

The Relationship between Iranian Parents' Motivations and their Children English Language Achievement and Proficiency

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the correlation between Iranian parents' motivations and their children English achievement and their English language proficiency. To fulfill this objective, the Parents' Motivation Questionnaire was distributed among 120 parents to categorize the parents in two groups, one with high level of involvement and positive motivation and the other with a lower level of involvement and less positive motivation and they were recognizable by the codes that the researcher assigned. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), and inferential statistics (correlation and independent t-test) were used to analyze the data. On the basis of the results obtained from the present and previous studies, it is concluded that the study of parents' motivations, attitudes, and the activities they have done at home toward the learning of English language helps us predict children's language achievement and school success.

Key words: Parent's motivation, English language proficiency, children English achievement

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Introduction

According to (Dörnyei, 2003), research in the past about motivations regarding second or foreign language learning has been conducted from the viewpoint of social phenomena. MacIntyre (2002) states that motivation shows a thing or a condition. It is aroused by individuals' behaviors. For example, "people are motivated to eat, play games, work, socialize on so on, with potentially hundreds or thousands of more specific motives that could be cited" (p. 46). In the same direction, Ager (2001) defines motivation as a language behavior. Ellis (1994) maintains that motivation "affects the extent to which individual learners persevere in learning the L2, the kinds of learning behaviors they employ and their actual achievement "(p. 36). Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 343) defined motivation as "the driving force in any situation that leads to action. Also, Noels (2001) suggests that "motivation is basically the extent of the effort of individual to achieve the goal of language learning because of a desire to do so and of favorable attitudes toward such language "(p.110). Based on Gardner (1985) and Dörnyei (2003) motivation is the combination of positive attitudes to language learning with the desire to reach a language learning goal.

On the other hand, parents, teachers and students have a prominent role in learning a foreign language, because they can help conversations concerning the status of foreign languages. They also have effects on every language policy decision and determine a new direction for education (Griva & Chostelidou, 2011; Nespor, 1987). Iranian parents are very interested in language learning for their children. According to Shin (1994) parents continually pay attention to home literacy behaviors that affect their children's successful bilingual education (Shin, 1994). Also Baker (1992) believes that parents' attitudes and motivations toward language learning are especially significant in concepts when predicting children's level of success in language attainment. To the extent that parents definitely understand advantages of bilingualism and how to foster it, their children's foreign language learning will be more effective through suitable home literacy practices. Furthermore, the study of parents' attitudes, motivations, and home literacy practices toward the learning of English in Iran helps us predict children's language attainment and school success.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the correlation between Iranian parents' motivations and their children English achievement and their English language proficiency

Review of the Literature

A study was done by Vaezi (2008) to investigate Iranian's undergraduate students' integrative and instrumental motivation toward learning English as a foreign language. The objects of the study included 79 non-English major students from the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). A motivation questionnaire was distributed among objects. In order to determine the students' tendency towards the two kind of motivation a modified 25-item survey was administered to undergraduate students in a university located in east of Iran. The data revealed that Iranian students had very high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English and they were more instrumentally motivated.

In another recent probe, Chalak & Kassaian (2010) strived to pinpoint the motivation and attitudes of Iranian undergraduate EFL students towards learning English. The participants of this study were 108 students majoring in English translation at Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch in Isfahan, Iran. The participants was surveyed using the AMTB (Attitude, Motivation Test Battery). The findings showed that these Iranian Non-native speakers of English learn the language for both 'instrumental' and 'integrative' reasons and their attitudes towards the target language community and its members were generally found to be highly positive. The paper also reported some micro and macro implications of the study.

Jang (2012) conducted a study to evaluate Korean parents' attitudes, motivations, and home literacy practices toward their children's participation in bilingualism in Korean and English in Korea. The participants consisted of parents who have children enrolled in the elementary school located in the center of Korea. Parents of 218 responded to the survey questionnaires on December 2011. The results of this research indicate that most participants had highly favorable attitudes toward bilingualism based on the scores according to both holistic view and fragmented view. Moreover, the parents claimed favorable responses to all five motivations toward bilingualism. While the scores for the integrative motivation were the highest, on the other hand, those for the attributions about past failure were the lowest. In terms of home literacy practices, the parents' responses were positive for all the practices.

Furthermore, in their hunt for the possible correlation between teachers' emotional intelligence and EFL learners' motivation, Alavinia, Bonyadi and Razavi (2012) used a sample of 240 EFL learners and 26 EFL teachers. The main instruments utilized for data collection were Bar-On's EQ-I (1997) Emotional Intelligence Inventory and Gardner's (1985) Attitude Motivation Test Battery. In line with the gained results, it was revealed that there was a significant amount of correlation held between the twelve sub-scales of motivation and teachers' emotional intelligence.

Finally, in their probe into the impact of Iranian parents' involvement in and attitude toward their children's foreign language programs for learning English, Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi and Yarahmadi (2015) used a sample 140 parents. Based on the finding of the study, researchers concluded that those parents who have high level of involvement in and positive attitude toward their children's English language programs made their children's higher level of achievement in the language program. Moreover, the findings showed that there are significant differences between the parents' knowledge of English, income, and educational background and their level of involvement and attitude. Finally, the aforementioned factors affect children's achievement test scores.

Research Question

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Does parents' motivation has any significant effect on their children's English language achievement test?
2. Does parents' motivation has any significant influence on their children's English language proficiency test?

Methodology

The participants of the present study were 120 parents and their children who enrolled in Iran Language Institute in Shiraz. Fifty three of the participants were male and sixty seven of them were female students with an age range of 10 to 15 years old. They were divided into two groups; sixty students in the control group and sixty in experimental groups. All were native speakers of Persian, learning English as their second language. None of the participants had been to any English speaking country prior to the study. The participants in this study had learned English in instructed setting for about 6-10 months and they were considered as Beginner level learners according to the language center's standards and the placement tests that they had taken (such as English Beginner Proficiency Test (proficiency test). The criteria for participants selection was the ease of access and availability.

Instrumentation

In order to collect the data, the researcher benefited three questionnaires for this study:

Parents' Motivation Questionnaire

The Parents' Motivation Questionnaire developed by Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, & Yarahmadi (2015) to get parents' involvement in and motivation toward their children's English language programs and divide them into two groups of parents with high level of involvement and positive motivation and vice versa. A pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability level of the questionnaire items. To do so, 30 parents were randomly selected from the target population. These parents did not take part in the actual study. They were required to present their personal information based on the Likert scale of the questionnaire items. Its reliability, using cronbach alpha, turned out to be 0.85 which shows acceptable value of reliability. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part contains thirteen items. The participants were asked to read each item and rate how much they agree or disagree with the statement using a five-point Likert system (1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Not applicable, 4. Agree, and 5. Strongly agree). The second part included five items to elicit information about parents and their children.

Teacher-Made Grammer Test

A teacher-made grammar test was used as the pre-test and post-test of this study which aimed to determine the level the participants' grammar knowledge on the simple present tense. The test consisted of 33 multiple choice items mainly constructed on the basis of the grammar points of the students' book. The grammatical structure of the book included: simple present tense, it's negative and question forms. The reliabilities of the pre-test and the post-test were calculated using the KR-21 formula and turned out to be 0.71 and 0.87 respectively, which are acceptable indices of reliability.

English-Beginner Proficiency-Teste (Proficiency Test)

In order to make certain that all the learners were at the same level of language proficiency, English Beginner Proficiency Test was administered at the very beginning of the experiment. The test contained 100 multiple choice items related to different aspects of English language such as prepositions, regular and irregular verbs, vocabulary, simple present and past tenses and reading comprehension. The participants were given enough time to answer the questions.

In order to estimate how reliable the use of the proficiency test is, the researcher administered the test to a pilot group of thirty students in Shiraz's Farhang language institute who were at the same level with the participants of the present study. The KR-21 formula was used for the computation of the internal consistency of the test. The reliability index for the English Beginner Proficiency Test in this study was found to be 0.73, which is considered an acceptable reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

In order to investigate the research hypotheses, this study was conducted using the empirical method. Two groups were used to examine the effectiveness of parents' motivation on their children English achievement. First of all, the Parents' Motivation Questionnaire was distributed among 120 parents to categorize the parents in two groups, one with high level of involvement and positive motivation and the other with a lower level of involvement and less positive motivation and they were recognizable by the codes that the researcher assigned. After the categorization of the parents, they were asked to get another book (White Line Book; grade two of guidance school) in addition to the main book taught in the institute to work with their children at home. Then, In order to feel certain that all the students are at the same level of language proficiency, - English Test – Beginner Proficiency Test was administered at the very beginning in one session. Since the participants were males and females, we had six groups of 20 individuals. Afterwards, Teacher- Made Grammar Test was administered in the next session as a pre-test. The session after pre-test, the students in experimental group (the group whose parents had high motivation) and control group (the group whose parents had low motivation) were exposed to an instructional program. Both groups were taught through the use of pattern drill practice and p-p-p method and sometimes through the use of consciousness raising activities.

At the end of the course, in thirteenth session, a posttest, which was exactly the same as pretest, was administered to both groups to identify their performance in achievement test. Then, the pretest was subtracted from the posttest to achieve the students' gain score. In another session, the language proficiency test was run as posttest to see their performance in language proficiency test. Like the previous one, the pretest was subtracted from the posttest to get the students' gain score. After collecting the data, appropriate statistical tests were used to find out the significance of the results.

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of the present study was to explore the effect of the parents' motivation on their children's English achievement. In the second place, it tried to scrutinize whether there was any significant correlation with the parents' motivation and their children's English language proficiency. First of all, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed to summarize the students' responses to the pre-test and the post-test. In the case of the first question and to test the relevant hypothesis, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of the two groups' gain scores. The alpha level was set at 0.05. In order to test the second research hypotheses, the same statistical analysis, as the first one, was conducted.

Results and Discussion

Before going to test the homogeneity of the two Groups, in the first place, the researcher divided the parents into two groups of high motivation and low motivation based on the analysis of the Parents' Motivation Questionnaire. According to the Z score, the researcher found two groups of participants among the parents. The following table (Table 1) reveal the distribution of the parents:

Table 1
The Z score for Parents' Motivation

Descriptive		Statistic	Std. Error
	Mean	48.9667	1.02503
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	48.9370
		Upper Bound	50.9963
Motivation	5% Trimmed Mean	47.4444	
	Median	50.5000	
	Std. Deviation	11.22866	
	Minimum	18.00	
	Maximum	63.00	

Based on the Z score, two classes were defined as Lower Bound and Upper Bound ones. The participants' responses were gathered and those parents whose total scores of the questionnaire were lower than 48 were considered as the parents having a lower level of motivation toward their children's language program. On the other hand, those parents whose total scores of the questionnaire were higher than 50 were defined as the parents having a higher level of motivation toward their children's language program.

In order to see whether the groups are different in their categorization, first descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation of the participants' responses were calculated the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Control and Experimental Groups for Parents' Motivation

	Parents' Motivation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total score	High Motivation	60	56.58	3.32
	Low Motivation	60	37.35	7.42

Note. N = Number of participants; Std = Standard

As it can be seen in Table 2, there are differences in the mean scores of the groups with regard to their motivation toward their children's English language program. That is, the mean score of high motivation group is larger than the other group. Since the mean score is not a good criterion for actual difference between the groups; therefore, it is necessary to perform Independent sample t -test to achieve real difference. Thus, an Independent Samples t -test was manipulated to see whether the differences between the groups are statistically significant or not. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Independent Sample t-tests for Differences between groups regarding their Motivation

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2 tailed
Total score	Equal variances assumed	24.173	.000	18.310	118	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			18.310	81.67	.000

As demonstrated in Table 3, the results of Independent Sample Tests show that there are statistical significant differences, ($p < 0.05$). The outcomes state that there are two independent groups of the students whose parents have different levels of motivation toward their children's English language programs. In the second place, the homogeneity of the groups is examined.

In order to make certain that all the groups are homogeneous regarding language proficiency, an English Beginner Proficiency Test was conducted at the beginning of the study to the both control (Students with parents' low motivation) group and experimental (students with parents' high motivation) group. After collecting the data, the descriptive statistics were calculated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 21. The descriptive statistics of the proficiency test for both groups are shown in Table 4.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test taken by Experimental and Control groups*

	Groups	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Experimental	60	32	92	52.46	10.91
Total score	Control	60	25	85	55.56	13.68

Note. Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum

As given in Table 4, for the experimental group, the mean score was 52.46 and the standard deviation was 10.91. For the control group, the mean score and standard deviation score were 55.56 and 13.68 respectively. Since the means cannot show the actual difference between the groups, an independent Samples t-test was run as shown in Table 5.

Table 5*Independent Samples t-test for Experimental Group Proficiency Test vs. Control Group Proficiency Test*

Proficiency test	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2 tailed
Exp. vs Con.	Equal variances assumed	.301	.584	-1.372	118	.173
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.372	112.46	.173

Note. Exp= Experimental; Con= Control

As Table 5 displays, there was no statistical difference between groups, $t(118) = -1.372$, $p = 0.173 > .05$. As a result, no significant difference was observed between the learners' mean scores in the proficiency test within the experimental and control groups; therefore, the two groups were homogeneous.

Testing the Research Hypotheses

As mentioned before, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of parents' motivation on their children achievement test and their proficiency test. This section reports the results of testing the research hypotheses to show whether they are confirmed or rejected.

Research Hypothesis 1

H₀ (Question 1): Parents' motivation has no significant effect on their children English language achievement test.

Descriptive Statistics for Pre- test and Post –test

In order to test the first null hypothesis, first, all participants' gain scores were calculated. To do so, pre-test scores gathered from the participants of both experimental and control groups from Teacher- Made Grammar Test were subtracted from their post-test scores. In the following lines, the data analyses and results are presented. The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of the gain scores of both groups is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups' Gain Scores for Their English Language Achievement Test

Language achievement	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gain score	Experimental	60	11.25	3.36	.434
	Control	60	5.88	2.82	.364

As indicated in Table 6, for the experimental group, the mean score was 11.25 and the standard deviation was 3.36 and for the control group, the mean score was 5.88 and the standard deviation was 2.82. Apparently, there was a difference between the means of the experimental and control groups, i.e. the experimental group outperformed the control one in learning simple tense. These differences shown by mean scores are not a good sign of actual differences. Therefore, it necessitates the independent sample t-test to reveal whether these differences are significant or not. Independent sample t-tests and test of significance are provided in the next section.

Independent Sample t-test and Test of Significant

In this section, the independent sample t-test was computed to see whether the differences observed through descriptive statistics are significant or not. The results obtained from the data analyses are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7

Independent Samples t-test for Differences between Experimental Group's Gain Scores vs. Control Group's Gain Scores Regarding their English Language Achievement Test

Language achievement		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2 tailed	
Gain score	Exp. vs	Equal variances assumed	1.111	.294	9.459	118	.000
	Con.	Equal variances not assumed			9.459	114.5	.000

As it is demonstrated in the Table 7, there was statistical difference between groups, $t(118) = 9.459$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. It can be claimed that the first null hypothesis is rejected. It was concluded that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in learning English simple tenses by beginner Iranian EFL learners. Therefore, there is good evidence to suggest that the parents' motivation has a significant effect on their children achievement test.

Research Hypothesis 2

H_0 (Question 1): Parents' motivation has no significant effect on their children English language proficiency.

Descriptive Statistics for Pre- test and Post –test

Like the previous section, for this one also the descriptive statistics of the participants' gain scores are computed to identify the mean differences between the groups.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups' Gain Scores for Their Language Proficiency

Language Proficiency	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gain score	Experimental	60	27.96	5.81	.750
	Control	60	18.46	8.12	1.04

As illustrated in Table 8, there seem to be differences between the control and experimental groups in their means. As can be seen in the table, experimental group with the mean score of 27.96 and standard deviation of 5.81 has a better performance than control group with the mean score of 18.46 and standard deviation

of 8.12 in their language proficiency. As stated before, the mean score is not a good criterion for actual difference between the groups; therefore, it is necessary to perform Independent sample t -test to achieve real difference.

Independent Sample t-test and Test of Significance

To make sure whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control language teaching groups, the researcher administered an independent samples t-test the results of which are illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9

Independent samples t-test for differences between experimental group's gain scores vs. control group's gain scores regarding their English language proficiency

Language Proficiency		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2 tailed	
Gain score	Exp. vs	Equal variances assumed	1.584	.211	7.363	118	.000
	Con.	Equal variances not assumed			7.363	106.87	.000

As the above table and the results of Independent Sample Test shows, the difference between groups' mean scores are statistically significant in terms of their English language proficiency ($t(118) = 7.363$, $p = .00 < 0.05$). Therefore, the second hypothesis is also rejected. That is, the parents' motivation has a significant influence on their children's English language proficiency.

Discussion and Findings

In this section, the research questions will be stated again and the findings will be discussed in details.

Research Question 1

Does parents' motivation has any significant effect on their children's English language achievement test?

Regarding this question, the effect of parents' motivation and involvement on their children's English achievement test was examined the result of which showed that those parents who have high motivation toward their children's language programs significantly affect their children's scores in a positive way in achievement test. This can be due to the parents' involvement in their children's affairs and the cooperation and contribution they have with their children. These findings are consistent with the findings of Buchmann, Condrón, & Roscigno (2010) who indicated that the benefits of parental involvement incorporated higher test scores and grades, better school attendance, greater completion percentage of homework, more positive attitudes and behavior, superior graduation rates and greater enrolment in higher education. The findings are also in harmony with the findings of Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, & Yarahmadi (2015) who found that those parents who have high level of involvement in and positive attitude toward their children's English language programs made their children's higher level of achievement in the language program. To the researcher's knowledge, no study has been done with contradictory results to compare it with the present study.

Research Question 2

Does parents' motivation has any significant influence on their children's English language proficiency test?

As for the second research question, the independent sample t-test revealed a significant effect of parents' motivation on their children's English language proficiency test. In fact, the students who had been worked and practiced at home by motivated parents showed a significant improvement in their scores in posttest for proficiency test. The rationale behind this may be because of the high motivation of the parents toward their children for learning in general and English learning in particular. The parents' motivation was in such a way that sometimes the parents urged the teacher to make their children active in the class and report their performance. Like the previous result mentioned in former section, a lot of research have reported that parental involvement and positive motivation has a major effect on all students' academic and overall success in general and language learning in specific (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henrich & Gadaire, 2008; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006).

These findings also are not generalizable because of the size of the participants involved. To generalize the results of the study, a larger and sufficient sample of the participants are required.

Implications of the Study

This section is followed by two more subsections, namely the theoretical implications and the pedagogical implications.

Theoretical Implications

Concepts of parents' motivations are important in comprehending children's language achievement because they affect parents' language behavior with regards to children's language learning (Tse, 1998). Recently, many researchers have tended to study motivations toward language learning in terms of both individual and social phenomena (Dörnyei, & Csizer, 2002; Masgoret, & Gardner, 2003). In this view, the role of language learners' motivations becomes one of the important factors in language learning (Gardner, 1985). Therefore, the success of foreign language learning is influenced by positive motivations and the level of motivation regarding the target language. Language learners' motivations and attitudes toward a target language are closely related to their development of language proficiency, and these are often strongly influenced by those of their parents. Therefore, understanding parents' motivations toward language learning also becomes a means to predict children's success in language achievement because they can influence parents' choices related to children's successful language learning (Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006).

Pedagogical Implications

From the findings of the present study, the following pedagogical implications can be inferred from which language teachers, syllabus designers, language programmers, and text-book developers can use to implement strategies and improve the curriculum development tailored to the needs of the students:

First, when parents have positive motivation toward language learning, they might provide their children with home literacy practices such as the target language books and audio-visual materials to develop their children's language learning. Second, Parents frequently pay attention to issues that affect their children's successful language proficiency. Next, to the extent that parents exactly understand advantages of language learning and how to develop it, their children's foreign language learning will be more effective through proper home literacy practices. Similarly, to the extent that teachers understand these motivations and language learning behaviors at home, they might be able to provide the students with more effective materials and methods to improve their skills at school. In addition, if

teachers and administrators are knowledgeable about types of home activities that parents provide, they might relate them to school work. High motivated Parents may take advantage of other parents' motivations and behaviors toward language learning and utilize them as a bridge to learn more various and effective activities and practices to develop their own children's language learning. Finally, the Iran government, which controls the educational curriculum of all schools from primary to secondary, could use the results of parents' attitudes and motivations for the curriculum, making it easier for children to reach their goals, to achieve school success, and to develop their English language proficiency.

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