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Is Emotional Intelligence or Mental Intelligence More Important in Language Learning?

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Abstract: This study on Language Learning provides a definition of intelligence and addresses the question whether emotional intelligence or mental intelligence plays a more significant role in language learning. Intelligence is an innate capacity of the individual that can be enhanced and developed by factors like environment and experience. Then, are individuals with high intelligence always successful? Or, do those people with high intelligence display a higher level of achievement in learning a language? Language learning is a concept that depends on both the learner and the instructor in terms of human psychology and interpersonal communication. What is important in language learning is not high intelligence values; it is being emotionally intelligent, that is, having the ability to recognize, employ, comprehend and manage emotions. Emotional intelligence 'is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions. Only 2% of the population of a human society have an IQ level of 130 or above and it is observed that most of these people tend to be clumsy, shy and suffer from social maladjustment with peers. Language learning, on the other hand, is designed to serve communicative purposes. For all these reasons, success in foreign language learning favors the individuals with high emotional intelligence levels.

Key words: Language learning, emotional intelligence, mental intelligence

INTRODUCTION

The ability to comprehend the relationships between the abstract or concrete objects and to think in abstract terms through conceptions and perceptions, to reason and to employ these mental faculties coherently for a purpose is defined as intelligence^[1]. Although there are numerous definitions of intelligence, they all seem to agree on that intelligence is a capacity or potential that can be developed and is biologically inherited. Accordingly, intelligence comprising the functions of the central nerve system of an individual is an innate capacity which is passed down from generation to generation through heredity and is ultimately shaped by experience, learning and environmental factors. Intelligence refers to the exercise of various mental faculties in different situations and circumstances. These abilities may be enumerated as verbal comprehension that the ability to recognize and understand words; verbal fluency that the ability to promptly retrieve words and expressions in speaking and writing; numerical intelligence that the ability to perform mathematical operations quickly and accurately; area and space relationships that the ability to visualize two or three-

dimensional configurations; memory that the ability to store auditory and visual images; speed of perception that the ability to discern the details of a complicated object, to distinguish between the object and the background, to accurately identify similarities and differences; logical thinking that to conduct reasoning consistently^[2].

An individual's intelligence is manifest, all else being equal, in how difficult tasks or how many of the tasks of the same difficulty level he accomplishes, or how quickly he reaches the accurate result. Intelligence demonstrates substantial growth in the early ten years of a person's life. Within this period, the most rapid development takes place in the first two years. At the end of the two years, a human being, whose behavior initially consists of several reflexes, grows up to become an individual who can talk, walk, solve some simple problems, draw cause-effect relationships, make simple plans and remember^[2].

Intelligence is hereditary. For example, children who are adopted when they are babies that are compared to both their foster parents and biological parents in terms of their intelligence level and their intelligence values are discovered to be very similar to that of their biological parents. In numerous studies like this, heredity is shown to play a significant role in the development of

intelligence. Environmental factors, too, play a considerable role in the development or retardation of intelligence. The more dissimilar environments single-egg twins are brought up in, the wider the gap between their intelligence levels appears to be. In addition, children of parents with higher levels of education are found to be more successful than those of parents with lower levels of education. Similarly, the individuals from median or higher socio-economic background tend to have higher intelligence values in comparison to those from lower socio-economic background. Of course, the reasons are quite obvious. High intelligence individuals receive better education and reach higher levels of income by qualifying for well-paid jobs. As the children of families with higher socio-economic levels, they are provided with more opportunities for learning and thus they are given a better start to make a future for themselves. Verbal components in intelligence enable the individuals with higher education to obtain higher scores. Therefore, it is clear that both hereditary and environmental factors confer substantial advantages to these individuals. According to some scholars, well-educated individuals tend to acquire a larger vocabulary and since all intelligence tests are predominantly verbal, it is natural for these individuals to obtain higher scores than the less educated individuals. It is commonly agreed that almost all intelligence scales are culturally biased^[3].

When psychologists began to write and think about intelligence, they focused on cognitive aspects, such as memory and problem-solving. However, there were researchers who recognized early on that the non-cognitive aspects were also important. For instance, David Wechsler defined intelligence as the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment^[4]. As early as 1940 he referred to non-intellective as well as intellective elements^[5], by which he meant affective, personal and social factors. Wechsler was not the only researcher who saw non-cognitive aspects of intelligence to be important for adaptation and success. Robert Thorndike, to take another example, was writing about social intelligence in the late thirties^[6]. Unfortunately, the work of these early pioneers was largely forgotten or overlooked until 1983 when Howard Gardner began to write about multiple intelligence. Gardner in 1983 proposed that intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are as important as the type of intelligence typically measured by IQ and related tests. Howard Gardner, having studied some individuals who had displayed exceptional achievements in certain fields, contended that there were seven different fields of intelligence. That is, he put forth a theory called Multiple Intelligence^[7]. Despite the fact that each of these fields of

intelligence defined below operate independently of the others, an activity may be performed by simultaneously activating several of them: The first one of them musical intelligence; the ability to enjoy, perform or compose a musical piece. The second one is bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; the ability to use the whole body or parts of the body to solve problems, create products or to present ideas and emotions; dancing, acting, athletic skills and operating tools or machines can be cited as examples of this intelligence. The third one is logical-mathematical intelligence; the ability to think logically, mathematically and scientifically. The fourth one is verbal-linguistic intelligence; the ability to use a language effectively and to produce works in that language. The fifth one is visual-spatial intelligence; the ability to perceive and depict the world accurately as demonstrated by painters, sculptors and artists. The sixth one is interpersonal intelligence; the ability to read others' moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions. And the last one is intrapersonal intelligence; the ability to understand one's inner feelings, dreams and ideas. What is important is being able to employ several of these fields of intelligence at the same time. In his attempt to explain each of these fields, Gardner cites exceptional individuals like Yehudi Menuhin, T.S. Elliot, Anne Sullivan and Virginia Woolf. Yehudi Menuhin was three years old when he was smuggled into the San Francisco Concert Hall. The sound of Louis Persinger's violin so entranced the youngster that he insisted on a violin for his birthday and Louis Persinger as his teacher. He got both. By the time he was ten years old, Menuhin was an international performer. When T. S. Elliot was ten, he edited a magazine called *Fireside* and during a 3-day winter vacation he prepared 8 issues of the magazine for print^[7]. At the one end of continuum of intelligence there are mentally retarded individuals whereas at the other end there are geniuses. Only 2% of the population of a human society have an IQ level of 130 or above. Those with an IQ score above 140 constitute merely 0.2% of the society. Although geniuses are stereotyped as clumsy, shy and socially maladjusted, research has shown that they are rather well-adjusted, well-loved individuals who are more dexterous in performing many tasks than people with average intelligence. A study that was launched by Lewis Terman in 1916 still continues. This study examines a group of 1500 children with IQ scores above 140 over a period of 60 years. From the beginning, these individuals were ahead of their peers in physical, academic and social terms. All these advantages resulted in professional achievement and these individuals were much better rewarded than normal people, acquired more material wealth and made greater contributions to art and literature. For example, the individuals in this group

wrote 375 plays and short stories and 2000 articles in total and produced more than 200 patents^[6]. Despite all this evidence, the answer to the question whether all the individuals with high intelligence value are successful is no, we cannot draw such a conclusion. Terman also reported some significant cases of failure in the group he studied. Therefore, it cannot be taken for granted that every genius is successful. And a high IQ value does not necessarily mean success in all fields^[8]. Thus human intelligence is first measured by IQ and then emotional intelligence was given serious consideration. It is claimed that the key to success is emotional intelligence. IQ defines a person's mental capacity and the ability to comprehend and can be measured by IQ tests. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, refers to an individual's capacity to establish relationships with the environment by developing a better understanding of his/her own self. Currently, there are no tests available to measure this kind of intelligence which Daniel Goleman conceptualized in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, but emotional intelligence reveals itself in five different ways^[1]. Self-knowledge means identify and name one's emotional states and to understand the link between emotions, thought and action. Self-control means manage one's emotional states to control emotions or to shift undesirable emotional states to more positive ones. Motivation means enter into emotional states associated with a drive to achieve and be successful. Empathy means to be sensitive and influence other people's emotions. Social skills mean enter and sustain satisfactory interpersonal relationships^[1]. Today, EQ (emotional quotient) is considered to be the key to success in interpersonal relations, social and business life. Consequently, companies and universities overtly state their preferences for prospective employees and students with high emotional intelligence. According to research, EQ boosts productivity and increases one's chance of promotion to executive positions. In this connexion, foreign language learning also requires emotional intelligence. EQ-emotional intelligence is recognized to play an important role in many parts of human life and especially in improving the quality of professional life. It has become a major consideration for both executives/ employers and employees^[9]. No doubt, all this effort aims to boost job quality and productivity. While the western countries have already begun to implement the fundamental principles of emotional intelligence in order to improve the quality of their education, studies on emotional intelligence in our country are still conducted on theoretical grounds rather practical applications. Studies in this field go far back in time, even to Plato's time. This is reflected in Plato's adage that All learning has an emotional base. Emotions

are an inextricable part of our lives, but development of emotional intelligence must be considered an academic subject in a psychological context. Being emotional and emotional intelligence must not be confused with each other^[10]. Emotional intelligence might be defined as an ability to train one's emotions and through his emotional growth to perceive, assess and positively influence one's own and other people's emotions. Yet what needs to be pointed out is to what extent we adults are able to develop our emotional intelligence and apply the communicative skills which we draw from emotional intelligence in our professional and private life. Foreign language teaching in our country has a long history and occasionally the concept of emotional intelligence is discussed in scholarly conferences at the most general level. Naturally, these meetings are from being sufficient; in fact, studies on the development of emotional intelligence must be built into education as a discipline. Language learning/teaching is a concept that depends on both the learner and the instructor in terms of human psychology and interpersonal communication. That is, in foreign language learning emotional intelligence must be considered in the context of interpersonal communication for each individual. Daniel Goleman defines Emotional intelligence as our capacity to regulate our emotions in our relations with others and in perceiving ourselves and to develop an awareness of both our and others' emotions in order to motivate ourselves^[11]. There are many other definitions of emotional intelligence, but they all accentuate the same point, that is, being able to read the emotions and emotional intelligence of the people with whom we are in social contact.

RESULTS

So is there anything new about emotional intelligence? Emotional intelligence really is not new. In fact, it is based on a long history of research and theory in personality and social, as well as I/O, psychology. Furthermore, Goleman has never claimed otherwise. In fact, one of his main points was that the abilities associated with emotional intelligence have been studied by psychologists for many years and there is an impressive and growing, body of research suggesting that these abilities are important for success in many areas of life. However, rather than arguing about whether emotional intelligence is new, I believe it is more useful and interesting to consider how important it is for effective performance at work or study. Although I have not had the time to cover very much of it, I hope I have shown that there now is a considerable body of research suggesting that a person's ability to perceive, identify

and manage emotion provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job. Furthermore, as the pace of change increases and the world of work makes ever greater demands on a person's cognitive, emotional and physical resources, this particular set of abilities will become increasingly important. And that is good news for I/O psychologists, for they are the ones who are best situated to help clients to use emotional intelligence to improve both productivity and psychological well-being in the workplace of tomorrow.

I firmly believe that there is an urgent need in our country in terms of efforts to apply the principles of emotional intelligence in the field of education and especially in foreign language learning, which heavily depends on interpersonal communication. It is no doubt that a foreign language instructor cannot be expected to act like a psychiatrist, yet since language teaching is based on communicative purposes, it should not be forgotten that the most basic element of communication is to foster empathy in the person or people we communicate with. This is so important that the instructors who can establish effective communication on the basis of emotional intelligence with the group of learners they teach achieve remarkable success in language teaching. For this reason, it is imperative that communicative skills drawn from emotional intelligence be developed for language learning and teaching. In short, foreign language teaching is to step into and identify with new horizons, new cultures and the lifestyles defined by these cultures. Therefore, both foreign language instructors and learners, regardless of age, must cooperate in the development of emotional intelligence and a better understanding of each other. Success in foreign language teaching depends on the instructor's knowledge of the field, experience, ability to establish communication and intimacy on the basis of emotional intelligence as well as on the learner's emotional mood, his/her ability to comprehend the language and the level and purpose for which he learns the language.

DISCUSSION

The instructor, the indispensable agent of foreign language learning, is expected to be aware of both his/her own emotions and the students' emotions and emotional intelligence. In Turkish, we have a very simple but profoundly meaningful proverb saying, One language one person, two languages two people. When we examine the assumption that underlies this proverb, we realize that language learning not only involves a knowledge of the culture of that language, the significance of that culture in

our social life, its national and international importance and many other aspects of that culture but also it is a process of creating a new being. Therefore, I definitely think that the most important point that we foreign language instructors must be concerned with is to have a better understanding of our body of students in our attempts to develop their emotional intelligence and to help them understand the fundamental cultural features of the target language which elicit our emotional response. Our success in language teaching seems to depend greatly on this. Emotional Intelligence improves language acquisition by stimulating the imagination, humour and creativity in young learners. Additionally, evidence suggests that many learners are unable to operationalise formal language knowledge. Emotional Intelligence bridges the gap and helps teachers manage the teaching of language in more efficient ways^[12]. Earl W. Stevick in 1989 analyses varying strategies used by language learners. One of the subjects of his research, Ed, is a highly successful learner who draws on three sources when speaking or writing:

- explicit rules
- remembered sentences and sentence fragments
- feeling derived from experience with how a change in one point in a sentence will require a change somewhere else, that is, instincts about regularities or patterns^[13].

Emotional intelligence is not given much consideration in areas other than business; its significance for education, especially foreign language learning is largely overlooked. However, it is known that foreign language learners (both children and adults), regardless of age, seek to establish intimacy on the basis of emotional intelligence with the instructor both in their personal communication with the instructor and the teaching of the course. For example, beginners, both children and adults, tend to demand understanding, tolerance and patience from their instructors and classmates. Mayer and Salovey in 1997 offer the following clues for instructors to apply emotional intelligence to education: Instead of giving orders to your students, express your feelings^[14]. Instead of imposing your feelings on students, take responsibility for your feelings. Be aware of your own feelings much more before than the feelings of your students. Before judging your students' behaviors, try to understand the feelings that might have motivated them to behave as such. Instead of giving orders, try to find ways of voluntary cooperation. Help your students to solve their inner conflicts. Help your students to express their feelings as they experience them.

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