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**IN THE NAME OF GOD**

Σ۲۳.۲

روز انصافت د آرک علمي ايرين  
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*Teacher Training University  
Department of Foreign Languages*

**A Comparative Study of Language Learning  
Strategies Employed by Bilinguals and  
Monolinguals with Reference to  
Attitudes and Motivation**

*A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)*

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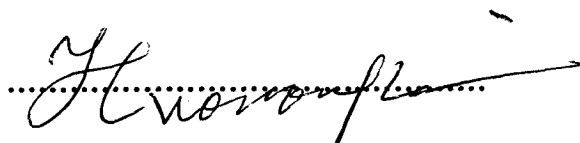
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We hereby recommend that this thesis by 'Alice Ebrahimi' entitled 'A Comparative Study of Language Learning Strategies Employed by Bilinguals and Monolinguals with Reference to Attitudes and Motivation' be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

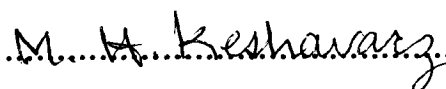
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Teacher Training University  
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**TO MY BELOVED FAMILY**

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating some EFL learners' cognitive and affective factors, namely the use of Language Learning Strategies (LLS), attitudes and motivation with special reference to linguistic background of students. It was an attempt to see whether bilingual and monolingual learners of English differ significantly in LLS use, attitudes, motivation, and proficiency in English. Further attempts were also made to determine the best predictors of language proficiency and LLS use in the total sample.

By employing an ex post facto design, 216 third grade high school female students were selected from among two groups of Armenian-Persian speakers and Persian speakers (106 Persian speakers and 110 Armenian-Persian speakers). One General English Proficiency Test (Nelson test, 150 C) with three valid and reliable questionnaires – SILL, attitudes and motivation – were administered to both groups. Statistical analyses of t-tests showed that there were no significant differences between two groups regarding their proficiency in English as well as motivation. By contrast, statistically differences existed between two groups with regard to LLS use and attitudes toward English and foreign languages. Further analyses showed that bilinguals differed from monolinguals in their use of metacognitive, cognitive and compensation strategies.

The findings also revealed that the most frequent LLS used by two groups were metacognitive and social strategies while affective strategies were used at the lowest frequency. The two groups differed in the order of three other categories of LLS i.e., cognitive, compensation and memory.

The results of multiple regression analyses also revealed that the best predictors of language proficiency were years of study and use of LLS respectively. Moreover, attitudes and years of study accounted for the greatest variation in LLS use.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Overview

One of the most important outcomes of the movement towards more communicatively oriented language learning and teaching has been the enhancement of the role of the 'learner' in the language learning process. Thus, understanding certain learners' characteristics and the ways in which learners differ from one another has been, and still is, a fundamental concern to those concerned in second language acquisition (SLA).

In fact, the learner variables that can influence the course of second language development are potentially infinite and very difficult to classify in a reliable manner. Research on individual differences in SLA have highlighted the importance of such variables as age, gender, language aptitude, language attitudes, cultural background, motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, self-confidence, self-esteem, personality traits, etc. (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995).

Noticeably, however, in the last three decades language learning strategies (as a cognitive variable) and motivation, attitudes and anxiety (as affective variables) have been the subject of a great deal of discussion in FL/SL research. These variables have gained so much importance among L2 researchers that they have been incorporated in models of second language learning.

Studies on language learning strategies (LLS, hereafter) have shown that appropriate LLS are useful in the development of communicative competence,

improved proficiency, and learner autonomy (Oxford & Crookall, 1988, 1989; Oxford, 1990).

On the other hand, the theory, research and experimentation of recent years have led to the increasing conviction of the importance of the affective component in language learning. Hilgard (1963:267) well known for his study of human learning and cognition, once noted that "purely cognitive theories of learning will be rejected unless a role is assigned to affectivity." Thus, in recent years FL educators have focused on affective variables such as attitudes and motivation. The results of some investigations indicate that students' attitudes and motivation have a great effect on their general proficiency level (Gardner, 1985, 1992; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992).

In contrast, some other studies have assigned a rather limited role to motivation and attitudes in learners' proficiency (Cooper & Fishbein, 1977; Chihara & Oller, 1978).

As an explanation to these contradictory findings, social contexts have been considered as important factors in determining the role of affective variables such as motivation and attitudes in learners' achievement. As stated by Gardner (1988:112) the view "that the role of attitudes and motivation should be consistent in many different contexts, and thus a universal in language learning is just too simplistic."

As a result, more research has been called for to define the role of contextual factors in examining these affective variables.

Moreover, some findings thus far have shown significant relationships between LLS and attitudinal/motivational factors (Oxford & Nyikos, 1993). However, as

confessed by SLA researchers more piece of evidence is required to judge whether this finding can be generalized to different groups of learners in different social contexts, with different cultural backgrounds.

Taking these points into consideration, this study aimed at further investigation of the mentioned variables and the possible relationships between them in a context of a foreign language learning (FLL).

Moreover, not yet described in the research literature is the investigation of these variables with respect to linguistic background of learners. Hence, another focus of this study was to examine these variables in bilingual and monolingual contexts.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study**

In the last decades, a considerable amount of research into learner variables such as LLS, attitudes, and motivation as well as the relationships between them and their contribution to learners' proficiency has been carried out. Though the results have been significant, it appears that there is no firm resolution with regard to the role of attitudinal/motivational factors along with LLS in foreign language learning.

Moreover, social context and cultural background have been considered as factors important to be addressed in the investigation of these variables (Gardner, 1988; Bedell, 1993).

Hence, the primary purpose of this study was to examine these variables in the contexts of bilingual and monolingual learners of English and to see whether bilingual and monolingual learners of English differ significantly in their frequency and order of LLS use, motivation, attitudes toward English and foreign languages, and proficiency in English.

Yet, the secondary purpose of the study was to examine the mentioned variables and the relationships between them in a foreign language learning (FLL) context where learners have few immediate and widespread opportunities to use the language within the environment of their own culture. More specifically, an attempt was made to determine which of the variables under investigation contribute more to language proficiency as well as LLS use with the hope to find more evidence for previous research conducted in this regard.

### **1.3 Significance and Justification of the Study**

In recent years, due to the recognition of the learners' role in language learning and a departure from seeking perfect methods of language teaching, research on specific individual characteristics has gained much impetus. As a result, learners' cognitive, affective and social factors have been considered as critical factors potentially influential in successful language learning.

However, as the review of literature shows, contradictory findings have been reported by SLA researchers in examining different learner variables. In this regard, contextual and cultural backgrounds of learners have been considered as important factors influencing the results of the studies.

So, this study was set out to examine some individual variables, namely use of LLS, motivation and attitudes in a foreign language learning context.

Besides, an attempt was made to examine these variables with regard to learners' linguistic background i.e., in bilingual and monolingual contexts. The reason to choose these contexts was the fact that the area of affective factors along with LLS with respect to learners' linguistic background was one of the least investigated areas of TEFL, particularly in Iran. The significance of the study,