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Moroccan Female Rural Students' Attitudes towards Learning English

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Abstract

Investigating female rural students' attitudes towards learning English is a substantial need to identify EFL learners' perception of English and provide language teachers and textbook designers with research evidence. For this reason, numerous studies have been conducted to determine the correlation between learners' background and their language learning attitudes. However, very few research studies have targeted female rural students' language attitude to determine whether there is a correlation between their socio-economic background and language attitude. Therefore, this study was conducted on a sample of 90 female rural students of two high schools located in two small Moroccan villages to identify whether they held a positive or negative attitude towards learning English and to specify the variables that shaped their attitudes. Participants were randomly selected and filled in a five likert scale questionnaire. The significant findings of the study include the participants' preference to study English rather than other foreign languages at high school; they displayed high motivation and frequent classroom participation in the English class, strong desire to improve their English communicative competence, negative attitude towards the culture used in the English textbook, and positive social value to a person who speaks English. Thus, this study concluded that there was no correlation between female rural students' socio-economic background and their positive attitude to study English.

Key words: attitude, language attitude, Moroccan female, socio-economic background, motivation

Introduction:

Although the Moroccan government made schooling compulsory in 1963, education in the rural areas is still lagging behind. According to Sadiqi (2011) the great majority of illiterates in Morocco are women "40% of them being in urban areas and around 60% in rural areas" (p. 26). Many factors lay behind the dreadful schooling conditions in the rural areas such as the scarcity of and far-located schools in addition to the socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds which may extensively have a bearing on language teaching and learning in the rural areas.

Socio-economic conditions have affected education in the rural areas. In a study conducted by Gardiner (2008) on education in the rural areas of South Africa, it was concluded that learning and education are influenced by socio-economic conditions. Poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment are basic factors that discourage parents from sending their children to schools. Because of the rural living conditions and constraints, a number of female pupils are pulled out of school to help in the family workload or in farming. Parents often send their sons rather than daughters to schools when they cannot afford education for both, thinking that daughters are destined to marry and cater for children. In this respect, Randell & Shirley (2009) state that "if the financial expenses of education force parents to choose whether to send their son or daughter to school, they will choose the son because sons are seen as a higher economic investment for the future of the family" (p. 4). Education, unfortunately, has been regarded as a profitable investment for the future of family. That is, some parents in the rural areas invest in educating their sons who will be the breadwinners of the family. Thus, the number of illiterate girls in the rural areas has increased (Sadiqi, 2011). There has been a huge gap in female and male educational opportunities especially in the poor families.

However, recently, the Moroccan government has doubled its effort to fully integrate girls in education especially in the rural areas where illiteracy rate is high. Thus, the Moroccan government has built a number of public schools in the rural areas and boarding schools for female students who are far-located from schools, offered transportation means for those who daily commute, and importantly, financially supported the poor families by handing them a monthly amount of money which depends on the number of each family's enrolled children in school. In addition to the persistent interest of the Moroccan government to raise the enrollment rate for rural girls, some foreign institutions and organizations such as World Bank have had effective roles in enhancing girls' education through donations. Therefore, rural girls have had more educational access than before.

The international relation between Morocco and the global governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations, especially the ones that aim at promoting education in rural areas, made the stakeholders develop foreign language interest in the public and private schools. Accordingly, the Moroccan educational system has encouraged the learning of foreign languages, particularly English due to its 'lingua franca' status and the future prospects it offers to Moroccan students. New curricula were designed and new teaching materials were introduced to produce a keen interest in foreign languages learning. English was introduced in high schools, secondary schools and even private primary schools. This governmental language interest may be culminated with a positive impact on the learners' attitudes towards learning foreign languages.

Nevertheless, based on the gender bias in the educational opportunities for rural girls which is still a persistent fact in some rural areas because of the uprooted cultural gender discrimination, the attitude of female rural students might be influenced by the previously discussed socio-economic conditions. Previous research has determined that there is a correlation between students' socio-economic conditions and their language attitude. It was pointed out that rural students developed a negative attitude towards foreign languages which was referred to their socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds (see Gardiner, 2008; Gajalakshmi, 2013; Sobia et al., 2015; Ghazali, 2008; Tsuda, 2003).

However, while much focus has been placed on education in rural areas in a more general sense, female rural students' attitudes towards learning English is still under-researched. Therefore, the scope of the present study is limited to providing research evidence about the attitude of a sample of female rural students towards learning English and exploring the variables that shape their perceptions as well as the correlation between the participants' social background and their attitude towards studying English.

Attitudes of female pupils towards learning English:

Definition of attitude and language attitude

Attitude is one of the concepts that are difficult to define accurately due to its abstractness. Although people in everyday interaction tend to say they have a positive or negative attitude towards something, the concept of attitude is a very complicated one (Eiser 1986; as cited in Bergroth, 2007, p. 29). No matter how difficult it seems to be defined, the concept of attitude is commonly used among people to show their opinions towards different objects or people. Therefore, attitude, as one of the simplest definitions, refers to people's opinion or way of thinking that reflects one's state of mind or behavior. Furthermore, the subjectivity of this concept is questioned by researchers since it almost reflects people's individual experience. Eiser (1986) contends that "what most researchers agree upon is that attitudes are subjective experiences, involve evaluations of different kinds of attitude objects, and are related to behaviour"(as cited in Bergroth, 2007, p. 29). Much of what people believe in may be a result of their life experience.

The term language attitude, in simple terms, refers to the opinions towards language. It may also refer to "attitudes towards different languages, varieties of one language or the speakers of a language" (Fasold, 1984, p. 148; as cited in Bergroth, 2007, p. 29). From a mentalistic perspective, attitude is defined with reference to the person's way of thinking of something. Allport (1935) provides a concise definition of attitude as "a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (as cited in Bergroth, 2007, p.30). In the mentalistic view, the concept of attitude is regarded as unobservable internal abilities.

However, in this paper, the term attitude was studied from a limited perspective. It was assessed from a set of questions answered by female rural students. Specifically, female students' attitudes towards learning English was measured by asking them whether they preferred English to other languages, how they perceived the foreign culture presented in the English textbook, how often they participated in the English class, how they socially valued a person who speaks English, and how motivated they were in an English class. Based on their responses, their attitude towards learning English was identified as positive or negative.

Previous studies on language attitudes:

Previous research has shown that EFL learners have positive and negative attitudes towards learning English language. In a study conducted by Abidin (2012) on Libyan secondary school students, it was concluded that the participants had negative attitude towards learning English which was apparently obvious when they did not feel relaxed whenever they had to speak in the English class. Similarly, Al-Zahrani (2008) found out that most of the participants displayed a negative attitude towards English which was due to a negative reaction to the instructional and traditional techniques used by some of the English language teachers. Research has also demonstrated that EFL learners were confused and nervous when they spoke English in front of their classmates (Shams, 2008), and instead displayed a positive attitude when Arabic was used as a facilitating tool in English classes (Al-Nofaie, 2010).

According to Abidin (2012), the findings included gender variable. Results indicated that the attitude of female secondary school students towards English was slightly higher than that of male ones. Tsuda (2003) also investigated language attitude of first and second year students at Tokai Gakuen University, Japan. The participants seemed to be less motivated to learn English other than earning credits for graduation. Interestingly, they had common negative attitudes even towards the importance of English in their future career, and thought that English grammar is difficult to learn and had never enjoyed studying it.

Relationship between attitudes and students' background:

A number of studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between language attitude and learners' background. It has been highlighted that learners' socio-economic background influences rural EFL learners. Brown (1994), in this respect, contends that attitudes "develop early in childhood and are the result of parents and peers' attitudes" (p.180). Ghazali (2008), who investigated Malaysian EFL learners' attitude towards learning English, argued that the students whose parents read more and had a variety of books at home had positive attitudes towards English literary study. This indicates that parents with positive foreign language attitudes often motivate their children to develop a similar attitude. In contrast, learners whose parents have negative attitudes towards learning foreign languages may negatively affect their children's attitude. Such studies have indicated that there is a correlation between learners' background and their language attitude.

Research Methodology:***Participants:***

The present study focused on a randomly selected sample of 90 female rural baccalaureate students from two high schools (Sidi Aisa and Ibn Zaidoune) which are located in small towns in the outskirts of Kenitra, Morocco. Some of the female students who are from the urban area were excluded as the present study limited its focus on female rural students. All participants were in the arts stream and their age ranged between 17 and 20. They had been exposed to English language as an academic subject one year in secondary school and two years at high school. English for them was one of the main subjects since it is included in the Moroccan baccalaureate national exam.

Research Design and Instrument:

The present study dealt with quantitative and qualitative data. Part of the data was analyzed through the use of statistics, in particular Chi-Square tests, to measure the correlation between the participants' background and their attitude towards learning English. Because this study addressed language attitudes, it was also of significant importance to have qualitative data which was analyzed by the frequency and percentage measures.

An attitude questionnaire was the primary method of the data collection. The questionnaire items were partly adopted from Al-Tamimi & Shuib (2009) who conducted a study on learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning English. All the questionnaire items targeted the participants' attitude towards English and aimed at investigating the correlation between their attitudes and the socio-economic background they came from. Additionally, the questionnaire items were formulated in a simple language so that all participants could answer the questions easily regardless of their language competence.

Research objective and questions:

The objective of the current study was to find out whether female rural students hold a positive or negative attitude towards learning English, the variables that might influence their language attitude, and the relationship between students' attitudes and socio-economic background. The research questions the study targeted are as follows:

1. Do female students have a positive or negative attitude towards learning English?
2. Do female rural students have a negative attitude towards the culture presented in the English textbook?
3. Do female rural students associate social value to a person who speaks English?
4. Is there any correlation between female rural students' language attitude and their socio-economic background?
5. For what reasons do female rural students learn English?

Research hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were set to answer the research questions above-mentioned:

1. Female rural students may have a negative attitude towards learning English.
2. Female learners' attitude towards the foreign culture used in the English textbook is very negative.
3. The participants may give more social value to somebody who speaks English rather than French.
4. There might be a correlation between female rural students' language attitudes and their socio-economic background.
5. Personal goals are the strongest reasons why female rural students study English.

Results and Discussions:

In this section, the data was described and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Thus, the frequency and percentage were the main statistical measures to assess the participants' responses, and the Chi-square test was used to see whether the difference between the participants' responses is statistically significant.

1. *The preferred language to be studied at high school*

To identify the participants' favored foreign language to be studied at high school, they were inquired about their views on a set of languages (*English, French, Spanish, and German*). The question item that was provided to them is "*of the following languages, which would you prefer to study at your high school?*" The findings are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. *The preferred language to be studied at high school*

Schools		Languages				Total
		English	French	Spanish	German	
Sidi Aisa	Count	40	2	2	1	45
	% within	88,9%	4,4%	4,4%	2,2%	100,0%
	Std.Residual	1,3	-1,8	-1,2	-,4	
Ibn Zaidoune	Count	25	11	7	2	45
	% within	55,6%	24,4%	15,6%	4,4%	100,0%
	Std.Residual	-1,3	1,8	1,2	,4	
Total	Count	65	13	9	3	90
	% within	72,2%	14,4%	10,0%	3,3%	100,0%

Findings in table 1 demonstrate that female students from the two high schools had very positive attitude towards learning English. The vast majority preferred to be taught English if they had to choose among a set of foreign languages even though French is regarded as a second language in Morocco and is taught starting from the primary school. This positive attitude towards learning English may be explained by the fact that some of the female rural students had a poor level in French and found English as a substitute to be bilingual. Another reason is strongly linked to the international status of English language.

This finding is consistent with Al-Quyadi's study (2002) in which he concluded that "the students had positive attitudes towards the English language and the use of English in the Yemeni social and educational contexts" (as cited in Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009, p. 35). Nevertheless, the present findings are inconsistent with Tsuda's study (2003) on the rural and urban Japanese students' attitudes towards learning English, in which she found out that the students from the remote rural areas had a negative attitude towards English since they could not see any relevance of English in their daily life.

Because French and English are both commonly used in Morocco, we compared the answers of the participants in these two languages to see their language preference statistically. The Chi-Square tests revealed marked differences in the participants' responses, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2. *Results of students' attitudes towards English and French using Chi-Square test*

<i>Sidi Aisa</i>	<i>Ibn</i>	<i>O.R</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>P-value</i>
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	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Zaidoune N (%)</i>	<i>(Odds Ratio)</i>	<i>(confidence interval)</i>	
English	41 (62,1%)	25 (37, 9%)	9,02	1,846 – 44,082	,002
French	2 (15,4%)	11 (84,6%)			

The findings indicate a significant difference in students' language attitudes. Though it was concluded in Table 1 that female rural students from the two high schools had a positive attitude towards learning English, Chi-Square test shows that there is a correlation between learners' region and the nature of their attitude: O.R= 9,02 ; CI= 1,846 – 44,082 ; P=,002. Therefore, the female students belonging to Ibn Zaidoune High School had more positive attitude towards French while the ones belonging to Sidi Aisa High School displayed more positive attitudes to learn English.

2. The influence of the foreign culture presented in the English textbook on the students' local culture

It is worth mentioning that a number of textbooks target specific learners with particular language purposes, and thus textbook designers use purposeful pictures that tend to reflect learners' local culture to make the learning process more authentic and meaningful. EFL learners, thus, may be influenced culturally while being exposed to a language textbook. They may be culturally manipulated, for instance.

Therefore, to determine how similar or different the participants' attitude is towards learning English, they were further asked whether the foreign culture portrayed in the English textbook affected their local culture since language and culture are inseparable. Specifically, they were provided with a 5-point Likert scale from Level 1: Strongly Agree to Level 5: Strongly Disagree.

Table 3 shows the participants' answers to the question item (*do you think that learning English may affect your local culture?*). The findings, in Table 3, demonstrate that the majority of the female rural students from the two high schools agreed that the foreign culture presented in the English textbook exercised an influence on their own local culture, which confirms our hypothesis.

Table 3. The participants' responses as to the influence of the foreign culture presented in the English textbook

Schools	Influence of foreign culture					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Sidi Aisa : Count	18	15	7	3	2	45
% within school	40,0%	33,3%	15,6%	6,7%	4,4%	100,0%

	Std. Residual	,5	-,1	,2	-1,2	1,0	
Ibn zaidoune :	Count	14	16	6	9	0	45
	% within school	31,1%	35,6%	13,3%	20,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	-,5	,1	-,2	1,2	-1,0	
Total	Count	32	31	13	12	2	90
	% within school	35,6%	34,4%	14,4%	13,3%	2,2%	100,0%

The participants' negative perception towards the foreign culture might be due to countless reasons. One of which is linked to the characters used in the English textbook. If we take *Ticket 2 English*, an English textbook for Moroccan baccalaureate students, it includes some pictures that might orient students to adopt a certain behaviour or lifestyle such as the picture of Messi, a football player, in the first textbook unit (Gifts of Youth) and a number of western actors and actresses. We cannot deny the fact that students need to be open to the western culture, but it should not be on the expense of their own because students may feel that the textbook does not respond to their cultural background.

These findings confirm what Xiao (2010) concluded on Chinese learners' perception to the foreign culture presented in an English textbook. He particularly found out that the majority (the highest mean score 3,30) of the participants thought that the cultural knowledge contents were included in most tasks.

3. The participants' views as regards the people who speak foreign languages

The ability of speaking foreign languages (being a polyglot) is undeniably socially valued. Because of globalization and the daily cross-border movements, English, in particular, has become a 'lingua franca' to facilitate the international communication and bridge the communication gap. Therefore, English does have a socially significant status, and the person who speaks it is often socially respected.

Based on this, the participants were asked whether a person who speaks English has more social value than another who speaks French. For this reason, they were given two options (English or French) to choose from as they are two commonly spoken languages in Morocco along with Arabic (the mother tongue). However, because of French colonialism, French language is more widely used in the administrations and Moroccans' daily-life interaction than English is.

Nevertheless, this wide use of French in Morocco, which might be seen as a 'privilege' to this language, was not reflected in the participants' responses since the vast majority from the two schools thought that speaking English is regarded more significant than speaking French, as the table below apparently presents:

Table 4. The participants' responses to French and English social value

Schools		Language		Total
		English	French	
Sid Aisa	Count	41	4	45

	% within School	91,1%	8,9%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	,8	-1,7	
Ibn Zaidoune	Count	31	14	45
	% within School	68,9%	31,1%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	-,8	1,7	
Total	Count	72	18	90
	% within School	80,0%	20,0%	100,0%

Table 5. Chi-Square Tests

	<i>Sidi Aisa</i> N (%)	<i>Ibn Zaidoune</i> N (%)	<i>O.R</i> (Odds Ratio)	<i>CI</i> (confidence interval)	<i>P-value</i>
English	41 (91,1%)	31 (68, 9%)	4,629	1,387 - 15,448	,007
French	4 (8,9%)	14 (31,1%)			

The Chi-Square tests, in Table 5, also demonstrate that there is no effect of region, where the high schools are located, on female rural students' attitudes (O.R = 4,629; CI= 1,387 - 15,448; P=,007). Hence, the majority of the participants displayed a positive attitude to learn English than to learn French.

As previously hypothesized, the findings clearly point out that the female students had a positive opinion and belief towards the use of English in everyday interaction and the person who speaks English is more socially privileged. It might be argued that the students who have positive opinions about English use in formal and informal contexts have a positive attitude towards learning English.

The findings also reinforce the idea that the rural female students are aware of the vital role that English plays in their lives. It is worth pointing out that although French language is sometimes an essential prerequisite to get a job in Morocco the participants associated more social value to anyone who speaks English. Besides, Moroccans especially the elite and the upper class use French in their daily communication, and sometimes even ordinary people, using some French words, phrases or chunks, communicate with one another. Thus, there is much exposure to the contexts where French is employed. For this reason, the participants considered it normal to hear somebody speaking French, which, at most, was the reason why they highly valued somebody speaking English. Henceforth, we conclude that English has a prestigious status for the female rural students from the two schools though it may not seem very relevant to their daily life needs.

With reference to previous research, Heaney's study (2005) on Indonesian EFL learners revealed that "students had positive attitudes towards English and English had a prestigious status among the youths" (as cited in Siregar, F. L. 2010, p.73). Additionally, Al-Tamimi & Shuib (2009) came up with the conclusion that the principal motives encouraging EFL learners to learn English were to maximize their "personal development and to enhance their status among friends" (p.40). The findings of the present study are also confirmed by Bernat & Rosemarie study (2007) who asserted that the majority of the respondents agreed on the statement "people in my country feel that it is important to speak English" (p.87).

Significantly, for female rural learners, English is regarded as a distinguishing criterion among people. This means that the respondents considered English as a means of exercising superiority and power in society. In particular, the female rural learners might think that the people who are fluent in more than one language especially in English are more intelligent than those who speak just their mother tongue. A recent study conducted by Bernat & Rosemarie (2007), they have concluded that "women are more likely than men to believe that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent" (p.82).

4. *The female students' motivation and participation in the English class*

While motivation has been defined in many ways (Liuoliene & Metiuniene, 2006), in this paper it is mainly measured by the students' feeling (bored or motivated) and the frequency of participation in class. If EFL learners possess a positive attitude towards English, they will be highly motivated to show enthusiasm and positively take part in classroom activities during the learning process. Importantly, it has been pointed out that there is a correlation between motivation and learners' achievement in class. Therefore, motivation is one of the key factors to language learning success or failure (Ellis, 1994; McDonough, 1983). Getting students motivated in class assures tremendous teaching and learning outcomes. Given the importance of motivation as a key factor in foreign language learning, learners' motivation in an EFL classroom determines their attitudes towards learning English.

In order to obtain a deeper insight into female rural students' attitude towards learning English, their motivation in EFL classroom was investigated through two major question items with specific options: *how do you feel in the English classroom (motivated or bored)? How often do you participate in the English class (always, usually, sometimes, rarely, never)?*

Table 6 shows female students' feeling in the English class:

Table 6. *The participants' motivation in the English classroom*

Schools		Students' feeling in the English classroom		Total
		Motivated	Bored	
Sidi Aisa	Count	29	16	45
	% within School	64,4%	35,6%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	,4	-,5	
Ibn Zaidoune	Count	25	20	45

	% within School	55,6%	44,4%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	-,4	,5	
Total	Count	54	36	90
	% within School	60,0%	40,0%	100,0%

Table 7. Chi-Square Tests

	<i>Sidi Aisa</i> N (%)	<i>Ibn Zaidoune</i> N (%)	<i>O.R</i> (Odds Ratio)	<i>CI</i> (confidence interval)	<i>P-value</i>
Motivated	29 (64,4%)	25 (55,6%)	1,450	,621- 3,384	,118
Bored	16 (35,6%)	20 (44,4%)			

Table 7 shows that the participants' motivation cannot be explained by the region they belonged to or their socio-economic background, rather there are other major factors that can be the source of learners' motivation such as the teacher's teaching method, textbook, classroom arrangement, parents' intervention, etc. All these variables contribute to the shaping of students' language attitude either in a positive or negative way.

One of the variables that determines how learners positively or negatively regard a certain language is classroom participation. Thus, the participants were further required to specify how often they used to participate in EFL class. The findings are revealed in Table 8 below:

Table 8. female rural students' participation in the English class

Schools		Frequency of Participation					Total
		always	usually	sometimes	rarely	never	
Sidi Aisa	Count	21	14	3	4	3	45
	% within region	46,7%	31,1%	6,7%	8,9%	6,7%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	1,0	,6	-1,6	,0	-,7	
Ibn Zaidoune	Count	13	10	12	4	6	45
	% within region	28,9%	22,2%	26,7%	8,9%	13,3%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	-1,0	-,6	1,6	,0	,7	
Total	Count	34	24	15	8	9	90
	% within region	37,8%	26,7%	16,7%	8,9%	10,0%	100,0%

It is evidenced, in the table 8, that the vast majority from the two high schools most often participated in the English class. Their tendency to participate in the English class reflects how

positive they are towards learning English. The participants were aware that through classroom participation they would improve their language skills especially the speaking skill.

5. The female students' reasons for learning English

The investigation of language learners' rationales for studying a language has always been of paramount significance. It is, undoubtedly, a substantial need to get deep insights into learners' specific purposes of learning a language and provide research evidence to language teachers and curriculum designers. In this respect, Oxford & Shearin, (1994) have stressed the importance of investigating learners' motivations which feed into the teaching and learning processes. Pachler (2000) similarly argued for investigating the aims of language teaching and learning in schools.

EFL learners learn English for a number of reasons. Personal benefits could be one of the strongest reasons that EFL learners tend to gain from learning a foreign language. In addition to the academic purposes, learners may be highly motivated to learn English to communicate efficiently in and out of school especially with native speakers, to have more chance to be employed in the job market, to get access to the English data produced on the internet, to explore foreign cultures, etc. There is also a social development impetus inherent in learners' desire to gain a social recognition and value. Importantly, since English has the status of a global 'lingua franca', learners perceive it as a prerequisite to their future career goals. Therefore, learners may be motivated to learn English because of its importance to their future prospects and they may have personal motives to learn it, as well.

Accordingly, the participants were provided with a list of language learning reasons that addressed their personal aims. The table below presents the participants' responses to the question item (*Tick the personal reasons behind learning English?*)

Table 9. Students' personal reasons of learning English

Schools		Students' personal reasons of learning English					Total
		To find a job	To communicate with foreigners	To chat	To watch films in English	To listen to songs in English	
Sidi Aisa	Count	13	20	5	3	4	45
	% within school	28,9%	44,4%	11,1%	6,7%	8,9%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	,3	-,2	-,6	,0	,9	
Ibn Zaidoune	Count	11	22	8	3	1	45
	% within school	24,4%	48,9%	17,8%	6,7%	2,2%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	-,3	,2	,6	,0	-,9	
Total	Count	24	42	13	6	5	90

Table 9. Students' personal reasons of learning English

Schools		Students' personal reasons of learning English					Total
		To find a job	To communicate with foreigners	To chat	To watch films in English	To listen to songs in English	
Sidi Aisa	Count	13	20	5	3	4	45
	% within school	28,9%	44,4%	11,1%	6,7%	8,9%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	,3	-,2	-,6	,0	,9	
Ibn Zaidoune	Count	11	22	8	3	1	45
	% within school	24,4%	48,9%	17,8%	6,7%	2,2%	100,0%
	Std. Residual	-,3	,2	,6	,0	-,9	
Total	Count	24	42	13	6	5	90
	% within school	26,7%	46,7%	14,4%	6,7%	5,6%	100,0%

As presented in the findings above, the vast majority of the participants ticked the option *to communicate with foreigners* (46, 7%) followed by the option *to find a job* (24%), which implies two major reasons female learners were strongly in need of: the need to improve their communicative competence to communicate with foreigners, in particular with native speakers of English, and to get a job. Accordingly, there appears to be a strong endorsement among the participants for the view that English language is very relevant to their daily needs. Sarjit (1993) similarly found that the instrumental and personal motivations were the main reasons for learning English. Benson (1991) also concluded that the integrative and personal goals were main motivations among Japanese college students to learn English.

It is not surprising that the vast majority of female rural students considered the communicative aspect of English and getting a job as their major personal goals. This might reflect their awareness of the international role of English language and the importance to communicate with foreigners, which has become a daily likelihood via the social networks regardless of the socio-economic background of rural students. It may also be explained by their longing to be able to speak a language which is often a priority to language learners in comparison with mastering the grammatical aspect of a language.

Conclusion:

The study aimed at investigating female rural students' attitudes towards learning English. It particularly attempted to identify whether female rural students, belonging to two Moroccan high schools, had a positive or negative perception of English and to measure the socio-economic variables that might shape their attitudes. This was performed through asking the targeted sample about the preferred foreign language to be studied at school, what social value

they would associate a person who speaks English to, the influence of the culture presented in the English textbook, and the reasons and motivations for learning English. Using the Chi-Square tests and the statistical measures frequency and percentage, the findings of the study indicated that female rural students' had a positive attitude towards studying English which refutes our hypothesis. This was remarkable in their preference to study English rather than other foreign languages at high school, high motivation and frequent participation in the English class, strong desire to improve their English communicative competence, negative attitude towards the culture used in the English textbook, and positive social value associated to a person who speaks English. Therefore, it was concluded that the socio-economic background of female rural students had no effect on or correlation with their positive attitudes to study English. The fact that they live in rural area where poverty, lack of educational opportunities, unemployment, etc. are prevailing did not have an influence on their attitude to study English. This conclusion is in marked contrast with previous research (see Ghazali 2008) which has shown that there is a correlation between rural students' language attitudes and their background.

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