Sociological Study of Motivation and its Effect on Iranian Teachers' Learning English

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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 teacher**s**' 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 (Qaemshahr Branch), Qaemshahr, Iran. The findings of this study showed that social factors can influence Iranian Teachers' motivation toward English language learning.

Keywords: Motivation, Social factors, Iranian teachers, English language learning.

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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 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 especially teachers, is essential. Nowadays, teachers need know the English language for teaching as well as research works. 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 learners can obtain are 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.

What seems common to Iranian teachers is the use of mother tongue and local dialect 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 questions in weaker English. The other problem is that some teachers are from underdeveloped school backgrounds where there are no educational facilities. 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.

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.

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.

5. In guidance school and secondary school there should be two sessions per week of teaching English and teaching of good hand writing be emphasized (the students must be taught to write good hand writing not told to write good. Teaching is not telling).

2. Review of literature

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 this indicates 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 doing so, 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.

3. Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

In this study, the hypotheses are as follows:

Social factors can not affect Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

- Gender cannot affect Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

- Social class cannot affect Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an International language.

- Family's encouragement cannot affect Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

4. Methodology

In this study 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 (Qaemshahr Branch), Qaemshahr, Iran. The number of teachers was 385 in 2016 (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. Inferential statistics includes one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation coefficient and Spearman correlation coefficient.

5. Results and Discussion

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

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

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 (α=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 Iranian teachers' motivation towards English language learning

Variance Kinds	Levene' Test for Equality of Variance		T-Test			Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	F	Sig	t	df	Sig	-1/698
	0/112	0/738	-0/906	98	0/367	
Equal variances not assumed			-0/888	42/25	0/380	-1/698

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

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, analysis of Duncan's test is not well done.

Table 3. Analysis of Duncan's test

Social class	N	Subset for alpa= 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			

In this study, hence, to analyze this hypothesis, the Spearman's correlation method was used.

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. Coefficient of social class on teachers' motivation

Spearman Correlation Coefficient	Sig
0/285	0.004

Based on Spearman correlation coefficient (0/285) and sig (0/004) which is less than (α=0/05), it can be concluded that social class can affect Iranian teachers' motivation towards English as an international language

To analyze the final hypothesis, based on table 6, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used. 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 α=0/05. Hence, this test is meaningful. And there is a meaningful and reverse relationship between family s' encouragement and learning English as an international language.

Table 6. Coefficient 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 family's' 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.

Table 7. Regression coefficient of independent variables with teachers' motivation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
gender	1/91	1/45	0/103	1/311	0/193
Social class	0/025	0/994	0/002	0/026	0/980
family' s encouragement	0/754	0/264	0/316	3/060	0/000

As you see, the researchers 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 8. Regression of social factors influencing Iranian teachers' motivation

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

b. Dependent Variable: Motivation

Table 9. The effect of social factors on 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

According to the above table, sig is 0.000 that is less than α=0/05. Hence, this test is meaningful and, in fact, social factors affect Iranian teachers' motivation towards English learning as an international language.

6. Conclusion

This research indicates that, concerning the notion of English as an international language, participants held different motivation towards different issues of social factors relating to English language learning. In this study we have found some social factors that affect Iranian 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 teachers' motivation towards English as an international language, but there are meaningful relationships between social class and family and friends' encouragement and support with teachers' motivation towards English as an international language.

In other words, social class and family and friend's encouragement have a positive influence on non- 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 are 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 social culture in the families. They should motivate children to learn English from childhood. It can be said to be an important factor 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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