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March 27, 2006

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION, GENDER, AND LANGUAGE
LEARNING STRATEGIES IN EFL PROFICIENCY

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The purpose of the present study was to investigate the role of motivation (instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, effort, valence, expectancy, and ability), gender, and language learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency. Descriptive statistics (range, means, and standard deviations), a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, an Independent Sample T-Test, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted to answer the questions raised in the study.

The participants were 147 female and male undergraduate students enrolled in intensive English classes at the American University of Beirut (AUB). The study employed a survey design which involved administering two different questionnaires, the Motivation Scale (MS), developed by Wen (1997) and modified by Shaaban and Ghaith (2000), to measure motivation, and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), developed by Oxford (1990), to measure Language Learning Strategies (LLSs). In order to determine language proficiency, the verbal SAT scores were used.

The results of this study revealed, at the $P < .05$ alpha level, that, although motivation in general does not correlate with EFL proficiency, effort does, in favor of the high proficient. The findings also revealed no significant gender differences in overall motivation; however, females make more effort and have a higher perception of the valence of learning EFL than males. In addition, the results did not show a significant role for gender in EFL proficiency.

Furthermore, the results showed that overall strategy use does not play a significant role in EFL proficiency; however, the results revealed a low, negative correlation between the use of metacognitive strategies and proficiency. The findings also revealed that the most frequently used strategies were the cognitive and metacognitive strategies (with a significant correlation between them), and the least frequently used strategies were the affective strategies. Finally, the results showed no significant role for gender in the overall use of language learning strategies, but they showed significant differences between males and females in their use of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, in favor of females.

The results are discussed and recommendations for further research are suggested.

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