Title

The Relationship between Verbal and Emotional Intelligences and Iranian EFL Learners’ Reading Comprehension Ability

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Biodata

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Abstract

Researchers all agree that reading comprehension is the main concern of education, literacy and academic setting. It is reported that Iranian students experience many difficulties reading texts in their text-books. Moreover, some variables including intelligences have been evaluated in academic setting, so far. The present study was an attempt to examine the relationship between two variables of verbal/linguistic and emotional intelligences on the skill of reading comprehension. Participants in this study were 30 male and 30 female undergraduate students who were attending TOEFL classes at the Iran Language Institute (ILI) of Shiraz section whose scores fell above the mean in a language proficiency test. The average age of these participants ranged from 22 to 31. Three instruments were used to accomplish the purpose of this study: TOEFL Language Proficiency Test (2004), Verbal Intelligence Test, and Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence (SSREI) scale. The results elicited from data manifested that there was a meaningful relationship between the subject’s verbal intelligence and their reading comprehension ability. Moreover, the results confirmed that linguistic intelligence is a relatively strong predictor of reading performance.
compared to emotional intelligence. Considering the analysis of emotional intelligence components, just two variables of Appraisal of Emotion in the Self (AES) and Utilization of Emotion for Problem Solving (UEPS) affected the learners’ reading comprehension positively.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligence, Verbal Intelligence, Emotional intelligence, Reading Comprehension

1. Introduction

According to Gardner (1999), intelligence is often thought to be one of the most significant predictors of language learning. Through the centuries, many philosophers and scientists have viewed human intelligence as being a single capacity that one is born with. Traditionally standardized Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) and aptitude test based on verbal fluency, wide vocabulary and computational skill were used as an instrument to measure intelligence. However, these tests cannot measure the value of a product or one’s ability to produce a product. In recent years, with progress in the realm of education and teaching, and with the arrival of psychology in academic society, learners have been regarded as individuals with all of their needs, challenges, pitfalls, and strengths who are remarkably different from one another. Children are different; they come to this world with different skills, abilities, personalities, preferences, and ways of doing things and with different exposure to oral or written language. Multiple Intelligence (MI) is a theory of intelligence put forth by Howard Gardner in 1983. MI theory suggests that all human beings possess different intelligences that are unique to each person and reflect different pathways of interacting with the world. The ultimate goal of MI is to increase students’ understanding about the skills that help them become happy and have successful life and to provide opportunities for authentic learning based on students’ needs interests and talents (Gardner, 1999).

In 1983, Gardner presented his famous theory of multiple intelligences and divided this notion into seven intelligences, and later he added two other intelligences to them. He mentioned that each individual intelligence performs as a distinct entity and these intelligences are related to each other simultaneously. Each intelligence addresses different learning styles and has a significant value in educational settings. Studying Gardner’s view of intelligence implies that each of us is a unique individual with unique patterns of intelligences that make us exceptional among others. Children are different from one another
even in the experience of learning; they process and represent knowledge differently. Besides, their learning style is unique. Moreover, intelligence and its related issues have been the concern of educators and those involved in it; however, the concept of intelligence, per se, has had an evolutionary trend. It has changed from a one-dimensional and single concept, g factor, to a multidimensional conceptualization with different facets, i.e. multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2006). Gardner's theory deals with different domains of intelligences, including linguistic intelligence, logical/mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and possibly existential intelligence. This trend of multiple intelligences evolved and finally reached a new kind of intelligence, namely, emotional intelligence, introduced by Mayer and Salovey (1990). They define emotional intelligence as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p. 189). Different models of emotional intelligence are suggested, namely, ability-based model, mixed model (Bar-on model and Goleman model) and trait model of emotional intelligence. Besides, several questionnaires and measures have been devised in line with these models. Thus many studies have been done to seek out the effect of these concepts on many aspects of life, including learning activities and learners, in particular; that is, a lot of studies have been done on the role of each of these intelligences in academic achievement, social behavior, and academic success (Barchard, 2003; Bastian, Burns, & Nettelbeck, 2005; Fahim & Pishghadam, 2007).

One of the other skills that seem to be of utmost importance in the educational setting is reading comprehension. Compared to other skills, reading comprehension seems to have a pivotal role in our educational settings. This skill is considered important due to its role as a means of conveying information among individuals in the academic society. Reading comprehension can be enhanced through activation of various intelligences (multiple intelligences) in the classroom.

The significance of this study lies in the possibility that learners with high verbal and emotional intelligences would enhance their understanding of reading passages. If it is proved that high verbal or emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with the learner's reading comprehension, it will help educators and teachers pedagogically in devising some courses and teaching activities in a way that develops learners' comprehension of the text respectively, and therefore, their improvement in reading.
comprehension.

2. Literature Review

Petrides and Furnham (2004) tried to determine the role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior of 650 British secondary school students with the average age of 16.5. Trait emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between cognitive ability and academic performance. Moreover, students with high scores in trait emotional intelligence had less deviant behavior such as frequent absences and being excluded from school. It was concluded that in implementation of this scale is a useful one in the realm of academic performance and measurement of deviant behaviors among disadvantaged adolescents.

Ayduk (2006) provided empirical evidence for the relation between verbal intelligence and self regulatory competence in which two groups of participants; 98 of the sample were middle school, low income boys, mostly of minority ethnicity, and 59 of the other group chosen from a treatment camp for boys with low income and with adjustment behavior problems. The relation between verbal intelligence and self-regulation was significant in such a way that high verbal intelligence was associated with lower aggression among boys with effective self-regulatory skill than the group with ineffective self-regulatory skill.

Shearer (2006) conducted a study, which examined the differences between multiple intelligences of high school students with their level of reading skill. The participants in the study were 215 ninth grade students from suburban U.S. high school who filled in Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS) and completed Ohio Advanced Achievement Test. Some significant differences were observed in terms of range of reading skills and some components of multiple intelligences including linguistic, logical/mathematical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. The reading skill was divided into three ranges of low, mid and high. The result indicated that the high reading group is “personal achievement oriented” while the moderate group seemed to be more “socially focused” and the low readers are more “pragmatic, practical and action-oriented”. Some Meaningful differences were also observed between boys' and girls' multiple intelligences at the high and low reading levels.

Buschicks, Shipton, Winner, and Wise (2007) implemented multiple intelligences in a research project for increasing reading motivation among elementary and middle school students. This project was administered by four teachers with second, fourth, sixth, and
eighth graders. The teachers who taught the second and fourth grade level students taught all subjects implementing multiple intelligences; while the two others teaching sixth and eighth graders taught reading and language arts. The participants in this study were 133 students, including 26 second graders, 25 fourth graders, 46 sixth graders, and 33 eighth graders. First, teachers marked a tally sheet through observing students' behavior indicated in the list. Then, students' reading habits were also recognized. The result of the preliminary survey showed that in spite of learners' belief on their ability to read well and their enjoyment of being read by their teachers, not only did they not read well, but also did not enjoy reading for pleasure. They did not feel comfortable visiting a library or encountering a new word, as well. After implementation of multiple intelligences in the classroom, in another survey it was observed an improvement in the students' behavior (decrease in non-movement and movement behaviors). They also became skilled in selecting books and choosing activities that suited their dominant intelligences. There were also an increase in reading at home of the students; moreover, they did not show reluctance to encountering a new word or visiting a library any more.

Hafez (2010) attempted to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL students’ multiple intelligences and their use of reading strategies. An attempt was made to find out which intelligence can predict learning strategies. The existence of relationships between the variables was investigated through the administration of Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scale (MIDAS), Strategy Inventory for Language learners (SILL), and Oxford Quick Placement (OQPT) on 60 Iranian senior male and female TEFL undergraduate students from Islamic Azad University of Shiraz. The results obtained from the correlational procedure analysis indicated that there was a meaningful relationship between the subjects’ MI and their use of reading strategies. Furthermore, multiple regressions showed that linguistic intelligence was the best predictor of reading strategies. The results of t-test showed that there was a relationship between MI and proficiency of students.

The study by Tahriri (2011) aimed at determining the effectiveness of an MI-inspired instruction in Iran. In particular, it sought to investigate whether MI-based instruction enhances EFL students’ language proficiency and language achievement in comparison with the instruction in which verbal-linguistic intelligence is activated. In addition, EFL instructors’ views concerning the implementation of the MI theory were surveyed. They were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire. The findings revealed that only 40% of those who were already familiar with the MI theory had implemented it in their classes at least ‘to some extent.’ Concerning the applicability of the MI theory in an EFL context, 66.6
In this study the effect of verbal intelligence on the EFL learners' reading comprehension is investigated to provide some empirical data in terms of the effectiveness of each of these variables that were scrutinized somehow separately in different studies mentioned in this section. The study on each type of intelligence, here verbal intelligence, is something that has remained unexplored in Iran. Besides, no study has been reported in order to examine the role of verbal and emotional intelligences in English learners' language skills, especially reading comprehension.

The main objective of the present study is to investigate whether or not there is a possible relationship between verbal/linguistic intelligence as well as emotional intelligence of senior language learners in reading comprehension ability.

3. Research Questions
1) Is there any relationship between the Iranian learner’s verbal intelligence and their reading comprehension?
2) Is there any relationship between the Iranian EFL learners’ emotional intelligence and their reading comprehension’s ability?
3) Do verbal and emotional intelligences interact in shaping reading comprehension of the Iranian EFL learners?

4. Method
4.1 Participants
Participants in this study were 30 male and 30 female undergraduate students who were attending TOEFL classes at the Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Shiraz section whose scores fell above the mean in a language proficiency test. Those students whose scores did not meet the prerequisite criterion were stepped outside the experiment. The average age of these participants ranged from 22 to 31.

4.2 Instruments
Three instruments were used to accomplish the purpose of this study: TOEFL Language Proficiency Test (2004), Verbal Intelligence Test, and Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence (SSREI) scale; each is explained in tandem. The instrument utilized to examine the language proficiency level of students and simultaneously their level of comprehension in reading skill was an actual TOEFL proficiency test (2004). It consisted of 90 multiple-choice questions on skills and sub skills of grammar and reading comprehension. The grammar
section, including fill-in the blank, multiple-choice items and detecting and selecting the ungrammatical items, contained 40 items. The second instrument used to measure the students' verbal/linguistic intelligence was a ten-item linguistic intelligence test, which was part of a multiple intelligence questionnaire based on Gardner's nine profiles of intelligences, namely, linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematical, musical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and existential intelligences. In order to avoid any comprehension problem, the original test, which was in English, was translated into Persian. The verbal intelligence section of the test used in this study was a ten-item test. The reliability of this test was calculated through Cronbach alpha ($\alpha = 0.55$). In order to evaluate the participants' emotional intelligence, Schutte, (1998) self-report emotional intelligence scale (SSRES) was used. This questionnaire includes 33 items with a five-point Likert scale, three of which are negatively stated. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through Cronbach’s Alpha method, yielding an index of 0.87.

4.3 Procedure
In order to assess the students' knowledge of English and their level of reading comprehension, the proficiency test was administered to the participants. This two section test (i.e. Grammar and reading comprehension sections) was answered in the allocated time (60 minutes) by the participants. The purpose of reading comprehension section in the proficiency was to evaluate the reading skills of participants. Then the same participants answered Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSRES). The results showed their level of emotional intelligence and the ten-item verbal intelligence questionnaire was used to assess their levels in the domain of linguistic intelligence, respectively. All of these questionnaire were administered in one session at the language institute with no time limit and the administration of all the instruments took about eighty minutes. During test administration, if some points were problematic for the students, they were explained to them in Persian by the researcher.

4.4 Data Analysis
In order to calculate and analyze the results, the sum of different items related to six-factor components of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) classification (ERS, EE, ERO, AEO, AES, and UEPS) was calculated to find the effect of each of these components on the variable of reading comprehension, and verbal intelligence of the learners. The participants' emotional intelligence scores, ranging from 33 to 165, as well as their scores on the verbal intelligence test, ranging from 10 to 50, were also calculated. After the required data were obtained from the tests, Spearmen's rank correlation coefficient was used to
measure the relationship between the two sets of data. Having calculated the results of the proficiency test, the emotional intelligence test, and the verbal intelligence test, the researchers analyzed the results through SPSS program version 15. The results obtained from statistical analyses are presented below.

5. Results and Discussion

Students’ verbal and emotional intelligence were taken as two independent variables. Then their scores on reading comprehension were also taken as the dependent variable. Therefore, the relationship between the above-mentioned variables and this dependent variable was examined through scatter plot to find whether there is any relationship between verbal intelligence and reading comprehension, and emotional intelligence and reading comprehension score respectively (Figures 1 & 2).

*Figure 1 Verbal and Reading*

![Figure 1 Verbal and Reading](image1)

*Figure 2 Emotional and Reading*

![Figure 2 Emotional and Reading](image2)

The first graph depicted a positive correlation between verbal intelligence and reading comprehension. The second graph (figure 2) showed a relation between emotional intelligence and reading comprehension, but this relationship is negative and low. To answer the first question, Spearmans’s correlation was used to show if there is any relationship between emotional intelligence and reading comprehension. The correlation between these...
two variables is significant (-0.12). That is, the correlation between emotional intelligence and the learners' reading comprehension is negative and low, which was evident through scatter plot. Spearman's rho correlation was also used to find the relationship between the verbal intelligence and reading comprehension (Table 1). As Table 4.3 indicates, the correlation between verbal intelligence and reading comprehension was (0.24). Through looking at the p-value (0.00) it could be inferred that the correlation coefficient was significant; and this correlation was positive.

Table 1. Correlation between emotional intelligence and reading comprehension

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Reading comprehension</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2. Correlation between verbal intelligence and reading comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Verbal Intelligence</th>
<th>Reading comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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The results revealed that in order to have a good command of reading skill, students were required to have a high level of verbal intelligence. The correlation between this variable and reading comprehension was positive ($r=0.24$, Table 2), however, multiple regression analysis depicted that only 10% of the variance in the students' reading comprehension scores was explained by the two variables of verbal and emotional intelligence. Moreover, verbal intelligence is a better predictor of reading comprehension's score ($Beta = 0.32$) compared to emotional intelligence ($Beta=-0.26$).

One of the questions of this study considered the interaction of emotional and verbal intelligences in shaping reading comprehension ability. The results indicated that there was a high and positive correlation between verbal and emotional intelligence. The results are in line with those of Ayduk’s (2006), in that he provided empirical evidence for the relation between verbal intelligence and emotional intelligence. The relation between verbal intelligence and self-regulation was significant in such a way that high verbal intelligence was associated with lower aggression among boys with effective self-regulatory skill than the group with ineffective self-regulatory skill.

The findings of this study support Gardner’s claim (2006) that interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are both two aspects of the intelligences that he introduced. These kinds of intelligences can be related to the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) depending on how it is measured. That is, emotional intelligence can be associated either with intelligence or personality. Visser (2006) reported that ability measures of emotional intelligence was correlated more with cognitive aspect of intelligence rather than the personality aspect; On the other hand, a self-report inventory of emotional intelligence are correlated more with the personality aspect, and descriptive aspect of one's behavior rather than cognitive ability. Gardner (2006) believes emotional intelligence or emotional sensitivity is only part of both inter and intrapersonal intelligences. Both inter and intrapersonal intelligences accompany with one another in most circumstances, to the extent that it can be inferred that they are related to each other. The former focuses on the external world, while the latter look at the internal aspect of the self. In this sense, one can conclude that self-awareness and some knowledge with regard to the self may be affected by others' judgments and beliefs. Visser (2006) views learning as a process that is achieved both "inter mentally" and "intra mentally". In other words, it is facilitated with interaction with others and exchange of information between the minds and interaction between the self and his brain. Gardner's (2006) views personal intelligence as having an access to one's emotions and
feeling, discriminate among them, express it in words and base one's behavior on understanding them. This view is closely related to emotional intelligence with the subtle difference in the degree of relation to the others, in the sense that, in emotional intelligence the focus is on both the self and others and the feelings is used as a means of motivation and social behavior, whereas in personal intelligence the focus is on the self. And these two kinds of intelligences are similar to what Goleman (1995) introduced as emotional intelligences. Putting together, emotional and verbal intelligences are both two kinds of intelligences that can be related to each other. In this study we found the interaction between verbal intelligence and emotional intelligence is significant (sig=0.001 < 0.05). Therefore, put it another way, verbal and emotional intelligence are not separate from each other. Moreover, as Table 3 shows emotional intelligence is a good predictor of verbal intelligence (beta=0.42).

Table 3. Correlation between verbal and emotional intelligence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verbal Intelligence</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Intelligence</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>55</td>
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Conclusion

According to Gardner’s theory (2006), not every language learner learns in the same way. Generally speaking, it can be said that an understanding of multiple intelligence theory broadens teachers’ awareness of their students’ knowledge and skills and enable them to look at each student from the perspective of strengths and potential. It would beneficial to understand how all human beings manifest intelligence in different ways. While all humans have the capacity for all of the different types of intelligence, some have stronger linguistic/verbal intelligence, while others have stronger logical, mathematical, spatial, interpersonal or body/kinesthetical intelligence. Gardner does not only bring about new understanding of intelligence but he also opened up the significance of understanding itself.
Understating the world along with physical world, biological world, human world and the world of artifacts is what he drew our attention to. Gardner (1999) stated the meaning of true understanding is the ability to demonstrate, exhibit, perform, or explain in a variety of forms. This can be made possible by setting explicit understanding goals, specifying the correlated performances of understanding, and sharing these perspectives with the students. Moreover, multiple intelligence theory provides a way of understanding intelligence, which teachers can use as a guide for developing classroom activities that address multiple ways of learning and knowing. Consistent with the current literature on intelligence, it is believed that our students have a broad range of capacities, only some of which are valued, and conscious development of broader capacities would better prepare our students for reading and understanding of a text as well as engaging them more effectively in boosting their reading comprehension ability. Multiple intelligence theory in fact gives us a more egalitarian perspective towards giftedness. This is a revolutionary idea which has outstanding pedagogical implications. When it comes to classroom, the point is “how the intelligences can best be mobilized to achieve specific pedagogical goals (Gardner, 2006, p. 11). This is a much-desired goal that should be taken into consideration. Gardner’s question is a much significant question to which a well-grounded answer is in fact an answer to a multitude of unsettled issues and controversies in the area of language teaching and learning.

5.1 The MI Teacher

As Armstrong (2009) states a teacher in an MI classroom contrasts sharply with a teacher in a traditional linguistic/logical-mathematical classroom. In the traditional classroom, the teacher lectures while standing at the front of the classroom, writes on the blackboard, asks students questions about the assigned reading or handouts, and waits while students finish their written work. In the MI classroom, while keeping her educational objective firmly in mind, the teacher continually shifts her method of presentation from linguistic to spatial to musical and so on, often combining intelligences in creative ways. The MI teacher may spend part of the time lecturing and writing on the blackboard at the front of the room. This, after all, is a legitimate teaching technique. Teachers have simply been doing too much of it. The MI teacher, however, also draws pictures on the blackboard or shows a video clip to illustrate an idea. She often plays music at some time during the day, either to set the stage for an objective, to make a point about the objective, or to provide an environment for studying the objective. The MI teacher provides hands-on experiences, whether they involve getting students up and moving about, passing an artifact around to bring to life the material studied, or having students build something tangible to reveal their understanding. The MI teacher
also has students interacting with each other in different ways (e.g., in pairs, small groups, or large groups); plans time for students to engage in self-reflection, undertake self-paced work, or link their personal experiences and feelings to the material being studied; and creates opportunities for learning to occur through living things.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The result of the present study will be useful for both EFL and ESL learners and teachers. Intelligence models have provided us with opportunities to look differently at curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This study may prove a useful contribution to our understanding of teaching English as a foreign language. In particular, findings will benefit Iranian teachers who are responsible for providing effective learning pedagogy for students. Additionally, findings of this study will be beneficial for the authorities in the Ministry of Education in Iran, who develop policy and provide curriculum. With regard to the two intelligences, it is believed that our students have a wide range of capabilities, only some of which are valued, and conscious development of these useful capabilities can enhance the students' performance and prepare them for reading and understanding of the text. The clear implication of the study is, therefore, that the teachers had better pay attention to affective dimensions of language learning. They, also, should train the students to increase their vocabulary knowledge and to manage their feelings and emotions efficiently. Further, if we believe that emotional intelligence can be increased, language policy makers are expected to raise both verbal and emotional intelligences of their learners and teachers and the value of learning emotional competencies should be acknowledged.

This study aimed to assess the students' verbal and emotional intelligence in order to study their relationship with the reading comprehension of the EFL students. Naturally, there are limitations in a study like this, the most important of which is related to sampling and data collection, since working with such a small number of students in a limited level, namely EFL learners in the institutes, limits the generalizability of the results to some extent. Furthermore no study was done on the other group of learners, i.e. the EFL learners at universities, at the same level. Therefore, there is a limitation for generalizing the results of this study even on all EFL learners.

This study opens up several lines of enquiry in the light of the findings of the current study, these areas deserve exploration:

One domain which needs further investigation can be carried out to examine the relationship of verbal and emotional intelligence with other skills of language proficiency including listening, speaking, and writing. A study can also be conducted to assess the
relationship of verbal and emotional intelligence with reading comprehension of EFL students at universities. Another line of enquiry is concerned with research to investigate the relationship of verbal and emotional intelligence with reading comprehension at other levels, namely intermediate and elementary levels, of the students, as well. Moreover, another study can be carried out to examine the relationship of other components of multiple intelligences with each skill of language proficiency. The way intelligence type interacts with other affective, social and cognitive factors is another area worthy of further investigations.

References
