Social, Cultural and Linguistic Factors Affecting EFL Learners' Language Proficiency: A Quantitative Analysis

Somaye Amirabadi*, PhD Candidate, Department of English, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran
Somaye.amirabadii@gmail.com
Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo, Professor, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran
arazmjoo@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

Abstract
Many factors may be involved in determining why some students are more and some are less proficient in language. This study tried to explore the factors affecting Iranian EFL learners' proficiency. 221 students at second, third and fourth year of university, including 50 male and 171 female were selected randomly to participate in the study. A researcher-made questionnaire and a proficiency test comprised the data collection instruments. The researchers were able to identify three factors affecting language proficiency. They were classified as social factors, cultural factors and linguistic factors, Then a model was developed to represent the relationship among these factors and language proficiency. In line with Bourdieu's (1986), the results of data analysis indicated that social factors are among the most dominant factors affecting the learners' language proficincy.

Keywords: Social factors, cultural factors, linguistic factors, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in theories and models of SLA that focus on social context, though they do not address the social factor of the language and its relation to linguistic and culture explicitly. Language, according to socio-cultural theorist Vygotsky (1962), comes out from cultural and social activity and only later becomes reconstructed as an individual, psychological phenomenon. In this way of thinking, SLL theory should be centered not so much on the process of learning new structures and sounds and then using them to communicate, but rather on the learner's participation in social activities such as having out-of-class conversations or talking to classmates and teachers. Lantolf (2002) believed that one of the primary concepts of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated. Lantolf states that Vygotsky finds an important role for what he calls "tools" in humans' realization of the world and of themselves. He maintains, Vygotsky believes that human beings do not act upon the physical world directly and without the using of mediating tools. Whether symbolic or signs, Vygotsky considers tools as artifacts produced by human beings under certain cultural and historical conditions, and they carry with them the characteristics of the culture. They are utilized as aids in solving problems that cannot be solved in the same way if they are not present. In turn, they also have an impact on the individuals who make use of them since they increase the previously unknown activities and previously unknown manners of conceptualizing phenomena in the world. So, they are continually modified while they are passed from one generation to the next, and each generation modifies them with the aim of meeting the needs and aspirations of its individuals and communities. Vygotsky states that the role of a psychologist should be to recognize how human social and mental activities are organized through culturally created artifacts.

His most outstanding work is the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is regarded as a remarkable contribution to the field of education and learning process. Turuk (2008) mentioned that according to Vygotsky (1978 cited Lantolf 2000), the sociocultural environment presents the child with a variety of tasks and demands, and engages the child in his world through the tools. In the early stages, Vygotsky claims that the child is completely dependent on other people, usually the parents, who initiate the child's actions by instructing him/her as to what to do, how to do it, as well as what not to do. Parents, as representatives of the culture and the conduit through which the culture passes into the child, actualize these instructions primarily through language. On the question of how do children then appropriate these cultural and social heritages, Vygotsky 1978 as cited in Wertsch 1985states that the child acquires knowledge through contacts and interactions with people as the first step (interpsychological plane), then later assimilates and internalizes this knowledge adding his personal value to it (intrapsychological plane). This transition from social to personal property according to Vygotsky is not a mere copy, but a transformation of what had been learnt through interaction, into personal values. Vygotsky claims that this is what also happens in schools. Students do not merely copy teachers" capabilities; rather they transform what teachers offer them during the processes of appropriation.

Objectives and Research Question

The sociocultural and linguistic factors affecting language proficiency was largely ignored by researchers; thus, research into this area can be beneficial. It is actually beneficial to develop a model to be representative of the factors affecting language proficiency. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following question:

Q. What type of model can be developed to be representative of the factors affecting Iranian EFL learners' proficiency?

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

Social Factors

Age

Sadeghi (2013) suggested two basic different views regarding the age issue. He argues that young learners are more efficient. On the contrary, he claims that adolescents are more efficient and effective second language learners than young learners in all aspects. According to Khalifa (2012) age has a significant effect on EFL learning since early exposure to language learning leads to better performance.

In this same way, he also cites Snow (1993) and Taylor (1990) that they revealed that the earlier the first language learning, the better the second language general fluency, and they concluded that the performance of foreign language was better in students who started learning English at an earlier age, for example five or six.

Socio-Economical Context

Another issue besides age is the social background in which learners are involved constantly when they are learning a second language, and that is since learning is involved in different contexts. Gholami (2012) suggests that the social context is believed to influence motivation and attitude. These two factors are to a great extent compulsory when attempting to learn a language other than their native language. Gholami (2012) established that the context provides many learning opportunities which give heighten the learner's outcomes. Learners acquire and learn a language through social interaction; by the way, sometimes, the significance of the social context is mostly neglected in EFL countries as it is stated by Gholami since their

social context is lost. Also, the researcher argues that a foreign language learner learns a language through social interaction. For some people; however, the importance and necessity of the social context is underestimated and neglected in most of the EFL countries. Thus, the final learning outcome is not satisfactory to some extent.

Motivation

Research studies have proved that motivation is the major factor in second language learning because it "determines human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction" (Dornyei, 1998). The term motivation in second language learning context is seen according to Gardner (1985) as "referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". (p. 10)

Educational Level of Parents

Based on Sui-chu & Williams (1996) one of the characteristics that may affect the value of parental involvement in students' academic achievement is parental educational level. The literary review on students' academic achievements has reviewed the importance of parents education. Many studies describe that parents education level plays an important role in the amount of parent involvement and the most of these research have been with secondary school students. More findings describe that the higher education level of the parents, the students more likely Journal of Education and Practice will have better academic achievement.

Cultural Factors
Culture Class

Recent studies focus on the seamless relationship between L2 teaching and target culture teaching, especially over the last decade with the writings of scholars such as Byram (1989; 1994a; 1994b; 1997a; 1997b) and Kramsch (1988; 1993; 1996; 2001). People involved in language teaching have again begun to understand the intertwined relation between culture and language (Pulverness, 2003). It has been emphasized that without the study of culture, teaching L2 is inaccurate and incomplete. For L2 students, language study seems senseless if they know nothing about the people who speak the target language or the country in which the target language is spoken. Acquiring a new language means a lot more than the manipulation of syntax and lexicon. According to Bada (2000: 101), "the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers." In addition, nowadays the L2 culture is presented as an interdisciplinary core in many L2 curricula designs and textbooks (Sysoyev & Donelson, 2002).

Gender

Gender is an issue with important theoretical and pedagogical assumption in L2 learning. A good number of studies found that gender can have a significant effect on how students learn a language. A large number of researches worked on topics about gender, including language learning ability, motivation, teacher perceptions, learning styles and strategies, classroom interaction, teaching materials, testing and pedagogies. Many studies that examined gender as a variable in the use of language learning strategies (LLS) reported that significant gender differences almost always are the same, and they show greater use of LLS by females (see for instance, Green & Oxford, 1995; Noguchi,1991). (Politzer ,1983) reported that females used social LS significantly more than males. (Ehrman and Oxford ,1990), using the LLSL with both

students and instructors at the U.S. Foreign Institute came to the conclusion that compared to males, females reported significantly greater use of LLS in four areas of general study strategies, functional practice strategies, strategies for communicating meaning, and self-management strategies.

Linguistic Factors
Linguistic Background

Brown (2001) claims that: "The native language of learners exerts a strong influence on the acquisition of the target language system. While the native system will exercise both facilitating and interfering effects on the production and comprehension of the new language, the interfering effects are likely to be the most salient." (p. 66). The Native Language Effect is present during the learning process until the learner has reached a level of language internalization; at this point the level of interference has lowered.

Word Order

Word order is the second linguistic factor which was considered in this article. Since Greenberg (1963) initiated working on this issue, there have been many studies which have studied linguistic universals based on word order characteristics of languages worldwide Greenberg proposed 45 linguistic universals on the basis of a sample consisting of 30 languages. 28 of these languages refer to order or position of grammatical relations such as subject, object and verb. Accordingly he assumed by his typology that languages are divided into one of three types: SVO (e.g. English), SOV (e.g. Korean) and VSO (e.g. Welsh).

Methods

Questionnaire

In order to measure socio-cultural and linguistic factors among students, a questionnaire emerged out of the qualitative phase employed in this study. The questionnaire consisted of 57 items. The items were scored according to the 5 Likert- type scale of five points ranging from (5) "Strongly agree" to (1) "Strongly disagree". The participants had 30 minutes to answer the items. They were asked to read the items carefully and answer them completely. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha. The scale was reported to have a construct validity established by factor analysis and reliability was found to be 0.91 Generally, coefficients greater than .70 indicate adequate reliability (i.e., consistency between methods accounts for 49% or more of variance) (Stemler, 2004). In the current study, the analysis of data included checking the reliability of questionnaire, checking the features of each individual items and confirming validity of questionnaire through factor analysis.

In order to check the features of the questionnaire, it was piloted on a random sample (N=90) of college students. The sample included 90 female students. Their age range from 18-25. Enough time were given to fill the questionnaire.

Results of the pilot study
Item analysis and reliability
Results of CFA

In order to examine the validity of the questionnaire, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used. Among the 35 items of the Social factors (F1) seven items (8, 12, 16, 19, 26, 29, and 30) were not significant and it was decided to delete these items. To check the model fit, goodness of fit indices were used. The model with all factor loadings can be seen in Figure 1. Goodness of fit

indices can be seen in Table1. In this study, χ^2/df, GFI, CFI, and RMSEA were used. To have a fit model, χ^2/df should be less than 3, GFI and TLI should be above .90, and RMSEA should be less than .08. As Table 1 shows, all the goodness of fit indices are within the acceptable range. Therefore, the scale enjoyed validity.

Table 1._Goodness of fit indices_

	X^2	df	X2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit			<3	>.90	>.90	<.08
Model	2594.25	1171	2.215	.91	.94	.071

Moreover, to examine the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha was used. The reliability coefficient was .919 for this scale, which shows the scale enjoys high reliability (See Table 2). It should also be added that because seven items were deleted in this pilot study the numbering of the items in this questionnaire changed in the final draft of the questionnaire as follows: Social items (items 1-28), and Cultural items (items 29-38), Linguistic items (items 39-50).

Table 2._The Reliability Indices of Questionnaire_

Subscale	Item No.	Cronbach alpha
Social factors	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35	.870
Cultural Factors	36,37,38.39.40,41,42,43,44,45	.752
Linguistic Factors	46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,57	.869
Total Scale		.919

Main Study

After checking the reliability and validity of the newly developed questionnaire, it was used in the main phase of the study. In this phase, a large sample was needed since the relationship between the variables of the study was supposed to be presented in the form of a model. Details about this phase of the research will appear below.

Participants

The participants in this phase of the study included 220 senior and junior students from different state universities in North Khorasan, Bojourd. From among students, 46 were studying

in their fourth year and 87 were continuing their third year and 87 in the second year of studies. Availability sampling was used as a large group was needed for this phase of the study. The sample included 50 male and 170 female students whose age range was from 18 to 25.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in this phase of the study. It was the socio-cultural and linguistic factors questionnaire and Proficiency Test. The questionnaire was constructed based on the emergent findings of the qualitative phase of the study as well as theoretical and empirical support from previous literature.

Data Collection Procedure

The validated questionnaire along with test of proficiency, test of TOEFL, was used to gather data using a very large sample. For this purpose, the researcher gathered data in all possible university contexts during data gathering processes in classrooms, enough instructions were provided for the participants by the researcher before they completed the questionnaires.

Data analysis procedure
Structural Equation Modeling

Selection of a proper methodology is one of the most important and crucial part of the research study. SEM is the second generation of multivariate technique that was applied. Multiple regressions were suitable for assessing constructs and relations between constructs. The first purpose of regression analysis is prediction while the intent of a correlation is to evaluate the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. (Tabachnick, 2001).

According to Dornyei (2007) the basis of SEM is on describing the relationship between the measured variables and the hypothesized latent variables resulting in a measurement model or a number of measurement models. As the second stage, SEM identifies links between the latent independent and dependent variables. The outcome of this stage will be a full structural model encompassing all the measurement models (Kline, 2011). Factor analysis can be either Confirmatory or Exploratory. The both type of confirmatory and exploratory modeling can be used by SEM. In other word SEM is also suitable for both theory extension and theory testing. Based on the objective of data analysis, each of these approaches can be implemented. In Exploratory Factor Analysis the researcher is looking for experimental data to discover and identity indicators and terms without any imposed model. On the other hand, exploratory analysis not only has proposal or under covering value but also it can be made structures, models or hypothesizes. (Diana D.Suhr, 2003)

In confirmatory modeling which begins with a hypothesis as a causal model representative, the model concepts must be operationalized in order to permit testing of the relations of concepts in the model. Then the model will be tested against gathered measurement data to check if the model fits the data. (Bartholomew and Knott, 1999).

Results and Discussion

To explore the possible association between Social factors, Cultural Factors, Linguistic Factors and Iranian EFL learners' proficiency, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was conducted. Table 4 represents the relationship between Social factors, Cultural Factors, Linguistic Factors and English proficiency. As it can be seen in the table, there is a positive significant relationship between all three factors and English proficiency. As the results shows, the highest relationship is

between Social factors and English proficiency (r=0.812, $p < 0.01$), and the lowest relationship is between cultural factors and English proficiency (r=0.492, p $<$ 0.01).

Table 3. *The Results of Correlation among Social factors, Cultural Factors, Linguistic Factors and English proficiency*

	1.	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**
1. Social factors	1			
2.Cultural Factors	.502[**]	1		
3.Linguistic Factors	.541[**]	.645[**]	1	
4.English proficiency	.812[**]	.492[**]	.507[**]	1

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01

Results of Path Analysis

In statistics, path analysis is used to describe the directed dependencies among a set of variables. It can be viewed as a special case of structural equation modeling (SEM) in which only single indicators are employed for each of the variables in the causal model. That is, path analysis is SEM with a structural model, but no measurement model. Other terms used to refer to path analysis include causal modeling, analysis of covariance structures, and latent variable models.

To examine the structural relations, the proposed model was tested using the Amos 22 statistical package**.** A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit: the chi-square magnitude which shouldn't be significant, Chi-square/*df* ratio which should be lower than 2 or 3, the normed fit index (NFI), the good fit index (GFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI) with the cut value greater than .90**,** and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of about .06 or .07 (Schreiber, et al., 2006).

As demonstrated by Figure 2, the chi-square/df ratio (7.167), RMSEA (.058), GFI (1.00), and CFI (1.00), all the fit indices except the chi-square/df ratio, lie within the acceptable fit thresholds. Hence, it can be concluded that the proposed model had a **good** fit with the empirical data.

To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the components, the standardized estimates were examined. As indicated in Figure 2, an estimate is displayed on each path. This standardized estimate is the standardized coefficient or beta coefficients (*β)* resulting from an analysis carried out on independent variables that have been standardized. It explains the predictive power of the independent variable and the effect size. The closer the magnitude to 1.0, the higher the correlation and the greater the predictive power of the variable is.
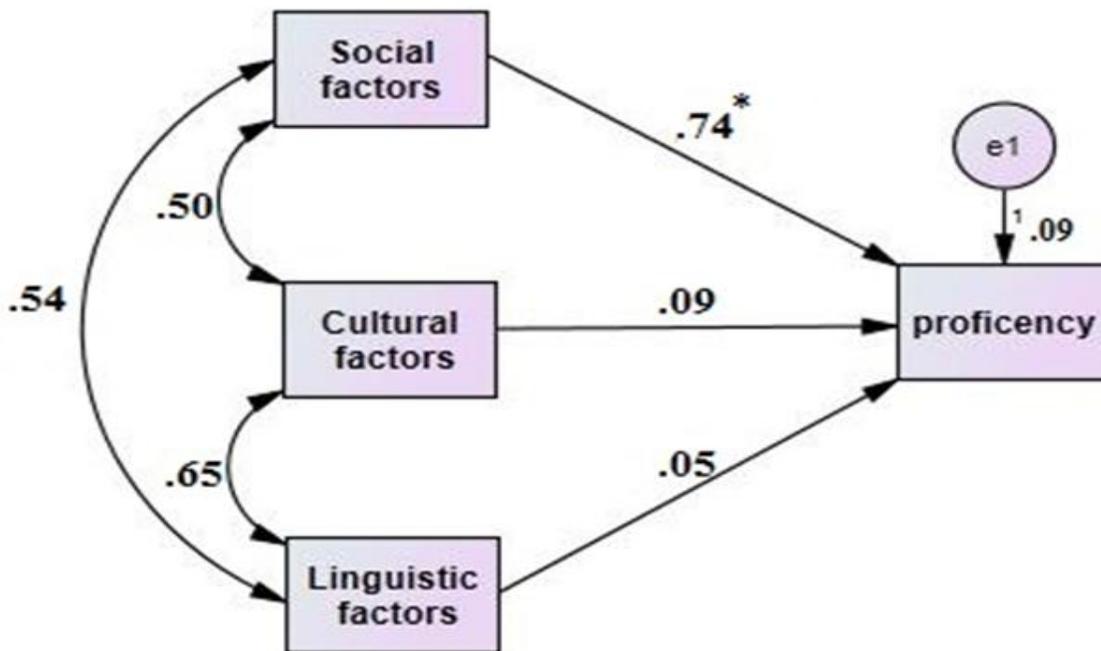
Figure 1. *The schematic representation of the relationships among Social factors, Cultural Factors, Linguistic Factors and English proficiency*

The results demonstrated that among three factors, only social factors (*β*= .74, *p<0.05*) are positive predictors of English proficiency. In other words, English proficiency is not influenced significantly by cultural (*β*= .09, *p*=0.09) and linguistic factors (*β*= .05, *p*=0.35).

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the development of a model of sociocultural and linguistic factors affecting Iranian EFL learners' proficiency. As the main issue, the problem of lack of the efficient and adequate models in general, and sociocultural and linguistic factors in particular were explored. Also, the aforementioned factors were surveyed on a researcher-made questionnaire. All the methodological steps pertaining to the actual implementation of the study were followed in an attempt to respond to the research question raised.

Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981) represented, learning of any language is inter-mental rather than intra-mental, indicating that sociological factors provide the learning's infrastructure and the solid foundation of that language. Thus, according to the results of this study, it is fair to claim that the social environment of learners help them manage, monitor, and plan or make use of their analytical thinking.

Based on the final model presented and analyzed through structural equation modeling and factor analysis, it can be stated that there seems to exist a relationship between social, cultural and linguistic factors and language proficiency. Contrary to what may be thought, the relationships established through SEM do not necessarily indicate a causal relationship (Kline, 2011; Lacobucci, 2009).

However, SEM procedures are able in casting light on the possible relationships between latent variables in a study with a higher degree of confidence than other statistical procedures do. In this study, social factors revealed to affect language proficiency more than the other two.

These factors were age, motivation, social context, and economic position of parents, media, technology and educational level of family. According to the results obtained through SEM procedures, there seems to be a meaningful relationship between social factors and language proficiency. In fact, social factors had just a significant relationship with language proficiency. The results also revealed that lowest relationship exists between cultural factors and English proficiency. Based on the findings of the quantitative phase and through path analysis, a model was presented which clarifies the degree of relationship between each of the factors and language proficiency. The causal claim of the model is similar to Ricento's (2005) identity and its understanding. He argues that if a learner identifies herself/himself (known as sociological factor) with another culture, she or he will be more proficient (known as linguistic factor) to learn the target language. Furthermore, the results of the current study are in agreement with Bourdieu's (1986) socio-cultural and linguistic factors in educational achievement, in that the socio-cultural factors have roots in linguistic factors. Also, the results are in line with Bourdieu's (1986) idea that socio-cultural factors are considered as a predictor of language learning than linguistic factors.

The outcomes of this study shed light on the socio-cultural and linguistic nature of language learning in relation to learners' proficiency. Educational policy makers should take into account that learners who have access to different social and cultural aspects perform differently in academic achievement. Also, they should keep in mind that learners' situation at home and their access to cultural aspects not only affect learners' achievements, but also explain those factors. For instance, literacy as an important subcomponent of linguistic and social context should be taken into account by teachers in foreign language classes, since learners may come from various cultural backgrounds (Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011). Therefore, teachers should be alert to various levels of literacies at different social levels. This indicates that teachers are required to know the learning problems of their learners outside the classroom.

Also, cultural and social factors are known as compulsory factors in educational contexts which are usually provided by family. The role of family is a significant factor in determining the extent to which a learner has acquired a specific cultural competence (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993). Accordingly, parental education is of high significance role in learners' achievement.

The implication of the this research for teachers in EFL contexts is that they should enhance their socio-cultural and linguistic competence periodically, their overall communicative abilities in general; and transfer their knowledge to students with new methods, progressing their classes to be more communicative to achieve more proficiency in learners.

As it is obvious, EFL context of learning and teaching is affected by the different situations of the classroom interaction. Such effects might encompass the learners' inability to achieve communicative and interactive tasks because of their incompetence in communicative ability as well as barriers in their cooperative learning contexts, and lack of confidence in their daily interactions. Besides, it also affects learners' spirit of interaction with peers from various backgrounds by causing learners to develop the attitude of new information's rejection concerning other learners' cultural linguistic realities. Moreover, effective teaching strategies that take into account the learners' backgrounds used to overcome the challenges of classes' interaction in EFL classes, would be helpful to gain the goals of EFL teaching.

Finally, it is of high importance to make situations to teach EFL materials which come from different linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds. Also, there is a need to motivate the learners in order to make them use the target language frequently.

References & related sources

Bada, E. (2000). Culture in ELT. C*ukurova University Journal of Social Sciences 6*, 100-110.

Bakhtin, M. (1986). The problem of speech genres (V. W. MacGee, Trans.). In M. Holquist, & C. Emerson (Eds.), *Speech genres and other late essays* (M. Holquist, Trans.) (pp. 1-9). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook for theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Johnson, R. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Pearson Education.

Bryman, A. (2008a), "Why do researchers integrate/combine/mesh/blend/mix/merge/fuse quantitative and qualitative research?", in Bergman, M.M. (Ed.), Advances in Mixed Methods Research, *Sage, London, pp. 87-100.*

Byram, M. (1989). *Cultural studies in foreign language education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Byram, M. (Ed.). (1994). *Culture and language learning in higher education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Byram, M. (1997). 'Cultural awareness' in vocabulary learning. *Language Learning Journal, 16*(1), 51-57.

Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Demotivation in foreign language learning. *Paper presented at the TESOL 98 Congress, Seattle, WA, March.*

Ehrman ML & Oxford RL. (1990) . Adult language learning styles and strategies in an intensive training setting. *Modern Language Journal, 74(3), 311 – 327.*

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation.* London: Edward Arnold.

Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century.* New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gardner, R. C., & Macintyre, P. D. (1991). An instrumental motivation in language study: Who says it isn't effective? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13*(1), 57-72.

Gholami, R. (2012). Social context as an indirect trigger in EFL contexts: Issues and solutions. *Canadian Center of Science and Education, 5*(3), 73-82.

Greenberg, J. (1963). Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements. In J. Greenberg (Ed.), *Universals of language* (pp. 73-113). Cambridge.: MIT Press.

Green J. & Oxford RL.(1995): A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. *TESOL Quarterly, 29, 261-297*

Johnson, K., & H. Johnson. (1998). *An encyclopedic dictionary of applied linguistics.* Oxford: Pergamon.

Khalifa, E. (2012). The Effects of Age Factor on Learning English: A case Study. *Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education, Vol. 5, No. 1. Retrieved on January 2016, from: www.ccsenet.org/el*

Kline, R.B. (2011). Principles and practice of structural equation modeling, 3rd ed. *New York: The Guilford Press.*

Kramsch, C. (1988). The cultural discourse of foreign language textbooks. In A. Singerman (ed.), *Towards a new integration of language and culture* (pp. 63-68). Middlebury, VT: Northeast Conference.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2001). *Language and culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lantolf, J. (2002*).* Introducing sociocultural theory. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 1-26). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Noguchi T. (1991). Review of language learning strategy research and its implications. *Unpublished bachelor's thesis, Tottori University, Tottori, Japan.*

Oxford, K. A., & Crookall, L. G. (1989). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Language Learning, 50*(1), 57-85.

Oxford, B., & Nyikos, J. (1989). "What's everybody so excited about?' The effects of teacher enthusiasm on student intrinsic motivation and vitality. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 68*(3), 217-236.

Oxford, R., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *Modern Language Journal, 78*(1), 12-28.

Pishghdam, R. (2011). An application of a questionnaire of social and cultural capital to English language learning. *Canadian Center of Science and Education, 3*(3), 151-157.

Pishghadam, R., & Zabihi, R. (2011). Parental education and social and cultural capital in academic achievement. *International Journal of English Linguistics, 1*(2), 50-57.

Pulverness, A. (2002). *Here and there: Issues in materials development for intercultural learning.* Retrieved from http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/forum/handt.htm.

Politzer RL. (1983). An exploratory study of self reported language learning behaviors and their relation to achievement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 6(1), 54–68.*

Pulverness, A. (2002). *Here and there: Issues in materials development for intercultural learning.* Retrieved from http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/forum/handt.htm.

Sadeghi, K. (2013). Learner´s starting age of learning EFL and use of language learning strategies. *Canadian Center of Science and Education,* 6(1), 28-34.

Snow, C. E. (1993). Bilingualism & Second Language Acquisition . *Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.*

Stemler, S.E. (2004). A comparison of consensus, consistency, and measurement approaches to estimating interrater reliability. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 9(4).*

Sui-Chu, E. H., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parent involvement on eighth-grade achievement. *Sociology of Education, 69*(2), 126–141.

Sysoyev, P. V., & Donelson L. R. (2002). *Teaching cultural identity through modern language: Discourse as a marker of an individual's cultural identity.* Retrieved from http://www.actr.org/JER/issue4/11.htm.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2001). Using Multivariate Statistics .*Boston: Allyn and Bacon.*

Taylor R. (1980). The computer in the school: Tutor, tool, tutee. *New York: Teachers College Press.*

Taylor, I., & Taylor, M. (1990). Psycholinguistic: Learning and Using Language . *Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Preatice-Hall. MA: Newbury House.*

Turuk, M. C. (2008). The Relevance and implications of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in the second language classroom. *ARECLS5, 244-262.*

Vennemann, T. (1972). Explanation in syntax. In J. Kimball (Ed.), *Syntax and semantics* (Vol. 2) (pp. 1-50). New York: Academic Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). Thinking and speech. In R. Reiber & A. Carton (Eds.), *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky: Problems of general psychology* (Vol. 1) (N. Minick, Trans.): (pp. 39-285). New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1962). Thought and Language. *Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.*

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Mind in Society. *Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.*

Wertsch, J. V. (1985). Introduction. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication and cognition* (pp. 1-20). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix

Dear participant:
The following questionnaire has been designed for a research project which will greatly help us in gaining insights with issues raised here. This questionnaire will not be seen by any of the university authorities.
Only the researcher will have access to your answers. Please be as accurate as possible. So, please tick the boxes below which best describes your characteristics. The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out how you feel about English and factors which you think might affect your learning of English. You are asked to give your honest and frank opinions.

Please try and answer all questions
1-Birth year
2-Department
3-a- male ☐   b- female ☐
4-How long have you studied English in secondary school?
(1)5 years
(2)6 years
(3)7 years
(4)Over 7 years

5-Parents   1- Literate   ☐
                         2- Illiterate ☐

6-Marital Status: 1- Married   ☐
                         2- Single   ☐

7-Mother tongue: 1- Persian   ☐
                         2- Turkish   ☐
                         3- Kurdish   ☐

4- Other   ☐

Please answer the following questions with a Likert Scale.
Strongly Agree(SA)   Agree(A)   Moderate(U)   Disagree(D)   Strongly Disagree(DA)

Social factors:	SA	A	M	D	SD
1-I think economic position has effects on EFL Learners' proficiency.					
2-I think social class has effects on EFL learners' proficiency.					
3-I think it is impossible to continue our education without money.					
4-I think if the students are from a higher social class, there are more opportunities to attend more educational classes and to have better teachers.					
5-I think the higher social class causes the less stress for education.					
6-I think less stress for education leads to more progress.					
7-I think economic position and the social class have no effect on learning.					
8-I think age has effects on EFL learning.					
9-I think the best age to start learning a foreign language is after learning mother tongue completely.					
10-I think the sooner a child starts to learn a foreign language, the better the pronunciation.					
11-I think the children are more motivated to learn a new language.					
12-I think early teens are quicker and more effective in learning EFL.					
13-I think the best age range for children to start learning a foreign language is when they are kids.					
14- I think technology is essential in improving foreign language skills, especially pronunciation					
15-I think technology makes acquiring and developing foreign language difficult.					
16-I think it is important to use best facilities to teach a new language.					
17-I think achievement of a native-like pronunciation does not mean just relying on black and white books. It can only be achieved by new technologies.					
18- I think social media will have greater presence in our daily lives and a dominant influence over the evolution of the English language.					
19-I think educational level of parents affects their children attitude toward language learning.					

20-I think educational level of parents is the significant predictor of children's educational achievement.					
21-I think the children are motivated to do well through being observed by the parents at home.					
22-I think educated parents can be good teachers and motivators for their children.					
23- I think context is the most effective factor in learning a foreign language.					
24-I think employment regulations motivate EFL learning.					
25-I think society finds it necessary for people to learn English language because there are so many needs.					
26-I think families in our country do care about their children's foreign language learning.					
27- I think most of the people learn a foreign language to get a good job.					
28-I think many people learn a foreign language to become more like valued people.					
Cultural Factors	**SA**	**A**	**M**	**D**	**SD**
29- I think culture of the people is one of the most effective factors that cause learning language.					
30-I think there are a lot of limitations of the country but none of them will hold back men or women from learning a foreign language.					
31-I think both boys and girls can attend the foreign language classes equally.					
32-I think Iranian tradition prevented female students to achieve good scores.					
33-I think gender of the person has not been a limitation for female students to achieve a good score in foreign language.					
34- I think learning a language helps to associate with many people from diverse cultural and linguistic groups.					
35-I think learning comes true through communication and interaction with others.					
36-I think tradition affects the way in which the English Language is learnt.					
37- I think positive intercultural perceptions helped us in the learning of the English Language.					
38- I think the country philosophy encourages the learning of the foreign Language.					
Linguistic Factors	**SA**	**A**	**M**	**D**	**SD**
39- I think the native language plays an important role in the acquisition of an L2 (second language)					
40- I think mother tongue affects learning a foreign language positively.					

41- I think grammar is the backbone of language, it affects language proficiency of the learners.					
42-I think with lack of grammatical understanding, we cannot produce accurate sentences.					
43-I think with lack of grammatical understanding, we cannot produce fluent sentences.					
44-I think learning grammar is an evil nightmare.					
45-Without understanding grammar speaking even short will be nonsense words.					
46- I think without understanding grammar, we can put words in a sentence to explain something.					
47- I think eliminating exceptions makes learning structure easier.					
48-I think eliminating exceptions helps learners use more correct structures during their speaking.					
49-I think speaking to people with different linguistic backgrounds helps learners to achieve proficiency in EFL.					
50-I think field of study has an impact on language proficiency.					