



Research Paper

## EFL teachers' home cultural attachment as predictor of their emotional intelligence and narrative intelligence: A structural equation model

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**ABSTRACT:** The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and narrative intelligence and emotional intelligence. In fact, this study examined which of these intelligences was best representative of Iranian EFL home cultural attachment. To this end, 102 EFL teachers from different language institutes in Mashhad were selected based on convenience sampling. They were requested to fill in Bar-On EQ-i test and Home Cultural Attachment Scale. For measuring EFL teachers' narrative intelligence, they were asked to perform on two narrative tasks. Task 1: they were required to talk about a strip story. Task 2: they were asked to talk about the topic "please tell the story of your first day at university". The narratives were recorded, transcribed, and rated based on Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS). The findings demonstrated that EFL teachers' home cultural attachment had a significant relationship with both EQ and narrative intelligence. Finally, the results were discussed in details and implications.

**KEYWORDS:** Home cultural attachment, Narrative intelligence, Emotional intelligence, EFL teachers, Structural Equation Modeling

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Culture set a cognitive as well as affective context for its people [1]. Culture has a significant influence on individuals' beliefs, norms, conceptions and emotions [2]. It is inseparable from language and in L2 instruction, in accordance with learning a second language, a second identity is achieved; so confronting new culture may result in changes in the learner's perceptions of the world, self-identity, belief system, feeling, emotions, function, and communicating [1]. In foreign language era, a deal of studies have been carried out to examine EFL learners' as well as EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and providing alternatives to keep this attachment as strong as possible and to fill the gap between EFL learners' L1 and L2 identities[3]. Some researchers such as [4] postulated a positive influence of L2 learners' home culture on their management of their L1-L2 interaction.

In this study, it was attempted to examine the role of EFL teachers' home culture on two intelligence; emotional intelligence and narrative intelligence. Research demonstrated that individuals' culture plays a significant role on their intelligence [5]. These two intelligences were selected because both of them had a significant relationship with EFL teachers' success; between EQ and EFL teachers' success [6], and between NI and EFL teachers' success [7] carried out a study.

The researcher of the present study made a hypothesized relationship between EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and their emotional intelligence based on logical assumptions derived from theoretical framework of both EQ and culture. Regarding different cultures, emotions can be displayed multifariously [8]. For example, an individual may benefit from high EQ in one culture but in another culture he may not be considered as an emotional intelligent person [9]. The way emotions are appreciated or disregarded is different

among different cultures [8]. So it was supposed that EQ can be a good indicator of EFL teachers' mother culture. Also, the researcher made a hypothesized relationship between EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and their narrative intelligence based on shared principles of both narrative intelligence and home cultural attachment. Theoretically, conception is the prime component of narrative intelligence [10] and peoples' conception is shaped by their cultural norms [11]. Every culture has its own unique way of giving magnitudes to its social and individuals' norms [12]. So it inspired the researcher to make a hypothesis about a dynamic relationship between EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and their narrative intelligence.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITURATURE**

### **2.1 Culture**

Language and culture are interrelated and people are supposed to perceive the reality from their own culture [1]. Nizegorodcew (2011, as cited in [13]) regarded two views toward the link between culture and EFL learning. While in the first view, learning a FL is respected to be demoralizing the national culture and undermining local values and beliefs, the second view regards FL learning as a means to the enhancement of two cultures. Because of this dynamic relationship between culture and language, [14] put emphasis on L2 users' consciousness of both their own cultural norms of communication as well as L2 ones. [15] mentioned that there are three type of relationships between culture and learning a language.

[4] argued that L2 curriculum should regard students' mother cultural identities and should motivate learners to have a high understanding of their own cultural values and beliefs since in light of these appreciation and respect toward their home culture, the learners can enrich their second or foreign language achievement more successfully. [16] recommended teachers to be conscious of both their students' culture and also the culture which they present in their academic setting. Learning language affects our identity [17]. Research revealed that we can construct and co-construct our identity in our interaction with others based on particular context and even we can have an alternation of language choices appropriate to that particular situation [18].

In SLA studies, Norton recognized that high levels of motivation did not essentially lead to good learning and proposed the term investment derived from the idea of Bourdieu's cultural capital [19]. Investment gives prominence on learners' changeable identity which shift across time and space and regenerated differently in different social interaction and she claimed that if learners invest in a second language, this investment contributes to their cultural development capital which aids to learners' reevaluation of themselves [19]. [20] proposed that second language students have access to communities through imagination and participation in that communities influences their identities and learning process as much as their direct participation in L2 learning. [21] signified the link between teaching language and teaching culture and suggested EFL teachers to raise their cultural awareness in order to regard different cultures in classrooms.

### **2.2 Emotional Intelligence**

[22] [23] considered the influence of emotional intelligence even more than cognitive factor. [24] stated that emotional intelligence can be referred to individuals' knowledge of emotional information and apply this knowledge as a problem solving strategy in life events. In educational field, EQ refers to teachers' capacity to direct and regulate their feelings which then contributes to their own emotional and intellectual development [25]. [26] Sutton and Wheatley (2003) highlighted the significance of teachers' emotion on their cognition and motivation which then leads to play a role on their learners' conception and learning process as cited in [27]. Harvey and Evans as cited in [24] suggested a model of teachers' emotional skill which includes of five subcomponents: emotional relationships, interpersonal awareness, emotional intrapersonal beliefs, emotional interpersonal guidelines and emotional management.

Emotional skills are contributed to individuals' success in various fields of studies; for example, [28] found out a significant relationship between EFL learners' EQ and their self-efficacy. EQ has a significant influence on learners' foreign language achievement [29] and [30]. In another research, [6] realized a high emotional intelligent EFL teachers were more successful in their teaching profession. In another study, [31] realized that there was a significant correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' personality, emotional intelligence and burnout. More specifically, their results indicated that for emotional exhaustion neuroticism as well as extroversion, for depersonalization intrapersonal scale of emotional intelligence and agreeableness, and finally for personal accomplishment interpersonal scale and conscientiousness were best predictors respectively.

### **2.3 Narrative Intelligence**

Narrative is an inseparable component of human life as Roland Barths suggested "the history of narrative begins with the history of (hu) mankind, there does not exist, and has never existed, a people without narrative" [32]. The narrative pattern and the kind of words that we use when we create and talk about our experiences represent our social and cultural capital [32]. When we talk about our narratives of our own lives we

represent our "preferred" identities [33]. Bruner believed that humans make sense of the world through narrative and they may have a biological potentiality for apprehending the world narratively [34].

[10] Another leading voice in narrative intelligence, defined NI as " the capacity both to formulate (compose, narrate) and to follow (understand, read) the story of our own life." He indicated five interrelated components for NI, including emplotment, characterization, narration, genre, and thematization and defined them as followings:

Emplotment includes to sum up both ongoing and past events, to perceive our environment, conditions, interactions, connecting events, to understand and realize an event and to highlights what is significant.

Characterization is the second component of NI. In Randall's definition of characterization we characterize ourselves and others and build a "working pictures" about our actions, emotions and others behaviors, thoughts, feelings. In characterization we ignore objectivity as Randall argued. Bruner pointed out this matter as "subjunctive" reality [34].

Narration is the third sub-capability of narrative intelligence which is according to Randall is the most significant feature among other components. Our narration ability determines our communicating the ongoing and past events to others as they feel a sensible link between events. By narration we can also represent our identity. Narrators can change their parts [33]; sometimes as a victim of a condition and in another time as a powerful agent to begin an action and they can move among their positions [33].

Genre is defined as the ability to order events based on predictable kinds as tragic, comic etc. "*To genre-ate is to intuit or imagine, and possibly to articulate, to dramatic shape of our own life course, its "ups and downs", "success and failures", whether it is fundamentally a "happy" life or a "tragic" one, and so forth*" (p. 18).itThematization, the last component of narrative intelligence is referred to the ability to justify the recurring of some particular events by noticing to their repeated meaning and to apprehend the main idea of a story. Studies indicated that in exploring life experiences, human beings can be conveyed by stories and that stories can be applied as a tool for expressing teachers' beliefs about theory, practice, and curriculum [35].

Recently, [36] conducted a research in narrative intelligence and learning languages which revealed that there is a significant relationship between learners' NI scores and their English language achievements.

To the researcher's best knowledge no study has been done to date explore the probable relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and their emotional intelligence and also the link between Iranian EFL teachers' home cultural attachment and narrative intelligence so this study aims to answer statistically to the following research questions:

- 1-Is Iranian EFL teachers' home cultural attachment a good predictor of emotional intelligence?
- 2-Is Iranian EFL teachers' home cultural attachment a good contributor of narrative intelligence?

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Participants

The total participants for the current study consist of 102 EFL teachers from different language institutes in Mashhad, a city in the northeastern of Iran. Among them, 60 were female and 42 were male, aged between 24 and 56. Their teaching experiences varied from 2 years to 31 years. The majority of them had majored in various branches of English; English literature, English translation, and English teaching. A few of them had majored in applied sciences and engineering but were qualified to teach English. The EFL teachers participating in the current study spoke Persian as their mother tongue.

#### 3.2 Instrumentation

##### 3.2.1 Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS)

To evaluate teachers' narrative intelligence, the researcher employed NIS designed and validated by [37]. This scale was designed based on the model proposed by [10]. This test included 35 items in which six items didn't satisfy the unidimensionality criterion. This scale yielded an item reliability of .99 and a person reliability of .98. A score of 1 to 5 was assigned to each item. This test consists of five subcomponents: emplotment, characterization, narration, genre-ation, and thematization. The EFL teachers' narrative intelligence was measured by asking them to perform on two narrative tasks. Task 1: they were required to talk about a strip story. The time allotted for this phase was 5 minutes. In the second phase teachers were required to talk about the topic "please tell the story of your first day at university" and the time allotted for this task was 5 minutes. It was mentioned that although the suggested time was around 5 minutes for each task, there were some teachers performing these tasks more than 7 minutes. In this study, the total reliability of the questionnaire, estimated via Cronbach' alpha, was 0.81.

### 3.2.2 Bar-On EQ-I test

To measure EFL teachers' emotional intelligence, the researcher applied the "Bar-On EQ-i test" which was constructed and validated by Bar-On in 1980. This test consists of 133 items, however, in this test the short form included 90 items was used. For response, it uses a five-point Likert scales ranging from 5 "true of me" to 1 "not true of me". This test has five main components: (a) Intrapersonal, (b) Adaptability, (c) General Mood, (d) Interpersonal, (e) Stress Management. In this study, the total reliability of the questionnaire, estimated via Cronbach' alpha, was 0.79.

### 3.2.3 Home Cultural Attachment Scale

In order to measure EFL teachers' home cultural dependency, HCAS designed and validated by [38] was employed. This questionnaire includes 36 items with the reliability of 0.87. This questionnaire has 5 constructs: (a) religious attachment, (b) western attachment, (c) Iranian attachment, (d) cultural attachment, and (e) artistic attachment. The participants required to complete it in 15 minutes. The responses were ranged from 1 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree" on a four- point Likert scale. In this study, the total reliability of the questionnaire, estimated via Cronbach' alpha, was 0.74.

### 3.3 Procedure

The process of data collection started from May 2020 until December 2020. To achieve the reliable data, the participants were requested not to write their names on their questionnaires. Their questionnaires were coded numerically before giving them. Then, based on their codes, the researcher measured participants' narrative intelligence.

## IV. Result

Table 1, shows the correlations between teachers' home cultural attachment and their narrative intelligence and table 2 shows the correlation between teachers' home cultural attachment and their emotional intelligence. As tables 1 and 2, indicate the correlation between narrative intelligence and teachers' HCA ( $r=.57$ ,  $p<.01$ ) is higher than the correlation between teachers' emotional intelligence and their HCA ( $r=.45$ ,  $p<.01$ ) In order to have better understanding of the contribution of teachers' HCA to EQ and NI, Structural Equation Modeling was applied.

**Table 1:** Correlation between HCA and Narrative Intelligence and its Sub-components

	NI	Emplotment	Narration	Genreation	Characterization	Thematization
HCA	.57**	.24**	.38**	.38**	.21*	.02

\*  $p<.05$

\*\*  $p<.01$

**Table 2:** Correlation between HCA and Emotional Intelligence and its Sub-components

	EI	Interpersonal	Stress	Intrapersonal	Adaptability	General
		Management			Mood	
HCA	.45**	.53**	.38**	.29**	.24*	.51**

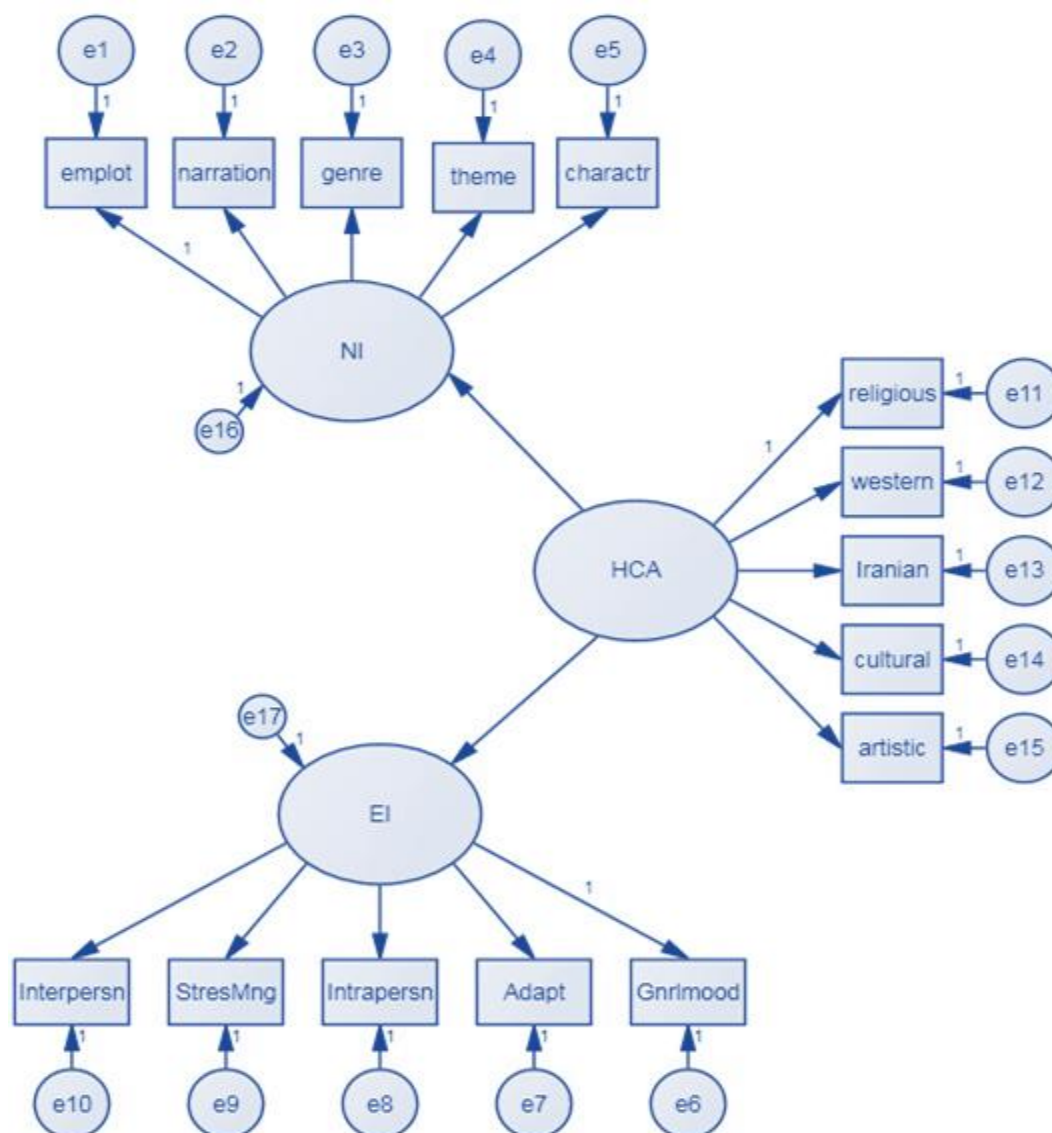
\*  $p<.05$

\*\*  $p<.01$

Before testing the model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run to check whether the measurement model fit the data (Figure1). Goodness-of-fit indices including  $\chi^2/df$  (chi-square divided by degree of freedom), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used. To have an acceptable fit model,  $\chi^2/df$  should be less than 3, GFI, IFI, and CFI should be above .90, and RMSEA should be less than .08 (MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara, 1996). Result of the CFA for the measurement model is given in Table1. As Table1 indicates, measurement model shows adequate fit to the data.

**Table 3:** Goodness of fit indices of the measurement model

	$\chi^2/df$	IFI	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Measurement model	2.32	.91	.94	.93	.91	.05



**Figure1:** Initial model to be tested

The initial model to be tested is given in Figure1. The structural model was tested by employing structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation using AMOS16. The initial model showed good fit to the data (Table 2). IFI, GFI, CFI, and TLI are above .90;  $\chi^2/df$  is below 3; and RMSEA is below .08. All these indices demonstrate that the model is a fit model.

**Table4:** Goodness of fit indices of the structural model

	$\chi^2/df$	IFI	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Structural model	2.41	.93	.92	.92	.93	.06

As figure 2 indicates, home culture attachment was a positive predictor of both narrative intelligence ( $\beta = .54, p < .001$ ) and emotional intelligence ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ). However, as Figure 2 indicates, home culture attachment was a stronger predictor of narrative intelligence than emotional intelligence. Among the subscales of home culture attachment, the highest loading was on artistic factor. It implies that home culture attachment is more related to artistic factor than other factors.

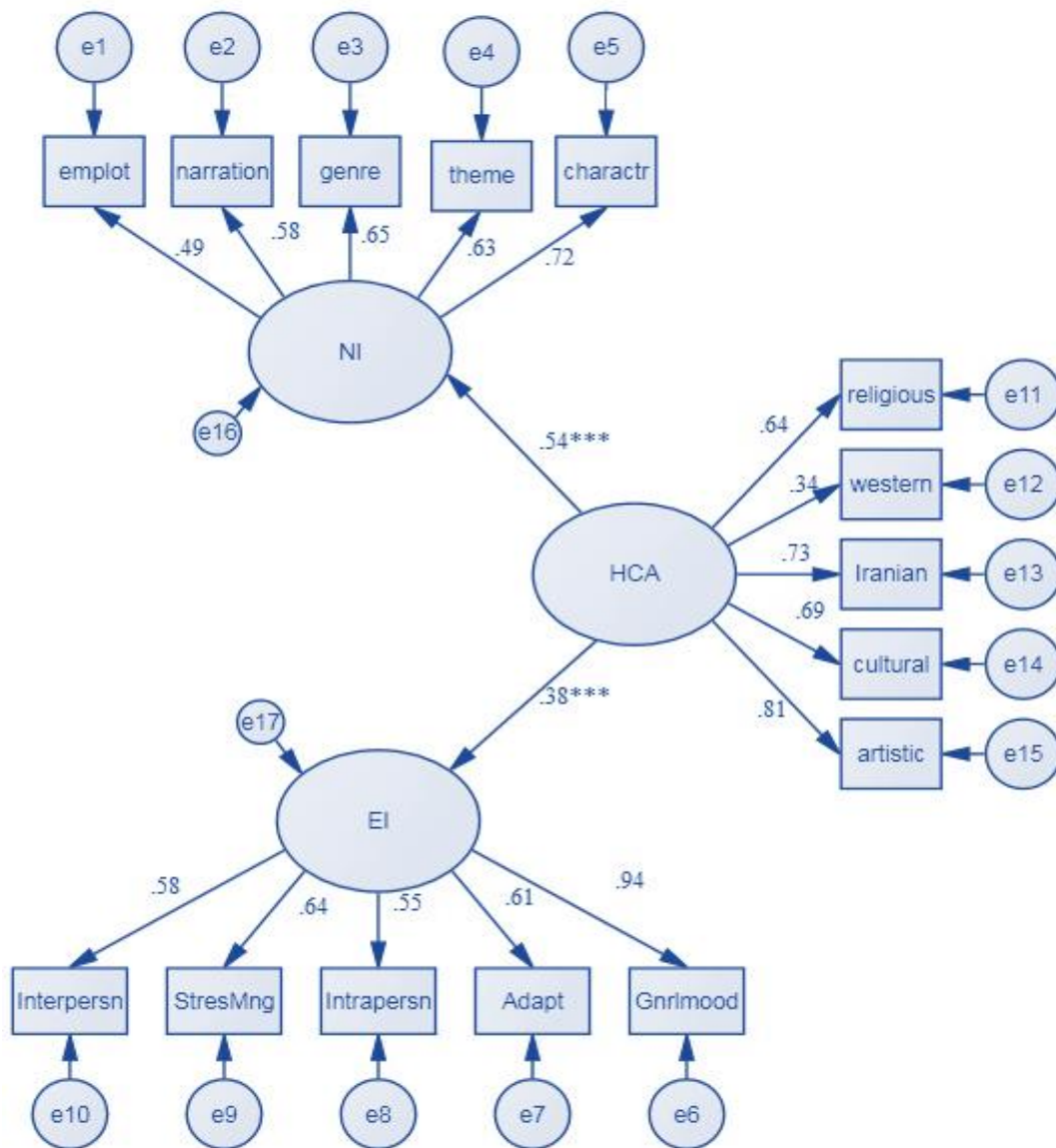


Figure 2. Final model

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study support statistically that EFL teachers' home cultural attachment has dynamic interrelationship with both EQ and NI. The result of the current study demonstrated that Iranian EFL teachers' home cultural attachment accounted for .38 and .54 of the variance in emotional intelligence and narrative intelligence, respectively. However, EFL teachers' home cultural attachment was better contributor of EFL teachers' narrative intelligence than emotional intelligence. These findings are consistent with both theoretical and empirical studies.

The strong relationship between teachers' home cultural attachment and narrative intelligence shows that teacher's respect to their own cultural values lead to their narrative intelligence enrichments and growth. It is in line with [11] argument that cultural factors have an effect on individuals' narrative of their lives. To broaden this notion in teacher education, it seems sensible, when teachers have a comprehensive view of their social norms and values, they can have a better professional functioning, interaction with learners, and as a consequence, create an enjoyable and effective setting in their classrooms. Combined with Randall's definition of narration, it can be stated that teachers' awareness of cultural values can assist them to elaborate lesson points depending heavily on understanding of cultural norms and as a result, they can direct their teaching process in line with L1 cultural norms.

Theoretically, narrative comes from at the heart of culture and is shaped under the influence of cultural norms [11]. Because of its emergence of culture it could be a good representative of teachers' opinions, conceptions, and value system [35]. In narrative intelligence we interact with others based on our perceptions of

our environment and how these perceptions affect our performance and interactions with others [10]. Interpreted in teaching context, the more teachers' conceptions are better and stronger, the better they can perform professionally and create meaningful environment. These creative teachers are expected to produce novel strategies for both teaching and learning process.

Empirically, in telling a story, consciously or unconsciously we have background knowledge about our addressee preferences and we adopt our thinking and speech based on their attitudes and interests [11]. Because of this background knowledge, people within a culture or individuals who have great understanding of other cultures can deal with others easily. Randall's definition of characterization that the more we have knowledge of our participants in our experience or event that we talk about it, the better understanding we have from others, and the more precise we can judge about them can be extended to teaching context. When teachers could realize the shortcomings and positive points in their teaching, they can better converge to their learners' academic and even cultural identities. Also, with the aid of emplotment, teachers can set a hierarchy of what could encourage and motivate them to evaluate their classroom critically. By critically, the researcher means to evaluate objectively, to see themselves, learners, and classrooms from outside, within which personal bias and interest could not interfere.

Regarding second research question, the result presented a significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their home cultural attachment. This is in line with theoretical and empirical studies. Theoretically, expressing emotion is determined according to cultural norms [8]. The definition of culture implies that when an individual follows and respects his cultural values, this cultural attachment influences his EI behaviors [2]. In educational field, there is a wide range of factors influence teachers' emotional experience such as personal reality referring to the teacher-self, social relationships such as the link between teacher-learner, teacher-teacher, teacher-parents ones, and above them is the effect of cultural context [27].

Empirically, in educational context, especially language teachers feel this emotion that students answer their questions based on what they think culturally and socially appropriate. Many factors are influential in learners' background knowledge [1]. Logically teachers and instructions have an influential role in their learners' beliefs constructions [1]. Among many factors, as [27] and [35] mentioned, cultural norms and standards shape teachers' criteria and consequently learning process. It means that from the higher level of education spectrum, from selecting a suitable text book to teach it, from teaching a book on the part of teacher to learn a book on the part of the learner, we deal with a bundle of cultural norms. Let us to deal with this issue from another angle, this package of cultural norms are transferred from one stage to another one and it is supposed that this bundle will be confronted with some changes such as both teachers' and learners' individual factors because they have their own cognitive and emotional unique system which influence teaching as well as learning process [1]. We cannot deny its impressive roles. When a student agrees with what her teacher says, in fact, this agreement enriches this bundle of cultural norms. It shows implicitly that this agreement is consistent with learners' value system. In contrast, when teachers' talk is different from learners' belief, this cultural package may be distorted that is why scholars emphasis that foreign language instruction considers and respects learners' attitudes. In this vein, as mentioned in review of literature, [16] recommend teachers to be conscious of both their students' culture and also the culture which they present in their academic setting.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Findings of the current study assist us to design various tasks in which L2 learners are exposed in a situation which contributed to put their L1 identity, L2 identity, and the self in the same direction. From another angle, the researcher means to remove the probable gap between their identities; how learners enjoy learning a foreign language without losing their mother identities. This goal can be achieved if these L2 learners' teachers are provided with both enriched NI and EQ strategies to employ in their classrooms. For example, how they see the challenging situations and how they can deal with them. It seems that when the distance between teachers' identity especially the preferred identity (one point should be mentioned here is that in educational context, clearly near all teachers attempt to achieve positive identity in terms of being more professional, better communicator, higher proficient, etc.) and self is minimum, teachers are supposed to achieve their academic goals better. With the aid of designing tasks for motivating and fostering students' narrative ability and integrating these with learners' cultural values, we can attain two goals simultaneously: to unconsciously depend our learners on their mother culture and to improve their communicating abilities in L2 in conformity with their own society norms. Narrative has been received attention as a kind of skill [36] and not much as a kind of intelligence in educational field; only a limited studies deal with this issue. With findings of this study, the researcher hopes that these aforementioned intelligences are regarded as complementary ones in designing learners' text books. Another implication of this study is that through narrative, EFL teachers could foster opportunities for enriching learners' beliefs better.

[39] With respect to social constructivist, claimed that identity is regarded as socially constructed and socially situated. We can direct our learners' identity formation by helping her/him to find the appropriate way and here is where narrative intelligence and emotional intelligence can contribute. How she approaches the world [11] and how she creates the reality based on her cultural norms [1] can be realized through both NI and EQ.

Finally, Menard-Warwick recommended teachers should have critical awareness of students' positioning in learning discourse and their conception toward language instruction in order to help students' attempts to remove their linguistic problems of the their new culture [19].

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