

# Emotional Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, and their Relevance to Speaking Anxiety of EFL Learners

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## ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to investigate any possible correlation between the speech anxiety and EFL learners' Emotional Intelligence and Linguistic Intelligence. The selected skills of EI in this study were interpersonal and stress management. The participants of the present research were 55 EFL learners both male and female who were selected randomly among the senior and junior learners of the Islamic, Salmas branch Azad University. Three questionnaires were used to measure the participants' speech anxiety, EI, and LI. The first questionnaire applied was Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Among which the construct of speech anxiety was taken into consideration in this study. The second and the third questionnaires were Bar-on's EI and LI test respectively. The results of the study indicated that there was a negative correlation between the speech anxiety and total EI. The results showed negative correlations between the variables i.e. speech anxiety with stress management and stress tolerance. However, no correlations were observed amid the speech anxiety with impulse control, interpersonal, empathy, interpersonal relationship and social responsibility. The results also found that there was a negative relationship between the speech anxiety and LI.

**Key words:** Emotional Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, Speaking Anxiety

## I. Introduction

Nowadays, communication plays a significant role among different societies in the world. Since English language is being used worldwide, and due to its phenomenal importance in being used in the majority of the countries in world, it is considered an international language. This research is an attempt to deal with the issues and problems such as anxiety, which might hinder the process via which one can learn this language efficiently. Since, there are many obstacles and difficulties in learning how to speak a language, here English, a lot of research needs to be conducted in this area. One of those difficulties is related to the affective factors, namely anxiety which is going to be investigated in this study. Although modern technologies and instruments as well as different kinds of methods, which are already being used as helpful tools so as to facilitate the process of language learning and make classroom setting more comfortable and enjoyable for learners, most of the language learners' problems are not even familiar with such methods and instruments. Besides, there are other kinds of problems related to the psychological and emotional factors such as anxiety which might act as a barrier and inhibits foreign language learning. Thus, some of the problems the researcher

has encountered in her studying and teaching career are related to the aforementioned problems. As a language teacher I have confronted many students who were nervous waiting for their turn to speak in front of others and tried to avoid the situations they were exposed to speak, while many of them were efficient enough in writing ability. Hence, many language learners feel uncomfortable and apprehension when they are requested to speak in English language. Accordingly, any successful communication in a foreign language in any situation needs one feel relaxed. Thus, we have to provide a relaxed and easy going setting for language learners to control anxiety provoking situations. Thus, dealing with the ways of how one can control or decrease anxiety among language learners seems to be of a lot of importance. There are many researchers who have supported the idea of the relationship which exists between speaking of a foreign language and anxiety. For example, Ellis (1994) maintains that there is a very strong relationship between anxiety and oral interaction. Similarly, MacIntyre (1998) claims that anxiety could be one of the most significant issues that can envisage the success of language learners. Besides, Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, (1986) claim that anxiety affects speaking more than other skills in learning a foreign language. MacIntyre (1995) concludes that “language learning is a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students. Anxious students are focused on both the task and their reactions to it” (p.96). There is a general feeling that the role of emotions has not been well studied yet in second language acquisition (SLA) and, as a consequence, there is a growing interest to include the role of emotions as a new source to measure the students’ Individual Differences (ID) in the research agenda (Rodriguez, 2010). Recently many studies have been conducted on the effect of EI on academic success in education (Elias et al. 2003). Nonetheless, in a context where English is spoken as a foreign or second language, a few attempts have been paid to explore the concept of EI (Brackett & Katulak, 2007). Since, among foreign language learning skills, speaking is the most problematic and anxiety provoking area for language learners, the aim of this research is to investigate the ways to overcome foreign language learners’ speech anxiety. Hence, the main purpose of the present research is to investigate the relationship between speaking anxiety as an affective factor and the Emotional Intelligence as well as Linguistic Intelligence as.

*A. Definition of the Key Words:*

**Emotional intelligence:** Golman (2001) defined Emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others. “It is the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”(Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 185-211).

**Linguistic intelligence:** Is the ability to learn languages and use language to express what is in one’s mind and to understand people. Those who have high linguistic intelligence are well-developed in verbal skills and have sensitivity to sounds, meanings, and rhythms of words (Hampton, 2008).

**Anxiety:**” Subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Spielberger, 1983, p.1).

**Foreign Language Anxiety:** “Distinct complex of self- perception, beliefs, feeling, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1991, p.31).

Communication apprehension: “A type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people “(Horwitz et al. 1986, p.128).

## **II. Review of the related literature**

### *A. Research findings on Multiple Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence in Second Language Learning.*

Second language learning is a complex phenomenon associated with many internal and external mechanisms. Accordingly, Gardner ( 1993 ) stated that language is not grammar specific, it is influenced by factors that are intelligence based. He has expanded the traditional view of intelligence into the broader scope of Multiple Intelligence and emphasized that language is not limited to syntax , semantics, and phonology. Ellis (1994) maintained that the development of the second language learning is influenced by many other variables including affective factors such as anxiety and empathy, among other variables. The main variables that have been recognized to affect second language learning success are self-esteem, inhibition, risk taking, anxiety, empathy, and motivation (Brown, 1994). Wolfradt, Felfe, Koster (2001 - 2002) in two studies showed that emotional intelligence is mainly associated with personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, self - perceived creativity), life satisfaction and thinking styles with only a low relation to verbal intelligence. In additional to, they state that people who benefit more from emotional intelligence dimension, are creative performers in comparing with those who are lower in this domain. Stottlemayer (cited in Rouhani, 2008) in a study of EQ and its relation to students’ achievements among 200 eleventh and twelfth grade American students in Texas found that EI skills were significantly predictor of academic achievement. In the field of second or foreign language learning, Pishghadam (2007) found a relationship between EQ and second language success among 528 Iranian university students in Tehran. Emotional intelligence scores were correlated with the students Grade Point Average ( GPA ) and the scores they obtained at the end of second year at the university in listening, reading, speaking and writing. The results showed that second language skills and GPA strongly correlated with stress management and intrapersonal skills in the EQ test. Skourdi and Rahimi (2010) investigated the relationship among Emotional intelligence, linguistic intelligence and acquiring vocabulary among 66 junior students of Shiraz Azad university and Shiraz state university studying in three fields of language learning: English language teaching, English language translation, and English language literature. The finding revealed that there was a positive relationship between EI & LI, between EI and vocabulary knowledge, and between LI & vocabulary knowledge, EI was found to be a potential predictor for LI, and vice versa. Rouhani (2008) investigated the relationship into EI, foreign language anxiety and empathy through a cognitive-affective course among 70 under graduate Iranian EFL sophomore and junior students. The results indicated that the cognitive –affective reading –based course in which literary readings were used significantly improved the participants' emotional intelligence scores from the Mayer, Salorey and Caruso (2000) Emotional intelligence test (MSCEIT) measure as well as Multi-Dimensional Emotional Empathy Scale (MDEES) scores, but significantly decreased their foreign language anxiety scores. Tagizade (2008) found a significant correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and EI skills in total. He also found that the difference of anxiety mean scores between EFL male and female students in Iran was not significant. Also the

difference of EI mean scores between EFL males and females was not significant expect the sub skills “stress management, self actualization and stress tolerance”.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, no study had been conducted on EI, LI, and their relevance to speaking anxiety among EFL learners so far. Therefore, this paper tries to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between the Iranian college students’ emotional intelligence skills and foreign language speaking anxiety?
2. Is there any relationship between the Iranian college students’ linguistic intelligence and foreign language speaking anxiety?

The following alternative hypotheses are addressed:

H1. There is a relationship between emotional intelligence skills and foreign language speaking anxiety of Iranian college students.

H2. There is a relationship between linguistic intelligence and foreign language speaking anxiety.

### III. Methodology

#### A. Participants

The research was done at Islamic Azad university of Salmas. The participants were 55 junior and senior students (47 females and 8 males) chosen from Salmas Azad University’s language teaching and translation fields.

#### B. Instruments

In the present study three instruments were used. The first instrument was Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). This questionnaire is a likert-type including thirty-three items, measuring speech anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cop 1986). From Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) the items of (1\_3\_9\_13\_10\_23\_24\_27\_30\_31\_33) which according to P.Burden (2004), measure speech anxiety were selected. As the following item depicts, each item ranges from strongly agree at one end, to strongly disagree, at other end. The scale for each item ranges from 5 to 1.

1: I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak in English. SA A N D SD

The second questionnaire in this study was Bar-on’s Emotional Intelligence test (1980-1997). This questionnaire was designed by Bar-on in 1980 by suggesting the question “why some people are more successful than others?” (Cited in Samouei et al. 2004). The questionnaire contains five main components (interpersonal - intrapersonal - adaptability -stress management and general mood) and 15 sub components (self regard - emotional self awareness -assertiveness independence - self actualization - empathy - social responsibility - interpersonal relationship reality testing – flexibility- problem solving -stress tolerance - impulse control - components optimism and happiness). This questionnaire is a likert-type including 90 items, the responses to each item ranges from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree and the scores for each item ranges from 5 to 1.

However, in this questionnaire like foreign language speech anxiety, there were some questions which were scored reversely from 1 to 5. The researcher of the present research focused on some selected components of the Bar-on's Emotional Intelligence test. The selected components and sub components of Emotional Intelligence are:

- 1) Interpersonal skills (Empathy- Social responsibility – Interpersonal relationship)
- 2) Stress management skills ( Stress tolerance – Impulse control)

Translated version of Bar-on's EI test (English to Persian) has been selected because of its simplicity and avoidance of any misunderstanding. The third questionnaire in this study was Linguistic Intelligence test which was a part of Gardner's MI test. Multiple Intelligence Developmental Assessment Scale is the instrument recommended by Gardner for measuring MI. It is a self report instrument of intellectual disposition designed by Shearer (1996) to be completed by the respondents. It includes 119 likert- type questions that covers eight areas of abilities, interests, skills and activities. Gardner's MI theory divides human intelligence in to nine intelligences in which Linguistic Intelligence is as one domain of those nine domains. Linguistic Intelligence questionnaire contains 19 items ranging from (Not at all, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost all the time). The scores for each items range from 0 to 4.

#### *C. Procedure*

All participants were asked to complete three questionnaires. In order to complete the questionnaires, there was no time restriction, but it took about 35 to 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires which were according to the estimated time. They were also asked to complete the personal information such as age and gender. In order to feel relax during the completion of the questionnaires; some explanations were given to the participants about the questionnaires. Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to understand any positive, negative or zero relationship between the speech anxiety and EI in total and also EI selected components and sub components, and between the speech anxiety and linguistic intelligence. To analyze the collected data in this study, the SPSS (18) software was employed.

#### **IV. Results**

In the following part the two hypotheses based on the two research questions will be discussed.

##### *A. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between Speech Anxiety & Emotional Intelligence (total):*

According to Table (I), it is seen that (r) between two variables is ( $r = -0.348$ ) with the level of significant ( $p = 0.009$ ). As  $p < 0.05$ , so there exists a negative correlation between speaking anxiety & total emotional intelligence.

TABLE I  
 PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN SPEECH ANXIETY & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (TOTAL)

		Emotional Intelligence (total)
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009
	N	55

B. *Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between Speech Anxiety & Stress Management:*

According to Table (II), it is seen that (r) between two variables is (r= -0.319) with the level of significant (p= 0.018). As p<0.05, so there exists a negative correlation between speech anxiety & stress management.

TABLE II  
 PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN SPEECH ANXIETY & STRESS MANAGEMENT

		Stress Management
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.319(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018
	N	55

B.1. *Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between Speech Anxiety & Stress Management sub skills (Stress Tolerance & Impulse Control):*

- ❖ According to Table (III), it is seen that (r) between two variables is (r= -0.336) with the level of significant (p= 0.012). As p<0.05, so there exists a negative correlation between speech anxiety & stress tolerance.
- ❖ According to Table (III), it is seen that (r) between two variables is (r= -0.206); beside, the level of significant (p= 0.131), which is higher than (0.05). Thus, there is not any correlation between speech anxiety & impulse control.

TABLE III  
 PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN SPEECH ANXIETY & STRESS MANAGEMENT SUB SKILLS (STRESS TOLERANCE & IMPULSE CONTROL)

		Speaking Anxiety			Speaking Anxiety
Stress Tolerance	Pearson Correlation	-.336*	Impulse Control	Pearson Correlation	-.206
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012		Sig. (2-tailed)	.131
	N	55		N	55

*C. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between Speech Anxiety & Interpersonal:*

According to Table (IV), it is seen that (r) between two variables is (r= -0.012) with the level of significant (p= 0.929), which is higher than (0.05). Thus, there is not any correlation between anxiety & interpersonal.

TABLE IV  
 PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN SPEECH ANXIETY & INTERPERSONAL

		Interpersonal
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.929
	N	55

*C.1. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between Speech Anxiety & Interpersonal sub skills (Interpersonal Relationship, Empathy and Social Responsibility):*

According to Table (V), it is seen that (r) between speaking anxiety & interpersonal relationship is (r= -0.127) with the level of significant (p= 0.355), which is higher than (0.05). Thus, there is not any correlation between speaking anxiety & interpersonal relationship. According to Table (V), it is seen that (r) between speaking anxiety & social responsibility is (r= 0.049) with the level of significant (p= 0.725), which is higher than (0.05). Thus, there is not any correlation between speaking anxiety & social responsibility. According to Table (V), it is seen that (r) between speaking anxiety & empathy is (r= 0.022) with the level of

significant ( $p= 0.876$ ), which is higher than ( $0.05$ ). Thus, there is not any correlation between Speaking Anxiety & Empathy.

TABLE V

PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN SPEECH ANXIETY& INTERPERSONAL SUB SKILLS (INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, EMPATHY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)

		Speaking Anxiety			Speaking Anxiety
Interpersonal Relationship	Pearson Correlation	-.127	Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.355		Sig. (2-tailed)	.876
	N	55		N	55
Social Responsibility	Pearson Correlation	.049			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.725			
	N	55			

So the first hypotheses is accepted in total EI, stress management, and stress tolerance skills ( $p<0.05$ ), but rejected in impulse control, interpersonal, empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relationship skills ( $p> 0.05$ ).

*D. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between Speaking Anxiety & Linguistic Intelligence:*

According to Table (VI), it is seen that ( $r$ ) between two variables is ( $r= -0.330$ ) with the level of significant ( $p= 0.014$ ). As  $p<0.05$ , so there exists a negative correlation between speaking anxiety & linguistic intelligence.

TABLE VI

PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN SPEAKING ANXIETY & LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE

		Linguistic Intelligence
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.330*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014
	N	55

As ( $p<0.05$ ) the second hypotheses is accepted.

*E. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of speaking anxiety with Emotional Intelligence & Linguistic Intelligence:*

In comparing speech anxiety with emotional intelligence & linguistic intelligence in a quantitative interval scale, we apply Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r). According to Table (VII), it is seen that (r) between two variables of EI and speaking anxiety is (r= -0.348) which is higher than (r) between LI and speaking anxiety (r= -.330). So emotional intelligence has stronger relationship with speaking anxiety than linguistic intelligence.

TABLE VII  
 PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF  
 SPEAKING ANXIETY WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & LINGUISTIC  
 INTELLIGENCE

		Emotional intelligence	Linguistic Intelligence
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.348**	-.330*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.014
	N	55	55

**V. Discussion**

EI skills have an important role in students achievements and their academic success, for example, Pishghadam (2007) found that second language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) and Grade Point Average ( GPA ) strongly correlated with stress management and intrapersonal skills in the EQ test. Also Chau (2003) found a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and EI skills. Foreign language Learners can benefit more from education especially in communication classes, which is one the most anxiety \_ provoking situations, and control their stress, fear, panic, apprehension if they develop EI skills in then selves. Therefore, the main concern of the present research was to investigate this issue (speech anxiety and its relevance with EI and LI) among Salmas Azad University’s EFL learners.

**VI. Conclusion**

This research studied three variables and intended to examine their correlations in foreign language learning context. The three variables were foreign language classroom speech anxiety as a part of foreign language classroom anxiety scale (Horwitz, Horwitz , and Cope 1986 ), Bar-on’s EI test and LI as a part of Gardner’s MI test. The first research question tried to explore whether or not there was a significant relationship between EFL learners’ foreign language speech anxiety and EI some selected skills. Based on the finding of the present research, there was a negative correlation between the EI in total and speech anxiety. The selected skills of EI in this

research were interpersonal skills (Empathy, Social responsibility, Interpersonal relationship) and stress management skill (Stress tolerance, Impulse control). The results of the first research question also revealed that there was a negative correlation between speech anxiety and stress management skill and stress tolerance sub skill, but there wasn't any correlation between the speech anxiety and impulse control. Also, there wasn't any correlation between speech anxiety and interpersonal skill and its sub skills (Empathy, Social responsibility, Interpersonal relationship). Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted in correlation between EI in total, stress management and stress tolerance variables, but rejected in impulse control, interpersonal, empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relationship variables. The second research question attempted to discover whether or not there was a significant relationship between foreign language speech anxiety and linguistic intelligence. Based on the finding of the second research question, there was a negative correlation between the speech anxiety and linguistic intelligence. Therefore, the second research hypothesis is accepted. By comparing EI and LI with EFL learners' speech anxiety, we found that EI has stronger negative relationship with speech anxiety than LI. The analysis of the collected data in general revealed that learners with high EI and LI can decrease their speech anxiety and increase their performance in language communication classes. Among the selected skills of EI in this study (Interpersonal & Stress management), the present research didn't find any correlation between the interpersonal skill and its sub skills with speech anxiety but found a negative correlation between the stress management skill and speech anxiety. Based on the findings of the present research, the newly developed theory of EI, which was first appeared in academic article in 1990, has a significant role in the process of foreign language learning. So learners can overcome to some barriers such as speech anxiety, by developing EI & LI in themselves. Therefore, it is recommended that in academic and educational settings specific programs should be designed in the curriculum in order to train and improve EI in language learners, and provide language learning situations more enjoyable for language learners. Also curriculum designers can design some programs to improve and value LI in language learners. Hence, the findings of this study can be helpful for both teachers and learners to control their speech anxiety by developing EI skills in themselves to express themselves freely in communication situations also learners with LI and willingness to learn new languages can decrease their level of speech anxiety.

*A. Suggestions for further research:*

- a) In this study LI as a part of Gardner's MI test was selected, it is possible for researcher to investigate the other parts of MI with language related concepts.
- b) EI is a new theory which according to Goleman (1995) can be taught and developed, it is possible for the researchers to investigate and compare different kinds of training or curriculum which is more effective in developing EI in language learners to overcome to speech anxiety and other barriers on the way of foreign language learning.
- c) Further research is recommended to be done in foreign language institutes. Although it's expected learners have high ability in speaking in language institutes, teachers face with students who suffer from anxiety during communication.

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