion was only one fourth for the intrapersonal side, indicating the significant role of interpersonal skills in engaging in and maintaining communication. This, in itself, highlights the importance of Bar-On's *interpersonal* and *adaptability* subscales of EI and reflects Cummins' (1979, 1980) notion of 'basic interpersonal communicative skills', which represent the interactional and communicative functions of language as opposed to 'cognitive/academic language proficiency', which relate to knowledge about language forms.

Another interpretation of this finding could be that one component of each of the two dimensions of EI, namely interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions, proved to be predictors of WTC in this study. In other words, it could be argued that WTC is a function of both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and strategies. That is, every act of communication is co-constructed (Kramsch, 1986) in the sense that both intrapersonal strategic competences and interpersonal interactional capabilities are required for maintaining successful communicative exchanges. Therefore, if WTC partly predicts success in maintaining interpersonal communicative exchanges, EI, in turn, seems to predict WTC itself, hence indirectly contributing to success in communication. Generally, all the components of EI seem to be correlated with WTC, with the highest correlation indexes belonging to UEPS and ERO.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The paramount role that the psychological factors play in the foreign language learning processes is accepted by theorists, researchers, and practitioners. EI is undoubtedly one of the most significant concepts playing a crucial role in these processes as reaffirmed in this study. The findings of the present study will be of significance to EFL teachers. They, at the outset, bear witness to the attested role of affective factors in driving L2 learners' inter-language development. They can also encourage active engagement in L2-

mediated communicative exchanges as well as helping L2 learners regulate their own affective and psychological conditions. They will also provide language teachers and language assessment experts with the insight that active participation in communication is a matter of both intrinsic individual characteristics within L2 learners and the ability to create interpersonal rapport and adaptability. Therefore, they should be considered effective design features in both teaching and testing situations.

This study, however, suffered from some limitations as follows. On the one hand, the number of participants was not as high as needed because it was conducted in an EFL setting where English is only of limited use relegated to the confines of the classroom. Naturally, not many new learners enroll each semester and it is usually not easy to find the required number of participants for empirical studies. The fact that a small number of participants were included in this study is likely to weaken any generalizations of the findings. On the other hand, another limitation relates to the sampling method, which was based on convenience sampling. Moreover, the current study made use of questionnaires that have the inevitable shortcoming attached to self-report measures. In other words, participants were asked to show their perception in response to items that might not be in perfect match with real behaviors.

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