

اختبار مستوى كفاءة متعلم اللغة الإنكليزية بناء على الاستبيان القصير لقياس الذكاء العاطفي كسمة: دراسة حالة من سورية

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الملخص:

تم تطوير مصطلح الذكاء العاطفي عبر الزمن للدلالة على قدرة الفرد على فهم مشاعره الشخصية ومشاعر من حوله. الذكاء العاطفي كسمة هو مصطلح وضع من قبل بيترابيدس Petrides لإعادة صياغة الدراسات السابقة حول هذا الموضوع وتحويلها لمقاييس يمكن استخدامه عن طريق الاستبيانات. يستخدم هذا البحث الاستبيان القصير لقياس الذكاء العاطفي كسمة TEIQue-SF وهو أقصر من الاستبيان الكامل إذ يتكون من 30 سؤال وأربعة عوامل ويمكن إكماله في خمس دقائق. الهدف من البحث هو دراسة الارتباط الإحصائي ما بين العوامل الأربع للاستبيان (الرفاه - التحكم بالذات - العاطفية - التواصل الاجتماعي) وكفاءة متعلم اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية في سورية. تشكلت العينة من 283 طالباً (75 ذكور و 208 إناث). كان الطلاب من مستويات كفاءة مختلفة بدءاً بمستوى A1 وانتهاءً بمستوى B2 حسب اختبار تحديد مستوى اعتماداً على الإطار المرجعي الأوروبي للغات. تم جمع البيانات من مخبر لغوي خاص في دمشق- سورية. وقد تبين وجود ارتباط إحصائي إيجابي ضعيف بين كفاءة الطالب وعاملين وهما التحكم بالذات والتواصل الاجتماعي. كما كان للنتيجة العامة ارتباط إحصائي إيجابي ضعيف مع الكفاءة.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء العاطفي كسمة، تعليم اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية، كفاءة.

Examining EFL Learners' Proficiency Level Based on TEIQue-SF: A Case Study from Syria

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Abstract:

Emotional Intelligence, a term developed over time to indicate one's ability to understand their personal emotions and the emotions of others around them. Trait Emotional Intelligence is a term coined by Petrides in order to redefine the works of literature on the topic and put them together into a scale that could be examined through questionnaires. This study implemented the TEIQue-SF which is a shorter form of the full questionnaire itself with 30 items, 4 factors and a completion time of around 5 minutes. The goal was to investigate the correlation between the 4 factors that the questionnaire offers (well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability) and the proficiency level of TEFL students in Syria. The study included 283 participants (75 males and 208 females). The participants are from various proficiency levels ranging from A1 to B2 according to CEFR and the results of a placement test conducted prior to the questionnaire. The data was collected from one private language center in Damascus- Syria. The research concluded that there is a weak positive relation between learners' proficiency level and two of the factors ($r=.143$, $sig=.017$ for self-control and $r=.147$, $sig=.013$ for sociability). Also, the global score had an ($r=.154$, $sig=.010$). This indicates that there is a weak statistical correlation between TEFL learners' language proficiency. Recommendations have been suggested for further research and practical aspects.

Keywords: Trait Emotional Intelligence, TEFL, Proficiency.

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1. Introduction:

There is a large set of factors that could affect a learner's approach towards foreign language in the literature such as Krashen's Hypotheses (1986), Horwitz's, Horwitz's, & Cope's the 'Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale' (1986), Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983), Salovey's and Mayer's 'Emotional Intelligence' (1990) and finally the work of Petrides (2001) on 'Trait Emotional Intelligence'. Tracing these works it could be of immense importance to note that learners' emotions are vital to the process. Krashen (1986) suggested a "Monitor Model" with its five hypotheses: acquisition-learning, the monitor, the input, the natural order, and the affective filter. When faced with high anxiety or lack of motivation, the language acquisition process would technically become less "affective" and vice versa. The level of anxiety could be a very crucial point that the learning environment should aim at eliminating. In order to achieve a comforting anxiety-free setting so that the process of acquisition commences at ease. This concept was a major interest of Horwitz et al. (1986) as they developed FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) which has restated the importance of the language classroom environment. Add to that, it also shed light on another factor that highlights learners' reliability on the aspects of feelings. Another important aspect to be introduced is the work of Gardner (1983) that paved the way for other dimensions of intelligence to be explored.

In retrospect, it could be assumed that the work itself presented essential parameters to widen the horizons of inter-disciplinary research. For the core interest of this paper, it would be worth to mention both interpersonal/intrapersonal intelligences. The former addresses one's ability to understand and interact with others while the latter deals with the same concept but of one's self. Gardner's view of individuals expands the concepts of Krashen and Horwitz et al. in the way that Gardner presented one's emotions or the surroundings as a comprehensible item that one could speculate about and that would vary in capacity between individuals. The aforementioned capacity could be deemed as a sort of "intelligence" yet at that point it was not recognized as one. At a later point in time Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced the term 'Emotional Intelligence'¹ a groundbreaking paper at the time. By introducing EI as one's ability to understand feelings and emotions as well as monitor them the concept quickly grew as one of the research trends in various fields. Petrides in his (2001) work introduced 'Trait Emotional Intelligence', a term that is sought to be a coherent approach to the concept of what EI is. Trait Emotional Intelligence is the main focus of this research paper.

All the above-mentioned topics have been excessively researched like: Costa and Faria (2015), Perera and DiGiacomo (2013), Perera (2015), Qualter and Gardner (2007), Qualter, Gardner, Pope, Hutchinson and Whiteley (2011), Sanchez-Ruiz, Mavroveli and Poullis (2012), Chahkandi and Rasekh (2017), Oz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz (2015), Tabrizi and Esmaeili (2016), Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), Satio, Dawaele, Abe and In'ami (2018), Saud (2019), Alrefaai and Shah (2022), and Alqasham (2022). Yet, this paper aims at implementing a certain tool which is the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue). However, the TEIQue-SF will be used which is a shorter form of the full questionnaire itself with 30 items, and 4 factors. The main goal is to investigate the relation between Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and language learning proficiency. The study included 283 participants (75 males and 208 females). The participants are from various proficiency levels ranging from A1 to B1 according to CEFR as a result of a placement test conducted prior to the questionnaire. This paper could be valuable for the sample it investigates. Namely, adult language learners from Syria as publications that include this type of sample could be considered scarce. The limitations could be summarized in the size of the sample itself; 283 participants cannot be sufficient to generalize the findings of this research. Also, the way language proficiency is addressed is a holistic scale of language ability without looking into a specific productive (writing and speaking) or receptive (listening and reading) skills. This study is quantitative, making use of the data from the questionnaire which was analyzed twice; once by the data calculator available on the official TEIQue website since it is available free of charge for research purposes, and by the researcher by utilizing SPSS to verify the accuracy of the data presented and to calculate other

¹ EI henceforth

statistical factors such as Cronbach's alpha. The syntax needed to analyze the data will be included in the appendix and the steps of dealing with the questionnaire items will be discussed in the results section.

2. Literature Review:

In any classroom settings and not just TEFL per se, the learning environment comprises of two main human components: instructors and learners. Thus, the importance of looking into the details of both is indispensable. One of the main interests of research would be investigating the personal differences between instructors or learners. This is done in order to know how it would affect the language teaching environment, in the case of both, or how to cater for personal differences in the case of the latter. Aspects of personality are of huge effect when personal differences are to be discussed. A part of those aspects could be Intelligence Quotient (IQ) or in a much modern approach towards Intelligence would be that of Gardner's (1983) as he highlighted various types of the concept of intelligence. In order to set a definition for what is Emotional Intelligence (EI) the work of Salovey and Mayer (1989) would be the most beneficial since they are accredited for coining the term: "We define emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." (Salovey and Mayer 1989, p.189). This work catalyzed a large body of research in order to investigate what impact this EI might hold in the field of language teaching and many other fields. Oz et al. (2015) investigated the relation between English as a foreign language learners' attitude towards language and their EI in Turkey. The sample included 159 adult learners from the university of Ankara. The researchers used a quantitative method to collect the data utilizing Schutte's et al's (2009) Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) which is a 33-item/5-point questionnaire that measures "perception of emotions, managing emotions in the self, social skills or managing others' emotions, and utilizing emotions" Schutte et al (2009, 121) the second stage was using Attitude towards Foreign Language scale (A-FLL) by Vandewaetere & Desmet (2009) a 31-item/7-point questionnaire. The research concluded that there is a correlation between high EI displayed by learners and their attitude towards foreign language. It also suggested that EI could be used as a predictor for (A-FLL) and recommended that instructors should be catering for individual differences for the sake of enhancing foreign language learning experience. Tabrizi & Esmaeili (2016) investigated the relation between EFL learners' EI and reading comprehension. The sample was 121 female students in a high school in Tabriz. The researchers utilized a number of tools: Preliminary English Test (PET), a four-skill language test that tests learners' ability in language and 3 questionnaires to test (EI, Impulsiveness and reflective thinking). Later, the results of the reading section of PET were compared to the questionnaires to investigate possible relations. The researchers concluded that there is a positive connection between learners' EI and the reading comprehension abilities. Saud (2019) investigated EI and Saudi learners' academic performance. The sample consisted of 80 undergraduate students in the university of King Khalid, where the Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) was used as a mean to collect data, Schutte et al. (2009). The study concluded that higher achieving students scored a higher level of EI. Costa & Faria (2014) took a longitudinal approach in investigating the effect of EI on secondary school learners' GPAs. The sample included 380 students. This study used the Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (ESCIQ) which is developed based on the work of Salovey & Mayers (1997) and Vocabulary of Emotions Test (VET). Their research concluded that there is a positive and significant impact of EI over school students' achievement. Yet, the weak to moderate effect might suggest the inability of EI to be a predictive tool.

In a later period of time, Petrides & Furnham (2001) presented a new dimension of EI which is to treat EI as a trait. The justification behind introducing this term is:

Attempts to measure EI as a cognitive ability must resolve a difficult problem, i.e., determining objectively correct responses to test items. The fact that it is particularly difficult to apply truly veridical criteria in scoring EI tasks [...] prompted many researchers to investigate the construct as a constellation of disposition and self-perceived abilities rather than as a class of cognitive-emotional abilities. Thus, at the time of writing, most of EI research papers in peer reviewed journals concerned aspects of what we have defined as 'trait EI' [...]

clearly then the present paper does not propose a completely novel approach to EI but rather tries to systemize and evaluate an approach that largely exists already. (Petrides & Furnham 2001, p.427).

In other words, the work of Petrides & Furnham aims at restructuring existing models in order to connect and set them as a unified scale that could be used in research. The work on the TEIQue started in an earlier work of Petrides (2001) as a PhD thesis. The questionnaire is made out of 153 items, 15 facets and 4 factors that can eventually sum up a global score. The TEIQue could be seen as a valuable tool for 3 reasons according to Petrides & Mavroveli (2020): "first, it offers a direct route to the underlying theory of trait emotional intelligence; second, it provides comprehensive coverage of the trait EI sampling domain; and third, it has superior predictive validity..." (Petrides & Mavroveli 2020, p.26) This questionnaire was developed into 9 different variations that approach the same concept differently either decreasing its length e.g. TEIQue-SF, a shorter variation of the original questionnaire. Another variation is TEIQue-CF which is meant to be used with age range 8-12. All the variations are listed in the table below:

**Table 1 variations of TEIQue questionnaire obtained from
(<https://psychometriclab.com/obtaining-the-teique/>)**

TEIQue	153 items, 15 facets, 4 factors, global trait EI score. Completion time: 25 min.
TEIQue-SF	30 items, 4 factors, global trait EI score. Completion time: 5 min.
TEIQue-AF	153 items, 15 facets, 4 factors, global trait EI score for ages 13-17. Completion time: 25 min.
TEIQue-ASF	30 items, 4 factors, global trait EI score for ages 12-17. Completion time: 10 min
TEIQue 360°	153 items, 15 facets, 4 factors, global trait EI. This form is for peer or 360 degree ratings on the 153 items of the TEIQue. Completion time: 20 min
TEIQue 360°-SF	30 items, 4 factors, global trait EI. This form is for peer or 360 degree ratings on the 30 items of the TEIQue-SF
TEIQue 360°-FB	15 items, 4 factors, global trait EI. This form is for peer or 360 degree ratings on the 15 facets of the TEIQue.
TEIQue-CF	75 items, 9 facets, global trait EI score. Recommended age range 8-12 years. Completion time: 25 min.
TEIQue-CSF	36 items, global trait EI score. Recommended age range 8-12 years. Completion time: 10-15 min.

A large number of papers that use TEIQue in various fields are listed on the official website of London Psychometric Lab Ltd and the list comprises of around 100 studies that deploy EI in various fields mostly: business, psychology, medicine and a few of them discussed education related topics. Thus, the works that could relate to the topic of this paper will be reviewed. Mavroveli & Sanchez-Ruiz (2011) investigated the effect of trait emotional intelligence (TEI) and school achievement in 3 modules (reading, writing and math) alongside 'peer-rated behavior, social competence and self-reported bullying behaviors. The sample of the study consisted of 565 children. Thus, the researchers used the TEIQue-CF questionnaire which is tailored for the sample of their study. The study resulted that EI has no direct relation to learners' IQ especially when attempting to correlate it with the scores of (math, reading and writing). However, young learners with higher TEI scored better at SAT exams. On the other hand, learners with higher TEI were observed to be 'kind' and having better 'leadership' skills. The study of Fiorilli et al. (2020) investigated the relation between TEI and school burnout. The sample of their research consisted of (1235) high school students between the ages of 13 and 17. This study used the TEIQue-ASF questionnaire which is the short TEIQue questionnaire addressed to children aged 12 to 17. The analysis was made in terms of correlations. The study concluded that TEI is positively correlated with resilience and negatively correlated with burnout.

TEI could be a tool that might assist in the field of foreign language teaching for several reasons: it could assist instructors cater for personal differences, understand their learners' capabilities, and it might be used as an

indicator of a set of behaviors. Yet, it could be noted that there is a few number of research papers that discuss TEI in TEFL, this is the gap that this paper is trying to investigate. This paper is similar to those discussed previously in various ways: first, most of the papers used a quantitative approach; questionnaires, statistical analysis and correlations to test their hypotheses. Second, the tool for data collection is a TEIQue questionnaire. Yet, this study could be different in the following ways: first, this study takes place in a TEFL setting, particularly Damascus, Syria. Thus, the sample at hand is scarcely present in the literature of this topic. Second, this study is looking into learners' holistic language performance and not a specific skill per se. What distinguishes this piece of work is also what sets its limitations.

2.1 Research Question:

After a thorough reading of the literature, the following research question was formulated:
To what extent could TEIQue-SF scores correlate with TEFL learners' language proficiency level?

2.2 Research Hypotheses:

The higher TEIQue-SF factors' score, the higher the learners' proficiency level is.

3. Research Methodology:

To investigate the research question and test the hypothesis, this research adopted a quantitative approach and the conclusions were based on the data obtained from the tool that was implemented. The tool used was a variation of the TEIQue questionnaire which is available online to be downloaded and used for research purposes. It is prepared by London Psychometric Laboratory Ltd (<https://psychometriclab.com/>) based on the work of Petrides and it is available in 9 different variations on their website. For the sake of this paper, the TEIQue-SF questionnaire was used because it suits the age of the sample of the study and it was adjusted to test the same aspects of the TEIQue questionnaire. A week prior to the questionnaire, participants took a language proficiency placement test: the questionnaire set by Cambridge Interchange 5th ed. The participation in the study was voluntary. Thus, there were no consent issues to be addressed. The data collected was organized into an Excel file which was later used to export data to two resources: the TEIQue website to calculate results using their free-of-charge service(<https://psychometriclab.com/scoring-the-teique/>) and to SPSS. After being imported to SPSS some items needed to be reversed before analyzing the data (item No.2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 22, 25, 26, and 28) are reverse-coded. Then, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. Alongside running the syntax needed to calculate the results which would show in 5 factors (global score, well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability). The next step was to run Pearson correlation analysis between the scores of the 5 factors and the scores of the learners' proficiency using SPSS. The learners' proficiency levels were number coded according to the CEFR and as divided by the placement test. The study included 283 participants (75 males and 208 females). The participants are from various proficiency levels ranging from A1 to B1 according to CEFR as a result of a placement test conducted prior to the questionnaire. The data was collected from the same language center in Damascus, Syria and on the same day. There was no need to collect personal information nor sensitive demographic data from the participants. Thus, privacy was not an issue to be addressed. In terms of reliability and validity, Maw (2017) conducted a study to investigate the construction of TEIQue-SF specifically and the researcher concluded that after distributing the questionnaire for 226 university teachers, calculating Chi-square to find significance levels and looking into the internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha), the questionnaire reliability is high enough to be used as a tool.

4. Results and discussion:

The reliability test results were calculated after reverse-coding the questionnaire elements and it showed the following results:

Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics – prepared by the researcher using SPSS

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.869	30

Cronbach's Alpha value is discussed in comparison to the value of 1, in this case the result of 0.869 indicates a relatively high internal consistency. In relation to the questionnaire results, the Pearson Correlation was calculated in relation to learners' proficiency level and the results were as follows:

Table 3 Pearson correlation results- prepared by the researcher using SPSS

Correlations ²								
		LEVEL	Global score	Well-being	Self-Control	Emotionality	Sociability	
LEVEL	Pearson Correlation	1	.154**	0.116	.143*	0.102	.147*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.010	0.053	0.017	0.088	0.013	
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	
Global score	Pearson Correlation	.154**	1	.765**	.667**	.747**	.797**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	
Well-being	Pearson Correlation	0.116	.765**	1	.358**	.450**	.532**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.053	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	
Self-Control	Pearson Correlation	.143*	.667**	.358**	1	.256**	.369**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.017	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	
Emotionality	Pearson Correlation	0.102	.747**	.450**	.256**	1	.558**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	
Sociability	Pearson Correlation	.147*	.797**	.532**	.369**	.558**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282	

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

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

Pearson correlation is a value that is usually set in a range between -1 to 1 negative numbers indicating negative correlation and vice versa. Looking at the correlation between the TEIQue-SF questionnaire global score and learners' proficiency level it could be seen that $r=.154$ and $sig=.010$ meaning that there is a weak positive significant correlation between the variables. Whereas by looking at the well-being factor and how it correlates with proficiency $r=.116$ and $sig=.053$ this could indicate a weak positive correlation that is statistically insignificant because $sig = <.05$. The second factor which is self-control scored $r=.143$ and $sig=.017$. The results refer to a statistically significant weak positive correlation between self-control and learners' proficiency. The third factor, emotionality, scored $r=.102$ and $sig=.088$ indicating a weak positive statistically insignificant due to the fact that $sig = <.05$, and finally the fourth factor which is sociability with $r=.147$ and $sig=.013$ meaning that there is a weak positive correlation that is statistically significant.

Looking into the previous results and in order to answer the research question: (to what extent could TEIQue-SF scores correlate with TEFL learners' language proficiency level?) it could be noted that not all the four

² All the correlations that need to be investigated in this study are italicized for making the table easier to navigate.

factors had a significant correlation with learners' proficiency level namely:(well-being $r=.116$, $sig=.053$ and emotionality $r=.102$, $sig=.088$) whereas the other two factors had had a weak positive statistically significant relation namely (self-control $r=.143$, $sig=.017$ and sociability $r=.147$, $sig=.013$). Even though the results could be considered significant yet the correlation is weakly positive. However, in the context of this study it could be assumed that the factors of self-control and sociability could reflect TEFL learners' language proficiency in the sample analyzed. This indicates that the higher those two factors are the higher the learners' level is expected to be. The research hypothesis will be accepted and the null will be rejected for the fact that the global score $r=.154$ and $sig=.010$ a weak positive significant relation that might indicate that the hypothesis was true; the higher the TEI score the higher the learner's proficiency is. These results could confirm the results of Mavroveli & Sanchez-Ruiz (2011) and Fiorilli et al. (2020), keeping in mind the differences between the studies. Although some correlations were established, there are some factors that should be taken into consideration: first, the sample size is not sufficient to generalize the results of this study. Second, the study investigated language proficiency as a holistic scale represented by a placement test's score. Third, the sample was collected from adult Syrian TEFL learners from one language center thus, other age groups/ centers were not included in this study.

Recommendations:

This section will encompass both future research recommendations based on the paper's results and practical recommendations that could be implemented in TEFL settings to make optimal use of the paper's results. It could be highly advised that future research would look into the following aspects:

- 1- Using a larger sample to research the same topic in order to establish more solid correlations that could be generalized.
- 2- Conducting a longitudinal study in the same context to check the consistency of the hypothesis suggested.
- 3- Including demographic factors that were not taken into consideration in this paper yet mentioned in literature as a variable.
- 4- Approaching language proficiency in a different manner, using international standardized tests could be valuable.
- 5- Incorporating different tools and triangulate data resources in order to get a holistic understanding of TEIQue use in TEFL.

As for instructors and in-duty teachers the following practical recommendations could be useful:

- 1- Conducting a TEIQue-SF questionnaire in language classes could help understand those who need catering at some learning incidents like coping with test anxiety, public speaking problems etc.
- 2- Determining TEFL learners' TEI levels might aid instructors in creating learner-friendly environment, which could keep their emotional needs into consideration, increasing the chance of keeping a positive impact for the classroom experience. Thus, motivating students to be present and engaged.

Conclusion:

This research mainly focused on Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and its correlation to TEFL language proficiency. The research used a quantitative approach to investigate the research question. It used the TEIQue-SF questionnaire to collect data. The sample was 283 participants. SPSS and the free questionnaire calculator offered by London Psychometric Lab Ltd were used to analyze the results of the questionnaire and establish correlations. The analysis of the results showed that not all the four factors had a significant correlation with learners' proficiency level namely:(well-being $r=.116$, $sig=.053$ and emotionality $r=.102$, $sig=.088$) whereas the other two factors had had a weak positive statistically significant relation namely (self-control $r=.143$, $sig=.017$ and sociability $r=.147$, $sig=.013$). A number of research and practical recommendations were made for further research.

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