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**Faculty of literature and Humanities**

**M.A. Thesis in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**

**THE EFFECTS OF INTEGRATIVE VS.  
INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION,  
LEARNING STRATEGY USE AND  
GENDER ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS'  
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

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March 2012



**In the Name Of God**

## **IN THE NAME OF GOD**

### **Declaration Letter**

I , Tahere Karbor, a graduate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Faculty of Literature and Humanities, declare that the thesis is the result of my own research and whenever I have made use of other sources, I have cited the accurate specifications regarding the sources. Moreover, I declare that my study and the subject of my thesis are not repetitive. And I undertake that I will not publish the results of my study without an authorization from Shiraz University or I will not give it to anyone. In conformity with the Mental and Intellectual Ownership Regulations, all rights of the present study are reserved for Shiraz University.

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**Date: July 2012**

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ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

BY

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*Dedicated to:*

*My beloved parents,*

*my dear Husband,*

*and my lovely twins*

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## **Abstract**

### **The Effects of Integrative VS. Instrumental Motivation, Learning Strategy Use and Gender on Iranian EFL Learners' Language Proficiency**

By  
**Tahere Karbor**

This study was carried out to investigate the effects of integrative vs. instrumental motivation, learning strategy use and gender on Iranian EFL learners. To this end, 120 EFL learners both male and female majoring in English Language and Literature at Shiraz University participated in the study. In order to conduct this study three instruments were used: Oxford Quick Placement Test, Motivation questionnaire and Language Learning Strategy Inventory. After data collection, the participants were divided into two groups of integratively and instrumentally motivated learners based on their scores on the motivation questionnaire. Furthermore, regarding the participants' scores on learning strategy inventory, they were divided into three groups of high, mid and low strategy users. Through a multiple regression analysis, it was found that language proficiency could be predicted by integrative motivation and learning strategy use, while gender did not account for language proficiency. Furthermore, based on the results of a one- way ANOVA and two independent t-tests, it was found that integratively motivated learners and high strategy users were more proficient than instrumentally motivated learners and low strategy users.



# Table of Contents

Content	Page
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.0. Introduction.....	2
1.1. Individual learner differences .....	2
1.2. Motivation and L2 proficiency .....	3
1.3. Learning Strategies and L2 proficiency .....	4
1.4. Gender and L2 proficiency .....	6
1.5. Objective of the study and Research questions .....	7
1.6. Significance of the study .....	8
1.7. Theoretical framework .....	8
1.7.1. Ellis’s (1994) Individual differences framework.....	9
1.7.2. Flemens’(2008) hypothesized model .....	10
1.7.3. Gardner’s (1985) motivation theory.....	12
1.7.4. Oxford’s (1990) Model of Language Learning Strategies .....	12
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITRETURE REVIEW</b>	
2.0. Introduction .....	14
2.1. Motivation .....	14
2.1.1. Different models of motivations .....	16
2.1.2. Integrative / instrumental motivation .....	21
2.2. Second language learning strategies.....	25
2.2.1. Language learning strategies definitions .....	25
2. 2. 2. Language learning strategies classifications.....	26
2.3. Gender .....	32
2.4. Motivation, learning strategies, gender and L2 proficiency .....	35

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
 <b>CHAPTER THREE: METHOD</b>	
3.0. Introduction.....	40
3.1. Participants .....	40
3.2. Instruments .....	40
3.2.1. Oxford Quick Placement Test.....	41
3.2.2. Motivation questionnaire .....	41
3.2.2. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning.....	42
3.3. Procedure .....	43
3.4. Data analysis .....	44
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
4.0. Introduction .....	46
4.1. Results .....	46
4.1.1. Descriptive statistics for learners' proficiency scores .....	47
4.1.2. The prediction of the language proficiency by the independent variables .....	48
4.1.3. The effects of learners' gender, learning strategy use and motivation on Proficiency .....	49
4.1.3.1. The difference between integratively and instrumentally motivated learners in language proficiency .....	49
4.1.3.2. The difference between male and female learners in language Proficiency .....	50
4.1.3.3. The effect of learning strategy use on language proficiency .....	50
4.2. Discussion.....	51
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
5.0. Introduction.....	57
5.1. Summary of study .....	57
5.2. Conclusion .....	59
5.3. Implications .....	60
5.4. Limitations.....	61
5.5. Suggestions for further research .....	62

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	63
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
APPENDIX A.....	74
APPENDIX B.....	84
APPENDIX C.....	86

## Lists of Tables

Table	Page
<b>Table 2.1.</b> Summary of models of motivation .....	20
<b>Table 2.2.</b> Main Categories, Definitions, or Subcategories of Strategies/Tactics .....	29
<b>Table 4.1.</b> Descriptive statistics for learners' proficiency scores and their motivational orientations .....	47
<b>Table 4.2.</b> Descriptive statistics for learners' proficiency scores and their levels of learning strategy use.....	47
<b>Table 4.3.</b> Descriptive statistics for learners' proficiency scores and their gender . .....	48
<b>Table 4.4.</b> Multiple regression for the relationship between independent variables and language proficiency.....	48
<b>Table 4.5.</b> Partial regression coefficients for the degree of prediction of independent variables on language proficiency.....	49
<b>Table 4.6.</b> t-test results showing the effect of instrumental vs. integrative motivation on L2 proficiency .....	50
<b>Table 4.7.</b> t-test results for language proficiency according to gender .....	50
<b>Table 4.8.</b> ANOVA for the effect of learning strategy use on language proficiency .....	51
<b>Table 4.9.</b> Scheffé test for the mean differences among learning strategy use levels in language proficiency .....	51

## Lists of Figure

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.1: A framework for investigating individual learners differences .....	10
Figure 1.2: Hypothesized model of the relationship between demographic characteristics, language-learning experiences, motivation, language-learning strategies, and expected course performance of second language learning adopted from Flemens .....	11

# **CHAPTER ONE**

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0. Introduction

The current study aims at investigating the relationship between a number of learner internal factors including gender, motivational orientation, the learning strategy use on the one hand and learners' proficiency level on the other hand. To this end, the first chapter introduces these individual differences and then provides a summary of each learner's variable and its relation to L2 proficiency followed by the objectives of the study, the theoretical framework and the significance of the study.

## 1.1. Individual learner differences

There is a multitude of individual learner differences influencing L2 acquisition. The identification and classification of different individual factors have proved to be problematic for L2 researchers. The main difficulty is that it is not possible to observe directly such individual differences. Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to draw distinctions between some individual differences such as attitudes, beliefs, and orientations (Ellis, 1994). Despite such difficulties, there is an overriding emphasis on the role of individual differences in L2 acquisition and several classifications have been envisaged by researchers. Ehrman (2003), for example, classified individual differences into learning styles, learning strategies, and affective factors. Other major individual factors include age, gender, culture, and other demographic variables. Among these individual differences, the current study investigates learners' motivational orientations, learning strategies and gender and their relationship with L2 proficiency.

## 1.2. Motivation and L2 Proficiency

Motivation has been one of the central concerns of researchers and practitioners in the field of L2 acquisition for at least 40 years as reflected in the multitude of different areas of research done on the topic. Motivation is somehow a fuzzy concept; that is, no single best definition can be provided for it. Birjandi *et al.* (2006) define motivation as “interest, tendency, and will of learning” (p. 18). Dornyei (2000) believes that three interrelated aspects of human behavior are discussed by motivation theories; they include (a) the choice of a particular action, (b) persistence with it, and (c) effort expended on it. In this regard, Shedivy (2004) states that, “motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it” (p. 104).

Gardner (1985) breaks down the concept of motivation into four main components: goal, effort, want, and attitudes toward the activity. He also argues that motivational components such as attitudes towards learning the language, desire to learn the language and motivational intensity influence second language proficiency positively. Other researchers have confirmed this fact that motivation can exert influence on performance in the second or foreign language-learning classroom. (Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Masgoret & Tremblay, 1997).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) identify the concept of motivation in terms of two orientations or classes of reasons: instrumental and integrative. According to them, integrative motivation is characterized by the learners’ positive attitudes toward the target language group, and the desire to integrate into the target language community while instrumental motivation impels learners to take an advantage from language in terms of getting a job, a higher degree, etc. Considering this new conceptualization of motivation, Shedivy (2004) argues that “Integrativeness refers to the individual’s willingness and interest in having social interaction with members of the L2 (second language) group” (p. 104). He further states that integratively motivated learners believe that success in second language strongly depends on the fact of truly integrating with L2 cultures. On the other hand, an instrumental orientation suggests a self oriented ideology toward language learning. In the other words, learners with this motivation



try to learn language for pragmatic and utilitarian reasons.

Research on the effect of learners' motivation on their proficiency has yielded mixed results regarding the superiority of integrative and instrumental motivation over one another. For example, Gardner (1985) noted that since language learning is rooted in the social cultural context in which it is used, it is different from other content areas of education. After a lot of empirical studies, he also came to this conclusion that integrative motivation is superior to instrumental one and is associated with higher levels of L2 proficiency. In another study, Gardner and Lambert (1972) reported a high correlation between integrative motivation and L2 proficiency. Lukmani (1972), on the other hand, demonstrated that instrumental motivation is a more reliable predictor of L2 proficiency than integrative motivation. Gardner and McIntire (1991) argued that the beneficial effects of integrative versus instrumental motivation are context specific and both can contribute to L2 proficiency in different situations. Gardner *et al.* (2004) noted that both integrative and instrumental motivations have roughly the same effect on L2 proficiency. Finally, Csizer and Dornyei (2005), working with Hungarian students of a foreign language, found that integrative motivation is the single important factor in L2 proficiency. Meanwhile, research has shown that the effect of motivation in the acquisition of L2 proficiency is usually mediated by other individual learner factors. Bonney *et al.* (2008), for example, posited that integrative motivation is more predictive of compensatory and collaborative strategies among others.

### **1.3. Learning strategies and L2 proficiency**

There is a plethora of research on the role of learners' strategies in L2 acquisition success both in the classroom and in natural settings. It is believed that learners must explicitly be taught what types of strategies can best fit them in order to achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency. Among researchers who considered a role for learning strategies in the field of language acquisition, Rubin (1975) was the first to carry out research in this area. He classified strategies in terms of processes which are directly or indirectly related to language learning. Oxford (1989) defined learning

strategies as techniques consciously used by learners to improve their progress in acquiring, storing, retaining, and using information in second or foreign language. Several classifications have been provided by different researchers to account for different types of learning strategies. Oxford (1989) classified learning strategies into the following categories: 1) Memory strategies (e.g., grouping, representing sounds in memory), 2) Cognitive strategies (e.g., repeating, analyzing, getting the idea quickly and taking notes), 3) Compensation strategies (e.g., switching to the mother tongue, using other clues), 4) Metacognitive strategies (e.g., linking new information with already known ones, self-monitoring), 5) Affective strategies (lowering anxiety by the use of music, encouraging oneself and discussing feelings with others) and 6) Social strategies (asking for clarification, cooperating with others and developing cultural understanding).

O'Malley et al (1985a) categorized strategies into metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective. They argued that the metacognitive strategies (i.e., those that deal with planning, directing or monitoring) were considerably important in the task of second language learning.

Language proficiency has been consistently linked with learning strategies (e.g., Green and Oxford, 1995; Wharton, 2000) with higher rates of strategy use culminating in higher levels of language proficiency. Early research on language proficiency and learning strategies attempted to underscore the role of learning strategies by characterizing good language learners. For example, Rubin (1987, p. 19) define learning strategies as "... any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information." He offered a list of features of good language learners by observing successful second language learners. Similarly, Stern (1975) summarized the characteristics of good language learners based on the previous research and his own experience. Yet, research findings have also provided evidence that the relationship between language proficiency and learning strategies depends to a large extent on the type of learning strategies. Chen (1990), for example, found that more proficient learners used fewer communication strategies, though they used them more effectively than less proficient learners. Green and Oxford (1995) and Wharton (2000) argued that language proficiency is highly related to the use of language learning

strategies, too. Yilmaz (2010) also believed that generally using language learning strategies has a strong positive effect on language proficiency. Other researchers also have provided convincing evidence that learners with different levels of language proficiency utilize different types of strategies (e.g., Chamot and Eldinary, 1999; Khalideh, 2000). In such studies, language proficiency was measured through Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Qualitative methods of data collection such as interview think aloud, stimulated recall, etc. were used to explore learning strategies used by learners.

#### **1.4. Gender and L2 Proficiency**

Apart from motivation and learning strategies, as research has shown, there are other factors that exert influence on the EFL learners' proficiency. For instance, gender is one of the factors explored by a number of researchers. Research has shown that gender indirectly influences L2 proficiency through moderating the effects of other individual factors. In language learning strategy studies involving gender, for example, efforts have been made to investigate the strategies used by males and females and 'the sex difference findings to date show that in typical language learning situations females use significantly more learning strategies than males and use them more often' (Oxford 1989, p. 239). In this regard, Arabski (1999) also performed a pilot study with 60 students and found that compared with males, females used learning strategies in a different way. In addition to the learning strategies, learners' motivation is another individual factor which can be confounded by the effects of learners' gender in second language acquisition. For example, the role of gender in shaping learners' motivation has proved to be influential. It has been shown that females are constantly more motivated to pursue their academic careers than males (Meece et al., 2006).

Considering the effects of learners' gender on integrative and instrumental motivation, some researchers (for instance, Bacon and Finnemann, 1992; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Goldberg Muchnik and Wolfe, 1982; Sung and Padilla, 1998) argued that females are highly motivated and have more positive attitudes toward learning a foreign

language than males. Mori and Gobel (2006), on the other hand, state that the effect of gender on learners' integrative and instrumental motivation is not clear. In other words, males and females do not benefit differentially from integrative and instrumental motivation.

While previous research investigated the effects of learners' motivation, learning strategies, and gender on L2 proficiency separately, the current study aims at contributing to the literature by investigating the combined effects of EFL learners' motivational orientations, learning strategies, and gender on their L2 proficiency. In other words, the current study aims at determining which of the above individual factors more significantly accounts for EFL learners' proficiency.

## **1.5. Objectives of the study and Research questions**

The main objective that the current study follows is the investigation of the extent to which a number of individual learner factors including: 1) motivation, 2) learning strategies, 3) gender are predictive of L2 proficiency. To this end, the current study is guided by the following research questions:

The current study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What type of motivation (integrative or instrumental) can better predict L2 proficiency?
2. To what extent can EFL learners' L2 proficiency be predicted by their use of language learning strategies?
3. Can differences in learners' proficiency be accounted for by their gender?