

On the English Language Achievement of Bilingual and Monolingual Iranian High School Students: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

A country like Iran is a remarkable example of monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism. There is hardly any valid argument against the potential magnitude of various forms of linguistic, sociocultural, anthropological, etc research studies conductible in Iran due to this immense linguistic diversity. This plus the fact that primary, junior high, and high school education all over this multilingual and multicultural land is entirely centralized makes the evaluation of the students' achievements in all the disciplines that they study all the more necessary.

The prime aim of this research put into four hypotheses and four research questions is to find out whether there exists a significant difference between the English language achievement of bilinguals and monolinguals in Iran and a secondary objective of finding whether there is such difference

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between males and females. The findings of the study confirmed that there is no significant difference between the English language achievement of monolingual and bilingual Iranian students studying in the pre-university grade although there exists a significant difference in this regard among the different bilingual samples. Also, the study suggests that there is a significant difference between the rate of the English language achievement of male monolinguals and male bilinguals but no such difference within the females.

On the whole, the findings of this research study show that bilinguality among Iranian high school students does not seem to have a significant impact on their English language achievement.

Key Terms

Bilingualism – The state in which a person has active knowledge of two languages and can readily apply any of the two linguistic systems. There are different forms of bilingualism, such as sequential, simultaneous, coordinate, compound, etc.

English language achievement – A learner's proficiency in English as a second or foreign language as the result of what has been taught or learned after a period of instruction.

Monolingualism – The state in which a person has active knowledge of only one language though s/he may have passive knowledge of other languages. A monolingual can only satisfactorily express himself/herself in one language.

Multilingualism – The state in which a person has active knowledge of three or more languages. Usually, the individual's competence varies in

the three languages and the skills of each. For instance, one may be able to speak one or two languages better than the other, while s/he may be more fluent in the writing of that language. Multilingualism is common, for instance, in some countries of West Africa (eg Nigeria and Ghana), Malaysia, Singapore, Israel, parts of Switzerland, etc. In Iran, a number of individuals are multilinguals such as those living in certain regions of West Azerbaijan who speak Azerbaijani, Kurdish, and Farsi or some of the people who are able to speak both Azerbaijani and Gillaki alongside Farsi as a result of their living in borderline regions between Azerbaijan and Gillan.

Introduction

One of the most common features of the human species, regardless of its sub-classifications into different races, cultures, creeds, etc, is language. The majority of humans speak at least one language and language is by far the most common and readily available form of communication among them. This empirically well-established fact presents, however, two surprisingly ironic points. Firstly, primitive humans started out life walking the face of this planet very much like animals, and, in a process of some thousands of years, they reached the status of being able to send space probes outside the Solar System (to name only one remarkable achievement of the 20th century); despite this dazzling change of lifestyle, they still resort to language, in a form not drastically different from

primitive times, as the most common form of their communication. Secondly, humankind has succeeded in designing supersonic aircraft, building 500-meter skyscrapers, splitting the nucleus of an atom, setting up satellite communication, and many other astonishing achievements; it has yet to explain what language is and how it functions.

Amidst all the different dimensions and factors which complicate the systematic study of language is the instance where some people speak more than one language; in other words, the bilinguals (speaking two languages) and/or multilinguals (speaking at least three). Strangely enough, this is not a rare phenomenon, as Wardhaugh (1990, p 214) remarks. "In fact," he comments, "in some societies, a monolingual individual would be regarded as a misfit, lacking an important skill in society, the skill of being able to interact freely with the speakers of other languages with whom regular contact is made in the ordinary business of living."

Statement of the Problem

A country like Iran is a remarkable example of monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism. To start with, there are much more than a handful of native tongues in Iran: Farsi, Azerbaijani, Gillaki, Kurdish, Lori, Arabic, Mazandarani, Armenian, Assyrian, Laki (an independent mixture of Kurdish and Lori), etc. Finding so many different native languages and dialects in a country only 1.6 million km² in area is

quite a rarity (readers are asked to emphasize the word 'native' in the above sentence since there are examples of countries and cities with drastically higher number of languages being spoken in them by ethnic communities which are not native to that geographical region: an outstanding example is the city of London which, according to a recent BBC report, houses 139 different linguistic communities).

The second point in Iran is that while there are millions of people who are bilinguals, eg the Kurds and the Azeris, there are millions of people who can only speak one language, ie Farsi. Not to forget of course that a small older generation of village people is to be found who only speak their regional dialect and are unable to comprehend Farsi.

At the same time, there are large numbers of people living in "linguistic borders" who speak two regional languages such as Azerbaijani and Kurdish, or Azerbaijani and Gillaki, and Farsi, making them multilinguals.

Hypotheses

The researcher is interested in conducting a study which is exploratory in nature pursuing neither the verification nor annulment of any hypotheses. However, as some scholars maintain that a hypothesis may give a more clarified direction to a study, the gist of the aforementioned questions can be incorporated into the following four hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the English language achievement of monolingual and bilingual Iranian students studying in the pre-university grade.
2. There is no significant difference between the English language achievement of different bilingual groups of Iranian students studying in the pre-university grade.
3. There is no significant difference between the English language achievement of monolingual (Farsi-speaking) and bilingual Iranian male/female students studying in the pre-university grade.
4. There is no significant difference between the English language achievement of different bilingual communities of Iranian male/female students studying in the pre-university grade.

Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

This study is founded upon learning English as a foreign language, on the one hand, and bilingualism, on the other. Therefore, this brief review of the related literature will be presented in two sections focusing on each.

The Process of Learning Another Language

Bilingual education is an everyday issue in many parts of the world. Long and Larsen-Freeman (1991) regard it as a help to those students who need to maintain their native language or to grow in their native language while acquiring a second language. Immersion programs, popular in Canada and

certain parts of the United States, are another form of second language acquisition in which native English-speaking children receive all of their initial instruction in a second language, for example French, and after the early grades, the majority of content courses are taught in the native language. Second language acquisition in adult learners, however, usually takes place in other contexts. Language classrooms after all are regarded as the most available context for those who are interested in learning a language other than their mother tongue. Other than a formal school setting, adults may learn the second language while living in the target community, as immigrants or guest workers, and using it for their everyday life communication.

Van Els et al (1984, p 35) summarize the ways in which second/foreign language acquisition/learning can take place:

- L1 and L2 may be learned simultaneously or successively;
- In the latter case, L2 may be learned at various ages: it may be learned by children, adolescents or adults;
- L2 may be learned in either an L1 or L2 environment; in the former case, L2 is usually learned through instruction, while in the latter case, L2 is learned through verbal contact with native speakers in a 'natural' environment (often in combination with L2 instruction);
- Lastly, L2 learning may relate to the development of various linguistic skills (eg oral vs. written, or productive vs. receptive skills).

In this brief literature review, the terms 'second language acquisition', 'foreign language acquisition', 'second language learning' and 'foreign language learning' are used interchangeably unless mentioned otherwise.

As Ellis (1986, p 249) states "there has been no shortage of theorizing about second language acquisition (SLA)" and in fact "the research literature abounds in approaches, theories, models, laws, and principles".

Brown (1994) remarks that as schools of thought have come and gone, so have language teaching methods waxed and waned in popularity; thus, he regards teaching methods as the application of theoretical findings and positions, a kind of "theories in practice" (p 11).

McLaughlin (1987) defines a theory as "a summary of known facts and laws and a conjecture of relationships among them" (p 7). "In this sense," he asserts, "theories transform the meaning of what is known" (p 7).

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991, p 227) hold the same view asserting that by their account, at least forty 'theories' of SLA have been proposed – more if one includes theories of other kinds of language development (first language acquisition, creolization, historical language change, etc) adopted by SLA researchers. They categorize the prominent SLA theories into three general types of nativists, environmentalists, and interactionists, based on the relative emphasis they put on biological and environmental contributions to the process of second language acquisition. Cook (1991), however, recognizes four overall types of learning models: the first type

emphasizes the individual mind such as UG Model; the second type regards language as acquiring ways of processing like the Competence Model; the third type is mixed models that recognize both the static language knowledge and language processing such as Monitor Model; and finally the last type which comprises social models such as the Acculturation Model.

Despite these obviously different theoretical trends, there are scholars like Kelly who believe that the practice of language teaching has not really been drastically affected by these generations of theorization. He writes (cited in Stern, 1983, p81), "The total corpus of ideas accessible to language teachers has not changed basically in 2000 years. What have been in constant change are the ways of building methods from them, and the part of the corpus that is accepted varies from generation to generation."

Rivers (1981) maintains that in an overall approach, different trends of language teaching can be categorized into being either formalistic or activistic. She states (p 25), "Emphases in language teaching tend to swing from a preference for one approach to a growing attraction to the other, as successive generations of teachers seek to correct any imbalance which may have developed from the particular pre-occupations of their predecessors."

It is obviously beyond the scope of this proposal to delve into all that has been developed and documented regarding learning and teaching another language.

Bilingualism

In his Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Linguistics, David Crystal (1992) defines bilingualism as “A situation where an individual or community controls two (or more) languages; less usually called polyglottism (though the term polyglot for someone who speaks several languages is common enough).” He further distinguishes ‘simultaneous bilingualism’, ie when two languages are learned at the same time and ‘sequential bilingualism’, that is, when the second language is acquired after the first has been established.

Hudson (2000) further makes a distinction between ‘subordinate bilingualism’ and ‘coordinate bilingualism’. He writes that while the former refers to a bilingual society where one language is more prevalently used in more important context of use, the latter is both languages are generally used for all purposes (p 454).

Cook (1991, p 102) describes also ‘elite bilingualism’ as a case in which “Some people speak two languages because their parents decided to bring them up bilingually in the home. This so-called elite bilingualism is not forced on the parents by society or by the educational system but is their free choice.”

Others such as Carl James (1980) classify bilingualism yet further (eg 'societal', 'individual', 'incipient', etc) which is beyond the scope of this proposal.

Alongside the concept of bilingualism – actually sometimes confused with it – is 'multilingualism'. Crystal (1992) defines this notion as “A situation where a speech community (or an individual) makes uses of several languages as in Switzerland or Belgium. The term may subsume bilingualism (strictly, the use of two languages) but is often contrasted with it, by emphasizing the use of more than two languages.”

Alongside the sociocultural factors involved with bilingualism, there are introspective philosophical/psycholinguistic discussions involved too. Steinberg (1991, p 110) argues that, “If the language system forms or guides thoughts in the way we perceive nature then multilingualism must be said to have a variety of ways viewing the physical world. The multilingual would have as many different conceptual/perceptual systems of the physical world as s/he has languages.” Steinberg clearly rejects such an assumption, however, where he writes (p 183), “A language system is simply a means for the expression of thought. Given this view, learning a second or more languages will provide a learner with different means for expressing thoughts. The system of thought, however, will not be affected by any of the variety of the labeling systems (languages).”

Radford et al (1999, p 419) concentrate on the issue by raising further

questions rather than providing answers, "What is the nature of the internalized system of linguistic representation for someone who is bilingual or bidialectal? More specifically, does such a person have two grammars and the facility for switching between them or a single grammar within which choices can be made?"

Bolinger (1975) sheds light on the twilight zone of linguistic and societal factors in the emergence of bilingualism and multilingualism where he writes (p 53), "There is no limit to the ways in which human beings league themselves together for self-identification, security, gain, amusement, worship, or any of the other purposes that are held in common; consequently there is no limit to the number and variety of speech communities that are to be found in society."

One must of course not fail to observe the politics of monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism. Language being an abominably decisive instrument in the political sphere of any society, statespersons and political elite are constantly involved in linguistic policymaking and decision-making, perhaps more than linguists themselves are! Fishman (1981, p 111) writes, "The greatest American linguistic investment by far has been the Anglification of its millions of immigrant and indigenous speakers of other languages. The Bilingual Education Act was primarily an act of for the Anglification of non-English speakers and not an act for bilingualism, but rather an act against bilingualism."

To conclude this very brief review of literature on bilingualism, suffice it to say that bilingualism is a phenomenon by no means merely within the boundaries of linguistics or any language-based or -related; the comprehensive study of bilingualism indubitably involves a multidisciplinary approach including fields of study such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and neuroscience.

Method

The present study is descriptive in nature since it aims at describing or reporting an instance of the state of affairs. No treatment is given or required; the researcher does not seek to evaluate any language teaching method, textbook, program, etc per se, rather, he wishes to make a comparison between the English language achievements of five groups of subjects each of whom bears a specific feature of being either monolingual or bilingual. Although the focal point of this study is a descriptive assessment of the English language achievement of various linguistic communities within Iran, an inevitable implication of the study would lend itself towards an evaluation of the high school English language instruction program itself.

Subjects

The population to which the findings of the present research are hopefully generalizable includes all the monolingual (Farsi-speaking) and bilingual Azerbaijani-, Kurdish-, Lori-, and Gillaki-speaking pre-university graders

of Iran. As it is the case in the majority of studies in social sciences, the target population is too large to be studied in its entirety and thus only relatively small but adequate samples were chosen to fulfill the purpose of the study. The cities chosen for the study, the number of participants, and some of the essential specifications of the subjects are:

1. Sanandaj, Kurdistan – 104 females and 81 males. All subjects were native speakers of Kurdish.
2. Oroomieh, West Azerbaijan – 93 females and 100 males. It is noteworthy that according to the most recent provincial census, around 40% of the population of Oroomieh are Kurds. Hence, the researcher checked that all participants in this city were native speakers of Azerbaijani and not Kurds by asking them.
3. Tehran – 89 females and 79 males. The researcher observed two precautions in his administration of the test in the capital. Firstly, he chose schools which were in the outskirts of Tehran to minimize the socioeconomic factors which might give an advantage to Tehrani subjects regarding their English language achievement. Secondly, as there are various ethnic communities, especially Azeris, residing in Tehran, the researcher checked that none of the participants was bilingual.
4. Rasht, Gilan – 68 females and 97 males. The researcher confronted two major problems in this administration: Firstly, the centers chosen

were non-profit schools and, as the researcher found out later on, among the top five schools throughout the province. Secondly, the majority of the subjects stated that they were not used to speaking Gillaki at home with their parents since they were brought up in families which considered their children's speaking Gillaki as "disreputable" or "low-class". They did, nevertheless, state that they were able to speak it if they had to under certain circumstances. These two reasons would unquestionably make this sample too biased to be representative of the whole population of Gillaki-speaking pre-university graders. Hence, the researcher chose to exclude the results of this sample and administer the test once again in this city among far less biased samples.

5. Rasht (2), Gillan – 90 females and 78 males. These samples were within average schools and regular users of the Gillaki language without feeling ashamed of doing so!
6. Khoramabad, Lorestan – 97 females and 76 males. All subjects were native speakers of Lori.

Instrumentation

Being too difficult for all the subjects, standard English tests such as TOEFL, FCE, IELTS, CPE, and Michigan Test would have suffered from low discrimination power, if administered. Therefore, a new graded general English proficiency test had to be developed based on the contents

that all the subjects had previously studied, ie the English textbooks of the first, second, and third grades of high school. Obviously the test had to be standardized, yielding satisfactory indices of reliability and validity for the target subjects.

The instruments finally developed to serve the purposes of the researcher are the followings:

1. A 70-item multiple-choice test was designed to measure the subjects' general English proficiency.
2. A 14-item questionnaire was developed to gather qualitative data on the students' opinions regarding their motivation and general attitude towards learning EFL at schools, how they evaluated their achievements, and whether they were satisfied with the overall method of ELT at school.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were gathered with the aim of making comparisons between the means of the different groups to be compared. Furthermore, the fact that there were more than two groups involved, the main statistical procedure employed for the analysis of the data was analysis of variance.

1. A series of One-Way ANOVA was conducted in the following manners: to compare the average performance of the monolingual (Farsi-speaking) and bilingual students in the English language

achievement test; to compare the average performance of the bilingual communities; to compare the average performance of the monolingual males with bilingual males; and to compare the average performance of the monolingual females with bilingual females.

2. Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) Test or Protected t was used to make multiple comparisons between means with a significant overall F value. This application controls the likelihood of Type 1 errors. The Scheffe Test, as a more conservative test, was performed to make post hoc comparisons between the means regardless of whether or not the overall F was significant. Generally speaking, the Scheffe test makes it harder to reject a true null hypothesis (and thus committing a Type I error) by increasing the critical value.
3. The t-Test was employed to compare the means of the males and females in each linguistic community, eg Azerbaijani-speaking males and females.

Finally, by creating appropriate artificial scales (Henning, 1987), the researcher tried to objectify the analyses and interpretations which were based on the questionnaires.

Phase 1 of Data Analysis: The Prerequisites

The first step in the data analysis of this study is naturally making sure that the instruments employed in this study were effective. To this end,

the achievement test was piloted among a group of 38 subjects (pre-university graders). Once the scores were listed, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted and the following results were obtained.

Table 1 – Descriptive analysis of the scores obtained by the subjects of the pilot study in the English language achievement test

Indicator	Value
Mean	52.30
Standard deviation	7.20
Variance	51.84
Reliability	0.75

The next stage was to conduct item analysis thereby identifying and replacing faulty items and distractors. With this process completed, the test was administered and the following descriptive indicators were obtained:

Table 2 – Descriptive analysis of the scores obtained by all the subjects in the administration of the test

Indicator	Value
Mean	18.42
Standard deviation	9.50
Variance	90.30
Reliability	0.86

Evidently, the reliability value of the test did increase from 0.75 in the pilot administration to 0.86 in the overall administration.

Phase 2: Comparing Means

This part virtually addresses the core of the study in that it attempts to seek answers to the research questions and the corresponding hypotheses. The statistical analyses conducted to reach this general objective were based on different parametric methods of comparing averages. The ones used in this section are listed below:

- The t-Test to compare the means of the performance of bilinguals with that of the monolinguals in the test, the means of the performance of female bilinguals with that of the female monolinguals in the test, the means of the performance of male bilinguals with that of the male monolinguals in the test, the means of the performance of the females with that of the males within the same linguistic community in the test.

- One-Way ANOVA to compare the average performance of the five groups of subjects in the English language achievement test, the average performance of the females of the five groups of subjects in the test, the average performance of the males of the five groups of subjects in the test.
- Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) Test or Protected t to make multiple comparisons between means with a significant overall F value. This application controls the likelihood of Type 1 errors.
- The Scheffe Test to make post hoc comparisons between the means regardless of whether or not the overall F was significant. This test was conducted for each of the three cases of comparison mentioned above.
- A descriptive statistical analysis of the excluded sample of Rasht, Gillan.

Null Hypothesis 1

To find out whether there was a significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the monolingual subjects and that of the bilingual subjects, one-way ANOVA was conducted with the following results:

Table 3 – Descriptive statistics of the scores of all the monolinguals and randomly selected bilinguals who took the English achievement test

Variable SCORE	Number of cases	Mean	SD	SE of mean
All monolinguals	168	19.8988	11.943	.921
Randomly selected bilinguals	180	18.2333	8.845	.659

Table 4 – t-Test for equality of means of the scores of all the monolinguals and randomly selected bilinguals who took the English achievement test

Mean Difference = 1.6655					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 15.950 P= .000					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	1.48	346	.138	.138	1.122 (-.541, 3.872)
Unequal	1.47	306.75	.143	.143	1.133 (-.564, 3.895)

The unequal variance must be adopted as the basis for the t-Test comparison ($p < .05$). Since the two-tailed significance level of .143 is about three times as much as 0.05, the 1.47 t-value falls between the acceptance area indicating no significant difference between the two samples. Hence, the first null hypothesis of this study was confirmed and not rejected. In other words, there is no significant difference between the English language achievement of monolingual and bilingual Iranian students studying in the pre-university grade. Various One-Way ANOVAs did, however, confirm that there exists a significance difference among the different samples.

Table 5 – One-Way ANOVA between the means of the scores of the five groups of subjects

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio	F prob
Between groups	4	1586.5427	396.6357	4.4612	.0014
Within groups	883	78505.6194	88.9078		
Total	887	80092.1622			

F prob < 0.05

To identify the exact areas of difference among the five groups, Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) or protected t was run.

Table 6 – Fisher's LSD between the means of the scores of the five groups of subjects

	Khoramabad	Sanandaj	Rasht	Oroomieh	Tehran
Khoramabad					
Sanandaj					
Rasht	*	*			
Oroomieh	*	*			
Tehran	*	*			

The Scheffe test revealed that there is only significant difference between the means of the subjects in Tehran and Khoramabad. This is understandable since the Scheffe test sets a higher critical value and thus makes it difficult for mean differences to exceed it, whereas Fisher's LSD – as the name implies – sheds light on the least significant difference.

Null Hypothesis 2

Regarding the second null hypothesis concerning whether there is a significant difference between the English language achievement of

different bilingual groups of Iranian students studying in the pre-university grade, again a series of One-Way ANOVAs was run showing that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the four groups of bilingual subjects who had taken part in this study.

Table 7 – One-Way ANOVA between the means of the scores of the four groups of bilingual subjects

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio	F prob
Between groups	3	1132.7590	377.5863	4.9439	.0021
Within groups	716	54684.3397	76.3748		
Total	719	55817.0986			

F prob<0.05

Table 8 – Fisher's LSD between the means of the scores of the four groups of bilingual subjects

	Khoramabad	Sanandaj	Rasht	Oroomieh
Khoramabad				
Sanandaj				
Rasht	*	*		
Oroomieh	*	*		

Scheffe's test shows a significance difference in the mean scores of only the Oroomieh and Khoramabad samples.

Null Hypothesis 3

The third and fourth hypotheses deal with the gender dichotomy of the subjects in this study.

Table 9 – Descriptive statistics of the scores of all the male monolinguals and randomly selected male bilinguals who took the English achievement test

Variable SCORE	Number of cases	Mean	SD	SE of mean
All male monolinguals	79	14.7722	9.224	1.038
Randomly selected male bilinguals	81	18.2469	7.721	.858

Table 10 – t-Test for equality of means of the scores of all the monolinguals and randomly selected bilinguals who took the English achievement test

Mean Difference = -3.4748					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 1.104 P= .295					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-2.59	158	.011	1.343	(-6.129, -.821)
Unequal	-2.58	151.88	.011	1.346	(-6.135, -.814)

With a p value of .295, the equal variance is used as the basis. The two-tailed significance level of .011 is almost five times as small as .05: the t-value of -2.58 shows a clear significant difference between the two samples here.

The same comparison was made within the female population of subjects:

Table 11 – Descriptive statistics of the scores of all the female monolinguals and randomly selected female bilinguals who took the English achievement test

Variable SCORE	Number of cases	Mean	SD	SE of mean
All female monolinguals	89	24.4494	12.278	1.301
Randomly selected female bilinguals	93	21.7204	9.464	.981

Table 12 – t-Test for equality of means of the scores of all the female monolinguals and randomly selected female bilinguals who took the English achievement test

Mean Difference = 2.7290					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 10.159 P= .002					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	1.68	180	.094	.094	1.621 (-.470, 5.928)
Unequal	1.67	165.38	.096	.096	1.630 (-.490, 5.948)

All the female monolinguals with a group of randomly selected female bilinguals. The p value here is .002, ie by far less than .05. Accordingly, the unequal variance is used and with the two-tailed significance level being .096 (greater than .05), the t-value of 1.67 shows no significant difference between the two samples.

Null Hypothesis 4:

The fourth and final hypothesis is focused on any significant difference among the various male/female groups of bilingual subjects.

Table 13 – One-Way ANOVA between the means of the scores of the four groups of male bilingual subjects

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio	F prob
Between groups	3	734.8355	244.9452	3.9711	.0084
Within groups	332	20478.4026	61.6819		
Total	335	21213.2381			

F prob<0.05

Table 14 – Fisher’s LSD between the means of the scores of the four groups of male bilingual subjects

	Rasht	Khoramabad	Oroomieh	Sanandaj
Rasht				
Khoramabad				
Oroomieh	*			
Sanandaj	*	*		

There is a significant difference between the means of the scores of the four groups of male bilinguals. Scheffe’s test shows a significance difference of means again only between the male Sanandaj and Rasht samples.

Regarding the female samples, again there is a significant difference between the means of the scores of the four groups of female bilinguals.

Table 15 – One-Way ANOVA between the means of the scores of the four groups of female bilingual subjects

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F ratio	F prob
Between groups	3	3191.6983	1063.8661	13.5860	.0000
Within groups	380	29756.3783	78.3063		
Total	383	32947.9766			

F prob<0.05

Table 16 – Fisher’s LSD between the means of the scores of the four groups of female bilingual subjects

	Sanandaj	Khoramabad	Oroomieh	Rasht
Sanandaj				
Khoramabad				
Oroomieh	*	*		
Rasht	*	*		

Strangely enough, the results of Scheffe's test is in complete accordance with what was established through Fisher's LSD.

Though not directly related to any of the hypotheses or research questions posed in this study, it might be interesting to report that there was a significant difference between the mean score of all the males and females who took this test regardless of their linguistic background of course.

Table 17 – Descriptive statistics of the scores of the females and males who took the English achievement test

Variable SCORE	Number of cases	Mean	SD	SE of mean
All males	415	16.1325	8.228	.404
All females	473	20.4249	10.083	.464

Table 18 – t-Test for equality of means of the scores of the females and males who took the English achievement test

Mean Difference = -4.2924					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 7.558 P= .006					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-6.89	886	.000	.623	(-5.515, -3.069)
Unequal	-6.98	881.47	.000	.615	(-5.500, -3.085)

The p is smaller than 0.05 – probability value of .000 – so the difference between the means is significant and the obtained t-value of -6.98 does not fall in the acceptance area. Hence, there is a significant difference between the mean of the scores of the females and that of the males (regardless of their linguistic background, of course) who took this test.

Generally speaking, female subjects scored higher than the males in this test meaning that their performance was better.

The third and fourth hypotheses and research questions in this study are concerned with two variables at the same time: that of linguistic background and that of gender. The researcher assumes that the overall performance of the individuals who took the English language achievement test may be impacted by an interaction of the aforementioned variables. In this regard, he decided to run a Two-Way ANOVA to compute the effect of this possible interaction. With the Sig of F (ie p-values or tail probability) obtained here, it is clear that there are significant main effects for both the city (that is, linguistic background) and gender factors: both are significant even beyond the 0.01 level. Therefore, there is a significant interaction involved as well.

Table 19 – Two-Way ANOVA summary

Mean scores
by CITY Linguistic communities
GENDER
UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	F ratio	Sig of F
Main effects	5776.058	5	1155.212	14.461	.0000
City	1432.354	4	358.089	4.483	.0000
Gender	4558.228	1	4558.228	57.062	.0000
2-Way interactions	4055.521	4	1013.880	12.692	.0000
City-Gender	4055.521	4	1013.880	12.692	.0000
Explained	9955.460	9	1106.162	13.847	.0000
Residual	70136.702	878	79.882		
Total	80092.162	887	90.296		

The Questionnaire

Each and every single one of the 888 subjects in this study filled out the 14-item questionnaire (questionnaire slide). Certain overall conclusions will be presented.

1. More than 80% of all subjects said that they were interested in learning English and over 70% of them preferred learning English to other foreign languages. The female subjects in Tehran expressed remarkably less enthusiasm in doing so compared to others.
2. The majority of the subjects (about 70%) believed that English was of average or little importance in their daily lives while a small minority (around 10%) felt that it is not important at all for them while the rest prioritized it very much.

3. About 60% of the subjects evaluated their English language ability as average while around 30% considered it poor and less than 10% claimed of possessing very good general English language ability.
4. Approximately the same statistical grouping mentioned above goes for the subjects' evaluation of their success at learning English at schools.
5. The subjects expressed using the Internet and passing the entrance exam as being the most major fields in which they can use English language knowledge while they thought this knowledge is least contributory to finding a suitable job among all the various fields.
6. Around 70% of the subjects considered speaking to be the most important language skill while the other three skills were almost evenly favored.
7. About 70% of the subjects claimed to be more competent in reading while again the other three skills was given almost the same weighting.
8. The subjects felt very differently about the emphasis each language skill and component bears at school. In fact, no general statement can be derived from their pattern of responses to this question.
9. Most subjects chose method and student motivation as the major factors contributing to successful ELT while textbook and teacher qualities were not considered so important.

10. Around 80% of the subjects wrote that ELT starts too late at school meaning that it must be launched before the 2nd grade of junior high school. Very few people thought it was too early or timely.
11. Approximately 70% of the subjects stated that ELT at schools is not emphasized adequately and almost no-one agreed that it is given too much emphasis while around 25% thought that it receives due attention. Almost the same pattern is also true regarding the subjects' evaluation of the number of weekly hours of ELT classes at school.

General Interpretation

The researcher set out his study focusing his curiosity on the differences between the rate of English language achievement of monolinguals and bilinguals; this was of course the origin of the first null hypothesis of the research. Such a difference, however, was not warranted by the findings in practice. There were of course significant differences between the monolinguals in Tehran and the Lori and Kurdish speakers but no such differences with Gillaki and Azerbaijani speakers.

Officially, the medium of instruction in all the schools throughout Iran is Farsi even in the provinces where the students' mother tongue is not Farsi. This general decree is of course variably not practiced in many smaller cities and rural areas but since there are no pre-university grades in rural areas and very few in small cities, one can rest on the fact that Farsi is the language of instruction throughout the pre-university grades of

bilingual provincial capitals. This of course applies to the English class as well. At first sight, one might think that this could have an impact, that is, those whose mother tongue is more congenial with Farsi would take more benefit from the English teacher who is explaining all the lexical items and syntactic rules of English in Farsi and vice versa those whose mother tongue is more deviant from Farsi might understand English less from the teachings of such teachers. The cases of significant difference, however, demonstrate no such probably interlanguage-based assumptions. There might have been some meaning if the Farsi-speaking subjects in this study showed a difference in their English language achievement with Azerbaijani and Kurdish speakers since Farsi is far more lexico-syntactically deviant from these two than it is from Lori and Gillaki. The result, however, portrays a strange symmetry: significant difference between the Farsi speakers in their English achievement and speakers of one mother language very deviant from Farsi (Kurdish) and those with one not so deviant (Lori) and yet no significant difference between the Farsi speakers and those with a mother tongue very deviant from Farsi (Azerbaijani) and those with one not so deviant (Gillaki). Indeed, the result could not have been more parallel than this! Hence this could not hold as a valid argument in the case of these subjects.

In the overall current culture of Iran which is a developing country, there is a tendency to analyze almost all issues in the lines of the rate of

development. According to official facts and figures of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey concerning the development indicators of the youth (under-18) living in the 28 provinces of Iran (published by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education), the ranking of the five provinces included in this research is:

Table 20 – The overall development rank of the five provinces in this study

Province	Overall rank out of 28 provinces
Tehran	3rd
Gillan	10th
Kurdistan	24th
Lorestan	23rd
West Azerbaijan	26th

One might think the more developed provinces would have students with a better rate of achievement in English than those living in less developed ones. Nonetheless, the findings of this study discord this seemingly reasonable argument: true it is that the Farsi-speakers have gained the highest mean score but the subjects living in the most disadvantaged of the five provinces (West Azerbaijan – Oroomieh) have gained the second rank surprisingly with no significant difference in their mean score with the monolinguals in Tehran, whereas it should have been the Gillaki-speakers who should have sat in their place. Again, the indicators of provincial development cannot be an acceptable rationale here.

To make the issue yet more complicated, the pattern of the difference of the monolinguals and bilinguals is extremely varied. While there is no significant difference between the monolinguals on the one side and the bilinguals on the other, the maximum degree of difference among the altogether ten groups of samples (both language-wise and gender-wise) is within the monolinguals themselves: male and female subjects in Tehran.

The findings of the Two-Way ANOVA conducted on the interaction of the two factors of linguistic community and gender showed an extremely significant difference of 0.0000. Furthermore, all the female subjects except the Kurdish one gained a higher mean score than their male counterparts; even in the case of Sanandaj where the females gained a lower mean score than the males, this difference was not statistically significant.

To sum up this section on the interpretation of the findings, unlike the linguistic-based communities' differences in their performance on the English language achievement test which may not have a consistent pattern, one point was very clear in this research: the female subjects achieved a significantly higher mean score than that of the males.

Suggestions for Further Research

In a sense, a research study does not really have an end since its final part, ie suggestions for further studies, is in effect the generation of other studies. Probably most – if not all – researchers would indulge in seeing

the study that they conducted through the inspiration of other studies to be extended and replicated even if its findings were to be questioned.

Throughout this study, the researcher came up with the following ideas as suggestions for further research to those who may take interest in studies concerning the English language achievement of bilingual populations in Iran.

1. As mentioned early on in the study, this research was ex post facto in nature; a developmental study with the same objective seems to be highly contributory in this regard.
2. The present study is also descriptive; a research study with an experimental design, that is, one that would control all the intervening variables ensuring to a satisfactory degree that all the different settings are almost the same, is highly recommended.
3. Due to the nature of this study, the results obtained cannot trace specifically any source of deficiency or error in the process of language instruction throughout junior high and high schools. It is recommended that studies with cross-sectional or longitudinal designs be conducted in this regard which would compare the various years and grades of instruction with one another.
4. This study involved four bilingual populations in Iran, whereas, as described in Chapter II, there are more such populations in the country. A comparative study of the English language achievement of

those populations would shed further light on the theme of the research.

5. The subjects comprising this study were pre-university graders, that is, they had all completed high school. It seems reasonable to conduct such studies on other groups, especially in the early years of exposure to English language instruction. One such group, for instance, could be those who have just entered the first grade of high school after receiving two years of instruction in junior high.
6. One further comparison could be made between the English language achievement of those bilinguals who speak their native tongue at home and those who have a tendency to speak Farsi with their family members.
7. Based on the typology of bilingualism described in full in Chapter II, such studies could be conducted to compare the English language achievement of individuals belonging to different categories of bilinguals.
8. The scores that the 888 subjects gained in this test are the result of various factors probably the most significant of which was the language instruction that they received at school. In this regard, the teachers, the methods they applied, and the facilities they enjoyed could be the subject of study both quantitatively and qualitatively depending on which may seem more appropriate.

9. A study which may be purposeful in this respect is comparing and contrasting the English language achievement of the students (and not necessarily with an emphasis on bilinguality) with their general proficiency in the subject matters they study at school. In other words, such a study would indicate whether there is a correlation between the students' degree of English language and that of other subject matters.
10. Researchers interested in exploring into the English language achievement of students throughout Iran may like to conduct studies in which the levels of students in the various provinces of the country would be assessed without any prime focus on bilinguality or gender.
11. Last but not least, an experimental research which would contribute to the theme of this study is comparing the English language achievement of a control and treatment group within each bilingual population: one group would receive English instruction through the aid of Farsi (which is common practice in the schools of Iran) while the other would benefit from their native tongue rather than Farsi. It would be highly interesting to see what the results of such an experimental study would yield to.

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