Toward the Development of a Model of Political and Socio-Economic Factors Impacting the Motivation of Iranian EFL learners to Learn English

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to identify a model of the political and socio-economic factors influencing Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. To achieve this goal, 20 EFL learners studying at the Iran Language Institute in Darab, Iran were invited for an interview session and a questionnaire was then designed based on the interview findings. Piloted testing of the survey was conducted among 221 EFL learners. Exploratory factor analysis was then run to identify the underlying factors and as a result, eight factors proved to have high loadings. Subsequently, the final 26-item questionnaire was distributed among 375 EFL learners and they were asked to rate the items on a Likert scale. Analyzing responses revealed the most influencing factor as 'emigration' and the least important one as 'attitudes toward English and its utilitarian values'. To confirm the factor structure of the instrument, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. The goodness of fit measures was utilized to see whether the proposed model fitted the data. The obtained fit indices including GFI, RMSEA, SRMR, NFI, Chi-square/df proved to be acceptable suggesting the fit of the model.

Keywords: English as Foreign Language (EFL), Motivation, Political factors, Socio-economic status

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is considered important in the accomplishment of any goal. It is a key factor that has a great impact on any educational learning process, most notably in learning a second or foreign language.Woolfolk (1998) defines motivation as "an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior" (p. 372). Rehman, Bilal, Sheikh, Bibi, and Nawaz (2014) define motivation as "an internal process that activates, guides and maintains behavior over time". (p. 345). According to Gardner (1985), the pioneer of socio-psychological motivational theory, second language (L2) motivation can be defined as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". From Gardner's view, motivation is divided into two categories: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to a desire to learn a language because it would help the learner achieve certain practical goals, such as getting a job, passing an examination, getting a salary bonus, etc., while integrative motivation indicates an internal rationale for learning a foreign language so as to identify oneself with the target group who speak that lan-

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guage and to be able to communicate with them (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). It is noteworthy that this dichotomy of integrative and instrumental motivation accounts for the orientation (i.e. goal) level of motivation and does not explain the core component of motivation (Dörnyei, 1998).

Since the last decade of the twentieth century onward, there has been an agreement among researchers on a call for shifting from the Gardnerian and social-psychological account of motivation toward a more practical and education-centered approach and in turn new definitions of motivation have been proposed ever since. Dornyei and Ottó (1998), for instance, define motivation as "dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized, and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out."(p. 64). However, this paradigm shift does not necessarily mean an antagonism between these two accounts of motivation. In fact, according to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), this change in thinking may be regarded as a kind of peaceful turnover for two reasons. First, it is not intended to renounce the previous works done in the field but conversely it aims to broaden their scope by introducing previously untouched factors. Second, the creators of the previous theories contributed to this revolution and had an active role in developing it.

The third wave of motivational theories emerged in the past decades through incorporating new motivational approaches. This mixture is characterized by a concern in motivational change and the association of motivation with concepts of identity and self. The most popular concepts in this characterization are: process-oriented perception of motivation (based mainly on dynamic character and temporal variation of motivation), motivation as investment, and ideal and ought-to L2 self (Klimova, 2011). The concepts of 'ideal L2 self' and 'ought-to L2 self' have literally brought about a great change in motivation research. These concepts actually constitute the core elements of this study, which is part of a PhD dissertation, along with the concepts of 'imagined communities' and 'international posture' since these latter terms are closely associated with identity and self-based motivation research.

Although there is a plethora of local studies carried out on different aspects of motivation as well as its effects on language achievement in the context of Iran, the review of literature reveals one important gap in conducting research on motivation in this politically unique context, where English as a foreign language learning has witnessed great ups and downs due to political and social changes that have occurred in the country since the Iranian public revolution of 1978-1979, and that is the effect of political and socio-economic milieu on persuading English language learners to learn English. Also, there is a need for a more localized motivation questionnaire that is tailored to the local context of Iran since most of the studies in Iran apply kinds of questionnaires as their research instrument that are designed on the basis of characteristics of western communities and thus cannot act as suitable models for Iranian learners (Azarnoosh Birjandi, 2012; Choubsaz and Choubsaz, 2014; Chalak and Kassaian, 2010; Vaezi, 2008)

Regarding the above shortcomings, the present study investigated the political and socio-economic factors that may contribute to the motivation of language learners in the light of L2 motivational self-system, taking into account the learners' ideal L2 selves, ought to L2 self, international posture, and also imagined communities with the latter two concepts being closely related to the former ones. In addition, this study aims to identify which political and socio-economic factors had the most and the least effects on the motivation of the subjects as identified by them on the questionnaire. Finally, a model of political and socio-economic factors contributing to motivation in the Iranian context was proposed and validated through confirmatory factor analysis. Consequently, the research questions answered in this study included:

1. What are the political and socio-economic factors affecting Iranian learners' motivation to learn English?
2. Which political and socio-economic factors had the most and the least influence on the motivation of the subjects?
3. Utilizing the results of the qualitative data, what is the model of political and socio-economic factors contributing to Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English and is it a valid one for future empirical research?

Most of the research carried out on the concept of motivation in Iran addresses the correlations of this construct with some other ones such as L2 anxiety and language achievement and proficiency as well as the Gardnerian dichotomy of integrative and instrumental motivational orientations (Ebrahim Khodadady, 2013; Sanadgol & Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2015).

Vaezi (2008) explores the integrative and instrumental motivations of 79 Iranian non-English major undergraduate students toward learning English by applying a 25-item questionnaire. The results showed that Iranian students had very high motivation and positive attitudes toward learning English (mean score=3.47). She concluded that these students were much more instrumentally motivated to learn English. Likewise, the work of Chalak and Kassaian (2010) pertains to the investigation of socio-psychological motivational orientations of 108 university students majoring in English translation. They summed up their research with a different conclusion from that of Vaezi (2008) proposing that their subjects held a high positive attitude toward English with both integrative and instrumental motivations at play. Also, Choubsaz&Choubsaz (2014) maneuver upon 50 Iranian English literature undergraduate students' instrumental and integrative motivations as well as their attitudes toward the target language and community and similarly came to conclusion that the subjects of their study were equally instru-

mentally and integratively-motivated toward the English language. This disagreement between Vaezi's study and those of Chalak and Kassaian (2010) and Choubsaz and Choubsaz (2014) may be easily attributed to the difference in the subjects of the three studies in that the first used non-English major students many of whom might have never been interested in English and had to study it just because it was a compulsory academic course, so their orientations were more instrumental. However, in the other two studies, the participants were studying English as self-chosen academic subjects, which shows their stronger interest in the language itself hence possessing some integrativeness toward the language.

Gender, age, language achievement, proficiency level, and their relationships with language motivation are also abundant in the Iranian motivational studies. Khodadady and Ashrafborji (2013) designed and applied a Motivations Underlying English Language Learning (MUELL) Scale to 493 female EFL learners to test it as a reliable and valid measure of language achievement. Through factor analysis, they uncovered three underlying variables of Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Communicative. Although the researchers concluded that the MUELL was highly reliable, none of the latent variables showed a significant relationship with language achievement. Jannati and Marzban (2014), also, conducted a survey among 100 Iranian EFL learners to find the relationship between learning motivation and the English proficiency level and that of gender and motivation. For the former relationship, Jannati and Marzban (2014) concluded a positive relationship while for the latter one the significance was not high enough. Although the previous studies were mainly based on Gardener's dichotomy of integrativeness-instrumentality, a few studies tried to move to the new motivational framework of L2 Motivational Self System proposed by Dörnyei (2005). Azarnoosh and Birjandi (2012) investigated gender differences in the 1462 junior high school students' L2MSS (L2 motivational self-system) and found out that for

the ideal L2 self, females acquired a higher mean whereas males had a higher mean on ought-to L2 self. Mahdavy (2013) pursued the same goal as that of Azarnoosh and Birjandi (2012) in high school students but with an opposite conclusion in that in his study the ideal L2, self was higher among males. For ought-to L2 self, the same result as in Azarnoosh and Birjandi (2012) was gained. Another application of L2MSS was in the cross-sectional work of Papi and Teimouri (2012) in which the researchers attempted to evaluate the change in the motivational characteristics of 1041 Iranian EFL learners studying at three contexts of secondary school, high school, and university. The results of the ANOVA indicated promotional variables generally improved with age while prevention variables declined with age.

Although many studies attempted to address motivation from various aspects through using a quantitative approach and non-Iranian-designed questionnaires, too many of these studies, if not all, ignored the specific conditions in which EFL is being used in Iran with its all political, social, cultural, and economic ups and downs during decades as well as the concept of globalization. Hence, there is a need for a reconsideration of the long-accepted underlying factors of language motivation to include more localized factors into this construct with regard to the latest political and socio-economic fluctuations occurring in Iran. The researchers believe that there should be an in-depth, qualitative approach since this line of research will enable us to get an eagle view of what is really happening to EFL and all its aspects, especially motivation, in Iran, and through which quantitative research finds credibility and value. Fortunately, some of researchers in Iran and even Iranian researchers outside have grasped this need and attempted toward achieving this goal. For instance, Mehrpour and Vojdani (2012) addressed the issue of globalization in an attempt to discover the factors underlying Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. They administered a survey among 238 EFL learners using a questionnaire designed based on localization of some aspects of globali-

zation with the result that 'technological, sociological and scientific aspects' (Mehrpour&Vojdani, 2012) influenced Iranian EFL learners' language motivation. Recently, Ardavani and Durrant (2015) carried out a qualitative study to investigate the political and social factors that may have contributed to Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English and came up with the conclusion that migration and contributions to the development of Iran were among the most-reported motivations. This study, however, implied some shortcomings as it was carried out with only five university students. It also occurred in a privileged context, in the capital city of Tehran where there are abundant language learning opportunities and most of those participants were of high social backgrounds and studying prestigious majors at the best universities in Iran. These advantages will surely influence the kind of motivation.

Generally, this study mixed methods study attempted to delve deeply into the concept of language motivation of Iranian EFL learners considering the political and socio-economic milieu salient in such a complicated EFL context as Iran. This research study also presented a validated model (through confirmatory factor analysis.) of the political and socio-economic factors affecting Iranian learners' motivation to learn English.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed methods approach to investigate the political and socio-economic factors that impact on Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. The design of the study is that of qualitative-quantitative, which started from collecting data qualitatively and moved toward confirming the gathered data through the quantitative phase. As a result, this study was comprised of three phases: a qualitative phase incorporating semi-structured interviews, a quantitative phase that aims to endorse the qualitative phase through using a researchers-made questionnaire, and the last phase applies a structural equation modeling approach to build a model of political and socio-economic factors influencing the motivation of Iranian EFL learners.

Participants

The participants of the qualitative phase included 20 EFL learners (10 males and 10 females) studying at a state-owned, nonprofit language institute (Iran Language Institute) in Darab, a southern city in the province of Fars, Iran. These learners were studying at high intermediate levels and thus were considered advanced students. All the participants had been learning English for at least three years in the adults section of the mentioned institute (ILI) and ten out of twenty claimed that had started learning English in the children and teenager sections of the institute since they finished the first grade of elementary school, which implied that they had studied English for seven years before they entered the adults section (according to the regulations of the ILI, the adults group includes students with at least fourteen years of age). The age range of these participants was fourteen to thirty-two.

For the pilot study, a total number of 221 EFL learners studying English in different levels of proficiency at the Iran Language Institute, Darab branch, took part in this survey. The sample included 164 males and 57 females who were studying in elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels of the adults' section of the institute. In whole, 146 learners were studying in elementary, 56 of them were in intermediate levels and 19 were advanced level students.

For the main part of the study, because the sample had to be large, available sampling was used. The participants in this phase included 375 English language learners pursuing their studies at different branches of the Iran Language Institute across the Iranian province of Fars. These branches were located in Fasa, Estahban, and Shiraz. The sample included 298 male and 77 female learners who represented 79.5 and 20.5 percent of the sample, respectively. The age range was from 12 to 37.

Instruments

Firstly, to elicit the various political and socio-economic issues, which may underlie the EFL learners' motivation to learn English and to satisfy the requirements of the qualitative nature of this phase of the study, semi-structured interviews were designed and conducted with the participants. To prepare the open-ended questions, the researchers surfed the literature on the concept of motivation and its underlying factors to grasp a general knowledge and gradually came up with an interview guide which in turn led to the designing of a number of open-ended questions that pertained to the particular interest of the interview objectives. Then, to pilot the interview and prepare the final interview questions, some interviewees as well as two colleagues who were familiar with the topic were asked to go over the content of the interview guide and questions. Finally, based on the comments, some questions were deleted and some added to the interview guide.

Utilizing the data gathered through the qualitative phase (the interviews), a 35-item questionnaire was designed as the first draft. However, after a scrutiny of the questionnaire items and consulting some colleagues and the participants in the first phase of the study, it was decided to drop six of the items since some either overlapped with some other items or were not relevant. Finally, 29 items were qualified to be included in the final version of the questionnaire. Each item in the questionnaire was of a 5-point Likert type and participants had to choose among five options of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire also included a demographic section. Then, the questionnaire went through piloting in which the designed questionnaire was given to 221 learners of English.

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through SPSS 22 and the obtained Cronbach's alpha was 0.841. It is worth mentioning that, in the process of item analysis, one of the items had to be dropped since it failed to meet the criterion value for 'corrected item-total correlation'.

To find the underlying factors in the questionnaire, principal component analysis (PCA) was run in the SPSS 22. The results of the correlation matrix suggested that two of the items had to be eliminated since failing to live up to the require-

ments (coefficients were less than 0.3). As for the suitability of the items, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin) was 0.77 and this was indicative of the suitability of the data since it should be more than 0.6. In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity reached statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) confirming the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA extracted eight factors, which had eigenvalues more than 1, explaining 60 percent of the variance. The results of the PCA were compared with those of another software program called Monte Carlo, which "compares the size of eigenvalues with those of a randomly generated data set of the same size." (Pallant, 2007), and it was decided that the eight factors be retained. Based on the results of the factor analysis, all of the 26 items in the questionnaire enjoyed strong factor loadings on the eight factors.

Eventually, a validated 26-item questionnaire was applied to the participants of the main phase of the study (N=375) and the reliability was calculated again. The resulted Cronbach's alpha reached the value of 0.877, which was a reasonable one.

PROCEDURE AND DATA ANALYSIS

After preparing the final interview guide, 20 participants were contacted to set the time and the place of the interview session, which was where the English classes were held. At the beginning of the interview, the researchers explained the purpose and scope of the study to the interviewees as well as assured the participants that their personal information would be kept confidential with the researchers. Since the interview needed to be recorded to enable the researchers to analyze the findings later, the interviewees were asked if they were willing to be recorded and only at their will the researchers/interviewers turned on the recorder. In addition, some ice-breaking questions were asked first to make the participants feel at ease. The interviews were carried out in the participants' mother tongue (Persian) and in as a friendly and comfortable atmosphere as possible and the interviewer did not interrupt the interviewees unless it was felt that they were

going off the main topic. In order to inculcate a sense of taking part in a dialogue into the participants, every now and then, the interviewer utilized back-channeling signals such as nods, yeah, and uh-huh. In addition, the interviewer took notes whenever necessary in the course of running the interview. Finally, the session was concluded by asking the interviewees if they had anything to add to their statements and were appreciated again for their contribution. In order not to put any time pressure on the participants which might have affected their functionality, there was no time limit for the interviews, with the shortest session lasting fifteen minutes and the longest one about twenty-five minutes. Then, the recorded data were transcribed in order to look for common themes and categories.

To codify the data, the researchers first organized the data and got familiar with it, which is the first step in codifying the qualitative data according to Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2010). Then the transcripts were imported to a computer software called MAXQDA. This software is designed to help qualitative researchers analyze their data through a fast and manageable procedure. Each imported transcript was assigned a label particular to the site and the person with whom the interview had been carried out. When the datasets were organized, the second stage was coding and reducing the data, which consists of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.With the help of the software options, as many codes as possible were defined for each dataset by labeling any important words or phrases, either as in vivo codes or researchers-defined ones. As a result, a considerable number of codes emerged. After this initial coding, this large list of codes were reduced into a smaller list of tentative categories (29 categories) by constant comparative method. Selective coding, which was the last and concluding section of coding and reducing, was commenced. Here, the researchers had to read between the lines and work out relationships or patterns among categories and combine them into major themes through consulting the related theories and the existing literature.

This led to the creation of eight themes, which comprised our model of the political and socio-economic factors affecting Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English.

The second phase of the study centered on a quantitative approach, which was carried out as an endorsement of the findings, gathered through the qualitative phase of the study. Because of the data analysis in the qualitative phase, the most influencing political and socio-economic factors regarding Iranian EFL learners' motivation in learning English were extracted from the interviewees' responses to the interview questions. In order to check for the extent of the generalizability of the findings of the qualitative phase to a much larger and comparable population, it was decided that based on the factors extracted from this phase, a questionnaire representing all these factors be constructed and distributed among other Iranian EFL learners. This self-constructed questionnaire was first piloted among 221 EFL learners and only after its reliability and validity was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis, it was used in the main phase of the study. In the last part of the study, 375 EFL learners from different branches of the Iran Language Institute around the province of Fars received the 26-item questionnaire during the fall and winter semesters of 2016-2017 academic year. Before responding to the questions, the participants were provided with instructions on how to answer the items and were also given the assurance that their answers would be kept confident with the researchers and that the results of the study were just going to be used for educational purposes. Filling out the questionnaires took almost 20 minutes or so and then the questionnaires were gathered and the responses were coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program to be later analyzed and interpreted. The means of responses to the eight measures of the instrument were calculated to identify the most and the least influential motivating factors. Then of course came the ultimate aim of the study, that is, the presentation of a model of political and socio-economic factors impacting Iranian EFL learners' motivation

to learn English. To achieve this aim, it was decided that Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) be used. This complicated and rigorous statistical procedure is often used to evaluate and define 'latent' variables using a number of observed variables hence introducing a structural model that imputes relationships between latent variables. A statistical software package called LISREL was used to perform SEM analysis in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collectively, the results of the interviews with the 20 EFL learners and factor analysis of the designed questionnaire revealed a number of factors as underlying the motivation of Iranian EFL learners both politically and socio-economically. The following is an account of these factors.

Significant others

In psychology, significant others are defined as people who have great importance to an individual's life and quality of life. These people might include parents, other family members, friends, classmates, teachers, colleagues, or even bosses and administrators as well as other members of the society in which the individual is living (Conttia, 2007). Conttia points out that learning partners, competitive learning situations in which learners desire to outperform their peers, teachers and parents are among those significant others who contribute effectively to the motivation of learners in English-for -specific-purposes courses. The important role of significant others can also be traced back to the Vygotsky's concept of ZPD, where through working collaboratively with more capable others, the distance between an individual's actual and potential development level can be narrowed down.In this study, for the subjects, the role of significant others lay in the fact that many of them were in competition with their classmates and learning English better meant a victory over those opponents. Many others were seeking their teachers' satisfaction or other people's attention and appreciation by boasting their good command of English.

The government's foreign and scientific policy

This theme embraces the political aspect of the Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. Many of the participants believe that since the beginning of the new government (2013), the political authorities realized the importance of international relations in all areas such as foreign policy, economy, and industry as well as knowledge exchange. As one of them, Alex, answers to the question whether the 2015 nuclear deal with the West has had any effects on his motivation to learn English as:

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

Also, Iran's recent developments and advances in economy, science and industry were mentioned as factors underlying our country's need to develop relations and cooperate with both developed and developing countries which in turn necessitates nurturing an educated labor force which is familiar with English.

Exchange of technology and knowledge was another aspect of this theme, which was mentioned by university students mostly. They believed that in order for Iranian university students to get familiar with the latest technologies and findings in their fields of study and also scientists to be able to exchange their ideas with other scientists throughout the world hence contributing to Iran's development, they needed to be provided with the opportunities to learn English effectively at the very beginning stages of academic education.

Transfer of religious and cultural ideology

Borjian (2013), in relation to the condition of English Language Teaching (ELT) in post-revolutionary Iran, acknowledges that in spite of the anticipations that after the Islamic revolution English Language would probably ebb due to an attempt to indigenize it, this field gained a bit of importance even from the founding father of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. He believed that learning foreign languages is necessary in this age of communication since it is our duty to disseminate the Islamic ideology throughout the world and this will be realized only through knowing English. Following this, a number of attempts have been made to use English to transfer Islamic thoughts and ideology. To name a few, Razavi cultural foundation, which is affiliated with Astan Quds Razavi, published two indigenized English language books with an Islamic-Iranian approach with the aim of 'eliminating language needs of Iranian students and also disseminating Islamic-Iranian culture'. These books are entitled 'Pick up English' and 'Pace up your English'. There are also a series of books entitled ' Rahmat' in 30 volumes, which aim at teaching English through Qur'an. These attempts might point to one of the functions of learning English in Iran, that of transferring the Islamic-Iranian culture and ideology. Although this theme did not represent much of the motivation of the participants in this study, the participants mentioned it as one of the factors, which could probably be motivating them to learn English.

Academic and occupational aspirations

It seems that instrumental orientations as to the values of English are at work in this theme and highly abundant in frequency. All the participants unanimously mentioned their concerns about finding the most suitable future careers for themselves and surviving the academic requirements, which could be eliminated if their command of English would be good enough. Some were trying to improve their English since they thought that they would not be able to find a career without it. These were the university students who were majoring in lab sciences and considered it a prerequisite to know English if they were to pursue their desired jobs. The high school pupils delved into their ideal selves being working in different occupations and successful individuals in them. Some pointed to their ideal selves as being specialists in different branches of medicine, which needed a good command of English,

and some imagined themselves achieving successfully in the English tests of the university entrance exam. The others mentioned referred to their concerns of failing to achieve academic requirements if they did not know English.

Information technology advancements and travel orientations

Nowadays, in almost every corner of the globe, you cannot walk down a street or enter a place without noticing people talking, texting or surfing the net on their cell phones or laptops. IT is an influencing factor is the process of globalization and as everybody expects the language of globalization and IT is, for the time being, English. Therefore, English and IT are so interconnected that imagining one without the other seems untenable. Working with cell phones, searching on the internet, using computer technology all need at least having a moderate command of English.

In Asian contexts which includes fast-moving developing countries such as Iran, Pakistan and many other ones (Abed & Davoodi, 2003), the development of Information Technology has sped up in recent years, demanding knowing English on the part of academic community. This fact has been demonstrated in Shahbaz and Liu (2012). They argue that internationalization has become so common in the world and particularly in Pakistan that, with the advance of information technology and access to Internet and English, Pakistani students consider themselves as members of the international community and are willing to take advantage of the process of globalization for which they feel the need to learn English effectively. This desire is referred to as 'International posture' by Yashima (2009). International posture grew out of Yashima's concern that Gardner's integrative motivation, which pertains to EFL learners' desire to become part of an specific L2 community, does not suit well the conditions of today's English as an international language and as an alternative she proposed 'International Posture' in which the individual tends to connect oneself to the international community, rather than any specific L2 group (Ardavani & Durrant, 2015).

These improvements in technology and use of smart phones and social networks have gained pace in Iran in recent years. Consequently, a need to have at least a moderate command of English in order not to lag behind these advancements and to have a sense belonging to the international community was expressed by the participants. They asserted that they did use English to surf the internet and social networks on their laptops and smart phones. The statistics also confirm this. By a quick search on the number of internet users, one realizes that nearly half of Iranians have been internet users in 2016 and ranked 18th among the countries of the world.

Attitudes and empathy toward global community

This theme reflects what constitutes the framework of this study, that is, 'international posture'. International posture was first applied to the field by Yashima (2009), where she studied the concept of motivation to learn English in Japanese students. She coined this term to refer to those students' willingness to communicate and their general perspectives toward the international community, which may affect their motivation to learn English. Here, international posture is used to refer to Iranian students' attitudes and empathy toward global community. In today's world, there are more non-native English speakers than native ones, a fact which has created the tendency to call this language as the "language for communication" rather than a language for identification (Aliakbari & Monfared, 2014). Taking this into consideration, Aliakbari (2002) proposed that "it is simplistic to assume that growing tendency toward learning English is a wish to become integrated into the native speakers' community". Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), also, mentioned this desire to connect to the international community rather than to the native English communities on the part of non-native learners of this language as one of the shortcomings of the 'integrative motivation' when it comes to an EFL context.

In our study, the participants indicated their positive attitudes toward the whole world community and their willingness to communicate with Asian as well as western communities and rated that as a stimulus to begin learning English.For example, one of them said, "I think we cannot separate ourselves from the rest of the world and have to communicate with them. Each culture has many interesting traditions that we can try to learn and take advantage of, and the first thing we need to achieve this is to know English, so that we can communicate with them." Still another participant mentioned that always liked to be informed about what was going around the world.

Attitudes toward English and its utilitarian values

According to Sarnoff (1970), attitude is "a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects". As Benson (1991) states, reactions must be embedded in context and he further continues that adults learn a foreign language optionally while for schoolchildren this is not usually the case. What the researcher found in the course of the interviews regarding this theme was in line with Benson (1991) in that since most of the interviewees were college students, many of them considered learning English as a form of entertainment, which reflects a sense of choice rather than compulsion. Benson (1991) called this view of English as a type of entertainment 'personal motivation'. To support his decision of adding this motivation to the long-established dichotomy of instrumental-integrative motivation he reasons: "a good number of students have been observed to be interested in English for reasons which could not realistically be termed either instrumental or integrative" (Benson, 1991: p 36). As a result, the last theme emerging from the responses of the interviewees might be termed 'per

sonal motivation'. This theme consisted of three subcategories of 'English as an easy language to learn', 'learning English as a form of entertainment', and 'academic values of English'. In addition, Vaezi (2008) mentioned this kind of motivation in her study of language learning motivation among Iranian undergraduates where she assigned two items in her questionnaire to personal motivation. One of these items was "Studying English can be important for me because language learning often gives me a feeling of success" and the other one was "Studying English can be important for me because language learning often makes me happy".

Emigration

Living abroad- at least temporarily- was also a recurring theme in the interviewees' responses to the questions in the interviews. Many of them, especially the university students, mentioned this somewhere in their statements. Some desired to leave Iran in pursuit of happiness and a high-quality life as soon as they could get the chance and never come back. Some would like to do their higher education in a prestigious country and return to Iran after a while. What was common among them was the wish to improve their life and find better jobs either in or outside the country. This bitter fact that many Iranian graduates hope to leave Iran was also mentioned in Ardavani (2015) in relation to the socio-political factors influencing university students to study English.

The least and the most influential factors

To determine the least and the most significant factors affecting the motivation of the Iranian learners, the means of responses to the items of underlying each factor were calculated in the SPSS. Table 1 below represents the factors in the order of importance.

Table 1.
The eight factors in the order of significance

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emigration	375	2	5	4.231	0.927
The government's foreign and scientific policy	375	2	5	4.109	0.804
Academic and occupational aspirations	375	2	5	4.049	0.908
Transfer of religious and cultural ideology	375	2	5	4.012	0.780
Significant others	375	2	5	3.859	0.761
IT advancements & travel orientations	375	2	5	3.622	0.855
Attitudes and empathy toward global community	375	2	5	3.403	1.056
Attitudes toward English and its utilitarian values	375	2	5	3.343	0.981

The postulated model of political and socio-economic factors affecting the motivation of the Iranian EFL learners

In order to check the validity of the model of political and socio-economic factors influencing Iranian EFL learners' motivation to learn English, which was presented through interviews and exploratory factor analysis, and to determine how the eight factors are measured by the indicators, or observed variables, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied using structural equation modeling (SEM). In fact, CFA is used to check the goodness of fit of one or more hypothesized factor models of a measure. In this study, eight measurement models were presented, which had to be checked in terms of their goodness of fit. LISREL software was applied to run CFA. Figure 1 below is a representation of the path diagram for our proposed model.
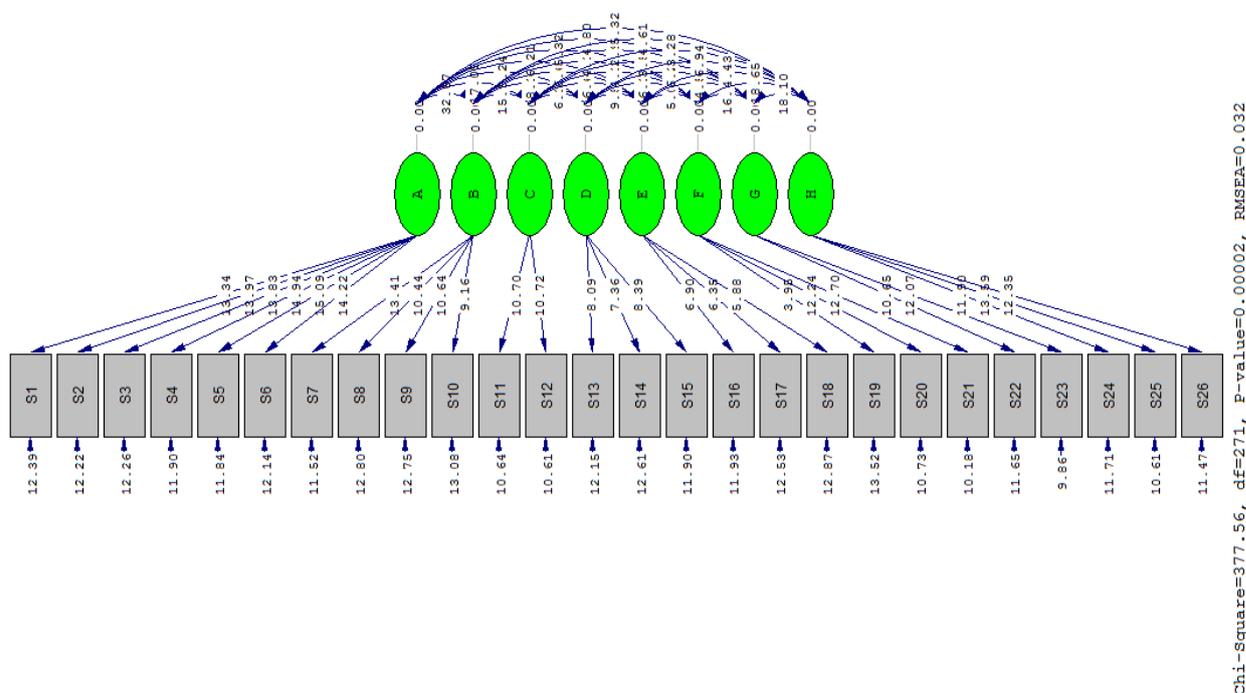

Figure 1 The path diagram

To check the fit of the model to the data, many researchers, such as Jaccard and Wan (1996) suggest using fit indices from different classes since this strategy may help overcome the limitations of each index. As a result, the obtained values for fit indices were checked against the least acceptable values (cut-off points) reported in literature.

For RMSEA, according to Steiger (2007), an upper limit of 0.07 seems to be the general consensus among authorities in the area and as it is evident from Table 2 the obtained value in this study is 0.032 which is less than 0.07. The relative chi-square that was calculated 1.393 for this model which is less than the upper limit of 2.00 reported in Ullman and Bentler (2003). The goodness of fit index (GFI) is traditionally believed to have an omnibus cut-off point of 0.90; however, simulation studies have shown that when factor loadings and sample sizes are low a higher cut-off of 0.95 is more appropriate (Shevlin & Miles, 1998). In this study, the obtained GFI was 0.93. As it can be determined from the table of the values of the fit indices, we can conclude that the proposed model does fit to the data. Table 2 summarizes the obtained values and the acceptable cut-off points for each index.

Table 2
The obtained and the acceptable values of the fit indices

Fit indices	RMSEA	Chi-square/df	SRMR	GFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
The obtained Value	0.032	1.393	0.048	0.93	0.95	0.98	0.98	0.94
The acceptable value	≤0.07	≤ 5	≤0.08	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9

The above findings and the acceptability of fit indices confirm the suitability and validity of the proposed model for future empirical research suggesting that the model of the political and socio-economic factors impacting on the motivation of Iranian EFL learners postulated through this research endeavor can be a reliable source for those Iranian researchers who are looking for a valid localized model of motivation in the context of Iran.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION
Like any other research endeavor, this study suffers from some shortcomings. First, this study was carried out in two phases. In the qualitative phase, the participants were selected through convenient sampling mostly among the author's own classes at the Iran language institute, as there was no other appropriate sample available in Darab, which is a small city in Iran. Second, in the quantitative phase, due to a large sample collected throughout different settings in Iran, many of the questionnaires were distributed not by the researchers but by other instructors at different institutes; consequently, this may have had some effects on the performance of the participants on the questionnaire. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of this work that was due to time limitations might have affected its results since motivation is a construct, which may change in the course of time, and as a result, in order to obtain more reliable results, a longitudinal study seems more convincing. To account for these shortcomings, future research could adopt longitudinal case studies since these types of research allow checking for any changes in the motives of learners to study English. Other research attempts may be carried out to explore if the proposed model would be able to predict language performance in English in accuracy, error, or even reaction time in behavioral tasks. It is also noteworthy to scrutinize the older participants than the ones in this study to check for any differences, for the political knowledge may be more advanced in the older learners.

The results of this study showed that the most dominant socio-political factor in motivating Iranian EFL learners to learn English is 'emigration' followed by 'the government's foreign and scientific policy' and the least influencing factor is 'attitudes toward English and its utilitarian values'. This low rank in terms of 'attitudes toward English' has also been reported in Weger (2013),

where he certifies that the international English language learners are less stimulated by the positive attitudes toward the English community and more motivated by "a sense of personal pride in learning and using English" (p. 87). In addition, in terms of the postulated model, it could be concluded that the data obtained through the qualitative interviews and the questionnaire consistently fit the hypothesized model and consequently the proposed model of the political and socio-economic factors motivating Iranian learners can be used as a valid model for future investigation. The results of this study could shed light on the issue of motivation in an English as foreign language context and how it would differ from that of English as second language context. Politicians and policy makers could benefit from the results of this study indirectly since more and more elite leave Iran with different goals and, this brain drain has and will have unprecedented negative outcomes for the future and development of this country.

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