

Social Factors Influencing Non-English Major Professors' Attitudes towards Learning English as an International Language

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Abstract

Nowadays, English is the leading foreign language enjoying a prestigious position in many countries, including Iran. In recent years, English is more and more popular in the world and the importance of learning English cannot be overstated in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. In this regard, studying the status of language of the educated class of the society such as teachers is very important. They can use English to improve their knowledge and research works. This requires that they have positive motivation towards English language learning. However, the role of social factors cannot be ignored. Based on the relationship between social context and English language proficiency, it should be remembered, however, that social context influences English language proficiency indirectly, mediated by a number of variables. Hence, this study tries to examine how the social factors influence Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language. To this end, a questionnaire was used as a research instrument. It was administered to 100 Iranian teachers of Islamic Azad University (Ghemshahr Branch), Ghaemshahr, Iran. The findings of this study showed that social factors can influence Iranian Teachers' motivation toward English language learning.

Keywords: Social factor, Motivation, Iranian teachers, English language learning, Ghaemshahr branch.

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1. Introduction

Language is purely a human and non-indistinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Therefore, language is very essential to the existence of every human. At every point in man's life, there are thoughts that need to be communicated (transferred) from person to person. If there is no medium for the expression of such thoughts or innate ideas, they are often lost. For this reason, language has come to be an indispensable factor in human existence. It is inferred that language learning is regarded as the cornerstone of human existence. The widespread use of English as an international language makes it highly important in the world. English is recognized as the lingua franca for communication across nations and cultures, and is the most desired second or foreign language in most countries in the world. English is used as a second or foreign language in workplace, international trade, global media, tourism, business, education, technology, and on diplomatic occasions (Crystal, 1997).

In this regard, studying the language status of the educated class of the society such as teachers can be useful. Nowadays, teachers need to learn English language for research works like taking part in conferences of foreign countries and workshops, presenting ISI articles, using world information, etc. In fact, they need English Language for their educational improvement.

Based on Fakeye (2010), the matter of learner's motivation is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impact on learning English language on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent (Gardner, 1985). It is believed that individuals with positive motivation usually progress more rapidly in foreign language learning. In this regard, sociolinguistic research in SLA has documented that social, cultural and psychological factors affect language acquisition too. Based on the relationship between social context and English language proficiency, it should be remembered, however, that social context influences English language proficiency indirectly, mediated by a number of variables. Learners' motivation towards the L2 and learning opportunities learner can obtain determined by their social-economic classes (Rathod, 2012). Learning of the language of the other community simply cannot be separated from the learners' social dispositions toward speech community in question (Long, 2010). According to

some researchers (Giles, 1982; Smith, 1995; Strong, 1983) the social context may, to some extent, account for a learner's motivation towards a second or foreign language learning.

Specifically, the main objective of this research is to evaluate the effects of social factors such as gender, family s' encouragement and social class on teachers' motivation in successes or failures in English language learning. It is hoped that a research of this nature will enlighten the depth and effects of problems encountered in learning English language as an international language and also suggest ways of alleviating them.

Statement of the Problem

As you know, English which is an international language is not used to the fullest extent in the universities of some countries. What seem common Iranian teachers is the use of mother tongue in classroom as well as outside classroom contexts. Some teachers always use their mother language even when they teach content subjects, however, at the end; learners are expected to answer the test and examination question in English. The other problem is that some teachers are from disadvantaged school backgrounds where there are no educational facilities. Most teachers are only exposed to English when they are at world conferences and workshops. Hence, they are thus deficient in English because of using weak grammar in sentence construction and communication.

Unfortunately some teachers are born in the families with low social class and there has not been a marked growth in attempts to incorporate information regarding the effect of positive motivation and social norms of language behavior into educational teaching practices. Maybe, there are some efforts to develop social motivation about learning English, but much work remains to be done. Two evidences to such efforts are the fact that often times social factors influencing motivation and the amount of benefit from English language are unknown. The other is the fact that the process of English language learning in educational system of Iran is not very dynamic.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study might shed some light on the following:

1. Iranian National Department of Education might need to review their language policy with regard to instructional languages.
2. All Iranian teachers must be able to identify the social factors influencing their motivation and improve them.
3. The result of the investigation might bring about changes in policy making.
4. Iranian educational system might change the strategy and role they are supposed to play in the choice of the most communicative and effective teaching among learners.

Background of the Study

Meenakshi (2013) studied the motivation of learners towards language learning in a second language learning environment. He selected the group of students pursuing different undergraduate courses after secondary examination in Uttar Pardesh (a state in India). As a result, he indicates learners with positive attitude and motivation towards English language learning learn it faster and better and states the sociolinguistic factors are responsible for the learners' motivation towards language learning.

Shabani (2013) investigated the effect of level of English language proficiency on speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners. In so doing, the study carried on a pre-university class including 10 students. Since there was just one class available, a quasi-experimental design was employed. A statistical analysis of the results obtained from Paired-Samples t-test provided some evidence in support of the positive effect of background knowledge on speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners.

Halimi (2012) did a research about the influence of attitudes and motivation on foreign language acquisition. The main issue of his study contributes to the understanding of the connection between learners, the sociological and psychological context in which languages are learned, and the attitude and motivation toward language learning. His study investigated bilingual learners of English as a foreign language at university level. In order to determine the students' learning process of English as a foreign language, students were given language background questionnaire based on Daller's

(2002) model and Gardner & Macintyre' (1993) mini- Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The results of the study show that although motivation is strong, attitude toward the learning situation should be promoted to help learners reach success in the learning process.

Kobayashi (2010) did a research about Japanese female students' motivation towards English learning. Based on his study the common practice found in questionnaire-based research ending with the statistical identification of gender differences in motivation without exploring factors influencing those differences. By utilizing multidisciplinary extant data and research findings, his study argued that Japanese social elements, such as the status of English as feminized academic and professional choices and women's marginalized status in Japanese mainstream society, underlie many women's positive motivation towards English learning.

Momani (2009) also investigated the learners' motivation towards learning English as a foreign language and their achievements in reading comprehension. The findings showed that the respondents that had neutral positive motivation towards learning English. Also, there was a strong correlation between the students' motivation toward leaning English and their performance in reading comprehension.

Shams (2008) conducted a study attempting to investigate learners' attitudes, motivation and anxiety towards the learning of English. The findings underlined the learners had affirmative attitudes and high enthusiasm towards English. This also highlighted that most of them showed positive motivation towards English language and its learning which, in turn, emphasized the value of English language efficiency in the daily life.

Yan's (1998) study is among the few attempts investigating the influence of affective factors such as social motivation on language achievement in mainland China. She asked the participants to rate their level of overall motivation for English learning on a five-point ordinal scale and found that the strength of motivation and attitude in general and anxiety were negatively correlated.

Research Hypotheses

In this study, the hypotheses are as follows:

Major hypothesis:

Social factors affects Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

Minor hypotheses

Gender affects Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

Social class affects Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an International language.

Family's encouragement affects Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to scrutinize effective social factors that influence Iranian teachers' motivation towards English language learning. So, the need for accurate information about teachers' motivation towards English language learning is essential. It also shows that how to determine whether Iranian teachers' motivation is negative or positive towards the usage of English as a language of learning and teaching in universities.

Methodology

In this investigation a survey research methodology was used to gather information about the social factors influencing opinions and motivation of Iranian teachers about the usage of English as an international language in the universities. The participants are all teachers of Islamic Azad University (Ghaemshahr Branch), Ghaemshahr, Iran. The number of teachers was 385 in 2014 (145 faculty members and 240 tuition teachers). It should be noted that, a simple random sampling technique was used to choose 100 samples for this study. Also, it is worth mentioning that the sample size is considered based on Morgan and Kerjcie Table. Questionnaire was used as data collecting instrument in this research. The first part of the questionnaire related to the individual information of the respondents. Questions are about age, gender, and marital status, major, economic status of the respondents' parents, social class

and their level of English language proficiency .In the second part, questions related to the components of the dependent variable. The teachers were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) so as to determine their level of agreement with each item statement. Higher scores corresponded to greater agreement with each statement. After pilot testing the questionnaire was given to the samples to gather information. It should be mentioned that analysis of data is done by SPSS software. Descriptive statistics of this study includes one-dimensional tables, mean, mode, standard deviation, variance and standard error of mean. Referential statistics includes one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation coefficient and Spearman correlation coefficient.

Results and Discussion

To test the major hypothesis the researcher, at first, tested three above minor hypotheses and then based on the findings that were mentioned below she tested it at the end of this part.

To test the first minor hypothesis that is related to the gender, it was used T-Test.

Table1. The effect of gender on Iranian teachers' motivation

Gender	Statistical Indexes			Variance Difference		Mean Difference		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig	t	Degree of Freedom (df)	Sig
Male	74	83/37	8/131	0/1	0/7	-0/906	98	0/367
Female	26	85/07	8/480	12	38			

The researcher used t-test to test this hypothesis. According to the above table, calculated sig is 0/367 that is higher than ($\alpha=0/05$). Then, H_1 is rejected. In fact, there is no meaningful difference between the gender and Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an International language. For more detail, see the table below.

Table 2. T-Test Results of gender influencing on Iranian teachers' motivation towards English language learning

Variance Kinds	Levene' Test for Equality of Variance		T-Test			Mean Difference
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig	
Equal variances assumed	0/112	0/738	-	98	0/36	-1/698
			0/906		7	
Equal variances not assumed			-	42/2	0/38	-1/698
			0/888	5	0	

Based on T-Test of the second row which is -0/888 and significance of the test (0/380) it can be resulted that mean of the gender of Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language is not different and also next row shows the mean difference that is -1/698. Hence, H_1 hypothesis is rejected and H_0 hypothesis is accepted.

In the following analysis that is related to the second minor hypothesis, the first and second class are considered as just one class, as stated in Table 2. Because there is one respondent in the first class and as a result, analysis of Duncan's test is not well done.

Table 3. Analysis of Duncan's test

Social class	N	Subset for $\alpha=0.5$	
		1	2
2.00	8	79.0000	85.2292
3.00	41	82.4390	93.0000
4.00	48	85.2292	.054
5.00	3	.144	
Sig			

Hence, The Spearman's correlation method was used, in this study, to analyze this hypothesis.

Table 4. Effect of social class on motivation based on Spearman's correlation

Spearman's rho	Social class	Motivation
	1.000	0.285
Sig	0	0.004
	100	100
N		

Table 5. Difference between social class Iranian teachers' motivation towards English language learning

Spearman Correlation Coefficient	Sig
0/285	0.004

Based on Spearman correlation coefficient (0/285) and sig (0/004) which is less than ($\alpha=0/05$), it can be resulted that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted.

To analyze the final hypothesis, based on table 6, it was used Pearson Correlation Coefficient. According to the following table, correlation between family' s encouragement and motivation towards English as an international language is 0/564. So, sig is less than $\alpha=0/05$. Hence, this test is meaningful and H_0 is rejected. And there is a meaningful and reverse relationship between Parents' encouragement and learning English as an international language.

Table 7. A survey of parents' encouragement on teachers' motivation

Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Sig
0/564	0/000

In general, considering the value of the standardized regression coefficient, it can be seen that the role of parents' encouragement (0/316) is more prominent than other variables. The high value of β indicates the relative importance and the highlighted role in forecasting the dependent variable of teachers' motivation. Hence, the parents' encouragement variables has greater role to predict the teachers' motivation variable.

Table 8. Regression coefficient of independent variables (social factors) with teachers' motivation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	gender	1/91	1/45		
Social class	0/025	0/994	0/002	0/026	0/980
Parents' encouragement	0/754	0/264	0/316	3/060	0/000

As you see, the researcher explained 3 minor hypotheses in detail and as a result, based on the findings, finally accepted or rejected them. But this research has one major hypothesis that should be tested. In this regard, she used one-way ANOVA to test this hypothesis. In general, all independent variables that related to the social factors were computed to test this hypothesis except the gender, because it was an interval variable and couldn't be computed with other variables that were ordinal. In fact, it was regarded as moderator variable.

Table 9. A survey of social factors influencing Iranian teachers' motivation towards English language learning

ANOVA^b

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.482	1	5.482	55.575	.000 ^a
	Residual	9.667	98	.099		
	Total	15.149	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant): Major

ANOVA^b

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.482	1	5.482	55.575	.000 ^a
	Residual	9.667	98	.099		
	Total	15.149	99			

b. Dependent Variable: Motivation

Table 10. Regression coefficient of social factors with teachers' motivation

According to the above table, sig is 0.000 that is less than $\alpha=0/05$. Hence, this test is meaningful and H_0 is rejected. In fact, social factors have effect on Iranian teachers' motivation.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.614	.187		13.946	.000
	Major Hypothesis	.413	.055	.602	7.455	.000

a. Dependent Variable:
motivation

Conclusion

This research shows that, concerning the notion of English as an academic language, participants held different motivation towards different issues of social factors relating to English language learning. In this study we have seen some social factors affect non-English major teachers' motivation. In this

regard, it was tried to show these effects by considering some variables such as age, social class and family and friend's encouragement and support.

As you know, based on the study findings, there is no meaningful relationship between the age and non-English major teachers' motivation towards English as an academic language, but there are meaningful relationships between social class and family and friends' encouragement and support with non-English major teachers' motivation towards English as an academic language. In other words, social class and family and friend's encouragement have a positive influence on non-English major teachers' motivation.

The motivation towards English and its use in Iran, supports the general contention partially that the positive language motivation let learner have positive orientation towards learning English. The recognition of the importance of English as a foreign language in Iran society may not, interestingly, lead learners to have active steps in learning process. One of the reasons behind this result may be the fact that they do not have positive motivation towards the English language – which may be an outcome of the education system of Iran - but the English based culture – which can be considered to be a result of social tendencies affected by globalization. Another reason may be that they do not feel the need of the English language in their daily life yet, and they delay learning the English language until adulthood when they become to be forced to learn English due to, say, professional needs. Therefore, the level of awareness is not enough on its own; it needs to be turned into action.

Therefore, strategy-based learning and teaching in Education Organization in Iran might be a solution for this type of learners who have positive motivation towards the culture and high level of recognition of the importance of the language but low level of orientation towards learning the English language.

It should be stipulated in each and every university policy that English should be used as one of the important language of learning and teaching in universities with the aim of helping learners because they need English for purpose of being useful and up-to-date in the future.

English language learning might be as a culture in the families. They should motivate children to learn English from childhood. It can be said to be an important factor is to establish the cool environment to encourage teachers and students to practice speaking English with other Iranian learners. Social factors should be recognized and increased. We should improve the policy in the society that English language learning can be the factor of our advancement in the world.

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