Original Article

Prediction of Foreign Language Anxiety and School Achievement by Family Characteristics in High School Students

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Abstract

Many learners experience foreign language anxiety in our schools today. Reported consequences of being anxious toward foreign language anxiety include the avoidance of language learning and decline in language achievement. The aim of the present study is to predict foreign language anxiety and school success by family characteristics in high school students. The sample comprised 214 high school students from Ahvaz in academic years 2020 to 2021. The Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLAS) was administered to the student's group sample and family characteristics were explained by observable socioeconomic background such as age, education and income. The results revealed that among the family characteristics variables, only parent's education had a negative correlation with foreign language anxiety and multivariate regression for this model revealed that a combination of age, income and education could be a good predictor for foreign language anxiety. The second part of results also exposed that parent's income and parent's education had a significant positive correlation with school achievement and multivariate regression for this model also revealed that a combination of family characteristics can be a good predictor for school achievement.
Keywords: Anxiety Scale, Family Characteristics, Foreign Language, High School Students, School Achievement.

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1. Introduction

Education is the basic mechanism for enhancing the population quality of a nation, and education during childhood is the foundation for the formation of human labor-force quality. Due to the scarcity of educational resources and their unequal distribution, various conditions of education inequality have yet to be addressed and improved (Yang, 2006). The relationship between family background and educational achievement has become a critical indicator in evaluating educational equality. Past studies showed that family social economic status has become increasingly important in determining personal education achievement, which has not been dampened with the expansion of schools (Li & Qiu, 2018).

One of the new factors in educational success is foreign language anxiety in recent discussions. The psychological factors and their effects on academic situations are the growing concerns of educational researchers and practitioners. Reported consequences of being anxious toward language include the avoidance of language and the decline in language achievement. Foreign language anxiety is the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced in learning or using a second or foreign language (Tran & Moni, 2015). The feelings may stem from any second language context whether it is associated with the productive skills of speaking and writing or the receptive skills of reading and listening. Moreover, foreign language anxiety is a form of what psychologists describe as a specific anxiety reaction. some individuals are more predisposed to anxiety than others and may feel anxious in a wide variety of situations (Al-Saraj, 2014). Foreign language anxiety, however, is situation-specific and so it can also affect individuals who are not characteristically anxious in other situations. The main causes of foreign language anxiety are communication-apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. There is also a psychological component to foreign language anxiety (Tran et al., 2013). An example of when foreign language anxiety may occur would be in a classroom. The causes of foreign language anxiety have been broadly separated into three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Csizer et al., 2015). Communication apprehension is the anxiety experienced when speaking or listening to other individuals. Test-anxiety is a form of performance anxiety, that is associated with the fear of doing badly or failing altogether. Fear of negative evaluation is the anxiety associated with the learner's perception of how

other onlookers (instructors, classmates or others) may negatively view their language ability. These three factors cause an increase in an individual's anxiety levels as well as a decrease in self-efficacy (Aydemir, 2011).

Dornyei and Ryan (2015) pointed out that despite the fact that emotions play a crucial part in our lives, they have been largely "shunned" by second language acquisition (SLA) scholars. The authors attribute this to the cognitivist tradition in the field and argue that it is time to overcome the general "emotional deficit" in SLA research. Looking back at the early research, Macintyre (2017) agreed with that "not all types of anxiety that can be defined and measured are likely to be related to language learning" (p. 12). Macintyre (2017) argued that the so-called early "Confounded Approach" ended with Horwitz et al. (1986) ground-breaking study which heralded the start of the specialized approach in foreign language (classroom) anxiety (FLCA) research.

Achievement is a cumulative function of the current and prior family, community, and school incomes (Steven et al, 2005) and a study of the entire process would require complete family, community, and school histories. House and family structure socio-economic background are essential aspects in the development of students' personality and academic function. These variables as an important environmental and humans' dimension are playing a basic role and there are many parents' socio-economic background that have been shown to be related to student school success (McFarland, 2001) and their language anxiety performance (Higbee & Thol, 1999). The educational success of a student is the ability of the student to study and remember facts and being able to communicate his knowledge orally or in written form even in an examination condition. Factors that influence students' educational success at the senior secondary school are not conclusively known and could be multivariate in nature. They might include students 'attitude towards school, interest in learning, study habit, attribution, self-efficacy, intelligence, and motivation (Fan, & Chen, 2001).

Student achievement was also explained in certain theories and models regarding student engagement. Finn (1989), in the Participation-Identification Model, focused on behavioral and emotional dimensions and tried to explain students' school dropout. The model was based on the idea that successful students identify themselves with their schools and that the unsuccessful ones cannot do so. In the model, it was claimed that participation in school and class activities increases students' performance and their achievement and

that students' performance has an influence on their feeling of identifying themselves with the school.

Most children come to school ready and willing to learn. How school can best foster and strengthen their predisposition and ensure that they leave school with the motivation and capacity to continue learning throughout life has remained a matter of great concern. Without the development of the right attitudes, students may not be well prepared to acquire the new knowledge and skills necessary for successful adaptation to changing circumstances and the necessary situation to achieve in their academic pursuit (Kuusinen & Leskinen, 1988). In school, teachers manage much of students' learning. However, learning might be enhanced if students can manage it themselves; moreover, once they leave school, individuals have to manage most of their own learning. To do this, they need to be able to establish goals, persevere, and monitor their learning progress, adjust their learning strategies as necessary and overcome difficulties in learning. Students who leave school with the autonomy to set their own learning goals and with a sense that they can reach those goals tend to be better equipped to learn throughout their lives (Candeias et al., 2013). However, many youths express negative attitudes to school as they do not tend to believe that the school and success in it will have a strong bearing on their future. Such negative feelings and attitudes may result in their becoming disaffected with school (Williams, 2000). Attitude to school is an important condition for a student's feeling of well-being, social engagement, and competence. A highly positive attitude towards school increases intrinsic motivation, for it fosters self-confidence and investment in the community. It is only with a positive attitude towards the school that a student can develop a good sense of belonging and engagement in school. The condition of belonging means that a student is a valued member of the school community while still maintaining his or her uniqueness (Horwitz, 2017). It is a relationship between two or more persons characterized by a sense of connection and support for individual achievement of self-actualization and advancement. Attitude to school can be, for some students, indicative of educational success and well-being. As such, this perception deserves to be treated alongside school achievement, an important outcome of schooling. The school achievement of students may partly depend on the kind of Educational Success Prediction: The nature and strength of one 's interest in learning and in schooling may represent an important aspect of personality. Attitude towards schooling denotes a positive or negative

predisposition towards schooling and every activity in the school environment, which could be cognitive, emotional, or behavioral (Bernstein et al., 2006).

The characteristic, interest, may substantially influence educational and occupational achievement, interpersonal relations, the enjoyment one derives from leisure activities and other major phases of daily living. Values are clearly related to life choices and are often discussed in conjunction with interests and preferences. From the viewpoint of the student and what he intends to achieve educationally, a consideration of his interest might be of practical significance. The interest must be there for him to devote time to his study. This investigation seeks to x-ray the relationship and the degree to which students 'interest in learning predicts their academic achievement (Fang & Feng, 2008).

It is believed that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement is impacted by various factors. Some of the most prominent, and thus most frequently investigated factors, include ethnicity, prior achievement, and socioeconomic status (Kohl & McMahon, 2000). Therefore, research studies that manage to control for the effect of some of these variables, although rare, are valuable and able to provide a more realistic picture of the effect of parental involvement on student achievement. Zellman and Waterman's (1998) findings indicated a significant positive correlation between parental in-school involvement and student reading scores. Additionally, after controlling for children's intelligence, Topor et al. (2010) argued that parental involvement was significantly related to school achievement and children's perception of cognitive competence. It should be noted that in this particular study parental involvement was measured by teachers' perceptions of positive attitudes parents might have had toward their children's education, teachers, and schools. It did not, however, take into account any parental involvement in school or at home, hence casting a shadow of doubt on the validity of the results. Izzo et al.'s (1999) study, results that indicated that parental involvement was a significant predictor of student academic achievement. The problem arose when some of the reported significant correlations became non-significant once the previous student performance was controlled. These studies are just a few examples indicating that the findings related to parental involvement are frequently full of inconsistencies.

The relationship between parental involvement and school achievement has been the primary interest of researchers for years. Overall, the results of prominent meta-analyses in

the field indicate that in general, statistically significant relationships exist between parental involvement and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005; Hill & Tyson, 2012).

2. Literature Review

Psychological literature provides a number of conceptualizations of school achievement (Rabalise, 1988). Dornyei and Ryan (2015) published the book entitled "The psychology of the language learner "and bring up the effective factors in language learning. Existing research has mostly focused on the impact of family background on the eventual education attainment, especially the attainment of high school education, but it is worth noticing that education attainment is a continuous process in which the education achievement of the prior stage affects the later-stage achievement both cumulatively and probabilistically. Without access to high-qualified primary school and middle school education, one barely has much chance to proceed to higher education (Natia & Pontso, 2017).

In the literature on the relationship between family background and school achievement in middle school (Fang & Feng, 2008) and high school (Yang, 2005), the discussion is also limited in the correlation between family background and academic achievement. The human capital theory claims that education is an important human capital investment, where the "cost-benefit" framework is the primary principles for families to make an educated investment decision, and the difference in children's educational achievement is mainly caused by the difference in family educational investment. Because of the limitation of family resources, parents of poor families usually are not able to invest sufficiently in their children's education, which affects their children's academic achievement. Gross (1993) showed that students' cognitive skills are positively related to their parent's socioeconomic status.

In correlational research, Anthony et al. (2000), found the cognitive, affective, personality, and demographic predictors of foreign-language achievement. The other researchers (Tran et al., 2013), studied second language learning and foreign language anxiety and found its sources and effects from insiders' perspectives.

Trang & Moni (2015), planed a program on the management of foreign language anxiety. Aydemir (2011) studied the changes in the foreign language anxiety levels experienced by the students of the preparatory school at Gazi university during an

academic year, and found family background and school achievement in middle school. The effect of psychological factors on foreign language anxiety was studied by some of the researchers. For example, Fallah (2017), mentioned that mindfulness has a significant effect on foreign language anxiety.

In spite of the different theoretical perspectives, most research pays attention to the paths and mechanisms of how the social-economic status of a family affects the children's academic achievements. Research shows that parental social-economic status can affect their children's schooling quality significantly (Fang & Feng, 2008).

While researchers tend to agree that household quality is an important determining factor in influencing student outcomes, there is little consensus about the relationship between specific parents' socio-economic background (Green, 1990; Ingersoll, 2001), Secondly, there is need for studies which will address variables in the levels of school achievement, or other psychological issues. The objectives of the presents study therefore focus on the relationship between parents' socio-economic background (age, income and education), language anxiety and School Success and it assumed that combination of parents' socio-economic background can be a good prediction for language anxiety and school success. According to the above-mentioned points there are two hypotheses, the first one is that if there here is a positive and significant correlation between family characteristics and language anxiety and the second one is that if there is a positive and significant correlation between family characteristics and school success.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample Characteristics

The participants of this study comprised 214 high school students, selected randomly from 8 high schools in Ahvaz. The distribution of the sample by grade reveals that there are 72 (33.63%) students in 8th standard, 74 (34.58%) students in 9th standard and 68 (31.08%) students are in 10th standard. In this research also results of the sample distribution by age, show that there are 69 (32.2%) students 13 years and below, 69(32.2 %) students 14 years, 65 (30.3%) students 15 years and 11 (5.1 %) students over 16 years old.

3.2. Instruments

The instruments used in the research study are as follows: a. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). To collect data on foreign language anxiety, this study also used a Likert-type questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). This scale includes thirty-three items, measuring test anxiety, speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. As the following item depicts, each item ranges from strongly disagree, at one end, to strongly agree, at the other end. Thus, the scale for each item ranges from 1 to 5. Example 2: I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class. a. strongly disagree b. disagree, c. neither agree nor disagree, d. agree, e. strongly agree. Internal consistency of the FLACS by Cronbach alpha coefficient, as measured by Horwitz (1986) was found to be .93, with the test-retest reliability of .83. With regard to its validity, criterion-related studies that bear on the construct validity of the scale were conducted. The results suggest that foreign language anxiety can be reliably and validly measured (Horwitz et al. 1986). School Success: average marks obtained from the students of the last class examination in their academic subjects.

4. Results

Coefficients of correlations between family characteristics, language anxiety and School Success are presented in the correlation matrix table 1.

Table 1.

Coefficients of Correlation Between of Family Characteristics, Language Anxiety and School Achievement

Family Characteristics	Mean	SD	Language Anxiety M: 65.12 SD: 9.48	Language Achievement M: 68.14 SD: 6.40
Parent's Income	1.71	.344	-.043	.41*
Parent's Education	1.61	.432	-.34*	.21*
Parent's Age	1.3	.211	.11	-.08

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). N= 21

The coefficients of correlations given in table 1 showed an inverse relationship between parent's education and language anxiety [r= -.09, p <.01], but the relationships

between parent's age and income with language anxiety was not significant [r= -.003, p >.05 for income and language anxiety and r= -.007 p >.05 for age and language anxiety].

Concurrently, significant positive relationships between two sub-variables of family characteristics and school achievement are identified. Coefficients of correlation between parent's income and School Success was positively significant [r= .33, p <.01]. It was also significant positive relationships between parent's education and School Success [r= .21, p <.01] but, the correlation between parent's age and School Success was not significant [r= .23, p >.05].

To test the prediction of language anxiety and school achievement by parent variables, data were analyzed using multiple regressions. The results indicated that a combination of the independent variables included in the models, had a statistically significant negative prediction for language anxiety (F (3, 211) = 4.19, p <.001, and Adjusted R Square = .017) and it can operate as a good calculation for Language anxiety. With regard to independent variables separately also parent's education was found to be a significant predictor for language anxiety (B = -.982, Beta =-.151, t= -3.541, p <.0001) but parent's income and parent's age was not a significant predictor for language anxiety.

The results of multiple regression for the second model with the Entering method, also revealed that a combination of parent's, income, education and age can operate as a good predictor for School Success (F (3, 211) =12.28, p <.001, and Adjusted R Square = .059) in students. In this model also, with regards to the effect of independent variables separately, parent's income was found significant predictor of School Success (B = 1.656, Beta = .234, t= 5.523, p <.0001) and parent's education (B = .450, Beta = .103, t= 2.453, p <.0001) but parent's age was not a significant predictor for School Success.

5. Discussion

The results demonstrated quite clearly that there are significant correlations between some parts of family characteristics with language anxiety and school success. The consequences of multiple regressions for two models revealed that a combination of the parent's age, income and education can operate as a good estimate for language anxiety and School Success. The results have revealed that, the language anxiety of students can be influenced by age, income and education of parents. It is also reported by the other researchers that getting higher of these kinds of socio-economic background led to

decreasing in language anxiety (Higbee, 1999., Anthony et al., 2000). language anxiety as a special kind of state anxiety occurs in the academic situations and can be reduced by using of more educated parent's and exposed by other researchers (Trang & Moni, 2015., Aydemir, 2011). The second part of this study also demonstrated that there is significant relationship between these kinds of socio-economic background and school success and the previous researche (Huang, 2012) also supporting these results.

6. Conclusion

This paper has used a sample of some students to investigate the relationship between three sub-variables of family characteristics with language anxiety and School Success. Most of the existing studies focus on the influence of family background on college education attainment. Actually, the educational attainment of higher education is affected by the education attainment during their childhood period. According to the above-mentioned results: a. significant negative correlation between one sub-variables of family characteristics and language anxiety is found a significant positive correlation between two parts of family characteristics and school success is detected. It is also found that language anxiety and school success in students can be predicted by a set of parent's ages, income and education. There is a lack of discussion on the mechanisms of childhood academic achievement, that is, the path through which the family background can affect educational attainment during childhood, which needs further examination in the research of education. Therefore, this article tries to explore the mechanisms producing the differences in children's academic achievement during the compulsory education period and the influence of family background from the starting point. With regard to mentioned results and the importance of parent's educational level in language anxiety and School Success, it is recommended that parents should be prepared in counseling and pedagogical classes and developing special classes can increase their communicational and educational skills.

Based on the results obtained in this study, it is suggested to teachers and education officials that they make more efforts to identify students and to determine their family status and pay more attention to the behavior and treatment of these students. Principals and planners are advised to take compensatory classes and support workshops to address the academic problems of weaker students. according to the results of this study, it is

recommended that teachers should devise modern methods of teaching to arouse students' interest in learning each of the various subjects. Teachers and parents should try and build self-confidence in their wards/students as it could boost students' interest in learning and improve their attitude towards school.

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Appendices

Foreign Language anxiety scale (FLAS)

Foreign Language anxiety scale (FLAS) contains 24 items, each answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". It measures a person's level of anxiety by coming up with an anxiety score by adding up the ratings on the 24 items.

1	When I study more for a language test, I will be confused.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2	I have anxiety about the consequences of failing on foreign language.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	I feel apprehension when I'm going to be called on in language session.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4	I don't worry about making mistakes in language meeting .	SA	A	N	D	SD
5	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language courses.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7	I often feel like not going to my language session .	SA	A	N	D	SD
8	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language course.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other courses	SA	A	N	D	SD
12	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13	I can get so nervous I forget things I know In language class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	SA	A	N	D	SD
15	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel worried about it.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	SA	A	N	D	SD
19	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20	I feel less self-conscious about speaking the foreign language.	SA	A	N	D	SD
21	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	SA	A	N	D	SD
22	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	SA	A	N	D	SD
23	I am scared that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	SA	A	N	D	SD
24	I feel very unease, When I'm on my way to language class.	SA	A	N	D	SD

SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neither agree nor disagree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree.