

## The relationship between spiritual intelligence and self-regulation with success of Iranian EFL university lecturers

**S. E. Elhambakhsh\***, Applied Linguistics, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, 83151-61355, Iran  
**F. Amirjalili**, English Department, Imam Javad University College, Yazd, 8915873764, Iran  
**S. Jahandoust**, TEFL, Imam Javad University College, Yazd, 8915873764, Iran

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### Abstract

Successful lecturers adapt themselves to the circumstances and comply with changes in addition to having a good psychological adjustment, interpersonal relationships and performance on achievement-related tasks. Researchers acknowledge that self-regulation (SR) and spiritual intelligence (SI) are both crucial for success in many life domains. This study investigated the relationship between SI and SR with the pedagogical success of 20 Iranian EFL university lecturers, Yazd University, Iran, whose success was assessed by 83 of their EFL learners studying for a bachelor's degree. For this purpose, a sequential mixed-method was designed. Quantitative data were gathered through spiritual intelligence questionnaire (SIQ), self-regulation questionnaire (SRQ) and characteristics of successful teachers' questionnaire. Qualitative data were gathered through classroom observations and the Pearson product correlation coefficients revealed that there was a positive and meaningful relationship between the lecturers' SI and SR with their success. Also, observation checklists revealed a high contribution of some components of SI to the teachers' pedagogical success.

**Keywords:** Spiritual intelligence, self-regulation, pedagogical success, L2 university lecturers.

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\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **S. E. Elhambakhsh**, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, 83151-61355, Iran.  
**E-mail address:** [e.elhambakhsh@gmail.com](mailto:e.elhambakhsh@gmail.com) / Tel.: +98(611) 333-0010-19.

## 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that teachers are the influential factors in educational contexts which can effectively motivate learners, produce interesting and pleasurable learning activity and increase the students' academic achievement. As Campbell (2000) indicated, one of the influential key factors in the process of language teaching and learning is a teacher. Therefore, the characteristics of successful and effective teachers have been investigated by some researchers (Schulz, 2000; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie & Minor, 2001; Koutsoulis, 2003; Velez-Rendon, 2002). The EFL teachers' teaching effectiveness is based on some different variables such as their knowledge of subject matter, content knowledge, professional development and contextual knowledge; however, some of the teachers' attributes are specifically related to their success through the pedagogical process. On the other hand, the point worth noting is that, in the current literature, issues related to human's interior or underlying potentials of mind and consciousness are partially neglected in educational contexts.

Intelligence is a concept that scientists have long been interested in researching about and have focused on its dimensions, representations and characteristics (McMahon & Rose, 2004). One of the aspects of intelligence is 'spiritual intelligence (SI)' among the other areas, for which there is not much coherent and systematic research in order to recognise and explain the features and components in comparison with the other types of intelligence (Ng & Earley, 2006). SI exceeds man's physical and cognitive relations with his surrounding environment and enters the field of intuitive and is a transcendent view of each person to life (Zohar, 2000). Therefore, a comparative analysis of the relationship between one of the components of emotional intelligence, namely SR, and SI can prove interesting with even striking results in English language teaching (ELT).

After the introduction of the theory of multiple intelligence by Gardner (1983), the concept of SI has become more visible. At the beginning of 2000, Zohar and Marshall (2001) (Oxford University Professors) who have studied physics, philosophy and religion published a book entitled 'spiritual intelligence: the ultimate intelligence' which led to the creation of a third intelligence as 'spiritual intelligence', and it was first raised in the scientific community. Researchers like Vaughan (2002) asserted that SI is one of the multiple intelligences that can grow and develop relatively independently. SI requires a different way of understanding and the integration of inner life of mind and spirit with the external life of work in the world. McShery, Draper and Kendrick (2002), in the field of SI, said that it is the underpinning beliefs and, thereby, it would have an effect on human's performance so that it can form the shape of real-life. In addition, Elkins and Cavendish (2004) believed that SI leads to humans' more meaningful life. So, one's logical and rational behaviour results from following personal beliefs in his/her life. A person's relationships with others will be a humane one and will have a positive attitude towards himself/herself and others.

On the other hand, emotional intelligence, as a wide range of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance, can also be considered as another branch of intelligence affecting the behaviour of individuals. According to Goleman's (1998) model, emotional intelligence consists of five areas: 1) Self-awareness; 2) Self-regulation; 3) Motivation; 4) Social skills; 5) Empathy.

Among all, self-regulation and self-control are crucial for success in many life domains. A university professor with a high self-control have a better psychological adjustment, better interpersonal relationships and better performance on achievement-related tasks (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004), and self-control appears to be a better predictor of academic performance than even intelligence (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006).

Specifically, SR, as the next main variable of this study, has been regarded as the ability to develop, implement and flexibly maintain planned behaviour in order to achieve one's goals. Building on the foundational work of Kanfer (1970a, 1970b), Miller and Brown formulated a seven-step model of SR (Miller & Brown, 1991). In this model, behavioural SR may falter because of the failure or deficits at any of these seven steps: 1) *Receiving* relevant information. 2) *Evaluating* the information and

comparing it to norms 3) *Triggering* change. 4) *Searching* for options. 5) *Formulating* a plan. 6) *Implementing* the plan. 7) *Assessing* the plan's effectiveness (which recycles to steps 1 and 2).

Language lecturers are one of the main sources for language input and practice. Perhaps, the most important factor affecting student achievement is related to the lecture quality or effectiveness in the classroom. Therefore, these lecturers become better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching practice; they eagerly examine what they are doing in the classroom to promote their teaching quality.

The previous research studies, in this area, have mainly focused on the relationship between SI and emotional intelligence. (Sahebalzamani, Farahani & Tabatabaee Jamarani, 2014; Ebrahimi Koohbanani, Dastjerdi, Vahidi & Ghani Far, 2012; Suan Chin, Anantharaman & Yoon Kin Tong, 2011). These studies outline that SI is associated with emotional reactions, and also several others were studied about the relationship between SI and positive thinking or the relationship between religious attitudes, self-control and spiritual health (Hassanzade, Yadollahpour, Fazeli Kebria, Yamin Feerouz & Gholiniya Ahengar, 2014; Mousavi Moghadam & Esmaeil Chegeni, 2015). The evidence presented in this section suggests that students' SI influenced positive thinking and self-control. Therefore, as much as the level of SI in students is increasing, the amount of positive thinking and self-control will grow in life too.

Based on these explanations, some studies have been done to examine the role of different types of intelligences on various aspects of language learning: trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behaviour at school (Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham, 2004); the influence of emotional and verbal intelligences on second language learning (Pishghadam, 2007); the relationship between emotional intelligence and vocabulary learning among Iranian pre-university EFL learners (Alavi & Rahimi, 2011); the relationship between emotional intelligence and general mental ability and academic performance of the students (Song, Haung, Peng, Law, Wong & Chen, 2010); the relation between academic achievement and several dimensions of emotional intelligence (Fahim & Pishghadam, 2007); the relation between cognitive ability and academic performance and trait emotional intelligence (Petrides, Furnham & Frederickson, 2004); social and academic success and the overall emotional intelligence among gifted adolescents (Woitaszewski & Aalsma, 2004); the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement (Bastian, Burns & Nettelbeck, 2005) and the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and trait emotional intelligence (Nikoopour, Amini Farsani, Tajbakhsh & Sadat Kiaee, 2012).

According to Boyatzis (2000), these types of intelligence are not fixed but they are modifiable and can be developed. Thus, policymakers, language teachers and material developers can increase their professional development if they are culturally, emotionally and socially intelligent. Besides, to the best of researchers' knowledge, little research has been found surveying the relationship between SR (one of the subcategories of emotional intelligence) and SI as two determining factors of successes of language lecturers at university levels. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between SI and SR of the lecturers and their success in EFL classes at the universities of Yazd.

This research seeks to address the following questions:

- i. What is the relationship between EFL university lecturers' levels of SR scheme and their professional success in their performances?
- ii. What is the relationship between EFL university lecturers' levels of SI scheme and their professional success in their performances?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants of the study

The participants of this study were the lecturers teaching EFL courses in Public, Azad, Payam-e-Nour Universities and etc., in Yazd. The total number of participants was 20 lecturers having MA (about 75%) and Ph.D. (about 25%) degrees in English Literature, English Translation or English Language Teaching fields of study. Both genders were observed among the participants. The teachers were aged from 30 to 45 and their ELT experience varied from 5 to 25 years.

### 2.2. Instruments

#### 2.2.1. Quantitative phase

*Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire (SIQ)*. To assess lecturers' SI, spiritual intelligence questionnaire (SIQ) was utilised. This questionnaire was constructed by Abdullah Zadeh (2000) based on the universal principles of spirituality, including 29 items and two components of transcendent self-realisation (12 items) and spiritual experiences (17 items). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, uncertain or unsure, disagree and strongly disagree) producing a score between 92 and 145. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by Abdullah Zadeh (2009) with a sample of 280 participants that was 0.89. In addition, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and the correlation of all questions was more than 0.3.

*Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ)*. This questionnaire was developed as a first attempt to assess these self-regulatory processes through self-report (Brown, Miller & Lawendowski, 1999). This questionnaire is composed of 63 items that are all answered on a 5-point Likert scale with the following scale points: strongly agree, agree, uncertain or unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. Test-retest reliability for the total SRQ score was high ( $r = 0.94$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Internal consistency of the scale was also quite high ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), consistent with the idea that its items contain much redundancy. Furthermore, the SRQ also has shown strong convergent validity with concomitant measures.

#### 2.2.2. Qualitative phase

On the other hand, based on the literature reviewed in this area, observation can be considered as one of the most reliable methods for assessing the EFL teachers' success in their classes. Therefore, observation and content analysis of the EFL lectures' syllabuses were used to see how SI might impact the lectures' practice. As a result, the success and effectiveness of the teachers were measured qualitatively.

*Classroom Observation Checklist*. To see how the EFL lecturers' spiritual views impact what they teach in the classroom, a classroom observation checklist was prepared by the researchers. The checklist included a list of statements in yes/no format. It focused on the factors of classroom rules and environment, lecturers' views of learning/teaching, student-lecturer relationship and assessment and evaluation.

### 2.3. Procedure and data analysis

A mixed method sequential explanatory design was used in this study. This type of design consisted of two different phases: A quantitative phase followed by a qualitative follow-up study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In a sequential explanatory design, a researcher first gathers and analyses quantitative data (in numeric form). Then, the qualitative data are gathered and analysed in order to better interpret, elaborate and explain the findings of the quantitative phase. In this study, the second phase of the study followed the quantitative research phase.

The quantitative phase was undertaken in various universities in Yazd in 2016–2017. First, English lecturers were informed about the purpose of the study. Then, they were asked to complete the SIQ

measure, which was administered to them and they returned the questionnaires after 20 minutes. Then, SRQ questionnaire was used to measure the intended attitude. After that, to find out the presence of any significant relationship between lecturers' SI and their SR and pedagogical success, the correlation coefficients analyses were conducted measuring the correlation between the scores obtained from the SIQ and SRQ measures (using SPSS version 23).

In the quantitative phase, a sample of 20 EFL lecturers, including those with the higher and lower SI/SR levels, were taken into consideration. For collecting data in the qualitative phase, an independent *t*-test was carried out between the SIQ/SRQ mean scores of the higher and lower SI/SR groups. The qualitative phase, including classroom observation and syllabus analysis of the EFL lecturers, provided rich information and evidence for possible effects of SI and SR on the lecturers' success. The classroom observation checklist, written in yes/no format, included a list of items to be taken into account while observing a class. It was used by the researcher i.e., the observer, to check the specific behaviours or relevant characteristics.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Inferential results

In order to come to the intended results, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to identify the relationships between the defined variables and test the research hypotheses.

First of all, in order to find out the relationship between SR and SI of the lecturers, a Pearson correlation coefficient was conducted. The findings are represented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficient on the relationship between SR and SI of the university lecturers**

		SR score	SI score
R score	Pearson correlation	1	0.502*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.024
	N	20	20
SI score	Pearson correlation	0.502*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.024	
	N	20	20

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to the numerical findings represented in Table 1, there is a significant positive relationship between gain scores in SR and SI ( $r = 0.502, p \leq 0.05$ ). It means that those who have more SI have better relations with others because they have high SR as well.

Next, another Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted to identify the relationship between gain scores in SR and the university lecturers' success. Table 2 shows the results.

**Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficient on the relationship between SR and the university lecturers' success**

		Self-regulation score	Successful score
Self-regulation score	Pearson correlation	1	0.463*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.040
	N	20	20
successful score	Pearson correlation	0.463*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.040	
	N	20	20

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis of the correlation coefficient, in Table 2, reveals that there's a positive and significant relationship between SR and lecturers' success in their career ( $r = 0.040, p \leq 0.05$ ). So as it can be well-justified, lecturers' SR affects their success. Therefore, the more self-regulated the lecturers perform in their teaching experience; they can prove to be managing more successful classes.

Finally, the last Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted to illustrate the relationship between gain scores in SI and the university lecturers' success. The results are provided in Table 3.

**Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficient on the relationship btw SI and the university lecturers' success**

		Successful score	SI score
Successful score	Pearson correlation	1	0.697**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	20	20
SI score	Pearson correlation	0.697**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	20	20

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 provides the relationship between SI and lecturers' success which is positive and significant ( $r = 0.697, p \leq 0.05$ ). Thus, the findings reveal that as the lecturers are more qualified in SI, they can perform better in their teaching process.

### 3.2. Classroom observation and syllabus analysis

The analysis of classroom observation revealed that the lecturers with a higher level of SI attempted to have a good relationship with their own students. The majority of them with higher SR interacted respectfully with their students, and they showed more capacity to make a close relationship with their students in the classroom context.

## 4. Discussions and conclusion

This study was conducted to identify the relationship between SI and SR and pedagogical success of Iranian EFL university lecturers, instructing at the universities in Yazd. According to the findings of the present study, the correlation coefficient conducted on the relation between SI and SR indicates a significant positive correlation. The same results were obtained in the study done by Sahebalzamani, Farahani and Tabatabaee Jamarani (2014). In this study, they explored the relationship between SI and emotional reactions in nurses of Tehran University Hospitals. They concluded that there is a significant relationship between SI, its components and emotional reactions (stress, anxiety and depression). Moreover, Suan Chin, Anantharaman and Yoon Kin Tong, (2011) in their study titled as *the roles of emotional intelligence and Slat the workplace* concluded that both SI and emotional intelligence complement each other and those with higher SI could have better emotional intelligence in the environment. The correlation coefficient conducted on the relation between SR and the success of the lecturers indicates a significant positive correlation. These results are in line with the ones obtained by Daniela (2014). This researcher conducted a study titled as *'The Relationship Between SR, Motivation And Performance At Secondary School Students'* which confirmed that a high level of SR involves a high degree of motivation as well as the assumption that SR moderates the relationship between performance and motivation. However, the point worth noting is that, in the present research, the relationship between SR and lecturers' success has been measured. In the same vain, the correlation coefficient conducted on the relation between SI and the success of the lecturers indicates a significant positive correlation. The same results were obtained by Roohani and Darvishi

(2015). In this study, teachers' SI was positively correlated with their pedagogical success. By the way, although the researcher has made a lot of attempts to minimise the pitfalls of this study, there are some limitations: the population of this study was limited to one city, only Yazd. Hence, it might not be the true example of EFL teachers and thus, the results cannot be generalised thoroughly. The other limitation was that the population of the research was small, only 70 EFL teachers, so in order to generalise the research studies' results to other groups, there is a need for more studies in this area.

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