

Managing Emotions in the Self & Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Size

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Abstract—Emotional intelligence as a general ability is increasingly relevant to organizational development as its principles provide a new way to understand and assess one's attitude, management styles, personal and interpersonal capabilities. The present research basically aimed at finding out whether managing one's thought as a subscale of emotional intelligence has any relationship with vocabulary achievement of EFL learners or not. For this purpose, a total number of 45 Iranian EFL learners participated in the study. An achievement pre and posttests of vocabulary along with a questionnaire on emotional intelligence were administered. Then, the relationship between vocabulary gain scores and emotional intelligence, as a total entity, and managing one's thought, as one of its subcomponents, were obtained through Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient formula. The results revealed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and vocabulary gain, on one hand, and managing one's thought, on the other hand for Iranian EFL learners. This implies that the more an individual is emotionally intelligent and can manage the self, the more his vocabulary achievement in language classes would be.

Index Terms—emotional intelligence, managing the self, vocabulary size

I. INTRODUCTION

The ability to perceive, understand, and manage one's emotions is perceived as Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Social intelligence can be considered as the origin of EI. EI was first viewed through the lenses of social intelligence, which is the ability to express empathy with others and behave properly in human relationships (Goleman, 1998), but the social relation-related view was not taken seriously for many years. Gardner (1983) is a pioneer in introducing eight different types of intelligences. One of the categories of intelligence as mentioned by Gardner is the personal intelligence, which actually was the first prompt for the extensive development of EI. Goleman (1998) mentioned that through IQ, one can classify people before they start a career; it signals which fields or professions they are more successful in. To learn who will perform to the top or whose work will turn out to be a failure, however, he said EI proves to be a stronger predictor of success.

According to Shields (2002, p.2), though there are varieties in defining intelligence, most people have come to the same idea that intelligence is basically related to abilities of learning through experience and adapting to the environment. Legg and Hutter (2006) stated that intelligence refers to one's possession as it can have any kind of interaction with the environment; it correlates with one's ability to be a success or reach some objectives; and this is quite related to how capable the person is in confronting different situations and how he can adapt to different situations and environments.

The early Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory, sometimes referred to as emotional quotient, was originally developed during the 1970's and 80's by the work of psychologists Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer (Lall, 2009). Definitions and models of emotional intelligence conceptualized it as a mixed set of perceived abilities, properties, skills, and personality traits.

As for kinds and models of emotional intelligence, some are explained by Lynn (2002). The first one is referred to as self-awareness and control. This kind of EI consists of two separate skills. One of its components is self-awareness which refers to intimate and accurate knowledge of one's self and emotions. Moreover, this component refers to the recognition of one's emotional reactions to situations. The other dimension from which Lynn (2002) looks at the phenomenon is empathy. Empathy implies one's capability to understand how others feel in different situations. It involves having a strong understanding of people's feelings toward particular events or circumstances. Another factor which has taken into consideration is called social expertness. This is the ability to produce and get engaged in natural relationships and connections with others, based on the assumption that human beings have a uniform life. This component, in fact, gives people the chance to express emotions freely, even conflict, in order to build relationships instead of destroying them.

Being interested in emotional intelligence and its possible components, Salovey and Grewal (2005) proposed a model known as the ability-based model which states that people are different in their ability to process emotion-related

information and in their ability to have it linked to a more complex cognitive processing. This ability can then be observed in various behaviors and learning situations. The model classifies the total emotional intelligence as consisting of four subclasses. The first category is referred to as perceiving emotions, which is an individual's ability to first diagnose and then analyze emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artifacts. It is also the potential to discover one's own emotions. The second subclass is 'using emotions' which refers to the ability to control emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities. On this basis, an emotionally-intelligent individual is able to capitalize fully upon changing moods in order to best fit the task at hand. The next type is 'understanding emotions' which means the ability to comprehend others' emotions and solve their emotional problems and understand the similarities and differences between different people's emotions. They, then, talk about the last subclass of EI known as 'managing emotions' or the ability to regulate emotions in both oneself and in others. If a person is emotionally intelligent, he is able to change even negative emotions and manage them to achieve his intended goals. According to Salovey and Grewal (2005), if an individual can control his own emotions, he can be predicted as a success in different stages of his life, not only interpersonal relations but self-related processes also including learning and cognitive abilities.

The present study was an attempt to explore whether Iranian EFL learners are able to increase their vocabulary knowledge if their ability to manage their self is high. This study also seeks the relationship between EI as a total entity and vocabulary gains for Iranian EFL students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learners vary enormously in learning a second language. Everybody agrees that there are many people who learn a second language with that much ease and some others, on the other hand, have difficulty doing this. From among a long list of many factors which have direct or indirect relationship with second language learning success such as internal, personality factors like motivation, attitude or personality types, one can predict that the most influential component which can be accounted for success in learning a second or foreign language is the degree of intelligence that an individual has. To be successful in all eras of life, in addition to scientific intelligence, one needs emotional intelligence, too. From the time Darwin proposed his well-known theory to date, most of the definitions and explanations of intelligence, whether emotional or social, consist of a number of major concepts including the ability to discover, understand and to describe one's feelings and emotions, the ability to recognize and interpret other individuals' feelings and finding a reasonable relationship in between, and also the ability to handle one's emotions and to direct feelings in a special route. It additionally implies the ability to take control of, change and find a solution to problems which are in connection with a personal and interpersonal behavior. Finally, it refers to the ability to set and generate positive interpersonal relations and be self-motivated. At present, many language scholars and researchers have defined it as the ability to take control of emotions and feelings along with those of others, to properly distinguish them and to tell them apart in order to guide personal behavior, ideas and opinions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

There are many psychologists who have agreed that emotional intelligence is the issue which has come about through a number of research results and findings in many scientific areas done on the effectiveness of intelligences in the success of human life. The ideas about the outcomes of all these studies confirm that the abilities like empathy, sharing feeling, being optimist, and having self-confidence will result in satisfactory consequences in making relations and having a social life within families, other people and different aspects of the life (Goleman, 1995).

Bar-On (1997), who is a prominent psychologist in the field offered a definition for emotional intelligence stating that it consists of a number of unobservable non-cognitive capabilities and skills that have influences on an individual's potential in managing social problems. He asserted that emotional intelligence is made up of five general components related to an individual's potentials and skills. They include emotional quotient of intrapersonal and interpersonal relations, adaptation and change, stress management, and general mood and feeling.

According to Bar-On (2000), EI is a combination of abilities, potentials and non-cognitive skills that can play a significant role in an individual's capabilities to be successful when he faces environmental pressures. To put it differently, he stated that EI refers to one's ability to diagnose emotions and understand how these emotions can affect interpersonal relationships. He added that, emotional intelligence is "a range of non-cognitive capabilities and skills that affect one's ability to succeed in the coping with environmental needs and pressures" (Bar-On, 2004, p. 111). In fact, he can be considered as the first scholar who used the term emotional quotient (EQ) for the first time as a counterpart to IQ, which is a part of one's cognitive ability. Bar-On considered EQ as a set of social and emotional capabilities that can help people manage the demands of their daily life. He also confirmed that EI can address dimensions of intelligence including personal, social and emotional aspects. EI and emotional skills can, of course, be developed over time and even change along life. They can be connected to any individual's abilities to perform, be process-oriented, and improve through training and practice.

According to Goleman (1998), a noticeable and knowledgeable psychologist in the field of emotional intelligence, is one that can attribute eighty percent of the causes and reasons for any success to the emotional intelligence. He revealed that general intelligence (IQ) normally predicts only about twenty percent ($r=0.45$) of the variance that determined various areas of life success, leaving about eighty percent to other factors.

Regarding the relationship between intelligence and L2 learning, Brown (2000) stated that it is a common idea that a smart and intelligent person is capable of learning a second or a foreign language more successfully because he enjoys

higher levels of cognitive abilities. If a student does not forget something that he or she has seen or heard before, that student would be a successful in learning a language as simply intelligence has traditionally been defined in terms of linguistic and logical capabilities linked to mathematics.

A great number of studies which have done previously indicated that the more intelligent an individual is, the better his professional and academic performance will be. Goleman (1998) suggested a theoretical framework of emotional intelligence that showed an individual's capability for learning and success correlates with intelligence. He added that intelligence is closely tied with self-awareness, self-management, and social competencies such as social awareness and relationship management.

With the aim of understanding whether or not there were any gender differences in students' intelligence ability in relation to their gender, Legg and Hutter (2006) did a study on ninety English language learners and concluded that males showed higher preferences and interests in logical mathematical intelligence.

On the other hand, Razmjoo's (2008) study on intelligence revealed that the use of interpersonal intelligence by females was higher than that of males, and also there were no significant difference between male and female participants regarding language achievement and types of intelligences.

Besharat, Rezazadeh, Firoozi, and Habibi (2005) showed the influence of EI on mental health and academic success. They did the study on a group of 220 Iranian university students at Isfahan University. They highlighted that EQ was negatively correlated with psychological stress. According to Ciarrochi, Chan, and Bajgar (2001), Emotional Quotient (EQ) is about the intelligent use of emotions and using the power or information included in emotion to make effective decisions. Based on this definition, emotional intelligence supplies the principle for the development of a large number of competencies and abilities that help learners do activities more effectively. Studying intelligence in a second or foreign language context, Pishgadam (2009) studied the relationship between EQ and second language success. His sample group consisted of 528 Iranian students at Tehran University. He found that second language skills and their school average scores could interestingly be related to stress management and intrapersonal skills in the emotional intelligence questionnaire.

All in all, more work is needed to establish the conditions where EI could show the potential to predict an individual professional and academic success. It is possible that skills related to emotional intelligence can be considered useful specially when students attend the university. This context typically involves leaving home, having less emotional support from parents and family, dealing with new friends and managing stress or anxiety associated university studies. Yet, it may become less salient once this transition is done with a considerable success (Austin, Evans, Goldwater, & Potter, 2005).

Following Salovey and Grewal (2005) and Pishgadam (2009) who confirmed the positive role of emotional intelligence as a general entity and intrapersonal skills as a part of EI in language success, the present research was an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge enhancement and their ability to manage their self?
2. Is there any relationship between EI as a total entity and vocabulary gains for Iranian EFL students?

On the basis of the above-mentioned questions, two null hypotheses were formed.

III. METHOD

A. Participants

A total number of 45 students at the Zand Institute of Higher Education in Shiraz took part in this study. They were sophomore students of English translation and literature who had already passed their comprehension course (I), and they were assumed to be at the same level of English vocabulary knowledge. To further check this homogeneity, the descriptive statistics for their performance in the vocabulary test was obtained, investigated and presented in a distribution curve.

B. Instruments

In order to answer the research questions, two instruments were used in the present study. To check the students' vocabulary achievement, a vocabulary knowledge test was developed and piloted before the actual administration of the test. The test consisted of 45 multiple-choice vocabulary items selected from the students' reading comprehension book. As it was an achievement test, the content was confirmed by two of the university professors teaching reading courses and was assumed to be valid as far as the content was concerned. The reliability of the test was obtained through Cronbach Alpha and turned out to be .81, which is a high level of reliability.

The second instrument used in this study was the Schutte's Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test (1998). This test consisted of 33 items on a five-point Likert scale, the items of which had values ranging from 1 to 5. The test items were related to three aspects of emotional intelligence, out of which those related to managing one's self and thought were focused in this study. Also, the total EI score for each participant was considered for further analysis. The test was previously reported as being standard and thus reliable and valid.

C. Procedures

In order to answer the research questions, a total number of 45 sophomore students majoring in English at the Zand Institute of Higher Education were selected based on availability non-random sampling method. To observe the research ethics, all the participants were informed of the purpose of the research before they actually took part in the study. At the beginning of the academic semester, the participants took the vocabulary achievement test. The purpose was two-fold: in the first place, the researcher intended to ensure the homogeneity of the subjects before the instruction; in the second place, the test was assumed to function as a pretest, the results of which were to be compared with those of the posttest later. They also filled out the EI questionnaire in about fifteen minutes.

Then, the treatment started. It took two one-and-a-half hour sessions per week for approximately three and a half months. The students learned the words in the context of reading comprehension passages and did the related comprehension exercises and word checks at home. After the instruction, the participants took the same vocabulary test which was administered at the beginning of the term. The results of the two tests along with the students' scores in the EI questionnaire were considered as the data for this study.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In order to see if the participants were homogeneous or not regarding their lexical knowledge, a vocabulary test was administered. The results of the descriptive statistics for subject selection are presented in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR SUBJECT SELECTION

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocab pretest	45	8.00	19.00	14.0000	2.92326

In order to see the scores on a diagram, the distribution was converted into a histogram. According to Figure 1, the participants' vocabulary mean score falls in the center and the shape looks like a normal curve.

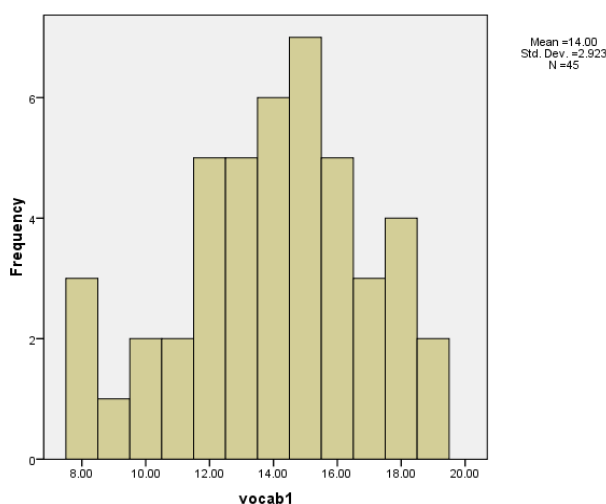


Figure 1 Distribution of Participants' Vocabulary Pretest Scores

Based on Figure 1, the participants' vocabulary knowledge before the treatment was considered homogeneous. In order to answer the first research question, the students' vocabulary gain scores were computed by subtracting each individual's vocabulary posttest from pretest scores. Then, using Pearson Product-Moment correlation, the possible relationship between students' managing-the-self scores and vocabulary gain scores was obtained. Table 2 indicates the results.

TABLE 2.
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MANAGING-THE-SELF SCORES AND VOCABULARY GAINS

	Vocabulary gain scores	
Managing the self	Pearson correlation	.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	45

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

As Table 2 reveals, the correlation between students' gain scores and their scores on the subscale of emotional intelligence, managing the self, is significant with the magnitude of .752 at the significance level of 0.01. This implies that the more a student's score in managing one's thought, the higher vocabulary gain score will be. Therefore, the first research hypothesis stating that there is not any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary gain scores and their ability to manage their self is rejected.

To answer the second research question, the total EI scores were calculated. Then, Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was obtained for the relationship between total EI and vocabulary gain scores. The results are shown in the following table.

TABLE 3.
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN TOTAL EI AND VOCABULARY GAINS

Total EI Scores		Vocabulary gain scores
	Pearson correlation	.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	45

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

As Table 3 indicates, the correlation coefficient for the relationship between students' total EI and vocabulary gain scores was .759, which exceeds the significance level (sig.=.000). It can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between total EI and vocabulary knowledge development. Therefore, the second null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between EI as a total entity and vocabulary gains for Iranian EFL students is rejected here.

In line with the present research, Saklofske, Austin, and Miniski (2003) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, linguistic intelligence, and vocabulary learning and found a correlation between emotional intelligence and vocabulary knowledge, and between first language and vocabulary knowledge. The results of the present research are also in support of Aki (2006), who confirmed that language learning is a concept that depends upon both the learner himself as with regard to inter and intrapersonal communication.

Concerning learners' emotional intelligence level and vocabulary knowledge, the results support Asadollahfam, Salimi and Pashazadeh (2012) who argued that "while both groups with high emotional intelligence outperform in their vocabulary tests, females with high EI show high vocabulary knowledge in comparison with males" (p. 836). According to these findings, emotional intelligence is a good predictor of success in learners' attainments. "Learners with higher emotional comprehension", they stated, "they have good self-respect; they are able to manage situations, have positive relationship with others, and they can control their stress, have flexibility in new situations, and are aware of their feelings" (p. 836).

This study also supports Shakiba and Barani (2011) who showed that there is a reliable and meaningful relationship between emotional quotient, its components and language proficiency. The findings are in line with Karimi (2011) as it indicated that managing one's own emotions and being aware of and responsive to others' emotions would contribute to the L2 productive skills for Iranian EFL learners.

On the other hand, the results of this study are in contrast with Lotfikashani, Lotfiazimi, and Vaziri's study (2012) who found that there was no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the students' end-of-the-term scores. In their study, Nesari, Karimi and Filinezhad (2011) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and vocabulary learning. *T*-test analysis of the findings indicated that "the observed *t*-value was -1.57 at the confidence level of $p < .05$ " (p. 903). In other words, there were no significant differences between high and low emotionally-intelligent learners' mean scores and their vocabulary learning. Therefore, the results of their study are in contrast with what was gained in the present research. This, of course can be due to many factors including the context of learning and general intelligence level of the participants.

V. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the present study was to see if the amount of vocabulary a foreign language student can learn can be related to his ability to manage his thoughts. It was also an attempt to find any possible relationship between Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary gains as their emotional intelligence as a whole. The results of the analyses indicated that there exists a significant positive relationship between EI, the ability to manage one's thoughts and the vocabulary achievement of Iranian EFL learners. The findings of this study are both theoretically and practically significant as it provides teachers with opportunities to look differently at their instruction and assessment. The results can help materials designers prepare instructional materials which can provoke learners' to make use of their abilities to manage their thoughts and foster their ability to involve both personal and interpersonal skills. As for the students themselves, the results help them become aware that knowing about their emotions and being able to control them is a way to language success.

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