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Listening Comprehension Performance Viewed in the Light of Emotional Intelligence and Foreign Language Listening Anxiety

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Abstract

The researchers in the current study were after probing the potential relationship between emotional intelligence, foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA), and listening comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners. To this end, 233 participants, studying English language and literature at three different Universities in Urmia, were initially selected. Successive to running homogeneity test, the number of eligible participants reduced sharply and only 160 out of the original number went on with the remainder of the study. To gather the data use was mainly made of two instruments, i.e. Bar-On's (1997) emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i), and FLLA scale. Results of Pearson product moment correlation pointed to a strong relationship between listening comprehension performance of the learners and their emotional intelligence scores, with the strongest relationship belonging to the self-awareness subscale of EI. Furthermore, a strong negative relationship was found between FLLAS and listening comprehension performance. The results also indicated a strong negative relationship between learners' FLLA and their emotional intelligence, with the strongest relationship belonging to the happiness component. The results of the multiple regression analyses for the predictability power of EI for listening comprehension performance and FLLA revealed that EI is a proper predictor of listening comprehension performance and FLLA of Learners. Finally, based on multiple regression analysis FLLA was deemed a proper predictor of listening comprehension performance of EFL learners.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, emotional quotient, foreign language listening anxiety, listening comprehension performance

1. Introduction

Now a pervasive catch term and a highly popular concept which has outlived most of its late-twentieth-century rivaling counterparts, emotional intelligence (EI) owes its emergence and growth to a number of distinguished and influential theoreticians, including Thorndike (1920) who popularized the notion of social intelligence, Gardner (1983) who put an end to the crystallized, static conception of intelligence as a general cognitive factor, and more importantly Goleman (1995) who gloriously unified the scattered outcries for the indoctrination of emotional side of life, and smothered the history-long divide between emotion and reason. Viewed as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Bar-On, 1997, p. 14), emotional intelligence has now turned to a panacea for a vast variety of setbacks plaguing different aspects of people's occupational, academic, and social lives.

Despite the outright consensus among EI researchers regarding various life, educational and career gains (e.g. Chan, 2004; Evenson, 2007; Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008; Holt, 2007; Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002; Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004; Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009; Vandervoort, 2006) resulting from possessing heightened levels of emotional quotient (EQ), the components making up the intricate construct of EI are a matter of ongoing debate among the manifold precursors of the field. For instance, while in Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee's (2000) Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, and Social Skills are listed as the core constituents of emotional intelligence, in Bar-On's (1997) taxonomy of EQ scales, known as emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i), the overriding factors underlying an individual's EQ are the so-called categories of intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, general mood, and stress management. Furthermore, within the other prominent model put forth for measuring EI by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000), emotional intelligence is conceived of as "an ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationships and to reason and problem solve on the basis of them" (p. 267), and a construct which "involves the capacity or ability to reason with and about emotions" (Conte, 2005, p. 435). Nonetheless, as Bowkett and Percival (2011) observe, in most EI models and constructs a key role is played by awareness of self and others as the two focal cornerstones of EQ.

As the current study explores learners' EI in relation to their listening comprehension ability as well as foreign language listening anxiety, the ensuing discussion is after setting the ground for probing such a relationship. Drawing on Krashen's model of comprehensible input and its focal role in learning, Rost (1994) underscores the importance of listening as a major skill in this regard and maintains, "Listening is vital in the second language classroom because it provides input for the learner; without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking" (pp. 141-142). Despite researchers and educationalists' unanimous consensus over the primacy of listening compared to other language skills, it is mostly the case that in language schools and academic contexts this crucial cornerstone of efficient language learning is either neglected or not paid the attention it deserves. In this regard Nunan (1991) holds that,

Among language skills, listening is the Cindrella skill. Unfortunately most of the time, it has been overlooked by its elder sister i.e. speaking. In most people's opinion being able to claim knowledge of a second language means being able to speak and write in that language, with this regard, listening and reading are viewed as secondary skills which serve as means to other ends rather than end in themselves. (p. 199)

Prior to introducing the other major element in the current study, i.e. foreign language listening anxiety, it might prove beneficial to deal with the concept of anxiety, in general, and language anxiety, in particular. Defined as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Spielberger, 1983, p. 1), anxiety, in the eyes of Arnold and Brown (1999, p. 8), "is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension." In Oxford's (1999, p. 59) words, "language anxiety is fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language." Language learning anxiety has been characterized by a number of subtypes, among which mention can be made of *situational* or *state anxiety*, which "arises in response to a particular situation or event" (Oxford, 1999, p. 60), *trait anxiety*, which refers to a more stabilized type of anxiety resulting from frequent occurrences of anxiety-inducing conditions in the process of language learning, *facilitating* or helpful anxiety as well as *debilitating* or harmful anxiety. Another anxiety type which is germane to learning contexts is what Heron (1989) refers to as *existential anxiety*, which encompasses thee other categories of anxiety, i.e. *acceptance anxiety*, or the learner's concern about whether s(he) is going to be accepted by the group, *orientation anxiety*, or the learner's worry concerning whether s(he) will be capable of comprehending and getting along in a group, and *performance anxiety*, or his/her worries about whether s(he) can cope with the learning tasks in the group. Still another less pertinent kind of anxiety is *archaic anxiety* or repressed type of anxiety which as Arnold and Brown (1999, p. 9) put it, has to do with "unhealed past wounds [which] may impinge on present situations with potentially threatening elements." Furthermore, Brown (1994, p. 142) refers to 'communicative apprehension', 'fear of negative social evaluation' and 'test anxiety' as the three major components of foreign language anxiety.

Though various scales have been developed for the measurement of anxiety, the most renowned instrument for gauging learners' language anxiety is Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Oxford, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997). In line with what Yang (2012) states, FLCAS, which encompasses 33 items probing different anxiety-inducing conditions, taps respondents' reflections on three constituents of foreign language anxiety. Portraying foreign language anxiety as a situation-specific type of anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) underscore the unique nature of foreign language learning which is overly distinct from other types of learning. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) delineate foreign language learning anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension especially associated with second language context, including speaking, listening, reading and writing" (p. 288).

Among other instruments devised for measuring learning anxiety are Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS), Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), as well as Second Language Writing Apprehension Test (SLWAT), of which the first one constitutes the main concern of the researchers in the current study. Though involvement with all four language skills may bring about different levels of anxiety in individuals, it is thought that listening skill is likely to induce higher levels of apprehension in learners, partly due to the more demanding nature with which listening tasks are mostly characterized (Bacon, 1992; Chastain, 1979; Christenberry, 2003; Dunkel, 1991). Regarding L2 listening anxiety, Kimura (2011) observed that *task-focused apprehension* and *self-focused apprehension* constitute two interrelated, yet distinct facets of anxiety, the former being characterized as the individual's concern for efficient performance as regards aural channel, and the latter as the learners' anxiety concerning social evaluative threats imposed on them on the part of context.

Informed by the pivotal role of traits such as emotional intelligence and language learning anxiety in configuring learning attempts, the researchers in the present study set out for a full-fledged probe into the potential interplay between learners' emotional intelligence, on the one hand, and their listening comprehension ability as well as foreign language listening anxiety, on the other. It is postulated that being able to pinpoint and substantiate the would-be relationships between foreign language listening anxiety and emotional intelligence along with listening comprehension would be of high importance for recognizing hindering factors which, to some extent, lead to unsatisfactory performance in educational/academic arenas. Thus, in an attempt to come up with a more lucid view regarding the possible interrelationships between the aforesaid constituents, the following research questions were set forth in the current study:

1) Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their listening comprehension performance?

2) Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' foreign language listening anxiety and their listening comprehension performance?

3) Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their foreign language listening anxiety?

4) Does emotional intelligence predict the listening comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?

5) Does emotional intelligence predict the foreign language listening anxiety of Iranian EFL learners?

6) Does foreign language listening anxiety predict the listening comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?

2. Literature Review

Investigations regarding the role of EQ in academic achievement abound within the literature on myriad gains resulting from possessing heightened levels of EI. In this regard, Evenson's (2007) research culminated in claiming the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in bringing about augmented academic performance. In like manner, Holt (2007), who drew on the data gathered from 152 college students via Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) as well as Scholistic Assessment Test and GPAs (Grade Point Averages), reported a significant correlation between participants' EI scores and their GPAs. Likewise, Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, and Majeski (2004) came up with a significant amount of correlation holding between varied components of Bar-On's EQ-i and learners' academic success.

In another probe into the role of EQ in determining attitudinal orientation of learners, Salami (2010) administered a set of questionnaires to some 242 Nigerian college students and found that emotional intelligence can act as one of the major predictors of individuals' attitudes as well as their behavior.

Among the skills-oriented and componential studies addressing the relationship between EQ and performance on varied areas of language, reference can be made to the work done by Motallebzadeh (2009) regarding the possible bonds between EQ and reading comprehension. Administering Bar-On's EQ-i to 170 students, he concluded "that except for social responsibility and empathy as interpersonal categories, there was a strong relationship between Emotional Intelligence and EFL learners' reading comprehension and structural ability" (p. 39).

In relation to implications of EQ for speaking skill, Pishghadam's (2009) study supported the influential role played by EI in speaking performance of academic learners. With regard to listening gains resulting from possessing high EI levels, Badakhshan's (2008) scrutiny came up with a significant correlation between participants' listening performance and their emotional intelligence. Likewise, Alavinia and Mollahossein (2012) ran a probe with 112 academic learners and concluded that EQ highly correlates with metacognitive listening strategy use in university students. In this study which was conducted through utilizing Bar-On's EQ-i, the researchers also referred to high amount of correlation holding between the use of metacognitive listening strategies and different subscales of EQ.

Among the studies dealing with the possible repercussions of EQ for writing skill, mention can be made of Alavinia and Behyar's (2012) investigation, in which the researchers were after finding the potential correlation between academic learners' EI and their lexico-semantic errors in writing. Administering Bar-On's EQ-i to 100 students, they found ample support for the research postulation regarding the correlation between EQ and learners' lexico-semantic errors. Furthermore, substantiating the predictive value of all EQ subscales for learners' errors was the other major finding in this research.

Another ubiquitous orientation in research on EQ is thought to be the one dealing with correlational analysis. In this line of scrutiny, for instance, Hasanzadeh and Shahmohamadi (2011) launched an investigation with 100 university pupils from different disciplines and through questionnaire administration (Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory and Learning and Study Strategies Inventory) claimed a strong relationship between the use of learning strategies and emotional intelligence level in both genders. Furthermore, in probing the would-be links between emotional intelligence and motivation, Christie, Jordan, Troth, and Lawrence (2007) assigned EQ and motivation questionnaires to 113 participants, and reported a go-togetherness between the two constructs. In like manner, Mohammadi and Bagheri (2011) provided support for the correlation between learners' motivation and their emotional intelligence. In a similar vein, Alavinia (2013) substantiated the significant correlation between learning styles and different subscales of Bar-On's EQ-i, except for the subscales of empathy, interpersonal relationship, and social responsibility.

Addressing the potential association between EQ, personality and social relationships, Lopes, Salovey, Straus (2003) opted for a study with 103 college students and concluded that learners' gratification with their social and interpersonal relationships was closely tied to their emotional intelligence as well as their personality types. Finally, concerning life gains resulting from possessing higher levels of EQ, Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough's (2002) research, implemented with 107 participants, revealed that EQ does correlate with the degree of life satisfaction in individuals.

Though a multitude of other studies have been conducted on various other repercussions of possessing higher EQ vis-à-vis several life, educational and occupational perspectives, it is not the researchers' intent in the current study to provide an exhaustive overview of the available literature in this regard. Yet, before moving on to the major part of the research, that is the methodology exerted for implementing the probe and the results gained through the analysis of data, a laconic account is provided, at this juncture, concerning the investigations addressing the other major component of the current study, i.e. foreign language listening anxiety.

In an early hunt for the possible causes of anxiety while listening, Vogely (1998) asked 140 participants to voice their worries while involved in a listening task. Tapping the data via utilizing a questionnaire, the researcher came up with a number of reasons underlying learners' listening anxiety, including the nature of speech, level of difficulty, lack of clarity, lack of visual support, and lack of repetition. Eliciting data on the impact of anxiety on general academic performance as well as listening comprehension performance of 453 Arab learners, Elkhafaifi (2005) came to the conclusion that learners' anxiety level correlates with their poor performance on the listening tasks. In their search for different factors underlying foreign language learning anxiety as well as strategies used by learners to cope with these anxieties, Lucas, Miraflores, and Go (2011) argued that communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and English classroom anxiety are among the principal culprits for learners' anxiety in a foreign language learning context.

In'nami's (2006) research, however, ended up with opposing results in this regard as no statistically significant relationship was reported to be at work with regard to the role of anxiety in learners' listening performance. Furthermore, Yang's (2010) investigation didn't end up with declaring a significant relationship between learners' anxiety and their listening performance.

In still another investigation carried out by Kimura (2008), some differences were found across different university disciplines with respect to listening anxiety. However, no significant differences pertaining to the role of gender were encountered. Kimura's study had been accomplished through the administration of Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) to 452 university freshmen.

In a later analysis performed in the context of bilingualism, Mihaljevic, Djigunovic, and Legac (2008) set out for a probe into the potential linkages between anxiety levels in monolinguals and bilinguals and their listening comprehension ability. A number of privileges were ascribed to bilinguals at the culmination of this study, including bilinguals' lower levels of anxiety and their superior listening comprehension skills compared to monolinguals.

Moreover, in a comparative investigation of the varying degrees of anxiety inducement by oral/aural tasks, Shomoossi and Kassaian (2009) ran a study with 74 freshmen and found that learners suffered from relatively lower levels of anxiety while engaged with the listening comprehension task than the oral interview task.

Finally, in an exploration of the possible impacts of teaching reading course through a novel cognitive affective methodology, Rouhani (2008) found that emotional intelligence of learners, their anxiety and empathy were positively affected by instruction through the researcher's devised course, that is to say while learners' emotional intelligence and empathy were marked by considerable enhancement, their anxiety went into a dip as a result of the exerted instruction. Despite the fact that high emotional intelligence and low anxiety have long been characterized as influential determinants for ameliorated learning outcomes, very meager attention has been paid to the possible correlation between these two focal constructs and learners' academic performance, particularly when it comes to dealing with the prickly task of listening comprehension. Thus, in an attempt to shed more light on these unattended, yet paramount issues, the current study strives to examine the viable correlation between emotional intelligence, foreign language listening anxiety and listening comprehension performance of learners.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

As stated earlier, the current study strived to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence, foreign language listening anxiety, and listening comprehension. To conduct the study, a total of 233 BA students studying English language and literature at a number of universities in Urmia, a city in Northwest Iran, were selected as the participants of the research. Successive to homogenization of the participants through the administration of TOEFL test, the number of eligible learners went through a sharp decline, as only 160 (72 males and 88 females) were selected as the final research participants. Furthermore, the learners taking part in the study ranged from 18 to 27 years of age and enjoyed different language backgrounds, i.e. Azeri Turkish, Kurdish, and Farsi.

3.2 Instrumentation

The major data collection device utilized in the current study was Emotional Quotient Inventory, a self-report measure of emotional and socially intelligent behavior, which was first developed by Bar-On (1997), as a questionnaire including 133 items, arranged under 5 major subscales of intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood, and 15 minor subscales known as problem-solving, happiness, independence, stress tolerance, self-actualization, emotional self-awareness, reality testing, interpersonal relationships, optimism, self-regard, impulse control, flexibility, social responsibility, empathy, and assertiveness. Table 1 gives out a lucid illustration of these major subscales and their subdivisions. The EQ questionnaire used in the current study was the domestically standardized and validated version of EQ test (Samouei, 2003) which comprised of 90 Likert-type items.

Table 1. Major and minor subscales included within Bar-On's EQ model

Composite Scales	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Stress Management	Adaptability	General Mood
Specific Factors	Self-Regard	Empathy	Stress Tolerance	Reality Testing	Optimism
	Emotional Self-Awareness	Social Responsibility	Impulse Control	Flexibility	Happiness
	Assertiveness	Interpersonal Relationship		Problem Solving	
	Independence				
	Self-Actualization				

The second instrument implemented in the present study was Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS). FLLAS was originally devised by Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999) as a measure of foreign language reading anxiety. Yet, the modifications and adaptations applied to the questionnaire by Elkhafaifi (2005) helped turn it to a 20-item Likert-type scale for gauging listening comprehension anxiety. Both the original version and the modified version of the questionnaire enjoyed high indices of reliability (.96 and .86, respectively). Further, the reliability coefficient found for the scale in the current study was also high (it equaled .89). Finally, it's worth noting that higher scores on this scale were interpreted as indicators of higher amounts of anxiety, whereas lower scores signified lower amounts of anxiety among participants.

3.3 Design and Procedure

Falling within the correlational category of research, the present study was primarily launched to investigate the feasible relationship between Iranian academic EFL learners' emotional intelligence, their foreign language listening anxiety, and listening comprehension. After establishing the research prerequisites through reassuring the learners of observing confidentiality conditions as to the obtained results and the voluntary basis for participation, TOEFL test was administered to learners to cater for homogeneity concerns. Throughout the process of homogenization, those students who had scored one standard deviation (16.66) above and below the mean (87.10) were included in the study, and, accordingly, the initial number of participants (N = 233) went into a considerable dip as the final number of eligible participants reduced to 160. Successive to these preliminary steps, Bar-On's EQ-i (1997) and FLLAS were administered to students to measure their emotional intelligence and foreign language listening anxiety. The allotted time for filling the first questionnaire was roughly 30 to 40 minutes, while the second questionnaire which was shorter was to be filled in a matter of 10 minutes. Having administered the questionnaires, the researchers then made use of mainly two statistical operations, namely Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression for the final analysis of the obtained data.

4. Results

Aimed at pinpointing the potential relationship between emotional intelligence, foreign language listening anxiety, and listening comprehension, the researchers in the current study initially probed the first postulation regarding the possible go-togetherness between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their listening comprehension performance. Thus, running correlation analysis, the first research question of the study was analyzed. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the descriptive statistics as well as the correlational results relevant to the first research question.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for listening and total EQ (N=160)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	30.13	8.11047
Total EQ	328	37.61252
Listening	30.1375	8.11047
Problem Solving	22.6875	3.19431
Happiness	23.6250	4.50681
Independence	22.2625	3.78093
Stress Tolerance	18.8500	4.12265
Self- Actualization	23.0375	3.78824
Self- Awareness	22.1062	3.88935
Reality Testing	19.1750	3.79100
Interpersonal Relation	23.9438	3.78386
Optimism	22.5688	3.80437
Self-Regard	23.0875	3.95317
Impulse Control	17.8938	5.34189
Flexibility	19.7938	3.23522
Social Responsibility	25.0125	3.36835
Empathy	24.8375	3.27538
Assertiveness	20.0250	4.09010

Table 3. The Correlation between listening and total EQ

		listening	Total EQ
Listening	Pearson Correlation	1	.594**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	160	.000
	N		160

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

As Table 3 shows and according to Cohen (1988), there was a strong, direct, and positive relationship (r = .59) between the participants' listening comprehension and their total emotional intelligence scores. However, in order to have a better understanding of the relationship between each of the EQ subscales and the listening performance of the participants, a more in-depth correlation analysis was run. The results of correlation coefficient related to each of the EQ subscales and listening comprehension scores of the students are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The correlation between listening and EQ subscales (N=160)

		listening
Problem Solving	Pearson Correlation	.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Happiness	Pearson Correlation	.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Independence	Pearson Correlation	.338**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Stress Tolerance	Pearson Correlation	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Self –Actualization	Pearson Correlation	.491**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Self- Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Reality Testing	Pearson Correlation	.377**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Interpersonal Relation	Pearson Correlation	.271**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
Optimism	Pearson Correlation	.374**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Self- Regard	Pearson Correlation	.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Impulse Control	Pearson Correlation	.367**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Social Responsibility	Pearson Correlation	.264**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.361**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Assertiveness	Pearson Correlation	.353**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

As can be seen in Table 4, the strongest relationship belonged to self-awareness subscale of EQ and listening comprehension (r = .49). Therefore, According to Cohen (1988), the relationship was a moderate, direct, and positive one.

To analyze the second research question, which was after finding the possible relationship between Iranian EFL learners' foreign language listening anxiety and their listening comprehension performance, again Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, the results of which are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for listening and FLLAS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Listening	30.1375	8.11047	160
FLLAS	48.4938	9.94134	160

Table 6. The correlation between listening and FLLAS

		Listening	FLLAS
Listening	Pearson Correlation	1	-.587**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	160	160

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

As is evident from Table 6, there was a strong, indirect, and negative relationship (r = .58) between the listening comprehension of participants and their foreign language listening anxiety.

Next, to probe the third research question, seeking to find the possible relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EQ and their foreign language listening anxiety, another correlational analysis was run, the results of which are reported in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for total EQ and FLLAS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FLLAS	48.49	9.941	160
Total EQ	328	37.612	160

Table 8. The correlation between total EQ and FLLAS

		FLLAS	Total EQ
FLLAS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	160	160

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

As Table 8 signifies, a strong, indirect, and negative relationship (r = -0.69) is found to hold between foreign language listening anxiety of participants and their total EQ scores. Moreover, to further analyze the viable correlations between the subscales of EQ and learners' foreign language listening anxiety, a more detailed correlational analysis was done (see Table 9).

Table 9. The correlation between EQ subscales and FLLAS (N=160)

		FLLAS
Problem Solving	Pearson Correlation	-.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Happiness	Pearson Correlation	-.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Independence	Pearson Correlation	-.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Stress tolerance	Pearson Correlation	-.535**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Self –Actualization	Pearson Correlation	-.551**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Self –Awareness	Pearson Correlation	-.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Reality Testing	Pearson Correlation	-.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Interpersonal Relation	Pearson Correlation	-.334**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Optimism	Pearson Correlation	-.517**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Self –Regard	Pearson Correlation	-.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Impulse Control	Pearson Correlation	-.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	-.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Social responsibility	Pearson Correlation	-.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	-.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Assertiveness	Pearson Correlation	-.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

In line with what is depicted in Table 9, the highest correlation index belonged to the relationship between happiness (as a subscale of total EQ) and the foreign language listening anxiety of the participants. Put another way, there was a strong, indirect, and negative relationship (r = -0.57) between the happiness subscale and the FLLA of the students.

Subsequent to various correlational analyses run on the obtained data, several regression analyses were employed in an attempt to pinpoint the predictive power of EQ and FLLAS for learners' listening comprehension performance. In so doing, the researchers were primarily interested in determining the predictive power of EQ for listening comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners. Nonetheless, before conducting multiple regression analyses, assumptions of independency, normality, and linearity were examined. Furthermore, scatter plots of residuals against predicted values were drawn to confirm that the latter three assumptions were met. In interpreting partial regression coefficients, the possibility of multicollinearity between the independent variables was a concern. However, there were relatively low values of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), indicating that there may be no serious multicollinearity. Table 10 shows the results of simple linear regression analysis for the emotional intelligence as a general independent variable and the listening comprehension as the dependent variable.

Table 10. Results of simple linear regression analysis of relations between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension

Dependent variable	Independent variable	R	R^2	F	Sig.	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
						B	Std. Error	Beta		
Listening	EQ	.59	.35	86.07	.00	.13	.014	.59	9.28	.00
	Constant					-11.97	4.56		-2.62	.01

As Table 10 indicates, the standardized coefficient value for EQ (B = .59) is statistically significant (p < .05), according to which EQ has influenced the listening comprehension of participants. In other words, with one standard deviation unit change in the emotional intelligence of the participants, their listening comprehension performance increases .59 standard deviations units.

However, in order to see which of the subcategories of the independent variable (emotional intelligence) was the appropriate predictor of the variation in the listening comprehension performance of the learners, a multiple regression analysis was run. Table 11 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis.

Table 11. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses of relations between emotional intelligence subcategories (independent variables) and listening comprehension (dependent variable)

Dependent variable	Independent variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
							B	Std. Error	Beta		
Listening	PS						0.55	0.21	0.22	2.67	0.009
	H						0.1	0.19	0.06	0.53	0.59
	IND						0.23	0.17	0.11	1.24	0.01
	ST						0.17	0.21	0.09	0.82	0.42
	SA						0.36	0.23	0.17	1.58	0.01
	SAW						0.31	0.22	0.152	1.44	0.01
	RT						0.063	0.19	0.03	0.33	0.74
	INR						0.05	0.19	0.023	0.26	0.79
	OPT	0.65	0.42	0.36	7.08	0.00	0.13	0.23	0.06	0.59	0.56
	SR						0.27	0.24	0.13	1.11	0.27
	IMC						0.27	0.12	0.18	2.25	0.009
	FL						0.15	0.21	0.06	0.70	0.48
	SRE						0.12	0.21	0.05	0.57	0.57
	EMP						0.56	0.211	0.22	2.62	0.009
	ASS						0.18	0.18	0.09	0.1	0.32
	Constant						-15.66	5.59		-2.79	0.006

Note. PS= Problem Solving, H= Happiness, IND= Independence, ST= Stress Tolerance, SA= Self-Actualization, SAW= Self-Awareness, RT= Reality Testing, INR= Interpersonal Relation, OPT= Optimism, SR= Self-Regard, IMC= Impulse Control, FL= Flexibility, SRE= Social Responsibility, EMP= Empathy, ASS= Assertiveness

Drawing on what is illustrated in Table 11, it can safely be claimed that problem solving, independence, self-actualization, self-awareness, impulse control, and empathy subcategories of emotional intelligence had statistically significant (p < .05) impact on the listening comprehension of the participants. In other words, the above variables had the highest Beta value among the others and could better predict the variation of the dependent variable. Altogether, the above-mentioned independent variables could predict 36 percent of the variation in the dependent variable.

Then, in an attempt to deal with the fifth research question in the study, delving into the predictive value of emotional intelligence for foreign language listening anxiety of Iranian EFL learners, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, the results of which are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Results of simple linear regression analysis of relations between emotional intelligence and FLLA

Dependent variable	Independent variable	R	R^2	F	Sig.	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
						B Std.	Error	Beta		
FLLA	EQ	0.69	0.49	144.06	0.00	-0.183	0.015	-0.69	-12.003	0.00
	Constant					108.53	5.03		21.56	0.00

As Table 12 displays, the standardized coefficient value for EQ (B = -0.69) is statistically significant ($p < .05$), according to which it can be argued that EQ has influenced foreign language listening anxiety of the participants. In other words, with one standard deviation unit change in the emotional intelligence of participants, their listening comprehension performance decreases .69 standard deviations units.

However, in order to see which of the subcategories of the independent variable (emotional intelligence) had functioned as the appropriate predictors of the variation in foreign language listening anxiety of learners, a multiple regression analysis was run (see Table 13).

Table 13. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses of relations between emotional intelligence subcategories (independent variables) and FLLA (dependent variable)

Dependent variable	Independent variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
							B	Std. Error	Beta		
FLLA	PS						-.248	.231	-.080	-1.071	.028
	H						-.541	.213	-.245	-2.544	.012
	IND						-.132	.208	-.050	-.636	.526
	ST						-.265	.237	-.110	-1.119	.265
	SA						-.178	.258	-.068	-.691	.491
	SAW						-.228	.246	.089	.928	.035
	RT						-.019	.215	-.007	-.090	.928
	INR						.081	.211	.031	.385	.701
	OPT	0.72	0.52	0.47	10.35	0.00	-.202	.252	-.077	-.800	.042
	SR						-.085	.272	-.034	-.311	.757
	IMC						-.135	.136	-.073	-.995	.032
	FL						-.277	.238	-.090	-1.163	.247
	SRE						.117	.233	.040	.503	.616
	EMP						-.624	.237	-.206	-2.636	.009
	ASS						-.459	.206	-.189	-2.234	.027
	Constant						108.47	6.27		17.3	0.000

Note. PS= Problem Solving, H= Happiness, IND= Independence, ST=Stress Tolerance, SA= Self-Actualization, SAW=Self-Awareness, RT=Reality Testing, INR= Interpersonal Relation, OPT= Optimism, SR= Self-Regard, IMC= Impulse Control, FL=Flexibility, SRE=Social Responsibility, EMP= Empathy, ASS= Assertiveness

Based on what is briefed in Table 13, it can be maintained that problem solving, happiness, emotional self-awareness, optimism, impulse control, empathy, and assertiveness subcategories of emotional intelligence had statistically significant ($p < .05$) impact on the foreign language listening anxiety of the participants. In other words, the above variables had the highest Beta value among the others and could better predict the variation of the dependent variable. Altogether, the above-mentioned independent variables could predict 47 percent of the variation in the dependent variable.

Finally, the researchers sought to investigate the predictive value of foreign language listening anxiety for the listening comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners. To this aim, a simple linear regression analysis was run on the data (see Table 14).

Table 14. Results of simple linear regression analysis of relations between FLLA and listening comprehension

Dependent variable	Independent variable	R	R^2	Sig.	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
					B	Std. Error	Beta		
Listening	FLLA	-0.59	0.35	.000	-0.48	0.05	-0.59	-0.12	.000
					53.36	2.60		20.52	.000

As is manifested in Table 14, the standardized coefficient value for FLLA (B = -0.59) is statistically significant (p < .05), according to which it can be stated that FLLA has influenced listening comprehension performance of participants. In other words, with one standard deviation unit change in the learning anxiety of the participants, their listening comprehension performance decreases .59 standard deviation units.

5. Discussion

The study aimed at investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence, listening comprehension, and foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA). Indeed, as an interactive process, listening comprehension performance of learners is thought to be affected by a multitude of factors, possible examples of which are postulated to be emotional intelligence and anxiety in the current study. The detailed analysis of the relationship between learners' EQ and their listening comprehension performance revealed that among the other components of emotional intelligence, self-awareness had the strongest relationship with the listening comprehension of learners. This finding is in line with the argument that effective listeners need to be aware and conscious of their needs, purposes, emotions, and their successful management of their emotions and those of others. The obtained finding for the first research question is in line with the findings of other scholars (e.g., Badakhshan, 2008; Pishghadam, 2009). Badakhshan (2008) found that in addition to the total emotional intelligence, its components except for empathy were correlated with the students' listening comprehension. The study by Pishghadam (2009), too, came up with similar findings in the sense that emotional intelligence components were found to be influential over the listening performance of learners.

Regarding the second research question, investigating the relationship between foreign language listening anxiety and listening comprehension of learners, the obtained results indicated that there was a strong, indirect, and negative relationship between the listening comprehension of participants and their foreign language listening anxiety. This can be attributed to the fact that when learners' anxiety is high, their performance in the listening test decreases, but when they are not anxious their performance enhances. The finding that anxiety has an impact on the listening comprehension has been supported by other studies too (e.g., Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kimura, 2008; Mihaljevic, Djigunovic & Legac, 2008; Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011; Vogely, 1998). All these studies pointed to a relationship between anxiety and listening comprehension. The study by Vogely (1998), for example, sought to identify the sources of anxiety in relation to listening comprehension and to offer solutions for dealing with learners' anxiety. It was asserted that the anxiety problems stemmed from: 1) whether the learners were experiencing listening anxiety or not, 2) if they did, what made them anxious during the listening comprehension task, and 3) what types of settings, exercises, or activities helped lower their anxiety level. Vogely (1998) identified the sources of anxiety as follows: 1) nature of speech: the lower speed of speech, poor pronunciation, different accents, and teachers' too soft speech created anxiety among learners, 2) level of difficulty: it concerned the use of unknown vocabularies and complex syntax in the listening text, 3) lack of clarity: students were more anxious in situations where they did not know the purpose of the listening task, the types of activities to occur after listening, and the reason why they were listening to the task, 4) lack of visual support, and 5) lack of repetition.

The third research question examined the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA). The results indicated a significant relationship between the foreign language listening anxiety of participants and their total EQ scores. In an additional step towards the investigation of the relationship between each of EQ subscales and the foreign language listening anxiety of participants, it was found that the 'happiness' component had a strong correlation with the FLLA. It should be stated that the relationship was negative so that with any increase in the happiness of learners, their anxiety levels decreased. The results of the present study are supported by all the research studies done to date even if the number of the studies is very limited. Rouhani (2008) and Andrade and Williams (2009), among others, investigated the same line of research and reached similar conclusions.

The fourth research question attempted to determine whether emotional intelligence in its totality could predict the changes in listening comprehension, and if so which of the components of emotional intelligence could better predict any changes in the listening comprehension performance of the learners. The results of simple linear regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of the listening comprehension. Results of multiple regression analyses showed that the 'problem solving', 'independence', 'self actualization', 'self awareness', 'impulse control', and 'empathy' subcategories of the emotional intelligence had statistically significant impact on the listening comprehension of the participants.

Research question five focused on whether emotional intelligence in its totality could predict the changes in listening anxiety of learners, and if so which of the components of emotional intelligence could better predict any changes in the anxiety levels. According to the results of simple linear regression, emotional intelligence in its totality influenced the anxiety of learners. Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that the 'problem solving', 'happiness', 'emotional self awareness', 'optimism', 'impulse control', 'empathy', and 'assertiveness' subcategories of the emotional intelligence had statistically significant impact on the foreign language listening anxiety of the participants.

With regard to the last question, probing the predictive value of the foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA) for listening comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners, results of regression analyses showed that FLLA influenced the listening comprehension performance of the participants. That is the increase in the listening anxiety of learners could disturb their listening comprehension.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Learners' listening comprehension performance is liable to be affected by a number of factors (both intrinsic and external). The current study dealt with the possible role of emotional intelligence and anxiety as the potential internal and external factors influencing the process of listening comprehension. It was postulated that while emotional intelligence is likely to affect listening process in a positive way, anxiety might thwart the normal listening performance in learners. Based on the significant correlations reported in the current study between emotional intelligence, foreign language listening anxiety, and listening comprehension performance of learners, it can be claimed that a great deal can be done by educators in the learning environment to upgrade learners' EQ and lower their worries and anxieties, in an attempt to ameliorate learning outcomes. Teachers, for instance, might be advised to maintain rapport, and to create a nourishing and non-threatening environment for learning, so as to enable the participants to function independently and effectively in the process of learning. Indeed, learners should be taught about how to know and identify their negative or positive emotions during the learning task, how to control them and manage the thoughts. Anxiety while listening or performing other tasks might, in turn, be reduced by instructors' building a more friendly atmosphere in the class, guiding learners with the use of efficient listening or other learning strategies, and providing a more inclusive and supportive environment by removing the pressures such as by minimizing the expectations from learners and imposing less idealistic objectives on learners. Additionally, syllabus designers and materials developers might be recommended to design and devise syllabi and course books with individual differences in mind. Finally, course evaluators might choose, drawing on the results gained in this study, to cater more attentively for issues such as anxiety as well as individual characteristics such as emotions and emotional intelligence at the time of assessment.

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