IN THE NAME OF GOD

Shahrood University of Technology

English Language Department

M.A. Thesis in Language Teaching

PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

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October 2021

شماره: ۱۴۰۲/۱۴/د
تاریخ: ۱۴۰۲/۸/۲۹

باسمه‌تعالی

دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود
مدیریت تحصیلات تکمیلی

فرم شماره (۳) صورتجلسه نهایی دفاع از پایان نامه دوره کارشناسی ارشد

با نام و یاد خداوند متعال، ارزیابی جلسه دفاع از پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد خانم فاطمه مولوی با شماره دانشجویی ۹۷۱۵۷۶۴ رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی تحت عنوان Exploring the admission criteria for English language and literature program که در تاریخ ۱۴۰۲/۷/۲۸ با حضور هیأت محترم داوران در دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود برگزار گردید به شرح ذیل اعلام می گردد:

الف) درجه عالی: نمره ۲۰-۱۹ ☐ ب) درجه خیلی خوب: نمره ۱۸/۹۹ – ۱۸ ☑
ج) درجه خوب: نمره۱۷/۹۹– ۱۶ ☐ د) درجه متوسط: نمره ۱۵/۹۹-۱۴ ☐
ه) کمتر از ۱۴ غیر قابل قبول و نیاز به دفاع مجدد دارد ☐
نوع تحقیق: **نظری** ☑ **عملی** ☐

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تاریخ و امضاء و مهر دانشکده:
گروه دروس عمومی

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound appreciation and sincere thanks go to many people who helped me throughout this research. First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to my advisor Dr. Ostovar. Namaghi for her valuable suggestions and guidelines. Without his kind support the completion of this thesis seemed far from possible. I would also like to express my gratefulness to all teachers and students who helped me during the data collection of the study. Last, but not least, I want to thank my parents by all means. The most powerful words are not proper means to express my deepest appreciation and love towards them.

DEDICATION

To my devoted parents, whose everlasting advice was always the light of my life and helpful in my whole education

تعهدنامه

اینجانب فاطمه مولوی دانشجوی دوره کارشناسی ارشد رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود نویسنده پایان نامه عوامل موفقیت تحصیلی در دوره کارشناسی زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی تحت راهنمایی دکتر سید علی استوار نامقی متعهد می‌شوم:

- تحقیقات در این پایان نامه توسط اینجانب انجام شده است و از صحت و اصالت برخوردار است.
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- کلیه حقوق معنوی این اثر متعلق به دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود است و مقالات مستخرج با نام «دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود» و یا «Shahrood University of Technology» به چاپ خواهد رسید.
- حقوق معنوی تمام افرادی که در به دست آمدن نتایج اصلی رساله تأثیرگذار بوده‌اند در مقالات مستخرج شده از رساله رعایت می‌گردد.
- در کلیه مراحل انجام این رساله، در مواردی که از موجود زنده (یا بافت‌های آنها) استفاده شده است ضوابط و اصول اخلاقی رعایت شده است.
- در کلیه مراحل انجام این رساله، در مواردی که به حوزه اطلاعات شخصی افراد دسترسی یافته یا استفاده شده است اصل رازداری، ضوابط و اصول اخلاق انسانی رعایت شده است.

تاریخ

امضای دانشجو

مالکیت نتایج و حق نشر

- کلیه حقوق معنوی این اثر و محصولات آن (مقالات مستخرج، کتاب، برنامه‌های رایانه‌ای، نرم‌افزارها و تجهیزات ساخته شده است) متعلق به دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود است. این مطلب باید به نحو مقتضی در تولیدات علمی مربوطه ذکر شود.
- استفاده از اطلاعات و نتایج موجود در این رساله بدون ذکر مرجع مجاز نمی‌باشد.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at probing the academic achievement of the students of English literature at BA level based on their performance in language related courses in high school and their GPA, as well. In order to do so, the researcher conducted a small scale survey of 46 students, who were selected based on convenient sampling method, and collected their scores language courses and their high school GPA. In addition, their average scores at BA level were operationally defined as the indices of their academic achievement in undergraduate English literature program. Using SPSS, the data went through correlational analysis. The results showed a week correlation between performance in English literature program and high school GPA. The same was true for Arabic and Farsi scores.

Keywords: Arabic, English, English Literature, Farsi, GPA, Graduate LevelAcademic Achievement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

Chapter I
Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The educational system is an essential element in the formation and development of cultural, economic and social factors of any society and education plays an important role in training specialized people and their employment in a community (Dashti, 2000). One of the factors that has been addressed in many studies of academic achievement is the student performance before entering a university, and more specifically, previous academic performance, whose critical role has been confirmed by many previous studies (Arulampalam et al., 2004; Fallahzadeh & Rezaei, 2007; Frischenschlager et al., 2005; Rudbari & Shariati, 2002; Sandow et al., 2002).

Entering university is an important change in the life of every teenager. Because many student activities during high school are aimed at being accepted to university, and secondary education is one of the links in the educational chain that links general education to higher education, the failure at this stage directly affects the performance and quality of the next circle. The national entrance examination of universities and higher education centers, as an important and decisive event in life, can have major psychosocial effects on individuals (Arab, 1994) so that it determines and directs their future social status and career path.

Some researchers believe that the current entrance exam only pays attention to the slight expansion of higher education and therefore harms the educational system, because students enter the university as people who are tired, reluctant and have little interest in scientific issues in higher education centers and universities (Ebrahimi, 1998). A look at the current developments in the higher education system suggests that higher education should maintain and promote quality improvement while paying attention to the crisis of

quantitative increase and financial constraints. Various instances of evidence also indicate that this system can fulfill its duties and goals if it is in a good condition in terms of educational quality (Kobrai & Rudbari, 2006).

The relationship between high school academic performance and university entrance exams has also been emphasized in numerous foreign and domestic studies. Many researchers emphasize the importance of the role of GPA in students 'academic achievement and believe that GPA is a predictor of students' success in university and the score of the entrance exam does not play a significant role in this prediction (Hosseini, 2017, 1993). According to these studies, a multiple choice test is not a good way to correctly identify talents (Montazeri, 1984), but previous academic achievement and prior knowledge of the students have significant relationships with students' academic performance (Byrne, 2008) and high school performance is the best predictor of success in a university course (Saei, 1997; Soleimani, 1996).

Even some researches after educational planning have stated that academic performance is more affected by pre-university performance (Elhampoor et al., 2007). Fallahzadeh (2007) referring to the positive correlation between the GPA and the results of the exams at different levels in the general medical education course, introduced the GPA as a suitable criterion for selecting a medical student. Imam Qureshi et al. (2010) examining the factors affecting the educational status of students in this regard found that the GPA of the diploma plays a very important role in the academic achievement of students. Mashhad Sari et al. (2017) in a study showed that GPA is an important factor in the success rate of students in the student period, and this can indicate that students with higher GPA have more perseverance and put more effort into studying in universities. Because of better

understanding of high school courses, they also have a better situation during their studies in higher education.

This finding has been confirmed by other studies in other countries than Iran. Duff (2006) found in a study that previous academic achievement (assessment of high school outcomes) significantly predicted the performance of the first semester of college. In this regard, Allen (2008) found that high school readiness is related to academic achievement and continuity at university, so that academic achievement in high school can predict 28 percent of the variance of first year university grades. Garavalia and Gerdler (2009) also showed that factors before entering the university, especially previous academic performance, have a positive effect on academic achievement in the university. In another study, Kim et al. (2010) showed that high school achievement is a significant indicator for predicting academic success.

On the other hand, some researchers believe that the entrance exam rank is a better predictor of students' success in the university and GPA has little to do with university grades. Raufi et al. (2010) conducted a study on the success of college students and found that entrance exam scores were associated with continued academic achievement. As expected, students with higher entrance exam scores are also more likely to score higher. In several studies conducted in various fields and levels of study, the entrance exam rank (Tamnaeifar et al., 2007) and the university admission quota (Adalatkhah et al., 2007; Fallahzadeh & Rezaei, 2007) are introduced as the effective and influential factors in academic achievement in the university.

In a study by Kobriaei and Rudbari (2007), they showed that the entrance exam quota, gender and marriage are effective in improving students'

GPA. In this regard, some studies have shown that university entrance score is a good predictor for certain disciplines such as engineering, but in disciplines such as sociology and psychology, non-cognitive factors such as individual and family variables should be considered. Some others paid more attention to cognitive variables (Ardila, 2001). However, many other studies emphasize the entry scores of specific courses and do not consider the overall score of the entrance exam to be related to students 'academic grades, but believe that the entrance scores of courses such as essay writing, foreign languages, mathematics, and individual interviews have a significant relationship with students' academic achievement.

Some studies also emphasize the effect of both factors. In a study conducted by Bayat (1976) on students at Shiraz University, he found that university entrance exam scores and high school sixth grade were equally effective in predicting students' academic achievement and a significant difference between high school grades and university entrance exam scores. Bayat (1976) found that university entrance exam scores and high school sixth grade were equally effective in predicting students' academic achievement and a significant difference between high school grades and university entrance exam scores. Another study showed that unsuccessful students of Payame Noor University are students who have a weaker self-concept compared to successful students, their entrance exam score and diploma grade point average are lower and there is a history of renewal and rejection in their education (Hormozi, 1994).

Despite the fact that there have been a number of research attempts in Iran to explore the predicting values of the students' gained score on entrance exam and GPA in terms of their performance at universities, it has to be argued

that there is little, if any, recent research on the issue and there has not been even one study focusing on the high school performance and GPA of the English students in higher education Iran in terms of the extent to which their performance in high school and on the entrance exam can predict their performance in university courses.

Conducting such a study is crucial due to the fact that the awareness of the students, academic counselors, teachers and educational administrators about the extent to which high school students' performance in language courses can predict their performance in English departments, better counselling and academic guidance would be provided to the learners and university applicants.

The same is true when the students enter universities. That is, the results of such studies will be beneficial for English departments due to the fact that they could identify the learners would be vulnerable to academic failure despite their interest in majoring in English based on their performance in language-related courses in high schools, their GPA or their university entrance exam scores.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Due to the differences of opinion of researchers in the field of student selection methods in universities and the importance of higher education in society, more research is needed to achieve more stable findings. Therefore, the present study was conducted to fill this research gap and its purpose is to compare the see the role of GPA and other high school scores of language related courses in predicting students' academic achievement. In addition, the present study, regardless of age and the turnover of students was going to show the predictive

values of high school performance in language related courses in the students' achievement in higher education in terms of the overall students' performance in these courses. However, considering the administrative aspects of this study, the research was delimited to the undergraduate students of English literature. This was also done because there has not been any research on the students of English departments in Iran so far. The results of this pioneering study may be beneficial to the administrators and also may pave the way for further research on English students' achievements in English departments.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between high school performance and the undergraduate achievement in English departments. The minor purposes of the study were to explore the extent to which the language courses the undergraduate students pass in high schools contribute to their achievement in their undergraduate study in English departments.

1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

According to the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1- What is the correlation between high school average score and university average score of the students of English language and literature?

2- What is the correlation between English language course average scores and university average score of the students of English language and literature?

3- What is the correlation between high school average scores of three languages (Farsi, Arabic and English) and university average score of the

students of English language and literature?

Based on the abovementioned research questions, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1- There is a significant positive correlation between high school average score and university average score of the students of English language and literature.

2- There is a significant positive correlation between English language course average scores and university average score of the students of English language and literature.

3- There is a significant positive correlation between high school average scores of three languages (Farsi, Arabic and English) and university average score of the students of English language and literature.

1.5. Operational Definition of the Variables

Student Academic Success:

Student academic success serves as the criterion variable in this study. Unfortunately, "There is no one agreed upon measure of college success" (Camara & Echternacht, 2000, p.3). However, several measures have been used in a multitude of studies including: course grades (Atkinson, 2004, 2005; Atkinson & Geiser, 2009; Geiser & Santelices, 2007), class rank, and retention (Thomas & Collier, 2002) are a few. Freshman GPA's (Camara & Echternacht, 2000) and other individual student indicators such as motivation, academic discipline, emotional control, commitment (Kaufman, et al., 2007) and other noncognitive variables have all been used in determining academic success of college students.

The plethora of information regarding academic success in college suggests that while test scores provide some basis for predicting success, other cognitive and non-cognitive variables as well as other skills may also play an important role in determining whether or not students will achieve academic success in college (Sparkman et al., 2012). This study defines academic success as college grade point average.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

GPA refers to average of the scores a student earns in one course over a period of time or an average score a student gains during an academic period. Currently, GPA is the most valuable tool in assessing academic success simply because it is a repeated measure of students' performance over a period of time. The same can be said for the GPA during the college years. Geiser (2007) suggests that: cumulative college GPA, like high school GPA is based on repeated sampling of student performance over time in a variety of academic settings, GPA in the fourth year of college tends to be less variable and possibly a more reliable indicator of students' true ability and achievement than their first year grades (p.17). Therefore, like high school GPA, it is viewed as a reliable predictor of performance, and is used as a measure of academic success and is used as the criterion variables for in this study.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research exists on several levels. First, the results of this study may be used as a means to forecast factors that most effectively predict entering freshman student academic success in the field of English literature. After a half a century of research on tools used to determine the

academic success of students entering college or university, much of the research still does not go outside predicting success in college beyond the freshman year. This study begins to fill in this gap in the literature. The knowledge gained from the study could lead to ongoing efforts of theorists and practitioners who seek to uncover methods for identifying early academic interventions in order to maximize students' potential for learning. For colleges and universities, university administrators, and curriculum designers, the results would hopefully influence admissions decisions, remedial programs, and the core curriculum.

The results provides better data regarding predictions of performance, persistence, and completion, which go beyond current data. Finally, the findings from this study are critical and highly beneficial for students. Command of language courses equips students with the intellectual tools needed to make sense of complexities facing them during their immersion into university life. Thus, students are able to identify, predict, respond and adapt to non-linear change opportunities and challenges arming them as they progress toward their degrees and pursue their careers.

1.7. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited in terms of the number of the participants. The researcher did not have access to the students in several English departments; thus, the sample was limited to one English department only. Furthermore, the data was limited to the students' self-reports and the researcher had little access to their grades in high school and higher education.

In terms of delimitation, this study was delimited to the students' academic success in English literature subject and other subjects offered in

English departments were not considered. Moreover, this study was delimited to the undergraduate students' success and other higher education levels were not considered.

Chapter II
Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

The literature on undergraduate academic success in

colleges and universities is not abundant and clear. This study explored the relationship between high school performance, especially in language courses, and higher education academic success in the field of English literature. Among the undergraduates. To this end, the researcher relied on the body of available literature in the field of education, in general, to provide a background and theoretical support for the findings of this study.

2.2. Methods for Determining Undergraduate Academic Success

2.2.1. Grade Point Average

The most widely accepted and most accurate tool colleges and universities have to determine whether or not students will be successful in college is the high school grade point average (Geiser, 2007; Geiser & Studley, 2004; Sparkman et al., 2012; Sternberg, 2010). As this tool is readily available and easily accessible, the high school grade point average (HSGPA) provides institutions with a student's strengths and weaknesses over the course of four years. HSGPA is not only useful for providing insight on students' various academic inclinations but it also allows institutions the ability to appropriately place students according to their academic achievement level. The best predictor of future performance is past performance (Geiser, 2007; Sternberg, 2010).

The same is true for academics. The best predictor of college academic success is high school academic success (Sternberg, 2010). HSGPA signifies that students have either gained mastery over a subject or not. Students ability to learn and ultimately understand what is being taught, navigate through

course work, examinations, teaching styles and subject matter are all reflected within the HSGPA (Sternberg, 2010).

Therefore, it is much more than just a number or an accumulation of numbers and scores. The HSGPA is actually a detailed picture of how a student has progressed over a given period of time and either excelled or not and in which course work they have done it in. It speaks volumes about not just academic achievement, but students' motivation and willingness to actively participate in their academic success. Though most of the research clearly supports HSGPA as the single best predictor of college success (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009), it too has its share of criticism. A major area of concern with HSGPA is that there is no standard national curriculum. Thus, there is no national standard by which HSGPA is calculated or grades assigned.

It is up to each school or district to determine which grades carry what weight as well as which courses will be considered as counting towards HSGPA credits and which will not. Their respective schools may not count the same courses towards receiving the same credits in their HSGPA. The question then becomes; is the A that one student earns as valuable as the A another student earns? This point seems subjective in nature (Sternberg, 2010). Though concern over "grade inflation" is a reasonable argument, there is at this juncture, no national movement toward the creation of a national standard or curriculum for K-12 education. Thus, these concerns are not likely to be addressed. Though there are issues regarding HSGPA and its make up, it still remains the most valuable tool admissions counselors have in determining the future academic success potential candidates. It affords colleges and universities a glimpse of what type of work a potential candidate is able to achieve; much the same way that university GPA (UGPA) is valuable in

looking at future semesters and degree completion, past performance is a great predictor of future performance.

2.2.2. Standardized Testing

Rudolph and Thelin (1962) suggest that in an effort to achieve a "comprehensive system" (p. 432) of American higher education, the use of standardized testing was implemented throughout many public and private institutions. The growth of both public and private institutions led to the standardization practices of finances, salaries, the severing of denominational ties as well as admissions practices (Rudolph & Thelin, 1990).

Though the overall use and worthiness of these tests are debated in colleges and homes across America, they remain widely used and popular and, to some, for good reason. Standardized tests provide insight into college success in that students will have to remember and maintain large amounts of information. Information that will need to be analyzed, interpreted, understood and implemented. These tests provide a common metric across different disciplines and maintain the appearance of being objective in nature (Sternberg, 2010). Additionally, and perhaps one of the most advantageous reasons institutions use these tests is because the entirety of the expense lies with the student.

High school grades and class rank remain the most effective determinants of academic success. Given the research findings, many colleges and universities are beginning to embrace alternative measures and tools for admission. The findings suggest that potential college candidates may have much more to offer based on both academic and non-academic skills than can be revealed in a four-hour, single-day, standardized testing situation. The claim

for standardized testing rests on its ability to provide insight into students' cognitive and intellectual capabilities. However, for many students, this picture may be incomplete. There is a vast amount of literature on what will make students successful in college; such as motivation, (Kaufman et al., 2007; Sternberg, 2010), persistence (DeBerard et al., 2004), self-regulation (Schapiro & Livingston, 2000), and thinking disposition (Stupinsky, et al., 2008). This stream of research suggests alternative methods of evaluation are providing colleges and universities with a more complete picture of students and their actual capabilities (Tough, 2012).

2.2.3. Alternative Measures

Alternative measures such as emotional intelligence and control (Robbins et al., 2006) as well as other cognitive variables such as self-regulation, self - awareness and critical thinking skills, add additional and often valuable information on what may lead students to achieve success (DeBerard et al., 2004). Additionally, non-academic factors, such as academic "student readiness" (Kaufman et al., 2007; Robbins et al., 2006) self- confidence, academic goals and social support (Lotkowski et al., 2004) may also provide a model for success. Perhaps in the future these alternative methods will become more prominent in the admissions process, affording students the opportunity to display talents not measured on exams and in classrooms.

Though alternative measures for determining eventual college success are becoming more acceptable they are by no means the norm. Sternberg (2010) suggests that colleges and universities can do better in terms of not just college admissions, but in terms of instruction and assessment as well. Sternberg (2010), argues that "if we think about students' abilities in a broader way than we have-in particular, by valuing, assessing and teaching for

analytical, creative, practical and wisdom-based skills as well as memory-related ones" (p. 5) we may be better off.

2.3. Cognition and Student Academic Success

The most widely used skill in academics, at any age, is the ability to think. Though there is a need now more than ever before for active and creative thought processes', thinking outside of the box has rarely been encouraged outside of fine arts courses and classrooms. As we move into the 21st century, the call for creative and out of the box thinking, when it comes to college admissions is getting louder (Atkinson, 2005; Kaufman et al., 2007; Lotkowski et al., 2004; Robbins et al., 2006; Sternberg, 2010). Perhaps in the future these alternative methods will provide a model of success. Students engage in thought processes in many different ways and have varied modes of thinking skills. Some students' thinking skills may be higher order than others. Thus, their responses to issues both in and outside of the classroom can be as varied as their thought patterns (Lynch & Wolcott, 2001).

Regrettably, there is a significant amount of data within the literature that suggests that many college graduates have a limited ability to handle situations which may have no single best answer (Lynch & Wolcott, 2001) or situations, which may have multiple answers and perhaps are more about process than precision. Researchers have identified a number of components essential for thinking skills; not just for academic success, but, success as an individual and contributing member of society. Beyer (2008) suggests that in

order to be an effective thinker that creates and achieves success, academically and otherwise, one must be able to improve effective thinking skills by developing: …skills such as decision making, problem solving, drawing

conclusions, interpreting written texts, analyzing multiple sources, and identifying cause-and-effect relationships as well as various critical-thinking skills, such as judging the strength of an argument, distinguishing factual claims from value judgments, detecting bias, identifying points of view, and determining the credibility of sources (p. 224).

2.4. Predictors of Academic Success

2.4.1. Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)

Though few studies have looked beyond first year or freshman grade point average as a means of college success, many researchers agree that academic success is defined mostly in terms of college grade point average (Shivpuri, et al., 2006). This outcome variable was chosen for the same reason that colleges and universities use HSGPA in determining whether or not a student will be successful, during the admissions process. The best measure for future performance is past and repeated performance (Geiser, 2007; Lotkowski et al., 2004; Sternberg, 2010). In a study by Geiser (2007), in looking at the validity of high school grades in predicting college success, he found that CGPA tended to increase during the first four years of college and decrease when a student moves into the fifth year. Additionally, DeBerard et al. (2004) found that "a multiple linear regression equation predicting CGPA using 10 predictors accounted for 56% of the variance in academic achievement" (p. 72). during the admissions process. The best measure for future performance is past and repeated performance (Geiser, 2007; Lotkowski et al., 2004; Sternberg, 2010). In a study by Geiser (2007), in looking at the validity of highschool grades in predicting college success, he found that CGPA tended to increase during the first four years of college and decrease when a student moves into the fifth year. Additionally, DeBerard et al. (2004, p. 72) found that

"a multiple linear regression equation predicting CGPA using 10 predictors accounted for 56% of the variance in academic achievement".

2.4.2. Time to Degree and Degree Earned

"Freshman class attrition rates are typically greater than any other academic year and are commonly as high as 20-30%" (DeBerard et al., 2004, p.66). For many universities, the retention of students is paramount. Whether or not a student returns to college semester after semester not only indicates their motivation, persistence and indicates eventual academic success, but also implies the success of the institution as well. Attrition during the freshman year not only cost students a great deal, but for the university the cost can be in the thousands. These dollars reflect not only the loss of tuition fees but more importantly the loss of potential alumni dollars as well (DeBerard et al., 2004). It is estimated that "40% of college students will leave higher education without earning a degree" (DeBerard et al., 2004, p. 66). Time to degree is used as a criterion variable based on its importance to not only CGPA but also its necessity in obtaining a degree, which is achieved through academic success.

"While high school GPA and standardized test scores have been shown to be the best predictors of first year college success, recent research demonstrates that HSGPA is unrelated to the prediction of college graduation" (Schuh, 1999, p. 642). A majority of the empirical research on college success using HSGPA and standardized test scores rarely goes beyond predicting freshman year success. Few studies establish a link between HSGPA and standardized tests and their ability to predict college graduation (Hall et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2006). As a criterion measure, time to degree is used to determine if more academically successful students take less time to earn their

undergraduate college degrees than their less academically successful counterparts.

2.4.3. Contextual Variables

There is an abundance of literature based on the relationship between academic success and various contextual factors. For this study the contextual variables included age, gender, ethnicity, parental education and academic discipline. The majority of these questions, with the exception of academic discipline, which was retrieved through archival data sources, were placed at the end of the STQ (as the last seven questions on the document) and were obtained at the same time the survey was disseminated. These contextual variables will be used as moderators of academic success between predictor variables and academic success outcome measures (CGPA, time to degree and degree earned).

2.4.4. Age

The literature on age and academic achievement is based on traditional aged college students versus non-traditional aged college students. The term "traditional age" refers to individuals who are under the age of 21 and have moved directly from high school into higher education. The "non-traditional" student is described as over the age of 28, who may or may not be attending college or university for the first time, is usually employed (at least part-time), married and sometimes even has children (Bye, et al., 2007). Today, with changes in the economy and workforce requirements, more and more colleges and universities are educating older or non-traditional students. One of the major differences between traditional aged students and non-traditional aged students is the context of learning itself. For many non-traditional students, the art of learning takes a more real life application process. Older, non-traditional

students are more likely to incorporate new learning with various life roles in a more multidimensional way compared to that of their younger counter parts (Donaldson & Graham, 1999). Research on these two groups suggest that while older students may not be engaged in campus life and activities, their academic engagement and achievement is equal to and often greater than that of traditional aged students (Bye et al., 2007). Perhaps this is true due in part to life experience. Donaldson and Graham (1999) suggest that:

> " …adults integrate new learning by making connections to existing knowledge schema. They reflect on rich, personal experiences and draw on their previous knowledge and wisdom to make meaning of new material and to understand it in a way that transforms their own previous understandings" (p. 27).

In terms of academic success as it has been defined for the purposes of this study, older students did as well or better than younger students during their academic careers based on their grade point average as well as aptitude or content based examinations (Donaldson & Graham, 1999). Though their reasons for attending university may be different, both traditional and non-traditional students seem to achieve academic success comparatively speaking.

2.4.5. Gender

Female students' academic success is overtaking that of their male counterparts and has continued to do so by a significant margin since the early 1980's (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). However, males do outperform females in some disciplines, including engineering and economics. This division can be seen within assessment tools used during K-12 and in preparation for college.

However, the research seems to suggest that women of every ethnicity are outperforming men and achieving greater levels of academic success including degree attainment within higher education (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2006).

2.4.6. Ethnicity

In looking at academic achievement and ethnicity, some of the research seems to indicate that different tools predict the academic success of different races in different ways. For example, in a study done by Bryson, et al. (2002) research determined that the best predictors of first year college success for white students was the use of both HSGPA and standardized test scores. While for African-American students these predictors were not viable for determining academic success. HSGPA and class rank were the best predictors of first year college success of Non-White students. While for African-American students, HSGPA alone was the single best predictor of freshman year success. Another study by Kirby, et al. (2007) confirmed the results of the 2002 study by Bryson et al., for Asian Americans, a combination of mathematic standardized test scores and non-cognitive variables such as volunteerism were the best predicators of academic success (Ting, 2000).

These studies give weight and voice to what researchers, professors, administrators and even students within higher education have been saying for over a decade, standardized tests though they give some sort of snapshot of abilities should not be relied upon as a central tool that institutions use when selecting candidates during the admissions process (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009; Bryson et al., 2002; DeBerard et al., 2004; Hall et al., 2008; Kirby et al., 2007; Lotkowski et al., 2004; Stupinsky et al., 2007; Ting, 2000). These studies and others, suggest that the use of standardized testing as a major part of or

required component of an admissions packet may be restricting a wide group of potentially successful candidates from earning the degrees.

2.4.7. Parental Education

The research on the level of parental education and its effects on their children's educational attainment are seemingly endless. As one might expect, parental educational level is both positively and significantly related to the academic success of their children (Dubow et al., 2009; Leppel et al., 2001; Naumann et al., 2003; Spera et al., 2009). Indeed, "one of the most consistent predictors of children's level of educational attainment is their parents' level of educational attainment" (Spera et al., 2009, p. 1141). This finding is not only true within the United States, but these positive correlations have been found in almost every other country.

In a study on the long –term effects of parental education on children's educational and occupational achievement, Dubow et al. (2009) found that the effects of parental education has an indirect effect on both their children's educational achievements as well as their eventual occupational achievements: A child exposed to parents who model achievement-oriented behavior (e.g., obtaining advanced degrees; reading frequently; encouraging a strong work ethic) and provide achievement-oriented opportunities…should develop the guiding belief that achievement is to be valued, pursued, and anticipated. This belief should then in turn promote successful outcomes. (Dubow et al., 2009, p. 3)

Buchmann and DiPrete (2006) suggest that parental educational background has a significant effect on women attending institutions of higher education. Research on "status attainment" establishes a link between parental

education and family resources to “an individual’s educational attainment (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006, p. 517).

4.5. Academic Achievement in English Language Learning

In the literature, academic achievement has been defined either narrowly, as performance on standardized achievement tests, or more broadly, as measures of general academic outcomes including grade point average (GPA), academic persistence, and school-related attitudes (Yoko, 2007). Discussion of English language leearners’ (ELLs') academic achievement inevitably involves language proficiency. Some researchers consider English proficiency (both literacy and oral language skills) as an academic outcome in and of its own right, along with content area achievement (Yoko, 2007).

Others speak of the unitary construct termed academic English or academic achievement in the second language (Yoko, 2007). All of these views are reflected in the NCLB legislation's stated purposes for ELLs' education. These purposes include (a) attaining English proficiency, (b) developing "high levels of academic attainment in English," and (c) meeting states' academic content standards. For feasibility reasons, the present study adopts the narrow definition of academic achievement as performance on standardized content-area achievement tests. English proficiency, along with LLS and L2 motivation, is considered as a mediating variable between ELLs' background characteristics and performance on standardized tests.

4.5.1. Current Trends in ELLs' Academic Achievement

Despite some improvements over the last three decades, the ELL achievement gap remains a reality (Fry, 2008; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Thomas and Collier (2002) estimated that the typical achievement gap between ELLs and native

English speakers was about 25 NCEs (normal curve equivalents). Analyses of the U.S. Department of Education databases for the 2004-2005 school year in five states with largest ELL populations indicated that ELLs are less likely to score at proficiency levels in mathematics and reading (Fry, 2008).

The comparison of mathematics achievement in 2004-2005 school year in five states with large ELL populations, for example, yielded a native-to-ELL gap that ranged from 18% (Texas) to 35% (Arizona) for elementary grades and form 42% (California) to 53% (Texas) in middle grades (Fry, 2008). Another trend noted by Fry is that ELL populations tend to attend schools with lower overall standardized test scores. These schools typically have "a set of characteristics generally associated with poor standardized test performance-such as high student-teacher ratios, high student enrollments, and high levels of students living in or near poverty" (p. i).

However, language minority status implies neither an achievement gap nor similarity across individuals within a particular cultural group (Kao & Thompson, 2003). For instance, 1990 SAT data in reading showed the following average scores across ethnolinguistic groups: 442 for Whites, 410 for Asian Americans, 388 for Native Americans, 380 for Mexican Americans, and 352 for Blacks. The same year's average results in mathematics, however, showed a lead by Asian Americans (528), followed by Whites (491), Native Americans (437), Mexican Americans (429), and Blacks (385). One study (Smirez-Orozc et al., 2008) found that the general pattern of decline in GPA over time observed in a sample of new immigrants from Central America, China, Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic was not uniform either across countries of origin or across individuals. About 30% of students showed a stable GPA and about 11 % increased their GPA by about .74 points by the

fifth year ofthe study.

Carhill et al. (2008) documented that Chinese students, the highest performers in their sample, tended to live in households with higher levels of education and to enroll into schools with higher SES and achievement characteristics. These findings suggest the importance of considering the influences of both school characteristics and individual student and family background characteristics on ELLs' academic achievement.

2.5.2. Theoretical Perspective Explaining the Achievement Gap

In a review of recent academic achievement literature, Kao and Thompson (2003) categorized current theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain achievement gaps into two broad categories: cultural orientations theories and structural position theories. Cultural orientations theories consider ethnic groups' differences in orientation toward schooling as the main cause that promotes or hinders achievement. For example, the academic successes of Asian students have been attributed to this group's cultural beliefs. Studies have documented that students from South Asian cultures prioritize achievement, believe in education, feel an obligation to succeed, and believe that academic success is their responsibility to their families.

By contrast, structural position theories attribute differences in academic performance to ethnolinguistic groups' economic positions and experiences in society, Namely, these theories consider parental socioeconomic status as the main explanation of academic achievement differences. The underlying assumption is that parents' economic and social standing is associated with educational experiences for children (e.g., parental involvement, parental social network, and schooling opportunities, including the quality of teachers and

peers). However, the authors noted that while SES was "probably the best predictor of eventual academic outcomes among youth," some unexplained variance in achievement persisted, suggesting the existence of other "unmeasured differences" (p. 431).

Although providing valuable insights into plausible causes of achievement differences among diverse cultural groups, these theories, mainly derived from sociology and anthropology, do not consider the influence of the most salient, namely, linguistic factors on academic achievement of ELLs. A recent trend in educational and applied linguistics literature (Dutro & Morgan, 2001; Schleppegrell, 2004; Zwiers, 2007), in educational assessment literature (Abedi, 2004; Abedi & Lord, 2001; Solorzano, 2008), and in teacher education literature (Fillmore & Snow, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008, Lucas, Villegas, et al, 2008) indicates increased attention given to linguistic factors in explaining and confronting the ELL academic achievement gap. since Cummins' (1981) influential conceptualization of language proficiency, many researchers and educators have recognized the challenges inherent in academic language development (Fillmore & Snow, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004) and came to recognize that language proficiency was "closely intertwined with academic content" (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994, p. 41).

Thomas and Collier (2002), for example, estimated that the number of years that it takes ELLs to acquire enough English to do grade-level work in academic content areas is equivalent to 1 to 2 years3l of interrupted schooling. The authors noted that ELLs "have to make more gains than the average native-English speaker makes every year for several years in a row to eventually catch up to grade level" (p. 8). Chamot and O'Malley (1994) pointed out that in order to explain how a word problem is solved or justify the

conclusions derived from a science experience, a student needs to draw on substantial discipline-specific linguistic resources.

In a similar vein, Schleppegrell (2004) observed that the mastery of academic language included (a) the explicit knowledge of a large variety of linguistic features of school texts and tasks, and (b) the ability to make appropriate linguistic choices to realize conceptual knowledge and relationships among concepts within the discipline. Academic language, also referred to as content area literacy by educational researchers, came to be understood as an entity embodying "the cognitive, linguistic, cultural, and discipline specific features of discourse found in school and beyond" (Zwiers, 2006, p. 318).

Thus, applied linguists and educators speak of the many school-based disciplinary language registers (e.g., the language of science, the language of history, or the language ofmathematics). All of these registers need to be mastered by students in order to be successful in school (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004). In fact, many authors (Abedi, 2004; Solorzano, 2008; Zwiers, 2006) noted difficulties in distinguishing language proficiency and academic competence. For example, in comparing performance differences in reading, mathematics calculation, and mathematics analytical in third, sixth, and eighth graders, Abedi (2004) found that: (a) the ELL/non-ELL gap was smaller on tasks that had lower language demands (the average effect sizes were .213 for reading, .160 for analytical, and .083 for calculation); and (b) the gap increased as the grade level increased. The author attributed the latter finding to higher language demands in higher grade tests. In another study examining linguistic factors implicated in schooling, Abedi and Lord (2001) found that linguistic modification of test items from the National Assessment

of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessment (e.g., shortening nominal phrases and substituting passive voice and low frequency vocabulary) resulted in a slight but significant improvement in performance in eighth grade ELLs.

In his literature review, Solorzano (2008) reported on a study documenting significantly higher performance on native language standardized tests versus comparable English tests both in limited and fluent English proficient elementary ELL students. The intricacies of the interplay among English language proficiency, native language proficiency, and academic achievement have been long recognized. In synthesizing findings from their systematic review of over 200 articles and reports on educational outcomes of ELLs, Genesee et al. (2005) concluded that bilingual proficiency and biliteracy have a positive relationship with academic achievement in both Englishand native languages. The authors noted that positive correlations between L 1 and L2 reading, L 1 reading and L 1 mathematics, and L2 reading and L2 mathematics reported in the research suggest "complex but supportive interdependencies in the language, literacy, and academic development" of ELLs (p. 376).

Mahon (2006) found that about 50% of the variance in English reading and writing scores was accounted for by elementary students' (N = 127) reading and writing scores in Ll. A linear combination of English proficiency and Spanish academic achievement accounted for about 73% of the variance in ELLs performance on English standardized tests. Reading and writing in L 1 and L2 were positively and significantly correlated (r = .73 for reading; r = .76 for writing).

The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006) concluded that L 1 oral and literacy skills were related to the development of English oral skills and literacy. Evidence suggests that ELLs may transfer their linguistic knowledge (e.g., speech discrimination, vocabulary, or reading strategies) from native to English language. The authors noted that "students who are literate in their first language are likely to be advantaged in the acquisition of English literacy" (p. 5).

In a meta-analysis of 17 experimental studies comparing elementary bilingual and English-only reading programs, Slavin and Cheung (2005) concluded in favor of bilingual programs based on a positive weighted effect size (.33,$p < .05$), suggesting the importance of Ll support in promoting academic achievement among ELLs. Research literature on ELLs' academic achievement primarily consists of program evaluation, program description, and program comparison studies (Genesee et al., 2005). Given that a program effectiveness comparison is beyond the scope of this study, only quantitative studies that explored the relationships among student- and school-level variables related to ELLs' academic achievement (beyond instructional program contexts) are included in the following review of empirical research.

2.5.3. Academic Achievement Research

Collier and Thomas (1989) reported on two longitudinal academic achievement studies conducted in a relatively affluent suburban area on the East coast. The studies examined patterns of academic performance over a period of six years in a group of 2,0 14 "advantaged" ELLs enrolled in public schools (Grades 4, 6, 8, and 11). The researchers defined "advantaged" students as those with previous schooling in the home country. Only students at or above grade-level

norms in their Ll schooling were selected. Also, although classified as low SES by the United States standards, a large percent of students' families were from middle or upper class backgrounds in their home countries. Students in the study originated from 75 different first language backgrounds (65% Asian, 20% Hispanic, 15% Other) and were serviced by ESL programs for a maximum of three years. Considering their advantaged sample, the researchers expected to estimate the minimum time required for ELLs to reach grade-level norms as measured by Science Research Associates (SRA) standardized tests in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and sciences. After two years of schooling in the United States, students at all grade levels achieved and surpassed the 50th percentile on the SRA mathematics test.

The researchers attributed this finding to transfer of knowledge from Lito L2. With other content areas, results were not so uniform, and age on arrival (AOA) appeared to have a differentiating effect on student outcomes. Researchers estimated that 12- to 16- year-old arrivals were the lowest achieving group in the study. They attributed this finding to increasing complexity on tests in upper grades and to a shorter length of residence (LOR). Students whose AOA was 8 to 11 made the fastest progress and reached the 50th percentile on all measures within a period from two (mathematics) to five (reading) years. By comparison, students with AOA of 4 to 7 demonstrated much slower progress for their LOR. The latter group did not achieve the 50th percentile within the six years of data collection.

Researchers projected that these students would need 7 to 10 years to achieve on-grade norms. Having at least two years of native language schooling appeared to be a significant variable influencing students' academic achievement in English. Researchers concluded that content areas achievement

in L2 is a developmental process requiring significant number of years even for the most advantaged students: "How many years depends on the student's level of cognitive maturity in first language and subject mastery in first language schooling" (p. 35).

Thomas and Collier (1997) summarized findings from a.study of five moderate to large urban and suburban school districts across the United States implementing different types of bilingual and ESL instructional programs. In a series of quantitative case studies33 of participating school districts, the researchers studied long-term student achievement as measured by performance on national standardized tests over a period of 4-10 years. To allow for comparison across districts' achievement tests, researchers used NCEs (i.e., equal-interval percentiles). Students' reaching the 50th NCE percentile on standardized tests served as a criterion of successful schooling in L2. From 1982 to 1996, researchers collected 700,000 student records. The student sample included 42,317 students from 150 language backgrounds who attended the studied schools for a minimum of four years. Spanish speakers represented 63% of the sample.

They estimated that, to reach the 50th percentile on the U.S. standardized tests, English learners required different amounts of time, depending on their background characteristics and the types of programs they attended in the United States. Bilingually schooled students, who performed on grade level in their first languages, required 4 to 7 years; "advantaged" students (i.e., those with 2 to 5 years of on-grade level home country schooling) required 5 to 7 years; and "less advantaged" students schooled in English-only programs required 7 to 10 years. Also, researchers found that, despite some initial short-term differences, in the long run, speakers of different first

languages progressed at the same rate, given similar levels of cognitive and academic development in L 1.

Based on findings confirmed in all five school districts, researchers concluded that the amount of schooling in the students' LIs (whether in the home country or in the United States), LOR, SES, and the type of instructional program were all strong predictors of students' long-term academic achievement. The amount of LI support explained the most variance in student achievement. Findings from two sites (where data were available) indicated that the amount of parents' formal schooling was a better predictor of academic success than SES, as measured by free and reduced-price lunch. In their National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students,

Thomas and Collier (2002) continued to examine patterns of ELLs' long-term academic achievement (over 4 to 12 years) in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science. This particular study was conducted in five school districts from 1996 to 2001 and included 210,054 student records. The study findings confirmed, to a large extent, results from an earlier study (Thomas & Collier, 1997) discussed in the previous paragraph. Socioeconomic status, the amount of L 1 schooling, program type, and number of years of program participation were strong predictors of students' long-term academic achievement.

They found that the shortest time to reaching grade-level achievement norms in L2 was four to seven years, given that students received grade level schooling through their two languages. ESL programs (typically offered for one to three years) closed about half of the total achievement gap. Students with no prior L 1 schooling never reached grade-level performance in L2.

Students whose parents waived language support services were the lowest achievers and had a higher chance of dropping out of school. Although SES was found to be a significant predictor of academic achievement (e.g., SES accounted for 3% to 12% of the variance in student achievement in reading), in some instances, effects of SES were moderated by other variables. In one research site, where about 50% of language minority students in the sample were United States-born, proficiency in English upon entry had stronger predictive power than SES. Moreover, years of Ll schooling (four years or more), either in the home country on in the United States, had more explanatory power than SES.

Yoko (2007) investigated the relationship among ELLs' background variables, school variables, and academic achievement using data from the Ohio Department of Education. Data were obtained for ELL students from 24 language backgrounds enrolled in 613 school districts in 4th grade (N = 2,544) and 6th grade (N = 1,985). Stateman dated standardized tests (Ohio Achievement Test and Ohio Proficiency Test) served as the measures of academic achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques, the author examined individual contributions (both direct and indirect) of student background variables and English proficiency (measured by ELDA34) to academic achievement.

Background variables included LOR (operationalized as years in the U.S. school systems), native language, gender, ethnicity (Hispanic/Non-Hispanic), SES, and migrant status. The final fourth- and sixth-grade SEM models explained 75.5% and 75.2% of variance in ELLs' academic achievement, respectively; gender and ethnicity did not correlate significantly with any other variable. Explained variance by academic content ranged from

58.8% (fourth-grade mathematics) to 90.3% (sixth-grade reading).

The total direct and indirect effect of English proficiency on academic achievement in both grade levels was .87. However, the selected predictors of English proficiency accounted for only a small portion of its variance: 14.1 % and 22.9% in fourth and sixth grades, respectively. The author concluded that there were some additional significant variables not included in the model. In the next step, the author used an HLM technique to examine two levels of academic achievement predictors: (a) student background variables (ethnicity, gender, SES, and ELL status); and (b) school quality indicators (campus mobility and campus poverty).

Results indicated that the proportion of variance in total student achievement accounted for by schools ranged from 15% (fourth grade) to 23% (sixth grade). The proportion of variance in achievement accounted for by student-level variables ranged from 7% (reading and math in fourth grade) to 13% (reading in sixth grade). Campus poverty had the most influence on the academic achievement of individual students. The performance of ELLs attending higher poverty schools was lower than that of students schooled in lower poverty schools.

The overall study results indicated that, among the examined variables, school poverty, English proficiency, and student SES had the most explanatory power. A large portion of the variance in English proficiency, the strongest student-level predictor of academic achievement, remained unexplained. The author concluded that additional variables need to be examined in order to better explain student-level effects and suggested further investigating L2 motivation and attitudes, prior schooling in the home country, and family

background.

Suarez-Orozc, et al. (2008) examined predictors of academic achievement in a sample of309 ELLs (mean age of about 16) from Chinese, Central American, Dominican, Haitian and Mexican backgrounds using the fifth-year data of the LISA35 study. A standardized achievement test in reading and mathematics, the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement-R (WJTA-R), and GPA served as measures of academic outcomes. Researchers examined ELLs' academic outcomes from two distinct perspectives: (a) student-centered (i.e., considering student-level predictors only); and (b) school-centered (i.e., considering school-level predictors only). Predictors included in the student-centered model were five: English proficiency (measured by BVAT), behavioral engagement (self-reported participation and effort to perform academic tasks), father's employment, maternal educational level, and two-parent household. Multiple regression analyses testing student-centered model revealed that (a) English proficiency and behavioral engagement were significant predictors of GP A (R2 = .29), and (b) English proficiency was the only significant predictor of standardized scores (R2= .74). (With English proficiency removed, maternal educational level and behavioral engagement became significant and together accounted for about 10% of the variance in standardized scores.)

Multiple regression analysis testing the school-centered model revealed that all four school-quality variables examined-ELA proficiency rate (the percent of students who reached proficiency on the state exam in English Language Arts in each school), school poverty (percentage of low income students), racial representation (percentage of diverse students), and the average daily attendance rate were significant predictors of standardized

scores. The four-predictor model accounted for: (a) about 32% of the variance in standardized scores, and (b) about 15% of the variance in GP A. Among school-level variables tested, ELA proficiency rate was the best predictor of ELLs' academic outcomes.

2.6. Summary

This section reviewed studies examining patterns and predictors of academic achievement. The review identified English proficiency as one of the key student-level predictors of academic outcomes. Student-level variables that have been linked to academic achievement include the amount of formal schooling in Ll, native language literacy, family SES, and parental educational level.

At the school level, attending schools with higher SES and achievement profiles appeared to have positive impact on academic outcomes. These findings suggest the importance of considering the influences of both school and individual and family background characteristics on academic achievement. A review of the related studies conducted recently, no Iranian study was conducted on the issue and there is a gap in the studies which have been conducted in Iran, especially on English students. In this study, Iranian students' performance in high school language-related courses and their GPA are taken into statistical analyses in order to better ascertain the relative contributions of language learning in high school to student academic outcomes in English departments.

Chapter III
Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is going to present the key issues related to the methodological aspect of his study. To this end, the participants and sampling procedure, the design of the study and the data collection procedure are described. In addition, the data analysis procedure is discussed in the final section.

3.2. Design of the Study

The present study is descriptive-correlational. In this study, the students' performance on language related courses in high school were correlated with their performance in undergraduate courses. These variables were all measured on interval scale ranging from 0 to 20.

3.3. Participants

The statistical population of this study was all undergraduate students of English Literature who entered the university in 2018. The sample of this research was selected by convenient sampling method. After reviewing the academic records of these students in the English department 46 students who had all the necessary information for this research (such as diploma grade point average, their scores for Arabic, English and Farsi courses in high schools) were selected to conduct the study. They included both male (n = 23) and female (n = 23) students and came from different SES background and ethnic groups. In addition, their L1 background were different.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

In order to collect the data, the participants were first informed about the purpose of the study. Then those who agreed to participate in this study were asked to provide the researcher their background information in terms of their final scores in Arabic, English and Persian courses they had in high school as

well as their GPA. In order to achieve these data, they had to consult their academic reports from high school or the researcher had to ask the university to provide their score lists from high school if possible. In the same vein, their average point scores obtained in English department were collected, too. After pooling the data, those participants whose scores on all five variables, high school Arabic, high school English, High school Persian, GPA, and university average score were provided participated in this study. Accordingly, 46 students took part in this study.

3.5. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, the obtained data were analyzed using SPSS software. For this purpose, the relationship between variables was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficients and in order to predict academic achievement in the university. In addition, t-tests were run in order to make comparison of the students' performance based on the collected scores.

Chapter IV

Results

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is going to provide the results of the statistical analyses done on the collected data, high school Arabic, high school English, High school Persian, GPA, and university average scores. In order to achieve the goal of study, that is, exploration of the link between high school performance in language related courses and GPA, and the university score average resembling the performance in English literature program, the researcher conducted both correlation and regression analysis. The results are presented in two independent sections. The final section of the chapter is dedicated to the results of regression analysis.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Results of Correlation Analysis

This section is mainly dedicated to the explanation of the results of the study based on the correlation and regression analysis done to answer the research question of the study. The high school performance of the participants in terms of their scores in Arabic, English and Farsi courses as well as their gender were the independent variables of this study and their performance in higher education as measured by their average score in English literature was the dependent variable of the study. The following table shows the descriptive statistics for these variables.

Table 4.1. *Descriptive Statistics for GPA and University Average*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
GPA	17.9130	.78390	46
University	15.3478	1.36979	46

As it is shown in Table 4.1, the scores collected from 46 students of English literature were taken into account in this study. In addition, the observed mean scores of the variables are reported. As it can be seen in Table 4.1, the observed mean score of their high school average (GPA) (M= 17.91, SD= .78) is higher than the university average (M= 15.34, SD= 1.36).

Table 4.2. *Correlations for GPA and University Average*

	r	*n*	*P*
GPA and University	.112	46	.460

As it is shown in Table 4.2, it can be concluded that the average scores obtained in language courses in high school are not correlated with university average (r= 11, p = .46 > .05). This indicated that the null hypothesis stating that "there is not a correlation between GPA and university average" was confirmed. In other words, GPA cannot predict the university average.

Table 4.3. *Descriptive Statistics for University Average and English 1 to 3*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
University	15.3478	1.36979	46
English 1	17.5870	1.43877	46
English 2	19.8696	.80578	46
English 3	18.6304	1.76835	46

As it is shown in Table 4.3, the scores collected from 46 students of English literature were taken into account in this study. In addition, the observed mean scores of the variables are reported. As it can be seen in Table 4.3, the observed mean score of their high school English 1 (M= 18.58, SD= 1.43), English 2

(M= 18.86, SD= .80), and English 3 (M= 18.63, SD= 1.76) are higher than the university average (M= 15.34, SD= 1.36).

Table 4.4. *Correlations between University Average and English Sores at High School*

	r	*n*	*p*
University and English1	.129	46	.346
University and English 2	.352	46	.031
University and English 3	.307	46	.011

As it is shown in Table 4.4, it can be concluded that the scores obtained in English 1 are not correlated with university average (r= .12, p = .34 > .05). This indicated that the null hypothesis stating that "there is not a correlation between English 1 scores and university average" was confirmed. In other words, English 1 scores cannot predict the university average. Additionally, it was shown that the scores obtained in English 2 are weakly correlated with university average (r= .35, p = .03 < .05). This indicated that the null hypothesis stating that "there is not a correlation between English 2 scores and university average" was rejected. Furthermore, it was shown that the scores obtained in English 3 are weakly correlated with university average (r= .30, p = .01 < .05). This indicated that the null hypothesis stating that "there is not a correlation between English 3 scores and university average" was rejected. In other words, English 2 and English 3 scores can predict the university average.

Table 4.5. *Descriptive Statistics for University Average and English Average*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
University	15.3478	1.36979	46
Three Year Average	18.1957	.74891	46

As it is shown in Table 4.5, the scores collected from 46 students of English literature were taken into account in this study. In addition, the observed mean scores of the variables are reported. As it can be seen in Table 4.5, the observed mean score of their high school English in three years (M= 18.19, SD= 1.43), is higher than the university average (M= 15.34, SD= 1.36).

Table 4.6. *Correlations for University Average and English Average*

	r	*n*	*p*
Three Year Average in English and University	.341	46	.018

As it is shown in Table 4.6, it can be concluded that the average scores obtained in language courses in three years in high school are weakly correlated with university average (r= 34, p = .01 > .05). This indicated that the null hypothesis stating that "there is not a correlation between English scores in three years and university average" was rejected. In other words, average English scores in three years can predict the university average.

Table 4.7. *Descriptive Statistics for the Average of Three Languages and University Average*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
Three Languages	18.3930	1.14390	46
University	15.3478	1.36979	46

As it is shown in Table 4.7, the scores collected from 46 students of English literature were taken into account in this study. In addition, the observed mean scores of the variables are reported. As it can be seen in Table 4.7, the observed mean score of their average of three languages (English, Arabic and Farsi) (M= 18.39, SD= 1.14) is higher than the university average (M= 15.34, SD= 1.36).

Table 4.8. *Correlations for the Average of Three Languages and University Average*

	r	*n*	*p*
Three Languages and University	.32	46	.026

As it is shown in Table 4.8, it can be concluded that the average scores obtained in the three language courses in high school are correlated with university average (r= .32, p = .02 < .05). This indicated that the null hypothesis stating that "there is not a correlation between the average of the three languages and university average" was rejected. In other words, the average scores of the three languages can weakly predict the university average.

In order to trace the difference between the male and female students in terms of their gender a series of independent samples t-test were conducted. The results are shown below.

Table 4.9. *Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples t-test for Male and Female Students' Average Scores*

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*	*t*	*df*	*p*
GPA	Female	18.21	.78	23	.86	44	.87
	Male	17.02	1.27	23			
University	Female	15.90	1.27	23	1.38	44	.17
	Male	14.82	1.02	23			
English 1	Female	18.92	1.72	23	.92	44	.67
	Male	18.30	1.23	23			
English 2	Female	19.13	.90	23	.18	44	.85
	Male	18.64	.68	23			
English 3	Female	18.90	1.90	23	.94	44	.35
	Male	18.68	1.50	23			
Three Year Average in English	Female	18.57	.46	23	.63	44	.52
	Male	17.98	.90	23			
Average of Three Languages	Female	18.80	1.38	23	1.55	44	.12
	Male	17.90	.987	23			

As it is shown in Table 4.9, the scores collected from 23 male and 23 female students of English literature were taken into account in this study As it can be seen in Table 4.9, with regard to the students' GPA, there was no significant

difference between the female (M= 18.21, SD= .78) and male (M= 17.02, SD= 1.27) students (t= .16, p= .87). According to the students' university average, there was no significant difference between the female (M= 15.90, SD= 1.27) and male (M= 14.82, SD= 1.02) students (t= 1.38, p= .17). With respect to the students' English 1 scores, there was no significant difference between the female (M= 18.92, SD= 1.72) and male (M= 18.30, SD= 1.23) students (t= .42, p= .67). With regard to the students' English 2 scores, there was no significant difference between the female (M= 19.13, SD= .90) and male (M= 18.64, SD= .68) students (t= .18, p= .85). In accordance with the students' English 3, there was no significant difference between the female (M= 18.90, SD= 1.90) and male (M= 18.68, SD= 1.50) students (t= .94, p= .35). With respect to the students' three years English average, there was no significant difference between the female (M= 18.57, SD= .46) and male (M= 17.98, SD= .90) students (t= .63, p= .52). According to the students' average of three languages, there was no significant difference between the female (M= 18.80, SD= 1.38) and male (M= 17.90, SD= .98) students (t= 1.55, p= .12).

Based on what was observed in Table 4.9, it was concluded that there was no significant difference between the students' performance in high school and university in terms of their gender. In other words, it was concluded that gender was not a significant factor in determining their performance in language courses in their high school and university. That is, both male and female students who decide on continuing their education in English language and literature have well-constructed background in language courses in high schools and decide to continue their education in English literature due to their abilities and perceived talent in language and literature.

Further analysis was also conducted by comparing the participants' performance in university and high school via comparing their university

average score with their GPA, and comparing their university average score and their scores in English 1, English 2, English 3, as well. Moreover, a comparison was made between their university average score and their three year English course average score. The results of paired samples t-test are shown below in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. *Paired Samples t-test for University Average and High School GPA and English Courses*

	t	*df*	*p*
GPA-University Average	7.34	45	.00
Three Year English- University Average	11.29	45	.00
English 1- University Average	12.46	45	.00
English 2- University Average	13.04	45	.00
English 3- University Average	12.80	45	.00

As shown in Table 4.10, the results of the paired samples t-test showed that there were significant differences between GPA and university average score of the participants ($t = 7.34$, $p = .00 < .05$). Moreover, there were significant differences between three year English average score and university average score of the participants ($t = 11.29$, $p = .00 < .05$). Also, there were significant differences between English 1 score and university average score of the participants ($t = 12.46$, $p = .00 < .05$). Additionally, there were significant differences between GPA and university average score of the participants ($t = 13.04$, $p = .00 < .05$). Furthermore, there were significant differences between GPA and university average score of the participants ($t = 12.80$, $p = .00 < .05$). With regard to the descriptive statistics reported in Table 4.1, Table 4.3, and 4.5, it can be concluded that the performance of the students significantly

decreased as they entered the university. That is, they underwent a sort of academic failure in university.

Chapter V
Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding points drawn from this research. In addition, the researcher highlights he pedagogical implications of the study for higher education organizations and the policy makers engaged with university student selection and admission. Additionally, a number of suggestions are made for those who are interested in pursuing this line of research in the future.

5.2. Discussion

In this study, the relationship between the GPA of the diploma and the mean scores of the language courses in high school have been investigated to determine which of the variables predicting the rank of the performance of the academic achievement of the students of English literature. Another question is whether it is possible to predict students' academic achievement based on the predictor variables of high school performance? The results of the present study show that there is a partial direct relationship between the language course point average and the final grade point average of the university and also between the high school final grade point average and the final grade point average in university. However, the interesting point was that the students' performance in English courses in high school is total agreement with one another and can best predict their performance in university as well. Almost in the same way, it has to be noted that the students' performance in Farsi course in high school is also a good predictor of their performance in BA level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that these two subjects are the important factors for explaining the possible achievements or failures of the students in English literature program at BA level.

This result is in line with the findings of several studies. In a study conducted by Montazeri (1984) on the success factors of the participants of the

national exam at the University of Tehran, studying mathematics and a person's educational background in high school were introduced as effective factors for admission to the entrance exam. Nesafat (1972) in a study on the university entrance exam found that there is usually a close coordination and relationship between the entrance exam scores and the secretary's exam. Soleimani (1996) by examining the relationship between personal and academic characteristics before entering the university with the entrance scores of the national entrance exam and personal characteristics while studying students of Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz showed that a significant relationship between the characteristics of education before entering There is a university (diploma grade point average) with their entrance scores (entrance exam rank).

Also, Saei (1996) by researching the effect of acquired factors on the educational success of individuals in the university entrance exam and within the university concluded that high school GPA has the greatest impact on the success of individuals in the national entrance examination. In the research of Asefzadeh and Atashnak (1998), entitled Assessing the correlation between the scores of the comprehensive basic sciences exam with internal exams and the field of study of medical students, it was found that there is a positive correlation between the written GPA of diplomas and the GPA of internal exams. Students' educational background in high school is directly related to their academic achievement. Kholdi (1998), based on his findings in the article Predicting the scores of the basic comprehensive exam using the educational background variables of control medical students, suggested that the diploma grade point average is a better criterion for determining the educational status of medical students in the early stages of education. In this study, the strongest correlation was observed between the diploma grade point

average and the total grade point average of the medical course.

5.3. Conclusion

In this research the predictive roles of diploma grade point average and language course average scores in academic achievement of the students of English literature were investigated. It was revealed that despite the partial correlations between these variables and academic achievement, they are not strong predictors of the higher education achievement. This is to some extent in contrast with the results of the other studies done in Iran on the students of the other departments than English. Fakharian et al. (2009) obtained the strongest correlation and highest predictive power between diploma grade point average and basic science course grade point average and stated that diploma grade point average is a sensitivity for predicting academic status. High and relatively acceptable positive and negative predictive value. The results of the research of Imam Qureshi et al. (2010), in examining the factors affecting the educational status of students, also showed that the diploma grade point average has a significant relationship with students' academic status in colleges, so high school grade point average has an important role in student achievement and It is better to consider the grade point average of the secretary in the student admission criteria.

Rahmani et al.'s study (2011) showed a direct relationship between the average of diploma grade point average and basic sciences grade point average. The higher the diploma grade point average, the higher the basic sciences grade point average. The result of the study of Adel Mashhad Sari et al. (2016), in the article examining the effect of diploma grade point average on the educational process of medical students in Babol, also showed that students' educational status during high school has an important role in their educational process, so

these researchers suggested that diploma grade point average To be considered as an influential factor in the selection of medical students. However, the results of this study could not confirm the same trend for the students of English literature.

The results of these studies are not consistent with the results of the present study. The findings of this study does not necessarily indicate that the higher the GPA of high school students, the more successful they will be in the national entrance examination for the foreign language studies and the more desirable grades they will obtain. Also, this study showed that there is not a significant difference between the GPA of the diploma and the higher education achievement of the students of English literature. This relationship is insignificant, that is, with the increase of the diploma grade point average, the entrance exam rank in the university will not necessary improve.

The results of the present study show that both the diploma grade point average and scores of language courses as well as gender cannot predict the rate of academic achievement of the students of English literature and guarantee their academic achievement in the university. It is not consistent with the results of other studies in foreign countries. Ardila (2001) examined the predictors of academic achievement at a Colombian university and concluded that entrance exam scores and cognitive factors are good predictors for engineering and technical disciplines. But in disciplines such as sociology and psychology, more attention should be paid to non-cognitive factors (such as individual and family variables) than cognitive variables. He justified these results by saying that the difficulty of engineering disciplines is far greater than that of sociology and psychology. Stater (2009) concluded in his research that the high school grade point average is a strong predictor of academic

achievement in college and has a positive relationship with the rate of completion and enrollment in subsequent courses. Wesley (2009) also concluded in his research that students who have higher scores in the entrance exam also get higher grades. Students who get a higher grade point average in high school also get a higher grade point average in college.

This finding also contradicts the findings of past studies in Iran, especially those done in twentieth century. In a study conducted by Bayat (1976) based on the information contained in the academic records of 100 students of Shiraz University, the score of the entrance exam to the university and the grade point average of high school were equally effective in predicting the variance of academic achievement and entrance exam score. However, in a study conducted by Hosseini (1990) on the subject of examining some characteristics of those admitted to Shiraz University in the academic year 2013-2014 and their relative comparison with those admitted in the academic year 1976-5, he concluded that high school grades compared to the total score Concours has more predictive power.

Examining the results of the above researches in line with the results of the present study shows the fact that it is possible to predict academic achievement in the university based on the diploma grade point average and the entrance exam rank. Based on some researches (Adel Mashhadsari et al., 2016; Asefzadeh & Atshanak, 1998; Bayat, 1976; Elhampour et al., 2006; Fakharian et al., 2009; Fallahzadeh , 2006; Hosseini, 1990, 1993; Imam Qureshi et al., 2010; Kholdi, 1998; Rahmani et al., 2011; Stater, 2009;), diploma grade point average predicts academic achievement in the university, but according to the present study, it is not a significant predictor of academic achievement of the students of English literature in the university.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that generally, the high school performance of the students of English literature cannot be considered a valuable predictor of their success in higher education. This may have a number of implications. First and foremost, the academic counsellors do not have to rely on the students GPA or language course scores when guiding the students with regard to continuing their education in English literature in higher education. In addition, the findings of the study have some implications for English departments. Based on the results, the department members should not judge the future performance of the students of English literature and their potentials based on their GPA or the scores they obtained in high school.

5.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Study

The present study has several practical implications for higher education leaders and administrators. Perhaps the most important implication is for selection and admission administrators. These individuals should know that language related course and GPA make a positive but a small difference for students of English literature and should not be considered as main predictors. These courses are helping students progress and complete their intended program of study in English departments.

This study also has implications for a broader audience. Findings contribute to the growing body of literature that confirm student success is not limited to their performance in language related courses and GPA. Therefore, higher education institutes should consider student success in terms of other factors such as their cognitive capacity, critical skills, among others. Higher education leaders and administrators should consider implementing policies and practices that centers admission on not only high school performance but the necessary cognitive skills and strategy use of the students.

Parjares (2006) encourages educators to offer academic experiences that incorporate skill development, peer mentoring, self-reflection, short-term goals, and frequent feedback as specific strategies to boost self-efficacy. It is believed that the existence of these factors in higher education can affect students' capabilities in higher education.

5.5. Suggestions for further Research

This study was not without limitations. The most considerable limitation of the study was the number of the participants. This study was mainly based on the GPA and the high school scores of the 46 students of English literature. More comprehensive studies are needed to include a larger body of the students from different departments from all over the country. In addition, this study did not consider the entrance exam scores of the participants as the predictor of their performance in higher education.

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چکیده

این مطالعه با هدف بررسی پیشرفت تحصیلی دانشجویان رشته ادبیات انگلیسی در مقطع کارشناسی بر اساس عملکرد آنها در دروس مرتبط با زبان در دبیرستان و همچنین معدل آنها انجام شد. برای انجام این کار، محقق یک نظرسنجی در مقیاس کوچک از ۴۶ دانشجو که بر اساس روش نمونه گیری در دسترس انتخاب شدند، انجام داد و نمرات آنها را در دروس عربی، انگلیسی و فارسی و همچنین معدل دبیرستان جمع آوری کرد. علاوه بر این، میانگین نمرات آنها در دوره کارشناسی به صورت عملیاتی به عنوان شاخص های پیشرفت تحصیلی آنها در برنامه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی در مقطع کارشناسی تعریف شد. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها از همبستگی پیرسون استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد که نمرات دانشجویان در درس زبان انگلیسی با عملکرد آنها در رشته ادبیات انگلیسی و معدل همبستگی معنادار اما ضعیفی دارد. در نمرات عربی و فارسی هم نتیجه همینطور بود.

کلیدواژه‌ها: عربی، انگلیسی، ادبیات انگلیسی، فارسی، معدل مقطع کارشناسی ارشد، پیشرفت تحصیلی

گروه زبان انگلیسی
پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد آموزش زبان

عوامل موفقیت تحصیلی در دوره کارشناسی زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی

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مهر ۱۴۰۰