Unpeeling the Onion: On the Relationship among Iranian EFL Teachers' Home-culture Attachment and Its Underlying Components with Their Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

"An understanding of language as 'open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal' encompasses the rich complexities of communication" (Shohamy, 2007, p.5). This expanded view of language makes educational experience more engaging for both teachers and students. The connection between language and culture has always been a concern of L2 teachers and educators. Knowing about the important role of culture as well as psychological aspects of language can give us a broader view of language teaching and learning. Thus, in order to obtain a better understanding of different aspects of language teaching, the present study aims to investigate the possible relationship among Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment and its underlying components, with their emotional intelligence. To this aim, two questionnaires were distributed among 80 EFL teachers, both men and women who taught at different levels in state schools in Birjand, Kermanshah and Zabol. Data gathered from two questionnaires namely: Home culture Attachment/dependency and Bar-On EI test were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regressions. Finally, results of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home culture attachment and its underlying components, with their emotional intelligence. The most important result of this study is bringing about awareness for EFL teachers, EFL syllabus designers, teacher educators and policy makers about the important factors in cultural attachment or detachment of Iranian EFL teachers in Iran that consequently affect their teaching and transfer of cultural values into their students.

Keywords: Home-Culture Attachment, Culture, Emotional Intelligence, EFL Teachers

1. Introduction

Understanding the nature of the relationship between language and culture is central to the process of learning another language. In actual language use, it is not the case that it is only the forms of language that convey meaning. It is language in its cultural context that creates meaning: creating and interpreting meaning is done within a cultural framework. In language learning classrooms, learners need to engage with the ways in which context affects what is communicated and how.

Common sense understanding a language involves not only knowledge of grammar, phonology, and lexis but also the certain features and characteristics of the culture. To communicate internationally inevitably involves communicating interculturally as well, which probably leads us to encounter factors of cultural differences. Such kinds of differences exist in every language such as the place of silence, tone of voice, appropriate topic of conversation, and expressions as speech act functions (e.g., apologies, suggestions, complaints, refusals, etc.). Bearing the points above it can be stated that a language is a part of culture and a culture is a part of a language. The two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 1994, cited in Cakir, 2006).

Salovey and Mayer coined the term of emotional intelligence (henceforth, EI) in 1990, but the term gained popularity with Goleman's book of 'Emotional Intelligence' in 1995. In the book of EI, Goleman (1995) defined EI as another way of being intelligent and stated that EI was an addition to IQ, but it was not an alternative to IQ (Titrek, 2007). Emotional intelligence refers to the capacities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others. EI can be as much powerful, and at times, more powerful than IQ in predicting success in various life challenges (Goleman, 1995). "In distinguishing successful people

within a job category or profession, EI emerges as a stronger predictor than IQ of who, for instance, will become a star, salesperson, team head, or a top-rank leader," (Goleman, 1995, p. 34).

2. Problem and Purpose

Both the learner's culture and the culture in which meaning is created or communicated have an influence on the ways in which possible meanings are understood.

This context is not a single culture as both the target language and culture and the learner's own language and culture are simultaneously presented and can be simultaneously engaged. Learning to communicate in an additional language involves developing an awareness of the ways in which culture interrelates with language whenever it is used (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003).

Taking the significant importance of culture into account, the present study has attempted to shed more light on this area of research. Although the theory of language teaching today has undergone drastic changes by acquiring a sociolinguistic aspect, a well-designed socio-cultural emphasis is still missing. As Vahdany (2005) mentions, culture "has always been touched but not hugged dearly enough: its relevance and contribution to language teaching has grown blurred and mystic." (p.93)

There is also a lot of discussion among scholars e.g., Chastain (1988), and many others who strongly advocate the idea that the culture of a foreign language must be taught alongside the language itself. This idea has been actualized and reflected in a number of commercially developed textbooks such as Interchange, Top Notch, and Headway series, to name a few. However, in the school textbooks used in Iran the role of target language culture has not

been fully considered. For instance, the authors of Iranian school textbooks have tried to use only Iranian names, ceremonies, and the like. This decision might have been made on political grounds but it anyhow impedes the teaching of the target culture.

The purpose of the present study is to work on a new dimension of culture and to investigate the possible relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment with their emotional intelligence. Also this research aims to reveal the extent to which each component of home-culture attachment (Religious attachment, Western attachment, Iranian attachment, Cultural attachment, and Artistic attachment) can predict teachers' emotional intelligence. In other words home-culture attachment as a cultural element is investigated against emotional intelligence as a psychological factor.

Students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms. English teachers can help students understand socially appropriate communication. Then the cultural knowledge of language teachers is a prerequisite to this very aim of educational system to enculturate and socialize language learners especially in an EFL context.

3. Research Questions

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment and their emotional intelligence?
2. To what extent can any of the five components of Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment predict their emotional intelligence?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

In this research two questionnaires were distributed among 80 EFL teachers, ranging from 20 to more than 40 years old, both men and women who taught at different levels in state schools in Birjand, Zabol and Kermanshah. Their degrees also ranged from B.A to Ph.D. in language teaching.

4.2. Instrumentation

Data was gathered from two questionnaires namely: home culture attachment/dependency (Pishghadam & Kamyabi, 2009) and Bar-On EI. The participants were asked to answer a questionnaire consisting of 36 items concerning "home culture attachment/dependency". The scale has been validated through Rasch measurement and its reliability has been determined to be 0.85 utilizing Cronbach alpha.

The second instrument in this study was the 'Bar-On' EI test, which is also called as the emotional quotient inventory (EQ-I). Designed by Bar-On in 1980, the test is a self-report measure of emotionally and socially intelligent behavior that provides an estimate of emotional-social intelligence (Bar-On, 1997).The adapted and translated final form of 'Bar-On' EI test was reduced into 90 items and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability index was reported as .80 (Samouei, 2002). In another study, Dehshiri (2003) reported that the Persian version has generally acceptable internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity. Results were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

4.3. Procedure

To detect the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' Home-culture Attachment and their emotional intelligence two questionnaires: Home culture Attachment/dependency and Bar-On EI test were used. Because of the large number of questions, teachers were required to answer the questionnaires in their free time at home. Although participants were not asked to write their names, some teachers were reluctant taking part in our study because they believed our research investigates into their private lives. In fact they were afraid of the possible political or social consequences. After collecting the data, they were entered into and processed with SPSS program.

5. Results

Data gathered from two questionnaires namely: Home culture Attachment/dependency and Bar-On EI were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Regarding the first hypothesis Pearson's correlation coefficient was used in order to measure the degree of relatedness of home-culture attachment and emotional intelligence. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is the statistic for comparing two sets of continuous scale data (Brown, 2005).

Concerning the second hypothesis multiple regressions was used to check if any of the components of Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment can predict their emotional intelligence. Regression analysis is used when you want to predict a continuous dependent variable from a number of independent variables if the dependent variable is dichotomous.

Research Hypothesis 1

H0 1. There is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment and their emotional intelligence.
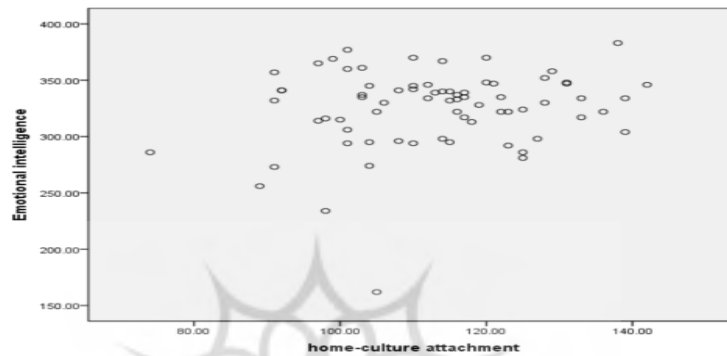
Figure1. Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Ho and Their Emotional Intelligence me-Culture Attachment

Table1. *Correlations of Iranian EFL Teachers' Home-Culture Attachment and Their Emotional Intelligence*

		Home-culture attachment	Emotional intelligence
Home-culture attachment	Pearson Correlation	1	.191
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.108
	N	72	72
Emotional intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.191	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.108	
	N	72	73

Based on correlation coefficient test, there's no significant relationship between the two variables. As Table 1 indicates there is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment and their emotional intelligence. ($p > 0.05$, $r = 0.191$, $n = 72$)

Figure 1 also shows no linear correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment and their emotional intelligence. So our first null hypothesis is confirmed because of the insignificant relationship between the two variables.

Research Hypothesis 2

H0 2. None of the five components of Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment can predict their emotional intelligence.

Multiple Regression is used to test the second null hypothesis. Emotional intelligence as the dependent variable and transitive subscales of home-culture attachment as independent variables were inserted into the regression model. So the regression model is:

$$\text{Emotional intelligence} = \text{constant} + \beta_1 \times \text{Religious attachment} + \beta_2 \text{ Western attachment} + \beta_3 \text{ Iranian attachment} + \beta_4 \text{Cultural attachment} + \beta_5 \text{Artistic attachment}$$

At first all independent variables are inserted into the model:

Table 2. *Variables Entered/Removed*[b]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Artistic, Cultural, Religious, Western, Iranian	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: Emotional intelligence

Table 3. *Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.266[a]	.071	.000	34.76974

a. Predictors: (Constant), Artistic, Cultural, Religious, Western, Iranian

R square is the coefficient of determination, in fact the total percentage of variability because of regression, on independent variable. As this value gets closer to one, the variability of dependent variables is modified by the independent variables more.

In this hypothesis the coefficient of correlation is 0.071. So this model can specify 0.071 percent of variable variance of Emotional intelligence.

Table 4. *ANOVA*[b] *(Tests the Linearity of the Relationship between Variables)*

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6076.305	5	1215.261	1.005	.422[a]
	Residual	79789.695	66	1208.935		
	Total	85866.000	71			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Artistic, Cultural, Religious, Western, Iranian

b. Dependent Variable: Emotional intelligence

Table 4 is the analysis of the variance of regression which tests the linearity of the relationship between variables. Based on the value of F and Sig, we

conclude that the hypothesis of linearity of variables is not confirmed, so this regression is not meaningful.

Table 5. *Coefficients of Independent Variables*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	243.298	38.672		6.291	.000
Religious	.070	1.132	.009	.062	.951
Western	.644	.969	.096	.665	.509
Iranian	3.300	2.228	.227	1.481	.143
Cultural	.003	1.323	.000	.002	.998
Artistic	-.885	1.332	-.088	-.664	.509
a. Dependent Variable: Emotional intelligence					

Based on the Sig. column in Table 5, coefficients of independent variables are not meaningful. In other words independent variables of the model- transitive subscales of the home-culture attachment- are not meaningful predictors of Emotional intelligence (Sig.>0.05). Then, the second null hypothesis is confirmed.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the possible relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment with emotional intelligence. Also this research aimed to predict the extent to which each component of home-culture attachment (Religious attachment, Western attachment, Iranian attachment, Cultural attachment, and Artistic attachment) can predict teachers' emotional intelligence. With regard to these goals two research questions were stated.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to investigate the first question. As mentioned above there is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment and their emotional intelligence. ($p > 0.05$, $r = 0.191$, $n = 72$)

Salovey and Meyer (1977) presented a detailed account of EQ and the importance of EQ in teacher training programs regarding that "emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth". (p.43)

ELT teachers should be able to navigate their own emotions and feelings as well as their students' for the sake of success in ELT teaching/learning. Besides, they can guide their students' potential feelings and emotions acquire/develop necessary language skills to be able to succeed in the acquisition of foreign language skills.

English language teachers can play an important role in shaping learners' national and cultural identities. Having observed that Iranian English language teachers showed positive attitudes towards American culture and tried to act like native speakers, Pishghadam (2011) concluded that English language teachers, if not well-trained enough, can transfer their own home culture to the class. It can be clearly understood that while culture and emotional intelligence are not significantly correlated but they play a complementary role for the final goal of language teaching/learning.

Regarding the second question multiple regression was used to find out the extent to which each of the five components of Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment can predict their emotional intelligence.

Sato (2001) in his dissertation examines a fundamental but poorly understood aspect of emotional intelligence, which is potential cultural-relativity. He believes significant differences in emotional intelligence test scores have been found between different cultural groups. He found that horizontal individualistic values may help account for the higher EI scores of European-North Americans, but the precise source of the lower EI scores of East Asians remained elusive. Overall, a significant challenge of conducting research and advancing knowledge on the relation between culture and EI is the lack of conceptual clarity of these variables.

Home-culture attachment questionnaire consists of five underlying factors. The first one is religious attachment which is associated with frequent perceptions of being religious, like: going to the mosque, keeping fast, taking part in religious ceremonies, wearing black clothes in religious mourning ceremonies, etc. The items check whether individuals believe in holding religious rites or not. As Table 5 shows coefficient of religious attachment as an independent variable is not a meaningful predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence. So the sacred beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers, and their belief in Islamic ideological concepts can't be a good predictor of their emotional intelligence.

The second underlying factor is Western attachment. It measures an individual's willing s towards western type of clothing or appearance, rejection of Iranian traditions, appreciation of marriage with an English or American, learners' orientation towards different aspects of western culture including western music, food, language, and names, and superiority of western culture.

Based on Table 5 coefficient of Western attachment as an independent variable is not a meaningful predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence. In other words, changes in Western attachment are not associated

with changes in EFL teachers' emotional intelligence, and increase or decrease in western thoughts of Iranian EFL teachers cannot predict their emotional intelligence variability.

The third factor is Iranian attachment which measures learners' appreciation for the historical heritage of Iran, learner's tendency towards Iranian customs and national tradition, namely the New Year, and their appreciation of classical Iranian poets and Persian literature. Again based on statistics this factor can't be a good predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence so changes in Iranian attachment of EFL teachers is not concerned with the change in their emotional intelligence. So for example we can't propose that based on attachment of EFL teachers to Iranian culture they are necessarily more emotionally intelligent.

The forth factor, cultural attachment measures Iranian EFL teachers' cultural attachment. It measure learners' attachment to different dimensions of traditional culture including traditional architecture, music, restaurants, costumes, customs, and dialects. Moreover, their familiarity with Persian literature as an important part of culture is checked through asking about Iranian and Western writers. Statistics in Table 5 show no significant relationship so the fourth component of Iranian EFL teachers' home-culture attachment can't be a good predictor of their emotional intelligence. In other words, changes in cultural attachment are not associated with changes in EFL teachers' emotional intelligence.

The last underlying factor is artistic attachment which measures the extent to which western films are attractive and meaningful to learners and also their willing for reading western stories over Persian ones. Based on Table 5 coefficient of artistic attachment as an independent variable is not a meaningful predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence.

Based on researcher's conclusion, the five subscales of home-culture attachment are not good predictors of Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence. So they can't predict EFL teachers' own emotional and social behaviors as well as their control over their contribution to other people. For example, we can't state that a teacher who has a high degree of attachment to Iranian culture or religious beliefs can surely affect his/her students emotions and social behaviors. So this conclusion can be an emphasis on the fact that a target language culture is a necessity of language teaching for language teachers. And language teacher trainers have to allow language teaching student to increase their knowledge of the target culture in terms of people's way of life, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and how these manifest themselves or are couched in linguistic categories and forms. Actually foreign language teachers should be foreign culture teachers, having the ability to experience and analyze both the home and target cultures.

7. Implications of the Study

The results of the present study can be taken by policy makers, curriculum designers, educational organizations, administrators, course developers and ELT teachers in order to train teachers to convey cultural meaning and introduce students to a kind of learning which challenges and modifies their perspective on the world and their cultural identity as members of a given social and national group. The teaching of culture should become an integral part of foreign language instruction and 'Culture should be our message to students and language our medium' (Peck, 1998). The most significant point is just about the balance that has to be kept by policy makers and curriculum designers in designing courses and syllables for new teachers about target/home culture.

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