Good Language Learners' Preferences for Motivational Strategies: A Focus Group Analysis

Trifa Soufi Mahmoudi[1]
Mohsen Masoomi[2]

[1]Department of English Language, Kurdistan Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sanandaj, Iran

[2]Department of English Language, Sanandaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sanandaj, Iran

Corresponding author: Mohsen Masoomi

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate and explore the motivational strategies employed by good language learners and examine students' differences in using the most-highly used motivational strategies with respect to the gender of the participants. The procedures were done with participation of twenty male and female (10 male and 10 female) students majoring Teaching English Foreign Language at Islamic Azad University of Sanandaj, Iran. The researcher, having divided the students into two groups, used focus group interview. The researcher acting as a facilitator guided the groups based on a predetermined set of topics. The result of quantitative and qualitative investigations and calculations showed that the learners mentioned 158 cases of motivational strategies categorized into 17 factors .These factors were both integrative, such as engaging in problem-solving activities, enjoying success, positive attitudes towards L2 speakers as well as increasing self-esteem and instrumental, like finding job, getting higher degrees, and promoting in current work. Also, the most commonly cited factors from the most to the least included pursuing studies (12.7%), finding good job (11.4 %), spending more time (10.1 %), engaging in problem-solving activities (10.1 %), and getting higher marks (9.5 %). The difference between the five most frequently-used motivational strategies with respect to the gender of the participants who were good language learners showed that: a) female students were more motivated in learning English, b) as for finding good job, male students were more motivated to learn English, c) as for spending more time, engaging in problem-solving activities and getting high grades, the difference between male and female students was not significant.

Keywords: Motivational strategies; Good language learner; Group analysis

I.Introduction

Traditionally, research on L2 motivation has focused on the social-psychological perspectives that   create interest in learning and facilitate in sustaining it among which factors such as "integrative motivation" and "intrinsic motivation" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132) were more prominent. Later on, the impact of motivation was examined from cognitive psychology 40 perspectives and motivation was regarded as "intrinsic motivation" (i.e., doing something as an end in itself) and "extrinsic motivation" (i.e., doing something as a means to some separable outcome) (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.41).

Nevertheless, motivation, itself, has not been sufficient since there is also another aspect to motivation that every learner most likely has encountered at some point: Motivational strategies. Similar to research carried out on learning strategies, Dornyei (2001) underscored the use of discussion and joint experience in raising learners' awareness of the strategies. As a matter of fact, it is rather difficult to theorize the motivational strategies. It can be taken as a driving force that energizes human behavior and orients it for better performance.

It has already been documented that motivation performs an effective role in second language acquisition. A sheer number of research explored L2 motivation, examining its complex nature and the way in which it influences the L2 learning process (Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1979; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 2009, to name but a few). So there is a benefit to such sorts of research works because of linking theory to practice by transferring motivational theories into techniques and strategies that can be applied by EFL teachers in the classrooms. The present study set out to explore and examine motivational strategies from the perspectives of EFL student in the context of Iran.

During the last five decades, much research has been conducted in the field of L2 motivation and its relevance to the success in L2 learning (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985). The primary studies of L2 motivation are influenced by the work of Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972), focusing on the social psychological approach. A key issue to this perspective is the view of L2 motivation as a determining factor which leads to L2 achievement. A noteworthy development in L2 motivation research occurred in the 1990s during which research in the field expanded to incorporate cognitive and educational views of L2 motivation (e.g., Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 1996a). During this time, research into L2 motivation emphasized the teacher's role in motivating students as well as the importance of the learning environment.

Since the current study is to focus on the contribution of motivational strategies to good language learners, it should be mentioned that research in the area of characteristics of good language learners has been the home of choice for SLA researchers since mid-1970. According to Griffiths (2008), in conducting such research, both learning and learner variables should be taken into account. However, one topic that has not been touched in this domain is the relationship between the characteristics of good language learner and the use of motivational strategies. It is evident that good language learners are motivated students.

II.Background and Objectives of the Present Study

One of the key factors to determine success in learning a foreign language is Learner's motivation. Motivation researchers suggested that motivational strategies that learners' motivation toward learning a foreign language can be effectively influenced by using teachers (e.g., Banya & Cheng, 1997; Dörnyei, 1994a; Fives & Manning, 2005; Stipek, 1996). In 2001, Dörnyei demonstrated the motivational strategies in his text, Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom. Creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining, and protecting motivation and rounding off the learning experience (encouraging positive self-evaluation) are the groups of motivational strategies. Based on this idea, the concept of all these strategies is teacher behavior and beliefs significantly affect students' motivation for learning a foreign language. For this reason, an important aspect of motivation toward learning a foreign language is strategies in motivating language learners.

Therefore, motivational techniques have been constructed and summarized in several research studies for teachers in classroom application (e.g., Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Brown, 2001; Chambers, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997). Moreover, several relevant motivational components into a multilevel are integrated by Dörnyei (1994a), motivational construct in second-language is based on understanding the second language motivation

from an educational view. He made a practical motivational strategy list based on these components comprised of thirty strategies for helping language teachers better understand what motivates their students in the second language classroom. The result shows that not only motivational strategies can influence learners' motivation, but also that teachers play significant roles to help learners establish self-confidence and achieve successes that can crucially influence motivation (Fives & Manning, 2005; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant & Mihic, 2004).

Accordingly there is a severe lack of research on the determining role of L2 learners' motivational strategies in terms of the new perspectives of motivation including the social and cultural context of motivation in promoting good language learners. The problem lies in the fact that most of the students just focus on cognitive aspects and strategies to improve their English, and they underrate the role of emotional factors in their success. Likewise, research on L2 motivation deals with what makes a person want to learn a second language and what maintains him or her interested in learning. However, motivation to learn a second language is a complex construct, taking into account that language is always socially and culturally bound and hence, quite different from other school subjects (Dornyei, 2001). Particularly, to gain mastery over a L2 is also a social event that is unavoidably accompanied by some elements of the L2 culture.

The current study, as an initial attempt, tries to identify the motivational strategies that learners employ to function well in English language, and in so doing, focus group interview is the focus of this study to figure out the relevant data. Having identified the motivational strategies, the researcher explores the most influential strategies used by good language learners. What mainly prompted this study was the novelty of this particular area of research, that is, the relationship between motivational strategies and good language learner. Based on Vygotskyian Sociocultural theory of mind (1978), higher order cognitive functions are internalized from social interaction with more competent others. Therefore, using group discussion and interaction, finding out the strategies employed by learners who are successful in learning a second language would lead to better understanding of the strategies that play significant roles in learning. L2 motivation is needed to help learners expend and persist in their effort in an L2 learning process which might extend over a long period of time.

Therefore, this study investigates the motivational strategies which EFL learners use to promote their learning process in Iranian context. In particular, it considers the perceptions of EFL students about different motivational strategies. This definition assumes that teachers can apply some motivational strategies in order to raise learners' motivation.

2.1 Research Questions

In order to examine the application of motivational strategies by successful L2 learners, the current study set out to provide answers for the following questions:

1. What factors do determine the motivational strategies employed by good language learners?

2. What is the frequency and order of importance of the motivational strategies employed by good language learners?

3. Are there any significant differences between motivational strategies and good language learners with respect to the gender of the participants?

The first research question of the present study mentioned above is a qualitative question; therefore, no research hypothesis is formulated for it. However, the following null hypotheses were formulated for the two quantitative questions (i.e., the second and third research questions) of the current study:

H02: There are no significant differences between motivational strategies and good language learners with respect to the gender of the participants.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The present study follows two theoretical frameworks to explore and examine the association between the motivational strategies and good language learners: 1) "Motivational strategies" proposed by Dornyei (2005)

and "characteristics of good language learners" suggested by Rubin and Thomspon (1983, cited in Nunan, 1999). The guidelines suggested by Dornyei (2005) are factors based on which the individual's goal-related behavior are promoted. The present study followed the guidelines proposed by Dornyei (2005) regarding the L2 Motivational Self System, including the following three components:

(1) Ideal L2 Self, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self: if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the 'ideal L2 self' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives would typically belong to this component.

   (2)Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to Higgins's ought self and thus to the more extrinsic (i.e. less internalized) types of instrumental motives.

(3)L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). This component is conceptualized at a different level from the two self-guides and future research will hopefully elaborate on the self-aspects of this bottom-up process.

Since the dependent variable in this study is good language learner, the present study also pays attention to the perceptions of good language learners regarding the reasons that they offer for their successes and their attributions for their successes. The theoretical framework that frames the characteristics of good language learners for the present study refers to Rubin and Thomspon's (1983, cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 57) theory of efficient including the following features: 1) finding their own way, 2) organizing information about language, 3) being creative and experiment with language, 4) making their own opportunities, 5) finding strategies for getting practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom, 6) living with uncertainty and develop strategies for making sense of the target language without wanting to understand every word, 7) using linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language in mastering a second language, 8) letting the context (extra-linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world) helps them in comprehension, 9) learning production techniques (e.g., techniques for keeping conversation going), and 10) learning different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

Therefore, The aims of the study were to 1) identify, analyze and categorize the motivational strategies employed by good language learners at Islamic Azad University of Sanandaj, 2) tabulate the frequency and order of the most highly used motivational strategies, and 3) investigate the association between motivational strategies and good language learners in terms of the most frequently-cited factors emerged from L2 learners' responses. The researcher tried to collect the relevant data regarding the major variables including good language learner characteristics as dependent variable, and motivational strategies as independent variable, and used relevant statistical procedures to carry out his research work. To conduct the interview, the researcher followed Semi-structured focus group interview.

III.Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 20 male and female EFL students majoring in TEFL at Islamic Azad University of Sanandaj. To select the students, first, the researcher chose those students who were between 6th and 8th (junior &senior) semester since they have had enough experience of engaging with learning English language. Then, he went for those students whose average points met certain criteria, that is, they had the required mean score that was 16+ to confirm the sample homogeneity. Following this, the researcher distributed

Nelson Test of Proficiency to them and, finally, 20 students were selected based on their higher scores on the test. The students were willing to take part in the study and they were divided into two groups including 10 male and 10 female students. The number of students in each group was small enough to give everyone the opportunity to express an opinion and simultaneously, large enough to provide diversity of opinions. The researcher named the two groups as Group A (including male students) and Group B (including female students).

3.2 Instrumentation

The major instrument used in this study was "focus group interview" to collect data from multiple individuals simultaneously.

The researcher used "semi-structured type of focus group" (Dornyei, 2007, p. 144) to conduct the research which is the most common format because it included three major questions (See appendix A) posed by the researcher rather than giving the participants freedom to discuss some broad topics.

3.3 Procedures

To collect data for the study concerning the extent to which students employ the motivational strategies introduced by Dornyei (2001), the researcher, having divided the students in two groups, used focus group interview since a focus group is a group interview of approximately six to twelve people who share similar characteristics or common interests. The researcher acting as a facilitator guided the group based on a predetermined set of topics. She created an environment that encouraged participants to share their perceptions and points of view.

The researcher held four sessions for each group separately in a quite classroom and each session and since focus groups typically last about 60 minutes, she tried to pose the questions and leading hints in a way that the session did not last more than around 60 minutes. The researcher guided the group through the discussion and kept the group focused on the topics for discussion. She also asked one of her friends to act as the note-taker and recorder during the sessions. The note-taker was just an observer and did not interact with the group. The notes included a sense of what each person said; identifying how comments were said; and recording when transitions occurred from one topic to the next. She was also responsible for recording the focus group discussion. The recordings were then transcribed by the researcher to figure out and categorize the common themes elicited from students' responses.

To collect the data from students' response three alternatives were possible. Indeed, Focus group data can arise from one of the following three types: individual data, group data, and/or group interaction data (Duggleby, 2005). Focus group theorists disagree as to the most appropriate unit of analysis for focus group data to analyze (i.e., individual, group, or interaction). Some theorists believe that the individual or the group should be the focus of the analysis instead of the unit of analysis (Kidd & Marshall, 2000). However, most focus group researchers use the group as the unit of analysis (Morgan, 1997). The researcher of the present study also used the group as the unit of analysis since it also included the interaction between group members. The researcher believed that out of interaction themes arose that was more than the individual data. By doing so, the researcher coded the data and presented emergent themes.

The researcher provided a focus group guide for herself which included a series of questions and prompts to use during the interview sessions. She asked the relevant questions of the group and allowed time for participants to respond to each other's comments. The focus group guide served as a "road map" and memory aid for the facilitator. The same focus group guide was used for each focus group.

To analyze the data gathered from students' responses and interactions, the researcher first explored different techniques used to analyze the data. Indeed, the frameworks of Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) suggest several qualitative analysis techniques that can be used to analyze focus group data. Specifically, the

analytical techniques that lend themselves to focus group data are constant comparison analysis, classical content analysis, keywords-in-context, and discourse analysis (for a review of analytical techniques, see, for example, Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

The researcher of the present study made use of both constant comparison analysis and classical content analysis to analyze data. With reference to constant comparison analysis, she followed the three major stages of the constant comparison analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the first stage (i.e., open coding), the data were chunked into small units. The researcher attached a descriptor, or code, to each of the units. Then, during the second stage (i.e., axial coding), these codes were grouped into categories. Finally, in the third stage (i.e., selective coding), the researcher developed one or more themes expressing the content of each of the groups.

With regard to classical content analysis, the researcher created smaller chunks of the data, placing a code with each chunk. However, instead of creating a theme from the codes (as with constant comparison analysis), with classical content analysis, these codes then were placed into similar groupings and counted. The researcher, first, identified whether each participant used a given code, then, she assesses whether each group used a given code, and finally, she identified all instances of a given code. The researchers not only provided information regarding the frequency of each code (i.e., quantitative information) but supplemented these data with a rich description of each code (i.e., qualitative information), which would create a mixed methods content analysis.

IV. Result and Finding

4.1 Results from Focus Group Interview with Good Language Learners

To explore the first research question, the researcher employed Focus Group Interview, following the guidelines proposed by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) through which initially the researcher acting as a facilitator posed open-ended questions and closed-ended questions in English language and let students express their ideas while her friend acting as note-taker, wrote down the verbal and non-verbal communication data and she also recorded their voices using audio-tape recorder. The researcher finally came up with common themes employing the techniques of open-coding, axial-coding and selective coding to analyze data.

The researcher started the interview with demographic question as follows: Would you please introduce yourself one-by-one in brief to the group, and immediately asked the questions already constructed to follow a semi-structured focus group interview. Here are the questions and some common statements elicited from the two groups including Group A (10 male students) and Group B (10 female students).

Question 1:

1. Could you talk about the characteristics of a good language learner?

The group interviews obtained from transcribing the responses out of group analysis revealed the following findings:

Group A:

Good language learners have self-esteem and they are confident. They practice as much as possible. They try their best to learn in the classroom and concentrate on whatever they study. A good language learner participates actively in class discussion. Students should rely on themselves not the teacher and a good language learner should be competent in listening skills more than anything else. Moreover, good language learners attribute their success to themselves not significant others, and their success is the result of their effort not their intelligence.

Group B:

Good language learners are willing to attend the classes. They pay attention to details more. They think that a good language learner should speak fluently and has good accent. They write their homework well. They

should memorize vocabulary and grammatical points. They are more reflective than impulsive, reflecting on what they have learned and on their lectures. They like to be checked by the teachers and they attribute their success to significant others, not their own effort. They have good marks.

Question 2:

2. To what extent does motivation determine your success in learning English?

Group A:

Motivation is a key factor in successful language learning because if we have possessed motivation, we could put away the obstacles and always tries to learn more. When we are motivated, we spend more time to learn. A good language learner has a driving force and will not leave his studies if he finds the task difficult. When we see that we are developing, we expect ourselves to progress more and this is a good indication of having motivation. We not only study our lessons but also learn from outside textbooks and films.

Group B:

To a great extent, learning depends on our motivation. Motivation increases our desire to learn English and become successful learners. Sometimes, some students say that if I fail to pass the final test in this or that course, I will give up my studies. Or, there are students who say that what is the difference between getting 12 or 20? We believe that they have not enough motivation and they think about how much they get at the end of the term, but, we think about both how much we get at the end of the term and how much we learned from the course at the end of the term. We like to learn more vocabulary because we are interested in learning them. Motivation helps us enjoy our learning. Indeed, when the teacher or our family praises us, we feel happy and when we see our good course grades, we become excited.

Question 3:

3. What motivational factors do help you sustain in learning English?

Group A:

We like to promote in works (teaching in private institutes) in English language. Learning English language increases our self-confidence and we feel satisfaction, say, when we see that we are watching an original film and can understand the films. We like to find the answer to the questions ourselves when listening to a track and we like to have teacher but as a mediator who provides hints for us not giving the answer at once. Indeed, we like to engage in problem-solving activities. We do not need to have forces from outside to study; we are worried if we find a good textbook about English language skills or components unread. We also learn English language to continue our studies and find a good job. We like to go abroad and communicate well with other people through English language. Motivation increases self-esteem and self-efficacy. When we are motivated, we participate actively without worrying about our mistakes.

Group B:

We like to pursue our studies. We are studying with together and we have a calm environment and we support each other in our lessons and our homework. We learn better in classes where the teacher does not cause stress for us. When we speak in English like native speakers or we write an E-mail in English language, we feel happy. We have a positive attitude towards English culture and try to learn the good points from their cultures; for example, to be honest, to be frank, and to be lively. We like to learn both linguistically and non-linguistically, such as performing well on the tests and paying attention to cultural values. Moreover, educated people are expected to know English language.

4.2 Frequency and order of motivational strategies

To find an answer for the second research question, the researcher, first, made use of three stages of coding. He chunked the data into small units during the stage of open coding. Then, he attached a code to each of the

units, and these codes were grouped into categories during the stage of axial coding. Finally, the researcher developed one or more themes expressing the content of each of the groups in the stage of selective coding. In the last stage, these codes then were placed into similar groupings and counted. The number and frequency of the categories that motivated the students to learn English were tabulated by the researcher using Descriptive Statistics. Therefore, the first research hypothesis with regard to the frequency of motivational categories was rejected.

Altogether, 158 cases were elicited from focus group interview and they were categorized into 17 factors. The results from the SPSS Software for Windows version 21: 00 yielded interesting frequency. The most commonly cited factors included pursuing our studies (12.7%), finding good job (11.4 %), spending more time (10.1 %), engaging in problem-solving activities (10.1 %), and getting higher marks (9.5 %).

The relationship between the most frequently cited motivational strategies and good language learners with respect to gender

Pursuing studies

Table 1: The number of cases pursuing their studies

	pursuing studies		Total
	Mentioned	not-mentioned	
GenderMale	6	14	20
Female	14	6	20
Total	20	20	40

As displayed by Table 1, the number of cases for pursuing studies mentioned by males was 6 and by female were 14.

Table 2: Chi-square test for pursuing studies

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.40a	1	.01		
Continuity Correctionb	4.90	1	.02		
Likelihood Ratio	6.58	1	.01		
Fisher's Exact Test				.02	.01
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.24	1	.01		
N of Valid Cases	40				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

To see if the difference between the two categorical variables is significant, we refer to the next table. The main value that should be checked in from the output is the first chi-square value which is presented in Table 3, headed Pearson Chi-Square. In the table, the value is 6.40, with an associated significance level of .00 (this is presented in the column labeled Asymp. Sig. (2-sided). To be significant the Sig. value needs to be .05 or smaller, and in this case, the value of .01 is less than the alpha value of .05; thus, it is concluded that that the result is significant. This means that the difference between male and female students with reference to pursuing studies is significant; female students are more motivated to learn English language in order to pursue their studies.

Finding good job

Table 3: The number of cases for finding good job

	finding good job		
	Mentioned	not-mentioned	Total
GenderMale	12	6	18
Female	6	12	18
Total	18	18	36

The number of cases discussed by the good language learners for finding good job with reference to male students was 12 and the number of cases for female students was 6. Out of 20 students, 18 students mentioned it in their talks (See Table 3).

Table 4: Chi-square test for finding good job

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.0a	1	.04		
Continuity Correctionb	2.7	1	.09		
Likelihood Ratio	4.0	1	.04		
Fisher's Exact Test				.09	.04
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.8	1	.04		
N of Valid Cases	36				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

With reference to Table 5, the results demonstrated that the difference between the two categorical variables for finding good job is significant. The main value obtained from the chi-square is 4.00, with an associated significance level of .04. The significant value is .04 which is less than the alpha value of .05, so that it is concluded that the result is significant. This means the difference between male and female students with reference to finding good job is significant; male students are more motivated to learn English language in order to finding good job.

Spending more time

Table 5: The number of cases for spending more time

	spending more time		
	Mentioned	not-mentioned	Total
GenderMale	9	7	16
Female	7	9	16
Total	16	16	32

As shown in Table 5, the number of cases discussed by the good language learners for spending more time with reference to male students was 7 and the number of cases for female students was 9.

Table 6: Chi-square test for spending more time

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.50a	1	.48		
Continuity Correctionb	.12	1	.72		
Likelihood Ratio	.51	1	.47		
Fisher's Exact Test				.72	.36
Linear-by-Linear Association	.48	1	.48		
N of Valid Cases	32				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

As for spending more time, the results demonstrated that the difference between the male and female students is not significant. Indeed, this time, the main value obtained from the chi-square is .50. The significant value is .48 which is larger than the alpha value of .05; thus, the result is not significant. This shows that both male and female students spend more time for studying appropriately in the same amount. This means that the difference between male and female students with reference to spending more time is not significant. This shows that both male and female students spend time for studying appropriately in the same amount (See Table 6).

Engaging in problem-solving activities

Table 7: The number of cases for engaging in problem-solving activities

	engaging in problem-solving activities		
	mentioned	not-mentioned	Total
Gender male	8	8	16
female	8	8	16
Total	16	16	32

As displayed by Table 7, the number of cases engaging in problem-solving activities mentioned by males and females was the same, that is, male students mentioned it 8 times and female students mentioned it 8 times.

Table 8: Chi-square test for engaging in problem-solving activities

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.00a	1	1.00		
Continuity Correctionb	.00	1	1.00		
Likelihood Ratio	.00	1	1.00		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.00	.63
Linear-by-Linear Association	.00	1	1.00		
N of Valid Cases	32				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Regarding engaging in problem-solving activities, the results showed that the difference between the male and female students is not significant. Indeed, this time, the main value obtained from the chi-square is .00. The significant value is 1.00 which is larger than the alpha value of .05; thus, the result is not significant. This means that the difference between male and female students with reference to engaging in problem-solving activities is not significant (See Table 8).

Getting good grades

Table 9: The number of cases for getting high grade

	getting high grades		
	mentioned	not-mentioned	Total
Gender male	6	9	15
female	9	6	15
Total	15	15	30

The number of cases discussed by the good language learners for getting high grades with reference to male students was 6 and the number of cases for female students was 9.

Table 10: Chi-square test for getting high grades

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.20a	1	.27		
Continuity Correctionb	.53	1	.46		
Likelihood Ratio	1.20	1	.27		
Fisher's Exact Test				.46	.23
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.16	1	.28		
N of Valid Cases	30				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.50.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Regarding getting high grades, the results showed that the difference between the male and female students is not significant. Indeed, this time, the main value obtained from the chi-square is 1.20. The significant value is .27 which is larger than the alpha value of .05; thus, the result is not significant. This means that the difference between male and female students with reference to getting high grades is not significant (See Table 10).

4.3 Discussion

The results of the present study are mostly in line with previous research conducted in Iran (e.g., Dastgheib, 1996). Iranian people usually learn English in order to enter prestigious universities and thereby proceed to the highest levels of education and strata in their society (Sadeghi & Maghsudi, 2000). They also have a tendency to study English in order to live and study abroad and get access to rich resource as well as get familiar with cultural aspects of western societies (Tagughi, Magid & Papi, 2009). On the contrary, the results of the present study was not in line with what Matin (2007) found in the context of Iran .Matin (2007) examined the motivational characteristics of university students in Tehran. The results of the study indicated that the participants did not differ in terms of their general orientation to learn English. Indeed, the students were motivated instrumentally and had integrative forces. The knowledge promotion and employment were the highest and lowest factors on the instrumental scale, and interest in the English language ranked the highest and interest in English culture ranked the lowest on the integrative scale.

In sum, based on the findings of the present study and similar findings with regard to motivational forces in the context of Iran, it is obvious that good language learners tend to have prestigious social status in the classroom and in the society. Norton (2000, p. 10) refers to "investment" according to which learners invest in learning a new language so that they can improve their cultural perspectives, their conceptions of themselves and their desires for the future. Indeed, they want to improve their professional identity in the educational communities of practice.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings, major conclusions can be drawn from the present study. Firstly, the line research on motivational strategies in the past two decades is not country-specific because similar pattern has been found in some other countries like Hungary and Japan (Dornyie, 2005). This confirms the fact that motivational research

has external validity. Secondly, the findings highlight the fact that both integrativeness and instrumentality are important to become good language learners in the context of Iran. Instrumentality can be classified into three major constructs including continuing studies and employment, and integrativeness can be classified into two major constructs entailing spending more time and problem-solving strategies.

The kind of data elicitation in this study was focus group interview based on which interaction and discussion between good language learners confirmed the content validity of the categories emerged and cultural differences were taken into consideration. Although the two groups selected for this study were homogeneous based on their proficiency, the findings revealed interesting facts regarding the gender of the participants. As an example, female students have greater tendency than male students to continue their studies. It is evident today in our universities that female students at MA and PhD levels outnumber male students; however, male students are worried about finding job because of socio-economic factors to be able to afford their future lives and for this reason, the male students outnumber female students in this respect. There are some shared discourses among the individuals, that is, everyone likes to spend more time and learn English better or have a good job. Motivation is the gate for expectancy of success for them, that is to say, those who see their progress, promote in learning since success increases motivation and self-esteem. A critical principle to the maintenance of motivational strategies is that motivation should emerge from the within, that is, from the learner rather than controlled by the teacher.

References

[1]Alderman, M. K. (1999). Goals and goal setting. Motivation for achievement: possibilities for teaching and learning. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

[2]Alison, J., & Halliwell, S. (2002). Challenging classes: Focus on pupil behavior. London, UK:CILT.

[3]Ames, C. (1992). Classrooms: Goals, structures, and student motivation. Journal of Educational Psychology, 84, 261–271.

[4]Ames, C., & Archer, J. (1988). Achievement goals in the classroom : student's learning strategies and motivation processes. Journal of Research in science Teaching, 31,811-813.

[5]Atkinson, J. W. (1957). Motivational determinants of risk taking behavior. Psychological Review, 64, 359–372.

[6]Atkinson, J. W. (1964). An Introduction to Motivation. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand. → See especially pages 240–268, "A Theory of Achievement Motivation.

[7]Atkinson, J. W., & Feather, N. T. (Eds) (1966). A theory of achievement motivation. London: Wiley .

[8]Bandura, A. (1977). Social Learning Theory. New York: General Learning Press.

[9]Bandura, A. R. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall.

[10]Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived Self-Efficacy in Cognitive Development and Functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148.

[11]Bandura, A. R. (1994). *Self-efficacy. In Ramachaudren, V. S. (eds.), Encyclopedia of human behavior*, 4. New York: Academic Press, 71-81.

[12]Bandura, A. (1997*). Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. NewYork, NY: W.H. Freeman and Company.

[13]Bandura, A., & Schunk, D. H. (1981). Cultivating competence, self -efficacy, and intrinsic interest through proximal self-motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *41,* 586–598.

[14] Banya, K., & Cheng, M. H. (1997). Beliefs about foreign language learning: A study of beliefs of teachers' and students' cross culture settings. *Orlando, FL: The 31st Annual TESOL Convention*. (ERIC Document No. ED411691). Retrieved March 7, 2009, from ERIC database.

[15]Becker, H. S.(1970). Sociological work: Method and substance. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

[16]Bernaus, M., & Gardner, R. C. (2008). Teacher motivation strategies, student perceptions, student motivation, and English achievement. *Modern Language Journal*, 92, 387-401.

[17]Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating students to learn* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

[18] Brophy, J. & Neelam. (1986). *Teacher socialization as a mechanism for social psychology of Education Current Research and Theory*. Cmbridge: Cambridge university press.257-288.

[19]Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

[20]Chambers, G. N.(1999). *Motivating language learners. Clevedon:* Multilingual Matters.

[21]Cheng, H.-f., & Dörnyei, Z. (2007). The use of motivational strategies in language instruction: The case of EFL teaching in Taiwan. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 1,* 153-174.

[22]Christophel, D. M., & Gorham, J. (1995). A test-retest analysis of student motivation, teacher immediacy, and perceived sources of motivation and demotivation in college classes. *Communication Education*, *44,* 292-306.

[23]Clément, R. (1980). *Ethnicity, contact and communicative competence in a L2*. In H. Giles, W. P. Robinson and P. M. Smith (Eds*.), Language: Social psychological perspectives* (pp.147-154). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

[24]Covington, M.V. (1992). *Making the grade : A self- worth perspective on motivation and school reform. Cambridge*: Cambridge university press.

[25]Covington, M. V. (2000). Goal Theory, Motivation and School Achievement: *An Integrative Review. Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 171-200.

[26] Covington, M.V., & Beery,R.(1976). *Self- worth and school learning*. New York: Holt, Reinehart and Winston.

[27]Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. New York: Sage Publication

[28]Crookes, G., & Schmidt, R. W. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning, 41,* 469-512.

[29]Dastgheib, A. (1996). The *role of attitudes and motivation in second/foreign language   learning*. PhD thesis, Islamic Azad University of Tehran.

[30]Deci, E.L., & Moller, A.C. (2007). Control (p. 182-185). In R. F. Baumeister & K. D. Vohs (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, Vol. 1, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[31]Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985*). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour*. Plenum, New York.

[32]Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.

[33] Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation: A literature review. *System, 23 (2),* 174.

[34]Dörnyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign-language learning. *Language Learning* 40, 45-78.

[35]Dörnyei, Z. (1994a). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language Classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, *78,* 273-284.

[36]Dörnyei, Z. (1994b). Understanding L2 motivation: On with the challenge! *The Modern Language Journal,78(4),* 515-523.

[37]Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[38]Dornyei, Z. (2005). The psychology of the language learner: *Individual differences in second language acquisition.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

[39]Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research, 2 (3),* 203-229.

[40]Dornyei, Z., & Otto, I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. *Working papers in Applied Linguistics, 4,* 43-69.

[41]Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation (Second Edition) Harlow*: Pearson Educatio

[42] Dweck, C. S. (1992). The study of goals in psychology. *Psychological Science,* 3, 165-167.

[43]Eccles, J. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), Achievement and achievement motives: *Psychological and sociological approaches* (pp. 75-146). San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman.

[44]Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational Beliefs, Values, and Goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*,53, 109-32.

[45]Fives, H., & Manning, D.K. (2005). Teachers' strategies for student engagement: Comparing research to demonstrated knowledge. Washington, D.C.: *The 2005 Annual 53 Meeting of the American Psychological Association.bRetrievedFebruary10,2009,from*

http://netdrive.montclair.edu/~fivesh/Research_files/Fives&Manning_2005_APA.pdf

[46]Gan, Z., Humphreys, G., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2004). Understanding successful and unsuccessful EFL students in Chinese universities. *Modern Language Journal*, *88,* 229–244.

[47] Gardner, R. C. (1979). Social psychological aspects of second language acquisition. In H. Giles & R. St. Clair (Eds.), *Language and Social Psychology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

[48]Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, *13,* 266-272.

[49]Gardner, R. C., Masgoret, A. M., Tennant, J., & Mihic, L. (2004). Integrative motivation: Changes during a year-long intermediate-level language course. *Language learning, 54(1),* 1-34