

# Investigating the Interplay of Emotional Intelligence and Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence in Iranian Lower-Intermediate EFL Learners

Ali Derakhshan\* 

*Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran*

Zohreh R. Eslami 

*Professor of Educational Psychology, Texas A & M University, Texas, USA*

Neda Ghandhari 

*Ph.D. Candidate of TEFL, University of Tehran, Kish International Campus, Kish, Iran*

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## Abstract

Despite the significant role of emotions in any aspect of language learning, including its pragmatic aspect, there has been few research studies on this topic. As a stride toward narrowing this research niche, the objectives of this research were threefold. Firstly, it aimed to examine the two face-threatening speech acts of request and apology as indicators of learners' interlanguage pragmatic competence (ILP) and its relationships with learners' Emotional Quotient (EQ). Secondly, it sought to investigate whether gender as an intervening variable would have any significant relationship with ILP and EQ, and thirdly whether EQ could predict ILP development. To this end, 72 (50 females and 22 males) Iranian lower-intermediate level learners ranging in age from 17 to 25 from two universities took part in this research. A multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) (Liu, 2004) and Bar-On's (1997) EQ scale were used and correlation analysis was done to search for any linkage between ILP and EQ. The Pearson product-moment correlation outcomes revealed no significant relationship between EQ and ILP. However, a significant relation was found between Independence as a component of EQ and EFL learners' ILP competence. The independent samples t-test outcomes indicated that female participants had a higher level of (ILP) competence than male participants; however, male and female participants did not differ significantly regarding their EQ level. The findings indicate that EQ, in general, is not influential in EFL learners' ILP competence. The paper concludes by providing pedagogical implications for EFL learners and instructors.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Competence, Interlanguage pragmatics, Request, Apology

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**Corresponding author's email:** [a.derakhshan@gu.ac.ir](mailto:a.derakhshan@gu.ac.ir)

## INTRODUCTION

Learners' individual differences, such as their motivation level, personality type, and attitude, are effective for their second language learning in general (Takahashi, 2001) as well as interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) development in particular (Arabmofrad, Derakhshan, & Atefinejad, 2019; Haji Maibodi & Fazilatfar, 2015; Tajeddin & Zand Moghadam, 2012). One of such important individual difference factors is one's level of intelligence for learning a second language successfully (Pishghadam, 2009; Teepen, 2006). Moreover, learners' emotional intelligence has been shown to potentially boost second/foreign language learning (Marquez, Martín, & Brackett, 2006). Among learners' social, cultural, and emotional capitals (Piri, Pishghadam, Quentin Dixon, & Eslami Rasekh, 2018), emotional capital most strongly predicts their second/foreign language achievement. Similarly, according to Ellis (1994) and López (2011), emotional factors have substantial effects on foreign/second language learning. In this regard, MacIntyre, MacKinnon, and Clément's (2009) findings approved the influential role of emotions in learning a foreign language. As a concept linking learner's emotional side to their intellectual ability, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a salient and rather recently introduced area of research with the potential to affect language achievement (Ahmadi Safa, 2013). Furthermore, research has confirmed that the association between learners' L2 achievement and emotional factors is bi-directional (Pishghadam, Zabetipour, & Aminzadeh, 2016).

Since the introduction of EI in the 1990s, it has become a popular concept in the realm of psychology, which has been later applied to other fields of research, including management and general education. Besides, researchers have found that, compared to Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ) is a more effective factor in one's functioning and education (Goleman, 1995; Pishghadam, 2009; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Furthermore, by admitting that IQ tests had decreased in their popularity in the process of educational assessment due to the problematic issues in IQ

testing, Beck (1976) stated that employing IQ tests as the sole assessment measure should be ceased and various types of intelligence considered. Goleman (1995), a prominent researcher in EI, describes EQ as encompassing “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, to control impulses and delay gratification, to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to emphasize and to hope” (p. 34). Bar-On (1997) reviewed factors (i.e., abilities, competencies, skills) being influential in success in life and found EI encompasses “an array of personal, emotional, and social competencies and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (p. 14). Likewise, according to Dabaghi and Zabihi (2013), “learners with high levels of EQ are more likely to rate their communication skills as high” (p. 22). Communication skills pertain to one’s ability to have a meaningful relationship with others, understand one’s and others’ feelings or desires, and cope effectively with communication problems (Kuzu & Eker, 2010). Second language acquisition researchers have acknowledged that second/foreign language learning is more than learning only grammar and vocabulary, and involves communicative competence. As a result, pragmatic competence, ILP competence, intercultural communication, and its assessment, as well as intercultural pragmatics have gained more attention (Alcón-Soler, 2013; Alemi, Eslami, & Rezanejad, 2014; Birjandi & Derakhshan, 2014; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020; Derakhshan & Shakki, in press; Kecskes, 2014; Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020; Martí’nez-Flor, 2016; Taguchi, 2015, 2019; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Furthermore, Meng and Wang (2006) acknowledge the importance of psychological factors in second language learning, indicating that individuals’ positive emotions can facilitate learning of a second language and can result in an improvement in language performance. By contrast, negative emotions can hinder second language learning. Accordingly, it might be argued that pragmatic competence development in second/foreign language learning contexts might also be affected by emotional factors (Ahmadi Safa, 2013).

Pragmatic competence is the “ability to communicate in a socially appropriate manner and to interpret explicit and implicit meanings according to the context” (Thomas, as cited in Taguchi, 2008, p. 424). Moreover, pragmatic competence development is affected by cognitive and emotional factors (Arabmofrad et al., 2019; Ahmadi Safa, 2013; Tajeddin & Zand Moghadam, 2012). According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000), individuals with higher EQ may make more effective communications with other people. Generally, emotional skills are essential for developing one’s cognitive ability and for achieving academic goals. According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004), “high EI individuals, most centrally, can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meaning, and manage emotions better than others, and tend to be more open and agreeable” (p. 210).

Pragmatic competence requires language users to perform and interpret different speech acts successfully. The two most frequently used speech acts are apology and request. To successfully perform these speech acts requires consideration of different factors, including social distance, power relationships, as well as the level of imposition involved in performing the speech act. Speakers’ level of EI, encompassing both intrapersonal and interpersonal elements, can affect the way they produce and approach apology and request speech acts. This is because speech acts are produced and received in a specific situation by two or more speakers having particular needs and individual differences. Successful production and realization of speech acts will be done only when such situation-specific aspects are considered. To put it simply, those individuals having higher EI levels may produce more appropriate situation-specific apologies and requests to maintain both the speaker’s and hearer’s face needs and interpersonal relationships. Given the potentially influential role of EQ in speech acts performance, the present study has implications for learners to know to what extent issues such as stress management, adaptability, and interpersonal and intrapersonal elements can help them develop their ILP competence more efficiently. Despite the significance of this relationship,

only a few empirical undertakings have checked the influence of EQ on apology and request speech acts. Therefore, the current research sought to examine the possible association between EI and ILP competence on using apology and request speech acts among Iranian EFL learners.

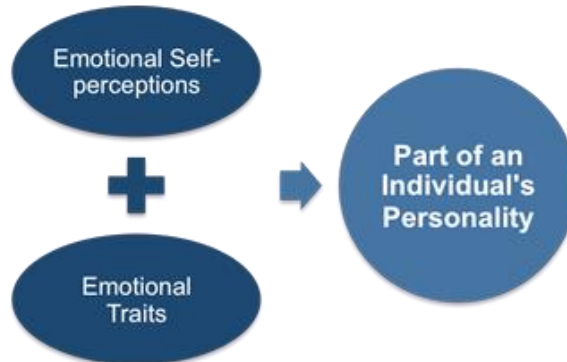
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Emotional Intelligence**

As a concept having been recognized and emphasized for many years, EI has been the focus of many studies conducted on personality and emotional factors (e.g., Alavinia & Razmi, 2012; Mahmoodi, Mohammadi, & Tofighi, 2019). EI was first introduced at the beginning of the 20th century by Thorndike (1920) as social intelligence and was categorized into (1) abstract, (2) social, and (3) mechanical types of intelligence. In the next half of the century, Gardner (1983) regarded personal intelligence as including intrapersonal and interpersonal types and defined intrapersonal intelligence as “the ability to detect and react to one’s feelings” and interpersonal intelligence as “the ability to detect and react to emotion in others” (as cited in Cook, 2006, p. 18).

Currently, there exist several theories of intelligence, among which theories of Mixed EI model, Trait EI model, and Ability EI model belonging respectively to Goleman (1998), Mayer and Salovey (1997), and Bar-On (1997) and are most widely used ones. Mayer and Salovey (1997) conducted several studies on the Ability EI model while describing it as, “the ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotions to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth” (p. 10). The mixed EI model posited by Goleman (1995) is an accepted and useful model, including various competencies that are subdivided into skills that form a person’s level of EQ. These competencies are social awareness, self-management, social skills, and self-awareness skills. Due to the dissimilarities between the Mixed EI model and Ability EI model, the Trait EI model was introduced (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001), referring to the

“constellation of emotional perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007, p. 273), meaning that there are emotional traits in addition to emotional self-perceptions as part of our personality.



**Figure 1:** Trait model of EI

Bar-On’s (1997) theoretical approach is more detailed in comparison to Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model. According to Bar-On’s (1997) EQ model, EI encompasses five components: adaptability (flexibility, reality testing, and problem-solving), intrapersonal (self-actualization, assertiveness, independence, emotional self-awareness, and self-esteem ), stress management (impulse control and stress tolerance), interpersonal (social responsibility, empathy, and interpersonal relationships), and general mood (optimism and happiness).

Bar-On (1997) designed his scale to assess EI components, and later, he developed different measurement instruments such as interviews, a questionnaire to be rated by observers, a self-report measure for different ages with different versions. The EQ Inventory (Bar-On, 1997) measures the five components of the Ability EI model through 133 items. Bar-On’s theoretical model includes emotional, personality, social, and cognitive dimensions (Mayer et al., 2000) and focuses on various everyday life situations (Bar-On, 2000, 2004, 2006).

## **Pragmatic Competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics**

Within the broad domain of SLA, ‘pragmatic competence’ was brought into light following the postulation of ‘communicative competence’ by Hymes in the 1970s, but explicitly premiered in the communicative competence model of Bachman (1990), underscoring the relationship between “language users and the context of communication” (p. 89). By putting more emphasis on social and functional dimensions of language use compared to structural ones, research on L2 pragmatic competence and development has increased in the last three decades (Cohen, 2017, 2018; Derakhshan, 2020; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2015; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Eslami & Liu, 2013; Li, Raja, & Sazalie, 2015; Kasper, 2007; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Kasper & Rose, 1999, 2002; Taguchi, 2015, 2017, 2019). Furthermore, research on second language pragmatics, called ILP, has mainly focused on speech acts, conversational structure, and conversational implicatures (Bardovi-Harlig, 2010; Derakhshan, 2019). Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) proposed two components for pragmatic competence including pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. Pragmalinguistic competence purports to the knowledge and ability to draw on conventions of means and conventions of forms (Thomas, 1983). Sociopragmatic competence, however, pertains to the social and cultural aspects of pragmatic competence. It emphasizes the appropriate use of language based on social and cultural variables of the context. It is, therefore, suggested that learners be conscious of the linguistic and non-linguistic conventions, functions, and sociocultural contexts which may vary cross-culturally. Performing different speech acts successfully is one important component of pragmatic competence pertains to speech acts. Requests and apology are two most frequently used speech acts and widely studied by different researchers in different languages.

## Speech Acts of Apology and Request

### *Apology*

Cohen and Olshtain (1981) asserted that when the speaker apologizes, s/he is aware that an offense has been committed and the speaker is partially involved in the infraction. Cohen and Olshtain (1981) divided apology strategies to five categories: (a) expressing an apology explicitly (e.g., *I am really sorry.*); (b) acknowledgment of responsibility (e.g., *You are right. It is totally my fault*); (c) explanation or account (e.g., *The bus was late.*); (d) offer of repair (e.g., *How can I make it up to you?*); and (e) a promise of non-recurrence, which means that the apologizer promises not to commit the offense again.

### *Request*

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), requests are face-threatening acts in which the speaker infringes on the hearer's action freedom. Depending on the situational factors of the degree of imposition, power, and distance, the speakers should decide on the degree of the directness of requestive strategies. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984, p. 201) proposed three directness levels that being applicable when requesting, which are as follows:

1. **Direct strategies:** such as imperatives.

*Clean up the room*

2. **Conventionally indirect strategies:** relating to contextual preconditions essential for its performance as conventionalized in the language which are commonly referred to as indirect speech acts.

*Could you clean up the kitchen, please?*

3. **Non-conventionally indirect strategies:** indirectly referring to contextual variables. These are hints and clues related to the context.

*Why is the window open?*

*It's cold in here.*



## **Empirical Studies on EI**

In the past 20 years, various studies have been conducted on EI and its effects on different aspects of behavior. Mayer and Salvory (1997) developed the EI theory regarding EI as encompassing four related abilities to manage emotions, understanding, perceiving, and using. Their findings showed that EI was influential in different life outcomes including maintaining personal relationships and accomplishing one's occupational goals. In this regard, Rouhani (2004) investigated the association of EI with foreign language anxiety with empathy among 70 Iranian university-level EFL learners. He concluded that attending to emotions is important for L2 learning. Similarly, Besharat, Shalchi, and Shamsipoor (2006) explored the impact of EQ/EI on the mental health and academic success of 220 students in Iran. The authors found a negative correlation between EI and psychological stress and a positive one between EI and academic success.

Scrutinizing the related literature, few studies only in the context of Iran have been found to focus on the potential effect of EFL learners' EI on their ILP development, and their results were inconsistent. On the one hand, some studies reported the insignificant role of EFL for ILP development. In this regard, Ahmadi Safa (2013) examined the association of EI and ILP competence in 52 Iranian EFL learners. According to his study results, EQ, regarded as an irrelevant factor to both foreign language proficiency and ILP development of EFL learners, might not be rightly considered as an effective personal variable in EFL educational contexts. In a similar study, Shirazi and Nadoushani (2016), examining the prediction of 150 Iranian EFL learners' ILP and more specifically, politeness strategies by their EI, reported that while EI was not a significant predictor of the learners' ILP and politeness strategies, their pragmatic knowledge and educational level were influential in their politeness within various social situations.

In contrast, the outcomes of some other research undertakings have revealed significant associations between EFL learners' EI and their pragmatic competence. Accordingly, in a study that explored the

relationship of EI with pragmatic awareness in 120 Iranian language learners, Rafieyan, Sharafi-Nejad, Damavand, Eng, and Mohamed (2014) reported a positive association between EI and pragmatic awareness of their study participants. Similarly, Rahimi Domakani, Mirzaei, and Zeraatpisheh (2014) carried out a study that first, investigated the relationship between pragmatic performance and EI in Iranian advanced EFL students, and second, examined the potential effect of gender on this relationship. The pragmatics test outcomes revealed that the pragmatic performance of female learners with higher levels of EI and intrapersonal skills was better compared to their male counterparts. These results suggested that pragmatic development and the pragmatic performance of learners and their emotions and feelings are intertwined, and such connections, in turn, are impacted by learners' gender.

Furthermore, in an experimental study conducted on 96 Iranian EFL learners to explore the potential role of EI-based instruction in influencing the pragmatic performance of EFL learners, the outcomes of posttests analyses revealed that EI-based instruction could significantly improve the participants' pragmatic performance (Zarrin & Abbasian, 2018). Due to the inconclusive findings of the studies conducted investigating the association of EI and ILP competence of EFL learners, more studies are needed to uncover the linkage of EI with ILP competence.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

To add to the nascent literature in the area of ILP and EQ, the primary goal of this research is to explore the associative and predictive link between ILP and EQ among a group of Iranian EFL learners. More particularly, this research endeavors to initially check the linkage of EI with ILP competence among Iranian EFL learners as shown in their performance of request and apology speech acts. It then aims to understand if any statistically significant relationship exists between the components of EQ based on Baron's (1997) model and Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence as revealed in

their awareness of apology and requestive speech acts. Finally, it aims to examine whether learners' awareness of apology and requestive speech acts can be predicted by their EQ level. In this respect, three research questions were posed:

1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EI and ILP competence as shown in their performance on two speech acts of apology and request?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between the components of EQ based on Bar-On's (1997) model and Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence as revealed in their awareness of apology and requestive speech acts?
3. Can learners' awareness of apology and requestive speech acts be predicted by their EQ level?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

The total population of the present study, who took the Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT), were 120 Bachelor of Arts (BA) students majoring in English Literature and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). From this pool, 72 participants (50 females and 22 males) whose ages ranged from 19 to 25 whose scores were between 24-30 were considered as lower intermediate learners and were included in this research. The participants had no experience of living abroad.

### **Materials and Instruments**

The Oxford QPT, the ILP Test, and the EQ Questionnaire were the instruments employed in this study.

### *Oxford Quick Placement Test*

To make sure the language proficiency of the participant was similar, they were given a paper and pencil test of the Oxford QPT (2004) at the beginning of the study. It includes 40 multiple-choice questions. It took 30 minutes to administer the test. As explained in the guidelines of the test, learners with a score between 24-30 (See Table 1) were considered as lower-intermediate, and therefore, were included in this study.

**Table 1:** *Oxford quick placemat test criteria*

Level		Paper and Pen Score	
Level	Description	Part 1	Score out of 40
0.1	Beginner		0-9
0.2	Break through		10-15
1	Elementary		16-23
2	Lower-intermediate		24-30
3	Upper-intermediate		31-40

### *ILP Measure*

The second instrument, used for measuring the participants' ILP competence (Liu, 2004), includes 24 multiple-choice discourse completion tasks (MDCT). One way to collect data in ILP is through DCT (Golato, 2003, 2005). Despite their limitations, MDCTs enable researchers to gather a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time and to control some factors (age, gender, features of the situation, etc.). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the test was found to be .88. The scenarios in the MDCT test measured the EFL learners' ability to recognize both pragmalinguistically and socio-pragmatically appropriate forms for the realization of request and apology speech acts, which contain four levels of familiarity and formality.

## EQ Questionnaire

The third instrument utilized in this study was Bar-On's (1997) EQ Inventory (EQ-i), which is one of the standardized, reliable, and validated measures of EI (Dawda & Hart, 2000). In our study, the reliability index was .82. The questionnaire includes 133 items in the form of short sentences. It takes respondents roughly 40 minutes to complete the test. It is also a self-reported measure of EI, intended for participants who are 16 years or older. The items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "very seldom or not true of me" to (5) "very often true of me or true of me". The EQ questionnaire provides an overall score as well as scores for the following five composite scales and 15 subscales (Bar-On, 2006).

**Table 2: EQ-i composite scales and subscales (Bar-On, 1997)**

The EQ-i scales and what they assess	The EI competencies and skills assessed by each scale
EQ-i SCALES	
Intrapersonal	Self-awareness and self-expression:
Self-regard	<i>To accurately perceive, understand and accept oneself</i>
Emotional self-awareness	<i>To be aware of and understand one's emotions</i>
Assertiveness	<i>To effectively and constructively express one's emotions and oneself</i>
Independence	<i>To be self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others</i>
Self-actualization	<i>To strive to achieve personal goals and actualize one's potential</i>
Interpersonal	Social awareness and interpersonal relationship:
Empathy	<i>To be aware of and understand how others feel</i>
Social responsibility	<i>To identify with one's social group and cooperate with others</i>
Interpersonal relationship with others	<i>To establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well</i>
Stress management	Emotional management and regulation:
Stress tolerance	<i>To effectively and constructively manage emotions</i>
Impulse control	<i>To effectively and constructively control emotions</i>
Adaptability	Change management:
Reality-testing	<i>To objectively validate one's feelings and thinking with external reality</i>
Flexibility	<i>To adapt and adjust one's feelings and thinking to new situations</i>
Problem-solving	<i>To effectively solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature</i>
General mood	Self-motivation:
Optimism	<i>To be positive and look at the brighter side of life</i>
Happiness	<i>To feel content with oneself, others and life in general</i>

## Data Collection Procedures

The measurement instruments were administered to the students for three weeks. To homogenize the participants, Oxford QPT (2004) was administered in the first week. Each correct answer was considered as one point. Seventy-two of the participants were homogenously categorized as lower-intermediate learners. In the second week, in a single session, the participants took the ILP test. This test had 24 questions; one point was considered for each correct answer. Finally, in the third week, the Bar-On's EQ questionnaire, including 133 items, was distributed among the participants.

## RESULTS

### Tests of Normality of the Data

To run the needed statistical tests, the normality of the data was required to be assessed first as parametric tests lie on the assumption of data normality. As a first step toward ensuring data normality, the Shapiro-Wilk, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) tests, were run on the ILP test and the EQ questionnaire data. As represented in Table 3, the data showed normal distribution as the KS Test results showed the  $p$  values for ILP and EQ data to be .1 and .2, respectively, and the  $p$ -value of the Shapiro-Wilk for ILP and EQ are .25 and .73 respectively, which are all greater than .05. Therefore, as the assumption of normality is met, the data can be further analyzed using parametric tests.

**Table 3:** *Tests of normality of the data*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statisti			Statisti		
	c	Df	Sig.	c	df	Sig.
ILP Total	.139	72	.100*	.978	72	.253
EQ Total	.053	72	.200*	.988	72	.736

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

## Results for Research Question One

Through Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, the association of EI and ILP competence level of the participants was measured. Table 4 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for the ILP and EQ tests. As demonstrated in Table 4, the mean score and the standard deviation reported for the EQ are 402.28 and 26.51 respectively, and the mean score and the standard deviation reported for the ILP competence are 13.10 and 3.19 respectively.

**Table 4:** *Descriptive statistics of the emotional intelligence and pragmatic knowledge*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EQ Total	402.28	26.510	72
ILP Total	13.10	3.198	72

As indicated in Table 5, no significant relation was observed between the EQ and ILP results ( $r = .03$ ,  $n = 72$ ,  $p = .77$ ,  $\alpha = .01$ ).

**Table 5:** *The correlation results of emotional intelligence and interlanguage pragmatic knowledge*

		EQ Total	ILP Total
EQ Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.776
	N	72	72
ILP Total	Pearson Correlation	.034	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.776	
	N	72	72

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

## Results for Research Question Two

The descriptive statistics pertaining to the EQ questionnaire is shown in Table 6. The highest mean score, 34.57, belongs to the Reality Testing component having a standard deviation of 5.69, and the lowest mean score, 17.82, goes to the Independence component having the standard deviation of 4.95. Reality Testing is followed by the Self-regard component having a mean score of 32.38 and the standard deviation of 3.82.

**Table 6:** *Descriptive statistics for the EQ components*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Problem Solving	72	18	35	27.32	3.305
Happiness	72	21	34	27.53	2.868
Independence	72	7	29	17.82	4.957
Stress Tolerance	72	16	29	20.92	2.499
Interpersonal Relationship	72	22	38	29.49	3.749
Self-Actualization	72	21	41	30.57	4.124
Emotional Self-Awareness	72	19	35	27.44	3.356
Reality Testing	72	22	60	34.57	5.691
Self-Regard	72	20	39	32.38	3.822
Impulse Control	72	15	40	26.94	5.140
Flexibility	72	13	31	22.78	4.136
Social Responsibility	72	21	38	29.81	3.240
Optimism	72	18	33	25.53	3.842
Empathy	72	15	31	24.19	3.740
Assertiveness	72	18	36	25.00	3.361
Valid N (listwise)	72				

The results presented in Table 7 evinced a positive correlation exists between the pragmatic knowledge of request and apology and the Independence component of EQ ( $r = .33$ ,  $n = 70$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\alpha = 0.01$ ). It is



interesting to note that Independence is the only component that is correlated with ILP.

**Table 7:** *The correlation between the components of EQ and ILP*

		ILP Total	Problem Solving	Happiness	Independence	Stress Tolerance	Interpersona l Relationship
ILP Total	Pearson	1	.068	.004	-.331**	.050	.042
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.572	.976	.004	.674	.727
	N	72	72	72	72	72	72
		Self Actualization	Emotional Self-Awareness	Reality Testing	Self Regard	Impulse Control	
ILP Total	Pearson	.019	.148	-.043	.146	-.017	
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.873	.214	.718	.222	.889	
	N	72	72	72	72	72	
		Social Flexibility	Responsibility	Optimism	Empathy	Assertiveness	
ILP Total	Pearson	-.110	.111	.144	.137	.077	
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.357	.355	.229	.250	.519	
	N	72	72	72	72	72	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

### Results for Research Question Three

Moreover, the third research question aimed to find out whether ILP can be predicted by EQ or not. In this respect, ILP competence is the dependent variable while EQ is the independent variable. To check this predictive relationship, linear regression analysis was run.

The  $R$  and  $R^2$  values are presented in Table 8. In this study, the  $R$ -value represents a very low degree of correlation, which is .03. The  $R^2$  value explains of the degree of total variation in the dependent variable, ILP, which can be accounted for by the independent variable, EQ. As the results show, the independent variable of EQ accounted for only .1% of ILP competence variation.

**Table 8:** *The results of linear regression and model summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.034 <sup>a</sup>	.001	-.013	3.219

a. Predictors: (Constant), EQ Total

b. Dependent Variable: ILP Total

As indicated below, Table 9 represents the results of the ANOVA analysis, reporting whether regression equation fits the data. The results show that the regression model does not significantly predict the outcome variable. ( $t(70) = .08, p = .77, a = .05$ ).

**Table 9:** *Results of ANOVA for prediction*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.843	1	.843	.081	.776 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	725.477	70	10.364		
	Total	726.319	71			

a. Predictors: (Constant), EQ Total

b. Dependent Variable: ILP Total

In order to examine whether ILP can be predicted by EQ and to determine whether EQ makes a significant contribution to the model, the Coefficients table is attended to.

**Table 10:** *Coefficients between ILP and EQ*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	11.444	5.810		1.97	.053
	EQ Total	.004	.014	.034	.285	.776

a. Dependent Variable: ILP Total

As shown in Table 10, the coefficient between ILP and EQ has not reached a statistically significant level since  $p < .053$  and  $p < .77$  are more than .05 level of significance.

## DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, due to the significance of both cognitive and affective factors in the development of ILP competence among second/foreign language learners (Ahmadi Safa, 2013; Arabmofrad et al., 2019; Tajeddin & Zand Moghadam, 2012), researchers have been urged to examine, besides the cognitive factors, the association of affective factors, such as motivation, EI, with EFL learners' language proficiency development and ILP competence, or to investigate the potential roles of such affective factors in EFL learners' academic achievement and ILP development (Ahmadi Safa, 2013; Besharat et al., 2006; Pishghadam, 2009; Rouhani, 2004). As confirmed by Ellis (1994), emotional factors impact general language development and second/foreign language learning. In this regard, Emotion-Based Language Instruction was introduced by Pishghadam, Adamson, and Shayesteh (2014) as a new, effective method for speeding up bilingualism and multilingualism processes. Following such lines of research, the present

study tried to investigate, initially, the associative linkage of EFL learners' EI with their ILP competence relating to request and apology, and then, the possible correlations between the EQ components based on the Bar-On's (1997) model and EFL learners' ILP competence pertaining to request and apology, and third, the probable prediction of learners' ILP competence by their EQ level.

Accordingly, the outcomes pertaining to the first research question showed no significant linkage between EQ in general and the pragmatic knowledge of request and apology. Moreover, the second research question results revealed that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between EFL learners' level of Independence and their ILP in apology and request speech acts. Finally, the third research question results uncovered that EQ was not a significant predictor of the learners' ILP competence concerning apology and request speech acts.

To elaborate on the outcomes, these results are in line with those of Ahmadi Safa's (2013) findings, investigating the prediction of ILP competence and language proficiency of 52 Iranian EFL learners by their EI level. According to him, EQ seemed to not have predictive power for EFL learners' general English proficiency and their ILP competence in apology, request, and complaint speech acts. Similarly, the outcomes of the current study are compatible with those of Shirazi and Nadoushani's (2016) study, reporting that Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence and politeness strategies could not be significantly predicted by their EI level.

However, some other studies have reported contrasting results in comparison with the outcomes of the current study. In this regard, Rahimi et al. (2014) reported that female EFL learners with higher levels of intrapersonal skills and EI performed better on the pragmatics test compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, Rafieyan et al. (2014) showed that a positive correlation existed between EFL learners' EI and pragmatic awareness. Finally, Zarrin and Abbasian's (2018) study results revealed that EI-based instruction could significantly enhance EFL learners' pragmatic performance.

In the end, the results of the second research question proving a positive linkage between the Independence and ILP competence may be justified by Bar-On's (1997) definition of EQ, which highlighted that an individual with a higher level of EQ can better understand and express him/herself. According to this definition, it may be justifiable to assert that when individuals can better understand themselves and can more clearly express their intentions to their addressees, they may show improvements in their actualizations of various speech acts, being crucial elements of the learners' ILP competence development.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

All in all, the current research aimed to examine the association first, between EQ and ILP and second, between the EQ components and ILP, and to examine the prediction of ILP by EQ among Iranian EFL learners. As the overall results indicated, EQ was not associated with and did not significantly predict the ILP competence of the learners. However, the Independence component of EQ correlated with ILP competence.

Because emotional factors are important in learning a second/foreign language (Ahmadi Safa, 2013), teacher educators and teacher trainers can equip instructors with the necessary knowledge about various emotional factors playing important roles in the context of education, such as EI, to aid teachers in their professional performance and consequently, promote their learners' educational accomplishments. Only when teachers have understood the EI concept themselves can they transmit their knowledge of EI to their learners. Thus, when students have internalized such knowledge about EI, it can impact their foreign language achievement (Pishghadam, 2009) and pragmatic performance. Teachers can make opportunities for learners to promote their EI level by asking them to participate in group discussions where they can communicate their feelings and emotions to others to facilitate better knowledge of the self and others, foster their

independence and relationship with others, and decrease their stress and anxiety.

Besides, the more the learners use their ILP competence in the classroom, the more knowledgeable they become of various speech acts. Therefore, it can be concluded that EI can promote learners' ILP development and speech acts utilization (Zarrin & Abbasian, 2018). But, the present study results support the conclusion made by Ahmadi Safa (2013) that while EI is considered as an influential factor in the language learning context, it should not be mistakenly considered as the sole variable required for guaranteeing learners' success in ILP development. Furthermore, addressing the concept of EI in teacher education programs can also aid teachers to more successfully regulate their emotions and provide more effective classroom management strategies (Goleman, 1995). Highlighting the necessity of EI, Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews (2009) have claimed that "training emotional intelligence in schools ... offers a viable, and valuable solution to perceived individual ... needs. It is the quick fix panacea for manifest problems in personal relations, at work, and during the educational process" (p. 3).

Moreover, the outcomes of this research can be added to the previous results on the association of EI and ILP competence. In order to reach more solid findings on this relation, further research is recommended to be done in this area in the future. Additionally, the present study outcomes may be clarified by pointing out the limitations of the current research. In this study, apology and request speech acts represented the ILP competence of the learners in general. Therefore, the non-association found between EI and ILP competence of the learners in the present study may be justified due to the reason that ILP was treated in a very restricted way by attending only to the request and apology speech acts. As mentioned by Bardovi-Harlig (2010), ILP competence encompasses speech acts as well as conversational structure and implicature. Therefore, to find more accurate findings, future studies can check the linkage of EI and other ILP competence aspects which are conversational structure and conversational implicature. This study has

mainly focused on EQ Inventory by relying on Bar-On's (1997) theoretical perspective toward EI. Further empirical studies can be done in the future eliciting data about learners' level of EI through other means such as interviews and narrative reflections. And finally, the current research has focused only on lower-intermediate EFL learners' EI and ILP competence. To reach more generalizable findings in this regard, more studies are urged to investigate this relation on learners from broader levels of language proficiency and with other aspects of ILP competence.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## ORCID

Ali Derakhshan  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6639-9339>

Zohreh R. Eslami  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2969-5056>

Neda Ghandhari  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8443-7493>

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