

Emotional Intelligence and its Correlation with Reading Strategies in Iranian EFL Learners

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Received: 18 November 2024; **Accepted:** 20 January 2025; **Published:** 01 February 2025

Abstract: This study explores the role of thematic role structures in bridging FrameNet, a computational resource for lexical semantics, with natural language processing (NLP) and linguistics. Thematic roles, which capture the relationship between a verb and its arguments, serve as crucial elements in understanding sentence structure and meaning. By examining how FrameNet categorizes these roles, the research highlights their significance in representing the semantic relationships within natural language. The study delves into how thematic role structures can improve the integration of FrameNet with NLP tools, enhancing tasks such as machine translation, information retrieval, and syntactic parsing. Through a comprehensive analysis, the paper discusses the challenges and benefits of linking these structures to natural language semantics, aiming to improve linguistic models and automated systems. The study concludes by suggesting ways to refine thematic role frameworks to further enhance the interaction between theoretical linguistics and computational applications.

Keywords: Thematic role structures, FrameNet, Natural language processing (NLP), Lexical semantics, Computational linguistics, Sentence structure, Natural language semantics, Machine translation, Information retrieval.

Introduction: In recent years, the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in various educational contexts has garnered significant attention. EI, generally defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence emotions, is increasingly recognized for its role in enhancing cognitive processes and learning outcomes. While traditional cognitive theories of language acquisition often focus on the intellectual aspects of language learning, a growing body of research highlights the role of emotional and psychological factors in shaping learners' abilities to succeed in language tasks. Among these, reading comprehension has been identified as a complex skill that not only requires linguistic proficiency but also the capacity to manage and regulate emotional responses during the learning process.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading is a crucial skill for language learners, involving various cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies, such as making predictions, identifying key ideas, and summarizing information, are

directly related to the mental processes involved in understanding and retaining a text. On the other hand, metacognitive strategies involve self-monitoring, reflecting on one's own understanding, and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies used while reading. These strategies contribute to higher levels of reading comprehension and proficiency. However, the application and success of these strategies are not solely determined by linguistic abilities. Emotional intelligence, which influences motivation, attention, and persistence, may also play a pivotal role in determining which reading strategies learners choose to employ and how effectively they do so.

In Iran, where English is taught as a foreign language, a majority of learners face challenges in mastering reading comprehension. Many students struggle with the emotional demands of language learning, such as frustration, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence, all of which can influence their ability to select and apply effective reading strategies. Despite this, limited research has been conducted on the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategy use in the Iranian EFL context. This gap in the literature

highlights the need for a closer examination of how EI might correlate with the selection of reading strategies among Iranian EFL learners.

This study aims to explore the correlation between emotional intelligence and the reading strategy choices of Iranian EFL learners. Specifically, it investigates whether learners with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to employ effective cognitive and metacognitive strategies in their reading tasks. By understanding this relationship, the study seeks to shed light on how emotional intelligence may contribute to improving reading comprehension skills in EFL learners, offering insights into potential pedagogical approaches that could enhance learning outcomes.

The following sections will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of emotional intelligence and reading strategies, review relevant literature on the intersection of EI and language learning, and present the research questions and objectives of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This section provides a detailed account of the research design, participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods used to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and reading strategy choices in Iranian EFL learners. The study followed a correlational research design, which is ideal for exploring the potential associations between two variables—emotional intelligence and reading strategies.

Participants

The study involved 200 Iranian EFL learners, consisting of both male and female students from a variety of proficiency levels. The participants were recruited from multiple language institutes and universities in Tehran, ensuring a diverse representation of learners from different educational backgrounds and levels of English proficiency. The learners ranged in age from 18 to 30 years, with the majority of them being undergraduate students. Their English proficiency levels varied from intermediate to advanced, as determined by the results of a placement test administered at the beginning of the study.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, the participants were categorized into three proficiency groups: low, intermediate, and high, based on their scores on the placement test. The participants' selection was non-random but aimed at achieving a balanced sample that would represent a cross-section of learners from different levels of language competence. All participants were volunteers and gave informed consent before their involvement in the

study.

Instruments

The data collection for this study was based on two primary instruments: an emotional intelligence assessment and a reading strategy inventory. These instruments were selected for their relevance to the research questions and their previous use in educational contexts.

Emotional Intelligence Assessment:

To measure emotional intelligence, the study used the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), which is one of the most widely used tools for assessing EI in educational settings. The EQ-i measures five key components of emotional intelligence: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. Each participant completed the EQ-i questionnaire, which consisted of 90 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The reliability and validity of the EQ-i have been well established in previous research, making it a suitable choice for this study.

Reading Strategy Inventory:

The participants' reading strategies were measured using the Reading Strategy Inventory for Language Learners (RSI), a self-report questionnaire designed to assess the use of various cognitive and metacognitive strategies while reading. The RSI consists of 30 items categorized into two sections: cognitive strategies (e.g., summarizing, note-taking, predicting) and metacognitive strategies (e.g., self-monitoring, self-questioning, evaluating). The participants were asked to rate how often they used each strategy while reading English texts, using a 5-point scale (1 = never to 5 = always). The RSI was chosen because of its comprehensive coverage of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which are essential for understanding the reading comprehension process. The internal consistency and validity of the RSI have been previously demonstrated in various studies, ensuring its appropriateness for this research.

Procedure

Data collection took place over a four-week period. Prior to the study, permission was obtained from the institutions where the participants were enrolled. The first step in the data collection process was administering the placement test to determine the English proficiency levels of the participants. This test consisted of multiple-choice questions assessing vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, and it was used to group participants into low, intermediate, and high proficiency levels.

Once the participants were grouped, the study was divided into two phases: the emotional intelligence assessment and the reading strategy inventory survey.

Phase 1: Emotional Intelligence Assessment

Participants first completed the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), which took approximately 30 minutes. The survey was administered in a quiet classroom setting, and participants were instructed to read each item carefully before answering. Since the EQ-i was available in both English and Persian, participants were provided with the Persian version to ensure comprehension. They were encouraged to answer the questions honestly and were assured that their responses would remain confidential.

Phase 2: Reading Strategy Inventory

After completing the emotional intelligence survey, participants were asked to fill out the Reading Strategy Inventory (RSI). This inventory was administered in the same classroom setting, and participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used each reading strategy. The completion of the RSI took approximately 20 minutes. Similar to the EQ-i, the RSI was provided in Persian to ensure full understanding and eliminate language barriers. Participants were instructed to reflect on their past reading experiences and respond based on their usual behavior when reading English texts.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the emotional intelligence assessments and reading strategy inventories were analyzed using statistical software (SPSS). The analysis proceeded in several stages.

Descriptive Statistics:

Initially, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as their overall emotional intelligence and reading strategy scores. The mean, standard deviation, and range were computed for each variable to provide an overview of the data.

Reliability Analysis:

To ensure the internal consistency of the EQ-i and RSI, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each instrument. This reliability analysis helped verify that the questionnaires were measuring their intended constructs consistently.

Correlation Analysis:

The primary aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the use of reading strategies. Therefore, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between

the participants' emotional intelligence scores and their reading strategy use. This analysis helped identify whether higher emotional intelligence was associated with a greater use of effective cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Multiple Regression Analysis:

To explore the predictive power of emotional intelligence on reading strategy choices, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. This allowed the researchers to determine whether emotional intelligence could significantly predict the frequency of use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, while controlling for proficiency level and other demographic variables.

Comparative Analysis:

To examine whether proficiency level influenced the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategies, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to compare the means of emotional intelligence and reading strategy use across the three proficiency groups (low, intermediate, high). This analysis provided insights into whether emotional intelligence had a different impact on reading strategy choices depending on the learners' proficiency level.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research and gave their consent to participate. They were assured that their responses would be confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Additionally, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence. The study received ethical approval from the university's review board.

Limitations

Although the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategies in Iranian EFL learners, it is not without limitations. The reliance on self-report inventories for both emotional intelligence and reading strategy use may introduce response biases, such as social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Further research with longitudinal designs and a larger, more diverse sample could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of emotional intelligence in language learning.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for emotional intelligence (EI)

and reading strategy use among the 200 Iranian EFL learners were calculated to provide an overview of the data. The mean score for emotional intelligence (EI) was found to be 3.5 (SD = 0.48), indicating that most participants displayed moderate levels of emotional intelligence. The breakdown of EI scores revealed that a majority of participants scored in the medium range, with only 15% of the sample showing exceptionally high or low emotional intelligence.

The mean scores for reading strategies revealed a more diverse pattern. The cognitive strategy usage (mean = 3.8, SD = 0.59) was slightly higher than metacognitive strategy usage (mean = 3.4, SD = 0.63), indicating that participants generally used more cognitive strategies (such as summarizing and predicting) compared to metacognitive strategies (such as self-monitoring and self-questioning) when reading English texts. Overall, the scores indicated moderate use of both types of strategies.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the internal consistency of the emotional intelligence (EQ-i) and reading strategy inventory (RSI). The Cronbach's alpha for the EQ-i was found to be 0.87, indicating good internal reliability. Similarly, the Cronbach's alpha for the RSI was 0.81, also indicating acceptable reliability for this instrument. These results confirmed that both the emotional intelligence and reading strategy inventories were reliable tools for measuring their respective constructs.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategy usage. The results indicated a moderate positive correlation between EI and the use of reading strategies ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that higher emotional intelligence was associated with a greater frequency of both cognitive and metacognitive strategy use while reading. Specifically, participants who scored higher on emotional intelligence were more likely to employ strategies such as summarizing, predicting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection during reading tasks.

When further analyzed by strategy type, a stronger correlation was observed between EI and metacognitive strategies ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) compared to cognitive strategies ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that emotionally intelligent learners were more likely to engage in self-regulation activities such as monitoring their comprehension, evaluating their strategies, and adjusting their reading approach. The relationship between EI and cognitive strategies, although significant, was somewhat weaker, indicating

that cognitive strategies may be less influenced by emotional intelligence compared to metacognitive strategies.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether emotional intelligence could predict the use of reading strategies. The results showed that EI accounted for 35% of the variance in reading strategy use ($R^2 = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), with metacognitive strategy use showing the strongest predictive relationship with EI ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of how frequently learners use metacognitive strategies during reading tasks, highlighting the crucial role of self-awareness, self-regulation, and emotional control in effective reading strategy use.

Proficiency Level Comparisons

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether the correlation between emotional intelligence and reading strategy use differed across proficiency levels (low, intermediate, high). The results revealed significant differences in both emotional intelligence and reading strategy use among the proficiency groups. High proficiency learners exhibited significantly higher emotional intelligence (mean = 3.8) and used both cognitive (mean = 4.0) and metacognitive strategies (mean = 3.7) more frequently than intermediate (mean EI = 3.4, cognitive strategies mean = 3.7, metacognitive strategies mean = 3.3) and low proficiency learners (mean EI = 3.2, cognitive strategies mean = 3.6, metacognitive strategies mean = 3.1).

Additionally, the correlation between emotional intelligence and reading strategies was significantly stronger in the high proficiency group ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) compared to the intermediate ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) and low proficiency groups ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that emotionally intelligent learners at higher proficiency levels are more likely to effectively use reading strategies, particularly metacognitive strategies, to improve their reading comprehension.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal a moderate positive relationship between emotional intelligence and the use of reading strategies among Iranian EFL learners. These results are consistent with previous research that has demonstrated the influence of emotional intelligence on various aspects of language learning, including reading comprehension and strategy use. The positive correlation observed in this study suggests that emotionally intelligent learners are better equipped to regulate their emotions and cognitive processes,

leading to more effective use of reading strategies.

One of the most significant findings is the stronger correlation between EI and metacognitive strategies compared to cognitive strategies. This aligns with the idea that emotional intelligence facilitates the regulation of one's own cognitive processes, such as monitoring comprehension, evaluating strategies, and adjusting reading techniques when faced with difficulties. Learners with higher EI may be more self-aware and better able to manage emotions such as frustration or anxiety, which can interfere with the reading process. As a result, they are more likely to engage in metacognitive activities like self-reflection and strategy modification.

The moderate correlation between EI and cognitive strategy use also suggests that emotionally intelligent learners tend to use more cognitive strategies, such as summarizing and making predictions, which are essential for text comprehension. However, the correlation was somewhat weaker than that with metacognitive strategies, indicating that cognitive strategies may be more influenced by factors such as prior knowledge and language proficiency rather than emotional intelligence alone.

The regression analysis further supports the idea that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of reading strategy use, particularly metacognitive strategies. This finding highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering self-regulation and independent learning among EFL learners. Learners with higher EI may be better able to navigate the challenges of reading complex texts by actively monitoring their understanding and adjusting their approach when necessary.

The results also reveal significant differences in emotional intelligence and reading strategy use across different proficiency levels. High proficiency learners not only displayed higher emotional intelligence but also made more frequent use of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This finding suggests that emotional intelligence may contribute to language learning success, especially in tasks that require higher-order cognitive skills such as reading comprehension. The stronger correlation between EI and reading strategies in the high proficiency group further emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence for learners who have already achieved a certain level of language proficiency.

Implications for Teaching

The findings of this study have several important implications for language teaching, particularly in the Iranian EFL context. Given the significant role of emotional intelligence in reading strategy use, it may

be beneficial for educators to integrate emotional intelligence training into their language curricula. By promoting the development of emotional intelligence, teachers can help learners improve their reading comprehension and foster better regulation of their emotions and cognitive processes during reading tasks.

Moreover, the study suggests that learners with low emotional intelligence may benefit from targeted interventions designed to improve their metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring and self-reflection. This could be achieved through instructional strategies that encourage students to reflect on their learning processes, set goals for improvement, and manage emotions that might interfere with their reading tasks.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategy use in Iranian EFL learners. The results suggest that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the selection and application of both cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies, with higher levels of emotional intelligence being associated with more frequent and effective strategy use. The study highlights the importance of fostering emotional intelligence in language learning contexts, particularly for enhancing reading comprehension and overall language proficiency.

Future research could further explore the causal relationship between emotional intelligence and reading strategy use through experimental or longitudinal designs. Additionally, investigating the role of emotional intelligence in other language skills, such as listening and speaking, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional intelligence influences EFL learning outcomes.

Incorporating emotional intelligence training into EFL curricula, alongside traditional language teaching methods, could potentially enhance the learning experience and outcomes for students, particularly those struggling with reading comprehension and strategy use. By recognizing and addressing the emotional dimensions of language learning, educators can better support students in becoming more effective, self-regulated, and emotionally resilient language learners.

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