On the Relationship between Socio-cultural Factors and Language Proficiency
(Case Study: Shiraz University MA Students)

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The primary objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between language proficiency and socio-cultural factors among the Iranian MA students registered and entered at Shiraz University in 2008. The second objective was to explore whether or not one or a combination of socio-cultural factors are predictors of language proficiency. Finally, the study aims at investigating the effects of gender, age and major on language proficiency. To fulfill the objective, a 100-item language proficiency test (30 items for grammar, 40 items for vocabulary and 30 items for reading comprehension) and a questionnaire including socio-cultural factors were distributed among 510 male and female Iranians taking part in the MA Placement Test at Shiraz University. The data gathered were analyzed descriptively utilizing central tendency measures (mean and standard deviation). Moreover, the collected data were analyzed inferentially using correlation, regression analysis, ANOVA and independent t-test. As such, the following results were obtained: a) although the descriptive statistics showed that females outperformed males in language proficiency, the independent sample t-test revealed that the difference is not significant; b) a significant difference was found between the participants' language proficiency in terms of their majors and their social classes; c) a moderate significant relationship was observed between the participants' language proficiency and their age; d) among various cultural factors, mother's literacy and using films/CDs predict language proficiency to a great extent.

Key Words: Socio-cultural Factors, Social Factors, Cultural factors, Language Proficiency

1 Introduction

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Numerous studies were conducted during the past few decades in an attempt to investigate socio-cultural factors, language proficiency, and the relationship between both. According to Richards, Platt and Platt (1992), language proficiency is "a person's skill in using a language for a specific purpose" (p.204). They stated that proficiency deals with the skills with which a person can use a language, for example how well a person can read, write, listen, and speak while benefiting from three important language components entitled grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Results from studies carried out in the field show that socio-cultural factors might have some sort of relationship with language learners' proficiency. Findings have frequently differed based on the context, whether they are learning their first or second language. However, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between language proficiency and socio-cultural factors that has received comparatively little attention from researchers in the past. Previous efforts have provided only limited insight into the relationship of socio-cultural factors and language proficiency. This proposed study is based on the assumption that proficiency may be affected by various socio-cultural variables.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Performance on language proficiency tests might vary depending on a multitude of factors. One understudied area has to do with socio-cultural variables. It is impossible to draw out the language issues separately since there is a close relationship between these issues and socio-cultural factors. Most often, the language issues are on the surface, but underneath are the complex socio-cultural issues. Moreover we cannot understand the language-related issues without investigating the socio-cultural environment as a whole. This study will investigate the relationship between socio-cultural variables and language proficiency among the Iranian EFL learners.

2 Background of the Study

Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency as a measure of language achievement is a way to understanding learners' language development. In the process of language development, there are a number of factors which play an important role, factors such as learners' first language, learners' beliefs about language, motivation, cultural background and learner's style. Since these factors have a direct impact on learners' language proficiency, it is of paramount importance to explore them. Among Socio-cultural factors are important factors the effect of which on language proficiency is worth studying since the findings of such study would have important implications for language instruction.

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2.1 Studies on socio-cultural factors

Sociocultural factors usually exert their influence within a family structure. Examples of sociocultural factors are belief and value system, attitudes, acculturation levels, socialization goals and practices, language use at home, etc. (Gonzalez, 2001).

Drame and Xu (2008) incorporated sociocultural factors in a model called Response to Intervention Model which addresses the issue of overrepresentation of minority children in special education. A number of researchers such as Cousin, Diaz, Flores, and Hernandez (cited *in* Drame *and* Xu, *2008)* presented a model of five sociocultural contexts that emphasize the relationships among the contexts involved in the educational process for an individual student. These contexts interact with one another in this model.

Yang (2002) examined the impact of sociocultural factors and motivation upon the color coding ability of university students with different demographic and sociocultural backgrounds. He concluded that sociocultural factors are important determinants in group performance in color naming.

Rogers (2002) mentioned that students' lack of preparation deals with some sociocultural factors rather than a lack of academic potential. Gonzalez (2001) believed that sociocultural factors have an influence within a family structure in which a kind of mediation of children's and parents' behavior is seen. In order to be adapted to the school system, parents and children have to develop some sociocultural strategies. De Voss (cited in Gonzales, 2001) maintained that "adaptive strategies are observable behaviors occurring within a particular sociocultural setting that are appropriate within the patterns and perceptions of the social group (p.17)". Walker *et al*. (cited in Gonzales, 2001) contended that there is "a cumulative effect of sociocultural context of home, community, and school to be linked to the presence of at-risk factors in academic achievement levels in language minority children" (p.17). They argued that minority children are affected by the quality and quantity of their interaction with their parents and teachers.

Shin (2000) carried out a qualitative research on the people who have experienced using pidgins and found that there is a kind of interface between the process of pidginization and sociocultural factors. He reviewed several models to explore the relationship of sociocultural factors to second language acquisition, such as John Schuman's social distance, William Acton's perceived social distance, Bjorg Saven's cultural distance, and Douglas Brown's optimal social distance.

Monzó and Rueda (2001) discussed the impact of sociocultural factors on the interactions between Latino students and Latino teachers. They stated that sociocultural theory emphasizes the social nature of learning. Thus, knowledge of students' culture and communities, their primary language, and the interactional styles with which they are familiar facilitate meeting their academic and social needs.

2.2 Studies on language proficiency

Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency 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 (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). A large number of studies on language are done in the area of proficiency and the factors affecting learners' language proficiency.

Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) carried out a study on the area of proficiency. In their study, they analyzed the effects of learning contexts on language proficiency. In this research, the participants are from two different groups: those who were studying at home and those studying abroad. The results showed that the study-abroad participants' proficiency gain was larger than those who stay home; 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 is concluded that the effects of extensive reading might be evident more quickly in general reading skills than in L2 linguistic ability.

Satar and Özdener (2008) investigated the use of two synchronous computer-mediated communication tools, namely, text and voice chat and explored the effect of synchronous computer-mediated communication tools on speaking proficiency. The researchers came to the point that the speaking proficiency of both experimental groups increase.

Trudell (2008) in her study explored the specific links between language development and literacy. The results showed a tight relationship between these elements.

Studies which have been carried out with regard to language proficiency and sociocultural factors are mentioned in the two previous sections. Next section deals with the studies conducted to investigate the relationship between language proficiency and sociocultural factors.

2.3 Studies on socio-cultural factors and language proficiency

Roebuck (2001) argued that teaching composition at university level presents a number of challenges to the instructor teaching the course, as there are different factors that make the course difficult to teach. The researcher claims that learners can enhance and improve their linguistic competencies through this course. Therefore, he draws on different components of socio-cultural theory in the organization of second language composition course.

Lori and Al-Ansari (2001) examined a large number of Arab students learning English as a foreign language and their sociocultural outlooks. They

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conducted a study on the relationship of some sociocultural factors and motivation and attitude of these language learners.

Bartlett (2005) sought to add a socio-cultural theoretical perspective for the creative identity work involved in the process of learning and using literacies. The hypothesis was that "people employ cultural resources, such as cultural artefacts, to develop new identities and literacies" (p.3). The researcher clarifies these processes by drawing examples from interviews with adult literacy students in Brazil and current literature in socio-cultural studies of literacy.

In another study by Oh and Kit-fong Au (2005), an attempt was made to identify the socio-cultural variables and explore the degree to which these variables could predict the successful mastery of a heritage language concerning grammar and accent by adult learners in Spain. The results pointed out that the socio-cultural variables are more related to mastery of Spanish accent, and that use of Spanish outside class is related to mastery of Spanish grammar.

Haworth *et al*. (2006) in their study, took a socio-cultural approach to investigate the factors that enhance young children's bilingual development in New Zealand. The findings of action research revealed that the relationship between language learning and socio-cultural factors was direct. Therefore it is concluded that socio-cultural factors are an inevitable part of achieving competence.

Verhoeven and Vermeer (2006) carried out a study on sociocultural variation in literacy achievement. The study was done on native and non-native upper primary school children in the Netherlands with different backgrounds. The results showed that native children perform better than their non-native peers on all of the tasks which were related to literacy achievement. Grade and ethnicity consistently predicted the scores for word decoding, reading and text writing. Also, socio-economic status affected reading literacy and the variable sex affected writing skills.

Hew Tano (2007) studied the role of motivational and sociocultural factors in reading achievement of Hawaiian children. According to Obgu (cited in Hew Tano, 2007), minority groups are often less advanced in terms of performance on tests of academic achievement and cognitive skills, and this tendency has been documented in some other communities as well. The recent studies carried out show the new tendency to relate learning to sociocultural factors. Hew Tano (2007) mentioned that to address poor reading achievement, the researcher must include the broader context of reading and the reader, particularly sociocultural and motivational factors. The study carried out by Hew Tano linked some sociocultural factors to show that when children have positive attitude toward a task and they have pro-social learning goals and expectations, they choose to do it more frequently and therefore do better at it. Therefore sociocultural factors influence student aspirations, choices and enjoyment that improve their understanding and

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achievement. Finally Hew Tano (2007), like some other researchers in the field, concluded that sociocultural factors are significantly associated with reading achievement and they emphasize the need to connect learning to students' daily lives, so learners can construct meanings of their world as they organize, restructure and represent what they already know.

Normand, Parisse and Parisse (2008) examined the influence of child gender and socio-cultural factors in language production. Subjects were French Parisian children. In their study, the level of proficiency was assessed based on grammatical words such as determiners, prepositions and pronouns and verbs. The results revealed the strong influences of socio-cultural factors on language proficiency. Based on the results, children from high socio-cultural families had more complex lexical productions and a higher rate of development in contrast to the children from low socio-cultural families, who used a less complex lexical production and a lower rate of development.

2.4 Studies on language proficiency and socio-cultural factors in the Iranian context

Tabasi (2000) investigated the relationship between age, sex, and level of proficiency on self-assessment. It was revealed that children and females were more dependable in self-assessment questionnaires for listening. Also 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.

Rezaeian (2001) investigated the relationship between field dependence/independence (FD/I) as a cognitive style and foreign language proficiency considering some other variables as sex and age in Iranian language learners. The results showed that FD/I was a significant factor affecting the performance of the students on the proficiency test. Also, age and sex were found to affect the degree of FD/I in Iranian language learners.

Moreover, 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 answer 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 differ in terms of restoring short-range and long-range cloze items. The results of two paired t-

test 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 do 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 of major and educational year play on learners' type
of motivation was studied. The outcomes of the study revealed that the
learners are 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 if 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 indicated the fact that no comprehensive study
was done to find the impact of the sociolinguistic factors on language
proficiency. Moreover, no thorough piece of research has been performed to
investigate the relationship between sociolinguistic factors and language
proficiency. The majority of the studies done focused on the impact or the
relationship of demographic factors (gender, age and major) on or with
language proficiency which is of major concern in this study, too.

2.5 Objectives and research questions

The objectives of this study were three-folded. The primary objective of the
study was to investigate the relationship between language proficiency and
socio-cultural factors among the Iranian MA students registered and entered
at Shiraz University in 2009. The second objective of this study was to
explore whether one factor or a combination of factors (among socio-
cultural) are predictors of language proficiency. Finally, the study aimed at
investigating the effect of gender, age and major on language proficiency.
Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were
proposed:

1. Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian MA students regarding their language proficiency?
2. Is there any significant difference among the Iranian MA students' majors with respect to their language proficiency?
3. Is there any significant difference among the Iranian MA students with different social classes regarding their language proficiency?
4. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students regarding their ages and language proficiency?
5. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and their parents' literacy?
6. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use TV?
7. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use satellite?
8. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use the Iranian radios?
9. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use foreign radios?
10. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use the internet?
11. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use newspapers/magazines?
12. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use books?
13. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use the films/CDs?

3 Method

In this section, the participants of the study, instruments and the data collection procedure are presented.

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study are item constructors and test-takers who are defined in details in the followings sections.

3.1.1 Item constructors

The item constructors were seven assistant professors majoring in TEFL and had more than eight years of experiences in teaching English and constructing language proficiency items for Iranians of various ages and

levels. They were at the time of the study teaching content English courses including the Testing Course both to undergraduate English majors in English Literature and graduate English majors at Shiraz University. Moreover, they were teaching ESP and General English to undergraduates and graduates of diverse disciplines.

3.1.2 Test-takers

The test-takers were 510 Persian speaking Iranian taking part in the MA proficiency test at Shiraz University in diverse majors. The test-takers ranged in age from 21 to 48 including, 276 males and 234 females.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire utilized in the present study consists of the following sections:

> A. Demographic data including gender, age and major
> B. Social factors consisting of parents' literacy and the social class
> C. Cultural factors consisting of the amount of using TV, satellite, the Iranian radios, foreign radios, the Internet, newspapers/magazines, books and films/CDs

The face and content validities of the questionnaire were approved by the experts in the field of sociology including one of the co-authors of the article.

3.2.2 Proficiency test

The language proficiency test for the study consisted of 30 structure items, 40 vocabulary items and 7 passages followed by 30 reading comprehension items. The passages were general enough to ensure that discipline-specific knowledge was not a determining factor affecting performance. It is important to know that the final 100 items were selected from among the 150 items submitted by the item-constructors. Once the items were submitted, the coordinators (2 assistant professors) commented on each item to improve the quality of the items. So all alterations were made by the coordinators.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

All participants were given an oral description of objectives and procedures

of the test and the questionnaire via the salon microphone prior to providing the instruments. After familiarizing the candidates with the objectives of the study, the socio-cultural questionnaire was distributed among them. They had ample time to go over the questionnaire items and answer them. In the same session, the language proficiency test was given to the participants with the necessary instructions on the cover page. The data gathered were analyzed descriptively utilizing central tendency measures (mean and standard deviation). Moreover, the collected data were analyzed inferentially using correlation, regression analyses, ANOVA and independent t-test depending on the research objectives in general and each research question in particular.

4 Results and Discussion

Table 1. Basic Descriptive Statistics for the Particiapnts' Lanaguge Proficiency

Factor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. D
Proficiency	510	4	90	52.02	17.45

Table 1 illustrates the measures of central tendency and dispersion for the 510 MA students. The minimum and the maximum are 4 and 90 respectively and the mean and standard deviation are 52.02 and 17.45 respectively, too. The distribution of the data is in the form of a quasi-normal curve as Figure 1 depicts the same information.

Figure 1. Display of proficiency scores
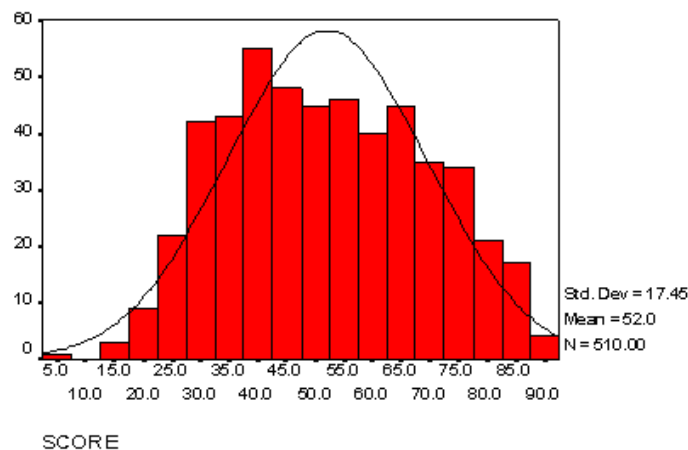
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Table 2. Indepentant Sample T-test for the Male and Female's Proficiency

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	t	Sig.
Male	276	50.58	17.40	-2.03	.793
Female	234	53.72	17.38		

While the means of male and female candidates were found to be 50.58 and 53.72 respectively, the independent sample t-test indicated that this difference is not significant. So, there is no significant and meaningful difference between the Iranian males and females' proficiency knowledge.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance for Social Classes and Language Proficiency

Social Class	N	Mean	Std. D	F	Sig.
Low	47	51.36	40.93	10.837	.000*
Middle	231	50.95	46.62		
High Average	170	58.42	53.09		
High	42	65.21	55.73		
Total	490	53.51	50.40		

*Significant at .05

The means of low, middle, high average and high social classes are 51.36, 50.95, 58.42 and 65.21, respectively. As the table shows, the ANOVA test is indicative of a significant and meaningful difference among the proficiency knowledge of the Iranian students with regard to their social calsses.

Table   4. Analysis of Variance for Majors and Language Proficiency

Majors	N	Mean	Std. D.	F	Sig.
Humanities & Social sciences	142	52.2606	21.05167	4.649	.003*
Engineering & Architecture	194	55.1598	15.09933		
Agriculture & Veterinarian	91	47.9560	15.69424		
Basic Sciences	76	48.8816	16.54486		
Total	503	52.0895	17.47833		

* Significant at .05

Table 4 presents that the means of the language proficiency levels for the Iranian students are different. To confirm significance of this difference, a one-way ANOVA was run and the results proved the significant and meaningful difference among the students of different majors.

Table 5. Multiple Regressions for Types of Socio-cultural Factors and Proficiency

Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
TV	-.102	-2.180	.030*
Satellite	.124	2.615	.009*
Iranian Radios	-.111	-2.266	.024*
Foreign Radios	.065	-1.341	.181
The Internet	.169	3.542	.000*
Newspapers/Magazines	-.095	-1.915	.056
Books	.038	.763	.446
Films/CDs	.165	3.277	.001*
Age	-.047	-1.012	.312
Father's Literacy	.066	.950	.343
Mother's Literacy	.270	3.866	.000*

*Dependent Variable: Proficiency Score (Significant at .05)

Table 5 shows that multiple rgressions were run to determine what type of socio-cultural factors predict language proficiency and the results indicated that TVs, the Iranian radios, satellites, the internet, films/CDs and mother literacy predict language proficiency to a great extent. However, as the stepwise multiple regressions in the Table 6 illustrate, the most determinant and dominant factor is the mother's literacy.

Table 6. Stepwise Multiple Regressions for Variables Predicting Language Proficiency

Variables	Beta	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	The Std. Error of the Estimate	t	Sig.
Mother's Literacy	.331	.331	.110	.108	16.38974	7.116	.000
Mother's Literacy	.303	.380	.144	.140	16.08889	6.564	.000
Films/CDs	.188					6.04	000
Mother's Literacy	.301					6.573	.000
Films/CDs	.191	.399	.159	.153	15.96979	4.15	000
TV	-.121					-2.67	.008
Mother's Literacy	.296					6.481	.000
Films/CDs	.186	.410	.168	.160	15.90067	4.06	.000
TV	-.101					-2.18	.030
Iranian Radio	-.099					-2.13	.033

Table 7. Spearman Product Moment Correlation for language proficiency and socio-cultural factors

Variables	Prof.
TV	-.120*
Satellite	.157*
Iranian radios	-.180*
Foreign Radios	.038
The Internet	.191*
News/Mag	-.054
Books	.063
Films/CDs	.199*
Father's Literacy	.294*
Mother's Literacy	.351*
Age	-.175*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 presents the following findings: a. no significant relationship is found between using foreign radios, newspapers/magazines, books and language proficiency; b. there is a negative correlation between language proficiency and using TVs and Iranian radios and age; c. there is a positive correlation between language proficiency and using satellites, the Internet and films/CDs, father's and mother's literacy.

5 Conclusions

To sum up, the main points can be encapsulated by answering the research questions.

1. Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian MA students regarding their language proficiency?

The findings indicated that no significant difference could be found between males and females' language proficiency knowledge in the Iranian context (Table 2). These results illustrate that although in the Iranian context females outnumber males and occupy more university seats than males, they do not necessarily outperform their male counterparts. The findings are in line with Tabasi's (2000) and Mohammadi's ones and in contrast to Hassani's results.

2. Is there any significant difference among the Iranian MA students' majors with respect to their language proficiency?

The results of ANOVA showed that the Iranian students with different majors are different with regard to their proficiency levels and this difference is both significant and meaningful (Table 4). It is interesting to emphasize

that the students of Humanities and Social sciences and engineering and architecture outperformed other students. This might account for the facts that these students' sources are more flexible and varied in terms of information in contrast to students of other majors.

3. Is there any significant difference among the Iranian MA students with different social classes regarding their language proficiency?

The findings revealed that social class is an important factor for language proficiency; that is, there is a significant difference among the Iranian students who belong to different social classes (Table 3). The main philosophy behind this difference is that the students who belong to the high social class of the society have more access to the facilities such as language classes, private teachers, the Internet and satellites. So, the results imply that the government should do its best to provide the students of lower social classes with more facilities. The findings support the results presented by Normand, Parisse and Parisse (2008).

4. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students regarding their ages and language proficiency?

Although there is a correlation between the participants levels of proficiency and age, this correlation is negative; that is, the younger the participants, the more proficient they are (Tables 5 & 7). This finding is in line with the idea of critical period hypotheses proposed by Lenneberg. The findings are in line with Tabasi's (2000) and Mohammadi's results.

5. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and their parents' literacy?

Despite the fact that a positive significant relationship was found between students' proficiency and their parents' literacy, mother's literacy is a more determining factor for predicting the participants' proficiency (Tables 5, 6 & 7). This might account for the fact that the Iranian students' mothers are mostly housewives and they spend a lot of time with their children. As a result, their levels of literacy have a great effect on helping their children develop their proficiency.

6. Is there any relationship between the Iranian MA students' language proficiency and the amount they use TV, satellite, the Iranian radios, foreign radios, the Internet, newspapers /magazines, books and films/CDs?

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Three types of possibilities exist in the Iranian context (Tables 5, 6 & 7). First, there is no significant relationship between the students' proficiency knowledge and the amount they use foreign radios, newspapers/magazines and books. Second, a negative and significant correlation is found between students' language proficiency and the extent they use the Iranian TVs and radios. This is indicative of the idea that those who are in charge of mass media do not much care for including the English programs in their priorities. Finally, the results show a significant and positive relationship between the participants' proficiency knowledge and the amount of using satellites, the internet and films/CDs. The major reason for this positive and significant correlation is that the satellites and the Internet are two important sources for developing the students' proficiency in an EFL context in which one's exposure to the foreign language is missing in the society. Moreover, the students will select the films and the CDs intently to improve their proficiency. This means that for developing L2 proficiency, students' choices should be taken into account. The findings support the results mentioned by those researchers who claimed that socio-cultural variables, in general, affect language proficiency (Drame *and* Xu, 2008; Haworth *et al*., 2006; Oh and Kit-fong Au, 2005; Monzó and Rueda, 2001; Yang, 2002; Rogers, 2002; and Shin, 2000) though they did not discuss the socio-cultural variables in detail as the present study did.

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