

Research Article

How Has Political and Socio-economic Status affected Iranian EFL Learners' Motivation to Learn English

Naser Salehi

Department of English, Darab Branch, Islamic Azad University, Darab, Iran

*Corresponding author: Naser.salehi@iau.ac.ir

(Received: 2023/12/11; Accepted: 2025/01/28)

Online publication: 2025/01/31

Abstract

This research study aims to investigate motivating factors underlying Iranian EFL learners' desire to learn English, specifically those connected to political and socio-economic milieu. The study considers the changing political and social landscape in Iran, which has been shaped by globalization and advancements in information and communication technology (ICT). To achieve this goal, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with thirty participants with an intermediate to advanced level of English studying at a private institute as well as a paramedical school. The interviews were transcribed and the data was then analyzed using a systematic approach, including open, axial, and selective coding. The resulting model identified seven factors and twenty-seven categories contributing to language motivation. These seven factors were 'the government's foreign and economic policy', 'transfer of religious and national ideology and patriotism', 'academic and occupational aspirations', 'improving social life', 'fear of failure', 'International posture', and 'IT advancements'. The findings of the study implied that there are more factors than just instrumental or integrative motivation affecting Iranian learners' motivation calling for more research regarding motivation in the Iranian context. This model can also serve as a valuable resource for informing future educational policies and curriculum development in Iran.

Keywords: EFL, Iranian learners, motivation, political landscape, social milieu

Introduction

Motivation is conceived of as an influential incentive toward achieving any goal and desire. Regarding foreign and second language learning, motivation has been receiving more and more attention from language learning researchers in the last four decades as it is evident in the abundance of the field's literature. Motivation research has observed bulk of discussion and theory investigating the tangled spirit of language learning motivation and its influence in the field of second language acquisition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Also, since late 90s and the introduction of globalization, power relations, political shifts worldwide leading to widespread migration, and identity concerns into the realm of language learning, motivation-themed SLA research has shifted toward taking these global issues into consideration in order to see how they might change what we theorize about motivation to learn a new language. To name just a few of these research attempts, one can refer to studies carried out by Coetzee-Van Rooy (2006) , Csizér and Dörnyei (2005), Dörnyei and Németh (2006) , Taguchi et al. (2009), and Ushioda (2006).

What is motivation? What seems to be really easy to define suddenly turns out to be a thoroughly complicated matter. Actually, there has been an abundance of theories of motivation, which in turn are due to and associated with different psychological perspectives (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998) , and that is why defining motivation in a definite way seems a bit demanding. However, there is a fact about it upon which many experts in the field agree and it is clearly stated by Dörnyei (1998) as motivation is responsible for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction. and that motivation is the initial drive to embark on learning a new language and furthermore persisting in continuing it in spite of all difficulties that may come along.

Here, with a view toward the progression of motivational definitions, some accounts of motivation are presented. Woolfolk (1998) defined motivation as an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior. Brown (1994) defined motivation as an internal process that activates, guides, and maintains behavior over time. Undoubtedly, Robert Gardner is the pioneer of socio-psychological motivational theory. According to Gardner (1985), L2 motivation could be defined as the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity. Motivation, as Gardner accentuates, is categorized as 'integrative motivation' and 'instrumental motivation'. Instrumental motivation refers to what drives an individual to learn a language so as to achieve particular practical objectives, such as finding occupation, qualifying on exams, obtaining job promotions, etc. On the other hand, integrative motivation refers to the internal incentive to acquire a foreign language in order to identify and communicate with a target group that speaks the foreign language. (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The last decade of the 20th century marked a turning point in the study of motivation, as scholars began to question the prevailing Gardnerian and social-psychological theories. This questioning led to a demand for a more practical and education-oriented approach, which subsequently gave rise to new understandings and definitions of motivation. Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), for instance, defined motivation more dynamically as dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized, and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out. The third wave of motivational theories represents a synthesis of previous theories and focuses on the dynamics of motivational change and its connection to concepts of identity and self. This wave introduces several key concepts, including a process-oriented perception of motivation that emphasizes its dynamic and temporal nature, the idea of motivation as an investment, and the notions of 'ideal L2 self' and 'ought-to L2 self' (Klimova, 2011). Additionally, the concepts of 'international posture' and 'imagined communities' are also prominent in this wave. It is worth noting that the concept of 'ideal L2 and ought-to L2 self' played a significant role in Dörnyei's development of the 'L2 Motivational Self System' in 2005. This framework is particularly relevant in the context of learning English as a foreign language, as it takes into account individuals' self-perception and identity. According to the socio-educational model, learners are motivated by the desire to become like the people who speak the target language. Dörnyei's construct, however, indicates that this motivation may not be easily attainable in foreign language learning uni-cultural and monolingual contexts where target language people are not readily accessible (Taguchi et al., 2009). As a result, the L2 Motivational Self System proposes a different approach to motivation by suggesting that language learners have an ideal self-image in mind, known as the L2-specific self, which they strive to achieve through language learning. This approach reconsiders the integrative motivation proposed by the socio-educational model (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Dörnyei's 'L2 Motivational Self System' has been the source of abundant research to validate its constructs and components. However, in spite of all the research carried out in this area, this approach is still in need of more validation and attention as it is new and a bit naïve in the path to be recognized as a thorough framework and this fact can be regarded as one of the interests of the present study.

This study, which is part of a PhD dissertation, aims to explore the social context and develop a model that examines the political and socio-economic factors influencing the motivation of language learners. The study focuses on the L2 motivational self-system, considering the learners' ideal L2 selves, ought to L2 self, international posture, and imagined communities, which are closely

linked to these concepts. Understanding these political and socio-economic factors becomes even more crucial when studying settings like that of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where learning English as a foreign language has experienced significant fluctuations due to political and social changes since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Additionally, the Iranian perspective on English as the language of the 'enemy' (the United Kingdom and the United States of America) has also undergone transformations (Borjian, 2013).

Literature review

When delving into the concept of motivation, most studies investigate its interplay with other factors such as L2 anxiety, language achievement and proficiency, and the integrative and instrumental motivational orientations outlined by Gardner (see Esmaeili et al., 2024; Golbakhshi, 2021; Nasri et al., 2021; Rezai et al., 2025).

Also, Vaezi (2008) focused on the motivations of Iranian undergraduate students in learning English. Through the use of a questionnaire consisting of 25 items, Vaezi argued that these students were primarily motivated by instrumental reasons rather than integrative ones. On the other hand, Chalak and Kassaian (2010) examined the socio-psychological motivational orientations of 108 university students majoring in English translation. Their research yielded a different conclusion compared to Vaezi's study, suggesting that the participants held a positive attitude towards English with both integrative and instrumental motivations at play. Similarly, Choubsaz and Choubsaz (2014) investigated the motivations and attitudes of 50 Iranian English literature undergraduate students. Their findings aligned with those of Chalak and Kassaian (2010), indicating that the subjects of their study were equally motivated by both instrumental and integrative factors in their pursuit of English language proficiency. The discrepancy between Vaezi's study and the studies conducted by Chalak and Kassaian (2010), as well as Choubsaz and Choubsaz (2014), can be attributed to the differences in the subjects involved. Vaezi's study included non-English major students who may have lacked interest in English and were compelled to study it as a mandatory academic course, leading to a more instrumental orientation. Conversely, the participants in the other two studies had chosen to study English as an academic subject, indicating a stronger interest in the language itself and a greater degree of integrativeness. Recently, Sabri and Hamid (2023), in an attempt to find out whether or not socio-economic status as well as motivation affect the students' speaking skill, came to the conclusion that the aforementioned variables did not have any significant effects on the learners' speaking ability.

Gender, age, language achievement and proficiency are also among factors explored habitually in Iranian research studies as having relations with language motivation. Khodadady and Ashrafborji (2013) developed the MUELL Scale to measure motivations underlying English language learning in 493

female EFL learners, revealing three underlying variables of intrinsic, extrinsic, and communicative through factor analysis. However, none of these variables showed a significant relationship with language achievement. Janati and Marzban (2014) surveyed 100 Iranian EFL learners to investigate the relationship between learning motivation and English proficiency level, as well as gender and motivation. They found a positive relationship between learning motivation and English proficiency level, but the significance of the relationship between gender and motivation was not high enough.

Some studies have moved beyond Gardner's dichotomy of integrativeness-instrumentality to the L2 Motivational Self System proposed by Dornyei and Ryan (2015). For instance, Azarnoosh and Birjandi (2012) found gender differences in the L2 motivational self-system of 1462 junior high school students, with females having a higher mean for the ideal L2 self and males having a higher mean for the ought-to L2 self. Mahdavy (2013), however, found the opposite result in high school students, with males having a higher ideal L2 self. For ought-to L2 self, the same result as in the previous study was gained. Another investigation of L2MSS was in the cross-sectional work of Papi and Teimouri (2012) in which the researchers evaluated the change in motivational characteristics of 1041 Iranian EFL learners across secondary school, high school, and university contexts using the L2MSS. The statistical results verified a positive correlation between age and promotional variables while a negative correlation between age and preventional variables was suggested.

Several studies have been conducted to explore motivation in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, these studies have primarily utilized quantitative approaches and questionnaires that were not specifically designed for the Iranian context. As a result, they have overlooked the unique conditions in which EFL is used in Iran, including its political, social, cultural, and economic fluctuations over the years, as well as the impact of globalization. Only a few studies, such as the one conducted by Salehi and Razmjoo (2019) have attempted to identify the social and economic motives that drive Iranian learners to learn English. Therefore, it is necessary to reevaluate the established factors that underlie language motivation and incorporate more localized factors that are influenced by the latest political and socio-economic changes in Iran. The researcher argues that an in-depth and qualitative approach is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of EFL, particularly in terms of motivation, in Iran. This type of research will provide credibility and value to the quantitative findings. Fortunately, some researchers in Iran, as well as Iranian researchers abroad, have recognized this need and have made efforts to address it. For instance, Mehrpour and Vojdani (2012) focused on the topic of globalization and its impact on the motivation of Iranian EFL learners to learn English. They conducted a survey among 238 EFL learners and utilized a questionnaire that was specifically designed to explore the localization of certain

aspects of globalization. The findings revealed that the motivation of Iranian EFL learners to learn English was influenced by various factors, including technological, sociological, and scientific aspects. Recently, Ardavani and Durrant (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore the political and social factors influencing the motivation of Iranian EFL learners to learn English. They found that migration and contributions to Iran's development were among the most commonly reported motivations. However, the study had limitations as it only involved five university students and was conducted in a privileged context in Tehran, where there are ample language learning opportunities. Additionally, most participants came from high social backgrounds and were studying prestigious majors at top universities in Iran, which may have influenced their motivation. To address these issues and shortcomings of the previous literature, this qualitative study aims to thoroughly examine the concept of language motivation among Iranian EFL learners, taking into account the political and socio-economic factors specific to the complex EFL context in Iran. The study seeks to answer the question: "What are the political and socio-economic factors that motivate Iranian EFL learners to learn English?"

Method

This research employed a qualitative grounded-theory approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the language motivation of Iranian EFL learners, particularly in relation to political and socio-economic aspects.

Participants

The study involved twenty EFL learners, consisting of ten males and ten females, who were studying at advanced and high-intermediate levels at the Iran Language Institute in Darab, a city in the Fars province of Iran. Additionally, ten undergraduate students, one male and nine females, majoring in Laboratory sciences at a state paramedical college in Darab, were also selected for interviews. These undergraduate students had previously studied at advanced or high-intermediate levels at the Iran Language Institute before entering university. The selection of participants was based on convenience sampling, as all of them were learning English in different contexts, aligning with the objectives of the study. The age range of the subjects was between 14 and 25 years, and they had been learning English for a minimum of three to six years. The decision to limit the number of participants was driven by data saturation, as it was anticipated that additional participants would not yield new themes.

Instruments

In order to explore the various political and socio-economic factors that may influence the motivation of EFL learners to learn English, this study utilized semi-structured interviews. These interviews were carefully designed and conducted to meet the qualitative nature of the research. To create the interview questions, the researcher extensively reviewed the existing literature on

motivation and its underlying factors, such as the work of Ardavani and Durrant (2015), to gain a comprehensive understanding. This process allowed him to gradually develop an interview guide that consisted of a series of open-ended questions specifically tailored to the objectives of the study.

To ensure the effectiveness of the interview process and refine the final set of questions, a pilot interview was conducted with a group of participants. Additionally, two colleagues who possessed knowledge in the subject matter were also involved in reviewing the interview guide and questions. Based on their feedback and suggestions, certain questions were removed from the guide while new ones were added. These modifications were made to enhance the overall quality and relevance of the interview guide, ultimately contributing to the validity of the study. The details of these changes can be found in the appendix.

Procedure

The data collection process involved several steps undertaken by the researcher. Initially, the participants were contacted to schedule an interview session. The interviews were conducted either at the teacher's office in the university or at the language institute where some of the participants were studying English. At the beginning of each session, the interviewer expressed gratitude to the participants for volunteering to participate in the project. The purpose and scope of the study were explained to the interviewees, and they were assured that their personal information would be kept confidential. The interviewees were asked if they were willing to be recorded, and the recorder was turned on only with their consent. To make the participants feel comfortable, some ice-breaking questions were asked at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were conducted in Persian, the participants' mother tongue, in a friendly and comfortable atmosphere. The interviewer did not interrupt the interviewees unless they went off-topic. Back-channeling signals such as nods, yeah, and uh-huh were used to encourage a sense of dialogue with the participants. The interviewer, who was the researcher himself, took notes whenever necessary during the interview. Finally, the interviewees were asked if they had anything to add to their statements, and they were appreciated for their contribution.

Once all 30 interview sessions had concluded, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews and allocated each participant a fictional name to safeguard their confidentiality. Subsequently, the transcripts, along with the researcher's notes and memos, were handed back to the participants. They were kindly asked to review the transcripts in order to verify the authenticity of the data and ensure that it accurately represented their perspectives. This method, known as member checking or participant feedback, serves as a means to validate the credibility and reliability of the collected data (Ary et al., 2013).

In order to verify the dependability of the method described by Ary et al. (2013) as the "degree to which variation can be monitored or clarified," the researcher enlisted the help of a colleague to independently code the raw data. Afterward, the researcher and his colleague compared their respective codes to come to an agreement.

Design

The qualitative research data analysis process involves several stages, one of which is organizing and familiarizing with the data. In this stage, the researcher reads and re-reads the data to gain a deep understanding and immersion. In this study, the researcher transcribed the audio-taped interviews without any manipulation and reviewed them multiple times to become familiar with the content. These transcripts were then imported into a computer software called MAXQDA, which facilitates the analysis of qualitative data in an efficient manner. Each transcript was assigned a specific label based on the interview location and the person involved. Once the datasets were organized, the next stage involved coding and reducing the data. This process included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Using the software, the researcher defined numerous codes for each dataset by labeling important words or phrases, either as in vivo codes or researcher-defined codes. Consequently, a significant number of codes emerged. Following the initial coding, the researcher employed the constant comparative method to reduce the extensive list of codes into a smaller list of tentative categories (27 categories). The final stage of coding and reducing was selective coding, where the researcher analyzed the relationships and patterns among the categories, and combined them into major themes by consulting relevant theories and existing literature. This resulted in the development of seven themes, which formed the model of the political and socio-economic factors influencing Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English.

Results and Discussion

As a result of the data analysis, seven major themes were elicited whose detailed explanations along with the researcher's interpretations are presented so as to answer the research question investigated in the study. The research question was: 'What are the political and socio-economic factors that motivate Iranian EFL learners to learn English?'

The government's foreign and economic policy

The initial topic revolves around the political factor that drives Iranian EFL learners to acquire English language skills. A significant number of participants hold the view that the government has acknowledged the significance of global connections in various domains, including foreign policy, economy, and industry. For instance, Alex, a participant, responds to the query regarding the impact of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Western nations on his English learning motivation in a distinct manner.: *'Well, I think everybody is*

happy with this deal since it opens new windows to our country's future and we can travel freely to other countries. Therefore, I think I need to know English.'

Furthermore, the significance of Iran's recent progress in economy, science, and industry was highlighted as a driving force behind the imperative to establish connections and collaborate with both developed and developing nations. Consequently, it becomes essential to cultivate a knowledgeable workforce proficient in the English language.

Transfer of religious and national ideology and patriotism

This theme was a pivotal theme being repeated abundantly and common in almost all interviewees' comments. The majority of the participants were in agreement in that we as a nation which is one of the oldest civilizations in the world have a rich culture and must be eager and able to transmit it throughout the whole world and this won't be possible without first being capable of speaking English as a global language. Jane, a female student at university who looks as having a strong sense of patriotism believes that, *'We are living in a country which is more than 2500 years old and therefore our culture is richer than the western world. I, personally, would like to introduce Iran's culture and history to any tourist who comes to Iran or to people I visit when I travel abroad. Well, if I don't know English, how can I achieve this?'*

English as a lingua franca among Muslims, also, was mentioned by some of the participants as an influential factor in their motivation to learn English. It seems that, although Arabic is considered the religious language of the Islamic world, Iranian students apparently do not like it very much and prefer English would replace it at least for communicating with their coreligionists. This desire can be inferred from Jane where she says, *'I think English is much easier than Arabic. I didn't understand a word of Arabic at school and I'm not sure why they taught us Arabic at there.'*

Contributing to Iran's development, also, fascinated many of the participants. Some of them would like to study abroad for some time and then return to Iran and *'assist to make it a developed and modernized country as our nation deserves this.'* According to what one of participants said when asked if she liked to contribute to the development of Iran. Even if they didn't intend to leave Iran and planned to study in local universities, they believed that learning English was must for them if they wanted to become an expert in their field so that they could help in making Iran a prosperous country. As Rita asserts, *'I don't think I like to leave Iran, but again I need English in order to become a knowledgeable laboratory scientist who can be influential in Iran's future.'* Here we can see the concept of ideal I2 self at play since the participant is attempting to learn English so as to be able to become a desired professional in her field who can speak English.

Academic and occupational aspirations

This theme as an influencing motivational factor was common between university students and those studying at school. It pertains to instrumental-promotion motivation- or Dörnyei's ideal L2 self- in which the individual strives for receiving promotions and achieving future aspirations. All the participants stated that their motivation to learn English was, to a great extent, influenced by their desire to be academically successful that ranged from impressing teachers and classmates at school to pursuing higher education and getting published scholarly articles. This theme was felt to be the most powerful driving force for learning English on the part of these participants which is in accordance with the previous motivational studies in Iran. For example, Rita, one of the students studying laboratory sciences, believes, *'In my major, since it is one of the branches of medical sciences, most of the technical terms are in English and our job also necessitates knowing English. I have to learn English otherwise I can't be successful in my job.'*

Improving social life

Pursuing a high-quality life and the belief that this goal is easily achieved if one leaves the country and settle in the U.S or a European country is prevalent among many Iranians nowadays. Right or wrong, many young people believe that in developed countries job selections are purely based on the qualifications and meritocracy. Consequently, they are encouraged, either personally or by family, to seek their social rights and a better life overseas and for this to come true they believe they must improve their English. Mary, a high school student studying at a private language institute, whose parents are general practitioners says, *'My father always encourages me to improve my English because he plans to send me to another country.'* Another school student believes that, *'When people around me notice I can speak English, they look at me differently as I've come from another planet [laughs]. I think knowing English is an indicator that the individual is very updated and modernized and this really fascinates me.'*

Fear of failure

Fear of disappointing parents, losing credit and face among colleagues and classmates, achieving academic requirements, and missing job and qualification opportunities on offer in other countries comprise this theme. This theme is in harmony with Dörnyei's ought-to L2 self (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) which has a prevention focus and pertains to the existence of negative outcomes of not living up to expectations and standards. In the case of these participants, many of them expressed their worries as to disappointing their parents and failing to keep up with their expectations if they couldn't do well in their language classes. Some of them asserted that in their schools most of the students were learning English and they were afraid of being mocked by them if they didn't know English (*' Because I study in our city's best school, nearly all my classmates are going to the ILI and I would feel ashamed if I didn't'* says Mary.

Cathy shows her fear of turning her parents down when she says, '*My father is working hard to pay for my English class and if I study well, I might dishearten him.*'). There is no sign of either integrative or instrumental motivation at work in this theme. It is simply a matter of fear and concern on the part of the learner that drives him or her to strive for learning English, the ought-to L2 self, that is.

International posture

The concept of "international posture" was introduced Yashima (2002) in her research on Japanese students' motivation to learn English. This term refers to the students' willingness to communicate and their overall perspective towards the international community, which can influence their motivation to learn English. The study used "international posture" as a broad term that encompasses various aspects such as expectations towards bilingualism, attitudes towards English, attitudes towards foreign cultures, empathy towards the international community, and identification with the global community. When the participants were asked about their impressions of English and the culture associated with it, they generally held a positive view. However, unlike integrative motivation, where learners are primarily interested in English-speaking cultures, Iranian learners demonstrated a passion and empathy towards the entire international community, with a strong desire for communication. This distinction, as highlighted by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) is one of the differences between ESL and EFL contexts. When asked whether she would like to identify herself with the international community or with the English or Americans, Mona answered, '*Definitely, I like to be seen as a member of the international community because I am a human and love all mankind and would like to feel close to them.*' Or Julia expressed her interest in English language as, '*I like English even if I don't need it in future for it gives me good feeling when I'm learning English.*'

Information technology advancements

In today's Iran, with the growing increase in the use of Information Technology such as high-speed internet, smart phones, social networks, computer games and various electronic devices a great amount of which has English as its medium of communication, young Iranians as well as the elder ones feel the need to learn English if they want to keep up with these rapid changes and technologies. Jane says, '*Whenever I'm surfing the internet or working on a social network or even watching satellite broadcasts, I understand the importance of English wondering what I could do in this age of technology if I were not learning English.*'

Internationalization which refers to the localization of products to suit the international conditions, even in education (Borjian, 2013), is also a factor that, to a large extent, determines the purposes of Iranian language learners' motivation to learn English since this process, like other forms of technology, needs English in order to spread among the nation. Internationalization of higher

education which refers to the global, intercultural, and international aspect of postsecondary education with the goal of recruiting foreign students, building international campuses, and many other ones is also a great stimulus for striving to learn English. This is evident in Carol's statements as she says, '*I need to know English if, one day, I plan to present an article in an international conference or even when I'm a postgraduate student because many of our original academic resource books are still in English and I think they will never be translated into Persian [laughs].*'

To summarize, the preliminary framework illustrating the influence of political and socio-economic aspects on the motivation of Iranian EFL learners to acquire English encompasses seven overarching themes and a total of twenty-seven categories. These themes, along with their corresponding categories and the frequency of their mention, are presented in Table 1.

Table1
The emerged themes and their related categories

Themes	Categories
The government's scientific policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-JCPOA opportunities (5) • Economic and industrial growth demanding expansion in international relations (10)
Transfer of religious and national ideology and patriotism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exporting Islamic philosophy (3) • Exporting Iranian rich culture (15) • English as a lingua franca among Muslim world (2) • Contributing to Iran's development (20)
Academic and occupational aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran's fast scientific growth (3) • English as the language of scholarly publication (19) • English as the medium of instruction in higher education (27) • Occupation-specific qualifications (25) • Language learning rivalry (5) • Deficient ELT policies at schools (10) • Impressing teachers and classmates (10)
Improving social life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuming a high social status (6) • Leaving Iran to enhance quality of life (11)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing one's social and human rights (2)
Fear of failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of disappointing parents (9) • Fear of losing face and credit in the society (4) • Fear of failing to achieve academic requirements (15) • Fear of missing foreign opportunities and qualifications (10)
International posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations toward bilingualism (9) • Attitudes toward English (7) • Attitudes toward foreign cultures (15) • Empathy toward global community (12) • Identification with global community (11)
IT advancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information technology infrastructure (17) • Internationalization (13)

The emerged model of political and socio-economic factors impacting on Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English is presented in Figure 1.

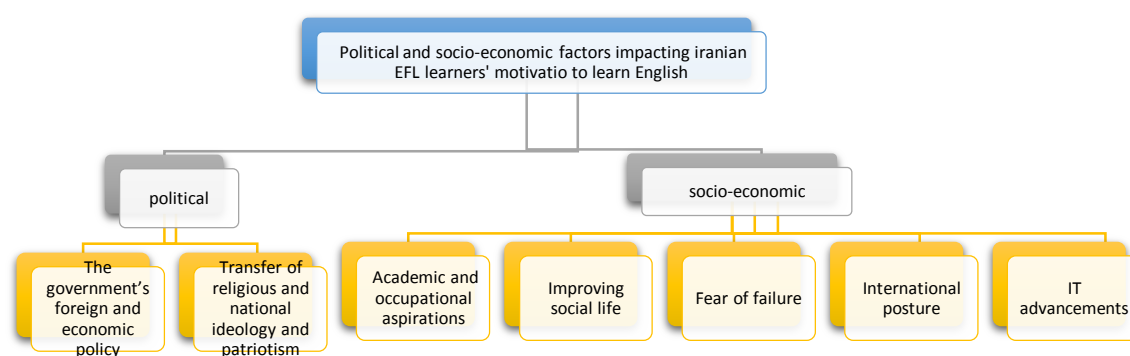


Figure 1: *The final model*

Conclusion

The implications of the proposed model are in accordance with the previous research. Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system poses a lot of focus on the self where it introduces the notions of ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, the former being related to the learners' attempt to lessen the distance between their actual selves and their future possible selves while the latter pertaining to the fear of failing to live up to standards and expectations. The results of the study also indicated that the participants of this study were either striving to learn English in order to become their imagined and ideal selves such as a PhD holder, a member of their expertise international association, and a patriot contributing to the development of Iran, or to avoid the negative outcomes of not knowing English like disappointing parents, losing credit in the community, and missing opportunities on offer worldwide. It is, also, clear from the findings of the interviews that Iranian EFL learners consider English as an influential contributor to the path toward their imagined future when they can benefit from its utilitarian values rather than from its intrinsic values (Ardavani & Durrant, 2015).

The aim of this study was to propose a model that identifies the political and socio-economic factors that impact Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. The study concluded with a seven-factor model, which is unique in the Iranian context. This is because no qualitative approach has been taken to the issue of language motivation in Iran due to the rapid fluctuations in government structure and different governments' orientations towards English language teaching and learning. The proposed model takes into consideration the latest political and socio-economic changes in Iran and can be applied by researchers inside or outside Iran to investigate the matter of English language learning motivation in this exceptional EFL environment.

The qualitative nature of this study has allowed for a deeper understanding of the construct of motivation on the part of Iranian EFL learners. This model can be used to design localized questionnaires that fit EFL conditions in Iran, resulting in more precise and authentic results. However, like any other research, this study has limitations, and more work needs to be carried out in this area to confirm or add to the results. One of the limitations is the researcher's bias that may have occurred during data analysis and interpretations.

Researchers who are interested in continuing this topic may want to explore whether the specific predictors of motivation for learning English vary across cultures and countries as the factors in the model change in their relevance to the culture or country. For example, would the model predict attitudes about learning English or language performance, including accuracy or errors as well as reaction time in behavioral tasks? Would the age of the participants matter?

Would different results be obtained with much older participants who may be much more informed and interested in political issues?

Declaration of interest: none

References

- Ardavani, S., & Durrant, P. (2015). How have political and socio-economic issues impacted on the motivation of Iranian university students to learn English. *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges*, 35-45.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. (2013). *Introduction to research in education: Cengage Learning*.
- Azarnoosh, M., & Birjandi, P. (2012). Junior high school students' L2 motivational self system: Any gender differences. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 20(4), 577-584. <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.wasj.2012.20.04.2732>
- Borjian, M. (2013). *English in post-revolutionary Iran: From indigenization to internationalization* (Vol. 29). Multilingual Matters.
- Brown, D. (1994). *Teaching by Principles-An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy-Prentice Hall Regents*.
- Chalak, A., & Kassaian, Z. (2010). Motivation And Attitudes Of Iranian Undergraduate EFL Students Towards Learning English. *GEMA online journal of language studies*, 10(2).
- Choubsaz, Y., & Choubsaz, Y. (2014). Motivational orientation and EFL learning: A study of Iranian undergraduate students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 392-397. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.431>
- Coetzee-Van Rooy, S. (2006). Integrativeness: untenable for world Englishes learners? *World Englishes*, 25(3- 4), 437-450. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2006.00479.x>
- Csizér, K., & Dörnyei, Z. (2005). The internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(1), 19-36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0026-7902.2005.00263.x>
- Dörnyei, & Ottó, I. (1998). *Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation*.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language teaching*, 31(3), 117-135. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480001315X>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Németh, N. (2006). *Motivation, language attitudes and globalisation: A Hungarian perspective* (Vol. 18). Multilingual Matters.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (Vol. 36). Multilingual Matters.
- Esmaeili, M., Mirzaei, A., & Roohani, A. (2024). The Interplay between Iranian EFL Learners' Motivational Selves and Their Sociopragmatic and Pragmalinguistic Competence: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach. *Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)*, 43(4), 33-56.

- Gardner, R. C. (1985). Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation. (*No Title*). <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0083787>
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/00625-8>
- Golbakhshi, N. (2021). The Role of Iranian EFL Learners' Motivation and Beliefs in Their Reading Comprehension Scores. *Journal of Language Horizons*, 5(2), 227.
- Janati, M., & Marzban, A. (2014). The Relationship between Iranian EFL learners' motivation and their English proficiency level. *Journal of Studies in Learning and Teaching English*, 2(6), 65-79. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.869599>
- Khodadady, E., & Ashrafborji, M. (2013). Motivations underlying English language learning and achievement. *Sage Open*, 3(2), 2158244013484157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013484157>
- Mahdavy, B. (2013). Gender and motivational orientations of English language learners: The case of high school students in Iran. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 1056-1061. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.158>
- Mehrpour, S., & Vojdani, M. (2012). Globalization and EFL learning motivation: A new perspective on integrative vs. instrumental motivation among Iranian learners of English. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 2(02), 43. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2012.22006>
- Nasri, M., Shafiee, S., & Sepehri, M. (2021). An investigation of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' L2 motivation and attitude in a computer-assisted language learning environment. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 10(1), 355-389.
- Papi, M., & Teimouri, Y. (2012). Dynamics of selves and motivation: a cross-sectional study in the EFL context of Iran. *International Journal of applied linguistics*, 22(3), 287-309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2012.00312.x>
- Rezai, A., Ahmadi, R., Ashkani, P., & Hosseini, G. H. (2025). Implementing active learning approach to promote motivation, reduce anxiety, and shape positive attitudes: A case study of EFL learners. *Acta Psychologica*, 253, 104704.
- Sabri, R. A., & Hamid, R. (2023). Socioeconomic Status And Motivation Effect on Students' English Speaking Skill. *International Journal of English Learning and Applied Linguistics (IJELAL)*, 3(2), 141-153. <https://doi.org/10.21111/ijelal.v3i2.10117>
- Salehi, N., & Razmjoo, S. A. (2019). On the development of a model of political and socio-economic factors impacting Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. *Journal of Language and Translation*, 9(3), 137-152. <https://doi.org/20.1001.1.20088590.2019.9.3.10.2>
- Taguchi, T., Magid, M., & Papi, M. (2009). *The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study* (Vol. 36).
- Ushioda, E. (2006). Language motivation in a reconfigured Europe: Access, identity, autonomy. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, 27(2), 148-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630608668545>

- Vaezi, Z. (2008). Language learning motivation among Iranian undergraduate students. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 5(1), 54-61.
- Woolfolk, A. E. (1998). *Readings in educational psychology*. ERIC.
- Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(1), 54-66.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4781.00136>

Appendix

The Interview Guide

Part I. Personal data

1. Would you please introduce yourself completely? (Parents' educational background included)
2. How long have you been learning English?

Part II political and socio-economic issues

3. How do you think your motivation to learn English is affected by the present political changes and issues in our country? (e.g. global sanctions imposed on the country, political clashes between Iran and the West, the nuclear deal, the new openings to communicate with the world, etc.)
4. A. how do you believe the economic aspirations have motivated you to learn English?
B. How important is English for your future-planned career?
C. Can you have a career without learning English?
D. If you didn't want to use English for your career, would it be worth studying it?
5. How much do you care about your country's development? How much is it important to you to contribute to it by learning English?

Part III Influences in learning

6. How can knowing English help you in your education?
7. These days many families would like to have and watch satellite T.V. programs which are in English. How about you? Do you believe this need can be a potential incentive for you to learn English?

Part IV Uses of English

8. A. Will you use English for educational purposes?
B. For professional purposes?
C. For social purposes?
9. Will you use English in order to be known as part of the world of native speakers of English, or would you like to be known as a person who is bilingual and belongs to a global community? If so, do you reject the idea of a specific national identity? Why or why not?
10. Are you studying English to help you understand people from all over the world or just English speaking countries?

Part V Leaving the country for achieving an ideal self

11. Where do you imagine yourself living in 2 years? (Inside or outside your hometown?)
12. If outside, how do you imagine this life abroad (how will it change)? (Expectation to improve social status)
13. If outside, what factors made you imagine yourself studying or living overseas?

14. What languages do you imagine you will be speaking and with what ratio? (50% English and 50% Farsi?)
15. Can you envisage yourself as a proficient speaker of English (or to what standard do you hope for? (Conversational, tourist or to conduct business)
16. Does learning English contribute to your success inside or outside of Iran? Give reasons
17. What opportunities can encourage you to stay in Iran?
18. What are the advantages of learning English for the development of the society in Iran?

Biodata

Naser Salehi is an assistant professor of TEFL at Darab Branch, Islamic Azad University, Darab, Iran. His areas of interest mainly include applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, and language learning and teaching. He has published a number of articles in Iran as well as outside Iran where he is currently teaching English courses.

چگونه موقعیت سیاسی و اجتماعی-اقتصادی بر انگیزه زبان آموزان ایرانی برای یادگیری زبان انگلیسی تأثیر گذاشته است؟

هدف این پژوهش بررسی عوامل انگیزشی است که زمینه ساز تمایل زبان آموزان ایرانی به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی، به ویژه عوامل مرتبط با محیط سیاسی و اجتماعی-اقتصادی، است. این مطالعه به بررسی چشم انداز سیاسی و اجتماعی در حال تغییر در ایران می پردازد که با جهانی شدن و پیشرفت های فناوری اطلاعات و ارتباطات (ICT) شکل گرفته است. برای دستیابی به این هدف، محقق با سی شرکت کننده با سطح متوسط تا پیشرفته انگلیسی که در یک موسسه خصوصی و همچنین یک دانشکده پیراپزشکی تحصیل می کردند، مصاحبه های نیمه ساختاریافته انجام داد. مصاحبه ها رونویسی شد و سپس داده ها با استفاده از یک رویکرد سیستماتیک شامل کد گذاری باز، محوری و انتخابی تجزیه و تحلیل شدند. مدل به دست آمده هفت عامل و بیست و هفت دسته را شناسایی کرد که به انگیزه زبان کمک می کنند. این هفت عامل عبارت بودند از: «سیاست خارجی و اقتصادی دولت»، «انتقال ایدئولوژی دینی و ملی و میهن پرستی»، «آرزوهای علمی و شغلی»، «بهبود زندگی اجتماعی»، «ترس از شکست»، «مقام بین المللی» و پیشرفت های فناوری اطلاعات. یافته های این مطالعه حاکی از آن است که عواملی بیش از انگیزه ابزاری یا تلفیقی مؤثر بر انگیزه زبان آموزان ایرانی وجود دارد که نیازمند تحقیقات بیشتر در مورد انگیزش در بافت ایرانی است. این الگو همچنین می تواند به عنوان منبعی ارزشمند برای اطلاع رسانی سیاست های آموزشی آینده و تدوین برنامه درسی در ایران باشد.

کلمات کلیدی: انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی، زبان آموزان ایرانی، انگیزه، چشم انداز سیاسی، شرایط اجتماعی