

Language and Identity in the Iranian Context: The Impact of Identity Aspects on EFL Learners' Achievement

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Abstract

Identity orientations refer to the relative importance that individuals place on various identity attributes or characteristics such as race, religion, culture and language when constructing their self-definitions (Chew, 2007; Cheek, 1989). Accordingly, the present study aims at identifying the impact of identity aspects on the Iranian learners' English language achievements at Shiraz University Language Center (SULC). Moreover, the study seeks for finding the impact of demographic factors on language achievement and aspects of identity among the Iranian EFL learners. To fulfill the objectives and find answers to the posed questions, a questionnaire representing aspects of identity and consisting of 45 items in the form of Likert Scale (personal: 10 items + social: 7 items + collective: 8 items + relational: 10 items + special: 10 items) was distributed among 180 language learners attending at SULC. Both descriptive statistics (Mean + SD) and inferential statistics (t-test + ANOVA+ Correlation + Multiple Regressions) were run on the data. The results demonstrated no significant relationship between language achievement and the aspects of identity; that is, none of the identity aspects is a predicting variable for language achievement in the Iranian context. Among the demographic factors, only gender can account for two aspects of identity, namely, personal and relational identities. Apparently, the results are local not universal.

Keywords: 1. Aspects of Identity 2. Collective Identity 3. Social Identity 4. Relational Identity 5. Personal Identity 6. Language Achievement 7. Language Proficiency

1. Introduction

Identity orientations refer to the relative importance that individuals place on various identity attributes or characteristics when constructing their self-definitions (Cheek, 1989). Identity markers and labels offer individuals a way of defining themselves in relation to the world; that is, “social, discursive, and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives” are the determining factors (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 19). In the same direction, McKenna (2004) claims that identities comprise elements which might be given, such as one’s social class, or physiologically inherited characteristics, as well as elements of choice or agency. Furthermore, Lopez (cited in McLaren, 1997: 271) describes identity as a combination of ‘chance’, ‘context’ and ‘choice’.

Regarding the existing paradigms on identity, there are two different models. Based on the first paradigm named as the Western, mono-cultural, cognitive view, the individual is considered as an independent, free and self-contained person. With respect to the second paradigm, the society plays an important role in the construction of the identity of the individuals. This paradigm is known as the constructivism and considers the human identity to be partly cognitive or individualistic and partly social (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brown, 2007). There are some theories which support the second paradigm and two of them will be presented below, namely, social identity theory and cross-cultural theory. According to the social identity theory, identity is bipolar: social and personal (Tajfel, 1998). Regarding the cross-cultural theory, self or identity represents two ideas, namely, independent-self and interdependent-self. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cheek, Smith and

Tropp (2002), benefiting from the mentioned paradigms and models, developed a questionnaire consisting of four aspects of identity, namely, personal, social, collective and relational.

Due to the importance of the two key concepts, namely, identity and language achievement on the one hand and the fact that in the literature no study deals with relationship between these two themes, the present study aims at discovering the extent of relationship between them as well as the impact of the demographic factors on the two variables. As such, first the studies conducted on aspects of identity are presented and then research done on the language achievement and proficiency are introduced.

1.1 Studies on aspects of identity

From the 1980s to the present time, many studies have been conducted on the impact of aspects of identity on and their relationship with other variables in different social educational contexts, sometimes with controversial findings and results. For the first time, Cheek and Busch (1982) found social identity to be positively correlated with measures of public self-consciousness, sociability, and institutional and altruistic selves. Personal identity was positively correlated with private self-consciousness, need for uniqueness and achievement-oriented self. Cheek and Hogan (1983), also, found that personal identity correlated significantly and meaningfully with guilt feelings than with shame, whereas social identity correlated significantly and meaningfully with shame than with guilt. Frantz (1985) found that although social identity was negatively correlated with independence of judgment, personal identity was positively correlated with independence of judgment, and the combination of the two identity scales significantly predicted independence of judgment scores, demonstrating a pattern similar to that of Hogan and Cheek (1983).

While personal and social identities were both positively correlated with private and public self-consciousness, Penner and Wymer (1983) found that personal identity showed a stronger relationship with private

self-consciousness and social identity was more strongly correlated with private self-consciousness. Social identity was also positively correlated with self-monitoring. Furthermore, Cutler *et al.* (1984) found personal identity to have a significant positive correlation with need for uniqueness and achievement orientation, while social identity was instead significantly correlated with concern for social appropriateness and altruistic orientation. Replicating Cheek's (1982) use of a composite of personal identity and private self-consciousness, Wymer and Penner (1985) found high scores on both inner-directedness and social skills to predict higher levels of congruence between self- and peer-ratings. Respondents low on social skills and high on inner-directedness had higher levels of attitude-behavior congruence. Furthermore, respondents high on personal identity also tended to have higher attitude-behavior congruence than respondents low on personal identity. Besides, Leary *et al.* (1986) found respondents high in personal identity to consider personally-relevant job characteristics as significantly more important than respondents low in personal identity, while respondents high in social identity rated socially-relevant job characteristics significantly higher than those low in social identity. Moreover, Barnes *et al.* (1988) found that respondents high in personal identity were more apprehensive about self-evaluation and less apprehensive about social evaluation than were respondents low in personal identity. Furthermore, respondents high in social identity grew more apprehensive about social evaluation than did low social identity respondents.

Lamphere and Leary (1990) reported that personal identity had significantly positive correlations with private self-consciousness and a new endogenic orientation scale whereas social identity had significant positive correlations with public self-consciousness, the self-monitoring scale, and a new exogenic orientation scale. In addition, Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) found that social and collective identities were both positively correlated with the total score and identity subscale of their new collective self-esteem scale. Moreover, Britt (1993) found that people treated on personal identity and private self-consciousness


showed greater correlations between the two than did untreated respondents or those treated only on one. Social identity correlated positively with public self-consciousness; the relationship between these two variables was substantially stronger among treated respondents than among untreated respondents or those treated on only one of the variables. Cheek *et al.* (1994) reported in their study that while there were no significant differences between Asian-Americans and European-Americans with respect to personal and social identities, Asian-Americans were significantly higher in collective identity than European-Americans.

Leibowitz *et al.* (2005) conducted a study on the relationship of identity, language and teaching and learning at a higher education institution in the Western Cape. It showed how language, both as proficiency in the dominant medium of communication and as discourse, is a key component of identity in a higher education institution. The interviews demonstrated how, according to lecturers and students, language and discourse function as primary influences on individuals' acculturation and integration into the academic community. According to the interviewees, language as a marker of identity is interwoven with other aspects of identity. It is both a resource and a source of identification and affiliation. The research demonstrated that dialogue and self-reflection can be facilitated via research into identity, teaching and learning, and that this can be beneficial for both the interviewees and the research team.

Finally, in their study, Lapresta and Huguet (2008), presented an analysis of the development of the Aranese identity and of the role language plays in this process and the way this process influences intergroup relationships. The study indicated that language plays an important part in the formation of Aranese identity, but the meaning given by the population to the language varies according to whether residents identify themselves or not with the Aranese world. At the same time, language also interferes in the relationship between the different groups living in the territory. In the following table, the core concepts of

each aspect of the identity as the framework of the present study are presented.

Table 1: Layers and Structures of the Self Taken from Cheek, Smith and Tropp (2002: 2)

Levels/Locus of Audience	Orientation	Description	Example	Basis of Self-Regard	Cultural Differences	Individual Differences
Personal	Private	Traits, Values and Abilities	"I am a sensitive person"	Personal aspirations and standards	Independence/individualistic  Interdependence / Collectivistic	Personal Identity Orientation Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Private Self-Consciousness Individualism Scale
Relational	Intimate	Other people with whom we have direct personal contact	"I am Amy's close friend"	Mutual regard; pride in and validation from intimate others		Inclusion of Other in Self-Scale Mutuality Scale Interdependence Self-Construal Scale Internal Working Models
Social	Interpersonal	Social roles and reputation	"I am a popular professor"	Public recognition; praise from others		Social Identity Orientation Public Self-Consciousness Scale Social Self-Confidence (vs. Shyness)
Collective	Communal	Social categories to which we belong	"I am Irish"	Ethnic pride; pride in one's social groups		Collective Identity Orientation Collective Self-Esteem Scale Inclusion of Other in Group Scale Collectivistic Scale

1.2 Studies on language achievement/proficiency

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), a language achievement test is designed to measure how much of a language learners successfully learned with specific reference to a particular course whereas a language proficiency test is defined as the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand language and the test is not linked to any particular course of

instruction. A large number of domestic and overseas studies are done on language proficiency/achievement performance and the factors affecting learners' language proficiency/achievement.

Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) carried out a study on the area of proficiency in order to determine the effects of learning contexts on language proficiency. The results showed that the study-abroad participants' proficiency gain was larger than those who did not have natural exposure to the language; that is, learners with a larger amount of exposure to content-based teaching have an advantage in the development of language proficiency over those who have less exposure. Their study also reveals that motivation leads to proficiency in L2. Yamashita (2008) examined the effect of extensive reading on different aspects of foreign/second language ability. In this study, the development of general reading ability and lower-level linguistic ability was also examined. It was concluded that the effects of extensive reading might be evident more quickly in general reading skills than in L2 linguistic ability. Trudell (2008) in her study explored the specific links between language development and literacy. The results showed a tight relationship between these elements.

Many Studies have been carried out in the Iranian context regarding the relationship between language achievement/proficiency and some other variables. Tabasi (2000) investigated the relationship between age, sex, and level of proficiency and self-assessment. It was revealed that children and females were more dependable in self-assessment questionnaires for listening. Proficiency had no significant effect on self-assessment except for the intermediate group in their overestimation of their speaking. A significant interaction was noted between age and level of proficiency. Salamian (2002) intended to investigate whether there was any relationship between FD/I and the students' performance on global and local questions of listening comprehension (LC) as well as the interaction between FD/I and the question type. The study also sought to investigate the relationship between FD/I and LC in general. The findings indicated no relationship between FD/I and the students' performance on

global questions. However, there was a relationship between FD/I and the students' performance on local questions. Also, there was an interaction between FD/I and question type in listening comprehension. In other words, FI students answered local questions better than global ones. And finally, no relationship between FD/I and the students' performance on the Global test was found.

In a study conducted by Fijani (2005), an attempt was made to find out whether below-and above-average EFL students differed in terms of restoring short-range and long-range cloze items. The results of two paired t-tests showed that both low-and-high proficiency groups score significantly higher on short-range items. It was concluded that low-and-high proficiency EFL learners perform differently on the two types of items, and short-range cloze items were easier for EFL learners to restore. It was also concluded that below average students did not have easy access to long-range constraint. In another study, Hassani (2005) aimed at investigating the role of EFL proficiency, gender, and the interaction of motivation type (intrinsic/extrinsic), gender, and levels of English achievement (high, mid, and low). Also the role that major and educational year play on learners' type of motivation was studied. The outcomes of the study revealed that the learners were mostly intrinsically motivated. It was also made clear that there was no significant interaction among motivation, gender, and level of English proficiency. Besides, no significant relationship was found between motivation type and major or educational year. Mohammadi (2007) investigated the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) among Iranian EFL learners correlate and can predict each other. Also the roles of gender, age and different years of university study on both FLCA and FLRA were taken into consideration. The findings showed that different years of university study do not play a role in neither FLCA nor FLRA, but both age and gender affect the FLCA and FLRA. A positive and significant relationship was found between FLCA and FLRA. Finally it was found that both variables (FLCA and FLRA) can predict each other. That is to say, FLCA anxiety can predict FLRA,

and vice versa.

The studies reviewed demonstrated the fact that the relationship between language and identity and the impact of identity aspects on language achievement have been untouched in the EFL contexts including Iran.

1.3 The objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are four-folded. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between aspects of identity and language achievement among the Iranian language learners who registered at Shiraz University Language Center (SULC). The second objective of this study is to explore what aspect(s) of identity predict(s) language achievement. The third objective aims at investigating the impact of sex and degree of education on language achievement and aspects of identity. Finally, the study tends to determine the relationship between age with language achievement and aspects of identity.

1.4 Research questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the present study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between aspects of identity (personal, relational, social and collective) and language achievement among the Iranian EFL learners?
2. What type(s) of identity predict(s) language achievement among the Iranian EFL learners?
3. Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners regarding their categories of identities and language achievement?
4. Is there any relationship between the Iranian EFL learners' ages with categories of identities and language achievement?
5. Is there any significant difference between pre-university and university Iranian EFL learners regarding their categories of identities and language achievement?

2. Method

This section introduces the participants, specifying how, where and in what ways they were selected. Moreover, the instruments used for data collection including the achievement test, the questionnaire for determining the type of aspects of identity (personal, social, collective and relational) together with the reliability and validity of each, where necessary, will be provided. In addition, the data analyses, along with the procedures made use of, will be presented.

2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 180 pre-university and university students who were selected on the basis of the purposive sampling from 1700 language learners attending SULC, Shiraz, Iran, although the initial selection of the sample was based on their availability; that is, the major justification for selecting the participants from SULC was that the researcher had access to them. The major problem for the great reduction of the number of the participants was that the identity aspects questionnaires includes some items related to the participants attitudes, beliefs and ideas which they did not feel at ease to share with the researcher. As such, the final number of participants was 119 female and 61 male Iranian students, ranging in age from 17 to 25, who willingly and cooperatively took part in the study.

2.2 Instruments

The instruments chosen were:

2.2.1 Language achievement tests

A team of instructors taking part in a practical workshop on test construction conducted by the researcher have constructed multiple-choice achievement tests to determine the language learners' academic success. The guidelines for constructing the language items were the ones proposed by Farhady, Jafarpur and Birjandi (1996). The items of each test consist of 20 listening comprehension items, 40 vocabulary and expressions items, 30 grammar items and 10 reading compression items.

Moreover, the feedback on the part of SULC instructors and language learners confirmed the fact that the items represent the objectives of the courses; that is, the tests have acceptable content and face validities.

2.2.2 Aspects of identity questionnaire

The development of the aspects of identity questionnaire began with the selection of items from Sampson's (1978) list of identity characteristics that were judged to represent the domains of personal and social identity (Cheek & Briggs, 1981, 1982). Subsequently, some items were reworded, others eliminated, and new items were developed to improve the reliability and content validity of the measures (Cheek, 1982/83; Cheek & Hogan, 1981; Hogan & Cheek, 1983). Because the psychometric analyses indicated that certain items originally scored in the social identity category (e.g., "Being a part of the many generations of my family") were tending to cluster on a third factor representing communal or collective identity, a third scale for this domain was developed (Cheek, Underwood, & Cutler, 1985 and Cheek, Tropp, Chen, & Underwood, 1994). Neither the social nor collective scales focus on intimate relationships with close friends or romantic partners, so a fourth scale for relational identity orientation ("Being a good friend to those I really care about") was added to the AIQ-IV (Cheek, Smith, & Tropp, 2002). Therefore, in the present study, the fourth version of Cheek, Smith and Tropp's (2002) scale was used. To avoid any confusion and enhance validity, the Persian version of the questionnaire was utilized and the back translation by two experts in the field confirmed the original concepts of the translated questionnaire. The numbers of items in the form of a Likert Scale in each category are as follows:

- a. Personal identity: 10 items
- b. Social identity: 7 items
- c. Collective identity: 8 items
- d. Relational identity: 10 items
- e. Special: 10 items

2.2.2.1 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

Cheek, Tropp and Chen (1994) ran a factor analysis of questionnaire

items and the results indicated that personal, social, and collective aspects of identity constitute three relatively distinct categories of identity attributes with adequate psychometric characteristics. Furthermore, the alpha coefficients of reliability for each scale were: personal (.84), social (.86), and collective (.68). Moreover, Cheek, Smith and Tropp's (2002) psychometric analyses in a sample of 1999 college women yielded 10 items for the new relational scale. As such, the final version of the questionnaire comprises four categories. Furthermore, the researcher ran a confirmatory factor analysis of questionnaire items and the results indicated that personal, relational, social, and collective aspects of identity constitute four relatively distinct categories of identity attributes with adequate psychometric characteristics. The validity of the third scale was checked by Jowkar and Latifian (2006) utilizing factor analysis on 404 Iranian girls and boys and the factor analysis of the questionnaire yielded three main factors and all the items delineated acceptable go-togetherness. As for the reliability, Jowkar and Latifian (2006) ran the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of reliability and the indices for personal, social and collective identities were .63, .67 and .55, respectively. Moreover, the researcher calculated the reliability index for the 5 variables of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha and the results were .55 (personal identity), .69 (social identity), .69 (collective identity), .79 (relational identity), .66 (special items) and for all the items of the questionnaire the reliability index was .88. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha depicts the fact that each of the factors by itself and the combination of all factors had acceptable reliability indices.

2.3 Procedures for data collection and analyses

All participants were given a brief overview of the study including the objectives of the questionnaire, the time required for completion and the directions for answering the items of the questionnaire. There was no force on the part of the participants to write their names which resulted in reducing the number of participants to a great extent. Moreover, the researcher was provided with the participants' total scores on the

achievement tests by the exam center of the SULC. Accordingly and in line with the research questions, a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures was run on the data which will be reported in the next section.

3. Results and Discussion

Because of limited space, this paper will be primarily devoted to the results corresponding to the major research questions, i.e., the relationship between language achievement and identity aspects, the impact of identity aspects on the Iranian learners' academic success as well as the effects of demographic variables on both language achievement and aspects of identity.

Table 2: Basic descriptive statistics for the participants' language achievement

Factor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lg Achievement	180	40	94	72.41	10.78

As Table 2 shows, 180 participants took part in the study with the mean of 72.41 and the SD of 10.78. Further, the minimum and the maximum scores on the achievement success are 40 and 94, respectively. The data prove the fact that achievement tests are positively skewed when they are administered at the end of the academic semester. Moreover, the SD shows that the participants are heterogeneous regarding their language achievements.

Table 3: Basic descriptive statistics for the participants' aspects of identity

Aspects of Identity	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Identity	180	3	5	4.25	.56
Relational Identity	180	2	5	4.25	.64
Social Identity	180	2	5	3.88	.66
Collective Identity	180	2	5	3.78	.69

Table 3 clarifies the idea that the Iranian students' personal and

relational identities are higher than their social and collective ones. This is indicative of the idea that the Iranian educational context is an individualistic rather than a collectivist one. Brown (2007) believes that in collectivist societies education is a way of gaining prestige in one's social environment whereas in individualistic ones education is a way of improving one's economic worth and self-respect based on ability and competence. The other reason for the low social and collective identities among the Iranian learners is that approaches and methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Community Language Learning (CLL), Cooperative Learning and Participatory Learning are missing to a great extent in the Iranian Context (Razmjoo & Rizai, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Table 4: Spearman product moment correlation for aspects of identity, language achievement and age.

Variables	Personal ID	Relational ID	Social ID	Collective ID	Achievement	Age
Personal ID	1	.497**	.297**	.310**	-.020	-.083
Relational ID	.497**	1	.381**	.382**	-.064	-.014
Social ID	.297**	.381**	1	.438**	-.023	-.088
Collective ID	.310**	.382**	.438**	1	-.081	-.021
Achievement	-.020	-.064	-.023	-.081	1	.002
Age	-.083	-.014	-.088	-.021	.002	1

* Significant at .05

Based on the results depicted in Table 4, regarding the correctional issues, though there is a significant correlation among the aspects of identity themselves, no significant relationship was found between age, language achievement and the aspects of identity. As regards as the significant correlation among the aspects of identity, it is justifiable since all of these four categories belong to the major category of identity and the confirmatory factor analysis proved it. However, the findings do not support Leibowitz *et al.*'s (2005) results that language both as proficiency in the dominant medium of communication and as discourse, is a key component of identity in the higher education institution.

Table 5: Multiple regressions for aspects of identity and language achievement

Independent Variables	Dependant Variable	Beta	t	Sig.
Personal ID	Language Achievement	.025	.286	.775
Relational ID		-.056	-.612	.541
Social ID		.025	.289	.773
Collective ID		-.078	-.895	.372

In line with the findings of Table 4, Table 5 shows that none of the aspects of identity could predict language achievement in the Iranian educational context. Despite the fact that aspects of identity are strong predictors for many variables such self-consciousness, sociability, institutional and altruistic selves, guilt, need for uniqueness etc (Cheek and Hogan, 1983; Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992), they could not predict language achievement in the Iranian context.

Table 6: Independent sample t-test for the male and female's aspects of identity and language achievement

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Personal ID	Female	119	39.1176	4.43823	3.268	.001*
	Male	61	36.8525	4.32757		
Relational ID	Female	119	38.5966	6.05808	1.854	.065**
	Male	61	36.9508	4.70612		
Social ID	Female	119	24.4034	4.48598	.356	.722
	Male	61	24.1639	3.81742		
Collective ID	Female	119	26.8655	5.09889	.319	.750
	Male	61	26.6066	5.27661		
Lg Achievement	Female	119	72.0840	10.99860	-.565	.573
	Male	61	73.0459	10.42154		

** Significant at .05

* Significant at .01

To determine the difference between male and female participants' performance on language achievement and aspects of identity, five independent sample t-tests were run and the results of Table 6 indicated that except for the significant and meaningful difference regarding

personal identity and the significant difference as regards as relational identity, no significant difference was found between males and females concerning collective and social identities as well as language achievement. Therefore we can claim that disregarding the biological and personal differences between males and females, their social and collective identities as well as their academic success are to a great extent the same.

Table 7: Independant sample t-test for aspects of identity and lanaguge achievement regarding educational degrees

Dependant Variables	Educational Degrees	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Personal ID	Pre-University	41	39.0244	4.10175	.530	.597
	University	83	38.5783	4.55085		
Relational ID	Pre-University	41	39.2195	5.39681	1.490	.139
	University	83	37.6145	5.75905		
Social ID	Pre-University	41	26.0244	4.59613	2.826	.006*
	University	83	23.6265	4.36927		
Collective ID	Pre-University	41	28.1951	4.61096	2.117	.036*
	University	83	26.1205	5.37019		
Lg Achievement	Pre-University	41	71.0488	12.30665	-1.264	.209
	University	83	73.7253	10.44660		

* Significant at .05

As it is presented in Table 7, regarding the difference between pre-university and university participants on aspects of identity and language achievement, except for the significant difference with respect to social and collective identities, no other significant difference was found. It is very interesting that means of learners in pre-university went beyond their peers in universities regarding social and collective identities. This is indicative of the idea that as the Iranian students enter universities, some sort of decrease is evident regarding their social and collective

identities.

Table 8: Multiple regressions for gender, degree and age regarding aspects of identity and language achievement

Independent Variables	Dependant Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
Gender	Personal ID	-.239	-3.273	.001*
Degree		-.120	-1.096	.274
Age		-.008	-.072	.943
Gender	Relational ID	-.132	-1.774	.078
Degree		-.151	-1.350	.179
Age		.091	.813	.417
Gender	Social ID	-.024	-.323	.747
Degree		-.181	-1.611	.109
Age		.046	.407	.684
Gender	Collective ID	-.018	-.236	.814
Degree		-.170	-1.508	.133
Age		.105	.930	.353
Gender	Lg Achievement	.043	.566	.572
Degree		-.004	-.035	.972
Age		.008	.068	.946

To determine whether the demographic factors, namely, age, gender and degree predict aspects of identity and language achievement, multiple regressions were run (Table 8). The results presented the idea that only gender is a strong predictor for the social aspect of identity which support Holmes (2008) claims that identity in many communities is determined by factors such as gender, social status, age, ethnicity and social networks people belong to. As such, none of the demographic factors could predict language achievement and the other aspects of identity. The findings are in line with Hassani's (2005) study which revealed no significant relationship between gender and English language proficiency.

4. Conclusions and Implications of the Study

To sum up, the following findings were drawn from the present research:

1. The correlational analysis revealed no significant relationship between language achievement and any type of aspects of identity.

2. Multiple regressions indicated that none of the type of aspects of identity could predict language achievement among the Iranian EFL learners.

3. The results of independent t-tests showed that male and female are only different regarding their personal and relational aspects of identities.

4. The correlational analysis and multiple regressions presented that age is not a determining factor for both aspects of identity and language achievement among the Iranian EFL learners.

5. Independent t-tests showed that pre-university learners were different from their university peers in terms of social and collective aspects of identity. However, no significant difference was found between the two groups as regards as their personal and relational aspects of identity and their language achievement.

The not-much-expected findings can be accounted for in different ways. Due to the fact that this is for the first time that such a study is conducted in the Iranian context, the study can be replicated in different academic contexts of the country such as university contexts in order to explore the relationship between students' academic achievements and their aspects of identities. Besides, regarding the idea that the questionnaire includes some items which hinder the participants to express their ideas freely and as a result they do not cooperate with the researcher which leads to a great reduction in the sample size, it is recommended that a new questionnaire on aspects of identity including items tapping the Iranian and local identity be designed and used for the Iranian context because most of the time the questionnaires validated for the inner circles (English as a native language) are not suitable for the expanding circles (EFL). Although in the present study, age, gender and educational degree could not account for the differences among the participants regarding course achievement and aspects of identity, there might be other factors such as parents' literacy, social class, family economic level, etc which might be the determining variables for the two

independent variables. As such in further research, such factors should be taken into account. Despite such unexpected findings, it is recommended that for any educational system, policy makers, materials designers, educators, teachers and in a nutshell all decision-makers have an eagle view of the learners' characteristics and consider learners' perceptions of themselves because the educational milieu is definitely affected by the learners' values, identities, as well personality, social, economic and cultural factors. Moreover, EFL teachers in Iran and similar contexts should keep in sight not only language, but also learner, the person. The data in the present study were confined to Iran's ELT context, and its implications for other contexts remain to be examined in future research.

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