



Low-achievement factors from language teachers' perspective: evidence from an EFL context

Hadi Heidari^{1*} and Abdorreza Tahriri²

¹Department of Education of Shahrood Region, High Schools of Shahrood Region, Ardebil, Iran. ²Department of English Language, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran. *Author for correspondence. E-mail: hheidari67@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. Current study aimed to explore the factors related to the high school students' low achievement in English course from teachers' perspectives in Ardebil city, Iran. Cluster random sampling was utilized and the participants of the study were 27 English teachers teaching in high schools of an EFL context during the fall term of 2012. The required data were gathered during the fall term of 2012 through a researcher-made questionnaire. The instrument was first piloted before it was administered and it showed the reliability of 0.81. The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics and statistical indicators like frequency, percentage, and mean. SPSS software (version 20) was used to run t-tests and ANOVA to analyze the closed items of the questionnaire. The findings revealed that from the teachers' viewpoints, the teachers-based factors were identified to be the most relevant reasons for high school students' low achievement in English course.

Keywords: low achievement, national entrance exams, teachers' points of view, english course, EFL.

Fatores de baixo rendimento do ponto de vista de professores de língua: Evidências a partir do contexto de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira

RESUMO. O objetivo desse estudo é uma investigação sobre os fatores relacionados ao baixo rendimento de estudantes de Inglês no Ensino Médio a partir da perspectiva dos professores na cidade de Ardebil, Irã. Utilizou-se a amostragem aleatória de agrupamento e os participantes foram 27 professores de Inglês ensinando o inglês como língua estrangeira no outono de 2012. Os dados foram coletados em 2012 por um questionário preparado pelo pesquisador. O instrumento foi simulado antes de sua execução e mostrou uma confiança de 0.81. Os achados foram analisados por estatísticas descritivas e por indicadores estatísticos como frequência, porcentagem e média. O software SPSS 20 foi usado para os testes t e ANOVA foi usada para analisar os itens fechados do questionário. Os resultados mostraram que, do ponto de vista dos professores, fatores baseados nos professores foram identificados como as razões mais relevantes para o baixo rendimento dos estudantes no curso de inglês.

Palavras-chave: baixo rendimento, exame nacional de admissão, o ponto de vista dos professores, curso de inglês, inglês como língua estrangeira.

Introduction

Undoubtedly, for human beings, education and learning are important aspects of a life that starts from the very beginning of their lifetime. These terms include all capabilities, knowledge, understandings and the views that individuals acquire in their life. If education is offered properly, it will lead to the perfection and flourishing of the talents and aptitudes that are innately endowed. Education starts from the birth of the child when his family becomes the first school for nourishing his talents and grounding his personality. As the child grows, the need for the internalization of society's values and behaving according to the rules of the society seems to be crucial for the child in order to live in a complex society—together with lots of other

people with different personalities and characteristics. Therefore, the more society achieves this goal, the more it will be able to gain the ideal goals. What we need is an education system that trains and educates people according to society's needs and values and improves their talents that will lead to the perfection of the nation.

As we know, the achievement of every society depends on the success or failure of its education system and whether its objectives are achieved. Nevertheless there are always some unexpected problems that prevent educational systems from achieving their goals. Among the courses that are formally taught in Iranian secondary and high schools, the English language is a course that seems to be facing lots of difficulties. The teaching of

English as an international language is emphasized in almost every non-English speaking country of the world and in spite of its international policies based on its independence, Iran is no exception. Since most of the sciences and information about different branches of knowledge and sciences are only accessed through English, its education has gained importance almost all over the world. According to the formal education programs, the students have to learn English and they have to be able to show their knowledge of it in parts. However, we can still see a plethora of problems related to the teaching of English and, as Bigdeli (2010) truly stated, we have not been successful and good enough in teaching English in Iran. Research results have shown that low achievement rates in English course in Iran are high and one of the courses with the lowest grade in students' achievements in high schools is the English course (SADEGHI, 2002). Unfortunately, learning English faces lots of difficulties in Iran and, as Alborzian (2000 apud SADEGHI, 2002) says, the lowest rank of graduation among general courses belongs to English course. Likewise, Bakhshi (1996 apud BIGDELI, 2010) stated that it is hard for Iranian language learners to utter even the simplest sentences in English. Therefore, it seems important to investigate the reasons of these lags in English course and find ways to prevent the waste of more financial and human resources. Since the objectives of our education system are mostly directed towards the students and fulfill their needs, it seems important to conduct a study through which we may detect the low achievement factors of the students and try to eliminate or decrease them.

One of the main reasons of this shortcoming leading to the underachievement of the students in English course based on the findings of the related studies may be referred to the viewing of the language as a way of mastering the forms and overemphasizing the bottom-up and linguistic features of the language at the expense of using the language as a way of conveying the message and communicating purposefully and authentically. Most of the class hours in these classes pass on manipulating the form and structure and translating long passages from the English language to the learners L1 without having any communicative purpose at all. Most of the activities within the classroom – like initiating, maintaining, and terminating the discussions – is up to the teacher and the students mostly have the role of imitators of the teacher, or rather, to follow the teacher strictly the way he is.

The results of studies conducted by Sadeghi (2002), Abdi et al. (2003) and Bigdeli (2010) in the province of Ardebil show that the following factors affect the students' low achievements and failures in English course: Economical and financial problems of the teachers and families, the poor content of the English text books and their neglecting the source language culture, the goals and method of teaching English in Iran which is mostly based on repetition and drilling and teaching the sounds and words in isolation and lack of due attention to the students' interests and capabilities. Therefore, it is obvious that due to the importance of failure in English course in high school program, there should be some new studies on the failure factors in the English course during the high school period. The findings may help policy-makers to take the failure factors into consideration and design policies that could best overcome obstacles and problems in our system of education. In addition, the EFL instructors can also benefit from the findings of the study in that they can be more alert to the factors which limit students' performance in language classes and do their best to cope with the relevant challenges.

In almost every country and among many nations, the teachers are believed to be the most important entities and main factors in leading society towards perfection and bringing about positive changes within society. Among the Iranians, it is commonly believed that no society will go beyond the mindsets of its teachers. So, if we want to find the most important characters in bringing about changes in English classes and the ones who can help us in spotting the exact factors of low achievement in English course, before any other person, we should investigate the teachers' perspective of the reasons of the mentioned low achievement factors in English course and try to find some ways to change the situations and improve them based on the teachers' perspectives.

Review of the literature

For the explicit and drastic differences between the situation of the setting of the study (Iran) before and after the Islamic revolution, which was also a great social, cultural, and economic revolution, we limit the review of the literature in Iran to the studies after the Islamic revolution, since the foreign language learning in Iran and more importantly the position of the English language before and after this period has been developed based on different attitudes and presuppositions during these years. In one of the post-revolution earliest studies on the

costs of students' failures in Iran imposed on the government, Nafisi (1992 apud SADEGHI, 2002) determined the instructional expenses as well as the financial and property losses as the results of students' educational failure in 1986, 1988 and 1990. Table 1 shows the results of his work and the costs that the education system had undertaken as the result of the students' failure during these years.

Fonseca and Conboy (1999 apud FONSECA; CONBOY, 2006) reported a case study of an intervention with introductory Physics students fraught with negative attitudes and repeated failure in 1999. Their findings showed that the students' continuous engagement within meaningful contexts along with the teacher's personal commitment, high expectancies and clear objectives may improve student performance. The study offered some strategies to improve students' performance in removing the failure which is in line with Fonseca's (2003 apud FONSECA; CONBOY, 2006) highlighting the importance of variables such as the quality of teaching, including teacher support and expectancies, school organization, including a collaborative environment with parental involvement, and relevant curriculum and classroom activities.

In his study, Ne'matollahie Lahroudi (1999) used questionnaires to determine the factors related to the failure of the second and third grade secondary students in English and Mathematics courses in Meshgin Shahr. The sample of his study consisted of 150 students, 21 principals, 30 teachers of English, and 30 Math teachers from Meshgin Shahr secondary schools. He used the same sets of questionnaires for all the participants and, using the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Chi-square test), he found a direct relationship between the failure of the students in English and Mathematics courses with factors related to learners, factors related to the families, and factors related to the education system.

In a report prepared for the Kansas State Board of Education (2006) in the United States to improve the achievement of students in 2000 – which was indeed a review of the literature concerning the characteristics of low achievers, and school factors that interact with student characteristics, and impact the likelihood of

student academic success, and actions that Kansas and other states were taking – a database of the school wide reform models and other interventions in different States of the USA and also data from the professional development and early childhood studies were used to improve the quality of education in Arkansas and also different States in the USA. Researchers, however, believed that there are recurring themes found in educational research on effective schools that can give some direction like quality leadership, enriched curriculum/instruction, positive environment, parental involvement, skilled faculty and comprehensive assessment.

After the related literature was collected, combined, and analyzed, the results were given in a list of 'Schools That Work' section of the report to inform schools about the best practices to take the most advantages of the available resources to them. The results of this report in Kansas State listed several highlighted topics, an explanation of why each topic is important, the current Kansas State Board and State Department of Education initiatives in the topic area, and possible next steps/actions to be taken.

In a study in the city of Qom, Homayi (2000) determined the factors affecting the students' weak performance in the English course from the teachers' points of view. The population of the study included all of the teachers of English in Qom (451 people) which after the sampling featured 110 male and 90 female teachers. He made use of a variety of instruments and techniques for eliciting the necessary information, including questionnaire, interview, observation, and the researchers' self-produced instruments. For the analysis of the findings he used the descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square test). The results showed that the following factors have the main effects on students' weak performance in the English course: 1. The teachers' insufficient knowledge of English; 2. unsuitability of the goals of the English course; 3. unstable economic and cultural conditions of families; 4. Ineffective teaching and evaluation techniques of teachers; 5. the schools' rules; 6. unorganized educational atmosphere and teaching contents.

Table 1. The instructional expenses and students' educational failure.

Title	Year		
	1986	1988	1990
The sum of government's instructional expenses	521 854	647 874	897 527
The sum of government and family expenses for failed students	167 105	194 227	265 047
The sum of government and families' expenses for students who have left the schools	50 756	498 438	8 798
The sum of students' instructional expenses	338 618	476 901	736 598
The sum of expenses of students' as a result of educational failure	556 479	720 966	1 089 573
The ratio of students' educational failures to the sum of the government's instructional expenses	1.07	1.11	1.21

Source: Sadeghi (2002).

In their survey of the educational failure factors in Ardebil province, Abdi et al. (2003, p. 3) referred to the high rates of educational failure in Ardebil province and stated that

[...] the situation is so crucial in Ardebil province that the governor of the Ardebil province has called teachers, students, researchers, and other people to find the reasons of the problem.

The population of their study included all of the teachers and the students in all educational grades as well as the managers, employees, and the experts of the education in Ardebil province between the years 2002 and 2003. There were no samplings implemented for this study as the samples of the study voluntarily took part in the study based on the call of the governor of the Ardebil province. The results of the study showed that factors related to the education system coupled with factors related to the educational management were the most important factors leading to the educational failure in Ardebil province and so, the main focus of education system should be based on these points.

Factors and variables which dependently or independently are crucial in the system of education and seem to be important in influencing and directing success and failure of the students are shown to be excessive. Fonseca and Conboy (2006, p. 83) listed some of these factors as a result of their studies in Portugal:

[...] parenting practices and parental involvement with the school explain much of the variation in school performance, student perceptions of meaningfulness, challenge, choice and appeal of class activities have been associated with motivation and learning; the science teacher has been found to be the most important factor in improving student achievement.

They further pointed out that

[...] one approach to acquiring the information about students' failures is to improve our understanding of what the students themselves perceive as the causes of school failure (FONSECA; CONBOY, 2006, p. 84)

which may lead the educational community to an understanding of what they can do to increase academic success and decrease the rates of students' leaving the schools.

Kiany et al. (2011) also conducted a study with 438 male and female graduated high school students from different cities and provinces across the country who were studying in one of the state universities of medical sciences in Iran and were normally high achievers on the school English

examinations. Relationships between students' examination scores were investigated by running correlation analysis between different sets of exam scores. Results showed that the relationship between the performance of students on the second-grade and third-grade examinations was relatively high. However, the lowest correlation was found between high school exam scores and high school fourth-graders' English language exam results. The researchers believed that the poor performance of the students was due to a sudden increase in the cognitive level of learning objectives in the fourth-grade English language textbook and examinations.

The researchers concluded that national ELT need to be defined in the context of the country's policy documents so that goals and objectives could be clearly stipulated and justified for each grade of high school English language education.

In a study in Bannu district, Pakistan, Shahzada et al. (2012) conducted a study to find out the causes of rising failure of students in English Language at Secondary Level and also to give suggestion for the improvement of the situation. This study was descriptive in nature. One hundred teachers of English from 50 secondary schools were randomly selected as the sample of the study. A questionnaire for secondary school teachers was developed to collect data. To analyze and interpret data, simple percentage was used. The researchers concluded from the findings of the study that teachers of English were not qualified and well-trained and they did not teach English in a proper manner. They were mostly teaching through traditional (grammar translation) method but they took their classes regularly. A positive point was that they came to class with preparation. Some of the causes of rising failure of the students were due to the fact that audio-visual aids were not used in English classes and the course was not compatible to the present time and that the teachers of linguistics were not present in the schools, but English was given importance in the annual progress of the students in school.

Shahzada et al. (2012) recommended that teachers of English use modern teaching methods instead of traditional methods and also get linguistics knowledge and be trained in phonology and phonetics. They believed that the direct method of teaching English is preferred because it is a natural method of teaching a language. They also recommended the use of the qualified and well-trained teachers for teaching English who have special command over pronunciation, functional grammar and vocabulary.

The Education Committee of the High School Level in Ardebil province (2012) has recently provided statistics which show that the third grade high school students in different cities and regions of Ardebil province, who are believed to be the only group of students to exhibit their real potentials by their scores and judged and scored objectively, are really showing low achievement in English and most of these students had been unable to gain the pass score of ten which conventionally discriminates the pass and fail of the students (the average of 8.94 in Khordad of 2010, and 9.63 in Khordad of 2011) (Figure 1).

The students' poor performance in English course may show and unveil some other facts, such as, situations in which the teachers, contently or discontently, and in order to achieve a higher percentage of passers, may help the students to gain more scores than what they really deserve, and it may result in some other problems in its own turn. As an example, the results of published statistics like National Entrance Examination to Universities in Iran (known as Konkur) for the Ardebil students' achievements show that only 13.42 of the candidates of Ardebil province were accepted in universities in 2010 and this rate has changed to 18.12 in the 2011 Konkur which seems to be too low when compared to other provinces and other majors.

Method

Participants

The population of the present study consisted of all high school English language teachers (56 teachers) in the city of Ardebil during the fall term of 2012. The population of the study, after counting dropouts, became 27 teachers (16 male and 11 female teachers).

Instruments

A questionnaire was employed for the teachers (with 110 closed items) to collect the required information. The closed items of the questionnaires were developed by the present researcher through consultation with different experts and teachers in teaching English and also studying different resources, articles, and source books, and eliciting from and revising the works of some other researchers like Ne'matollahie Lahroudi (1999), Bigdeli (2010) and Shahzada et al. (2012) as well as using the findings of the pilot study with 18 high school teachers. After piloting, the final questionnaire showed the reliability of 0.81. The content validity of the items of the questionnaires was approved within the frameworks of studies by Ne'matollahie Lahroudi (1999), Bigdeli (2010) and Shahzada et al. (2012) and finally by the analysis of the items by two university instructors.

Regions	Khordad of 2010	Khordad of 2011	Deviation
Ardebil Reg. 1	7.42	10.69	3.27
Hir	6.59	9.45	2.86
Nir	5.61	8.34	2.73
Meshgin Shahr	7.04	9.37	2.33
Shahrood	8.06	10.11	2.05
Aslandooz	6.68	8.35	1.67
Lahrood	5.93	6.88	.96
Kousar	9.93	10.71	.78
Province	8.94	9.63	.69
Arshaq	6.87	7.54	.67
Namin	8.51	9.03	.52
Khalkhal	11.12	11.59	.47
Pars Abad	7.84	8.16	.32
Germi	8.11	8.37	.26
Ardebil Reg. 2	10.52	10.77	.25
Ungut	7.03	6.82	-.21
Bile Savar	8.94	8.57	-.37
Khoresh Rostam	7.81	6.34	-1.47
Sarein	10.46	8.53	-1.93
Jafar Abad	9.1	7.05	-2.05

Figure 1. The third grade high school students' scores in English course in Khordad in 2010 and 2011 in the province of Ardebil.
Source: Education... (2012).

Table 2. Results of students in Ardebil Province in NEEs (Konkurs) of 2010 and 2011.

Major	Konkur of 2010 (provincial)	Konkur of 2011 (provincial)	Konkur of 2011 (national)	Std. deviation (provincial)	Std. deviation (national)
English	13.42	18.12	15.37	4.7	2.75
Total	36.65	56.15	54.5	19.5	1.65

Source: Education... (2012).

Procedure

After making sure of the validity of the revised questionnaire, the present researcher administered the final version to the target group. The questionnaire was distributed during the fall term of 2012.

Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of the data. Statistical indicators, such as, frequency, percentage and mean, were calculated for the data to determine the factors affecting students' low achievement in English course. SPSS software (version 20) was used to run t-test and ANOVA test to analyze the closed items of the questionnaire to check the differences between the perceptions of male and female teachers as well as the analysis of the factors perceived by the teachers.

Results and Discussion

Overall, the following emergent themes were identified from the analysis of data on high school teachers' perceptions of low achievement in English courses in Ardebil. From the teachers' viewpoints, the following order of factors was identified to be the most relevant for the students' low achievement in the English course: teachers-based factors, factors related to the instructional instruments, students-based factors, factors related to the content, and factors related to the family (Table 3).

This table shows a statistical significance in teacher-based factors ($\text{sig} = .018$, $p < 0.05$), instructional instruments ($\text{sig} = .036$), and students-based factors ($\text{sig} = .042$). The other factors (factor related to content and family) did not show any significance ($p > 0.05$) and they gained the next orders of importance from the teachers' viewpoints.

As the results of the study showed, from high school teachers' perspective, teachers-based factors were believed to be the main factor for the low achievement of students in English. Based on the findings of the study we have conducted, the teacher is one of the most important factors in decreasing the rates of students' failure and low achievement in all courses. Though the world of education is becoming more and more student-oriented and the focus of education is getting away from teaching toward learning and helping the students to learn how to learn, the teacher is still believed to be the most responsible factor in students' drop-outs and failures in most countries, including ours. It is the

teacher who can wisely diagnose the students' problems and shortcomings and adopt the methods and available resources and get the students' potentials to create the best situations for their students to learn and communicate in stress-free and relaxed contexts. The findings of the current study in this field are alongside the findings of Fonseca and Conboy (1999), Homayi (2000), Easton (2002), Bigdeli (2010), and Shahzada et al. (2012). These findings are also partially consistent with the findings of Ne'matollahie Lahroudi (1999) and Abdi et al. (2003).

In his study, Ne'matollahie Lahroudi (1999) revealed that factors related to the education system and their sub-factors, such as the kind of relationships between the teachers and the students, the relative difficulty of the courses, the emotional atmosphere of the classes, the overcrowdedness of the students in classes, the evaluation systems of the teachers, the teachers' negligence, the improper learning of the Persian literature and course, and the possibility of using the exceptions referred to as 'Tabsare' or 'Tak-Maddeh' in Iranian system of education are one of the main sources of the students' failure in English course. He believed that it is better for the teachers to explain the importance of the learning and application of each lesson to the students to arouse their interests efficiently for the process of learning; in addition; he highlighted the supports of families and peers and he stated that, as one of the ways of achievement, the teachers should help the students meet success. He also believed that the cooperation between the teachers and students and also students themselves should be enhanced and there should be a comfortable situation for the students to learn. He also mentioned that one of the factors related to the failure of the students was the teachers' inabilities in teaching the courses. So, he recommended that the teachers be equipped with the required knowledge and teaching abilities. He also talked about the economic problems of the teachers which should be considered and if the society requires any revolution in education, there should be a change in teachers' status and their financial needs should be removed.

Table 3. The high school teachers' perceptions of the students' low achievement factors and their priorities in English course.

Factors of low achievement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	F	Sig.
Students-based factors	24	108.04	7.49	0.001	4.629	.042
Teachers-based factors	24	208.04	18.98	0.000	6.424	.018
Factors of family	26	46.42	6.84	0.004	1.078	.309
Factors of content	24	40.25	7.43	0.42	2.927	.101
Factors of instruments	27	41.74	4.93	0.001	4.889	.036

The results of study by Fonseca and Conboy (1999) emphasized the personal commitment on the part of the teacher, high teacher expectancies and clear objectives and policies leading to better students' performance through continuous engagement of the students within meaningful contexts and in a supportive environment (FONSECA; CONBOY, 2006). Hodayi (2000) also found that the teachers' insufficient knowledge of English and their ineffective teaching and evaluation techniques mainly affect students' weak performance in English course. He believed that the most effective way of reducing the rates of failure factor in English course is providing the teaching environment with gifted and professional teachers who are always needed for creating better teaching situations and he also talked about the need to in-service programs for all teachers. He also stated that the teachers of English should have disciplined lesson plans and they should be familiar with the modern language teaching methods and they should always be serious enough about the students' homework and exercises.

In Easton's (2002 apud FONSECA; CONBOY, 2006) work, the students believed that there is a need for teachers who care about active learning. They further mentioned the need to feel emotionally safe, the need for high expectancy on the part of the school and the need for self-directed learning/ learning by choice. The study conducted by Abdi et al. (2003) also revealed that factors related to the education system like the teachers' inabilities in teaching different methods, scoring more than the students' real scores, lack of expert staffs, and no application of the available resources and educational aids are the most important factors leading to the students' performing less than their expectations. They also give second place of importance to the factors related to planning and programming, such as the lack of in-service classes related to the families, insufficiency of the expert teachers, the economic and financial problems of the teachers, and the voluminous books used for the students. They made suggestions to reduce these factors of failure by taking the economic and financial problems of the teachers into account and promoting their social positions, employing the teachers by formal employments, and the teachers' keeping from complaining about the professional problems in front of the students.

Results by Bigdeli (2010) also showed that the teachers' interest and capability in teaching English contribute to the level of students' learning. He believed that because of the importance of the teachers' abilities in English learning, the need for

workshops and in-service courses for qualifying teachers is necessary. He also stated that the teachers should enhance their interest and motivation for teaching better. And he also emphasized the need for warm atmosphere between the teachers and students and the need for expert counselors as important aspects of effective teaching and learning. Shahzada et al. (2012) also referred to incompetent and professionally unskilled English language teachers as one of the main sources of students' low achievement in English and they recommended that well qualified and competent English language teachers should be appointed.

The mastery of different methods of evaluation and assessment of the students through the use of various methods of evaluation and providing accurate and timely feedback to students is another important factor for the teachers. They should also get the knowledge and application of different evaluation types, such as open-ended, multiple choice, filling in the blank, etc. They should also constantly evaluate and score the students' homework and also give them some assignments and tasks to perform depending on their own abilities.

A professional teacher should also have in mind that there are always some gifted students that like and need to have individual tasks in order not to lose their motivation as a result of working with less conflicting and simple content for them and also ordinary and less gifted students. Therefore, the teachers should identify them and assign some activities and tasks for them and they should take these individual differences as serious and find unique ways for each student who is unique in nature and they should not confine themselves to the situations with actualizing only one or two intelligences. This statement about the gifted students raises another implication in our minds. As Puryahya Koluri (2012) truly declares, the typical teacher enters a classroom which is full of students who are different from each other in different aspects such as cultural and economic backgrounds, differences in aptitudes and interests, different positive and negative points, and different ways of self-upgrading. So, the teachers should take these individual differences as serious and apply the findings of Multiple Intelligence Theory; in fact, they should find unique ways for each student who is unique in nature and they should not confine themselves to the situations with upgrading only one or two intelligences. She grounds her statement on a verse of the Holy Qur'an which talks about the differences in the creation of each individual: "Why

don't you obey the God who has created you differently?" (THE QUR'AN, verses 14; 15).

The students also like to see the changes in the teachers' behaviors as a result of their suggestions and criticisms. In order to enhance the trust between him and the students, the teacher should let the students talk about the shortcomings of the teaching process and make some changes according to them, if possible.

Final considerations

The aim of the present study was to explore and find the reasons and factors related to the students' low achievement in English course in Ardebil, Iran. This low achievement was already indicated by the Department of Education of the city of Ardebil and the findings of the studies by the other researchers, the results of the students' performance in examinations (especially the examinations for third graders of high school) and the findings of the pilot study were indicative of this problem. As the findings showed, one of the most important findings of the study was about teachers and their impacts on students. The need for talented and qualified teachers and managers who may wisely and bravely manage the learning environment to take the most out of it is always obvious and necessary; so these people should be elected just by their qualifications and abilities.

We need revisions in the ways and systems by which teachers, principals and managers are appointed to their positions and employing teachers. The appointment of some people in the places of teachers such as what occurred in Iran in 2010 (during which 40,000 teachers were employed only in a few months) may have irrecoverable and ongoing damages to the system of education. It is also necessary for managers of education to provide different incentives and reinforcements (such as financial ones) to enhance the interest and motivation of the teachers for teaching and even learning and researching.

Owing to the importance of the teachers' abilities in English teaching, the need for workshops and in-service courses for qualifying teachers is necessary. The teachers should also be constantly self-evaluated, because a typical classroom has different students with different demands and needs. Although the recommended methods for teaching depend on different conditions, the low efficiency of traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing and grammar-translation methods--which are frequently used by the teachers--are often pointed out by numerous experts. It is

recommended that the use of these methods be limited and, instead the use of interactive methods such as cooperative learning, group discussion, exploration, problem solving, and project learning and also the active participation of the students in collaborative groups be encouraged in which they can cooperate with each other in order to perform a task--which can make them motivated and help the materials to be better understood.

The friendly relationship between teachers and students and mutual respects are important aspects for an effective and stress-free learning. The first condition for maximum student learning is being away from anxiety in the classroom. One of the main characteristics of the high school period for the students is that it lies within the context of puberty. The physical, psychological and emotional changes occur so quickly that they can lead to complex and uncoordinated behaviors. Therefore, the need for experienced teachers and educators who are familiar with the students' problems and the characteristics of their emotional problems can decrease and eliminate the problems of these students during this critical period.

Regarding the educational instruments and learning aids which contribute towards the achievement of the students, it is recommended that the main stockholders of the education system – e.g. teachers and students – be provided with these instruments in schools. Active and permanent learning of the students may be achieved via using teaching aids by making it more sensible to students to and be involved in the process of learning. The importance given to receptive skills (listening and reading) should be equal and in the same way as that of the productive skills (writing and speaking).

It is important to enhance that due to cultural and linguistic variations, factors like bilingualism, which exist in Ardebil province, were not taken into account. Actually we need further studies to take into account these and some other factors, such as the delimitation of the study to high schools and the books used for the high school students and also the problems related to the age of the students which may be a barrier for effective learning of a foreign language in Iranian schools.

References

- ABDI, A.; MOHAMMADI, H.; ESMAILI, M. **Barrasie avamele moasser bar ofte tahsili az didgahe daneshamuzan va moalleman**. Ardebil: Research Association, 2003.
- BIGDELI, M. **Barrasie avamele mortabet ba yadgirie payine zabane englisi dar daneshamuzane ostane Ardebil**. Ardebil: Research Association, 2010.

- EDUCATION Committee of the High School Level. **Darsade ghabulie Konkure 90**. Ardebil: Education committee of the high school level, 2012.
- FONSECA, J.; CONBOY, J. Secondary student perceptions of factors effecting failure in science in Portugal. **Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education**, v. 2, n. 2, p. 82-95, 2006.
- HOMAYI, S. **Barrasie elale ofte tahsilie daneshamuzan dar dares zaban englisi dar maghtae motavasseteye Qom az didgahe dabiran**. Unpublished M.A thesis. 2000. 87f. Thesis (M.A degree)-Psychology and Educational Sciences, Tehran University, Tehran, 2000.
- KANSAS State Board of Education. **Possible causes of and solutions for low achievement**, Kansas, 2006. Available from: <http://www.ksde.org/pre/low_achievers2000.html>. Access on: Apr. 7, 2010.
- KHODAMORADI, A. Exploring the perceptual gap between learners and teachers: The case of Iranian high school freshmen and their teachers. **Roshd Foreign Language Teaching Journal**, v. 25, n. 3, p. 56-64, 2011.
- KIANY, G. R.; MAHDAVY, B.; GHAFAR SAMAR. R. Towards a harmonized foreign language education program in Iran: National policies and English achievement. **Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)**, v. 2, n. 3, 2011. Available from: <http://infonomics-society.org/LICEJ/Towards%20a%20Harmonized%20Foreign%20Language%20Education%20Program%20in%20Iran_National%20Policies%20and%20English%20Achievement.pdf>. Access on: Feb. 12, 2012.
- NE'MATOLLAHIE LAHROUDI, E. **Barrasie avamele moasser dar ofte tahsili darshaye riazi va zaban englisi az nazare daneshamuzan, modiran, va dabirane madarese rahnamayie Meshginshahr dar saletahsilie 1376-77**. 1999. 84f. Thesis (M.A degree)-Psychology and Educational Sciences, Tabatabaei University, Tehran, 1999.
- THE QUR'AN. Trans. Elahi Ghomshei. **NOAH SURAH**. Qom: Golbarg publication, 2009. Verses 14; 15.
- PURYAHYA KOLURI, S. S. **Tasire amuzeshe mobtani bar nazariyeye hushe jonbeshi Gardner bar yadgirie dares olume daneshamuzane pesare dore ebtedayie shahrestane Ghods**. 2012. 93f. Thesis (M.A degree)-Psychology and Educational Sciences, Khwarizmi University, Tehran, 2012.
- SADEGHI, A. **Barrasie avamele ofte tahsilie daneshamuzan dar dares zaban dar maghtae motavassete shahrestane Parsabad**. 2002. 97f. Thesis (M.A degree)-Psychology and Educational Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Ardebil, 2002.
- SHAHZADA, G.; GHAZI, S. R.; ALI KHAN, U. Causes of rising failure of the students' in the subject of English at secondary level. **Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences**, v. 3, n. 1, p. 605-611, 2012.

Received on October 25, 2014.

Accepted on February 22, 2015.

License information: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.