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# Exploring Learning Styles and Oral Communication Strategies and their Relationship with Emotional Intelligence of EFL Learners

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## Abstract

This study explored Learning Styles (LSs) and Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) among the Iranian learners of English with high and low Emotional Quotient (EQ). Moreover, it looked into the association between emotional intelligence (EI) with four LSs and OCSs in high and low EQ groups. Three questionnaires were employed to gather data from 108 participants from Shahrekord, Isfahan, and Payam Noor universities. Descriptive and correlational statistics were utilized to analyze the data. The results of descriptive statistics showed that the learners with high EQ favored visual and kinesthetic LSs more, whereas the learners with low EQ favored kinesthetic and auditory LSs. The high EQ group preferred accuracy-oriented and negotiating for meaning strategies more, while the low EQ group preferred word-oriented and scanning strategies. Besides, strategies of attempting to think in English and abandoning the message were the least frequent strategies. Correlational analysis also indicated that EI did not significantly correlate with any of the learners' LSs, nor did it correlate with the OCSs in the high EQ group. However, there were positive correlations between the learners' EI and OCSs for dealing with speaking problems in the low EQ group. The findings have implications for foreign language learning.

***Keywords*:** Emotional Intelligence, Learning Styles, Oral Communication Strategies

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## 1. Introduction

Researchers in the domain of L2 teaching often explore various factors which can affect L2 teaching or facilitate L2 learning. In recent years, more attention has been paid to individual learner differences. They have been

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viewed as factors which can influence L2 learning. Individual learner differences are characteristics unique to each individual (Dornyie, 2005). Among affective factors related to individual learner differences, emotional intelligence (EI) was introduced in 1990s and, since then, it has been viewed as an affective variable playing a crucial role in L2 learning/teaching (Goleman, 1995). In relating emotional intelligence to foreign language learning, researchers (e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Ehrman, 2000; Pishghadam, 2009; Wenden, 1991) point out its pivotal role in promoting learners' cognitive processes, independence and their learning process. Therefore, EI has been considered by several scholars (e.g., Goleman, 1995, 1997) as a predictor of success and achievement. As Goleman (1997) maintains, success in life is not dependent on Intelligence Quotient (IQ) generally, but on EI as a metaskill controlling other skills. In fact, EI is the convergence of individuals' emotions and cognition (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2007), which includes a group of skills and capabilities "encouraging the assessment, regulation, and use of emotions in reasoning" (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p. 189).

Moreover, one crucial issue in the learner-centered pedagogical context is the role of learners' learning style preferences. Learning style is often used to describe a learner's usual, natural, and favored manner of processing, taking, and keeping new skills and information (Reid, 1995). Learners with various learning styles may represent various responses to different methods of L2 learning/teaching, including methods of learning EFL in the classroom. Students attend the L2 class with different capabilities and vary in the styles of their learning (Khany & Tarlani Aliabadi, 2016). Therefore, mismatches between EFL learners' learning styles and the teacher's teaching style in the class may result in the learners' low learning quality, their negative attitudes toward the class, and their low L2 achievement (Felder & Henriques, 1995).

In a similar vein, success in L2 teaching/learning involves not only the application of the individual learner differences such as EI and learning style, but also the use of strategies in L2 learning. Language learning strategies aid L2 learners to become independent and enhance self-efficacy to successfully complete a series of language tasks (Rezaee, Khomeijani Farahani, & Abdulameer Mubarak, 2018). As a specific type of the strategies, OCSs can be a main command of EFL learners in learning situation (Weinstein & Mayer, 1983). In order to facilitate linguistic interaction, L2 students attempt to compensate and diminish the language problems and weaknesses encountered while communicating in the target language. These learners utilize conscious strategies to facilitate communication or target language use, and gain communicative competence. Additionally, as Nakatani (2010) states, by using and learning certain strategies, they can improve their communicative language ability and prove to be independent learners. Thus, the regular and proper use of such strategies is related to L2 proficiency and achievement (Oxford, 2003). Therefore, given the aforementioned role of learning styles, OCSs, and EI in EFL learners' quality of teaching/learning, it seems logical to conduct a study in EFL contexts to investigate if and how these variables are related and see what learning styles and OCSs are employed mostly by the EFL learners with different levels of Emotional Quotient (EQ/EI).

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Emotional Intelligence

Within the last two decades, EI has come into being as a notable concept in the field of education and in the research in the domain of psychology (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2008). In fact, the concept of intelligence took root in Thorndike's concept of social intelligence in 1920s. He postulated that social intelligence was the ability to deal with, regulate,

and understand other individuals and try to interact sensibly (Wong & Law, 2002).

In the last century, scholars such as Binet, Spearman, and Terman and Merrill viewed an individual's intelligence as a unidimensional factor, that is, a "single, unchanged, inborn capacity" (cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 115). In 1980s, Howard Gardner, motivated by Piaget's concept of cognitive development and functionality of personal behavior, expanded the concept of IQ and introduced the multiple intelligence (MI) theory (Zirkel, 2000). Gardner (2006) adduced different kinds of intelligence (musical, logical/mathematical, linguistic, bodily kinesthetic, spatial, personal intelligences, naturalistic, and existential intelligence). He specified that personal intelligences include intrapersonal intelligence i.e., emotional recognition in oneself, and interpersonal intelligence i.e., emotional recognition in others. According to Gardner (2004), both would help to control and direct human behaviors. This way, he opened the floodgate for the consideration that humans learn, think, and interact in multiple and independent ways beyond their own cognitive ability. This view laid a foundation for the flourishing of EI concept.

Later, Mayer and Salovey in 1990 formally used the term in their articles and described it as a kind of social intelligence which is concerned with the capability to monitor and control our own and other peoples' emotions and feelings, to differentiate between them, and to utilize this kind of information to direct our thoughts and action. They advocated an ability model and considered EI as a mental ability framework which would provide the capability to reason and enhance thought as regards emotions. The term reached a peak in 1995 when Goleman used the term *EQ* in his best-selling book titled *Emotional intelligence.* In Goleman's (1995) view, EI is seen more as abilities like the ability to motivate ourselves and persevere when

confronted with frustrations; to check impulses and postpone gratification; to manage our mood and keep pain and discomfort from overflowing the capacity to think; to feel empathy for others and be hopeful. In fact, he favored a mixed model towards EI, consisting of mental abilities as well as personal traits.

In 1997, Bar-on advocated a multifactorial framework of EI and described EI as a mix of "noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills" which affect peoples' ability to achieve success in facing with situational pressures and requirements (p. 14). According to Bar-On (2006), this concept is a representation of intertwined "emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators" that specify how successfully individuals perceive themselves, discern other people, make connection with others, and deal with every-day pressure and requirements (p. 3). He used *Emotional Quotient* for his EI measurement tool and created the most comprehensive, operational, theoretical, and multifactorial framework of EI (Emotional-Social Intelligence model), which included personal, emotional, and interpersonal aspects of intelligence with five broad skills: X (Bar-On, 2004).

## 2.2 (Oral) Communication Strategies

Communication Strategies (CSs) as a deep-rooted notion can be traced to the concept of interlanguage and learner errors studies in early 1970s, that is, the time when Selinker (1972) used it in his influential article entitled *Interlanguage*. In interlanguage theory, Selinker claimed that L2 learners, in their efforts to communicate, produced deficient language which contained characteristics of both target and their native languages and their classes of errors were seen as their positive effort in an attempt to control the interim language in the process of L2 acquisition.

Among various definitions of CSs, Faerch and Kasper (1983) described CSs as careful plans used by an individual for solving a possible problem so

as to reach a specific communicative goal. In simple terms, CSs were defined as conscious techniques used by speakers to express their meanings when confronted with some problems or difficulties (Corder, 1983). Later, Dörnyei (1995) extended the definition of CSs and proposed two types of CSs: avoidance strategies (where learners work on different solutions to achieve their goal), and compensation strategies (where learners avoid conveying their intended messages).

There exist different classifications of CSs, but generally, two perspectives prevail in the L2 literature: interactional and psycholinguistic approach. From the interactional perspective, the main characteristic of CSs is negotiation of meaning and engagement of an interlocutor due to problems that may occur during the interaction. However, according to Nakatani and Goh (2007), the psycholinguistic view examines learners' problem-solving actions to compensate the possible communication gaps present in their lexical repertoire or knowledge. That is to say, from the interaction standpoint, CSs are viewed both as problem-solving tools to bridge the gaps in interactions and as pragmatic discourse operates that focus on the intended message (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Tarone, 1980).

In taxonomies and classifications of CSs, inadequate attention has been paid to how students employ strategies in the interaction with others in real EFL classrooms (Nakatani, 2006). Therefore, to avoid such terms that might aggravate the misunderstanding with regard to taxonomies, Nakatani used the word *OCSs*, and classified them strategies into: a) those which deal with problems in speaking and b) those which deal with problems in listening. According to Nakatani (2006), the eight categories which deal with problems in speaking would include: *X*. Also, the strategies which deal with problems in listening encompass seven categories: *X*.

On the empirical side, CSs have attracted the interest of some researchers in L2 research. Several studies (e.g., Bialystok & Frohlich, 1980) tried to probe the relationship between the use of CSs and learner characteristics. Also, some studies (e.g., Dörnyei, 1995; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991) debated whether they could be taught in the language classroom and whether they should be taught directly or indirectly. Moreover, in the EFL context of Iran, Mirzaei and Heidari (2012), focused on the OCSs use by fluent and nonfluent L2 speakers. They examined the association between various types of OCSs and gender. They concluded that the fluent participants used more strategies than the nonfluent ones during oral communications. However, in their study, nonverbal and word-oriented strategies were more frequently employed by the nonfluent participants while coping with listening problems. Moreover, they reported that the male participants employed fluency-oriented and meaning-negotiation strategies while speaking. However, the females preferred social affective strategies while speaking as well as nonverbal and word-oriented strategies while listening more than the males.

In another study, Nakatani, Makki, and Bradley (2012) examined the features and occurrence of CSs utilized by Iranian learners of English in conversation tasks in the English classes in a language institute in Shiraz. The participants included 60 EFL learners divided into advanced, intermediate, and elementary levels in terms of L2 proficiency. They reported that the occurrence of CSs was comparatively low. Moreover, the learners at the elementary level repeatedly employed the strategies that hampered their communication flow, whereas the learners at the advanced level commonly used effective strategies to keep the interaction flow. Finally, regarding the relationship between OCSs and intelligence, Roohani and Heidari (2013) looked into the relationship between OCSs use and MI among EFL learners at several universities in Iran. The results revealed that MI positively

contributed to OCSs, and the spatial intelligence was the best predictor of OCS use.

**2.3 Learning Style**

Although studies about learning styles dates back to about 50 years ago, its origin goes back earlier (Cassidy, 2004). Historically, in 1937, Allport introduced the term *style* in psychology, as a way of determining typical personality or behavioral types. Later, with the progress in psychology, linguistics, and second language acquisition, physiological and cognitive factors were embedded into its categories, and the concept such as cognitive style, which is often used interchangeably with learning style emerged between 1960 and1970 (Dunn & Dunn, 1978).

In 1980s, Reid formally considered learning style as a label which would characterize the variations between individuals in taking advantage of one or several senses to comprehend, deduce, manage, and cherish experience. Reid (1995) also delineated it as people's usual, natural, and favored manner of taking, processing, employing, and maintaining new skills and information. Reid (1995) classified styles into three (*minor*, major, and *negative)*, and developed an inventory which included features functioning within sensory modalities. In fact, perceptual learning styles act as the mediums by which individuals obtain data from their environments through using five basic senses. They include (Institute for Learning Styles Research, 2003):

- *Auditory* (those who learn or gain information from oral instructions, conversations, and lectures),
- *Visual* (those who prefer to read and gain information and knowledge from visual cues and like to use imageries, pictures, spatial perceptions, and photos),
- *Tactile* (those who need to touch and handle objects),
- *Kinesthetic* (those who prefer using hands and body),
- *Individual* (those who prefer self-reading and working alone), and
- *Group* (those who prefer learning and working in groups and with others).

> Meanwhile, individual and group styles also belong to the domain of perceptual styles. That is to say, they are incorporated into perceptual learning styles.

As Dörnyei (2005) points out, the related literature highlights the possible role of learning styles in L2 learning, and considers them as a crucial, though relatively underresearched, area of research. Nonetheless, among a few studies on the role of learners' perceptual learning style and intelligence, the study by Baleghizadeh and Shayeghi (2014) is significant because it was done in EFL context. They looked into the association between the Iranian EFL students' MI and perceptual learning styles. The results indicated several positive relationships, for example, between linguistic intelligence with auditory style preference and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence with kinesthetic and group style preferences. Yet, the findings did not demonstrate any statistically significant association between musical and spatial intelligence types with learning styles. Also, Alavinia and Ebrahimpur (2012) showed that Iranian EFL learners' EI and gender were positively related to their learning style preferences, and EI was likely to have a crucial part in EFL learners' learning style preferences.

Moreover, in relating learning styles to learners' strategies, Lin and Qin (2006) showed that learning style preferences of L2 learners could have a great effect on students’ strategy choice in L2 classes. They claimed that learning style influenced L2 learning through the employment of various L2 learning strategies. Also, Khani and Tarlani Aliabadi (2016) reported that the Iranian EFL learners' learning styles could impact the learners' final achievement. Moreover, in relating learning style to MI and L2 proficiency, Roohani and Rabiei (2013) reported a significant association between Iranian EFL students' MI and earning style preferences. Also, they showed that MI made a unique contribution to the learners’ learning styles. Moreover, the results of the research by Naserieh and Ananisarab (2013), who intended to

identify the most favored perceptual learning style, showed that variables such as age and gender affected EFL learners' learning styles and strategy choice.

In spite of the significance of L2 learners' individual learner differences and variables such as EI, learning styles, and OCSs, still not much research has been done on them in L2, particularly in EFL contexts. Little research has addressed the interrelationship between these variables among EFL learners. Moreover, little research has investigated the association of EI with OCSs and perceptual learning style among EFL students with different EQ levels. It is assumed that exploring the relationship between these variables can assist EFL teachers to choose better teaching materials or methods compatible with their learners' characteristics and enhance L2 learning process. Thus, this research was intended, first, to identify the perceptual learning styles and OCSs of the Iranian EFL students/learners with high and low EQ levels. Second, it sought to look into the relationship of EI with learning styles and OCSs (communication strategies which deal with problems in speaking and communication strategies which deal with problems in listening). In so doing, this study has addressed the following four questions:

1. What is the prominent learning style of Iranian EFL learners with high and low EQ?
2. What are the prominent OCSs of Iranian EFL learners with high and low EQ?
3. Is there any significant association between EI and four perceptual learning styles of Iranian EFL learners with high and low EQ?
4. Is there any significant relationship between EI and OCSs of Iranian EFL learners with low and high EQ?

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Participants

The participants consisted of 42 male and 66 female intermediate-level EFL undergraduate students. They were chosen using convenience sampling. The

students' age ranged from 18 to 25. According to the data gathered in the demographic section of the questionnaires used in the current research, they were native speakers of Persian, whose majors were English Literature and English Translation. They were selected from Shahrekord, Isfahan, and Isfahan Payam Noor universities, which could be accessed by the researchers. Among the participants, 52 students who had a higher level of EQ were considered as the high EQ group and 56 students who had a lower level of EQ were considered as the low EQ group.

## 3.2 Instrumentation

### 3.2.1 Emotional Quotient Inventory

To learn about the participants' EI profiles, the Bar-On's (1997) Emotional Quotient Inventory, known as EQ-i, was employed. EQ-i originally contains 133 Likert-type items which are written in the form of statements based on a Likert scale of five points. They range from *very seldom* to *very often*. In the current study, the validated and adapted Persian version of EQ-i, which has been reduced by Samooei (2002) into 90 items, was used. This adapted version is valid and reliable. Its validity was determined through factor analysis, which supported its construct validity, and the reliability of EQ-i measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was reportedly above .90 (see Samooei, 2002). Also, the alpha coefficient was estimated to be .84, which was acceptable for the purpose of the current study.

### 3.2.2 Oral Communication Strategy Inventory

Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) was employed to identify the participants' OCSs. This inventory, consisting of 58 items, includes two main parts/types (OCSs *for dealing with speaking problems* and OCSs *for dealing with listening problems*). The first part, which consists of 32 items, includes 8 categories: *X* (6 items), *X* (6 items), *X* (4 items), *X* (5 items), *X* (3 items), *X* (2 items), *X* (2 items), *X* (4 items).

The second part, which consists of 26 items, includes 7 categories*: meaning-negotiation* (5 items), *fluency-maintaining* (5 items), *scanning* (4 items), *getting-the-gist* (4 items), *less active listener* (2 items), *nonverbal listening* (2 items), and *word-oriented* (4 items). All the items are assessed on a Likert scale of five points, anchored from *never true of me (1)* to *always true of me (5)*. The reliability of the questionnaire estimated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the present study were .86 and .85 for the first and second part of OCSI, respectively.

### 3.3.3 Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire

To identify the students' learning styles preferences, Reid's (1987) Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) was employed. Naserieh (2009) translated and validated it in the Iranian context. PLSPQ is widely used for foreign language learners. This inventory includes 30 ordered statements for identifying four main learning styles (auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic), along with two aspects of learning (individual and group). Each style includes five statements. PLSPQ includes items assessed on a Likert scale of five points, ranging from *strongly agree (5)* to *strongly disagree (1)*. Based on Naserieh (2009), this questionnaire is reliable and the reported alpha coefficients for the subscales of kinesthetic, auditory, visual, tactile, group, and individual styles are .78, .73, .68, .70, .85 and .89, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales of kinesthetic, auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual styles were found to be .81, .83, .79, .75, .73, 83., and .75, respectively.

## 4. Procedure

Prior to study, the purpose was explained to the participants and the variables were explained to them. All the students were initially notified that their cooperation in the research was not compulsory. Moreover, ethical approval was received before collecting the data. All were ensured that any personal

data would be confidential. Also, they could receive feedback on the results and data collected from the questionnaires of the study. Meanwhile, one of the present researchers attended the classes, submitted the questionnaires in two sessions, and asked them to answer the items with care and honesty. In the first session, in order to specify the participants' EI profiles, EQ-i was administered. They were given 30 min to complete it. Then, in another session, PLSPQ and OCSI were administered to the same participants. They were given 45 min to complete PLSPQ and OCSI. In the end, 108 questionnaires comprised the dataset for descriptive and correlational analysis.

## 5. Results

To divide the EFL participants into two groups of EI, two steps were taken. Firstly, descriptive statistics, including kurtosis and skewness values, were obtained. Then, the EI distribution through histograms and normal Q-Q plots were inspected. Secondly, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was carried out as another attempt to ensure the EI distribution normality. Those participants whose mean score of EI was 4 and above were considered as high EQ participants. This number is between the fourth (i.e., *true of me/agree*) and fifth (*very true of me/strongly agree*) options on 5-point Likert items of EQ-i. Thus, 52 EFL students were considered as the high EQ group and 56 EFL students were considered as the low EQ group. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics regarding the high and low EQ groups.

Table 1
*EI Descriptive Statistics for the Two EQ Group*

| Variable | *N* | Min | Max | Mean | *SD* | Skewness | Scale Mean | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High EQ | 52 | 361 | 407 | 371.46 | 19.09 | .21 | 4.13 | -1.1 |
| Low EQ | 56 | 276 | 340 | 312.52 | 18.11 | -.35 | 3.47 | -.86 |

The skewness and kurtosis EI values in both (high and low EQ) groups were within the acceptable range. The EI scores of the high EQ group ranged

from 361 to 407. In addition, the EI mean score of the learners in the high EQ group was 371.46, which was about 58 points above the EI mean score for the low EQ (312.52).

To identify the prominent learning style(s) of the learners with the high and low EQ, descriptive statistics were used. Table 2 presents the results of the descriptive statistics regarding the learning styles of the participants with the high and low EQ scores.

Table 2
*Descriptive Statistics on the Learning Styles of the High and Low EQ Groups*

| | Styles | *N* | Min | Max | Mean | *SD* | Skewness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High EQ | Visual | 52 | 30 | 50 | 39.04 | 7.91 | .353 |
| | Tactile | 52 | 16 | 46 | 38.08 | 9.57 | -1.46 |
| | Auditory | 52 | 26 | 50 | 38.92 | 9.11 | -.362 |
| | Kinesthetic | 52 | 28 | 46 | 41.85 | 5.35 | -1.98 |
| | Group | 52 | 22 | 44 | 38.46 | 7.62 | -1.19 |
| | Individual | 52 | 22 | 50 | 34.38 | 9.76 | .318 |
| Low EQ | Visual | 56 | 28 | 42 | 35.04 | 3.55 | .353 |
| | Tactile | 56 | 26 | 44 | 36.57 | 4.9 | -1.46 |
| | Auditory | 56 | 30 | 42 | 37.00 | 3.45 | -.362 |
| | Kinesthetic | 56 | 28 | 50 | 37.07 | 5.73 | -1.98 |
| | Group | 56 | 14 | 48 | 30.79 | 9.37 | -1.19 |
| | Individual | 56 | 24 | 50 | 35.93 | 9.49 | .318 |

According to Reid's (1995) suggestion and cut off points set by him, there are three ranges for learning styles, that is, major (38 and above), minor (25 to 37), and negligible (24 or less). According to the data in Table 2, it was revealed that, the mean scores of kinesthetic ($M$ = 41.85, $SD$ = 5.35), visual ($M$ = 39.04, $SD$ = 7.91), auditory ($M$ = 38.92, SD = 9.11), group ($M$ = 38.46, $SD$ = 7.62), and tactile ($M$ = 38.08, $SD$ = 9.57) learning styles fell into the major category among the learners with the high EQ, while the learners' individual ($M$ = 34.38, $SD$ = 9.76) learning style preference was minor. The analysis revealed that the learners with the high EQ had a strong inclination towards kinesthetic and visual style preferences.

Moreover, the mean scores of kinesthetic ($M$ = 41.85), and visual ($M$ = 39.04) learning styles were the greatest among the EFL learners with high EQ. Also, the EFL learners with low EQ favored kinesthetic learning style ($M$ = 37.07, $SD$ = 5.73), followed by auditory ($M$ = 37.00, $SD$ = 3.45), and tactile ($M$ = 36.57, $SD$ = 4.9) learning styles. Moreover, all the perceptual learning styles of the learners with low EQ fell into the *minor* category.

Furthermore, descriptive statistics related to the EFL participants' OCSs were calculated. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics concerning the EFL learners' scores on OCSs with high and low levels of EQ.

Table 3
*Descriptive Statistics of OCSs for the Low and High EQ Group*

| | OCSs | *N* | Min | Max | Mean | *SD* | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High EQ | *X* | 52 | 1.83 | 4.66 | 3.899 | .56 | -1.12 | 2.25 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.25 | 4.75 | 4.133 | .57 | -.867 | .67 |
| | *X* | 52 | 1.83 | 5.00 | 4.106 | .72 | -.65 | .47 |
| | *X* | 52 | 1.60 | 4.80 | 4.137 | .68 | -1.31 | 2.19 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.33 | 4.33 | 3.125 | .54 | .76 | .18 |
| | *X* | 52 | 1.60 | 4.75 | 2.873 | .69 | .60 | .96 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.50 | 4.00 | 3.413 | .48 | -.31 | -1.34 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.266 | .93 | .87 | -.60 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.783 | .99 | -.49 | -.85 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.25 | 4.80 | 3.997 | .58 | -.31 | -.12 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.50 | 5.00 | 3.788 | .58 | -.018 | -.37 |
| | *X* | 52 | 1.25 | 4.00 | 3.489 | .50 | -1.83 | 6.05 |
| | *X* | 52 | 1.50 | 5.00 | 3.816 | 1.1 | -.59 | -.96 |
| | *X* | 52 | 1.50 | 4.50 | 2.956 | .96 | .13 | -1.1 |
| | *X* | 52 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.709 | .6 | -.04 | -.14 |
| | *X* | 56 | 1.83 | 4.66 | 3.085 | .64 | .23 | -1.08 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *X* | 56 | 2.25 | 4.75 | 3.212 | .42 | .65 | -.152 |
| | *X* | 56 | 1.83 | 5.00 | 3.490 | .69 | -.23 | -1.23 |
| | *X* | 56 | 1.60 | 4.80 | 3.332 | .64 | -.06 | -.507 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.33 | 4.33 | 3.127 | .46 | .49 | -.237 |
| Low EQ | *X* | 56 | 1.60 | 4.75 | 3.254 | .61 | .52 | -.765 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.50 | 4.00 | 3.216 | .60 | -.15 | -1.28 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 2.977 | .65 | .77 | -.066 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.492 | .84 | 3.51 | 2.39 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.25 | 4.80 | 3.205 | .62 | .21 | -1.26 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.50 | 5.00 | 3.514 | .49 | -.48 | -.640 |
| | *X* | 56 | 1.25 | 4.00 | 3.067 | .49 | .01 | -.757 |
| | *X* | 56 | 1.50 | 5.00 | 3.402 | .78 | .20 | -1.219 |
| | *X* | 56 | 1.50 | 4.50 | 3.062 | .94 | -.01 | -1.073 |
| | *X* | 56 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.568 | .44 | -.35 | -.303 |

As depicted in Table 3*, X strategies* (*M* = 4.137, *SD* = .68), followed by *X* (*M* = 4.133, *SD* = .57), and *X* (*M* = 4.106, *SD* = .72) were the most commonly occurring strategies in the high EQ group. On the other hand*, X* (*M* = 2.87, *SD* = .69) and *X* (*M* = 2.8*, SD =.96)* were the least commonly occurring strategies among the learners with high EQ.

As displayed in Table 3, reportedly, *X* (*M* = 3.568, *SD* = .44) and *scanning* (*M* = 3.514, *SD* = -.48) were the most frequent strategies used by the learners. This was followed by the strategies of *X*, and *X*. *X strategies (M* = 2.977, *SD* = .96) were the least frequent OCSs.

As regards the third research question, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between EI and four main learning styles were computed for the participants with high and low EQ (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Correlation* coefficients *between Perceptual Learning Styles and EI for the Two EQ Groups*

| | Variable | Perceptual Learning Style | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Visuals | Tactile | Auditory | Kinesthetic |
| High Group | EI | -.062 (.664) | -.025 (.862) | .001 (.995) | -.002 (.989) |
| Low Group | EI | -.001 (.993) | .085 (.532) | .143 (.293) | .019 (.891) |

As displayed in Table 4, EI did not significantly correlate with any of the learner's learning styles in the low and high EQ groups. These results indicated no statistically significant association between four perceptual learning styles and EI of the students with high and low EQ.

Furthermore, the Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated in order to see if any significant relationship between EI and two main types of OCSs existed in the two groups. Table 5 summarizes the results.

Table 5
*Correlation* coefficients *between EI and OCSs for the Two EQ Groups*

| | Variable | OCSs | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Coping with Speaking Problems | Coping with Listening Problems |
| High Group | EI | .219 (.119) | .110 (.439) |
| Low Group | EI | .343** (.010) | .191 (.159) |

According to Table 5, the results indicated a positive association between EI and strategy use for coping with speaking problem in the low EQ group ($r$ = 0.34, $p$ < .01, $N$ = 56). This relationship was statistically significant. According to Cohen (1988), this $r$ value ($0.30 \leq r < 0.49$) could be considered as medium. Also, a small positive correlation between EI and OCSs for dealing with problems in listening was observed in the two EQ groups, but the relationship was not statistically significant.

## 6. Discussion

Concerning the learning styles, the above results indicate that the Iranian EFL students with high EQ preferred all main learning styles. Nonetheless, the most preferred type of learning style in the high EQ group was kinesthetic and the least preferred one was individual learning style. This finding demonstrates that EFL learners with the high EQ, who have the sense of empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationship, tend to work in group and help others to solve problems. In other words, those EFL students with high EQ preferred kinesthetic learning style to engage in the L2 (English) learning experience. That is to say, EFL students' potentials for L2 learning can increase if they are actively involved in the activities in the class. In addition, they can learn best when they interact or work with other students.

In addition, the above results indicated that those EFL students with low EQ expressed inclination towards kinesthetic and auditory styles more than other learning styles. This finding indicates that taking part in the class activities individually and listening to the lecture in the class are important for such EFL learners. In the class, such EFL learners can enjoy the oral-aural learning channel to gain information. Also, the EFL learners with the low level of EQ have less tendency to interact with others in the class activities and they are weak at empathy, interpersonal relationship, or social responsibility since, as the results showed, such learners keep a low profile of group learning style; they prefer to work alone to solve their problems. In contrast to the low EQ group, the other EQ group was mainly inclined to study collectively and in cooperation with others, hence disfavoring individual style.

Furthermore, as to the OCSs, accuracy-oriented strategies were the most preferred type of strategy in the high EQ group. It is assumed that such

learners who have a high level of self-awareness and independency are willing to speak the target language with accuracy, pay much attention to the language forms and grammatical accuracy in speaking, and possibly correct themselves when they notice their mistakes. This indicates that such learners are aware of accuracy in their speech to develop communication skill in a foreign language. Also, strategies of fluency-oriented and negotiating for meaning were ranked high among them. In other words, the learners with high EQ prefer to maintain their engagement, continue their interaction, and prevent a communication breakdown in the class; they tend to employ more interactive strategies to cooperate and empathize with others. They believe that negotiation for meaning strategies is very effective in sustaining the flow of conversation in L2. By way of using such strategies, they pay heed to the intonation, rhythm, clarity of their speech, and pronunciation as well as their interlocutors' reactions to gain the understanding, hence becoming stronger at negotiation in class. In contrast, message abandonment and less active listener strategies received low mean scores among these learners, indicating that the EFL students with high EQ are more capable of interacting and solving their problems with listening and understanding others.

In contrast, the prominent OCSs among the EFL learners with low level of EQ were word-oriented and scanning strategies, indicating that such learners depend on their lexicon to comprehend the interlocutor's intention. It might be that memorizing individual words is one of the common tools among them to achieve success in listening. The finding can be justified by their inclination towards paying attention to every word and interrogative sentences (Irgin, 2011; Nakatani, 2006). As Nation and Meara (2002) have pointed out, developing fluency requires learning to make the best use of vocabulary repertoire at hand. Therefore, it can be argued that EFL students with low EQ develop scanning strategies to optimize their comprehension

and get the meaning from the context. Besides, some learners in English classes use their native language to comprehend the message and focus on grammar; they try to transfer the grammatical rule from L1 and think in their native language; they depend more on translation and their thinking in L1 is a way of coping with communication problems. That could be one reason why the strategy of attempt to think in English had a low mean among the students with low EQ.

Regarding the correlational analysis, the above results revealed no significant relationship of EI with any aforementioned learning styles. This could be because the development of EI level may not necessarily result in enhancement of certain learning styles. For example, a high level of EI cannot be linked with tactile style preference. It is assumed that the high or low levels of EQ cannot strongly predict learning styles among EFL learners. Baleghizadeh and Shayeghi (2014) also assert that certain intelligence types cannot be strongly related to learning style preferences. However, this issue requires further research to claim a strong generalization.

Even though a positive correlation of EI and OCSs, including both main types of OCSs, was observed in the high EQ group, the correlation coefficient was not high enough to be statistically significant. Possibly a higher level of EI can lead, to some extent, to better OCSs use, but its contribution cannot be so unique. Therefore, the relationship between EI and OCSs among those EFL learners with a high level of EQ should be interpreted with caution. In the like manner, EI had a positive relationship with the OCSs for dealing with listening problems in the low EQ group, but the relationship was not statistically significant. As a matter of fact, as Akbari and Hosseini (2008) point out, these positive correlations can be due to the fact that both intelligence and strategy use belong to a general problem-solving ability. However, to be able to use and speak target language so

successfully, L2 learners should have the capacity to interact and negotiate with others and take a notice of the pronunciation and reaction of the listener in context. According to Nakatani et al. (2012), the frequency of CSs seems to be relatively low among some Iranian EFL learners, and it seems vital to initiate metacognitive strategy instruction to enhance awareness towards CS use. As the descriptive analysis in the current study has indicated, the EFL students with low EQ did not employ strategies, especially for coping with listening problems, as much as possible, and when they reported to use the strategies, they selected the less effective strategies, especially for coping with listening problems. Thus, the observed low correlation between the participants' EI and strategy use for listening problems is not against expectation.

**7. Conclusion and Implications**

The results indicated that the EFL learners with high EQ favored kinesthetic and visual perceptual learning styles more and disfavored individual learning style, whereas the EFL learners with low EQ preferred auditory and kinesthetic perceptual learning styles more and did not favor group learning style. Among OCSs, the strategies of accuracy-oriented and negotiating for meaning while speaking were the most preferred types among the EFL students with high EQ, but the most frequently reported strategies among the students with low EQ were scanning and word-oriented strategies. Moreover, the strategies of attempting to think in the target language and abandoning the message were the least frequently used strategies in the low and high and EQ groups, respectively. The review of the OCSs reported by the EFL learners with high and low EQ indicated that the EFL learners with high EQ preferred to employ more effective strategies during oral communications than the learners with low EQ. More specifically, the EFL learners with high EQ tended to utilize accuracy-oriented, meaning-negotiation, and fluency-

oriented strategies to maintain the communication in speech, whereas the EFL learners with low EQ tended to care for every word during the interaction, which would be considered as a disadvantage to the ongoing communication.

The results that the EFL learners with high EQ prefer kinesthetic and visual styles and those with low EQ prefer kinesthetic and auditory styles imply that the kind of teaching/learning materials should not be the same for EFL learners with various levels of EI. Using charts, diagrams, power point slides, movies, visual riddles, imaginative storytelling, pictures, pictorial thinking exercises, and color cueing can be greatly helpful for the EFL learners with high EQ. However, language learning of those EFL learners with low EQ might be reinforced by getting lectures, verbal explanations, tapes and oral instruction, short stories, repetition, dictation, music, and listening for clues. Additionally, the above results imply that L2 teachers should allow the EFL learners with high and low EQ to participate in activities which require action, move, and touch. They can thrive in classes that involve active participation such as role playing, interviewing, pantomiming, field trips, writing, diagramming, and mapping.

Also, the findings of this research imply that EFL teachers should teach strategies which require those learners with low EQ to conceptualize in the foreign language as much as possible and involve them in negotiating and communicating with their classmates to maintain their conversational goal. Although almost all EFL teachers in Iran are nonnative speakers of English with some deficiency of linguistic knowledge that can result in using their own native language in the classroom, they should not stop encouraging their learners to use a variety of OCSs in the classroom to promote their ability to cope with difficulties during listening and speaking without being afraid of making errors. EFL teachers in Iran should take L2 learners' EI profiles into

account and facilitate their capability to utilize strategies to cope with speaking and listening problems through designing and using teaching techniques for language learners with different learning styles.

Furthermore, the results of correlational analysis demonstrated that the participants' EI did not significantly correlate with the OCSs for tackling listening problems in both low and high EQ groups. Nor did it correlate significantly with the OCSs for tackling speaking problems in the high EQ group. However, a significant association between the students' EI and the OCSs for tackling speaking problems was observed in the low EQ group.

In closing, the findings about the positive relationship between the learners' EI and OCSs indicate that the EFL learners' use of OCSs can, partially, linked to their EI level. In other words, while employing OCSs, language learners can benefit from their EI to some extent. Also, language learners, through implementing OCSs, can develop their EI to some degree. When they use the strategies for coping with speaking problems, they may improve problem solving and interpersonal relationship, which are related to the component of EI. Indeed, future research should put the reciprocal effect of EI and OCS use among L2 learners under spotlight. And curriculum designers and material developers should design useful materials which make L2 learners aware of their level of EI and enhance effective oral communication.

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