

Mono and Bilingual Iranian University Students' Attitude, Motivation and Test Anxiety towards Learning English Language

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Abstract

Purpose: In today's world learning a second language, especially English, has become vital for success, both academically and professionally. Yet, learners' characteristics like affective features and linguistic background may impact either the ultimate level of achievement. **Methodology:** This study was carried out to determine whether there is a difference in test anxiety, attitude, integrative and instrumental motivation of the monolingual and bilingual university students in English. To this end, 227 questionnaires obtained from freshman university students majoring in various fields from 125 bilingual students at the University of Payame Noor and Islamic Azad University of Meshkin Shahr and 125 monolingual students at the Payame Noor University of Qazvin in Iran. Three Independent t-tests were run to compare these two groups' attitude, instrumental and integrative motivations and test anxiety. **Findings:** The findings revealed that the bilingual students had a significantly more positive attitude and showed a significantly higher integrative motivation towards learning English. However, no significant difference was observed among the two groups regarding their instrumental motivation and test anxiety. **Discussion:** Pedagogical implications of the study will be discussed. The bilingual students possess a higher level of motivation towards learning English language than do the monolingual students..

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1. Introduction

Since English is the medium of communication in international relations, Finance, Economics, Banking, Science, Technology and Cultural interchange, developing fluency in it has become of great importance. Vitality of becoming fluent in English, as emphasized by Gomleksiz (2010), can be justified with regard to the fact that it dominates academic research; Over 90% of the scientific and academic research is published in English and university students all around the world need to gain certain level of fluency to absorb the ideas. The university students in Iran, like their counterparts around the world, have to pass courses in English Language since academic achievement in English can increase their employment opportunities and help them to pursue their postgraduate studies. Owing to the need for developing a good command of English in academic context, educational researchers have long investigated academic progress and achievement in learning a second language (SL) and the factors affecting this process. Findings allude to a wide range of vital factors that can contribute to learning a language and motivation, attitude and test anxiety have been found to be of paramount importance. Ellis (1999) divides anxiety into two types: facilitative and debilitating. The facilitative anxiety leads to the students trying hard to learn English; whereas, the debilitating anxiety leads to students avoiding learning it. Test anxiety, which is a type of anxiety, is the consequence of debilitating aspects of anxiety and shows itself when one is getting ready for an exam or is in the process of taking it (Onyeizughbo, 2010). Ziedner (1998) defines test anxiety as a set of phenomenological, physiological and behavioral responses that accompanies concerns about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative circumstances. There are many studies conducted in classroom settings, both at universities and schools, which show that test anxiety hinders students' academic progress (Goetz, Preckel, Zeinder, & Schleyer, 2008). Moreover, Du (2010) introduces a type of anxiety which he calls Language Anxiety. According to him, this type of anxiety has three elements: fear of communication, test anxiety and fear of being assessed poorly. Such findings suggest an association between academic achievement in English language and test anxiety.

2. literature Review

Another vital factor in learning a foreign language is motivation which has been broadly defined by defined by Ager (2001) defines motivation as the stimulus or desire to initiate behaviors. Gardner (1985) links motivation more closely to language learning by defining it as the driving force that stimulates an individual to endeavor to learn a language. Like many other affective factors, however, motivation is not a uniform trait and might be subcategorized, as suggested by Cook (2001), Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Zhu and Leung (2011), into integrative and instrumental. The former, as she claims, represents "Learning the language in order to take part in the culture of its people", whereas the latter embodies, "Learning the language for a career goal or other practical reasons" Cook (2001, P.114). likewise, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) defined instrumental motivation in relation to practical benefits, such as career development and integrative motivation in association with intrinsic desires to interact with member of the community whose langue they are learning. long-lasting impacts than the instrumental motivation (Zhu & Leung, 2011). Integrative motivation shows the desire of a learner to be just like a native speaker of a language while instrumental motivation manifests the willingness to obtain recognition in the society or gain economic superiority via learning an L2 is an instrumental motivator (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Johnson (2001) emphasizes on being interested in learning L2 for pragmatic and utilitarian benefits. Johnson uses higher salaries as the characteristic feature of instrumental motivation.

Nowadays, both researchers and teachers consider motivation to be an instrumental factor affecting the degree of success in learning a second language (Ghazvini & Kajepour, 2011). Some researchers have even gone further by claiming that motivation is the primary factor in learning a language and that it directly affects learning of language (Gomleksiz, 2010). Consequently, several models have been offered explaining the effect of motivation on learning. One main model points out that two types of motivation, integrative and instrumental motivation, could affect learning. Common belief is that the integrative motivation is stronger and can lead to more profound positive

The third factor scrutinized in this study is learners' attitude towards language learning. This factor has been selected because it can contribute to learning English and might be associated with motivation is attitude. Bohner and Dickel, (2011) define attitude as the sum of positive or negative feelings, emotions, and beliefs toward any object, such as people, things and ideas, through evaluations of our own mental states.

The attitude of a university student toward learning an L2 is one of the factors which could predict his/her success in learning that language. Attitude towards learning a language could be positive or negative (Youssef, 2012). Studies have shown that having a positive attitude towards learning a language is a good start (Bidin, Jusoff, Abdul Aziz, Mohamad Saleh, & Tajudin, 2009; Gomleksiz 2010). Positive attitude of a person towards learning an L2 will strengthen his/her motivation for learning that language (Jain & Sidhu, 2013). It seems that besides the direct impact of attitude on academic progress, the interactive effect of attitude and motivation plays a vital role in learning as well. For example, CsizE'R et al. (2010) and Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) reported the significant role that positive attitudes could play in promoting the motivational behavior of the learners.

Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has delved into the comparative investigation of monolingual and bilingual Iranian EFL learners with respect to these three variables. Hence, the present enquiry set out to compare these three affective variables among monolingual and bilinguals because Iran is a country majority of whose population is bilingual and learn English as a third language. Defining bilingualism, however, is a difficult task. Butler (2013) describes a bilingual as a person who has knowledge of two languages and uses them. Grosjean (1989) pointed out that an individual who uses two languages, L1 and L2, functionally and fluently in different contexts is a bilingual individual. A great deal of evidence in various research studies indicate that bilingualism can have positive advantages. Furthermore, much evidence points to bilingualism enhancing children's cognitive development (Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Diamond, 2002; Kave, Eyal, Shorek, & Cohen-Manfield, 2008). In addition, emphasizing previous research findings, Syahabuddin (2013) confirms that bilingual individuals who receive bilingual education during their childhood and adolescence tend to outperform monolinguals. Syahabuddin (2013) also underscores bilingual children's astonishingly good grasp of relations between words and languages and the meanings of the words in the two languages they speak. Maghsoudi and Talebi (2009) reported significant differences in mono and bilingual learners' metacognitive and total cognitive strategies. Morales et. al. (2013) showed that the bilingual students had a better working memory than their monolingual counterparts.

EFL learners' attitudes, motivation and anxiety have been investigated distinctively. Gardner (1985) pointed out that motivation and attitude of those who are learning language plays an important role in their learning. Vuorinen (2009, p.5) explored the attitude of bilingual learners toward L1 and L2 which was to be generally positive. Researchers have also explored the relationship between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Global Self-Esteem with regard to gender and English achievement of students in Shiraz University (Yamini & Tahriri, 2006) supporting the negative correlation between anxiety and English achievement and a positive relationship between global self-esteem and achievement. factors that cause foreign language reading anxiety have also been examined using think-aloud protocols (Güvendir, 2014) were reported to be text title, unknown words and time limit.

As it was previously mentioned, majority of Iranians particularly those who live far from the central regions are bilingual and start learning English as a third language. The curriculum, however, does not take this linguistic variation into account and is applied in the same way for both monolingual and bilingual contexts. Despite the plethora of studies undertaken to examine motivation, attitudes and anxiety of EFL learners, we could not detect any comparative investigation of these three factors among the monolingual and bilingual Iranian ELF learners. Hence, the current enquiry set out to find out whether the bilingual and monolingual English learners in Iranian universities differed significantly in their attitudes, motivations and test anxiety.

3. Methodology

The participants in this descriptive study included a sample of 250 university freshmen, 125 bilinguals and 125 monolinguals, who were recruited from undergraduate classes in Payame Noor universities of Meshkin Shahr and Qazvin and the Islamic Azad University of Meshkin Shahr. The main criterion for being included among the participants in this study was having passed a general English class and having got a mark for it. Then, using cluster sampling, 10 classes were selected and the research questionnaires were distributed among the students in those classes. The process of gathering 250 questionnaires took two weeks. 125 of the questionnaires were filled out by the monolingual students and 125 of them by the bilingual ones. Only 227 of the questionnaires were filled out completely and, thus, 23 of them were not included in the statistical analyses of the data.

Out of the 227 students, 90 of them were male (39.1%), 137 of the students were female (59.6%). 188 of the students were single (81.7%) and 38 of them were married (16.5%). The average age of the participating students in this study was 22.36 with a standard deviation of ± 4.09 . Eighty-two of the students (33.7%) were freshmen, 59 of them (27.7%) were sophomore, 34 of the students (14.8%) were juniors and 21 of them (9.1%) were seniors. Moreover, 34 of the participants (14.8%) had not mentioned their academic standings on the questionnaire.

Instruments: The research data were gleaned through three questionnaires that were administered linearly among the research samples. They included the Attitude and motivation Assessment Scale (Shirbagi & Azizi, 2010) which measured the participants' attitudes and motivation as well as Sarason and Mandler's School Anxiety Scale (1960).

Attitude and Motivation Scale: The participants' attitudes and motivations were quantified using the Attitude to English Learning Scale (AELS) which had been originally developed by Shirbagi and Azizi and has been recently translated into Persian by Shirbagi and Azizi (2010). The translated scale was validated with Iranian participants and the Chronbach Alpha Coefficient value of 0.80 showed that it enjoyed an acceptably high reliability Shirbagi & Azizi, 2010). It comprised 43 items and seven sub-scales: Motivated intensity, parents' encouragement to learn languages, interest in learning languages, language learning experiences outside of school, bias, interest in foreign languages and English language proficiency. To prevent any misunderstanding on the part of the participants who came from different backgrounds, the translated version of the questionnaire was employed in this study. It was initially reviewed and revised by a few instructors who taught English and a few who taught Persian at Sanandaj and Tabriz Universities to ascertain

faithfulness to the source text. In the present study, only three of the sub-scales of attitude (items 13), integrative motivation (items 8) and extrinsic motivation (items 6) were used.

Sarason and Mandler's test anxiety assessment scale: Sarason and Mandler's School Anxiety Scale (1960), which is one of the most widely used questionnaires and has been revised recently, was employed to measure the participants' test anxiety. This scale includes 30 items and has been validated rendering a correlation coefficient of 92% and compatibility coefficient of 95% (Mahmoodi, et al., 2003). This scale is a short yes/no answer questionnaire with a score range of 0 to 30. A score of zero to ten is considered low, 10 to 20 is taken as moderate and the score of 21 to 30 is considered as severe (Lashkaripour, Bakhshani, & Solaimani, 2007). Using the answers, one could determine the mental states and Physiological experiences of the participants based on the self-assessment method before, after and during the test. Reliability coefficient for this scale has been reported to be 0.88 (Lashkaripour, Bakhshani, & Solaimani, 2007).

4. Findings

In this study, the statistical software of SPSS, version 21, was used to analyze the research data. First, we ran Colomograph-Smirnov test on the research data to see if they were normally distributed. Having checked the normality of the research data, three independent samples t-test were run to compare the mono/bilingual university students' in terms of their attitudes, motivation and test anxiety. Further the groups' descriptive statistics were calculated as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Attitude, Motivation, and Test Anxiety

variable	bilingual		monolingual	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
attitude	18.88	3.03	16.91	2.89
Instrumental motivation	51.10	8.92	49.09	7.89
Integrative motivation	13.03	2.78	11.65	2.73
Test anxiety	16.93	5.85	18.35	6.85
English score	15.68	2.97	14.41	3.17

The four research questions addressed the difference among bilingual and monolingual Iranian university students' in terms of their attitudes towards and integrative and instrumental motivation towards learning English as well as their test anxiety. Since, the normality of the research data was checked ($p > .05$), the research questions were answered using four independent samples t-tests the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: means and standard deviations of the variables in the study

variable	t	p
attitude	4.99	0.001
Instrumental motivation	1.81	0.07
Integrative motivation	3.79	0.001
Test anxiety	1.67	0.095
English score	2.56	0.011

As Table 2 shows, the bilingual students had a more positive attitude toward learning English language than the monolingual students. In addition, the integrative motivation of the bilingual students was significantly higher than the monolingual ones. However, no significant difference was observed with respect to the instrumental motivation and test anxiety between the two groups. Furthermore, the general English course grades of the bilingual students were significantly higher than those of the monolingual students. This indicates that the achievement of the bilingual students was higher than the monolingual students.

5. Conclusion

As English has become the internationally accepted medium of communication, learning it and gaining certain level of fluency in it has become vital for many around the world. This need manifests itself in a more colorful way in the academic world, as over 90% of the academic research papers are published in English. Students in Iran are no exception to this fact. Like their counterparts in the other non-English speaking countries, they have to gain certain level of fluency in English language in order to advance in the academic world. Iran is a multi-cultural and a multi lingual country. Majority of the Iranian students are bilingual. In other words, they speak their mother tongue (L1) and another language (L2) such as Azeri, Kurdish and so forth. However, there are those who are monolingual and only speak Persian. Learning a second language could have both positive and negative impact on some children's attitude and motivation towards learning. This study was carried out to compare the test anxiety, attitude, instrumental and integrative motivation of mono and bilingual university students with respect to English language courses. In other words, to see whether there are any significant differences between the bilingual and monolingual Iranian university students with respect to their integrative as well as extrinsic motivation/instrumental, attitude and test anxiety towards learning English Language or not. One of the findings was that the attitude of the bilingual students towards learning English was significantly better than that of the monolingual ones. Furthermore, with regard to integrative and instrumental motivation, the bilingual students obtained a higher score than the mono lingual ones. Studies show that attitude towards learning a language could be both positive and negative (Youssef, 2012). Also, having a positive attitude towards learning a second language would increase the person's motivation for learning that language (Jain & Sidhu, 2013). Motivation is defined as the force which motivates a person to try to learn a language. Nowadays, teachers and researchers alike talk of motivation as an instrumental factor affecting learning a second language (Ghazvini & Khajehpour, 2011). Some researchers have even gone further by claiming that motivation is the primary factor in learning a language and that it has a direct impact on learning a language (Gomleksiz, 2010).

Furthermore, the result of this study shows that the bilingual students possess a higher level of motivation towards learning English language than do the monolingual students. The reason could be that since the bilingual students have unconsciously learned a second language, they have, by experience, found out that learning another language is not that hard, so they display a higher motivation towards learning another language than do the monolingual ones. In addition, some researchers believe that acquiring two languages at early ages and systematically using them for an extended period leads to increased ability in cognitive functions and a wide array of other activities in these children (Bayanlou et. Al, 2014). Therefore, these

children display higher abilities in various skills and this could result in possessing a much more positive attitude towards learning in them. Another finding of this study was that no significant difference was observed between the test anxiety of the monolingual and bilingual students. Despite lack of significant difference, the bilingual ones had a slightly lower test anxiety. Test anxiety is considered a type of anxiety which refers to debilitating effects of anxiety when one is preparing for or taking an exam (Onyeizugbo, 2010). Chamorro-Premuzic, Tomas, Ahmetoglu, Gorkan, & Furnham, Adrian. (2008) citing Zynder (1998) defines test anxiety as a set phenomenological, psychological and behavioral responses which is accompanied by worrying about the negative consequences or failing a test or any other circumstances where assessment is involved. Considering the fact that the result of the study did not show any significant difference in test anxiety of the monolingual and bilingual students, other reasons could contribute to this factor. Although the bilingual students display higher motivation and a more positive attitude towards learning English, the test anxiety of these students could be considered as a different phenomenon these two factors. One plausible reason for lack of significant difference in test anxiety could be that the student in both group have frequently prepared for and taken exams so they have developed ways to deal with it. In light of the findings of this study, it is recommended that any English teaching curriculum in Iran must take into consideration raising the monolingual students' motivation and attitude towards learning this language.

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