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The Relationship between Interpersonal Intelligence, Reading Activity and Vocabulary Learning among Iranian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper was to describe the relationship between Interpersonal Intelligence and the learners' vocabulary learning through teaching reading activity so as to see whether this type of intelligence contributes to better vocabulary learning and whether there is any significant relationship between the performance of participants with interpersonal intelligence and their vocabulary learning in reading activity or not. This quantitative study consisted of a vocabulary test, a reading passage, an English proficiency test and a Multiple Intelligences questionnaire followed the study. A pre- test and post -test were conducted to get the differences in the students' post- test vocabulary score and their pre- test vocabulary score served as their gain score in vocabulary knowledge through reading. The comparison between the students' scores showed that there was no significant difference in the final performance of two groups. Therefore, this study doesn't support the idea of relationship between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning through reading, but as a positive point, the present study indicated that reading texts can greatly assist the learners in developing the level of their vocabulary knowledge. This study proved to be useful for Iranian EFL learners and also EFL teachers can adopt the technique in their classes to advance their students' language learning. A comparison of the results after the next course cycle will then allow us to assess the effects of enhancing vocabulary knowledge, which would not be possible without reading texts.

Keywords: *Multiple Intelligences, Interpersonal Intelligence, Vocabulary Learning, Reading Activity, EFL*

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1. Introduction

According to philosophers and scientists, intelligence is an important part of psychology. It is considered as an inborn feature in human beings which makes all learners different from each other in language learning. Gardner (1993) defines intelligence as "the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings" (p.87). Initially, Gardner divided intelligences into seven categories in 1983. They are linguistic intelligence, logical mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Later, he added two other intelligences to them (naturalist and existential) (Gardner, 2003). He mentioned that each intelligence have different learning styles and a significant value in educational

settings. Based on his point of view, each of us is a unique individual with unique patterns of intelligences that make us exceptional among others.

The ability to understand other people, to work cooperatively and to communicate effectively is part of the interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is a kind of intelligence which helps us to interact with others and understand their moods, feelings, motivations and intentions.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning is shaped and influenced by social interaction. As Dornyei and Murphy (2003) explain from a Vygotskian social constructivist point of view, learning happens inter mentally first between minds in interaction and only later becomes one's own learning intra mentally. Due to the nature of interpersonal intelligence, cooperative Learning is a method which

helps to develop this intelligence in the language classroom (Casal, 2002).

As Shen (2003) has stated, the important role of word knowledge cannot be ignored in language pedagogy due to the number of available theories on L2 vocabulary learning and teaching. Due to importance of this component of language in expressive the communicative intensions, more attention should be directed towards effective teaching of the lexical items. Consequently, vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) have received more attention from the researchers. They suggested some different and useful ways in teaching or learning vocabulary. Nation (2001) focused on the significance of direct teaching of various vocabulary learning strategies in order to increase the students' knowledge of vocabulary and also encourage them to utilize them actively.

One of the useful ways is learning vocabulary through reading activity by using different contexts. Using various contexts and engaging students in active thinking about word meanings provide opportunities for learners to develop vocabulary knowledge. Research in second/foreign language vocabulary acquisition has also displayed that learners acquire vocabulary incidentally through reading (Daskalovska, 2011). Some researchers have found that most second language vocabulary learning occurs through reading texts while learners are involved in reading for comprehension (Coady, 1999 ;Waring, 2003). A number of vocabulary acquisition researchers have investigated the rate of words learners learn from reading in a second or foreign language (Waring & Nation, 2004). So, vocabulary acquisition is considered as one of the main requirements of language learning as mentioned above.

The present study attempts to investigate the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL students in reading activity with a focus on gender. Based on this study, it is hoped that researchers and teachers feel and realize the importance of interpersonal intelligence and its influence on teaching and find ways to improve their students' learning in language skills and sub-skills especially vocabulary.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1 Multiple Intelligence

Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory was first developed by Gardner (1983). Gardner believed that we all have different

combinations of intelligences which work together and make individuals different. But Gardner mentioned that our schools and culture focus most attention on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences and ignore other intelligences. He claimed that we should also place equal attention on those who show gifts in the other intelligences to enrich the world we live. So, Gardner created his theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in 1983. The theory of MIs has always been a controversial view in language learning, and there have been many different views about the relationship between MIs and language learning (Zarei & Mohseni, 2012). At the early genesis of MIT by Gardner (1983), the father of MI theory, his definition of intelligence is the natural ability to solve problems or create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings; however, recently, Gardner extended his first conception of intelligence and refined it as a psychological potential that provides a learner with an opportunity to process information which can be activated in a cultural products that are culturally valuable (as cited in Zarei & Mohseni, 2012).

Initially Gardner identified 7 relatively autonomous capacities, namely, linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Later, he added an eighth intelligence (naturalist intelligence), and worked for a possible ninth intelligence (existential intelligence) (Gardner, 2003). MIT is proposed and put into practice in a way to call for an alternative classroom design to traditional classroom setting. It has been embraced by the teachers in need of an educational program which addresses a variety of ways people learn (Shore, 2014). In order to explain why MI is an effective way of teaching and why it can overcome some of our problems in education, Moran, Kornhaber and Gardner (2006) give the following example; Think of LEGO building blocks. If we have only one kind of block to play with, we can build only a limited range of structures. If we have a number of different block shapes that can interconnect to create a variety of patterns and structures, we can accomplish more nuanced and complex designs. The eight or nine intelligences work the same way.

Poole's (2000) clear description of an MI classroom seems to be helpful in



understanding the potential of the theory in practice. In an integrated and cooperative MI classroom, the teacher employs non-traditional approaches to construction of meaning through a flexible but careful planning. The small social groups and learner-centered activities enable the students to share information and get a better understanding of what is learnt. In such a relaxed and nonthreatening learning environment that is characterized by contextual clues, learners receive comprehensible input by working collaboratively. Classroom research has reported that MIT is a promising theoretical construct which can foster students' learning. Haley's (2014) research on the ways teachers apply MIT in foreign and second language classrooms showed that students in experimental groups outperformed those in control groups while developing a high degree of satisfaction and positive attitude toward the content. Similarly, in agreement with Emig (1997), Haley (2014), Hamurlu (2017) found that MIT-based instruction increased students' achievement in English classes and had positive effect on students' attitudes towards English.

2.2 Interpersonal Intelligence

The interpersonal component is used in person to person relationships through verbal and non-verbal communication. This intelligence involves the ability to interact with, work with and motivate others toward a common goal. For example, the solution to the problem in a science laboratory classroom needs to be mapped out by following the guidelines to the scientific method. Student lab groups collectively state the problem, write a hypothesis and conduct experiments in order to achieve the group goal and solving the problem. The interpersonal intelligence also includes the ability to have empathy for others' feelings, values, need and be able to understand what other people are "going through in life." Whenever a conflict or problem arises this social model does not compromise until a win-win solution is the result for the parties involved. Peer mediation is a strategy used to diffuse the situation. This is often referred to as being "People Smart".

Characteristics of an Interpersonally Intelligent Student is to be leaders among peers, encourages togetherness for a feeling of belonging, "street smart"; has a high degree of common sense, has many friends in a variety of social groups, hates to study

or work alone would rather do things collectively, possesses a high degree of social skills and shows concern for others.

2.3 The Importance of Vocabulary Learning

The importance of vocabulary learning is undeniable and the need for sustained vocabulary learning is clear. According to August (2005), limited vocabulary knowledge of L2 learners make them not to be able to understand the target language text and not to be able to communicate properly. Similarly, Allen (1983) points to the significant role of vocabulary learning in ESL/EFL context. He states that L2 speakers know a great number of words that speakers and writers of the target language employ in their interactions and asserts that teachers and students agree on the need to learn a large number of vocabulary items. Krashen (1989) also emphasizes the important role vocabulary knowledge plays in L2 communications and states that most of the meaning in a language is carried by lexical items (as cited in Tozcu & Coady 2004).

Vocabulary learning is at the heart of language learning and language use. As Zygadlo (2007) puts it, lexical knowledge is what makes the essence of a given language. He further adds that it is not easy to conduct a message or communicate in English by those who have learnt only grammatical structures and their knowledge of words needs to be enriched. He explains that many EFL learners have somehow experienced that most of their time spent over the L2 learning process has been devoted to absorbing and remembering vocabulary. In this regard, Gorjian, et al (2011) also point to the importance of vocabulary knowledge by stating that L2 learners can boost their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and may eventually improve comprehension and production in the L2 by vocabulary learning.

According to Meara (2005), the importance of vocabulary learning becomes more important due to the fact that English has a rich and a very large group of vocabularies. In fact, Nation (2001) explained why English lexical system is a complicated mixture of Germanic and Romance words (Meara, 2005). He further explains that the result of this mixture of items is that learning English lexical items presents a lot of very complicated problems for foreign learners. Accordingly, an effective solution must be exerted for this problem and that is why English learners must be familiarized with useful methods of

learning lexical items. If not, they may feel disappointed and lose their confidence (Yunus and et al. 2016).

2.4 Vocabulary Learning in Reading Activity

A number of vocabulary acquisition researchers have investigated the rate of words learners learn from reading in a second or foreign language (Waring & Nation, 2004). The studies on second/foreign language acquisition have demonstrated that reading can help learners enrich their vocabulary knowledge through reading (Brown et al., 2008; Zahar et al., 2001). The findings show that reading can be an important source for vocabulary acquisition.

One of the techniques that teachers can use to enhance their pupils' vocabulary is reading. Despite the important role it has, vocabulary learning through reading program is not a core part of language program's curriculum in EFL/ESL contexts (Waring, 2012). Teaching vocabulary through reading approach is rarely practiced in EFL/ESL English classrooms. EFL/ESL learners are not exposed to enough language to build a large vocabulary (Grabe & Stoller; 2002). Hosseini: (2007, P. 4) maintains that "Iranian students do not have ample opportunities for more natural acquisition of the language as well as vocabulary acquisition". He further asserts that "Under such circumstances, there is very little scope for genuine and meaningful interaction and effective language learning" (p. 6).

A study was done by Waring and Takaki (2003) who provided empirical support to the prediction that vocabulary is acquired from reading. Words encountered in a variety of contents in which new words are presented contribute the learners or readers to acquire the mastery of full knowledge of semantics (Krashen, 1989). Following Krashen's (1989) idea on full mastery of word knowledge through reading, different measures are required to measure full knowledge of vocabulary gained from reading (Waring & Takaki, 2003) as word knowledge comes in different levels: knowledge of recognition of form, recognition of meaning and producing meaning. Another reason for using different measures is that as vocabulary acquisition is an incremental process using measurements that are sensitive to capturing partial knowledge is also required (Schmitt, 2010).

2.4 MI and EFL Teaching/ Learning

In recent years, a number of studies have been conducted to investigate the role of MI

and its applications in various educational settings. Mett, Jordan and Harper (1997) conducted a study to investigate the impact of a MI curriculum in an elementary school. They used observation and survey for data collection. On the basis of their analyses of the data, three themes emerged "(a) students, teachers, and parents were very positive about the concept of multiple intelligences; (b) they were positive about school-wide implementation, including flow time, activity room and enrichment clusters; and (c) classroom implementation of MI concepts was uneven across classrooms" (p. 115).

In one study by Supon (1999) the use of the MI theory and rubric design was done to evaluate students learning. The utilization of 'how' various assessment procedures can be used in the K-12 classroom as well as means to access quality results by preparing teacher-created rubrics were discussed. It is argued that weaving the MI into a rubric design provides the teachers with challenging and rewarding tools for assessing learners' performance (Supon, 1999). Chan (2001) conducted a study to assess the variability of the use of a self-report checklist identifying aspects of giftedness in a sample of 192 Chinese secondary students from a multiple intelligences perspective. Osciak and Milheim (2001) focused on MI strategies which could be implemented with web-based instruction. They stated that "utilizing the principles of Multiple Intelligences theory and the dynamics of the Internet allow instructional designers to develop learning experiences that are diversified, exploratory, guided and soundly constructed" (P.358). Mbuva (2003) focused on the implementation of the MI theory in 21st century teaching and learning environment. He suggested that MI theory is an effective teaching and learning tool at all levels. Mbuva who examined various types of intelligences, offered a definition of MI and discussed the historical developments of MI. He further argued about the application of the MI into the classroom social environment. The researcher concluded that "traditional ways of understanding pedagogy and static methods of teaching are giving way to the new classroom examination and application of the MI" (p. 1). He also noted that teachers should take account of the cognition, language, and culture of each of their students.



Rule and Lord (2003) edited an activity book containing 13 curriculum units which are designed to help learners who need special help including gifted students with enhanced instruction. To this end, Bloom's level of cognitive understanding and Gardner's MI theory were utilized to provide a framework for individualized instruction. Bloom's taxonomic levels and Gardner's eight multiple intelligences are the basis of the activities. McMahan, et al. (2004) evaluated the reliability of an instrument designed to assess MI, namely, the Teele Inventory of Multiple Intelligences (TIMI). They also investigated the relationship between intellectual preferences and reading achievement. The results indicated that the instrument does not provide consistent measurement and needs further development and refinement. In another study Hajhashemi, et al. (2011) attempted to find out the relationship between the MI and language learning strategies used by Iranian EFL high school students. Participants of the study consist of 229 students (121 males, 108 females). Findings revealed a low, positive correlation between the MI and learning strategies.

3. Research Design

A non-experimental, descriptive and correlational quantitative design was used in this study. No treatment was used in this study and also no variable was manipulated to cause a change. In fact, the necessary data were collected through a set of instruments to provide insights about the issue of concern in the current study.

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study were a convenient sample of 30 (15 male and 15 female) freshmen students whose dominant intelligence are interpersonal. A Multiple Intelligence (MI) questionnaire was administered in order to elicit the participants' responses and also types of intelligence. The researcher managed to have access to 100 participants who could answer the MI questionnaire. Finally, thirty students who had a dominant interpersonal intelligence type were selected as the main participant of the study. They were all majoring in English Language Translation at Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas branch, Iran. In fact, the attempt was made to choose a homogenous sample of participants in term of language proficiency. To this end, 30 participants whose scores on the proficiency test fell on standard deviation above and one standard deviation

below the mean were chosen to be intermediate level.

3.2 Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of a vocabulary test, a reading passage, an English proficiency test and a Multiple Intelligences questionnaire. Since our main concern in the present study was to see the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning through reading, these two constructs must have operationalized and appropriately measured.

In order to measure students' vocabulary learning through reading, the researcher developed a ten item test of vocabulary knowledge based on a reading passage. In fact, the vocabulary items from the reading passage were singled out for the vocabulary test. For this selection, the criteria of frequency of use, scope, usability and complexity were taken into account. This ten item vocabulary test was in the multiple choice format in which each item was presented in a sentence and underlined and the students were required to select the appropriate synonym for the word in each stem among the given alternatives. More specifically, this test as pre-test and post-test of the study and served as a benchmark for comparing the performance of different individuals.

Furthermore, in order to operationalize the vocabulary learning through reading, the students were required to read a reading passage in which the items of vocabulary tests featured there and were in the bold form to catch the learners' attention and attempts for figuring out their meanings. This passage was selected from a corpus of test for TOEFL exam and the students were required to read the text carefully, try to understand the meanings of the underlined words and finally write a summary of about 150-200 words on the main content of the reading passage.

The reason behind asking the learners writing a summary instead of presenting multiple choice items assessing their comprehension was the fact that summary writing requires further mental processing and cognitive engagement with the reading passage.

In order to identify the intelligence of the participants, the MI questionnaire was distributed to the students. Armstrong (1994) states that the MI inventory is a form that was designed to assess the strengths of the individuals or determined by each of the intelligence in this study, Mckenzi (1999)

MI inventory (albeit, the Persian translated version) was used. Some researchers have claimed the overall internal consistency in the range of 0.85 and 0.90 for the questionnaire. It consists of 90 statements related to each of the nine intelligences proposed by Gardner (1999). In the study each respondent was required to compute the questionnaire by making Yes/ N next to each statement based on their own understanding of themselves.

Finally, Nelson English Language Proficiency test (Fowler & Coe, 1976) was administered to the participations so as to identify the learners with an intermediate proficiency level. It consisted of 50 multiple-choice items organized in four paths: grammar, (two sections), vocabulary and reading comprehension. The allotted time was 40 minutes.

3.3 Results

The present study was intended to investigate the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning through reading of a group of Iranian EFL learners.

3.3.1 Descriptive statistics of interpersonal intelligence items in MI

A multiple intelligence survey developed and validated by McKenzie (1999) based on Howard Gardner's identification of different kinds of intelligences possess: visual / spatial, verbal / linguistic, mathematical / logical, bodily / kinesthetic, musical / rhythmic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist and existential. Interpersonal intelligence that is the issue of our concern in the present study refers to learning through interaction with others that promotes collaboration and working with others. The interpersonal section in the MI survey had ten items and the descriptive statistics for these items based on the responses of the participants of the current study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of interpersonal intelligence items

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I learn best interacting with others	.77	.42
2	I enjoy informal chat and serious discussion	.77	.42
3	The more the merrier	.54	.50
4	I often serve as a leader among peers and colleagues	.74	.44
5	I value relationships more than ideas and accomplishments	.77	.42
6	Study groups are very productive for me	.74	.44
7	I am a "team player"	.80	.40
8	Friends are important to me	.77	.42
9	I belong to more than three clubs or organizations	.41	.50
10	I dislike working alone	.61	.49

As it is depicted in the above table, item number seven (that is, I am a team player) had a highest mean score ($M=.80$ and $SD=.40$), which can be considered as the most tangible experience for Iranian EFL learners. Item number nine (that is, I belong to more than three clubs or organizations) had the lowest mean score ($M=.41$ and $SD=.50$) which can be attributed to the limited number of social organizations or clubs in Iranian socio cultural context. On the average, the patterns depicted in the above table indicate that Iranian learners optimally value their interpersonal relationships.

Since our main intention was to examine the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning through reading of Iranian EFL learners, the participants of the study also responded to a researcher-made vocabulary learning through reading test. Herein students' gain scores (post-test score minus pre-test scores) will be used as an index for their vocabulary learning through reading.

Table 2: Correlation between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning through reading

		Interpersonal intelligence	Gain score
Interpersonal intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.317
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.082
	N	31	31

The table presents the results of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. As it is shown, there wasn't any significant relationship between these two variables ($r=-.317$, $\text{Sig.}=.08 > .05$). This finding can be attributed to the underlying nature of these two variables: interpersonal intelligence is a social variable, but vocabulary learning is more an independent undertaking that mostly depends on individual endeavor and effort. The small number of participants can also be another factor to explain this lack of significant relationship between these two variables since most of the parametric statistical tests are highly dependent upon the sample size and require a large sample to reach a significant level.

Table 3: Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest Posttest	-7.74	4.05	.728	-9.23	-6.25	-10.62	30	.000



Paired samples statistics also indicated that this difference was statistically significant ($t=-10.62$, $df=30$, $sig.$ (2-tailed)=.000) which conform the idea that the learners have significantly improved their vocabulary knowledge from pre-test to post-test and reading text has performed a good role and has served as an effective medium to enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

4. Discussion & Conclusion

The present study indicated that there is no significant relationship between interpersonal intelligence and vocabulary learning through reading. This finding can be mostly attributed to the idiosyncratic nature of the context and participants of the present study and never undervalues the importance of considering multiple intelligences in general and interpersonal intelligence in particular in educational settings because Multiple intelligences theory provides different pathways to tap the diverse students' learning preferences. Different intelligence types are considered as learning tools and have a contribution to the learners' success and development. Therefore, all of the intelligences should be activated if the aim of education is to train successful individuals in everyday life in the globalized diverse world. Consequently, within a MI framework, language teachers are strongly recommended to represent all the intelligences, "while not losing sight that their purpose is to teach language (Fahim, Bagherzadeh, & Alemi, 2010, p. 5).

As a positive point, the present study indicated that reading texts can greatly assist the learners in developing the level of their vocabulary knowledge, which confirms the results of previous studies which have demonstrated that foreign language learners can acquire a significant number of unknown words through reading. A significant outcome of this research is a call to return to the issue of the role of extensive reading in EFL classrooms. While extensive reading alone is not suggested as a model for EFL vocabulary development (Laufer, 2003), it has been shown to lead to significant gains in vocabulary learning beyond high frequency words (Horst, 2005; Lee, 2007).

4.1 Implications of the Study

Proponents of MI-based education identify classroom as more than a place that students simply learn facts, but instead where students learn how to learn

and think critically about their learning. This enhances each individual's prospects on post-graduation because they come out with the ability to solve problem and work in a multitude of work settings. The opportunities created for post-graduation give each of the students a purpose in the classroom. Classroom, no longer is only for students going on in academia, but instead everyone is prepared to be citizen of the world (Carig, 2007).

Teachers usually see the students who come to the classroom with different sets of developed intelligences. Thus, there is a need to deal with different students with varying strengths. It may sound impossible to cater for all the different needs of these differing students. However, this is possible if the teacher centers the lesson arounds the nine intelligences. By encompassing all the nine intelligences, these students will benefit from their different levels of intelligences. Gardner (1987, pp. 187-193) says that "teachers should recognize and nurture all the varied human intelligences, and all the combinations of intelligences". Thus, teachers' should acknowledge different intelligences of the students and prepare student-centered activities that cater to all the students' intelligences. In this way, students experience success in learning. Students come to celebrate their own uniqueness and honor the diversity they discover among themselves. Thus, recognizing students' intelligences and learning in a conductive environment are vital for effective learning to take place.

As for the implications of interpersonal intelligence, teachers can help their students to benefit most from such learning activities as pair work, group brainstorming, peer tutoring, role plays, etc. Therefore, teachers may set out their classes in such a way that the students can understand their perspectives and options that are highly interpersonal intelligence connected. Educational methods such as cooperative learning and social constructivism, stresses the importance of interaction of the participants in the learning situation.

In addition, since reading can be the main source of vocabulary growth in foreign language contexts and because this and other studies have demonstrated that foreign language learners can acquire vocabulary from reading. An important pedagogical implication would be that language learning programs would incorporate an extensive

reading component which would give learners the opportunity to enrich their vocabulary, to see how the language functions in authentic contexts, to read at their own pace and to choose texts that interest them which should increase their motivation and interest in learning the language. Such reading supplemented with specific vocabulary exercises leads to the acquisition of even greater numbers of words as well as greater depth of knowledge.

Due to importance of acquiring vocabulary through reading, there would appear to be a strong case when selecting ELT course books for classroom use to supplement use of the text with extensive reading of graded readers or other suitable reading material.

In line with the limitations of the study, more longitudinal research studies by using more rigorous research methods and more standardized research instruments are needed to further explore Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning through reading. In fact, a semester-long instructional program in reading and vocabulary instruction can better serve this purpose. Further studies can also qualitatively explore the learners' personal experiences and their level of engagement with learning vocabulary through reading. Future studies can also investigate other aspects of vocabulary knowledge such as the effects of reading on the learners' vocabulary size and vocabulary depth. As a final suggestion, research must continue to further explore the issue due to the relative importance of language input and instructional techniques on vocabulary acquisition.

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