



## The Journal of Applied Sciences Research

Journal homepage: <http://www.journals.wsrpublishing.com/index.php/jasr>

ISSN: 2383-2215

### Original Article

## Investigation of Detriments of EFL Academic Proficiency

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### ARTICLE INFO

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#### How to cite this article:

Sadeghi, M.R. 2014.  
Investigation of Detriments of  
EFL Academic Proficiency.  
*The Journal of Applied  
Sciences Research*. 1(1): 30-  
37.

#### Article History:

Received: 16 September 2014  
Revised: 2 October 2014  
Accepted: 4 October 2014

### ABSTRACT

The study examined the relative and combined contributions of the some predictors of students' proficiency studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). One hundred and fifty university students from Tehran University, Iran, were randomly sampled. The Self Factor Scale (SFS), Home Factor Scale (HFS) and Teacher Factor Scale (TFS) were administered to collect data, which was analyzed with stepwise multiple regression t-test statistical tool. The finding implied that the proficiency of EFL students in English language could be predicted by the combination of students' self, home and teacher factors. It was recommended that students should be allowed to think on their own and be left alone to work and teachers should perform their supervisory roles.

**Keywords:** EFL, University students, Iranian academic proficiency, stepwise multiple regression t-test.

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## INTRODUCTION

Problems of self or ego needs to be investigated because the adolescent youths in schools need to be psychological healthy and mature and the key to these lies in adequate self-building. Self is the product of interaction, from infancy onward with the individual physical and social environment. In concrete situations and activities self-involvement supply means involvement to such an attitude in a non going psychological activity. It is characterized by highly sensitized mobilization of the individual's psychological processes (discrimination, perception, learning, remembering, solving, decision making, and so on). Studies have investigated the relationships among efficacy beliefs, related psychological constructs, and academic motivation and achievement. Findings also support Bandura's (1986) contention that efficacy beliefs mediate the effect of skills or other self-beliefs on subsequent performance by influencing effort, persistence, and perseverance (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Bouffard Bouchard, 1990; Lent Brown & Larkin, 1984; Schunk & Hanson, 1985). Collins (1982) identified children of low, middle and high mathematics ability who had, within each ability level, either high or low mathematics self-efficacy. Bouffard Bouchard, Parent and Larvae (1991) found that student with high self-efficacy

engaged in more effective self-regulatory strategies at each level of ability.

Researchers often distinguish between academic self-concept (reading, mathematics, general school concept) and non-academic area, such as social prowess, physical abilities, peer relations, and parents' relations (Marsh and O'Neil, 2000) separating self-conception to constituent parts such as these indicate that how one perceives oneself in one situation does not transfer necessary to another. Findings have consistently shown that self-concept is related to academic achievement and too the motivation constructs across domains (Hattie, 1992; Vannita, 2002; Awoyemi, 2002; Adegbile, 2003). Few researchers have explored the relationships among self-efficacy, self-concept, and academic performances, and results are inconsistent. Marsh, Walker, and Debus (1999) compare the direct effect of achievement on the Math self-concept and self-efficacy of fifth graders and report a stronger direct effect on self-concept than on self-efficacy. Using a similar path model, Chapman and Tunmer (1995) find that the reading performance of beginning readers during their first year of school in has stronger influence on achievement. March (1990), assesses math self-concept, math achievement, performances on a mathematics task, and self-efficacy for the task. Achievement correlated equally strongly with domain-specific and self-concept. Specific performance on the math task was more strongly correlated with specifically assessed self-efficacy than with domain-specific self-concept. Rosenberg and Kaplan (1982) wrote that self-concept precepts include judgments of confidence, along with judgments of self-esteem, stability, and self-crystallization. Self-concept theorists view as particularly troubling the loss in practical utility that results from the micro analytic assessment of a particularized judgment matched directly to a criteria task. Most academic outcomes are seldom as particularized as one's capability to solve specific problems or successful accomplish specific tasks, the levels of specificity at which self-efficacy judgments are most predictive of academic performances. Lent and Hackett (1987) observed that specificity and precision are often purchased at the expense of external validity and practical relevance. Thunmer (1995) found that the reading performance of beginnings readers during their first year of schooling had a stronger effect on their subsequent self-efficacy than on their reading self-concept. Such hypothesized relationships beg the question of which self-belief has the stronger influence on achievement. Relich (1983) as cited in Marsh (1990) assessed math self-concept, math achievement, performance on mathematics task and self-efficacy for the task. Achievement correlated equally strongly with task was more strongly correlated with specifically assessed self-efficacy than with domain-specific self-concept. Pajares and Miller (1994) used path analysis and found that item-specific math self-efficacy beliefs were more predictive of mathematics problem solving than domain-specific self-concept beliefs.

In addition, Ayodele (1988) laments on the low English language competence of Nigerian students and posit that the causes "must be traced to the classroom "because "the formal classroom practices provide by far the greatest avenue for the learning of the language". Some of these classroom factors are teachers' low level of competence in the language skills, especially reading; unduly large classroom; too many periods per week; lack of incentive for teachers; and learners' unserious attitude, to mention just a few. Aside the teacher factor cultural experiences provide by the parents, particularly experiences with books and reading, and parental methods of cultural, intellectual and language activities also influence a child's intellectual development (Hoffman, 1982; Okpala and Onocha, 1988; Oyetunde, 1997).

These researchers are of the opinion that differences in linguistic environment of families could bring about differences in children's literacy skill development. This is because according to them, children tend to think in their first language. Baker and Soden (1998) examined the degree of family enlightenment and its effect on children academic aspiration. It was found that the home, the first socializing agent has a considerable effect on the child's later development and achievement. It will be derogatory not to point out that

parental educational background and attitude remarks, instruction and correction gives to children turn enhance the child's educational aspiration. Children from educated parents stand a better chance in their upbringing by way of encouragement, motivation and direct contact. The educated parents are able to adapt themselves to the educational needs or demands of their children at every developmental stage, hence equipping the children with necessary background experiences as might be required of them to meet the challenging intellectual demands and pursuit. The task of the present research is an examination of some determinants of students' achievement EFL university students. This study there for examined the relative and combined contributions of the some determinants (Psychology, parental and teacher factors) of students' achievement in the Iranian setting.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent will the psychological, parental and teacher fact or contributed to the variance in the students' performance in English language?
2. What is the relative contribution of psychological, parental and teacher factors to students' performance in English language?
3. Is there any significant relationship among teacher, parental and psychological factors in students' performance in English language?
4. Is there any gender difference in students' performance in English language?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted an ex-post -facto design approach. The target groups for the study were English language university students in Tehran University, Iran. Multi stage stratified sampling technique was used to select the sampled English classes. EFL students were selected using the simple random sampling. The students' age ranged from 19 to 23 years. In all, 256 students participated in the study out of which one hundred completed questionnaires were returned. These constitute 69 percent of the original sample size. However, due to incidence of incomplete data, only 178 (86.8%) completed questionnaires were used for the final analyses. This final sample was significantly sufficient for this type of study. The data was collected within a period of one month.

### **Instruments**

The instrument for the study were questionnaires on Home Factor Scale (HFS), Self Factor Scale (SFS) and Teacher Factor Scale (TFS) The HFS, SFS and TFS were constructed by the researcher to solicit information on follow up at home, home language, teaching strategy and use of Instructional materials. Each of the questionnaires consisted of fifteen items and has a modified four point Likert Rating Scale from SA - SD. The instrument has two sections - Section A is basically on the demographic information of the English language teachers like age, sex, level of education, etc. Section B of the instruments contains items eliciting information from the students on the theme of the study. The validity and reliability of the instrument were determined by trial testing the instrument on the similar set of the sample and the Kurder- Richardson 21 formula was used to obtain the inter-item reliability coefficient of 0.80 and 0.75 respectively.

### **Data Analysis**

The data resulting from scoring of the instrument and coding were subjected to stepwise multiple regression analyses to test the research questions. Data were tested for significance at the .05 level.

## RESULTS

### Question One

To what extent will psychological, parental and teacher factors contribute to the variance in students' performance in English language?

Table 1 reveals a multiple r of 0.353, R square of 0.125 and adjusted R square of 0.124 using psychological factors as a predicting factor of students' performance which is significant at 0.05 levels with F ratio of 145.226. This means that psychological factors contributed 12.5 percent to the variance observed in the performance of students in English comprehension.

**Table 1: Regression Analysis of Psychological Factor on English proficiency**

Source of Variation	Sums of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Regression	3530.991	2	1765.495			
Residual	24756.813	2037	12.154	145.226	0.000	Significant
Total	28287.804	2039	-			

Significant (P<0.05), R= 0.353, R Square= 0.125, Adjusted R Square= 0.124, Standard Error= 3.48620

Table 2 reveals a multiple r of 0.227, R square of 0.052 and adjusted R square of 0.050 using parental factor as a predicting factor of students' performance is significant at 0.05 levels with F ratio of 27.694. This means that parental factor contributed 52 percent to the variance observed in the performance of students in English comprehension.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis of Parental Factor on English proficiency**

Source of Variation	Sums of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Regression	1460.347	4	365.087			
Residual	26827.457	2035	13.183	27.694	0.000	Significant
Total	28287.804	2039	-			

Significant (P<0.05), R= 0.227, R Square= 0.052, Adjusted R Square= 0.050, Standard Error= 3.63084

Table 3 reveals a multiple r of 0.285, R square of 0.081 and adjusted R square of 0.080 using teacher factor as a predicting factor of students' performance which is significant at 0.05 levels with F ratio of 60.192. This means that teacher factor contributed 81 percent to the variance observed in the performance of students in English comprehension.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis of Teacher Factor on English Comprehension**

Source of Variation	Sums of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Regression	2304.508	3	768.169			
Residual	25983.296	2036	12.762	60.192	0.000	Significant
Total	28287.804	2039	-			

Significant (P<0.05), R= 0.285, R Square= 0.081, Adjusted R Square= 0.080, Standard Error= 3.57238

The results in table 4 signified that psychological, parental and teacher factors significantly combined to predict students' performance of in English language comprehension ( $R = 0.555$ ;  $R^2 = 0.308$ ;  $R^{2(\text{adjusted})} = 0.305$ ;  $F = 100.522$ ;  $p = < 0.05$ ). This implies that 30.8% of the variance in the performance of students in English language comprehension is significantly predicted by the combination of psychological, parental and teacher factors. The implication of the study is that students' performance in English language comprehension could be predicted by the combination of students' psychological, parental and teacher factors.

**Table 4: Model Summary of the Combined Contribution of Psychological, Parental and Teacher Factors in the Prediction of Students' Performance in English Language Comprehension**

Source of Variation	Sums of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Regression	8720.455	9	968.939			
Residual	19567.348	2030	9.639	100.522	0.000	Significant
Total	28287.804	2039				

Significant (P<0.05), R= 0.555, R Square= 0.308, Adjusted R Square= 0.305, Standard Error= 3.10469

### Question Two

What is the relative contribution of psychological, parental and teacher factors to students' performance in English Language?

The results in table 5 above revealed that self efficacy, which is one of the variables in the psychological factor, is the most potent predictor of performance of students in English Language comprehension (  $\beta = 0.461$ ;  $t = 22.749$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, teachers' attitude and parental language are also potent predictors at (  $\beta = 0.313$ ;  $t = 15.870$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and (  $\beta = 0.188$ ;  $t = 9.761$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) respectively.

The findings of this study indicate that self efficacy teachers' attitude and parental language contributed to students' performance in English comprehension. Other variables such as self concept, parental involvement and parents' qualifications are not powerful predictive factors in students' performance in English language comprehension.

**Table 5: Multiple Regression Analyses of Relative Contribution of Psychological, Parental and Teacher Factors Predicting Students' Performance in English Language Comprehension**

Model	Sums of squares		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	0.419	0.522	-	0.803	0.422
Self efficacy	0.173	0.008	0.461	22.749	0.000
Self concept	-0.056	0.110	-0.140	-04.952	0.000
Trs' qualification	0.525	0.094	0.120	05.596	0.000
Trs attitude	0.111	0.007	0.313	15.870	0.000
Instr. Materials	0.362	0.093	0.099	03.907	0.000
Parental lang.	0.959	0.098	0.188	09.761	0.000
Family size	0.047	0.102	0.009	0.458	0.647
Parental involve	-0.064	0.013	-0.131	-05.000	0.000
Parental qualification	-0.217	0.018	-0.238	-11.901	0.000

Significant (P<0.05)

### Question Three

Is there any significant relationship among teacher, parental and psychological factors in students' performance in English Comprehension?

In table 6, there is test of relationship among the independent factors and dependent factors. The highest significant relationship is between parental involvement and self concept ( $r = 0.615$ ), therefore student who has positive parental involvement will also have a high self concept. The next highest relationship is between instructional materials and self concept ( $r = 0.608$ ). This is closely followed by parental involvement and instructional materials ( $r = 0.519$ ). However, of all the independent factors parental involvement has the highest positive relationship and parental involvement as a parental factor is very important to reckon with in predicting students performance in comprehension.

**Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the Relationship among Psychological, Parental and teacher Factors and Students' Performance in English Comprehension**

	SE	SC	TQ	TA	IM	HL	FS	PI	PQ	CM
SE	-	0.304	0.163	-0.042	0.125	-0.022	0.026	0.138	0.284	0.348
SC	0.304	-	0.140	0.147	0.608	0.179	0.142	0.615	0.213	0.049
TQ	0.163	0.140	-	-0.104	0.341	0.162	0.426	0.170	-0.038	0.062
TA	-0.042	0.147	-0.104	-	-0.081	0.107	0.037	0.210	-0.010	0.253
IM	0.125	0.608	0.341	-0.018	-	0.108	0.240	0.519	0.092	0.048
HL	-0.022	0.179	0.162	0.107	0.108	-	0.158	0.047	0.040	0.191
FS	0.026	0.142	0.426	0.037	0.240	0.158	-	0.248	-0.085	0.079
PI	0.138	0.615	0.170	0.210	0.519	0.047	0.248	-	-0.037	0.030
PQ	0.284	0.213	-0.038	-0.010	0.092	0.040	-0.085	-0.037	-	-0.109
CM	0.348	0.049	0.062	0.253	0.048	0.191	0.079	0.030	-0.109	-

Significant (P<0.05)

SE- Self efficacy; SC- Self concept; TQ- Teacher qualification; TA- Teacher attitude; IM- Instructional materials; HL- Parental language; FS- Family size; PI- Parental involvement; PQ- Parental qualification; CM- Comprehension

#### Question Four

Is there any gender difference in students' performance in English comprehension?

The research question, which stated that there is no significant gender difference in the prediction of students' performance in English comprehension, was upheld by the findings of this study.

**Table 7: Gender Differences in Students Performance in Comprehension**

Sex	N	M	Std.	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Male	980	7.8122	4.13256				
Female	1060	8.0179	4.17699	-1.117	2038	0.264	Not Significant (NS)

Significant (P<0.05)

## DISCUSSION

The analysis indicated that there is a significant combined contribution of self, home and teacher factors in the prediction of students' achievement in English comprehension. This finding corroborates that of Maynard *et al.*, (1997) also found that parental education has a positive relationship with academic pursuit of their children. Many scholars believed that there exists a relationship between the home and academic performance of students. Davies (1991) in Odinko (2000) stated that there exists a link between parental attitude to education and academic performance of their children. This is also in line with attribution theory. In attribution theory, the casual attributions that individuals make about the success or failure of their actions are presumed to influence their subsequent performance expectancies.

Recent findings (Bandelos, 1995; Schunk, 1981) suggest that this relationship is reciprocal and those attributions influence motivation and performance largely through the mediation role of self-efficacy. Similarly, the findings of this study show that only self factors contributed to students' achievement in English language test. Home and teacher factors are not powerful factors in students' achievement in English language grammar. This is expected because self factors aid students of all ages to control their learning through productive motivation and beliefs as well as use of cognitive learning strategies. Interest in schooling seemed to be a motivator that affected the student's attitude, which influenced achievement in English Language. Okubanjo (2007) found that self efficacy is related to academic achievement and to other motivation constructs across domains. This negates the

popular slogan by many researchers that it appears that the home and the school are important agencies in the education of the child. Educators like Oyetunde (1997) and Evans (2000) believe the home compliments the teaching of the school, and the school stands in “Loco Parentis” while the child remains the focus. Numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between the self factors and academic achievement Pajares (1994), Banderols (1995) and Bouffard (1991) had shown that self- factors is a better predictor of academic success than measured intelligence as they influences academic performance. Okubanjo(2007) asserted that successful academic performance enhances self factors while poor academic performance tends to erode students levels of self-factors. Similarly Lent (1986) carried out a study of College Courses asserted that high self factors has been demonstrated to influence the academic persistence necessary to maintain high academic achievement. Vanitta (2002) and Awoyemi (2003) also found out that self-concept is related to academic achievement to other motivation construct across domains. Marsh *et al.*, (1999) have explored relationships among self-efficacy self-concept, and academic performance and result are inconsistent.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that there is a great level of interaction among the determinant. They have a greater influence on the academic achievement of English Language Student in comprehension Parents’ level of education is very important in the academic achievement of their children, so parents should enable to acquire some level of educational in order to assist their wards. The home environment must be conducive and accommodating since it also determines the academic achievement of English language student most especially when it comes to test. The students should be allowed to satisfy their wishes academically as their interest in school contribute positively to their learning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should perform their supervisory roles of given out exercises and marking at the expected time so that the students can get the feed back at the appropriate time. There is a need for Government to enforce the issue of teacher/student ratio in secondary schools as the small class size enhances learning while large classes’ aid roundness. The Government should make provision for instructional materials to be used in teaching and learning. Managers of Schools must take cognizance of the domineering influence of the teachers in the achievement level of students generally in their academic pursuits. Parents themselves are stakeholders in education need not fold their arms and wait on the government for the provisions and maintenance of facilities in school. Through the Parents/Teachers Association, they could play active roles in ensuring adequate provisions of facilities for the teaching of their children. More importantly, Parents should develop positive attitudes to their children education as a way to imbue them with the right level of self confidence that could promote their learning of English language at school.

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