

- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13, 266-272.
- Gardner, R. C., & Tremblay, P. F. (1994). On motivation, research agendas, and theoretical frameworks. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 359-68.
- Heitzmann, J. (2009). The influence of classroom climate on students, motivation. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English Applied Linguistics* (pp. 207-244). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.
- Lamb, M. (2004a). It depends on the students themselves: Independent language learning at an Indonesian state school. *Language, Culture and, Curriculum*, 17, 229-245.
- Lamb, M. (2007). The impact of school on EFL learning motivation: An Indonesian case study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, 757-780.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Lier, L.V. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. Applied Linguistics and Language Study Series, Longman.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Baker, S. C., Clément, R., & Conrod, S. (2001). Willingness to communicate, social support, and language-learning orientations of immersion students. *Studies in Language Acquisition*, 23, 369-388.
- Oxford, R. L., & Shearin, J. (1996). Language learning motivation in a new key. In R. L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning motivation: Pathways to the new century* (pp. 121-144). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Phan, H. T. T. (2010). *Factors affecting the motivation of Vietnamese technical English majors in the English studies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Otago.
- Reeve, J. (1996). *Motivating others: Nurturing inner motivational resources*. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.
- Sakai, H. & Kikuchi, K. (2009). An analysis of demotivators in the EFL classroom. *System*, 37, 57-69.
- Wentzel, K. R. (1998). Social relationships and motivation in middle school: The roles of parents, teachers and peers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 202-209.
- Wilkinson, I. A. G., Hattie, J. A., Parr, J. M., & Townsend, M. J. R., et al. (2000). *Influences of peer effects on learning outcomes: A review of the literature*. Auckland: Auckland UniServices. Retrieved from ERIC Database (ED478708).
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wong, R. M. H. (2008). Motivation and English attainment: A comparative study of Hong Kong students with different cultural backgrounds. *Asia Pacific- Education Researcher*, 16, 45-60.



on L2 learning; therefore, investigating the factors enhancing these orientations can play an important role in pedagogical studies. The results of correlation analyses in the present study showed a significant relationship between support from parents and teachers and LLOs such as job, travel, personal knowledge, and school achievement. Deci and Ryan (1985) assert that a supportive learning situation has three features: autonomy, relatedness, and competence, all of which are associated with motivational orientations. Reeve (1996) defined relatedness as feeling of belongingness, security, support, and value.

EFL teachers and parents are recommended to encourage EFL learners to learn English by notifying them of the benefit of learning English such as finding a well-paid job, gaining good scores in English courses, traveling to English speaking countries, studying abroad, and increasing their personal knowledge by learning English and using English sources. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p. 186) argue, in learning an L2 teachers can provide situations in which “learners interact with other persons or use affective control to assist learning”. They add that “creating situations to practice the target language with others, using self talk, and cooperating or

**As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p. 186) argue, in learning an L2 teachers can provide situations in which “learners interact with other persons or use affective control to assist learning”**

working with others to share information, obtain feedback, and complete a task” are examples of strategies a teacher can use in the L2 classroom to help learners learn the L2 efficiently.

## References

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- Dörnyei, Z., (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. *Language Learning*, 53, 3-32.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Csizer, K. (2005). The effects of intercultural contact and tourism on language attitudes and language learning motivation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 24, 1-31.
- Gao, X. (2006). Strategies used by Chinese parents to support English language learning: Voices of “elite” university students. *RELIC Journal*, 37, 285-298.
- Gardner, R.C. (1985). *Social psychology and language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Arnold.



English speaking countries for education or business, and school achievement.

Having different orientations for learning English may compensate for the lack of language ability and learning among EFL learners because motivational orientations have been broadly accepted by teachers

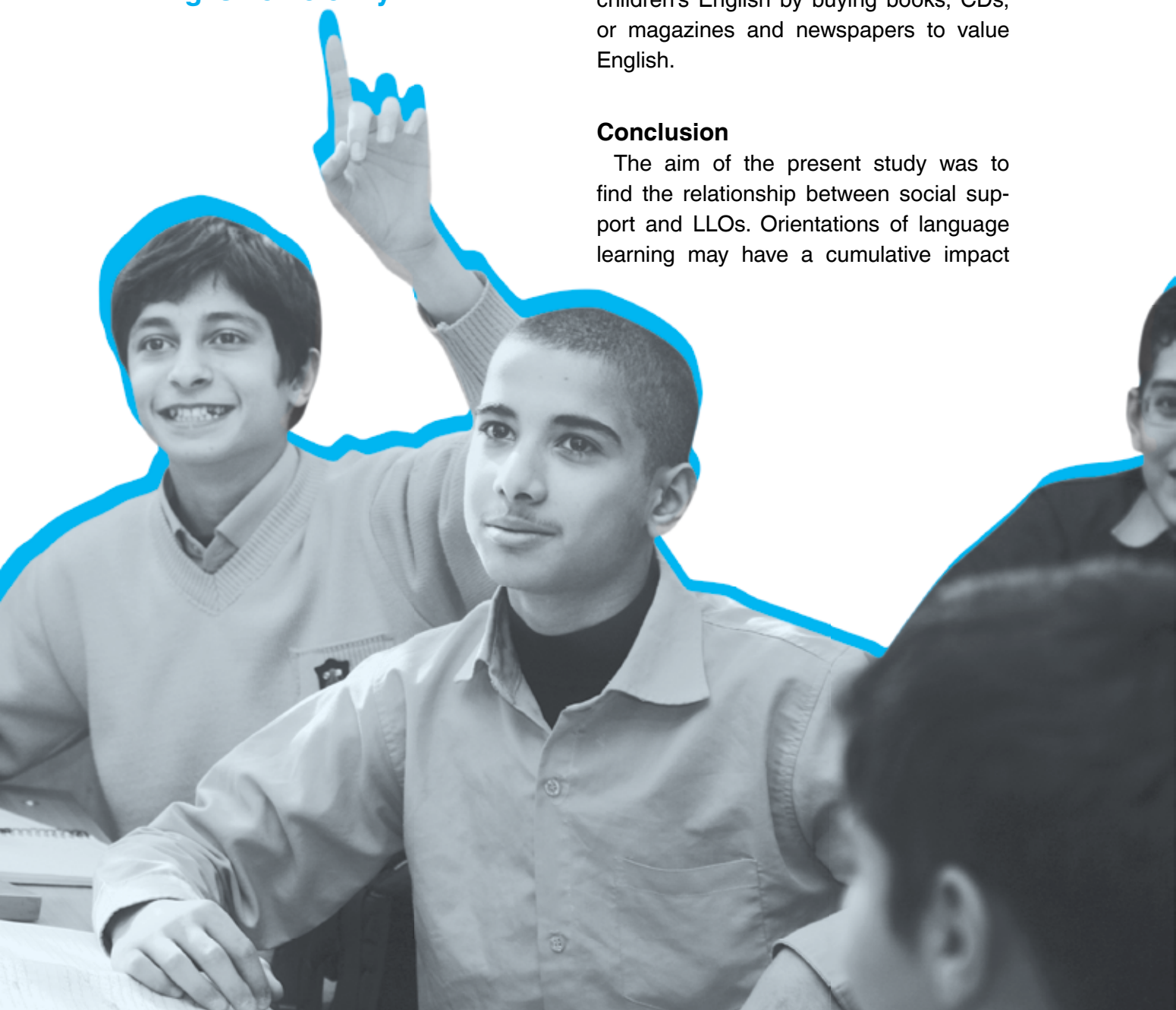
**In the L2 classroom, supportive EFL teachers may create a competence-supportive class environment for EFL learners to learn English efficiently**

and researchers as a key factor in successful language learning (e.g., Dörnyei, 2003; Dörnyei & Csizer, 2005; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). It can also compensate for insufficiency in language aptitude and learning (e.g., Oxford & Shearin, 1996, cited in Oxford, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997).

The results of this study might be helpful for the EFL learners' parents, too. Gaining awareness of what motivates EFL learners to learn English is invaluable. Consequently, being aware of their role in motivating and supporting their children learning English as an L2 parents can facilitate their children's English by buying books, CDs, or magazines and newspapers to value English.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of the present study was to find the relationship between social support and LLOs. Orientations of language learning may have a cumulative impact

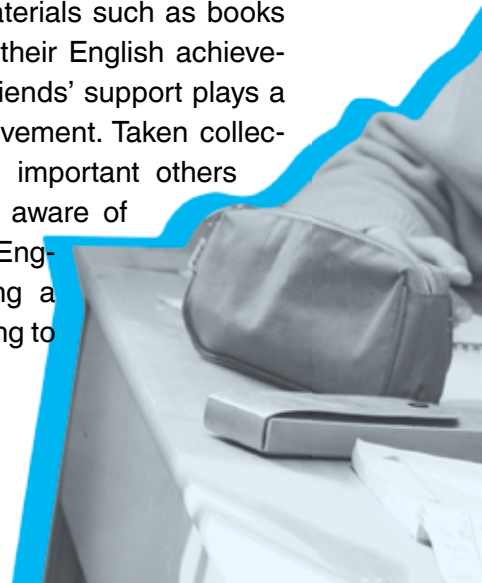


learners and their motivation to learn English. It can also be suggested that favorable attitudes of others toward the importance of English function as an inspiring factor for Iranian EFL learners. Iranian EFL parents may be instrumental in communicating the benefits of learning English to their children and in this way motivating them to gain their goal orientations. Lack of parental support might lead learners to negative behavior, such as not valuing learning English as an L2. Moreover, with reference to the influence of family members on students' motivation to learn English, Phan (2010) stated that support from parents in terms of monetary help, verbal and concrete encouragement, and approval of their goals influenced learners' motivation to learn English well. The result of the present study supports this view. It might be concluded that parents' encouragement and advice can motivate Iranian EFL learners to set goals for learning English. Through valuing the pragmatic benefits of knowing English such as gaining a well-paid job, traveling abroad for the sake of having fun or studying, and increasing personal knowledge, parents can praise and support their children in their efforts to learn English. Parents who are aware of merits of English learning may make EFL learners more motivated to learn English.

Results also show that teachers' support and orientations of language learning are significantly correlated among Iranian EFL learners. Another feature of the supportive learning situation is autonomy which is defined as "the amount of freedom a teacher gives to a student so the student can connect his or her behavior to personal goals, interests, and values" (Reeve, 1996, p. 206). Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) in their studies concluded that EFL teach-

ers have a unique opportunity to enhance EFL learners' motivation through nurturing desirable learner goals. Therefore, it might be suggested that in FFL contexts like ours a teacher can be considered as a helper who leads EFL learners to shape their orientations toward learning English. Teachers' constructive guidelines might motivate Iranian EFL learners to work toward their goals of learning English. In the L2 classroom, supportive EFL teachers may create a competence-supportive class environment for EFL learners to learn English efficiently. Learning English might help them be admitted in foreign universities they have applied for and, in this way pursue their studies to the highest levels. It may also help them to use English sources to increase their knowledge on different subjects.

Findings of the present study demonstrated that supports from the best friend and other friends were significantly correlated with EFL learners' school achievement. Wilkinson, Hattie, Parr, and Townsend (2000) found systems and procedures in which peers influenced students' learning. They argued that some of these processes provide social facilitation through which students can work better under the support of peers. It might also be suggested that Iranian EFL learners may work together to practice their oral topics and help one another before the final exam. Sharing their English materials such as books might contribute to their English achievement. As a result, friends' support plays a role in school achievement. Taken collectively, support from important others make EFL learners aware of merits of learning English including getting a well-paid job, traveling to



to provide a research-based answer to the following research question:

1. Is there any relationship between social support and LLOs, namely job, travel, friendship, personal knowledge, and school achievement?

## Method

### ● Participants

The participants of this study were 60 Iranian EFL learners, both males and females, who were selected from among EFL learners. Their age range was between 12-17. They had been enrolled for the summer 2012 English courses of intermediate and upper intermediate levels.

The data for the present study were collected through a two-part questionnaire that was adapted from MacIntyre et al. (2001). It consisted of 20 items which referred to the reasons for learning English, namely job, travel, personal knowledge, friendship, and school achievement. Five items were added to explore who encouraged them to learn English, that is to say parents, siblings, best friend, other friends, or teachers.

First, the questionnaire was piloted on 5 EFL learners with similar characteristics in order to uncover any problems and remove them and estimate the time needed for the administration of the questionnaire. Then, with the permission of the administrators and teachers, the questionnaire was given to be completed by the participants. Participants' privacy and information confidentiality were secured.

Then, the collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, 18). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire turned out to be .90 and .70, respectively.

## Results and Discussion

To examine the relationship between support and encouragement from others for language learning and LLOs, a series of point-biserial correlations were computed. Table 1 shows the results of the correlations between social support and LLOs.

**Table 1: Point-Biserial Correlations Between Orientations and Sources of Social Support**

Support	Travel	Job	Friendship	Knowledge	School
Parents	.25*	.29*	.19	.22*	.30*
Siblings	.10	.00	.11	.10	.12
Best Friend	.13	.08	.00	.11	.22*
Other Friends	.18	.13	.06	.05	.24*
Teachers	.26*	.30*	.19	.24*	.30*

Findings indicate that among 25 correlations only 10 hypothesized correlations were significant. Both parents and teachers' support was significantly associated with increased orientations for travel, job, personal knowledge, and school achievement. On the other hand, there was no significant correlation between social support from parents and teachers and friendship with English speaking people. No significant relationship was found between social support from siblings and LLOs. Social support from the best friend and other friends was significantly associated only with school achievement.

As it is evident from the table, parents' and teachers' support was significantly correlated with higher levels of language orientations such as job, travel, personal knowledge, and school achievement among Iranian EFL learners. Wentzel, (1998) examined parental support in learning situations and found that it predicated students' mastery goal orientations and willingness to learn. Consequently, it may be claimed that social support from parents is intermediary between Iranian EFL

## Introduction

Along with the research on motivation, research on the reasons for language learning has been taken into consideration. Gardner and Lambert (1959) referred to these reasons as orientations. Most researchers and educators agree that motivation “is a very important, if not the most important factor in language learning” (Lier, 1996, p. 98), without which even the most gifted learners cannot achieve their goals, whatever the curricula

**EFL teachers and parents are recommended to encourage EFL learners to learn English by notifying them of the benefit of learning English such as finding a well-paid job, gaining good scores in English courses, traveling to English speaking countries, studying abroad, and increasing their personal knowledge by learning English and using English sources**

and whoever the teachers are. Based on Gardner and Lambert (1959), orientations of language learning are categorized into: integrative and instrumental orientations. Integrative orientations refer to having a desire to interact with the L2 community and become a member of that group. However, practical purposes of learning an L2 such as finding a job or increasing one’s salary are related to instrumental orientations.

Researchers who carried out studies in

FL contexts have confirmed the importance of the support in motivation and LLOs and, consequently, in language learning. For example, Lamb (2004a) suggested that a teacher is considered motivating when he/she offers EFL learners with practice opportunities, lets them to share the information, and encourages them to speak English. In a study conducted by Wong (2008) in Hong Kong, it was revealed that peers influenced learners’ motivation more than teachers or parents. For example, they enjoyed learning English with their classmates. Moreover, Heitzmann (2009) found that peers were helpful in improving English.

With regard to social support, family members, especially parents play an important role in giving support to students’ learning. The main focus of support from parents in both ESL and EFL contexts is on how parental attitudes control children’s reasons to learn (e.g., Gao, 2006; Gardner, 1985; Lamb, 2007).

## The Study

MacIntyre et al. (2001, p. 373) argued that “a behavior is more likely to be performed when a person perceives that salient referents approve of the behavior.” Therefore, it can be claimed that those who are encouraged and supported by important referents are to be more interested in learning an L2. The relationship between social support and LLOs in language learning among Iranian EFL learners has gone rather unnoticed. Due to the significance of orientations of language learning as important variables in L2 learning, studies have focused on the factors affecting those variables among EFL learners. The present study was an attempt in this direction

# The Relationship Between Social Support and Language Learning Orientations Among Iranian EFL Learners

Masoud Rahimi Domakani, PhD in TEFL

Email: rahimi@lit.sku.ac.ir

Moazam Vatankhah, M.A in TEFL

Email: Vatankhah.english@yahoo.com



Researchers

## چکیده

حمایت اجتماعی در یادگیری زبان دوم بسیار حائز اهمیت است. زبان‌آموزانی که مورد حمایت و تشویق دیگران قرار می‌گیرند، به فراگیری زبان دوم علاقه‌مند می‌شوند. علائق زبان‌آموزی با حمایت اجتماعی مانند حمایت از سوی اعضای خانواده، معلمان زبان انگلیسی، و دوستان در ارتباط است. مقاله حاضر حاصل تلاشی برای مطالعه ارتباط بین حمایت اجتماعی و علائق زبان‌آموزی زبان‌آموزان ایرانی است. ۶۰ نفر زبان‌آموز از دو مؤسسه زبان در اصفهان در این تحقیق شرکت کردند. به‌منظور تعیین میزان رابطه حمایت اجتماعی با علائق زبان‌آموزی (شغل، سفر، دوستی با انگلیسی‌زبانان، دانش شخصی، و موفقیت تحصیلی) از یک پرسش‌نامه استفاده شد. نتایج به‌دست آمده حاکی از آن است که حمایت والدین و معلمان با دلایل یادگیری زبان دوم همبستگی دارد. در پایان، به والدین و معلمان زبان توصیه می‌گردد که نقش خود را در برانگیختن زبان‌آموزان به یادگیری زبان مورد توجه قرار دهند و آنان را در یادگیری هر چه بهتر زبان یاری کنند.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** حمایت اجتماعی، علائق زبان‌آموزی، انگیزه

## Abstract

Social support plays a significant role in learning English as a foreign or second language (EFL / ESL). Foreign/second language learners are motivated and inspired by encouragement and support from others. Language learning orientations (LLOs) are associated with social support such as support from parents and EFL teachers. This study aimed at exploring the effect of social support on orientations of L2 learning among 60 Iranian EFL male and female learners with the age range of 12 to 17. Using a questionnaire, the current study measured the relationship between social support and orientations of L2 learning, namely travel, job, school achievement, personal knowledge, and friendship. Results revealed that social support, mostly from parents and teachers, was correlated with orientations of L2 learning. Finally, it is suggested that parents and L2 teachers exercise their support in L2 learning in a way that it will motivate L2 learners and will help them learn English more efficiently.

**Key Words:** LLOs, Social Support, motivation