# L2 Learners' Affect and Pragmatic Performance: A Focus on Emotional Intelligence and Gender Dimensions

*Masoud Rahimi Domakani¹, Azizullah Mirzaei², & Shahla Zeraatpisheh³*

¹Shahrekord University, rahimi@lit.sku.ac.ir
²Corresponding author, Shahrekord University, mirzaei-a@lit.sku.ac.ir
³Shahrekord University, shahlazeraatpisheh@ymail.com

## Abstract

Research on L2 learners' success at development and appropriate use of pragmatic ability and knowledge has mostly approached the issue from a cognitive or social perspective, and less attention has been devoted to the problem from the equally important emotional or individual-psychological lenses. This study sought to explore, first, the interplay between Iranian advanced EFL learners' pragmatic performance and the different dimensions of their emotional intelligence (EI) and, second, the possible influence of gender on this association. A sample of 80 (32 males and 48 females) advanced M.A. TEFL students from 2 Iranian universities constituted the participants of the study. The Bar-On's EQ-i measure of EI and Liu's (2006) Test of Pragmatic Performance were administered to the participants. Results of the descriptive statistics indicated that the participants performed better in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and adaptability skills consecutively. Pearson product-moment correlational results revealed that there were 3 medium positive correlations between the participants' pragmatic performance and their intrapersonal, interpersonal, and EI dimensions, as well as 2 small positive correlations between the participants' pragmatic performance and their adaptability and stress management abilities. Results also indicated that the females with more EI and intrapersonal skills performed better on the pragmatics test than the males. Findings suggest that pragmatic development and performance are intricately linked to learner affect, subjectivity, and emotions, and that this interplay, in turn, is not immune to gender influence. Theoretical and pedagogical implications are discussed

## 1. Introduction

For quite a long time, the main goal of teaching and learning L2s was improving grammatical and lexical accuracy. Since Hymesian proposal of communicative competence in the early 1970s, pragmatic (rather than linguistic) competence has increasingly received momentum in promoting L2 learners' communicative ability (Bachman, 1995). As a fundamental part of individuals' communicative competence (Kasper, 1997), pragmatic competence is defined as a

kind of knowledge enabling people to apply their present linguistic knowledge appropriately in a sociocultural context (Rose, 1999). The development of pragmatic competence is, thus, highly important to L2 learners, and its paucity leads to misunderstanding or miscommunication (Allami & Naeimi, 2011). This perceived importance of developing pragmatic ability to appropriately use an L2 has made pragmatic competence a main theme of inquiry in recent decades (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Haddadi Koohsar & Gobary Bonab, 2011; Holmes, 1989; Trosberg, 1987).

L2 research during the last century mostly attempted to relate L2 learning to cognitive and social variables so as to specify ability, predict performance, and develop L2 learning and teaching (Ehrman, 2001; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Reiff, 1992). Less attention, however, was given to the L2 learner's affective (or emotional) factors in association with individual differences (e.g., gender). Over the years, however, emotional facets of cognition and learning have been the center of attention for different educational circles. In L2 education, Oxford (1990) views affective variable as the main elements of the L2 learning process, attention to which assists L2 learners manage and heighten their emotions and motivation. As to emotions, Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence (EI) as an affective cognitive ability through which a person can perceive, use, and regulate emotions. Many researchers (e.g., Finnegan, 1998; Low & Nelson, 2004; Parker, Summerfelt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004) emphasize the role of EI as a significant predictor of academic success and as an influential factor in L2 learning. As Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) argue, promotion of EI can considerably develop communication between or among individuals. Consequently, pragmatic competence, which is one of the fundamental dimensions of communication, can hypothetically be associated well with EI. Also, L2 learners' gender in specific sociocultural milieus like Iran seems to be at issue defining the association between EI and L2 pragmatics. Therefore, exploring how gender differences relate to L2 learners' EI and pragmatic performance is an important area of research. Some studies (e.g., Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Mayer, 2001; Mirzaei & Seyyed Rezaei, 2012; Pishghadam, 2007) deal with the role of pragmatic competence or EI in educational settings. However, further research is needed to investigate the relationship between EI components and pragmatic performance and, in turn, how gender modifies this association.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Research on EI has shown that EL plays a substantial role in successful L2 learning development and performance (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Wenden, 1991). Viewing EI as a kind of mixed model, Bar-On (1997) introduced it as merging cognitive abilities with personality traits influencing individuals' success (Ciarrochi & Mayer, 2007). He defined it as a series of

noncognitive skills, capacities, and abilities raising an individual's power in coping with social problems. The Bar-On's Emotion Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), as a self-report measure of EI, consisted of five broad areas of skills and some subcategories within each group: intrapersonal abilities (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, independence), interpersonal skills (interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, empathy), adaptability (problem solving, reality testing, flexibility), stress management (stress tolerance, impulse control), and general mood (happiness, optimism). Bar-On (2002) generally believes that EI, as a means of influencing individual's general intelligence, leads to great success in life.

Intrapersonal skill refers to processing an exact picture of oneself and being aware of the inner moods and desires (Morgan & Fonseca, 2004). According to Deutschendorf (2009), knowledge of the inner states enables people to deal with others and the surroundings properly. Shahmohamadi and Hasanzadeh (2011) found a significant role for the intrapersonal skill in promoting L2 learning, and it also appeared to be a good predictor of L2 achievement. Intrapersonal skill has many dimensions, each of which constitutes the inner world of EI (Deutschendorf). The first dimension is emotional self-awareness which informs individuals from their thought, emotions, and stimulations. Assertiveness, as the second dimension of intrapersonal skill, enables people to assert the emotions, thoughts, and beliefs (Bar-On, 1997). Self-regard is the next subscale of intrapersonal skill which enables a person to consider both abilities and disabilities, to see oneself as what he or she is in the real world, and to regard both positive and negative points (Bar-On, 1997). The fourth subcategory of intrapersonal skill is self-actualization which paves the way for a person to reach to the feasible desires through activating one's potentiality (Bar-On, 1997). The last subscale of intrapersonal skill is independence: Independent people consult others, but they rely on their own for the final decision (Bar-On, 1997). They are not under the pressure of society; rather, they control their forces and direct them in the right way (Sternberg, 2003).

As Bar-On (1997) explicitly explained, interpersonal skills consist of three subscales which are the main contributors of EI in the outer world (Deutschendorf, 2009). In line with Morgan and Fonseca (2004), interpersonal abilities strongly support L2 learning through understanding other people, working cooperatively, and communicating effectively. Interpersonal skill consists of three subscales: interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, and empathy. Interpersonal relationship, as the first subscale, is defined as the ability of creating and maintaining a relationship with others, the ability of being intimate, and the ability of expressing emotions. The second subcategory of interpersonal skill is social responsibility which allows a person to be responsible, helpful and cooperative in social groups. The last subscale of interpersonal skill is empathy that refers to an

individual's ability to understand and recognize other's emotions and feelings and help them in difficult situations (Bar-On, 1997).

Adaptability enables individuals to deal with different changes and solve problems efficiently (Bradshaw, 2008). It is the third category which in turn comprises three subcategories. The first subcategory is problem solving defined as the ability to recognize a problem, define its areas, and create effective solutions (Bar-On, 1997). The second subcategory is reality testing, which consists of understanding the similarities between what exists in individuals' minds and what happens in the real situation and creating a new situation according to realities. The last subcategory is flexibility, which enables an individual to adjust his or her feeling, thoughts, and behaviors to the new, hard, and unpredictable conditions (Bar-On, 2002).

The fourth scale is stress management, which refers to the ability of controlling stressful situations. Tackling their stresses, individuals can cope with problems and perform better in L2. Pishghadam (2007) argued that there is a strong association between the stress-management skill and L2 academic success. Bar-On (1997) classified stress management dimensions into stress tolerance and impulse control. He defined stress tolerance as the ability of coping with the problems and finding useful solutions in dealing with stress. Further, he approached impulse control as an individual's capacity to control their anger, indignation, and feelings in order to reach specific aims.

Bar-On (1997) described general mood, the last scale of EI, as being optimistic and enjoying life. According to Bar-On, general mood includes happiness and optimism. Happiness is a necessary element of being relaxed and consent of life, and optimism enables one to see problems positively and keeping hopeful towards life. Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) showed that L2 academic success is significantly associated with the general mood dimension. Therefore, L2 learners enjoying higher general mood levels may possess more tendencies to learn L2 (Fahim & Pishghadam).

As Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) state, pragmatics refers to an individual's ability in comprehending and producing linguistic actions in different contexts. It studies people's sense of certain texts even when a semantic element has been deleted in the intended text (Blum-Kulka, 1982). The most important concern with pragmatics in L2 education is its teachability, that is, whether it is permeable to instruction so that L2 learners can find socially appropriate language forms for specific functions in different contexts (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). As Bouton (1988) states, rules of pragmatics should be taught to L2 learners because they cannot acquire them on their own. Yamashita (2008) believes that pragmatics is

directly related to L2 users engaged in real-life language use contexts and their problems in social interactions.

The concept of pragmatic competence was initially suggested by Grice (1975) arguing how an appropriate use of language could facilitate an interlocutor's understanding of an utterance. Bachman (1995) considers pragmatic competence as a framework of knowledge that is used in the performance and interpretation of social acts. Pragmatic competence is needed for L2 learners because they should be able to recognize the incompatibility between the literal utterance and the intended meaning and, then, to infer the implied meaning by analyzing the literal information (Taguchi, 2010). The development of pragmatic rules is very significant for L2 learners because the lack of pragmatic knowledge leads to misinterpretation and miscommunication (Allami & Naeimi, 2011).

To study how nonnative speakers use L2 grammatical rules (Rose, 2000), interlanguage pragmatics as a subfield of pragmatics and L2 pedagogy (Allwood, 1985) has been investigated. Kasper (1989) defined interlanguage pragmatics as the study of nonnative speakers' use of linguistic-based patterns in an L2. It investigates nonnative speakers' understanding and production of an L2 (Liu, 2006). It deals with both pragmatic competence and L2 learners' language performance (Ji, 2008). Liu (2006) developed a multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) in which the testees were supposed to select the correct choice from the three given options. It assessed the pragmatic knowledge of the Chinese EFL learners in relation to the speech acts of apology and request.

On the whole, communication is a necessary part of the educational system and is also essential for the promotion of educational processes (Topping, Bermner, & Holmes, 2000). As Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) state, the promotion of EI can considerably develop communication between individuals; consequently, pragmatic competence, which is one of the fundamental bases of communication, can hypothetically be associated with EI. Verscheuren (1999) asserted that pragmatics deals with the factors related to one's choice of language in social interaction and also the way one's choice influences others'. As a result, the type of words that one chooses can make the surrounding intimate or not. Furthermore, because pragmatic competence is the main means helping persons to imply the intended and deep meaning of an utterance (Levinson, 1983), L2 teachers being aware of their learners' EI levels can make them acquainted with L2 pragmatic competence.

### 3. Purpose of the Study

Due to the importance of L2 pragmatics to successful cross-cultural communication in today's inter-connected world, related research should explore the

various factors which play any fundamental role in the process of L2 pragmatic development and performance. EI has been widely known as an influential variable in general L2 learning. Related research, for instance, has shown that being aware of their levels of EI, L2 learners can more purposefully engage in communication and learn L2 more effectively. On the other hand, recent investigations (Cohen, 1998; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Studenska, 2011) have treated gender as a significant factor for academic success, especially, in certain sociocultural contexts, and, in turn, as an important aspect of L2 learning or language use. However, there are different conflicting views regarding whether gender plays any role in the association between EI and L2 leaning (Roohani, 2009), that is, whether EI makes a difference for L2 learners only with a certain gender or with all. For instance, Stottlemayer (2002) found that EI affects L2 learning and educational achievements in favor of female L2 learner, whereas Chao (2003) demonstrated that male L2 learners have a better performance at EI. In the light of these views and lack of unified results, the current study was an attempt to explore any association existing between L2 learners' pragmatic performance (or competence level) and learner affect, defined and operationalized here as EI dimensions. Additionally, this study probed whether gender had any role to play in the (possible) association between Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance and their EI (along its five dimensions). Simply put, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant association between Iranian advanced EFL learners' total EI and its five dimensions (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood) and their pragmatic performance?

2. Does gender modify the association existing between the learners' EI (and its dimensions) and their pragmatic performance?

## 4. Method

### 4.1 Participants

For the first phase of the study, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT; Allen, 2004), as a standard language proficiency test with sound validity and reliability estimates, was administered to 100 EFL learners. In the second step, 80 EFL advanced learners (32 males and 48 females) were selected out of 100 EFL learners based on their OPT scores. All the 80 learners were M.A. students majoring in TEFL from two state universities at Southwest of Iran. From among the participants, 50 M.A. students (15 males and 33 females) were from Shahrekord University and 30 M.A. students (17 males and 13 females) from Yasouj University. All the 80 advanced learners were within the age range of 23 to 32, and they were doing their first- or third-semester studies.

*4.2 Instrumentation and Data Collection*

To gather the necessary information, the following materials were used in this study. To ensure the participants' homogeneity in terms of language proficiency, the OPT was used, and those recognized as advanced, based on Allen's (2004) guidelines, were selected as the main participants.

To determine the participants' EI levels, the EQ-i developed by Bar-On (1997) was used. In fact, Bar-On developed the EQ-i based on his definition of noncognitive skills. He conducted his research over a twelve-year period with more than 6,300 respondents, with 133 items in the form of short sentences measured on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "*strongly agree*" to "*strongly disagree*"). The EQ-i consists of five broad areas of scales and 15 subscales. Bar-On reported the reliability ranging from 0.69 to 0.86 among samples. This study used Samooei's (2002) reduction of Bar-On's EQ-i into 90 items. Having translated Bar-On's EQ-i into Persian, Samooei administered the translated form to 500 students, both males and females, in state and Azad universities in Isfahan. She reported the total reliability of the questionnaire as 0.93. The translated Persian version of the questionnaire is a suitable means of measuring Iranian EFL learners due to its match with Iranian society and culture (Aghayar & Sharifi Daramadi, 2005). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.72. The participants were asked to answer the questionnaire in 40 min.

Finally, a pragmatics test originally designed by Liu (2004) was administered to the participants to assess their pragmatic knowledge (see Appendix). Originally, Liu developed the multiple-choice pragmatic test to assess the pragmatic knowledge of the Chinese EFL learners. He developed the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) questionnaire first based on 57 situations which was later reduced to 24 items each with three options. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the test was estimated 0.88. Before using the DCT in the Iranian context, the scenarios were inspected by two M.A. students as well as two academics to ensure that the situations were all natural to the Iranian context. No major modifications were deemed necessary though. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.74. The participants were asked to complete Liu's pragmatics test in 20 min.

## 5. Results

Initially, all the scores of the five scales were transformed to the scale of 20. Then, descriptive statistics (i.e., the means, minimum and maximum scores, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were calculated for each of the five subscales (see Table 1):

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of the EI Dimensions*

| EI Dimensions | $N$ | Min | Max | Mean | $SD$ | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stress Management | 80 | 7.33 | 15.67 | 11.66 | 2.39 | .20 | -1.23 |
| General Mood | 80 | 8.67 | 14.67 | 12.42 | 1.35 | -.53 | -.21 |
| Adaptability | 80 | 8.22 | 18.00 | 12.91 | 2.50 | .083 | -.85 |
| Interpersonal Skill | 80 | 8.44 | 16.67 | 13.31 | 1.72 | -.45 | .15 |
| Intrapersonal Skill | 80 | 7.60 | 18.27 | 13.58 | 2.40 | -.66 | -.044 |

According to Table 1, the minimum score of the participants' EI scores was 7.33 and the maximum was 18.27. Their mean scores on the five scales of EI ranged from 11.66 to 13.58. More clearly, the participants rated themselves least capable in stress management ($M$ = 11.66) but most capable in the intrapersonal skill ($M$ = 13.58). The results suggest that the participants would be more powerful at the intrapersonal skill ($M$ = 13.58, $SD$ = 2.4), followed by interpersonal ($M$ = 13.31, $SD$ = 1.72), and adaptability ($M$ = 12.91, $SD$ = 2.5) skills.

Then, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to see whether there was any relationship between the participants' pragmatic performance and their EI scales. Before running the correlations, prerequisite analyses were obtained to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The correlational results are depicted in Table 2:

Table 2. *Correlational Results for Pragmatic Performance and EI (Dimensions)*

| | General Mood | Stress Management | Adaptability | Intrapersonal Skill | Interpersonal Skill | EI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pragmatic Performance | .20 | .25* | .29* | .31* | .33* | .39* |
| *Sig.* | .074 | .024 | .010 | .005 | .003 | .000 |

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

As displayed in Table 2, there were three medium-to-high positive correlations. The first correlation was found between pragmatic competence and intrapersonal skill, $r(80)$ = .31, $p$ < 0.05; the second one between pragmatic competence and interpersonal skill, $r(80)$ = 0.33, $p$ < 0.05; and the strongest correlation between pragmatic competence and EI, $r(80)$ = 0.39, $p$ < 0.05. In clear terms, the results indicated that high levels of intrapersonal skill, interpersonal skill, and EI are correlated with high performance on the pragmatics test. In sum, other levels or dimensions of the participants' EI demonstrated fairly meaningful positive

relationships with pragmatic competence, that is, stress management, $r(80) = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$ and the adaptability skill, $r(80) = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$.

Also, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to see whether gender modifies the association between EI (dimensions) and pragmatic performance. The results of the correlations are depicted in Table 3:

Table 3. *Correlational Results for Pragmatic Performance and EI (Dimensions) and Gender*

| Gender | N | | | EI | Intrapersonal Skill | Interpersonal Skill | Adaptability | Stress Management | General Mood |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 32 | Pragmatics | *r* | .22 | .08 | .12 | .03 | .34 | .13 |
| | | | *Sig.* | .224 | .641 | .512 | .848 | .055 | .455 |
| Females | 48 | Pragmatics | *r* | .55* | .57* | .50* | .42* | .14 | .23 |
| | | | *Sig.* | .000 | .000 | .000 | .002 | .341 | .112 |

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

After splitting the data based on gender, independent Pearson product-moment correlations were computed for the males' and females' scores on both EQ-i and pragmatics tests. Interestingly, there were statistically significant differences in terms of the strengths of (EI-pragmatic performance) correlations between the males and females. As shown in Table 3, significantly stronger correlations emerge for the female participants' total EI, interpersonal skill, adaptability and pragmatics ($z_{obs}$= -2, lower than critical ±1.96). Still, more interestingly, intrapersonal skill significantly explains most of the variance in pragmatic performance of females compared to that of the males ($z_{obs}$= −2.34, well below critical ±1.96). In other words, learner affect, or specifically how the learner feels about herself and others, is a key to success or pragmatic variation of female EFL students in Iran.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings revealed that the participants had high levels of EI based on the computed descriptive statistics of their performance in the five sub-intelligences of EI. Specifically, the intrapersonal skill was the most common type of EI dimension among the participants, whereas stress management was the least common type. Therefore, the participants were highly aware of their own emotions and feelings, whereas they had the lowest mean score in confronting (or managing) a stressful situation. L2 learners with strong intrapersonal gifts are introspective, independent, and good at knowing how they are feeling; therefore, they have a good sense of self, enabling them to understand others (Gardner, 1993). This finding

concurs with the studies done by other Iranian researchers such as Haddadi Koohsar and Ghobary Bonab (2011), Shahmohamadi and Hasanzadeh (2011), and Shakib and Barani (2011). The high mean score of the participants' ability in intrapersonal intelligence can be an indication of their tendency to be more metacognitively oriented in approaching any task. However, low stress management orientation might be taken as an indicator of potential frustration in them, grappling with any learning challenge.

As to the correlational results concerning the association between L2 pragmatic performance and EI dimensions, a small positive relationship was found between the participants' performance on the DCT and their stress management and adaptability. Further, medium-to-strong positive associations were evidenced between pragmatic performance and intrapersonal, interpersonal, EI dimensions. Therefore, the higher the participants' levels of intrapersonal, interpersonal, EI, stress management, and adaptability skills, the higher their pragmatic competence. This finding concurs with Parker et al. (2004) who found that communication success was strongly associated with several scales of EI, ordering as intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, and adaptability skill. More specifically, as to the noticeable positive relationship between the participants' pragmatics and their intrapersonal intelligence, higher levels of intrapersonal characteristics enable the participants to be more metacognitively oriented in their approach towards L2 use, constantly monitor their own performance, come up with appropriate pragmatic self-assessment, and thus reshape their pragmatic behaviors. As Shahtalebi, Sharifi, Saeedian, and Javadi (2011) state, intrapersonal skill has been compatible with the learner's communication and learning style in that he or she often uses metacognitive strategies to compensate (cognitive-social) shortcomings to avoid communication breakdown or learning failure. Similarly, Hashemian and Adibpour (2012) found a strong positive correlation between the intrapersonal intelligence and the use of L2 learning strategies among Iranian L2 learners. It can be argued that good levels of intrapersonal EI intelligence enable L2 leaners to be introspective, independent, and concentrated in the process of L2 leaning and communication. As intrapersonal L2 learners can determine their personal goals and work well with their aims, they know themselves and their feelings very well; consequently, they will be more able to express themselves, and understand others. The implication could be that, for successful, appropriate L2 communication, L2 learners should constantly reflect upon pragmatic rules and conversational tactics to sound felicitous while they communicate with different partners.

Besides improved intrapersonal emotional skills, interpersonal EI dimension is of equal, if not of more, importance to success in communication and pragmatic appropriacy. This study also found considerable reciprocity between the

participants' pragmatic performance and their interpersonal skill level. Interpersonal skill enables an individual to sense another person's moods, feelings, motivations, and intentions, and to respond effectively to others in some pragmatically acceptable way. That is, one should use certain speech acts to influence or convince others or be able to discern the appropriate illocutionary force in any social encounter (Weinreich-Haste, 1985). Therefore, interpersonal emotional skill is key to L2 learners' pragmatic appropriacy in the process of communication. As Kagan (2000) states, interpersonal skill is the ability to understand, communicate with, interact with, and influence others. On the whole, interpersonally intelligent people demonstrate more tendency to interact effectively and to deal appropriately with others. The link between L2 pragmatics and interpersonal EI skill evidenced here is in line with Arnold and Fonseca's (2004) finding that interpersonal intelligence is strongly connected to L2 learning as interpersonal frame focuses on the interaction and appropriate cooperation of participants in L2 learning situations.

Most importantly, the results also displayed a noticeable positive correlation between the participants' pragmatic performance and their emotional dimension of the whole EI scale. Previous research has shown that strong emotions can either facilitate or impede cognitive and social processes of L2 learning (Goleman, 1995; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002). Emotions can improve one's ability to think and to solve problems (Goleman); consequently, L2 leaners can learn an L2 more easily when they benefit from intense relevant emotions with regard to the language or interlocutors. It has also been shown that L2 learners with higher EI are often able to make better decisions and can communicate more effectively (Caruso, 2004; Mayer et al., 2000; Pishghadam, 2009). This study can shed further light on Mohammadi's (2012) finding that L2 learners' EI scores can be a good predictor of their general performance in terms of L2 use. As Pishghadam states, L2 leaners' EI correlates with their GPA of reading, speaking, writing, and grammar. As a result, EI plays an important part in L2 learning, in general, and pragmatic performance, in particular.

Furthermore, L2 learner affect dimensions, that is, stress management and adaptability, were found to be fairly related to their pragmatic performance. The capacity to manage stress in the transient moment is fundamental to effective communication because stress management enables one to think clearly and creatively, and to act appropriately. L2 learners who efficiently manage their stresses can potentially grow as more pragmatically competent because they can recognize different contextual stressors and cope with them. Moreover, L2 learners should be able to adapt communication in terms of appropriacy to different others. To successfully adapt or modify speech acts, speakers should consider factors such as age, culture, and role of their partners (Fontana, 2014). As part of the definition of

the construct pragmatic competence, it is very important that the L2 learner is able to express the same language function appropriately in different contexts (Susikaran. 2013).

Interestingly, L2 learner gender was evidenced to be a significant modifier of the association between EI and pragmatic performance in a way that the EI-pragmatics association was significantly stringer for the females. In other words, it seems more important for females to invest in different dimensions of their EL scale if they aspire to grow more pragmatically competent. This finding is consistent with Stottlemayer (2002) who investigated the role of gender in relation to the interplay between EQ and its relation to learning and found that gender differences made a difference in EI skills and learning in favor of the females. Brackett and Mayer (2003) also found that the females had a better performance than the males on the EI tests. Similarly, many studies (Burton, Dyson, & Ardener, 1994; Haas, 1979) found that the females seemed to be more pragmatically competent in different types of speech acts, especially requests and apologies. Therefore, L2 teachers should not neglect the bearing students' gender might have on emotional and pragmatic reciprocity. In particular, the females' intrapersonal EI, and interpersonal skills in the current study demonstrated the most bearing on their pragmatic performance. Although Bar-On (2002) and Bissessar (2011) found that the males were more intrapersonally intelligent than the females, the findings of this study are in line with those of Stottlemayer (2002) who indicated that the females were more aware of emotions than the males. In sum, Turiman, Leong, and Hassan (2013) found that the females seemed to be more sensitive to the appropriacy of different types of speech acts, suggesting that they were more pragmatically competent than the males.

Learning an L2 is a popular issue in the world today. It is a complex mental process which is influenced by various factors, both internal (e.g., age, personality, motivation, and cognition) and external (e.g., curriculum, instruction, motivation, and context; Shoebottom, 2014). If cognition and environment are two important sides of the L2 leaning coin (Brown, 1994), L2 learner affect (e.g., motivation, empathy, stress tolerance, and anxiety, among others) formulates the connecting mechanism between the two (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003). Therefore, L2 teachers should see the whole L2 learner in programming and teaching activities, accounting for the cognitive, social, and affective (or emotional) facets of his or her learning process. Similarly, in planning instructional pragmatics and appropriacy issues, sufficient attention should be devoted to improving EI dimensions, as these were found to be significantly associated with pragmatic performance, especially in the females. EI typically comprises socioaffective intelligence components which are the preliminary conditions of learning which is, in turn, accompanied by thinking; therefore, individuals' knowledge and thoughts are under the influence of

their emotions (Arul Lawrence & Deepa, 2013). In short, the results indicate that the EI-pragmatics relationship is stronger within the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and then adaptability dimensions of L2 learner affect, and gender significantly modifies this association in favor of females.

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**Appendix**
**Pragmatics Test**

University: ……………....                    Gender: Male O    Female O

**Instructions:** *Please read each of the following situations. There are three responses following each situation. Please read the responses to each situation and decide which one is the **BEST** in this situation. Please put your answers on the ANSWER SHEET by blackening the corresponding letters.*

**Situation 1:**

You are trying to study in your room and you hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to turn the music down.

A.   Excuse me, what's name of the music? Sounds good, I like it. But, oh, I'm sorry it is not the right time, I'm just doing some important work. Do you mind turning it down? Thanks so much. I wish I have another chance to listen to it, but not now.

B.   Hello! Would you like to turn down the music? Some people are now studying, and some are sleeping.

C.   Hey! I've got an exam tomorrow so would you mind turning the tunes down a little?

**Situation 2:**

You are now shopping in a department store. You see a beautiful suit and want to see it. You ask the salesperson to show you the suit.

A.   Oh, sorry, could you pass that suit to me to have a look? I want to buy it.

B.   Lady, I'd like to have a look at that suit. Would you please do me a favor?

C.   Excuse me. Could you show me this suit please?

**Situation 3:**

You are now discussing your assignment with your teacher. Your teacher speaks very fast. You do not follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your teacher to say it again.

A.   I think you are right. But if you can explain it more clearly in some details, I may understand it better.

B.   Sorry, teacher, can you repeat it?

C.   Excuse me. May I have your pardon?

**Situation 4:**

Your computer is down because of a virus. One of your teachers is very skillful in fixing computers. You know he has been very busy recently, but you still want to ask him to fix your computer.

A.  Sorry to bother you, but I've been having problems on my computer and was wondering if you could help me?

B.  Excuse me, Mr. Smith. My computer is down because of a virus, so I'm in need of your help. When will you be free these days?

C.  Good morning, Mr. Smith, I hear you are very skillful at fixing computers. So I hope you can help me. It is a little trouble; it won't take you much time, OK?

**Situation 5:**

You are a teacher. In class, the mobile phone of one of your students rings. You ask your student to turn off his mobile phone.

A.  I wish you can learn more things in my class, but if you disturb like this, it is hard for me to teach the class well, understand? So turn off your mobile phone, please.

B.  I don't appreciate mobiles ringing in my class, please make sure they are switched off for the duration of this class.

C.  I think you can stop it during the class. And remember this is the last time.

**Situation 6:**

You are watching a basketball game. A student you don't know comes and stands just in front of you blocking your view. You want ask the student not to block your view.

A.  Hi, so you are interested in basketball. So am I. Let me stand beside you and exchange opinions about the game.

B.  Sorry, you are blocking my view, would you please take another place?

C.  Hey, friend. You'd better move away or sit down.

**Situation 7:**

You are applying for a new job in a small company and want to make an appointment for an interview. You know the manager is very busy and only schedules interviews in the afternoon from one to four o'clock on Wednesday. However, you have to take the final-term exam this Wednesday. You want to schedule an interview on Thursday.

A. I have an exam on Wednesday. Would it be possible to schedule the interview for sometime on Thursday?

B. Sir, I'm glad to learn that your company offers a job. I like it very much, I don't know whether an interview on Thursday is suitable to you or not.

C. Excuse me, sir. I wish it doesn't take much time for you to schedule an interview on Thursday. I want you to give me a chance because I really want to work in your company.

**Situation 8:**

You are the owner of a bookstore. Your shop clerk has worked for a year, and you have gotten to know him or her quite well. It is the beginning of the semester, and you are very busy selling and refunding textbooks all day. Today you have a plan to extend business hours by an hour, though you know the clerk has worked long hours in the past few days. You ask the clerk to stay after store hours.

A. Tom, do you think you could do me a favor by working an extra hour for the next few days seeing we're so busy? I'll try and make it up to you later.

B. Tom, because I've been very busy selling and refunding textbooks all day, I terribly expect you can stay after store hours.

C. Tom, I need you to work a couple of extra hours today. You'll make more money!

**Situation 9:**

For the first time this semester, you are taking a mathematics course. You have had a hard time following lectures and understanding the textbook. A test is scheduled to be held next week. You notice that one student sitting next to you seems to have a good background knowledge of math, and is doing well. Because it is the beginning of the semester, you do not know him or her yet. You want to ask him or her to study together for the upcoming test.

A. Hello, you look very kind, what's your name? Can we study together?

B. Can you cooperate with me in the upcoming test? I need your help very much.

C. I was wondering if we could possibly get together some time to study for the test.

**Situation 10:**

Something is wrong with your computer, but you have to finish some homework which is due tomorrow. Your roommate has a computer, but he is also writing a course paper on his computer. His homework is due the day after tomorrow. You

want to ask him to stop his work and let you use his computer to finish your homework first.

A.   Hi, Lucy, you know my homework is due tomorrow and my computer is down, give me a hand.

B.   Could I please use your computer for an hour? It won't take long!

C.   Can you use your computer after I finish my homework, please?

### Situation 11:

You are writing your graduate thesis and need to interview the president of your university. The president was your teacher and you know him quite well. You know the president is very busy and has a very tight schedule. You still want to ask the president to spare one or two hours for your interview.

A.   Hello, Mr. president, because we know each other quite well, I want to make an appointment with you for my M.A. thesis.

B.   Mr. President, you seem to be very busy, but when will you be free? Can I help you? I think you had better have a rest. Can we have a talk?

C.   I'm currently writing my thesis and would like to interview you. Can you spare one or two hours of your time?

### Situation 12:

You are the manager of a company. You are in a meeting with the other members of your company. You need to write some notes, but realize you do not have any paper. You turn to the person sitting next to you. You know the person very well.

A.   Have you got some extra paper?

B.   Sir, can you help me? Now I need your help, please lend me some paper.

C.   Sorry, I forgot to bring paper with me. And you know it is important for me to write something now. Would you give me a piece of paper? Thank you.

### Situation 13:

You are a student. You forgot to do the assignment for your Human Resources course. When your teacher whom you have known for some years asks for your assignment, you apologize to your teacher.

A.   I'm sorry, but I forgot the deadline for the assignment. Can I bring it to you at the end of the day?

B.   Pardon me, sir, I forgot about that. Shall I do the assignment at once? So sorry! It's my fault!

C. I've completed my assignment but forgot to bring it with me. I'll hand it in tomorrow.

**Situation 14:**

You are now in a bookstore. While you are looking for the books you want, you accidentally find a book that you have been looking for a long time. You are so excited that you rush out of the bookstore with the book without paying it. When the shop assistant stops you, you realize that you forgot to pay for it. You apologize.

A. Oh, I'm sorry! I was too happy! I like this book and have been looking for it for a long time.

B. I'm very sorry that I forgot to pay the book because I was so excited. I've been looking for it for a long time. I hope you can forgive my behavior.

C. Oh, I'm so sorry. I was so excited about finding this book that I have been looking for ages that I just plain forgot to pay. I really am very sorry, how much do I owe you?

**Situation 15:**

You are a student. You are now rushing to the classroom as you are going to be late for the class. When you turn a corner, you accidentally bump into a student whom you do not know and the books he is carrying fall onto the ground. You stop, pick the books up, and apologize.

A. Oops, sorry, my fault. I'm in such a hurry. Here let me help pick these up for you.

B. I'm sorry, I will be late if I'm not in a hurry. I'll pay attention to this when I turn corner next time.

C. Oh, I'm very sorry. I'm going to be late for my class, and if I'm late, I won't be allowed to enter the classroom. But I like this course very much. So, sorry again!

**Situation 16:**

A few days ago, you put one of your classmate's books into your bag without knowing it when you were in the classroom with him. You knew your classmate had been looking for it and felt very upset about losing the book, because he needed the book to prepare for an important exam. Yesterday, he took the exam, and did not seem to have done well. Today, when you look for a pen in your bag, you find the book in your bag. You give the book to your classmate and apologize.

A. I'm sorry, I didn't know the book was in my bag. You haven't done well in the exam. I'm sorry.

B.   I didn't know why your book was in my bag and I apologize for the crazy thing I have done, so please forgive me.

C.   I don't know how to say this but somehow your book has ended up in my bag. I really am sorry for all the inconvenience I've caused you. I wish there was something I could do.

**Situation 17:**

You are now in the classroom. When you go out of the classroom, you accidentally knock over a cup on the desk and spill water over the books of a student whom you do not know. You apologize.

A.   I'm very sorry for my behavior, I was so careless to knock over your up and spilled water on your books. I didn't mean to do it. I do hope you can forgive me.

B.   I'm very sorry. It is a pity that you got the trouble because of my carelessness. Please forgive my fault. Thank you!

C.   Oh dear! I am sorry, I hope I haven't ruined your books. Let me mop it up.

**Situation 18:**

You are a cashier in a bookstore. One customer comes to you to pay for a book. The price of the book is $12.8. The customer gives you a $20 note, but you give only $6.20 change back to the customer. The customer says he should get $7.2 back. You realize the mistake, and apologize to the customer.

A.   It's my fault, I made such a mistake. But I didn't know it, I'm really sorry for that.

B.   Sorry, my mistake. Here you are sir. Here's the extra $1 change. My apologies. Enjoy the rest of the day.

C.   Oh, sir. I'm awfully sorry. Please don't mind. Welcome to our bookstore again. And I'm looking forward to seeing you again.

**Situation 19:**

You are playing football on the playground with your classmate. You take a shot and the ball hits a teacher on the back of the head very hard. You go up to the teacher and apologize.

A.   Are you all right? I'm sorry I hit you!

B.   Dear teacher, I'm sorry for that! If you like, we hope you can play football with us.

C. I'm very sorry for that. I didn't realize you were coming and didn't control the ball well. I do hope you can forgive my rudeness.

**Situation 20:**

You are a teacher. You promised your students to teach them a French song on Thursday afternoon. But you forgot. The students waited for you in the classroom for one hour. Today is Friday, now you are in the classroom and apologize to the students.

A. I apologize to you for my absence yesterday. But I think I can do it better now, because I practiced it many times in the past day. Could you forgive me?

B. Sorry to disappoint you, but I totally forgot about the French song I promised you. I'm really sorry, how about we schedule it for next Thursday ? And I promise I won't forget.

C. I have wasted your time, I feel sorry about that. Could you give me a chance?

**Situation 21:**

Yesterday morning, you received a call from a company. The call was for one of your classmates, but he was out. The caller asked you to deliver a message telling him to go for a job interview at 2:00 in the afternoon. But you forgot. Today, you suddenly remember it and realize that your classmate has lost a chance because of your mistake. Now, you tell your classmate the message, he feels very upset, because he has been looking for a job for a long time. You apologize.

A. Please accept my apology. Don't be upset.

B. I'm really sorry about it, I know it's my fault.

C. May be this was the worst message I had passed to a person. I 'm so sorry.

**Situation 22:**

You want to study in the classroom. You push the door of the classroom very hard. A student whom you don't know is standing just behind the door reading a poster posted on the wall of the classroom. The door hits very hard on the student's forehead making it bleed. The student cries because it is very painful. You don't know the student. You apologize to him.

A. Are you all right? Is it serious? I'm so sorry.

B. I must apologize for my rudeness, I made you so painful, and you are bleeding.

C. Oh, dear me. Please forgive my rudeness. I'll call for an ambulance right now. Please wait for a moment.

**Situation 23:**

You are applying for a job in a company. You go into the office to turn in your application form to the manager. You talk to the manager for a few minutes. When you move to give the manager your form, you accidentally knock over a vase on the desk and spill water over a pile of papers. You apologize to the manager.

A.   I'm sorry, but in China, it's symbol of good luck. I think I am lucky to have met you.

B.   I'm sorry for my carelessness, but I'm not a careless man.

C.   I'm sorry. Please let me help clean up.

**Situation 24:**

You have promised to play basketball with your classmates this afternoon. But because your music teacher prolonged her classes for about half an hour, you arrive late. You apologize to your classmates.

A.   I'm sorry I'm late.

B.   I'm sorry I'm late. I got out of music class late.

C.   I'm sorry to have come so late, but you should know, I like playing basketball as well as music, and the music teacher prolonged her classes for about half an hour.