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Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement of Iranian EFL Learners

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This research attempts to investigate the effect of the English language test of the University Entrance Examination (UEE) in predicting the academic achievement of Iranian EFL learners. To achieve this goal, Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, Shiraz and Allameh Tabatabaei Universities were randomly selected. Then, the scores of the English majors admitted to those universities were collected from the aforementioned universities. Subsequently, the scores of special courses were included and the scores of the general ones such as theology, Ethics, etc. were excluded. Afterwards, the English scores of the learners were obtained from the Educational Testing Measurement (ETM) to investigate the relationship between the set of scores from the ETM and their achievements at the aforementioned universities. The results showed significant relationships between the UEE scores and the academic achievement in all fields of the study when quota (Q) six was included. However, in the same fields of study when Q six was excluded, the observed correlation was rather low except for the scores of the English majors in Shiraz University. It was also discovered that the correlation observed between the two sets of scores of the English majors in Mashhad University did not reveal significant relationships when Q six was excluded.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Language Proficiency, University Entrance Examination (UEE), Quota Six

Definition of Terms

1. Academic Achievement

The term refers to the degree of success gained by students in a subject measured by either standardized nationwide tests or teacher made local tests as indicated by their grade point average.

2. Language Proficiency

Different scholars have given somehow various views on what language proficiency is, and what a test of language proficiency should measure. Brier (1972), for example, defines language proficiency as "the degree of competence or capability in a given language demonstrated by an individual at a given point in time independent of a specific textbook, chapter in a book or pedagogical method" (p.332).

Davies (1990) claims that "Proficiency is concerned not only with publicly stated instruction but with the relationship between language control and a particular use of language, for example, whether a testee has adequate language for academic study, for practicing as a doctor, for working as a pilot, for driving a car, for being a ski instructor and so on" (p. 7).

As regards different aspects of language proficiency, Farhady, Jafarpour and Birjandi (1994) assert that a general language proficiency test is the one that can measure the overall ability of the learners such as the extent of knowledge language learners have built up, their competence in various language components and the extent at which they are able to practically demonstrate their knowledge of language use. Thus, what language proficiency attempts to measure is the testees' abilities to make use of the language at the time of examination.

3. University Entrance Examination (UEE)

It refers to a nation-wide examination administered each year by the Educational Testing Measurement (ETM), as a competition

test to admit the learners who have completed their pre-university courses to different universities throughout the country. An English test based on the English language courses offered at the high school and pre-university institutes is included in this examination with an index of four for the English major applicants.

4. Quota six

This term refers to the students who were in the battlefronts during the imposed war; Quota (Q) six constituted 40% of the students who were admitted to the universities.

While the nature of language proficiency has not, as yet, been completely understood. (Farhady, 1983), the literature is quite rich of studies focusing on the relationship between proficiency in English and the university students' academic success in ESL situations. The researchers believe that among many other factors, English language proficiency plays a significant role in shaping the academic success or failure of university students. In a study, for example, the academic records of 375 international graduate students at the University of Albany were analyzed for the relationship among TOEFL score, grade point average (GPA), credits earned and academic major, TOEFL score was not found to be an effective predictor of academic success, as measured by GPA, for this group of graduate students. However, there was a significant correlation between TOEFL score and graduate credits earned, and there were substantial differences among academic majors in the correlation between TOEFL score and GPA (Cummins, 1981a).

Such findings, along with theoretical contributions from Cummins (1976, 1978 and 1980) and Carrol (1980), paved the way to question the way general language proficiency was being measured. It was, therefore, concluded that predicting academic success of subjects based on teacher judgments or tests of oral fluency in English language was not a reliable criterion. It was also observed that what such proficiency tests as TOEFL and Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) claimed to measure was not on the basis of communicative competence.

Rather, as Carrol maintains, it was based on linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, a lot of variations were reported about what such tests purported to measure.

Introduced to the literature on bilingualism by Cummins (1980), the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) have been included to account for the degree of academic success of language minority groups.

Cummins (1980) introduces the distinction between BICS and CALP to account for the degree of academic success of language minority groups. The distinction suggests that the capability of surviving in an all-English classroom is apparently less related to face communication skills (BICS) but more to CALP.

It has also been asserted that BICS is more the outcome of salient aspects of communicative competence than of relatively superficial aspects such as accent, fluency, etc. upon which educators have frequently based their intuitive judgments about the English language proficiency of the language minority learners. Similarly, it was also pointed out that CALP was socially grounded and could not develop within a matrix of human interaction (Cummins, 1984).

In an attempt to answer the question "When does a language learner have sufficient English proficiency to participate effectively in an all-English classroom?" Scholars, doing research on bilingual education, have formulated the "threshold hypothesis" (Cummins, 1966), which has later been supplemented by the "interdependence hypothesis", suggesting that L1 and L2 academic proficiencies are developmentally interdependent (Cummins, 1978). The "interdependence hypothesis" was itself formulated in terms of the common underlying proficiency (CUP) model wherein CALP in L1 and L2 were regarded as manifestations of one underlying dimension (Cummins, 1980, 1981). It means that in whatever language a student receives instruction, the kind of cognitive and academic abilities, developed as a result of this instruction, underlie his/her future English achievements. Whether or not instruction in a particular language (L1 or L2) will

successfully develop CALP could be dependent on socio-cultural as well as pedagogical factors (Cummins, 1980 b).

Factors Influencing Academic Success

While there is some controversy in literature as to the role of English language proficiency on one's later academic success, it has been reported that math aptitude scores, high school grade point averages (GPAs), and subject matter achievement test scores all indicate some kind of statistically significant correlations with academic success (Wilcox, 1975). Among the factors mentioned above, high school GPAs and Math SATs (Scholastic Aptitude Test) have been reported to be the best predictors of academic success (Graham, 1984).

Besides these academic variables, some non-academic factors associated with personality and attitude are believed to have some predictive force (Ho and Spinks, 1985). Gue and Holdaway (1973) claim that non-academic factors such as motivation, homesickness, friendship, acceptance by the western culture, and attitudes to learning may also play an influential role in predicting the academic success of academic career.

Problems with Academic Prediction Studies

There are a number of problems with both the design and interpretation of such studies, including (a) the criterion for judging academic success, (b) the validity of measure of English proficiency, (c) the interpretation of any relationship found, and (d) the large number of uncontrolled variables involved in academic success (Graham, 1987).

While Grade point average (GPA) is the most commonly used criterion for academic success**,** some researchers have noted that it is not always a valid indicator of academic achievement. Heil and Aleamoni (1974), for example, state that GPA does not take into account the number of courses taken. Students may be able to handle only two courses at a time due to poor English language proficiency, for example, but their GPAs would not

reflect this. Heil and Aleamoni also take this problem into account that teachers might be lenient enough to give good will grades to nonnative speakers. Ho and Spinks (1985) argue that GPAs are "composed of heterogeneous or divergent elements, especially at the university level, where various academic subjects demand divergent competencies or dispositions" (p. 258). For example, some students might have a gift for logical argument, which would serve them well in one course, and a deficiency of math skills, which would doom them in another. In defense of the use of GPA, a study of 2075 foreign students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) found that first-semester GPA was the indicator of the learners' eventual success (Sugimoto, 1966).

Another problem with the prediction studies has to do with the definition of English language proficiency. Usually, scores on various commercial tests such as TOEFL or the Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT) are used as the measure of proficiency, and proficiency is defined by the performance on the test. Therefore, the definition of proficiency is somewhat different in a study using TOEFL scores from the one using CELT scores (Graham, 1987).

Many studies have found very high correlations between various well known tests (Carrol, 1972; Cervenka, 1978; Dizney, 1965). But, with the recent attention to communicative competence (as opposed to linguistic knowledge), the value of traditional multiple choice proficiency tests, such as the ones named above, for predicting the ability to use language competently has been severely questioned. Carroll (1980), for example, points out that when the aim is to measurer the ability to use the language (as opposed to knowing the proper usage), tests should not be based on "a selection items chosen on linguistic grounds alone" (p. 8).

Although this argument seems to be rationally appealing, it has yet to be conclusively demonstrated that traditional tests do not predict language performance. Nonetheless, high correlations between traditional multiple-choice tests and integrative tests (such as cloze tests) and performance tests (such as writing tests) have been reported by a number of studies (Hanania and Shkhani, 1980;

Farhady, 1983). Farhady (1983), for instance, found fairly strong relationships between an especially designed functional test for university students and various traditional tests, including tests of grammar.

Another problem in interpreting results is to determine the real significance of a relationship as opposed to its statistical significance e.g., (Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient). This means that different researchers use different cut off points for asserting 'strong' and 'weak' correlations, and that a statistically significant relationship does not necessarily indicate a strong relationship.

A Review of Prediction Studies

The following studies give an idea of the variety of academic prediction studies and the difficulties they came across regarding the use of their findings to generalize on the relationship between English proficiency and academic success.

Negative Conclusions

A number of researchers have found weak relationship between English Language proficiency and academic success. For example, Mulligan (1966) in his study of 699 students at the business and Public Administration of the City College of New York found no significant relationship between English placement and GPA, leading him to conclude that "proficiency in English was not a significant indicator of scholastic achievement" (p. 313). Likewise, Hawang and Dizney (1970) found that English language test scores were poor predictors of academic performance. Another study of the TOEFL and the verbal ability segment of the Graduate Record Exam as predictors was conducted by Shay (1975), who found that these tests failed to predict academic success.

Mixed Conclusions

A number of studies on the relationship between English language proficiency and academic achievement led the researchers into mixed conclusions. Slark and Bateman (1982) used the Nelson Denny Reading Test and the listening section of the CELT to measure the English proficiency of nonnative undergraduates. They used class grades instead of GPA as the criterion for academic success. In 4 out of 22 courses, the Nelson Denny total scores correlated significantly with success, whereas vocabulary subscores and comprehension subscores correlated significantly with course grades in 6 out of 22 and 8 out of 22 courses. CELT listening scores correlated significantly with grades in 9 out of 22 courses. Furthermore, Light, Xu and Mossop (1987), in a study of the value of the TOEFL score as a predictor of academic success, discovered a statistically significant but weak correlation (r= .14) between TOEFL scores and GPA. Their study was particularly interesting due to two other significant findings: a) the relationship between TOEFL and GPA varied noticeably when students were grouped by major area of study, and b) the higher the TOEFL score, the more graduate credits tended to be earned during the first semester.

Positive Conclusions

There are also many researchers who appear to have concluded that English language proficiency is a useful predictor of academic success. For example, Heil and Aleamoni (1974) reiterated that the TOEFL was greatly as useful for predicting success for nonnative English speakers as other admission tests are for native speakers. They found significant correlations between TOEFL and GPA. Similarly, Baldauf and Dawson (1980) concluded that Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) was a reliable and valid predictor of general academic performance for their learners after doing a prediction study of students in a teacher training college in Papua, New Guinea. The MELAB was also used in a validity study of 42 Cuban American

students by Freidenberg and Curry (1981) in a teacher education program at Florida International University. They found significant but rather weak relationships between test scores and GPA (r = .41). A similar correlation (r= .40) was found by Ayers and Peters (1977) between TOEFL and GPA in a study of 50 male Asian graduate students of engineering, chemistry and mathematics. Furthermore, Burgess and Greis (1970) discovered that TOEFL correlated significantly with GPA, particularly when grades for courses requiring little English such as art, math, and music were deleted from the grades being averaged (r=.66). They found writing and reading as good predictors of academic success. Thus, a review of the studies mentioned above does not reveal clear- cut answers for ESL/EFL professionals who are looking for guidance in offering recommendations to admission offices.

Method

A brief survey of the literature, related to the studies on the relationship between English language proficiency and academic achievement, reveals that mainly most of these studies have been carried out in ESL situations. The present study has intended to do the same thing in an EFL situation. In other words, this study has attempted to investigate the degree of relationship between English proficiency as indicated by the English sub-test of the University Entrance Examination (UEE) and the academic achievement of Iranian EFL university students.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Owing to the conspicuous problems, the following research question would arise:

Is there any relationship between the performance of the English and French majors on the language part of University Entrance Examination (UEE) and their academic achievement at the university?

To test the results of the aforementioned research question,

the following null hypotheses are proposed.

1. There is no relationship between the performance on the language part of the University Entrance Examination (UEE) and the academic achievement of the English majors including quota six.
2. There is no relationship between the performance on the language part of the UEE and the academic achievement of the English majors excluding quota six.
3. There is no relationship between the performance on the language part of the UEE and the academic achievement of the French majors when quota six is included.
4. There is no relationship between the performance on the language part of the UEE and the academic achievement of the French majors when quota six is excluded.

Participants

To find an answer to the questions posed above, a number of 433 subjects were selected from five different universities randomly chosen for the purpose of this study. As illustrated in Table 1, the subjects were selected from the universities of Allameh Tabatabaei, Mashad, Tabriz, Isfahan and Shiraz. These included 343 male and female EFL undergraduate students majoring in English literature, English teaching and English translation, and 90 male and female students majoring in French literature and translation. The French students were only from the universities of Allameh Tabatabaei and Isfahan. All the subjects were senior students and had already gained over 115 credits. The rationale behind selecting senior students was to include those students who had, at least, passed most of their special courses so that the researcher would arrive at reliable results as well as more meaningful conclusions. The number of students excluding quota (Q) six admitted to the aforementioned universities is given in Table 2.

Table 1
The number of students admitted to the following universities in the academic year 1990 – 1991

University	English Literature	English Teaching	English Translation	French Literature	French Translation	total
Isfahan		60		35		95
Tabriz	55					55
Shiraz	29					29
Mashhad		35				35
Allameh Tabatabaei	80		84		55	219
Total	164	95	84	35	55	433

Table 2
The number of students admitted to the following universities in the academic year 1990–1991 excluding quota (Q) six

University	English Literature	English Teaching	English Translation	French Literature	French Translation	total
Isfahan		38		33		71
Tabriz	42					42
Shiraz	25					25
Mashhad		21				21
Allameh Tabatabaei	63		50		46	159
Total	130	59	50	33	46	318

Instrumentation

Two types of scores were used as the raw data in this investigation. Firstly, the English sub-test scores of all the subjects in their UEE were formally obtained form the Educational Testing Measurement (ETM). It should be noted that the English test included in the UEE administered each year by the ETM is considered as a language proficiency test. Secondly, the researcher formally referred to the aforementioned universities where the subjects were studying to obtain their scores in all their academic subjects. In order to control the external variables, however, the

students' scores in general subjects such as Persian literature, theology, Physical education, etc. were excluded, and their GPAs were calculated on the basis of their special courses.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were also analyzed and interpreted by means of various statistical procedures such as the mean, minimum, maximum, range and standard deviation of the scores. Furthermore, to arrive at a statistically meaningful answer to the question of whether there exists any kind of relationship between the subjects' scores on English language proficiency test (as measured by the English sub-test of the UEE) and their academic performance, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied.

Before describing the statistical data gained, it is necessary to point out that the statistical measures of the English part of the UEE were computed out of 1000, whereas the statistical measures of the special courses obtained from different universities were computed out of 20.

Findings and Discussions

With regard to the nature of the present investigation which is mainly concentrated on discovering the relationship between the language score of the University Entrance Examination (UEE) and the academic achievement of the English and French majors, the following results were obtained.

Table 3
Data obtained from the students majoring English Teaching in Isfahan University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	471.8	0	966	966	318.08
	Excluding Q 6	644.9	68	966	898	220.5
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	14.4	10.8	18.03	7.28	2.05
	Excluding Q 6	15.2	10.8	18	7.6	1.9

r = 0.78 (Including Q 6) r = 0.72 (excluding Q 6)

As it can be seen from Table 3, the correlation coefficient calculated between the language part of the UEE and the academic achievement of English teaching majors including Q6 is 0.78, which is significant as compared with the critical value of r which is 0.25 at a significant level of $\alpha = .05$ for the degree of freedom of 58. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) calculated for this relationship is 0.61, implying that 61 percent of the variation in the language score of the UEE is due to the variation in the academic achievement score. As regards the data excluding Q6, a statistically significant correlation (r = 0.72) was also found for this relationship. However, at a rapid glance, it can be seen that the relationship including Q6 is rather stronger than that of excluding Q6.

Table 4
Data obtained from the students majoring English Literature in Tabriz University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	546.7	33	900	867	263.8
	Excluding Q 6	638.6	66	900	834	206.1
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	14.1	7	18.1	11.1	2.5
	Excluding Q 6	15	8.3	18.1	9.7	1.8

r = 0.69 (Including Q 6) r = 0.48 (excluding Q 6)

According to Table 4, the results reveal a correlation of 0.69 between these two sets of scores for the students including Q6. Thus, the relationship is significant if we compare it with the critical value of r, which is 0.27 at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 53. Besides, the R^2 calculated for this relationship is 0.48, suggesting that only 48 percent of the variance of the first set of score is predicted by the academic achievement of the learners. The correlation coefficient gained for the English literature majors excluding Q6 is 0.48, which is also significant with the critical value of r that is 0.30 at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 40. However, the R^2 obtained is

0.23, implying that although there is a significant relationship between these two sets of scores, the relationship is weak. That is, 77 percent of the variance in one is not predicted by the other. In other words, the variation in the language score of the UEE caused by the academic achievement is small.

Table 5
Data obtained from the students majoring English Literature in Shiraz University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	615.1	68	900	832	235.8
	Excluding Q 6	673.6	145	900	755	189.3
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	14.1	7.4	18.6	11.1	2.3
	Excluding Q 6	14.4	7.4	18.6	11.1	2.4

r = 0.73 (Including Q 6) r = 0.78 (excluding Q 6)

In reference to Table 5, the correlation coefficient obtained between the two sets of scores is 0.73 for the English literature majors including Q6. However, when Q6 is excluded, the relationship gets rather stronger (r = 0.78). In comparison with the critical value of r which is 0.39 at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 27, it can be concluded that the relationship is quite significant. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination calculated for the English majors excluding Q 6 is 0.53, suggesting that 47 percent is the proportion of the variance in the first set of scores which is not predicted by the UEE scores.

Table 6 indicates that students majoring in English teaching including Q6 obtained a correlation coefficient of 0.63 between the two sets of scores. The correlation obtained is higher than the critical value of r (0.32) at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 33. This finding indicates that there is a significant relationship between the two sets of measurements.

Table 6
Data obtained from the students majoring English Teaching in Mashhad University

		Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	520.09	25	808	783	244.9
	Excluding Q 6	676.7	441	808	367	113.4
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	15.4	11.9	19	7.1	1.9
	Excluding Q 6	16.3	13.6	19	5.4	1.5

r = 0.63 (Including Q 6) r = 0.15 (excluding Q 6)

However, having excluded Q6 from the English teaching majors, the researcher encountered a correlation of 0.15. Contrary to the previous case mentioned above, a critical glance at this finding shows no significant relationship between these two sets of scores. The calculation of R^2 (0.02) also would indicate that only 2 percent is the proportion of change in one due to the proportion of change in the other.

Table 7
Data obtained from the students majoring English Literature in Allameh Tabatabaei University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	634.1	42	933	891	254
	Excluding Q 6	721.7	66	933	867	177.3
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	15.4	12.1	19.04	6.9	1.8
	Excluding Q 6	15.8	12.3	19.04	6.9	1.6

r = 0.59 (Including Q 6) r = 0.48 (excluding Q 6)

An inspection of Table 7 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.59 when Q6 is included. By referring to the critical value of r (0.22) at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 78, it can be claimed that the relationship is significant. However, when Q6 is excluded, the correlation coefficient of these

two measurements becomes weaker (r = 0.48), that is also significant as compared with the 0.25, which is the critical value of r at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 61. Thus, the results indicate that the relationship between the language part of UEE and academic achievement of the students is more significant when Q6 is included. The R^2 calculated for these two sets of measurements excluding Q6 is 0.23, suggesting that 77 percent is the proportion of the variance in one that is not predicted by the other. This means that although there is significant relationship between these two measurements, in reality the effect is negligible.

Table 8
Data obtained from the students majoring English Translation in Allameh Tabatabaei University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	563.8	34	933	899	239.9
	Excluding Q 6	667.7	275	933	658	172.9
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	14.8	11.5	18.3	6.8	1.6
	Excluding Q 6	15.6	12.1	18.3	6.2	1.5

r = 0.52 (Including Q 6) r = 0.34 (excluding Q 6)

Table 8 shows a significant correlation (r = 0.52) for the two sets of scores when Q6 is included. However, as it can be seen in Table 9, the relationship becomes weaker when Q6 is excluded (r = 0.34). The correlation coefficient calculated for the sets of scores excluding Q6 is 0.11. It can be interpreted that although there is significant relationship between these two sets of scores, in reality the influence is very small. That is, 89 percent is the proportion of the variance in one that is not predicted by the other.

Table 9
Data obtained from the students majoring French Literature in Isfahan University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	541.1	85	900	815	227.4
	Excluding Q 6	567.1	116	900	754	206.7
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	16.3	13	19.6	6.6	1.7
	Excluding Q 6	16.4	13	19.6	6.6	1.6

r = 0.44 (Including Q 6) r = 0.32 (excluding Q 6)

As it can be seen from Table 9, a correlation coefficient of 0.44 was found for these two sets of scores when Q6 was included. When we compare the obtained correlation with the critical value of r (0.32) at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 33, we see that the relationship is significant. Besides, the coefficient of determination calculated for this relationship is 0.19, implying that only 19 percent of the variance in the UEE scores is predicted by the students' academic achievement. This also implies that although there is a significant correlation, the influence is not large. Having excluded Q6, however, the researcher came up with a correlation of 0.32, which is not significant as compared with the critical value of r (0.35) at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 31. The R^2 obtained for this relationship is 0.10, suggesting that only 10 percent of the variance in the UEE score is explained by the performance of the students' academic achievement. The low correlations for these students, especially when Q 6 is excluded, could be interpreted as the result of very erratic and large variation of scores.

The correlation coefficient calculated for the set of scores for the students including Q6 is 0.57, which is significant compared with the critical value of r (0.27) at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 53. However, when we exclude Q6, a lower relationship (r = 0.41) is found between this set of scores.

Table 10
Data obtained from the students majoring French translation in Allameh Tabatabaei University

		mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	SD
University Entrance Exam	Including Q 6	560.8	0.00	905	905	242.6
	Excluding Q 6	638.9	275	905	630	161.0
Academic Achievement	Including Q 6	15.3	9.9	18.9	8.9	2.4
	Excluding Q 6	15.8	11.8	18.9	7.1	2.2

r = 0.57 (Including Q 6) r = 0.41 (excluding Q 6)

Although the relationship is low, it is significant when compared with the critical value of r (0.29) at the significant level of $\alpha = .05$ with a degree of freedom of 44. When we apply the coefficient of determination for the set of scores excluding Q6, we get 0.17, implying that 83 percent of the variance in the first set of scores (UEE) is not predicted by the students' performance at the university. It does indicate that although there is a significant relationship between this set of scores, the relationship in reality is very small.

Conclusions

The analyzed data led the researcher to conclude that the first null hypothesis proposing a lack of relationship between the language part of UEE and the academic achievement of the English majors including Q6 is rejected. Therefore, the idea that the subjects' performance on the language part of UEE, to some extent, predicts the academic achievement of these students in the universities mentioned is supported.

As regards the second null hypothesis, which suggested a lack of relationship between the sets of scores of English majors excluding Q6, the researcher came up with the findings that reject the null hypothesis in most of the selected universities. Nevertheless, the data obtained from the students majoring in English teaching in Mashhad University did not reject the null hypothesis.

Having compared the correlations between the performance on the language part of UEE and the Academic achievement in all the selected universities excluding Q6, the researcher came up with the fact that in spite of the other universities in which the relationship between the performance on the language part of the UEE and the academic achievement was more significant when Q6 was included, the reverse happened in Shiraz University; i.e., the relationship between the two variables was more significant when Q6 was excluded. The third null hypothesis indicating a lack of relationship between the Language part of UEE and the academic achievement of French majors including Q6 is rejected in all selected samples. Thus, the idea that there is a significant relationship between the performance on the language part of UEE and the academic achievement of French majors is supported.

The last finding of the present study, which is indeed a logical interpretation to the fourth null hypothesis posed primarily, reveals an inconsistency in the relationship between the performance on the language part of UEE and the academic achievement of French majors in Isfahan and Allameh Tabatabaei universities when Q6 is excluded. The data obtained from French Literature majors of Isfahan University supports the null hypothesis; that is, there is no relationship between the two sets of scores of these students. However, the data obtained from French Translation majors of Allameh Tabatabaei rejected the null hypothesis.

The outcome of the statistical analyses clearly indicated that in all fields of studies, the observed correlations between the language part of the UEE and the academic achievement ranged from high to moderate, except for French Literature majors of Isfahan University and English Translation majors of Mashhad University, whose observed correlations were not significant when Q6 was excluded. Furthermore, the correlation observed for the English Translation majors of Allameh Tabatabaei University was low, but significant.

Thus, the findings, in most cases, are in line with the findings of Heil and Aleamoni (1974), Baldauf and Dawson (1980), Freidenberg and Curry (1981), and Burgess and Greis (1970). For

example, Heil and Aleamoni (1974) and Burgess and Greis (1970) found significant correlations between TOEFL and GPA. Similarly, Baldauf and Dawson (1980) found MELAB as a reliable and valid predictor of general academic performance for their learners. Likewise, Freidenberg and Curry (1981) found significant but rather weak relationships between test scores and GPA(r= .41). However, as regards the lack of significant correlations for French Literature majors of Isfahan University and English Translation majors of Mashhad University, the results are in line with the findings of Mulligan (1966), Hawing and Dizney (1970) and Shay (1975), who found that English language proficiency was a poor predictor of academic performance.

The inspection of the results would indicate that the standard deviations obtained for the majors excluding Q6 were lower as compared with their corresponding means. This finding could be interpreted as the result of very small variation of scores, and that the subjects were more homogenous when Q6 was excluded. The results also reveal that English majors of Shiraz University obtained a higher correlation when Q6 was excluded, contrary to other universities, whose observed correlations were higher when Q6 was included. It could mean that students who scored well in the language part of UEE are likely to have performed well in their academic achievement.

It is worth mentioning that due to the domain of the present study, there have been many interfering factors that have not been taken into consideration. First of all, the number of subjects might not be a good representative of the total population, and in turn, might not show the exact existing relationship between the two variables. Secondly, the psychological, economical and social factors of the students at different universities and cities may considerably vary from one to another. Furthermore, the universities themselves have some particular characteristics of their own that may influence students' achievements. In addition, teachers teaching at different universities may have different peculiarities. Finally, due to different testing techniques and methodologies, the scores students achieve may not be of the same absolute values.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of the present study will have both theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical findings have something to do with the nature of language proficiency and academic achievement. Practical implications, on the other hand, will, to some extent, be drawn up concerning the teaching, testing, curriculum development of different language courses in junior and senior high schools, language institutes as well as universities.

As regards the theoretical aspect of language proficiency, it can be argued that a different kind of English test focusing on both testing communicative competence and formal knowledge would be a better measure for university achievements. To do so, the following theoretical points seem to be more appropriate to develop the language part of the University Entrance Examination (UEE):

- Providing a context for language test items.
- Emphasizing pragmatics and discourse as well as forms.
- Increasing the authenticity of the language test of the UEE.
- Planning the test so as to measure "what the testees do know", not to measure "what the testees do not know".
- Developing the language test of the UEE in a way that it could measure the applicants' communicative competence.
- Removing the problems of 'test practices' and basing test items on certain well known books or sources of information.

The practical implication of this study is also worth mentioning. It is likely that academic achievement might not include all skills that are important for successful university students. Variables other than language proficiency such as language anxiety, sociolinguistic background, fatigue, linguistic background, etc. are also important for the students' academic success. Thus, in judging the academic potential of such students, English proficiency should be only one of the several criteria to be considered. The researcher only took grade point average (GPA) of

special courses as a criterion of the students' academic success into considerations.

The quality of academic achievement, though affected by many uncontrollable factors, may be improved by gearing language proficiency towards an acceptable and ideal level. The findings of this research could be applicable in most language learning centers, schools and universities. In addition, the evaluators and curriculum developers of different language fields of studies have to consider the important role of language potential for students' prospective success at different universities as well as the courses they are going to study.

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