

English Language Learning Motivation and Cultural and Economic Capital: A study of Language Learners of Yasuj Language Institutes, Iran

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Abstract: *This research is an attempt to determine the relationship between English language learning motivations and cultural and economic capital in EFL learners in Yasuj language institutes in 2013-2015. A questionnaire was used to collect the data. The content validity of the questionnaire was approved by English language experts and its reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha (Motivation= 0.71, Cultural capital= 0.89, Economic capital= 0.81). The results revealed that cultural capital had an impact on motivation of English language learners. Economic capital was not effective on English language learning motivation in Yasuj Language Institutes.*

Keywords: *language, economic capital, cultural capital, motivation, Yasuj institutes*

Introduction:

Capital: Capital is derived from the Latin word "caput" meaning head. The concept of capital has a number of meanings. Capital has been defined in economics. It has been mentioned that there are three different kinds of capital in economics: physical capital, human capital, and natural capital. Physical capital is the first kind which means the stock of real goods like machines and buildings. It has been known and debated from the very beginning of economics. More recently, a second type of capital, human capital, has been recognized arising from understanding that the embodiment of skills and experience in people symbolizes a capital stock that is just as important as physical capital in producing output in the economy. The third type is natural capital that was accepted by economists by increasing awareness about the influence of environmental problems on economic activity. Natural capital means the stock of renewable and nonrenewable supplies provided by nature, and incorporates the ecological processes governing their existence and use (Becker, 1964).

Moreover, in classical economic schools of thought, especially in the Marxist political economy, capital is the money used to buy something only in order to sell it again to realize a financial profit. For Marx, capital only exists within the process of economic exchange—it

is wealth that grows out of the process of circulation itself; to him, it forms the basis of the economic system of capitalism. In more contemporary schools of economics, this form of capital is generally referred to as "financial capital" and is distinguished from "capital goods". But, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has classified the capital into four different forms: economic, social, symbolic and cultural (Connolly, 2012).

According to Bourdieu, *economic capital* which is money or wealth in all its changeable forms may advance children's educational outcomes through direct and indirect investment. *Social capital* which is concerned with social relations is presented by a network of friends and contacts of a person. *Symbolic capital* started as the opinion of artistic recognition and developed into collective recognition, prestige or the imbueing of honor notions and *cultural capital* which has been seen as the education product happens within an academic market.

Cultural capital:

The term cultural capital refers to non-financial social assets that develop social mobility beyond economic means. Examples can involve education, intellect, style of speech, dress, or physical appearance.

Cultural capital is a sociological concept that has obtained widespread popularity since it was first posed by Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, who is famous in sociology of education in America. Bourdieu (1997) classified cultural capital into three main categories: objectified capital, institutionalized capital, and embodied capital.

According to Bourdieu (1997):

1. *Embodied form* is in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body.
2. *Objectified state* is in the form of cultural goods and objects, such as pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, ect.
3. *Institutionalized state* refers to educational qualifications. (1997, pp.47-48)

Moreover, other sociologists and educational researchers have tried to express the concept of cultural capital based on Bourdieu's definition. In addition, cultural capital has been classified into other forms such as static and relational cultural capital.

In static cultural capital, intellectual activities and parent's practices are represented and in relational one, cultural interactions and communication between children and their parents have been presented. It has also been mentioned that the effects of dynamic cultural capital is strong on students' schooling outcomes and static one has more modest effects (Willms & Tramonte, 2010).

In spite of various forms of capital, such as economic, social and symbolic, cultural capital is the most precious one in the field of education. It has also been expressed that cultural capital has a role in educational and other life outcomes around the world, in Western Europe, the US, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and even Asia.

According to Bourdieu (1997), there is an unequal distribution of cultural capital in society so that upper class families have a large amount of cultural capital and working class and poor families possess none at all. He also claims that cultural capital is transferred from childhood. Therefore, while children reach school age, they have obvious class differences in cultural capital possession.

Other sociologists have also studied cultural capital and its effects on educational outcomes quantitatively and qualitatively for the past 20 years (Kingston, 2001). In addition, in most industrialized societies, education is an important factor for forecasting social mobility. And also, most studies on social mobility have determined that people's family origin and educational experiences affect academic achievements. In these studies, family resources, including economic, cultural and social capital, have been focused. And people's success depends on the use of their social and cultural capital in strategic ways (Sirin, 2005, as cited in Willms & Tramonte, 2010).

Moreover, sociological explanations about the relationship between educational outcomes of children and family background have considered the economic, social, and cultural capital as the major components of parental resources (De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000, as cited in Willms & Tramonte, 2010). Also, the research on cultural capital clarifies the significant role of this term in educational outcomes by addressing this question: Why families with low income are generally unable to help their children to be successful at school? According to Lareau (1989 as cited in Willms & Tramonte, 2010), individuals have various amounts of cultural capital which explains why some students with school standards are accepted at college, and finally reach educational higher levels, and why other students do not.

Bourdieu believed that there is an unequal distribution of cultural capital in society so that upper class families have a large amount of cultural capital and working class and poor families do not. He also claims that cultural capital is transferred from childhood. Therefore, while children reach school age, they have obvious class differences in cultural capital possession. He believed that cultural capital was to describe the social inequality in French society in different socioeconomic status groups of students in educational achievements.

Economic Capital:

Economic or financial capital is one kind of capital that makes economic productions easier. It refers to a system of ownership or control of physical capital, but this term is not productive

itself. Economic capital permits all the productive activities to get going in a money economy, before returns that will flow from them. (Goodwin, 2003)

In addition, economic capital consists of incomes or other forms of monetary assets, such as capital, stock and property. This type of capital may advance the educational outcomes of children by direct and indirect investment. (Bourdieu, 1974) It is noticeable that other instruments, such as money, currencies and securities of the global financial system are considered as financial capital, as well.

Motivation:

Motivation plays an important role in learning a second or foreign language (L2), especially classroom language learning. Both teachers and researchers have accepted that motivation is a key factor in the second/foreign language learning rate and success. It has a complex and multi-faceted construction (Gardner, 1985; Williams & Burden, 1997).

In the first research on motivation and L2 learning, motivation was seen as a trait of learner. In a socio-educational model by Gardner that was developed to explain L2 learning in the classroom, motivation was connected to behaviors towards the L2 community and also a desire to learn the L2 (Gardner, 1985). In Gardner's model, two different kinds of orientations have been suggested: an integrative orientation and an instrumental orientation. There is a desire to interact with the L2 language group in integrative orientation, but in instrumental orientation, the practical advantages of learning a new language such as job advancement have been considered (Dorneyi, 2003). But based on d'Anglejan (1990), both types of motivation are important and indeed a learner might learn a second language well with both orientations.

Dorneyi also claims that beginning in the 1990s, there was a shift towards viewing motivation as a more dynamic factor, more cognitive in nature, and more grounded in the educational contexts where most L2 learning takes place. This understanding views motivation as a continuously evolving construct, subject to various internal and external influences confronted by the learner (2001).

Lareau (1989) describes that working-class parents lack the resources such as education, occupational status, ect., and they feel relaxed in confrontation with teachers. She believes that school is a different place from home and teachers are responsible for children's schooling.

Bourdieu (1977) pointed that there are different kinds of economic and non-economic supplies that parents may have in various forms and amounts to invest in developing educational success of their children.

Halsey et al. (1997) also argued that non-material resources such as education and occupational status are welcome by Bourdieu. Therefore, because of Bourdieu's emphasis on cultural capital

rather than economic capital, it can be concluded that income as a material resource is not emphasized by Bourdieu and is not important in educational outcomes.

Swidler (1986) and Farkas (1996) claim that low income parents do not support their children to be successful in school, not because they pay too low to such action but because they have no skills, habits and knowledge needed to influentially help children.

In Levin's educational reform model (1989), it has also been mentioned that disadvantaged students could succeed as gifted ones if they were afforded some of the same approaches such as chances to make knowledge through hands-on projects and research.

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between English language learning motivations and cultural and economic capital in EFL learners in Yasuj language institutes. Based on the aims, two research questions were posed:

1. Is there any relationship between cultural capital and EFL learners' English language learning motivations in Yasuj language institutes?
2. Is there any significant relationship between economic capital and EFL learners' English language learning motivations in Yasuj language institutes?

Therefore, there were two hypotheses in this study:

- 1- There is a significant relationship between cultural capital and EFL learners' English language learning motivations in Yasuj language institutes.
- 2- There is a significant relationship between economic capital and EFL learners' English language learning motivations in Yasuj language institutes.

Material and Method

This quantitative study was conducted on Language Learners of Yasuj Language Institutes in 2012 -2015. The participants of this study were selected from three language institutes in Yasuj city. In the quantitative section of the research, 150 Iranian EFL learners whose proficiency level had been identified by the institutes as intermediate voluntarily filled out two questionnaires, one regarding the concept of cultural capital and the other related to the concept of motivation. The data collection of this study started from the beginning of Mordad in three language institutes in the city of Yasuj. The students were selected using stratified random sampling and three language institutes were randomly selected among many more language academies which existed in Yasuj city. In each of the three institutes, fifty students, whose proficiency level had been identified as intermediate by the institutes, were randomly chosen to fill out the two questionnaires, one of which was on cultural capital and the other one on motivation. Meanwhile, the data were analyzed by SPSS software after collection.

Validity: The validity of the questionnaires was confirmed by a panel of English experts and the inventory of items and development of questions for the questionnaire were carefully scrutinized and examined by the researchers. **Reliability:** The internal consistency of the items of these questionnaires was calculated through Cronbach Alpha. The estimated reliability of the items in two questionnaires was high. As shown in Table 1, the questionnaires were statistically reliable.

Table: 1

Reliability statistics of motivation and cultural capital

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Motivation	41	0.71
Cultural capital	29	0.89
Economic capital	27	0.81

Result and Discussion:

In order to investigate the research hypotheses, (There is a significant relationship between cultural capital and EFL learners' English learning motivation), Pearson correlation test was used. It was revealed that there is a significant relationship between these two variables. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table: 2

The relationship between cultural and economic capital and learning motivation

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Number of studies	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
Cultural Capital	Motivation	150	0.429	.0001
economic capital	Motivation	150	-.034	.684

As Table 2 demonstrates, sig is .0001 in Pearson correlation which is less than the critical R (.05). Consequently, the null hypotheses "There is a significant relationship between cultural capital and English learning motivation of FEL learners" are confirmed.

It is believed that second or foreign language learning is a complex phenomenon. Language and language learning have universal features. Several variables are needed to acquire a new language, e.g. learners' characteristics, linguistic factors, learning processes, age and acquisition, instructional variables, context, and purpose (Brown, 2007). In addition, cultural capital is considered as a key factor in academic achievement, as shown in many studies in the United States (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002), the United Kingdom (Sullivan, 2001), and the Netherlands (DeGraaf, DeGraaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000); also, several studies have been carried out in this field by measuring the concept of cultural capital. Specifically, academic achievement differences are significantly explained by cultural capital (Dumais, 2002), parental wealth (Orr, 2003), family generated habits (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) and parental educational values (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

To test the second research hypothesis, i.e. there is a significant relationship between economic capital and EFL learners' English language learning motivations in Yasuj language institutes, Pearson correlation was used. As shown in Table 2, there was no significant relationship between economic capital and English Language Learning Motivation in Language Learners of Yasuj Language Institutes. The sig. value (0.684) was greater than 0.05 (P 0.05). Thus, it means the economic capital is not effective on English Language Learning Motivation. Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusion

Cultural capital had a significant impact on motivation of English language learners. Cultural capital impresses opinion, individual's tendencies, inclinations and behaviors of learners and will increase the learners' attitude toward learning English. However, economic capital was not effective on English Language Learning Motivation in Yasuj Language Institutes; in other words, some conditions, such as family income or financial situation, are not an important factor to encourage and motivate English language learning.

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