

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ATTRIBUTION FOR FAILURE OF ENGLISH MAJORS STUDENTS VERSUS THAT OF THEIR INSTRUCTORS

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ABSTRACT

The current research is a comparative study of the attribution of English majors students versus that of their instructors. The aim of this study was to explore the causes of attribution for students' failure pinpointed by students of English translation, English teaching, and English literature as well as their instructors. This study was conducted to indicate why some students of English majors could not perform adequately and efficiently. By these findings, instructors should try to enhance the quality of their pedagogy. The researcher investigated the attribution of 300 students of English related majors in five branches of Islamic Azad University in Iran and their difference among them and instructors. The students were asked to determine their attribution by a questionnaire. Thirty (English Foreign Language) EFL teachers were also asked what they attributed their students' failure to. The result of the questionnaire indicated that students mainly attributed their failure to external factors while their instructors attributed their students' failure to internal factors. Many significant differences were found between the relation of students' attribution in English related majors and their instructors. The findings of this study aid the heads of departments to compare the learners' opinions of studying English translation, literature, teaching and the instructors regarding their attribution towards language pedagogy. They should recognize the people who are responsible for students' failure in the process of learning or even the reasons which contribute to their failure to communicative well in English.

KEYWORDS: Attribution, students' failure, English-related major students, EFL instructors

INTRODUCTION

During the history of language teaching, teachers and ESL scholars have chosen appropriate teaching methods which can be applied to all the situations, but unfortunately, they have failed to accomplish this goal. In recent years a number of methods have emerged such as Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Total Physical Response, and Communicative Language Teaching. Each of them has either merits or demerits, but each method was practical in a particular time. They came into existence because of the needs of their time. Each was developed because it was considered more effective in comparison with the previous one (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In language teaching, teaching effectively has been a major important concern among language teachers and scholars.

A lot of studies have been done to explore the components of effective teaching, which has resulted in the shift from teaching to learning and teachers to learners. Therefore, it has been

important to examine learners' causes of failure or success in foreign language learning (Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011).

Psychological research into attribution began with the work of Fritz Heider during the early years of the 20th century. In his 1920's dissertation, Heider addressed a fundamental problem of phenomenology; why do perceivers attribute the properties of an object they sense, such as its color, texture and so on, to the object itself when those properties exist only in their minds? Heider's answer was to consider the object being perceived and physical media, a process he called "attribution". Perceivers faced with sensory data thus they see the perceptual object as "out there", because they attribute the sensory data to their underlying causes in the world (Forsterling, 2001, p. 23).

Heider (1958) subsequently extended his ideas to the question of how people perceive each other, and in particular how they account for each other's behavior, person perception. Motives played an important role in Heider's model: "motives, intention, and sentiment, the core processes which manifest themselves in overt behavior". Heider distinguished between personal causality such as offering someone a drink and impersonal causality such as sneezing, or leaves falling (Forsterling, 2001, p. 4).

According to Heider (1958), the factors which people used to attribute the results of their behavior fall into two categories. One is dispositional factors, the other one is situational factors. Dispositional factors are internal factors, for example, people's efforts in doing, their ability to do, their interest to do, their attitude towards what they do, and their characteristics in personality. Situational factors are external, for example, the difficulty of the task, the rewards or punishments for the task, luck. Heider holds the belief that it is how people perceive events rather than the events themselves that influences their behavior (Williams & Burden, 1999).

Heider's attribution theory is the starting point in development of the theory in the field of psychology. Williams and Burden (1997) proposed attribution theory as an area that could be explored to reach a better understanding of individuals. It relates to motivation in that the attribution of success and failure can influence people's motivation to tackle future tasks (Jarvis, 2005). For example, the extent to which a person attributes their failure to can be due to lack of ability or luck to which people tend to hang on their perceived success and failures.

Weiner (1974) classified these attributions in three casual dimensions: locus of control, stability, and control ability. In the dimension of locus, an outcome can be described as either internal or external; in the dimension of stability, the outcome is either stable or unstable (whether the causes change over time or not); and in the dimension of control, an outcome is either controllable or uncontrollable. Weiner (1986) further postulated that people attribute their failures to a combination of the six dimensions mentioned above. Each of these casual dimensions influences individuals' expectancies for success, and has important effective consequences.

But attributions which are perceived reasons for failure resulting from self-questioning such as 'why did I get a poor result', have received surprisingly little attention in EFL research. Psychologists suggest that attribution is how students learn about themselves and impresses order on vague situation (Graham, 1994).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of causality and the analysis of casual explanation have a long tradition in philosophy and in psychology. Forsterling (2001, p. 6) wrote that “attribution theory starting about two thousand years ago with Aristotle’s differentiation of various types or classes of causes”. About two hundred years ago, the foundations for current psychological models of perceived causality had been laid by philosophers Hume (1975), and Mill (1973).

Conception of causality also play a central role in different areas of psychology, and they have been introduced independently by various authors to different fields of psychology such as perception (Michotte, 1946) motivation (Rotter, 1954), emotion (Schachter & Singer, 1962) and developmental psychology (Schultz & Kesstenbaum, 1985). However, they have been most explicitly dealt with by Heider (1958), who is considered the founder of attribution theory (Forsterling, 2001)

Heider (1958) published his influential monograph, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relation*. However, this work did not arise interest in the topic of causal attribution. Later on, Jones and Davis (1965) worked on Heider’s monograph and focused on the condition under which people observe an agent’s behavior and either do not attribute correspondent disposition to the agent. Their versions of attribution theory lead to the emergence of hundreds of social psychological research articles on perceived causality in the 1970s and 1980s. In those years, attribution theory was the prevalent theoretical framework of social psychology, and the theory was also used in other applied areas of psychology (Forsterling, 2001). Kelley (1967) believed in his model which has three elements a person, stimulus, and circumstances and derives the condition under which people make attributions to the person or the stimulus.

Attribution approaches are still of increasing importance in the field of applied psychology. All in all, Heider (1958) was the first who propose a psychological theory of attribution, but Weiner and his colleagues developed a theoretical framework that has become a major research paradigm of social psychology. He discussed what he called “naïve” or “common sense” psychology (ibid. p. 110).

Attributions Theories

An attribution theory has a long history and Heider is a father of this theory. A number of scholars made contribution to its development. The purpose of this section is to explain the relevant theories in the field of attribution.

Heider’s Analysis of Naïve Psychology

The attribution thinking for psychology traces its origin to the work of Heider; *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relationships* (Heider, 1958) has had a considerable effect on the appearance of field of attribution theory. Questions of attribution, however, were just one aspect of the naïve, or common sense psychology in which Heider was interested. He believed that common sense was important for two main reasons. First, whether true or not, common sense beliefs were assumed to guide behavior; as Heider put it: “If a person believes that the lines in his palm foretell his future, this belief must be taken into account in explaining certain of his expectations and actions”(1958, p. 5). Second, common sense psychology was considered a “valuable resource” (p. 95).

There are four central ideas in Heider’s naïve psychology. First, Heider proposed that causal analysis was in some respects similar to the perceptual process, as conceived in Brunswik’s

(1952) 'lens model'. The object 'out there' objective properties constitute the distal stimulus, but what is psychologically important is the proximal stimulus, the way the object appears to the perceiver. For social perception, Heider suggested that the important distal stimuli were dispositional properties linked to the proximal act; these often referred to psychological states. He argued, further, that these invariant dispositional properties were needed to explain the behavior of others and render the perceiver's world stable, predictable and controllable (Hewstone, 1989).

This activity, fundamental to the naïve analysis of action, introduces Heider second major contribution, the crucial distinction between personal and situational causes. Heider illustrated this distinction in an often quoted passage:

In common-sense psychology (as in scientific psychology) the result of an action is felt to depend on two sets of conditions, namely, factors within the person and factors within the environment. Naïve psychology also has different terms to express the contributions of these factors. Consider the example person rowing a boat across a lake. The following is but a sample of expressions used to refer to factors that are significant to the action outcome. We say, trying to row the boat across the lake', 'He has the ability to row the boat across the lake', 'He can row the boat across the lake', 'He wants to row the boat across the lake', 'It is difficult to row the boat across the lake', 'Today is good opportunity for him to row the boat across the lake'. These varying descriptive statements have reference to personal factors on the one hand and to environmental factors on the other. (Heider, 1958, p. 82)

This distinction opened the way for Weiner's (1986) extensive research on attributions for success and failure. Heider also addressed again the perceivers' tendency to ignore partly or completely, situational factors when explaining behavior. As Heider put it, "behavior in particular has such salient properties and it tends to engulf the total field" (1958, p. 54).

The third contribution can be seen as refinement of the personal-situational dichotomy. Heider suggested that personal dispositions were more readily inferred for intentional than unintentional actions. He put forward three criteria for making inferences about intentionality: equifinality (whether action is goal directed or means centered), local causality (whether people are seen as agents of an action or passive recipients of environmental forces) and exertion (people are presumed to try harder to achieve intended effects or goals). These criteria have, however, had little impact on subsequent research, although the attribution of intentions is central to Jones and Davis's (1965) theory (Heider, 1958).

"Heider's fourth central idea was his answer to the question of why we sometimes attribute effects to the person, at other times to the object, and at still other times to mediating conditions" (1958, p. 68). He identified three relevant pieces of attributional information "factors within the perceiver" "properties of the object" and 'mediating conditions'- and proposed J. S. Mill's method of difference (which he called the co-variation principle) as a canon for making an attribution in such circumstances (Hewstone, 1989, p. 15).

However, Heider (1958) assumed that the intuitive or naïve psychologist uses attribution theory which had been a traditional philosophic interest in the study of causal reasoning and even prior to Heider a number of empirical studies were concerned with perceived causality

(e.g., Michotte, 1946). Heider's contribution was relatively neglected prior to the influential attribution analyses offered by Jones and Davis (1965), Kelley (1967), and (Weiner, 2011).

Kelley's Theory

Heider's ideas about the determinants of casual attributions did not receive much attention, however, this situation changed. Kelley (1967) picked up Heider's description of Mill's method of difference. Kelley assumes that the responsibility of the "naïve psychologist" for events or effects to be explained in the social domain can be classified into three classes; causes that describe stable properties of the person, causes that refer to stable characteristics of the entity, and to the time or circumstances (Kelley, 1967, p. 194). Kelley did not continue to label this principle (method of difference) but introduced, instead, the term "co variation principle".

Kelley proposed that individuals observe three types of covariant data when assessing the origin of behavioral events. They are consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness. Consensus refers to whether others behave identically in the given situation or not. "Consistency refers to whether the individuals behave identically from case to case in a given situation. Distinctiveness also refers to whether the individuals behave identically when the given situation is changed:" (ibid., p. 184). In a later publication (Kelley, 1973, p. 108), changed somewhat and stated that "an effect is attributed to the cause within which it co varies overtime".

To decide whether the entity is casually responsible for the effect, one has to assess whether the effect co varies with the entity. In Heider terms this would be whether there is variation of the effect across objects. According to co variation principle, co variation with the entity is given when the effect is present (Forsterling, 2001).

Jones and Davis' Theory

As Heider reported, the criterion of intentionality is critical to personal causality. Attribution theory in the framework of Jones and Davis was known as a correspondent inference theory. "The direct lineage from Heider to Correspondent Inferences Theory was made explicit in Jones statement that the theory has attempted to formalize same of Heider's (1958) attributional ideas" (1985, p. 90).

By proposing correspondent inferences theory, Jones and Davis have conducted a more detailed analysis of the personal attributive factors. "This theory states that people make inferences about a person when his or her actions are freely chosen, are unexpected, and result in a small number of desirable effects" (Forsterling, 2001, p. 27).

The aim of Correspondent Inference Theory is "to construct a theory which systematically accounts for perceiver's inferences about what an actor was trying to achieve by a particular action" (Jones & Davis, 1965, p. 222).

To summarize, Jones and Davis were guided by Heider's analysis of the determinants of attributions to intentions. "They specify in their theory of correspondent inferences that non-common effects and desirability of the effects determine the degree to which a behavior is seen as corresponding to underlying intentions and dispositions" (Forserling, 2001, p. 40).

Weiner's Theory

The study of attribution was initially associated with Heider's theory. Later Weiner (1958) of the university of California at Los Angeles developed a more comprehensive and extensive model of attribution. The Weiner's theory is to study how people understand and explain the behavior of themselves or other casual theory of motivation. Weiner focused his attribution theory on achievement (Weiner, 1974). He identified ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck as the most important factors which affect attributions for achievement.

Weiner (1974) assumed a three dimensional classifications and explained the attribution of success and failure. According to Weiner attributions are classified along three casual dimensions: locus of causality, stability, and controllability. Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals consider the causes of events to be internal or external to them (Rotter, 1966). Luck and task difficulty are considered as external attributions; on the other hand, ability and effort are seen as internal attributions.

Stability refers to the degree to which the causes of events are definite/indefinite and stable/unstable through the passing of time. For example, while effort and luck are supposed to be unstable factors, ability and task difficulty are regarded as stable attributions (Weiner, 2006). Controllability refers to the extent to which people have control over a cause. For instance, unlike ability, luck and task difficulty which are uncontrollable factors, effort is thought of as a controllable attribution (ibid.).

Attribution in the Second Language Learning

Attribution theories have attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of psychology since its birth. However, its significance was not recognized until the 20th century in the field of foreign language teaching. Attribution theory is also important in the area of language learning, because as Dornyei (2005) stated failure is common in learning language and learners do not usually achieve the desired level of proficiency.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With regard to purposes proposed for the current study, the following research questions can be stated:

- 1) What are the major causes of attribution for failure of foreign language learning among Iranian students of English translation, literature, and teaching?
- 2) What are the major causes of attribution for failure of foreign language learning among Iranian students of English translation, literature, and teaching in Iranian instructors' view who are teaching the courses of English related majors?
- 3) Are there any statistically significant differences among Iranian students of English translation, literature, and teaching in English learning attribution for failure?
- 4) Are there any statistically significant differences between Iranian students of English translation, literature, and teaching and their language instructors in English learning attribution for failure?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Students and the teachers at some branches of Islamic Azad University in Iran constituted the target population of this present study. The teachers were teaching in Islamic Azad Universi-

ties and had different years of experience. Roughly 300 students and 30 instructors constituted the subject of the current research. They were students of undergraduate level. Students were studying English literature, English teaching and English Translation and were mainly female. The researcher restricted the sample to junior and senior, because their ideas toward learning were nearly more sophisticated than sophomore and freshman. The researcher didn't use any specific test for sampling. The students were kindly asked to fill out the attribution questionnaire. Then the researcher selected 30 instructors teaching English at some branches of Islamic Azad University who had different years of experience. They were asked to complete teachers' attribution questionnaire. Both of these groups were selected from Garmsar, Lahijan, Rasht, Roudehen and South Tehran branches of Islamic Azad University.

Procedure

In order to identify the attribution of English related major students and instructors' failure in this study, necessary arrangement were made by the heads of language department, so that the data collection would work better. The researcher went to Garmsar, Lahijan, Rasht, Roudehen, and South of Tehran branches of Islamic Azad University. When the permission for the research was obtained, the researcher arranged everything with the heads of department. After making sure that the samples were working in the right path the researcher gave students English learning attribution questionnaire to realize whether their ideas about items differ or relate to each other. Then the researcher selected 30 instructors and asked them to answer teachers' attribution questionnaire to figure out their attitudes towards items and whether their opinions differ or relate to that of the students. The students' and teachers' English learning attribution questionnaire were administrated at various branches of Islamic Azad University that were mentioned before. The researcher gathered some useful information on how students of English related majors and instructors expressed their attribution in English related majors. After administering the questionnaires to both instructors and students the researcher did the statistical analyses based on the answers. The result of the analyses of students' and instructors' questionnaire would clearly represent whether teachers and students expressed the same attitudes towards attribution. It should be born in mind that they would be notified on how to respond to the questionnaire by the researcher.

Instrumentation

In order to collect the data of the present study two questionnaires were employed. The first one was constructed to determine the attribution of students' failure in English related majors and the other one concerned attribution of teachers' failure. The meaning of some items in both questionnaires is alike. The two questionnaires have been used extensively in attribution studies and have proved to be valid and reliable. Both of the questionnaires are based on Likert scale. The students' questionnaire was designed based on attribution theory. Some of the items are related to internal factors and the others are about external factors. The Student's Questionnaire (see APPENDIX A) consisted of two parts: Part One is about personal information and Part Two is about student's attribution of failure in their English learning. There are fourteen items in Part Two, and all of them are the attributive factors which may result in failure in their English learning. Item one is about English learning interest; item two is about help of teacher; items three and four are about efforts; item five and thirteen are about testing strategies; item six is about teacher's teaching method; Item seven is about difficulty; item eight is about language aptitude; item nine is about environment; item ten is about test; item eleven is about learning method; item twelve is about luck; item fourteen is about learning method. Teachers' Questionnaire consisted of two parts (see APPENDIX B): the first part is personal information and the second part is attribution of students' failure in English learning.

There are fourteen items in the second part. The factors tested in the items of questionnaire for teachers were the same as those of questionnaire for students.

The form of the both questionnaires was Likert Scale with the choices of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. We assumed interval scale and assigned 1 point for Strongly Disagrees, 2 points for Disagree, 3 points for Agree, and 4 points for Strongly Agree. The reliability of both Student's and Teachers' Questionnaire were estimated in a pilot study by 35 subjects who had the same characteristics to the main participants of this study as 0.84 and 0.81 respectively through Cronbach's Alpha Formula. Their content validity also was approved by four experts in teaching English as a foreign language.

Design

As the nature of this study demands, it employed Ex Post Facto design and was descriptive in methodology. The Ex Post Facto design was used because the researcher did not have any control over the selection and manipulation of the independent variable, and the distinction between independent and dependent variables was not well defined. Descriptive research is planned to demonstrate a situation as it naturally happens. It may be used to judge and to expand theories. A descriptive study is one in which information is gathered without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated). For the purpose of this study, descriptive studies were usually the best methods for collecting information that would describe the causes of attribution for failure and demonstrate the differences identified by students of English translation, English teaching, and English literature as well as their instructors. This research design led to explain and quantify an incident. The data collected were from quantitative kinds to describe and quantify.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Investigating Research Question Number 1

The first research question of this study was concerned with the causes of attribution for failure of foreign language learning among students of English translation, literature, and teaching. The major features of students' attribution for failure can be indicated by the top choices in their feedback. The present study described the major features by employing the top five choices, that is, the five top means. Table 1 below indicates the top five causes of attribution for failure in English learning among Iranian students of English translation, literature, and teaching.

Table 1: Major Features of Students' Attribution

Major	N	Item	Mean
Translation	1	4	3.34
	2	7	3.25
	3	9	3.21
	4	6	3.17
	5	5	3.11
Literature	1	9	2.96
	2	10	2.92
	3	11	2.88
	4	5	2.86
	5	4	2.83
Teaching	1	9	3.38
	2	10	3.20
	3	4	3.12
	4	6	3.11
	5	7	3.02

Table 2 indicates the closer examination of the top five factors. As indicated in Table 2, a majority of students attributed their failures in English learning mainly to environment, test system, efforts, task difficulty and teaching methods. Environment refers to external factors. Test system refers to external factors. Effort refers to internal factors. Task difficulty refers to external factors. Teaching methods refer to external factors. Putting together four out of top five factors refers to external factors which indicated that students mostly attributed their failures in English learning to external factors.

Table 2: Major Features of Students' Attribution for Failure

N	Attribution Type
1	Environment
2	Test system
3	Efforts
4	Task difficulty
5	Teaching methods

Investigating Research Question Number 2

The second research question of this study inquired what the causes of attribution for failure of foreign language learning according to the opinions of instructors teaching the courses of English related majors are. Table 3 and Table 4 below demonstrate the related descriptive statistics. Table 3 indicates the top five causes of instructors' attribution for failure in English learning.

Table 3: Major Features of Instructors' Attribution for Failure

N	Item	Mean
1	4	3.83
2	6	3.50
3	3	3.20
4	11	3.07
5	1	2.97

As indicated in Table 4 below, teachers attributed students' failure in English learning to factors mentioned in items number four, six, three, eleven, and one. Item four is about effort, item six is about teaching methods, items three is about efforts, item eleven is about learning method, and item one is about interest. Putting together, three out of five top factors are about internal factors that indicated teachers attribute their students' failures mainly in to internal factors. The internal causative factors are concerned with effort, interest.

Table 4: Major Features of Instructors' Attribution for Failure

N	Attribution for failure
1	Efforts
2	Teaching method
3	Efforts
4	Learning method
5	Interest

Investigating Research Question Number 3

The third research question of this study was made to find out any statistically significant differences among students of English translation, literature, and teaching in English learning attribution for failure. Table 5 below represents the related descriptive statistics.

Table 5: Statistical and Descriptive Data of English Related Majors Students' Attribution for Failure

Attribution	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	Min.	Max.
Environment	Translation	100	3.210	1.3431	.1343	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.961	1.2827	.1778	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.364	1.3955	.1147	1.00	5.00
	Total	300	3.243	1.3627	.0786	1.00	5.00
Test	Translation	100	2.250	1.2008	.1200	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.096	1.1924	.1653	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	2.459	1.1271	.0926	1.00	5.00
	Total	300	2.326	1.1681	.0674	1.00	5.00
Efforts	Translation	100	2.930	.9017	.0901	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.548	1.2217	.1694	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.020	.9912	.0814	1.00	5.00
	Total	300	2.908	1.0177	.0587	1.00	5.00
Task difficulty	Translation	100	3.250	1.2978	.1297	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.634	1.0484	.1453	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.006	1.2371	.1016	1.00	5.00
	Total	300	3.023	1.2414	.0716	1.00	5.00
Teaching methods	Translation	100	3.170	1.1196	.1119	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.769	1.2305	.1706	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.121	1.1541	.0948	1.00	5.00
	Total	300	3.076	1.1613	.0670	1.00	5.00

To check the homogeneity of five causes of attribution points for failure in three groups the Levene's Test was used, and the related results are provided in Table 6. The results indicated that all causes of attribution points in the three groups were homogeneous ($p > .05$) in which p value was more than .05 for all five types of attributions.

Table 6: Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the Three Groups

Attribution	Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Environment	1.696	2	297	.185
Test	.026	2	297	.974
Efforts	2.244	2	297	.093
Task difficulty	2.024	2	297	.134
Teaching methods	.789	2	297	.455

As Table 7 clarifies, ANOVA detected a statistically significant difference in "efforts" across the three groups ($F_{(2, 297)} = 4.26, p = .01, p < .05$) in which F -observed, 4.26, was greater than the Critical F , 3.14, and p value was less than .05. In addition, ANOVA results indicated that there were significant difference in "task difficulty" among three groups ($F_{(2, 297)} = 4.32, p =$

.01, $p < .05$) in which F -observed, 4.32, was greater than the Critical F , 3.14, and p value was less than .05.

However, the results of ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference in the other three causes of attribution, i.e. “environment”, “test”, and “teaching methods” among students of English Translation, Literature, and Teaching (F -observed $<$ Critical F , $p > .05$) in which F -observed for all three of them was less than the Critical F , 3.14, and p value was more than .05.

Table 7: ANOVA to Compare Causes of Attribution for Failure among Students of English Translation, Literature, and Teaching

Causes of Attribution		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Environment	Between Groups	6.426	2	3.213	1.739	.178
	Within Groups	548.810	297	1.848		
	Total	555.237	299			
Test	Between Groups	5.961	2	2.980	2.202	.112
	Within Groups	402.026	297	1.354		
	Total	407.987	299			
Efforts	Between Groups	8.650	2	4.325	4.266	.015
	Within Groups	301.079	297	1.014		
	Total	309.729	299			
Task difficulty	Between Groups	13.036	2	6.518	4.323	.014
	Within Groups	447.801	297	1.508		
	Total	460.837	299			
Teaching methods	Between Groups	6.085	2	3.043	2.275	.105
	Within Groups	397.152	297	1.337		
	Total	403.237	299			

Post-hoc Scheffe test was performed to locate the exact differences between the groups. Post-hoc Scheffe Test (see Table 8) revealed significant difference in “efforts” just between students of literature and teaching ($p = .015$, $p < .05$), in which p value was less than .05. Figure 1 graphically illustrates the difference; Furthermore, Post-hoc Scheffe Test detected a significant difference in “task difficulty” just between students of translation and literature ($p = .014$, $p < .05$) in which p value was less than .05.

Table 8: Post-hoc Scheffe Test to Locate the Exact Difference among the Groups

Dependent Variable	(I) Major	(J) Major	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Efforts	Translation	Literature	.38192	.17214	.087
		Teaching	-.09027	.13033	.787
		Teaching	-.47219*	.16231	.015
		Literature	.61538*	.20993	.014
Task difficulty	Translation	Teaching	.24324	.15895	.312
		Teaching	-.37214	.19795	.173

Figure 2 below is a graphical illustration of the differences.

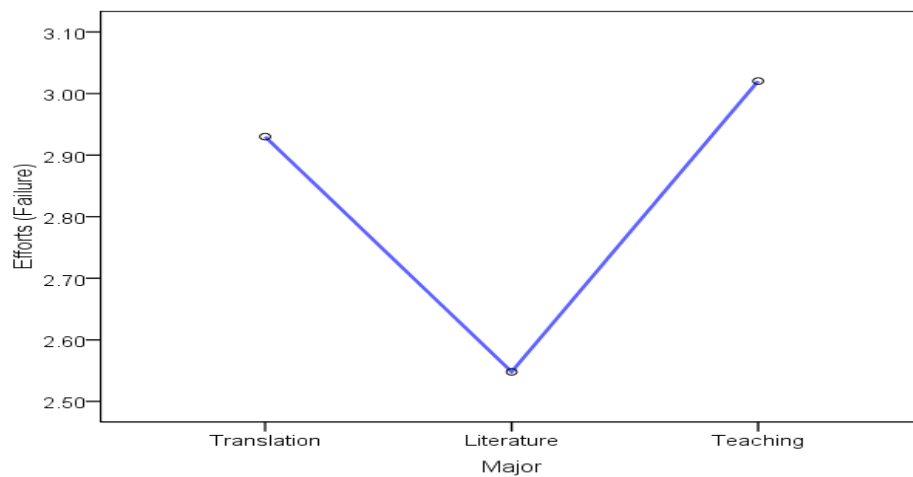


Figure 1: Mean efforts for English translation, literature, and teaching majors

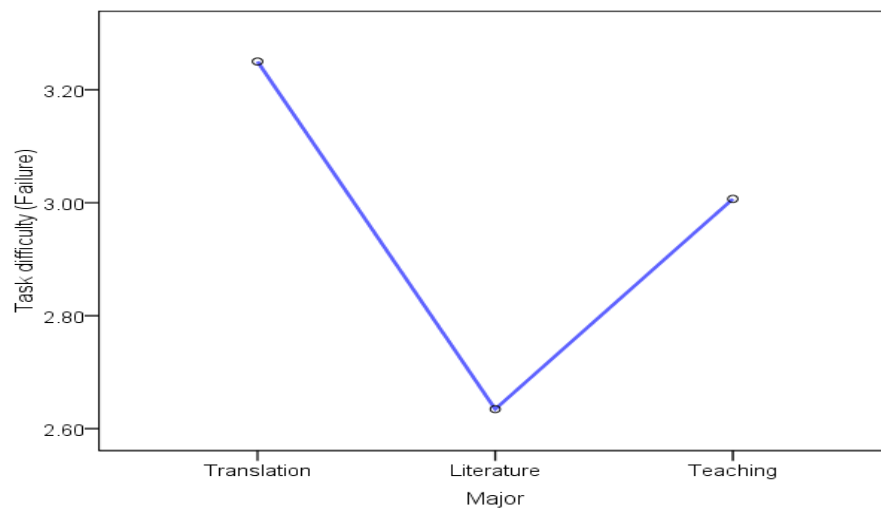


Figure 2: Mean task difficulty for English translation, literature, and teaching majors

Investigating Research Question Number 4

The fourth research question was formulated to examine whether there are any statistically significant differences among students of English translation, literature, and teaching and instructors in English learning attribution for failure. Table 9 below represents the related descriptive statistics.

Table 9: Statistical and Descriptive Data of Causes of Attribution for Failure among English Related Majors Students

Causes of Attribution		N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	Min.	Max.
Environment	Translation	100	3.210	1.343	.134	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.961	1.282	.177	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.364	1.395	.114	1.00	5.00
	Instructors	30	2.800	.761	.138	1.00	4.00
	Total	330	3.203	1.324	.072	1.00	5.00
Test	Translation	100	2.250	1.200	.120	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.096	1.192	.165	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	2.459	1.127	.092	1.00	5.00
	Instructors	30	2.100	1.268	.231	1.00	5.00
	Total	330	2.306	1.177	.064	1.00	5.00
Efforts	Translation	100	2.9300	.90179	.09018	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.5481	1.22178	.16943	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.0203	.99125	.08148	1.00	5.00
	Instructors	30	3.5167	.85585	.15626	1.00	5.00
	Total	330	2.9636	1.01817	.05605	1.00	5.00
Task difficulty	Translation	100	3.2500	1.29782	.12978	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.6346	1.04841	.14539	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.0068	1.23716	.10169	1.00	5.00
	Instructors	30	2.7000	1.11880	.20426	1.00	5.00
	Total	330	2.9939	1.23277	.06786	1.00	5.00
Teaching method	Translation	100	3.1700	1.11966	.11197	1.00	5.00
	Literature	52	2.7692	1.23058	.17065	1.00	5.00
	Teaching	148	3.1216	1.15414	.09487	1.00	5.00
	Instructors	30	3.5000	1.00858	.18414	2.00	5.00
	Total	330	3.1152	1.15333	.06349	1.00	5.00

The results of Levene's Test in Table 10 showed that all five causes of attribution were homogeneous among the four groups ($p > \alpha$) in which p value for all of them was more than .05.

Table 10: Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the Three Groups

Causes of Attribution	Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Environment	6.542	3	326	.000
Test	.051	3	326	.985
Efforts	3.248	3	326	.022
Task difficulty	1.636	3	326	.181
Teaching method	.566	3	326	.638

As indicated in Table 11, ANOVA detected a statistically significant difference in "efforts" ($F_{(3, 326)} = 6.31, p = .000, p < .05$) in which F -observed, 6.31 was greater than the Critical F , 2.62, "task difficulty" ($F_{(3, 326)} = 3.56, p = .014, p < .05$) in which F -observed, 3.56 was greater than the Critical F , 2.62, and "teaching methods" ($F_{(3, 326)} = 2.79, p = .040, p < .05$) in which F -observed, 2.79 was greater than the Critical F , 2.62 and p value was less than .05 across the four groups.

On the other hand, the results of ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference in the other two causes of attribution, i.e. “environment” and “test” among students of English Translation, Literature, Teaching, and the instructors ($F_{\text{observed}} < \text{Critical } F$, $p > \alpha$) in which F_{observed} was less than the Critical F , 3.14, and p value was more than .05 for these two causes of attribution.

Table 11: ANOVA to compare Five Causes of Attribution for Failure among Students and Instructors

Causes of Attribution		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Environment	Between Groups	11.787	3	3.929	2.264	.081
	Within Groups	565.610	326	1.735		
	Total	577.397	329			
Test	Between Groups	7.362	3	2.454	1.783	.150
	Within Groups	448.726	326	1.376		
	Total	456.088	329			
Efforts	Between Groups	18.743	3	6.248	6.319	.000
	Within Groups	322.321	326	.989		
	Total	341.064	329			
Task difficulty	Between Groups	15.887	3	5.296	3.566	.014
	Within Groups	484.101	326	1.485		
	Total	499.988	329			
Teaching method	Between Groups	10.973	3	3.658	2.795	.040
	Within Groups	426.652	326	1.309		
	Total	437.624	329			

Post-hoc Scheffe Test results in Table 12 revealed that there are significant differences just in “efforts” between instructors and students of English translation ($p = .047$, $p < \alpha$), and between instructors and students of literature ($p = .001$, $p < \alpha$) in which p value was less than .05.

Table 12: Post-hoc Scheffe Test to Locate the Exact Difference among Groups

Dependent Variable	(I) Major	(J) Major	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Efforts	Instructors	Translation	.5866*	.2069	.047
		Literature	.9685*	.2279	.001
		Teaching	.4964	.1990	.104
Task difficulty	Instructors	Translation	-.5500	.2536	.197
		Literature	.0653	.2793	.997
		Teaching	-.3067	.2439	.664
Teaching method	Instructors	Translation	.3300	.2381	.590
		Literature	.7307	.2622	.053
		Teaching	.3783	.2290	.437

Figure 3 below graphically demonstrates the difference. There were significant differences between efforts factors for failures of students between four groups. There was maximum difference between instructors and English literature students idea about the role of efforts in failures of English learning.

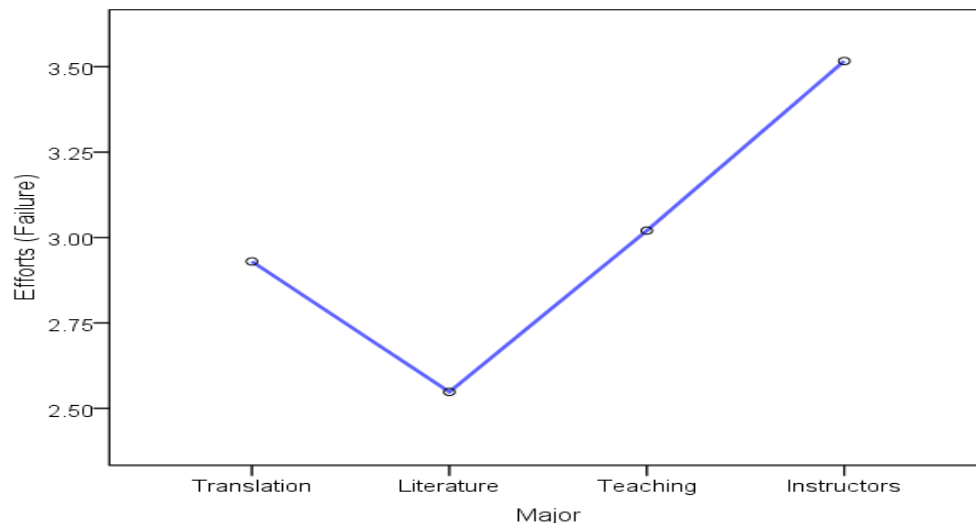


Figure 3: Mean efforts for instructors, English translation, literature, and teaching students

Discussion

A dearth of research led us to investigate the attribution of both students and instructors in English related majors. Therefore the present study finds out firstly the causes of attributions for failure among students in English majors. The primary goal of the present research was to identify the attributional patterns of students and instructors in Islamic Azad Universities.

With regard to instructors' opinion about attribution of students in English related majors, the findings indicated that instructors attributed their students' failures to external factors. This finding is compatible with Peacock (2009) which indicated that teachers' and students' opinions differed significantly about attribution of English learning. Teachers attributed students' failures to external factors. The differences between attributions of students in English related majors i.e. English literature, translation, and teaching can be also discussed. ANOVA results revealed a fundamental difference in effort and task difficulty between three groups. Students of English teaching mainly attributed their failures in English to effort in contrast to literature students who partly attributed their failure to effort. English literature students largely attributed their failure to task difficulty while a few of the English literature students attributed their failures to task difficulty. With regard to the participants' majors, considerable differences emerged. This finding is in parallel with that of Pishghadam and Modarresi (2008) who reported that university students from different majors attributed their and failures to different factors.

Finally, there were significant differences between efforts factors in failures of students across the four groups. There was significant difference between instructors and English literature students' idea about the role of efforts in failures of English learning. Instructors mainly attributed their failure in English learning to effort while English literature students partially attributed their failure to effort. As Lei and Qin (2009, p. 46) point out, "effort is very important in learning, without it learners could achieve nothing." The learner who attributes failure to lack of effort, i.e. to their own actions and characteristic, feels more responsible for their actions; teachers, thus, should remind learners of the value of effort. According to Hsieh (2004, p. 143), "when learners feel that they are responsible for the outcome of their grades, they tend to become more involved and active in the learning process".

The study which was conducted by Hsieh and Schallert (2008) indicated that undergraduate Spanish, German, and French students who perceived themselves as unsuccessful gave their lack of effort as a reason for their failure or in other words they attributed their failure in English learning to internal factors while our finding indicated that English related major students attributed their failures to external factors.

The whole findings of this study are not compatible with other research, because no studies have investigated the attribution for failure of English related major students and instructors.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore the causes of attribution for failure as pinpointed by students of English translation, teaching, and literature as well as instructors teaching general English courses, and English related major courses in some branches of Islamic Azad University. The next objective was to compare the causes of attribution for failure offered by students and those given by instructors. Furthermore, this study compared the causes of attribution of foreign language among students of English translation, literature, and teaching.

The finding showed that English majors students mainly attributed their failures to external factors while instructors mainly attributed students' failures to internal factors. On the other hand, there was a considerable difference among students of English related majors in the causes of attribution. English teaching students mainly attributed their failures to effort but English literature students partially attributed their failures to effort, whereas English teaching students mainly attributed their failures to task difficulty while English literature students partially attributed their failures to task difficulty.

There was a maximum difference between instructors' perspective and their students' idea about the role of efforts in failure of English learning. Instructors mainly attributed their failure in English learning to effort, while English literature students partially attributed their failure to effort.

Implication

This section pays attention to pedagogical implications. They can be divided into theoretical and practical implications. In the realm of theoretical implication, attribution theory can contribute significantly to the process of language learning. Scholars can identify the causes of failure language learners. However, it has received little attention in the field of EFL teaching and learning. In Iran, a few studies have been done on this issue (Pishghadam & Moddarsi, 2008; Zabihi, & Hashemi, 2011; Hasankhan & Vahabi, 2010). This research was carried out to give this message to language teachers that learners have certain perceptions of their language learning and these beliefs are related to many factors such as effort, ability, task difficulty, and interest.

In the zone of practical implication, the results of this study help the heads of department to compare the ideas of the students studying English translation, literature, teaching and the instructors in terms of their attribution towards foreign language learning and teaching. They should seek to find out the people who are responsible for students' failure in the process of learning or even the factors which contribute to their failure to communicative well in English. Therefore, they can focus their attention on those attributive hurdles and try to eliminate

them. Furthermore, the heads of departments of literature, teaching and translation at different branches of Islamic Azad University are expected to understand the causes of failure in learning English among their students.

Limitations of the Study

The subjects of this study were chosen from male and female students, who were mainly female students. Secondly, the number of English literature students was fewer than English translation and English teaching students. All of the students were Iranian and haven't access to foreign students. Only the students and instructors at five branches of Islamic Azad University participated in this study. The results would be inappropriate to be generalized to the context of State Universities in Iran.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire of University Student's English Learning Attribution

Dear students,

Thank you for answering the questionnaire. The following are explanations for the success or failure of English learning. Please make choice according to your own English learning.

Part I. Please answer the personal information.

1. Sex:	1. Male: <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Female: <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Major	1. English Translation <input type="checkbox"/>	2. English Literature <input type="checkbox"/> 3. English Teaching <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are you a.....	1. Freshman <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Sophomore <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Junior <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Senior <input type="checkbox"/>	
4. What College/University do you attend?		
5. How old are you?		

Part II. The following are explanations for failure of English learning; Tick below the alternative of your choice.

N	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I am not interested in English learning.					
2	Instructors have bias on me and consider me a low-achievement student.					
3	I do not work enough in English learning.					
4	The bad results of exams are resulted from lack of preparation.					
5	The bad results of exams are resulted from carelessness in exams.					
6	Instructor's teaching method is too boring.					
7	The bad results of exams are resulted from high difficulty of exams.					
8	I do not have the aptitude for English learning.					
9	There is no appropriate English learning and using environment in Iran.					
10	The current testing system is unreasonable.					
11	I do not have effective learning strategies and learning methods.					
12	The results of exams are bad because I do not have enough luck.					
13	The results of exams are bad because I am nervous in exams.					
14	I do not know how to make arrangement of learning schedule.					

☺ Thank you very much for your time and cooperation ☺

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire of Teachers' Attribution of Student's English Learning

Dear Teachers,

Thank you, for answering this questionnaire. The following items are explanations for the success or failure of English learning. Tick below the alternative of your choice.

Part I. Please answer the personal information.

1. Sex:	1. Male: <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Female: <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Major	1. English Translation <input type="checkbox"/>	2. English Literature <input type="checkbox"/> 3. English Teaching <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Teaching experience?		
4. What College/University do you attend?		
4. What courses have you mainly taught?		

Part II. The following are explanations for failure of English learning; Tick below the alternative of your choice.

Students have failure in English learning may be because:

N	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	They are not interested in English learning.					
2	Instructors have bias on them and regard them as low-achievement students.					
3	They do not learn English hard enough.					
4	The results of exams are poor because they did not prepare enough.					
5	The results of exams are poor because the exams are too hard.					
6	The instructor's teaching method is too boring.					
7	The results of exams are poor because the exams are too hard.					
8	They do not have the aptitude in English learning.					
9	There is no appropriate English learning and using environment in Iran.					
10	The current testing system is unreasonable.					
11	They do not have the effective learning method or strategies.					
12	The bad results of exams are resulted from bad luck.					
13	The results of exams are poor because they are nervous.					
14	They do not know how to make arrangement learning schedule.					

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation



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