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## **EFL Learners' Emotional Intelligence, their Preferred Reading Strategy, and Reading Comprehension**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the correlation between emotional intelligence (EQ), preferred reading styles, and reading comprehension from the perspective of Iraqi pupils of English as a foreign language. The investigation involved one hundred twenty female high school students between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. We were able to ensure that all of the participants were identical by employing the Quick Placement Test. The Arabic version of Bar-On's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, the Reading Strategies Questionnaire (SORS), and a Reading Comprehension Test that the researcher independently devised were the instruments employed in this study. The study's findings indicated that there are robust correlations between reading comprehension ability, preferred reading techniques, and emotional intelligence (EQ). This implies that comprehension abilities are enhanced by strategic reading approaches and higher EQ.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, preferred reading styles, reading comprehension

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Undoubtedly, reading is one of the most crucial abilities that a person may have. It functions as a gateway to knowledge. Erfanpour (2013) asserts that reading is one of the four essential skills that are vital in the complex process of language acquisition. Furthermore, the act of reading is a fundamental ability that has a significant impact on students' academic development, particularly in educational environments where English is taught as a foreign language. Rasinski (2010) argues that reading is a fundamental prerequisite in all academic disciplines, and it is consistently emphasized in educational curricula and programmes. The crucial importance of reading is also highlighted in the domain of learning foreign or second languages (EFL/ESL). An important advantage is that individuals have the ability to regulate their

reading speed, unlike when they are listening. Effective control over reading speed is a fundamental psychological, emotional, and cognitive aspect that has a beneficial impact on the process of language acquisition. One advantage for individuals learning English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) is that reading can provide a feeling of ease, particularly when confronted with multiple speaking assignments. (Meyer & Ray, 2011); moreover, Gao and Zhang (2021) emphasize that reading is a significant means of obtaining information for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, especially when there is limited availability to native speakers who can provide genuine input. In Iraq, where English is taught as a second language, reading materials are utilized as genuine sources of input due to the unavailability of native speakers. However, learners must have the ability to comprehend written text in order to understand the materials.

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According to Ediger (2001), EFL and ESL learners often encounter difficulties and setbacks when trying to improve their reading comprehension skills while learning the language. The challenges may arise from various sources, including a lack of comprehension of word definitions, insufficient background information, a limited command of terminology, and misreading of authors' ideas. Under such circumstances, EFL/ESL learners frequently have more obstacles in their ability to comprehend written text compared to native language (L1) learners. There is a strong requirement in the field of language education and learning to examine many aspects, such as methodology, materials, and human characteristics, that can facilitate the process of reading and comprehension. This acknowledgment emphasizes the significance of confronting these obstacles in order to enhance the effectiveness of language teaching (Ediger, 2001). Karasakaloglu (2010) highlights that college students must grasp the talent of comprehending texts as a crucial aspect of reading. Karasakaloglu further asserts that reading lacks fulfilment if comprehension is absent. In addition, Jalilifar (2010) emphasizes that learners' motivation and interest in reading academic English texts may be influenced by the challenges they have in understanding English texts, potentially resulting in poor performance in English courses. Grabe and Stoller (2002) argue that reading comprehension is crucial for academic achievement since university students are required to read many sources such as books, journals, and articles to gather information and produce papers from the beginning of their university studies.

A common challenge encountered by numerous EFL/ESL readers is their inability to employ appropriate reading strategies. According to the research conducted by Al-Ali and Al-Shboul (2016), Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face difficulty in understanding what they read not because they lack opportunities to read, but because they struggle to employ good reading strategies that would help them comprehend the text. Through the acquisition of reading strategy training, learners can enhance their self-awareness and develop more

proficiency in effectively addressing the challenges they encounter when reading.

The challenges faced by language learners during their learning process can be linked to both their internal cognitive abilities and the external factors in their surroundings. "Learners possess various individual characteristics that influence their learning process and the results they achieve" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 88). In a recent study conducted by Gardner and MacIntyre (2020), it was shown that language development encompasses more than simply acquiring knowledge of syntax, semantics, and phonology. Instead, it is intricately connected to internal characteristics, such as intellect, which can significantly impact an individual's reading comprehension abilities.

Through the progression of psychology, the interplay between emotion and thought has given rise to the concept of Emotional Quotient (EQ) or Emotional Intelligence. The concept of emotional intelligence, derived from Darwin's research, seeks to emphasize the significance of emotional expression for the sake of survival and adaptation. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is utilized to enhance one's emotional state in order to facilitate improved decision-making (Grewal & Salovey, 2005; Ciarrochi & Mayor, 2013). Emotional Quotient, often known as Emotional Intelligence, is a one aspect of the various intelligences put out by Gardner (1993), who criticized conventional IQ (Intelligent Quotient) testing for solely measuring language and logic abilities. Gardner posited that people possess several intelligences characterized by diverse compositions and varying degrees of strength.

The academic achievement of students has traditionally been assessed by Intelligence Quotient (IQ) exams. However, there is a growing belief that emotional intelligence (EQ) has a greater impact on the language acquisition process compared to IQ. Petrides and Furnham (2001) provide a definition of EQ as the capacity to comprehend and regulate emotions, ultimately leading to individual development. Bar-On (2006) defines EQ as the ability to effectively comprehend oneself and others, establish good relationships with people, and adapt and cope with the local environment in

order to be more successful in meeting the demands of the surroundings. Goleman (2006) suggests that IQ tests only explain around 20% of the elements that contribute to success in life, whereas EQ explains the other 80%.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Reading and Reading Comprehension

Reading is regarded as one of the primary skills that are necessary for success in various facets of life. It is generally defined as the capacity to "understand, use, evaluate, reflect on, and engage with texts in order to achieve one's objectives, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society" (OECD, 2018, p. 11). Due to English's global status as an international language, reading proficiency is particularly important, particularly in a foreign language such as English. Ediger (2001) posits that the capacity to read is a more significant indicator of literacy in all languages when compared to other language skills, such as speaking or listening.

Reading necessitates additional attention due to its complexity; however, it is a significant source of learning, particularly for language learners in foreign environments (Krashen, 2004). Reading is a complex phenomenon, but it is a valuable source of language input that involves communication between the reader, the author, and the text. Additionally, reading is an activity that is strongly related to comprehension, which further emphasizes the importance of reading skills (Berardo, 2006). McNamara, Ozuru, Best, and O'Reilly (2007) assert that readers must draw upon their prior knowledge to construct a coherent account of the text in order to understand it. Subsequently, readers are obligated to assess whether the information is comprehensible or whether the knowledge they have acquired through reading can be applied to their objectives (McNamara, Ozuru, Best, & O'Reilly, 2007). Consequently, reading comprehension is considered a critical factor in the pursuit of personal, professional, and educational success, which has resulted in a plethora of research aimed at elucidating the cognitive abilities that facilitate successful reading (Ghafar Samar, Dehqan, & Ghafar Samar, 2013).

Hedge (2003) proposed two primary types of reading: extensive and intensive reading, which are founded on the objectives of reading comprehension. Some academicians define extensive reading as a combination of skimming and scanning activities, while others attribute it to the volume of content read, as a controversial issue. Azizi, Tkáčová, Pavlíková, and Jenisová (2020) have previously noted that the educational benefits of extensive reading are derived from the notion that exposing learners to a significant quantity of meaningful second language (L2) material over an extended period enhances their mastery of the same.

However, in intensive reading, learners are expected to examine a page, search for significance, and become acquainted with writing strategies and methods (Hedge, 2003). Learners can acquire substantial in-depth reading skills by practicing and utilizing these strategies and methods, which will enable them to apply their abilities more readily to a diverse array of texts. Isoqjon (2022) elucidates the distinction between extensive and intensive reading by stating that whereas learners are exposed to relatively brief texts in intensive reading activities, these texts are either used to illustrate specific features of the lexical, syntactic, or discoursal system of the L2 or to serve as a foundation for targeted reading strategy practice.

### Diverse Reading Strategies

The significance of teaching reading and employing reading strategies has been the subject of research since the 1970s, despite the fact that the acquisition of reading skills is inherent in second or foreign language reading research (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). A reader's reading strategies are the deliberate decisions they make to facilitate the comprehension of written material. These strategies are frequently implemented by educators and students to expedite the reading comprehension process (Grabe, 2004). Bernhardt (2005) posits that while some educators may draw on their personal experiences when selecting appropriate strategies, others may consider the learners' preferences.

In order to become proficient readers, second language learners should actively implement and select these strategies (Anderson, 2003).

Despite the difficulty of evaluating the efficacy of each of these strategies, it is strongly advised that students employ them to improve their reading comprehension and address comprehension challenges (Singhal, 2001). Teachers and researchers should refrain from concentrating on a single strategy, but rather employ a variety of comprehensive strategies, as recommended by Gustanti and Ayu (2021). The diverse application of reading strategies enables readers to expedite the reading process and enables teachers to implement a variety of methods to accommodate the preferences and requirements of their students (Dewitz, Jones & Leahy, 2009).

Reading strategies encompass a variety of techniques, including skimming, perusing, summarizing, and backtracking. Furthermore, these strategies are broadly classified into two primary categories: cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies (Singhal, 2001). Gustanti and Ayu (2021) define cognitive strategies as mental processes that are directly involved in the processing of information for learning. These processes include activities such as the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and utilization of information. Cognitive strategies encompass the following: summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, and utilizing context clues. In contrast, metacognitive strategies, as defined by Muhid, Amalia, Hilaliyah, Budiana, and Wajdi (2020), involve higher-order processes, including the planning, control, and evaluation of learning.

### **Student Achievement and Emotional Intelligence**

According to McNulty and Quaglia (2007), students' academic performance is enhanced when they perceive that their educators are deeply invested in their well-being. Teachers who possess a robust intrapersonal dimension will be capable of distinguishing their own emotional requirements and adjusting their emotions to address the needs and issues of their students.

Brooks (1996, as cited in Winters, 2009) has posited that "a teacher's emotional intelligence and empathy can assist the teacher in more effectively interacting with students who are angry or resistant." Recognizing the burdens

that many students experience at home and at school that result in misbehavior and the capacity to develop strategies that can reduce their anger and resistance are both facilitated by an understanding of the experiences of a student (p. 2).

Bar-on's (2007) emotional intelligence is composed of five composite scales that are attributed to

a) The initial dimension pertains to the interpersonal relationships of a teacher, which are enhanced by high emotional intelligence. For instance, teachers can establish strong relationships with their students by demonstrating empathy for their emotions.

b) The second dimension pertains to the intrapersonal relationships of a teacher. Strong intrapersonal skills enhance the students' capacity to interact with administrators, parents, and colleagues, thereby facilitating their success.

c) The third dimension pertains to the capacity of a teacher to manage their tension. The capacity to manage stress will enable teachers to demonstrate a greater awareness of their work, more effectively complete their responsibilities, more effectively manage students' misbehavior and parent complaints, and be less likely to react aggressively. Ultimately, this will result in students' success.

d) The fourth dimension pertains to the adaptability of a teacher. Teachers who are adaptable are able to more effectively resolve students' challenges, better recognize and accommodate individual learning styles and differences, adapt flexibly to changing school environments and curricula, and take calculated risks for the benefit of their students.

e) The fifth and final dimension is concerned with the overall disposition of a teacher. Teachers who are generally optimistic can exhibit confidence and provide more comprehensive support to their students, thereby facilitating their academic success.

Taking into account the above-mentioned points and considering learners' performance differences in learning a language the researcher tried to investigate why some EFL learners perform better in reading comprehension while not others. Hence, the researcher aimed to find the relationship between learners' EQ, their preferred reading strategy and reading

comprehension ability by posing the following questions:

*Q1. How is the relationship between EQ and the preferred reading strategy of Iraqi EFL learners?*

*Q2. How is the relationship between preferred reading strategy and the reading-comprehension proficiency of Iraqi EFL learners?*

*Q3. How is the relationship between EQ and the reading comprehension proficiency of Iraqi EFL learners?*

## METHODOLOGY

### Design of the Study

This research employed a correlational design to investigate the relationships between emotional intelligence (EQ), preferred reading strategies, and reading comprehension among Iraqi EFL learners. The study involved 120 female high school students aged 16-18 in Maysan, Iraq. To ensure homogeneity, participants were administered the Quick Placement Test (QPT). The study adhered to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent and maintaining participant confidentiality. Data analysis involved correlational techniques to examine the relationships between EQ, preferred reading strategies, and reading comprehension proficiency.

### Participants

In order to conduct the current study, the researcher selected 120 high school female students in Maysan, Iraq, all falling within the age range of 16-18. To enhance the homogeneity of the sample of the study, the Quick Placement Test, a well-established and recognized test possessing a desirable reliability and validity, was employed.

### Instruments

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the following instruments were used:

### Participation Consent Form

The necessary approvals for the research were meticulously obtained through a systematic and ethical approach and explicit written confirmations were obtained from all participants, signifying

their approval for the research to be conducted within their educational institutions. Consequently, prior to initiating the primary phase of the study, the researcher conducted a detailed introduction and elucidation of the study procedures to both the educators and participants. To formalize their consent, a consent form was distributed to all participants; the consent form served as a tangible expression of participants' willingness to actively participate in the research.

### The Quick Placement Test

In order to homogenize the selected sample of the learners, the researcher used the Quick Placement Test (QPT) to ensure that the participants are at the same proficiency level at the beginning of the study. It is worth mentioning that the QPT is a test developed by Oxford University Press and Cambridge ESOL consisting of two parts. The first part includes 40 questions that test the participants' knowledge of prepositions, grammar, pronouns, vocabulary, and completion questions. The second part consists of 20 questions that test the participants' ability to complete cloze passages and answer completion-type questions.

### The Arabic Version of Bar-On's (2002) Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

The next data collection instrument used in the current study was a localized version of Bar-On's (2002) Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire which was accurately translated and localized by López-Zafra, Landa, & Ramos-Álvarez (2021). The questionnaire is a comprehensive measure to evaluate emotional intelligence. This questionnaire includes 90 items which are carefully categorized into five main scales. The rationale behind the choice of the Arabic version of Bar-On's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, adapted by López-Zafra et al. (2021) was to ensure the participants complete understanding of the items to provide exact responses. In addition, this version was chosen because of its alignment with the local language and culture confirming a more cultural compatibility for the participants. According to López-Zafra et al. (2021), the Arabic version of Bar-On's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire has been confirmed to be both valid and reliable with the



reported reliability index of  $r = .72$ , showing its appropriateness for accurate measurement within the cultural and linguistic context of the participants.

### Reading Strategy Questionnaire

In order to achieve a thorough assessment of the reading strategies favored by the participants of the study, the researcher used the Reading Strategies Questionnaire (SORS) which is developed and structured by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The SORS is precisely developed to be used for eliciting students' preferred reading strategy in high schools, colleges, and universities. The questionnaire is composed of three distinct subscales including Global Reading Strategies (GLOB), Problem Solving Strategies (PROB), and Support Reading Strategies (SUP) that provides a comprehension measure of different strategies opted by the participants.

### Reading Comprehension Test

As the last instrument used to collect the required data was researcher made Reading Comprehension Test to assess the reading proficiency and understanding of the participants. The devised test was composed of three different reading passages strategically chosen to represent a variety of topics and genres followed by ten multiple-choice questions, carefully made to measure different aspects of comprehension, including main ideas, details, and inferential reasoning.

### Data Collection Procedures

In order to conduct the intended study, first the required permissions were obtained from the authorities. Later, 120 high school female students were selected from the existing intact classes that were held in the schools which were permitted to cooperate in the process of data collection. To ensure homogeneity of participants in terms of English proficiency, the Quick

Placement Test (QPT) was initially implemented. Based on the results of the homogeneity test, 12 students were as outliers, and accordingly their scores were excluded from the analysis. However, in order to observe the ethics of the study and follow the regulation of schools, they actively participated in all study parts. After homogenizing the sample of the study, those who were chosen as the participants of the study filled out the domestic version of Bar-On's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire translated and localized by López-Zafra et al. (2021). Later, The Survey of Reading Strategies Questionnaire (SORS), developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), was employed to measure and spot participants' preferred reading strategies. For the last part of data collection procedure, a reading comprehension test was made by the researcher and piloted on 20 intermediate learners similar to the participants of the study. Based on the results of the pilot study, the reliability of the test was calculated which equaled .68 that can be considered as a desirable reliability level. The validity of the test was confirmed by two PhD holders in TEFL with minimum experience of 15 years. After, getting assured of validity and reliability of the test, it was given to participants to measure their reading comprehension proficiency. Finally, the process of data analysis was meticulously conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

## RESULTS

After collecting the required data and getting assured of the distribution normality of the scores which were checked using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, based on the quantitative nature of the scores, the researchers used Pearson Correlation Coefficient test to answer the first research question and investigate the correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Reading Strategy Use.

**Table 1**

*The Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Reading Strategy Use*

		Overall Strategy Use	Global Reading Strategy	Problem Solving Reading Strategy	Support Reading Strategy
EQ	Pearson Correlation	.499	.409	.374	.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.004	.165
	N	108	108	108	108

Based on the results of Pearson correlation test shown in Table 1, it was concluded that there exist significant correlations between EQ and over strategy use, global strategy uses and problem-solving strategy use. In addition, it was indicated that three of the relationships i.e. between EQ and overall strategy use, global reading strategy and problem solving strategy are positive, with a significance indices of .000, .001 and .004, falling below the set threshold for the study ( $p < .05$ ). However, it was revealed that the correlation between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Support Reading Strategies is not statistically significant.

The researcher used Cohen's (1988) correlation classification to measure the magnitude of the observed correlation coefficients. According to the classification proposed by Cohen, correlation coefficients which fall within the range of 0.10 to 0.29 are considered small and the

ones ranged from 0.30 to 0.49 are taken as intermediate while the coefficients falling within 0.50 to 1.0 are considered large correlations. As the current correlations fall within the 0.30 to 0.49 range, they are characterized as a medium magnitude correlation. In general, the findings of the study, with 95% of confidence revealed that there exists a significant positive correlation between participants' Emotional Intelligence and their overall reading strategy use. In addition, it was revealed that learners with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence are motivated to use Global and Problem-Solving reading strategies more while reading.

Continuing with the data analysis the researcher used the same test to identify potential correlations between participants' preferred reading strategy and their reading comprehension proficiency to address the second research question. The results of these correlation tests are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2**

***The Correlation between Reading Strategy Use and Reading Comprehension Proficiency***

		<b>Overall Strategy Use</b>	<b>Global Reading</b>	<b>Problem Solving</b>	<b>Support Reading</b>
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.372	.158	.214	.320*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.236	.106	.014
	N	108	108	108	108

According to the findings presented in Table 2, which examined the relationships between participants' overall reading strategy use, Global Reading strategy use, Problem Solving strategy use and Support reading strategy use and their reading comprehension, statistically significant positive correlations were identified between reading proficiency and participants overall reading strategy use and their support reading strategy use. The significance levels ( $P = .004, .014$ ) fall below the predetermined threshold set for the study ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, based on the results of the study, it is evident that the correlation between participants' reading comprehension and their use of global and problem-solving reading strategy is not statistically significant, given the p-values of .236 and .106.

Once more, the researcher referred to Cohen's (1988) classification to investigate the magnitude of correlations. Accordingly, the significant correlation coefficients i.e. correlation between participants reading comprehension proficiency and overall strategy use and support reading strategy fall within the range of 0.30 to 0.49, which corresponds to medium correlations.

Moving forward in analyzing the data obtained from the participants, the researcher addressed the third research question investigating the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and the reading comprehension proficiency of Iraqi EFL high school students using the same analysis approach as employed for the previous two research questions.

**Table 3*****The Correlation between EQ and Reading Comprehension Proficiency***

		EQ scores	Reading Comprehension
EQ scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.684
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	108

**DISCUSSION**

The discovery of a statistically significant positive correlation between the use of reading strategies and the emotional intelligence of learners indicates that those with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to employ reading strategies during the reading process. Furthermore, learners with elevated emotional intelligence employ reading strategies that emphasize global and problem-solving reading more frequently. According to the findings, there are substantial positive correlations between the proficiency in reading comprehension and the overall use of reading strategies and Support Reading strategies among the participants. Consequently, it can be inferred that learners who employ support reading strategies exhibit high levels of reading comprehension proficiency. Ultimately, it was determined that there is a robust positive correlation between the Reading Comprehension Proficiency level of participants and their Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Consequently, it can be inferred that students who are emotionally astute demonstrate a higher level of reading comprehension proficiency.

Mayer and Salovey's (1997) theoretical framework posit that emotional intelligence is the capacity to effectively recognize, comprehend, manage, and employ emotions, which explains the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the overall use of reading strategies. In contrast, Mayer and Salovey (1997) suggest that the correlation between emotional intelligence and reading strategies suggests that emotionally intelligent learners possess superior self-regulation skills, which allow them to intentionally employ a variety of reading strategies while reading (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). According to Brackett and Mayer (2003), the positive correlations between the application of Global and Problem-solving reading strategies and Emotional Intelligence are consistent with the assertion that emotional

intelligence activates higher-order cognitive abilities in learners. That is, learners who exhibit higher emotional intelligence may be more adept at employing these cognitive strategies to enhance their comprehension, as emotional intelligence incorporates critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Pressley and Afflerbach's (1995) strategic reading model elucidate the positive correlation between reading comprehension proficiency and the overall use of reading strategies. Strategic and self-regulated learners are more adept at comprehending texts, according to this model. Lastly, the claim that emotional intelligence contributes to effective emotion regulation and higher-order cognitive skills that are significant in comprehension justifies the strong positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Reading Comprehension Proficiency (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The results of the present study are comparable to those of Eastabrook, Duncan, and Eldridge (2005), Parker et al. (2004), and Stottlemayer (2002), who have reported positive correlations between EQ and academic success, particularly in the field of reading comprehension. In general, the findings are in accordance with those of Aki (2006), Fahim and Pishghadam (2007), and Pishghadam (2009), who have established positive correlations between EQ and second language performance. In particular, the results of the present study are consistent with the research conducted by Rahmani, Sadegh, and Khanlari (2013), which examined the relationship between the emotional intelligence of Iranian learners and their utilization of affective and compensatory strategies. In a manner similar to the present investigation, they had identified a substantial positive correlation between the emotional intelligence of the participants and their overall utilization of reading strategies. Moreover, Genç, Kuluşaklı, and Aydın (2016), who investigated the correlation between productive language skills and emotional intelligence, reported a positive and close



relationship between Emotional Quotient (EQ) and foreign language proficiency. Furthermore, the results of this study are in agreement with Ghafournia (2023), who investigated the potential correlation between the emotional intelligence (EQ) of Iranian language learners and their reading proficiency. Specifically, they discovered substantial positive correlations that are consistent with the most recent research.

The study's results are, in some sense, a confirmation of the importance of EQ and the inadequacy of IQ alone in predicting the success of learners, as Goleman (1995) posited. Consequently, the findings of the present study and comparable studies conducted in various contexts and locations suggest that it is imperative to priorities and draw greater attention to literacy strategies and emotional intelligence within the Iraqi educational system. According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligence "not only functions as an internal mechanism but also interacts with the external environment" (p. 15). Consequently, it is advisable for educators to assess the emotional intelligence (EQ) of their students prior to selecting instructional materials in order to verify that they are in accordance with their requirements. Moreover, it is strongly advised that educators and instructors strive to promote the use of a variety of reading strategies by students and assist them in engaging in supportive learning activities to improve their overall language proficiency.

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there are significant relationships between emotional intelligence (EQ), preferred reading strategies, and reading comprehension among Iraqi EFL learners. Specifically, higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with more effective use of reading strategies, which in turn correlated with better reading comprehension proficiency. The findings suggest that students who are better able to understand and manage their emotions are more likely to employ strategic approaches to reading, leading to improved comprehension outcomes. This underscores the importance of incorporating emotional intelligence training and strategic reading instruction in EFL curricula to enhance learners' reading comprehension

skills. By fostering both emotional intelligence and strategic reading practices, educators can potentially improve academic performance and language acquisition among EFL learners. Additionally, the study highlights the need for further research into the interplay between emotional intelligence and other cognitive and metacognitive strategies in language learning contexts.

## Implications

**Educational curriculum development:** The findings suggest that incorporating emotional intelligence training and strategic reading instruction into EFL curricula could significantly enhance learners' reading comprehension skills. This implies that educational policymakers and curriculum designers should consider integrating EQ development and reading strategy training into their programs.

**Teaching methodologies:** The study highlights the importance of teachers understanding and fostering emotional intelligence in their students. This implies that teacher training programs should include components on emotional intelligence and its role in language learning.

**Reading instruction:** The significant relationship between preferred reading strategies and reading comprehension proficiency implies that teachers should focus on teaching and encouraging the use of effective reading strategies. This could involve explicit strategy instruction and providing opportunities for students to practice and apply these strategies.

**Holistic approach to language learning:** The study's findings on the interconnection between emotional intelligence, reading strategies, and comprehension suggest that a more holistic approach to language learning might be beneficial. This implies that language programs should consider addressing cognitive, metacognitive, and emotional aspects of learning.

**Assessment practices:** Given the importance of emotional intelligence in reading comprehension, there may be implications for how students are assessed. This could involve incorporating measures of emotional intelligence alongside traditional language proficiency tests.

**Individualized learning:** The study's findings on individual differences in EQ and preferred

reading strategies imply that a one-size-fits-all approach to reading instruction may not be optimal. This suggests the need for more personalized learning approaches that take into account students' emotional intelligence levels and strategy preferences.

Further research: The study's results imply the need for more research into the interplay between emotional intelligence, cognitive strategies, and language learning outcomes. This could lead to a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing second language acquisition.

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