



## **A Study of Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Writing Ability**

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### **Abstract**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory has stirred up interest of researchers and policy makers. As opposed to mere reliance on Intelligent Quotient (IQ) as contributing to success in education, proponents of EI theory emphasize its fundamental role in different aspects of academic achievement. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the relationship between EI and writing ability of Iranian EFL university students. To achieve this goal, a group of forty EFL students took part in this study. Twenty of the participants were female and twenty male, and their age range was 19-26. The participants were given Bar-On's EQ questionnaire as well as a writing test. Bar-On's questionnaire consisted of 90 items which were in Likert scale format and the writing test was given as the final exam of students' Advanced Essay Writing course at the university. Students were asked to write about one of the 2 topics they were given and their writing was evaluated by two raters. Inter-rater reliability of 0.8 was achieved. The results indicated no significant relationship between female and male students' EI and their writing score. Among sub-skills of EI, impulse control correlated negatively with males' writing ability. Detailed findings and implications are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Language Teaching, Writing Ability, Correlation, and EFL Students.

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## **Introduction**

Writing skill is at the heart of teaching and learning in higher education. According to Chastain (1988) “writing is a basic communication skill and a unique tool in the process of second language learning” (p.244). It is an essential part of a syllabus which plays crucial role in student success, especially at higher levels of education: “Writing requires complex, integrated process in order to compose a logical, coherent text suited for its purposes” (Yan, 2011, p.5). Writers not only need to generate and organize their ideas using the available tools of syntax, vocabulary, and paragraph organization, but also they are required to turn their ideas into a coherent text (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In the process of writing, one’s thinking process and his/her act of writing are integrated (Kellogg, 2001, as cited in Ansarimoghaddam & Hoon Tan, 2014). Nunan (1999) describes it as an “enormous challenge to produce an elaborated text” (p.271). “Writing is not an innate natural ability but is a cognitive ability” (Harris, 1993, p.78) and is acquired through years of training.

Writing and especially writing for academic purposes is a challenging task for students of foreign languages since it is an integrated knowledge which requires critical and creative process on the part of writers. Writing in a foreign language is anxiety provoking for learners, and Iranian EFL learners are not an exception; after having studied English for years they experience difficulty in writing skill and cannot cope with its demands. There are various reasons for this; one is ineffectiveness of writing courses in helping students require skills to accomplish writing tasks; in fact, teachers have degraded the role of writing to home assignment which requires feedback on vocabulary and grammar; communicative aspects of writing, critical thinking skills are not accounted for. Another reason for this is differences in approaches to teaching writing and assessing writing in different context.

However, it may also be a matter of students’ psychological, emotional wellbeing, since affective factors impact different phases of foreign language learning, and writing cannot be an exception. Findings indicate that intellectual capability is not the only predictor of success as EI also plays a pivotal role. In fact, success is depicted as the accumulation of small changes resulting from perseverance, self-discipline, and getting the most advantage from one’s EI (Deutschendorf, 2009).

EI refers specifically to the co-operative combination of intelligence and emotion. It emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, understanding, and addressing the perceived imbalance between intellect and emotion. Zeidner and his colleagues (2004, as cited in Jonker & Vosloo, 2010) state that EI relates to some areas of psychological science such as the neurosciences of emotion, self-regulation

theory, studies of meta-cognition, and the search for human cognitive abilities beyond “traditional” academic intelligence.

According to Austin (2004), the concept of EI provides a psychometric framework for the idea that EI relate to life outcomes such as career and relationships success. The theoretical preposition is that individuals who are high in EI are more successful in work-related and non-work related aspects of life than those who possess low level of EI. It represents growth in evolution of views about the relation between passion and reason, and represents an outgrowth of new theories of intelligence (Grewal & Salovey, 2005). Recently more attention has been paid to the effect of emotional intelligence on academic success in education. Students’ ability to pay attention to their emotions influences academic performance. Individuals with limited emotional skills are more likely to experience stress and emotional difficulties during their studies. The gap in emotional intelligence skills affects students both inside and outside the school context. Studies carried out in the United States show that a university student with higher EI have fewer physical symptoms, less social anxiety and depression, and make greater use of active coping strategies for problem solving (Ogoemeka, 2011). Furthermore, when these students are exposed to stressful tasks, they perceive stressors as less threatening (Salovey et al, 2002, as cited in Ogoemeka, 2011).

For the most part of the history the attitude toward emotion in writing had been negative; as Bloom (1986) pointed, research studies on the role of emotion in writing process depicted it as disruptive of the process. And as Clacher (1999) noted, there is lack of empirical study about second language writing and emotion. The dominant assumption has been that emotion has little to do with actual composing and revising process of writing. The issues under consideration have been confined to cognitive psychology with the view that emotions have little to do with composing and revising process. There is need for more inquiry to explore possible role of EI in students’ writing process. So, to fill this gap, the present study aims to explore whether students’ writing ability is affected by their EI.

## **Literature Review**

### **Emotional Intelligence Theory**

The theory of EI is heavily based on Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences, in particular his concept of interpersonal, intra-personal intelligences. It also goes back to the concept of social intelligence coined by Thorndike (1920) to refer to one’s ability to understand, manage people, and act wisely in relationships (as cited in Petrieds, 2011). Salovy and Mayer (1990) developed the idea of EI. They presented the first conceptualization of EI and described it as the “ability to monitor one’s own

and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (p. 189). They suggested that EI consisted of three main categories of abilities: appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion, and utilization of emotion to solve problems. But it was Daniel Goleman (1995) who popularized the term and introduced the concept to the world with his best seller-book, *Emotional intelligence*. Goleman (1995) defined EI as the capacity to recognize one's own feelings and those of others to motivate and to manage emotions in oneself and one's relationships. Goleman (1998) reformulated his definition of EI and broke it down into twenty-five different competencies and skills such as political awareness, service orientation, self-confidence, consciousness, and achievement drive.

One of the more widely known EI models was developed by Mayer & Salovey (1997). The major tenet of this model is that emotions are a means of information that are useful in interacting in social environments and in social relationships. The structure of Mayer & Salovey's model is multi-factorial. It consists of four hierarchically arranged set of abilities which are developed from the most basic to more psychologically complex. These include:

- a) Perceiving emotion:** The first branch of the model is the ability to perceive and identify emotions in one and others, as well as in other stimuli including people's voice, stories, music, and works of art.
- b) Using emotions to facilitate thinking:** The second branch of EI model is the ability to use emotions to focus attention and think rationally and logically.
- c) Understanding emotions:** The third branch of EI model is the skill to understand emotions which involves a fair amount of language and thought to reflect the capacity to analyze emotions.
- d) Managing emotions:** The fourth branch of EI is the ability to regulate moods and emotions in oneself and in others. It is the ability to reflectively regulate emotions and emotional relationships (Brackett & Salovey, 2006; Karim & Weisz, 2010).

Goleman (1998) presented the mixed model of EI which is the mostly used model for EI. It involves a range of competencies which are broken down into skill sets and which together form the person's level of EI. The competencies are:

- a) Self-awareness:** This includes knowing our feelings and using our emotions to help making decisions, having a realistic understanding of our own abilities, and a strong sense of self-confidence.

**b) Self-management:** It involves handling our own emotions so that they do not interfere but facilitate our activities.

**c) Social-awareness:** It involves understanding others' feeling, comprehending situations from other's perspective, and making relationships with others.

**d) Social-skills:** It involves handling emotions in respect to relationships with other people, being able to interact in social situations, and using this skill to influence others.

Another famous EI model is developed by Bar-On. Bar-On (1997) presented a model that provides the theoretical basis for the EQ-I, developed to assess various aspects of this construct. According to this model, emotional-social intelligence is a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands (Bar-on, 2006). The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory is a 133-item self-report measure which consists of 15 distinct scales. The scales measure: emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, independence, empathy, interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, problem solving, reality testing, flexibility, stress tolerance, impulse control, happiness, and optimism (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998).

### **Emotional Intelligence and Language Teaching**

In the second or foreign language realm, EI helps students acquire a language more easily if they have the necessary EI skills required to deal with challenges. Krashen (1982) in his Affective Filter Hypothesis considered the role of affect in language learning process; however, it was limited in that it centered for the most part on the view that anxiety prevented input from passing through the language acquisition device.

However, EI theory is an umbrella term which covers different concepts related to students' emotional and psychological well-being. In education, it applies to the institution, teachers, and students through promoting academic success while reducing anxiety and negative feelings during the learning process. For example, if students know that anxiety can be minimized with relaxation techniques and anticipatory strategies, they may control it accordingly and effectively. In fact, anticipatory anxiety can motivate students to prepare well for an upcoming test, for example, thereby performing better (Goleman, 1995, as cited in Prieto 2010).

Within the field, a number of methodologies (e.g. suggestopedia and community language learning) attempted to take affective factors such as self-

esteem, anxiety, and some other personality traits into account. For example, Carl Roger's humanistic psychology in the Community Language Learning method has more of an affective focus than cognitive. He studied the "whole person" as physical and cognitive, but primarily as an emotional being. In his view, inherent in principles of behavior was the ability of human being to adapt and grow in the direction that enhances their existence (Brown, 2007).

A number of researchers attempted to explore the role of EI in language learning process. Rouhani (2008) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and foreign language anxiety. The results revealed that the cognitive-affective reading-based course significantly improved the participants' emotional intelligence scores and also notably decreased their foreign language anxiety.

Pishgadam (2009) studied the impact of emotional and verbal intelligences on English language learning. To this aim, the researcher selected 3 classes, two of which represented emotional and verbal intelligences, and the third one included control group. The results of the study suggested that EI has an effect in learning different language skills, especially productive ones. Analysis of data showed that EI and verbal intelligence were effective on turn-taking, amount of communication, the number of errors, and writing ability.

Homayuni (2011) aimed to examine whether students' math and English learning is affected by their personality trait. Results indicated that Extroversion, Openness to Experience, and Agreeableness as sub scales of EI correlated positively with English learning. Math learning positively correlated with Extroversion and Conscientiousness; while Neuroticism showed negative relationship with math learning.

The studies conducted so far report positive effect of EI in different aspects of language teaching process as learning another language is a highly demanding task which is affected by learners' psychological wellbeing. They are in conformity with the general claim that EI plays a critical role in education and academic success.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Writing**

Studies of the nature of writing process has been extremely affected by cognitive psychology which has provided information-processing models of how the mind works, and the problem-solving approach to writing based on those models (McLeod, 1991). Findings of the problem-solving approach provide insights about writing process and the cognitive difficulties student writers often have. For the most part, the emotional dimension of writing has been vague and undifferentiated (McLeod, 1991) or missing in contemporary composition theory (Brand, 1985). Brand (1991) states: "what is not understood is why emotions have had no place in

composition theory despite the fact that emotions are integral to social psychology, an influential progenitor of social construction” (p. 396). However, penetration of social themes into language teaching has removed the restriction. In line with cognitive dimension, some researchers have emphasized the non-cognitive aspects of writing process; writing skill is depicted as an emotional as well as a cognitive process and affective factors impact different phases of writing activity. Brand (1986) emphasized the role of emotion in L2 writing pointing that cognitive models of writing fail to characterize the psychological dynamics of humans in writing; they consider conscious information processing acts through which writers determine what they want to achieve and how they can achieve it.

Studies on the role of emotions in L2 writing has focused on the differences in lexicon level, emphasizing that there are no equivalent representations in written forms for emotionally related words. Hanaure (2010) emphasized the role of poetry in studying the emotional aspect of L2 writing task, since poetry represents thoughts, feelings, and negotiated messages of writers. His study of poetry and L2 writers is the most recent distinguished scholarship on emotion and L2 writing. He created a second language poetry corpus from over 800 poems written by L2 writers. The corpus shows that L2 writers are better able to express their emotions by using affective and emotive words in their poems.

Mills and D’Mello (2012, as cited in Mills & D’Mello, 2013) studied the role of emotions in writing process. To this aim, they asked 42 participants to write two essays on two opposing stances about abortion. Participants’ affective states (14 emotions plus neutral) were tracked at 15-second intervals via a retrospective affect judgment protocol. Participants provided self-judgments of their affective states immediately after the writing session via a retrospective affect judgment procedure (D’Mello & Graesser 2011). The results indicated that engagement, anxiety, confusion, frustration, and curiosity were the more frequent states, while the “basic” emotions (e.g., sadness, disgust) were comparatively infrequent. Participants experienced more boredom when writing essays that did not align with their positions on abortion, but were more engaged when there was alignment.

Farjami and Ghebalı (2013) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between the Iranian EFL learners’ EI and the coherence of the essays they produced. To achieve this goal, forty-five EFL students were given Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale. This EI test consists of 33 items which are in Likert scale format and are based on Salovey and Mayer’s (1997) original model of emotional intelligence. The items composing the subscales are as follows: Perception of Emotion, Managing own Emotions, Managing, Others’ Emotions, and Utilization of Emotion. Participants were asked to write an essay on a specific task. Analysis of

data revealed that there was no significant relationship between EFL learners' EI and coherence of their writing task.

Sadeghi and Farzizade (2013) studied the relationship between EI and EFL learners' writing ability. To do so, a cohort of 47 learners participated in the study. Participants were given Bar-On's EQ-I as well as a writing test. The scores of the two tests were analyzed and Pearson  $r$  was applied to data to find the correlation between scores. The results indicated no relationship between learners' total EI score and their writing score. However, there was a positive relationship between writing ability and assertiveness, a sub scale of EI.

Review of related literature on the role of EI in writing process indicates dearth of research concerning the relationship between EI and writing ability. Actually, the studies conducted reported contradictory results about significance of EI in writing task, demanding more research in different contexts in order to come to a well-established understanding of the actual role of emotions in writing. With this information, the present study attempted to study the relationship between EI and writing ability of Iranian students. For this purpose, the following research questions were set:

## **Method**

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there any relationship between EI and writing ability of Iranian female and Male students?
2. Is there any relationship between sub-skills of EI and writing ability of Iranian Female and male students?
3. Is gender a distinguishing factor in EI level possessed by individuals?

## **Method**

### **Design**

The present study applies a correlational design which is a subset of ex post facto designs. Ex post facto designs are used to examine the relationship between two variables to evaluate the strength and association existing between them. In these kinds of designs there is no cause-and-effect statement (Hatch & Farhady, 1982). Correlation coefficients describe only linear relationships, that is associations between variables, but are not appropriate to find curvilinear relationships among the variables, i.e., U-shaped distribution of scores (Dornyei, 2007).

### **Participants**

The selection of participants in this study was confined to a population of students who were given Essay Writing Course at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University. The



participants were a cohort of 40 undergraduate students who were within 19-26 age range. Twenty of them were male and twenty female, 90% of participants were Turkish speakers, 7% were Kurdish speakers, 3% were Persian speakers, and they were from different social and economic backgrounds.

## **Instruments**

### **Questionnaire**

In order to assess students' EI, we utilized Bar-On's EQ-I. The EQ-I is a self-report measure designed to measure a number of constructs related to EI. The EQ-I consists of 133 items and takes approximately 40 minutes to complete. It gives an overall EQ score as well as scores for the subscales; this questionnaire is broken down into 15 subscales of emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, independence, empathy, interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, problem solving, reality testing, flexibility, stress tolerance, impulse control, happiness, and optimism.

The items in EQ-I are in Likert scale format and consist of five statements: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) somewhat agree, 4) agree, and 5) strongly agree. It has been researched in a number of professional settings that demonstrate that the EQ-I is both reliable and valid. "Bar-On reports a series of 53 validation studies that are quite impressive in scope. The EQ-I has been used in a large, diversified North American sample (N = 3,831), 48.8 of subjects were male and 51.2% female, and the scales seem to be statistically reliable in North American and other samples worldwide" (Matthews, et al, 2002, p. 16).

In terms of reliability, several studies have been conducted to determine the internal consistency and retest reliability of the EQ-I. The Cronbach alpha coefficients are high for all subscales, ranging from a "low" of .69 (Social Responsibility) to a high of .86 (Self-Regard) with an overall average internal consistency coefficient of .76. These results indicate very good reliability, especially considering that all internal consistency procedures tend to underestimate the actual reliability (Bar-On, 2004, p. 87). It is the only EI self-report test that has been scientifically demonstrated to be both reliable and valid (Schutte et al, 1998).

EQ-I has been translated into Farsi and revised by the experts in Tehran University. The test was given to 500 students of different subjects and age range, and it has been standardized by Raheleh Samooeir in Tehran University. The reliability and validity reported are respectively 0.8 and 0.93 (Samouei, 2002). In another study, Dehshiri (2003) has reported that the Persian version has generally good internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and constructs validity. As he states,

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be .76 and the results of the factor analysis provided convincing support for the inventory hypothesized structure.

### Writing test

In order to test students' writing and find its relationship with their EI level, a writing test as final exam of Advanced Essay Writing Course at university was conducted. Participants were given two topics chosen from writing section of IELTS Exam. They were supposed to write about one of the following topics: 1) Television has had a significant influence on the culture of many societies. To what extent do you think that television has positively or negatively affected the cultural development of your society? 2) Some people believe the aim of university education is to help graduates get better jobs. Others believe there are much wider benefits of university education for both individuals and society. Discuss both views and give your opinion. Having obtained the writing samples, we rated students' writing according to criteria given in writing scale of Pölzleitner (2013, see appendix 1).

### Procedure

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' EI and their writing ability. To achieve this goal, a body of 40 students cooperated with the researcher. The study was conducted with students who were given Advanced Essay Writing Course at University, since students take writing in university exams more seriously than writing for research purposes. From three Essay Writing classes at university, one of them was randomly chosen to conduct the study with. Due to ethical issues, we informed the participants about the process of the study; however, we did not provide them with information about details and the exact objectives of it. We ensured them that the results will be kept anonymous and asked them to answer the questions sincerely to help us reach a better understanding of their learning process.

In the first phase of the study, the participants were given Bar-On's EQ-I. They were given 30 minutes time and were asked to choose the statement that better depicted them. After one month, participants took part in writing test which was held as final exam of their Advanced Essay Writing course at University. This one month interval between the two tests was due to the university schedule as there is some time interval between end of university courses and exam season. After obtaining the scores of EI, the results of the EI test were correlated with the scores

of writing test using Pearson r formula to find out whether there is any relationship between writing score and EI score.

### Data Analysis

To analyze data of the present study, we used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 and the relevant hypothesis was tested at the probability level of 0.05. We applied Pearson r to data in order to find the correlation between independent and dependent variables. And independent t-test analysis was used to compare the significance of means.

### Results

In order to answer the first research question: Is there any relationship between EI and writing ability of Iranian female and male students? Pearson r was applied to scores from EI and writing test. As Table 1 shows, there is no significant relationship between EI and writing performance of students (female/male), since the significance value for both groups is more than p-value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The significance value for females' group is (0.402) and it is (.140) in males' group.

**Table 1:** Correlation between EI and writing ability of students (female & male)

Interval by Pearson r	Female			Male	
	N	Value	Approx Sig.	Value	Approx Sig.
	40	.198	.402	.140	.557

To answer second research question: Is there any relationship between components of EI and writing ability of Iranian female and male students? Pearson r was utilized. As results in Table 2 show, correlation between sub-skills of EI and writing ability of female students is not significant since the significance value for each of the sub-skills of EI is more than p-value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). However, in male's group, there is a significantly negative relationship between impulse control and writing ability. In this sub-skill, significance value (0.03) is less than p-value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Other sub-skills do not correlate significantly with writing ability.

**Table 2:** Correlation between sub-skills of EI and writing ability of students (female & male)

Interval by Pearson r	Female			Male	
	N	Value	Approx Sig.	Value	Approx Sig.
Self-Regard	40	.177	.455	.184	.437
Emotional Self-Awareness	40	.240	.308	.174	.464
Assertiveness	40	.032	.892	.112	.639
Independence	40	.079	.740	.088	.711
Self –Actualization	40	.166	.485	.219	.354
Empathy	40	.039	.869	.018	.941
Social Responsibility	40	.126	.595	.253	.281
Interpersonal Relationship	40	.124	.601	.095	.691
Stress Tolerance	40	.106	.658	.063	.792
Impulse Control	40	.406	.076	.485	.03*
Reality Testing	40	.143	.547	.213	.367
Flexibility	40	.316	.174	.340	.143
Problem Solving	40	.059	.804	.190	.423
Optimism	40	.257	.273	.004	.985
Happiness	40	.183	.441	.192	.417

To answer the third research question: Is gender a distinguishing factor in EI level possessed by students? We obtained descriptive statistics of students' EI test. As is indicated in Table 3, mean of EI score for male students' is higher than mean of female students' EI score. Male students' mean of EI score is 324.45 and mean of female students' score is 319.65. As we see in the above table, the standard deviation of males' score is 32.007 and the standard deviation of female's score is 38.05. In order to test significance of gender in difference in EI levels possessed by students, Independent t-test analysis was applied to data (Table 4). As the results in Table 4 show, the difference between female students and male students in EI test is not statistically significant, since the significance value (.601) is more than p value ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics of EI of students (female & male)

	Female			Male		
	N	M	S.D.	N	M	S.D.
E I	20	319.65	38.05	20	324.45	32.007

**Table 4:** Independent t-test analysis for EI

Equal variances assumed	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
EI	.279	.601	.432	38	.668	4.800	11.119	27.309	17.709

Now let us look at Table 5 below, which shows descriptive statistics of sub skills of EI. Mean of scores for female students in sub skills of EI are as follows: empathy (24.95), social responsibility (24.60), interpersonal relationship (23.55), self-regard (22.70), optimism (22.35), self-actualization (21.95), problem solving (21.60), happiness (21.15), impulse control (20.85), independence (20.60), emotional self-awareness (20.10), flexibility (19.55), reality testing (19.50), stress tolerance (18.65), and assertiveness (17.55). Descriptive statistics of males' scores shows the following results for sub-skills of EI: social responsibility (24.45), happiness (24.15), optimism (23.60), empathy (23.40), self-actualization (22.85), interpersonal relationship (22.95), self-regard (22.80), independence (21.85), assertiveness (21.60), problem solving (21.35), reality testing (20.30), emotional self-awareness (20.10), stress tolerance (19.80), flexibility (18.45), and impulse control (16.80).

**Table 5:** Descriptive statistics of sub-skills of EI test of students (female & male)

Sub-skills	N	Female			Male	
		M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
Self –Regard	40	22.70	4.47	22.80	3.92	
Emotional Self –Awareness	40	20.10	4.06	20.10	3.81	
Assertiveness	40	17.55	4.36	21.60	2.87	
Independence	40	20.60	3.39	21.85	3.64	
Self –Actualization	40	21.95	3.47	22.85	2.85	
Empathy	40	24.95	3.47	23.40	3.20	
Social Responsibility	40	24.60	3.60	24.45	3.30	
Interpersonal Relationship	40	23.55	3.59	22.95	3.57	
Stress Tolerance	40	18.65	4.01	19.80	4.26	
Impulse Control	40	20.85	5.05	16.80	5.13	
Reality Testing	40	19.50	2.56	20.30	2.71	
Flexibility	40	19.55	3.53	18.45	3.77	
Problem Solving	40	21.60	4.54	21.35	3.61	
Optimism	40	22.35	3.80	23.60	2.58	
Happiness	40	21.15	4.33	24.15	4.46	

Based on the results of descriptive statistics of the sub-skills of EI, we notice that females possessed higher levels of empathy, social responsibility, flexibility, impulse control, problem solving, interpersonal relationship, and problem solving; and males demonstrated higher levels of self-regard, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization, stress tolerance, reality testing, optimism, and happiness. In order to test the significance of results, i.e. any differences observed between female and male students in sub-skills of EI, Independent t-test analysis was utilized (Table 6, below). As we see from results in Table 6, differences are significant only in assertiveness, impulse control, and happiness with significance values of .001, 0.01, and 0.03, respectively. The significance value for each of the sub skills is less than p-value ( $\alpha = 05$ ). So, it is concluded that female students possess higher level of impulse control compared to male students. And male students demonstrated higher level of assertiveness and happiness in comparison to female students. In other sub-skills the differences are not statistically significant.

**Table 6:** Independent t-test analysis for sub-skills of EI

Variables	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
<b>Emotional-Self Awareness</b>	1.603	.213	.000	38	1.000	.000	1.246	-2.522	2.522
<b>Assertiveness</b>	3.884	.056	3.470	38	.001*	4.050	1.167	-6.413	-1.687
<b>Self-Regard</b>	.021	.885	.075	38	.941	.100	1.331	-2.795	2.595
<b>Self-Actualization</b>	1.617	.211	.896	38	.376	.900	1.005	-2.934	1.134
<b>Independence</b>	.468	.498	1.122	38	.269	1.250	1.114	-3.505	1.005
<b>Empathy</b>	.008	.930	1.468	38	.150	1.550	1.056	-.588	3.688
<b>Social Responsibility</b>	.028	.869	.137	38	.892	.150	1.093	-2.062	2.362
<b>Interpersonal Relationship</b>	.451	.506	.530	38	.600	.600	1.133	-1.694	2.894
<b>Problem Solving</b>	1.205	.279	.192	38	.848	.250	1.299	-2.380	2.880
<b>Reality Testing</b>	.033	.856	.958	38	.344	.800	.835	-2.491	.891
<b>Flexibility</b>	.174	.679	.951	38	.347	1.100	1.156	-1.240	3.440
<b>Stress Tolerance</b>	.282	.598	.878	38	.385	1.150	1.310	-3.801	1.501
<b>Impulse Control</b>	.026	.874	2.515	38	.01*	4.050	1.611	.789	7.311
<b>Optimism</b>	1.974	.168	1.216	38	.231	1.250	1.028	-3.330	.830
<b>Happiness</b>	.016	.900	2.157	38	.03*	3.000	1.391	-5.816	-.184

## **Discussion**

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between EI and writing ability of female and male students and to compare them in terms of EI. The results of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between students' writing skill and their EI. Among components of EI, impulse control correlated with male students' writing ability. The correlation was negative; it means that students with higher impulse control score achieved lower writing score. This relationship was noticed in male students' scores; in female group, there was no relationship between scores of components of EI and writing scores. The results of our study contradict Pishghadam's (2009) study which demonstrated that second language learning was strongly associated with the several dimensions of EI. Contrary to the findings of this study, Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) found significant relationship between academic achievement and different dimensions of EI. The results are also in contrast with findings of Alavinia and Mollahosseini (2012) who reported a significant correlation between the use of listening meta-cognitive strategies and total emotional intelligence score. However, regarding the subscales of EI the results are to some extent similar to our results; the results of their study indicted correlation between use of listening meta-cognitive strategies and learners' scores on the subscales of intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, and general mood, with the mere exception of stress management. In the same vein, Sadeghi and Farzizadeh (2013) found significant correlation between assertiveness and writing ability of EFL learners.

Although this study failed to find a correlation between EI and writing ability of students, it should not be ignored that emotional well-being is a fundamental aspect of education. In order to systematically approach writing skill, teachers need to consider all dimensions of writing including, among many, the psychological factors that might affect writing process. Writing skill is an emotional as well as a cognitive process and affective factors impact different phases of writing activity. The process of writing requires writers set clear purpose for writing task, since this affects all the stages of writing. The capacity to make clear links in different phases of an activity and being able to recognize the purpose are psychological factors which are flourished in some individuals. Students' performance in any learning task including writing activity is affected by their emotional well-being and their skills in dealing with challenges they face in their writing process. A relaxing environment is required for students to be able to develop skills and knowledge needed to accomplish the task of writing. This is only possible if educational systems and teachers recognize the value of individuality and accept differences between individuals and help students grow as independent individuals who can set clear objectives for themselves and try to achieve them.

The results obtained also indicated that gender was not a significant factor in the EI level possessed by individuals, since difference between female students and male students was not statistically significant; however, in terms of sub-skills of EI, there were some differences between female and male students. In impulse control females scored higher than males. The M of scores for female group was 20.85, and that for male group was 16.80. Impulse control is the ability to effectively and constructively handle emotions, resist a temptation, urge, or impulse that may

harm one or others. It is the talent that male students need more practice with, since they lack the skills necessary to control their emotions. This shows that in order to work effectively with others students needed to develop higher degrees of impulse control. Teachers should understand the importance of this ability and help individuals who need more practice to develop this capacity.

Another sub-skill of EI is assertiveness. Results indicate that male students scored higher than female students in this sub-skill. The M of males' scores was 21.60, and that of females was 17.55. Assertiveness reflects individuals' expression of their genuine feelings, standing up their legitimate rights, establishing favorable interpersonal relationships, and resisting undue social influences (Yong, 2010). The lack of assertiveness on the part of females has roots in the principles of male oriented society in which men perceive themselves to be at the center of social activities, constructions, and decisions; hence, women have been deprived of their rights to be involved in making decisions in the society. As a result, women perceive themselves not to be able to express their ideas clearly, defend their rights in the society, and/or to be involved in critical issues in the society. This has also implications for the education; in the era of individualism, students should clearly define their objectives and evaluate the kind of education they receive. Although the findings failed to establish relationship between assertiveness and writing ability, teachers should appreciate the importance of students' assertiveness and help them develop confidence and skill necessary to expressing their ideas and defending their rights in the context of classroom and outside, in the society.

Another major difference between female and male students is in happiness component; male students scored higher than females in this sub-skill. The M of males' score was 24.15, while that of females was 21.15. Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions. Boys are happier in their life than girls and this increases energy and motivation for life. Although no relationship was found between students' happiness and their writing skill, it is important to teach students how to experience and lead a happy life and how to grow as strong individuals.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between EI and writing ability of Iranian female and male students and to compare them in terms of EI level. Analysis of data indicated no significant relationship between EI and writing ability of female and male students. Between components of EI, impulse control correlated with males' writing ability. The findings indicated that gender is not a significant factor in differences in students' EI. However, in sub-skills of EI, female and male students showed different capabilities; females demonstrated priority in impulse control and male students excelled in assertiveness and happiness sub-skills. The findings of the study have several implications for teaching English language in the context of Iran. In contrast to most of the traditional school systems which emphasized students' cognitive capabilities, psychologists believe that students' emotional wellbeing has an important role in



students' success level. Emotional knowledge, skills, and competencies are essential to student development of values of individuation. Individuation involves considering the fact that students enter higher education in search for their unique identity and they seek to be involved in meaningful relationships at university (Johnson, 2008).

It is important that besides language teaching, we help our students develop this important aspect of their personality to make the maximum achievement level. The sub-skills of EI in which female or male students lack the required capacities should be given priority in language classes. There is growing body of research that shows academic performance improves when social and emotional factors are dealt with explicitly (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004).

Since emotion is shaped by cognitive processing, students can learn to regulate their emotions. The ability to regulate emotions is a predictor of academic outcomes. Students who can regulate emotions are more resilient in their failures. Teachers can help students develop strategies for coping with stressful circumstances. Students can also use cognitive appraisal to cool negative emotional reactions. Because high levels of stress disrupt learning, school setting should be a secure environment and teachers should understand emotional needs of students and try to eliminate stress and fear in the classroom (Hinton, 2008).

Instructors should assist students perceive their emotions by making them aware of different external factors that affect learning. They can do it in several ways; for example, they can help students use their emotions in the classroom to promote a positive learning environment, and make students understand their emotions by helping them recognize their emotions and take responsibility for them. Instructors can also help students learn how to manage their emotions by encouraging and motivating them in the classroom (Gross, 2007). The school and class environment play an important role in developing students' emotional, social, and academic well-being and growth. Creating a positive, safe, relaxing and healthy environment, making a good and friendly relationship, developing meaningful classroom roles, and giving students choice in learning tasks are key points that should be the main concerns of the teacher.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In this study we tried to investigate the relationship between EI and writing ability of Iranian female and male students. Since one of the limitations of this study was the number of participants, it would be better to replicate the study using a large number of participants in a diverse range of universities from different geographical areas. Another possibility would be to conduct the study using other measures such as self-

reports or performance measures. The study can also be replicated considering all the skills of foreign language learning.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Pölzleitner's (2013) WRITING SCALE**

	<b>Maximum Score</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Task</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent to very Good</b>	All content points fully dealt with; wide range of ideas relevant to task Meets text type requirements including specified length Register and format consistently appropriate	30 29 28 27	10  9
<b>Good</b>	All content points dealt with; ideas relevant to task Some inconsistencies in text type requirements Register and format on the whole appropriate	26 25 24	8
<b>Average</b>	Most content points dealt with; sufficient valid ideas Several inconsistencies in text type requirements Reasonable, if not always successful, attempt made at appropriate register and format	23 22 21	7
<b>Fair to Poor</b>	Some content points dealt with; few valid ideas and/or repetitive Most content points mentioned; barely meets text type requirements Attempts at appropriate R/F are unsuccessful or inconsistent	20 19 18	6
<b>Poor to very poor</b>	Hardly any relevant content points dealt with Hardly any or no valid ideas Does not meet text type requirements	17 15 13 6-11	5-0
<b>Organization</b>	<b>and Cohesion</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent to very good</b>	Valid ideas organized effectively Variety of appropriate linking devices	20 19 19	10
<b>Good</b>	Valid ideas organized clearly Suitable linking devices	17 16	8
<b>Average</b>	Mainly valid ideas organized adequately Some simple linking devices	15 14	7
<b>Fair to poor</b>	Choppy; ideas organized inadequately Communication or purpose of writing sometimes obscured; repetitive Rare or incorrect use of linking devices	13 12	6

<b>Poor to very poor</b>	Confusing; ideas disconnected; lacks logical sequencing No appropriate linking devices	11 10-4	5-0
<b>Range of</b>	<b>Grammar and Vocabulary</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent to very Good</b>	Wide range of appropriate vocabulary and structures to express valid ideas efficiently Ambitious attempts at advanced, idiomatic language	20 19 18	10 9
<b>Good</b>	Good range of appropriate vocabulary and structures Ambitious attempts at advanced language	17 16	8
<b>Average</b>	Moderate range of structures and vocabulary	15 14	7
<b>Fair</b>	Frequent errors of vocabulary, grammar or spelling Errors may obscure communication at times	13 12	6
<b>Poor to very poor</b>	Frequent errors distract the reader Frequent errors obscure communication	11 10-4	5-0
<b>Accuracy of</b>	<b>Grammar, Vocabulary, and Spelling</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent to very good</b>	Accurate word/idiom choice; confident handling of appropriate constructions to communicate efficiently and concisely Hardly any errors	30 29 28 27	10 9
<b>Good</b>	Language is generally accurate Possibly some errors but errors do not impede communication Demonstrates mastery of basic grammatical structures	26 25 24	8
<b>Average</b>	Well-formed sentences; generally accurate expression Possibly a number of errors but errors do not impede communication	23 22 21	7
<b>Fair</b>	Frequent errors of vocabulary, grammar, or spelling Errors may obscure communication at times	20 19 18	6
<b>Poor to very poor</b>	Frequent errors distract the reader Frequent errors obscure communication	17 15 13-6	5-0