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The Impact of Learning Strategies on EFL Students' Motivation

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the impact of learning strategies on student motivation in English language learning. The data were compiled from 200 secondary school students in Khartoum State and 100 secondary school teachers; the study employs validated instruments to measure strategy use and motivation levels; the result reveals that most of the male students prefer "memory, cognitive and social strategies "consequently. Compensation, Metacognitive, and Affective strategies are least used by male students. The findings also show that female students prefer "social, memory, and cognitive strategies "consequently. Compensation, Metacognitive, and Affective strategies are also the least used by female students. Students were inclined towards the use of memory, cognitive, and social strategies. However, they least used compensation, affective, and metacognitive strategies. For teachers' motivational strategies, the result shows that there is no balance in teachers' use of motivational strategies; the descending orders of the importance of the four scales perceived by teachers are from attention to satisfaction to confidence and lastly to relevance. It was found that the attention scale was significantly higher than other three scales and the relevance scale was the lowest. The researcher recommend that teachers should use motivational strategies matches students learning strategies to rise their motivation and promote their language standard.

Keywords: Learning strategies, motivation, English language learning, metacognition

1. Introduction

English proficiency is a critical skill in the 21st century, yet many EFL students struggle with motivation due to ineffective learning habits. Motivation, a key driver of language learning, is influenced by learners' ability to employ effective strategies. This study examines how targeted learning strategies can enhance students' motivation.

1.2 Research Problem

Traditional teaching methods often neglect engagement in the learning environment, leading to passive learning and boredom. This paper addresses how learning strategy can empower students and create motivation for EFL students.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To determine teachers' perception of motivation strategies in EFL classes.
2. To identify which strategies most effectively enhance students' motivation.

1.4 Research Questions

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1. What are the teachers' perceptions of motivation strategies in EFL classes?
2. How do learning strategies affect students' motivation to learn the English language?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory: Deci and Ryan (1985) propose that intrinsic motivation increases when learners are involved in autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, students are more likely to engage in learning activities out of willpower and internal satisfaction.

Social Cognitive Theory: Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy and observational learning. According to this theory, individuals learn by observing others' behaviors and outcomes, which influences their own actions and confidence in their abilities.

2.2 Learning Strategies

Cognitive Strategies: As described by Oxford (1990), cognitive strategies involve mental processes such as note-taking, summarization, and translation. These strategies help learners to process and retain new Information more effectively.

Metacognitive Strategies: Flavell (1979) introduced metacognitive strategies, which include goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflection. These strategies enable learners to plan, regulate, and evaluate their own learning processes, enhancing their overall autonomy and persistence.

Social-Affective Strategies: O'Malley and Chamot (1990) highlight the importance of social-affective strategies, which involve collaboration, seeking feedback, and managing anxiety. These strategies help learners to interact with others and maintain a positive attitude toward learning.

2.3 Motivation in Language Learning

Intrinsic Motivation: Gardner (1985) explains that intrinsic motivation is driven by curiosity and enjoyment. Learners who are intrinsically motivated engage in language learning for the sheer pleasure and interest in the language itself.

Extrinsic Motivation: Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is fueled by external rewards such as grades, career opportunities, or social recognition. While extrinsic motivation can be effective, it may not sustain long-term engagement as effectively as intrinsic motivation.

Metacognitive Strategies: Dörnyei (2001) found that metacognitive strategies significantly enhance learners' autonomy and persistence. By setting goals, monitoring their progress, and reflecting on their learning, learners can take greater control of their language learning journey.

Social Strategies: According to Li and Wang (2020), social strategies foster communal motivation through peer interaction. Collaborating with peers and seeking feedback creates a supportive learning environment, which can boost learners' motivation and engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 The participants:

3.1.1.1 The Students

The participants of this study are 200 students selected from third year secondary school students in Khartoum State. There are 100 female and 100 male students in this classes and they are around 16 to 18 years old. They   have studied English for about 8 years. They all planning to take the Sudanese Certificate Examination so as to incorporate in the different scientific fields of Sudanese Universities.

The students are all Arabic L1 speakers and some Sudanese colloquial language speakers who learn
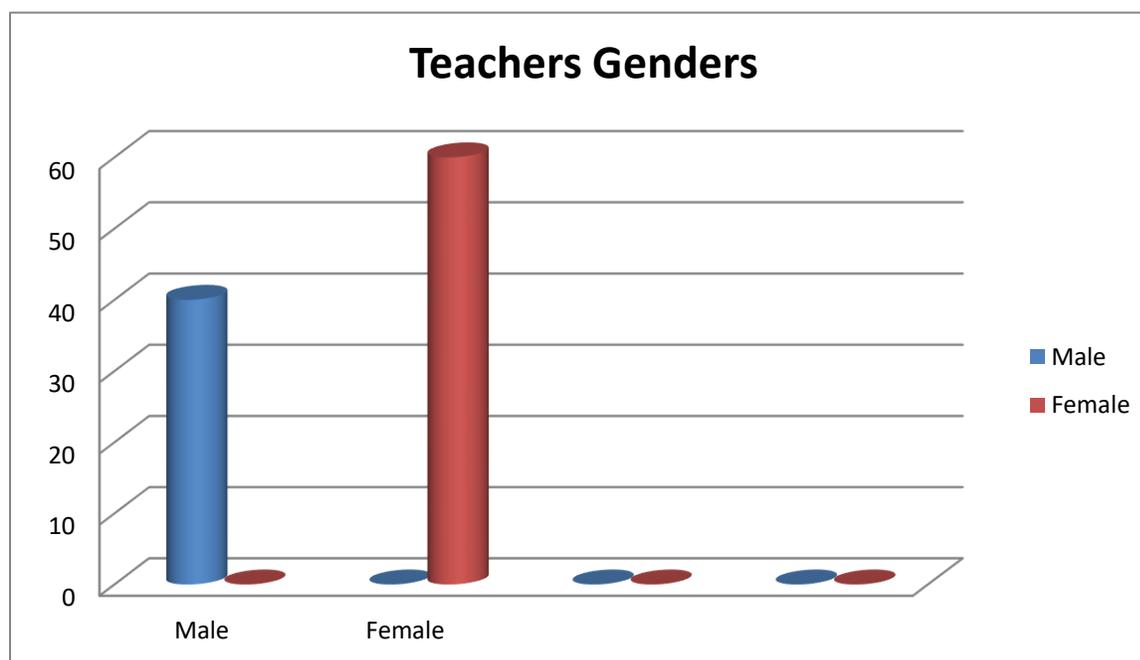
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English as a foreign language (EFL).

3.1.12 The Teachers

The participants also include English language teachers who work in secondary schools. They are (100) hundred in number, and they are categorized into two groups: males and females. They have different qualification certificates ranging from Diploma to Master degrees awarded from different inside country and outside universities. Also, they have different years of work experience. Most of them professional, they have been teaching English for   many years.

Table (3.1) Gender

No	Gender	Freq.	%
1	Male	40	40 %
2	Female	60	60 %
Total		100	100 %

Table 3.2: Qualifications

No	Qualification	Frequency	Percent
1.	M.A	40	40 %
2.	B.A	35	35 %
3.	Diploma	25	25 %
Total		100	100 %

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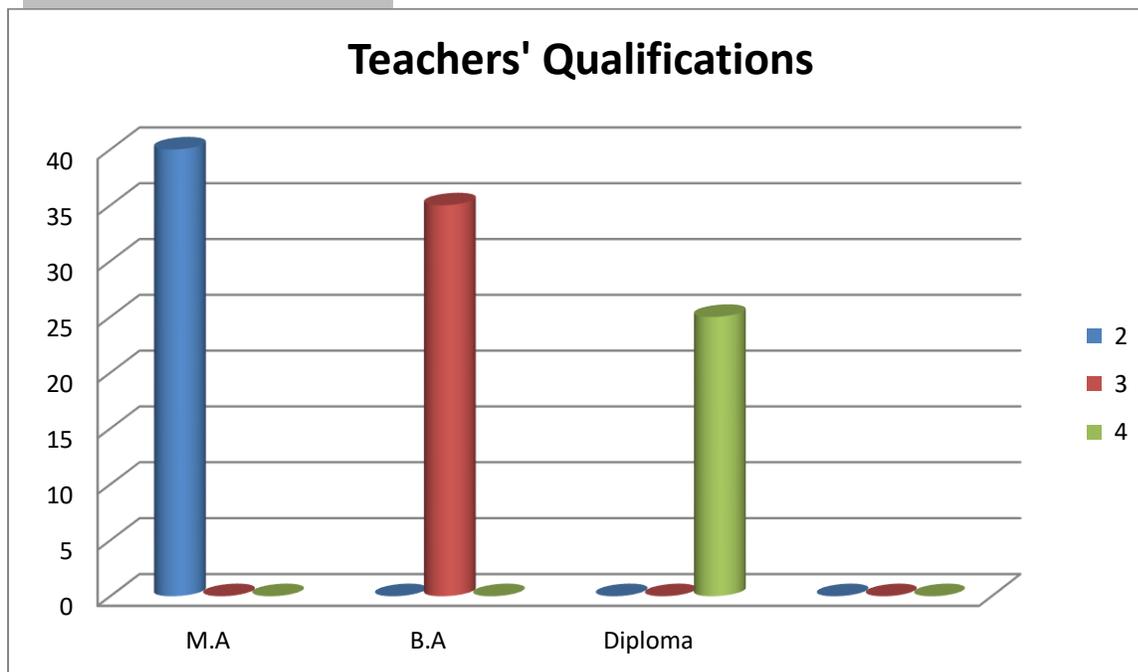
Table (3.3) : Experience

No	working experience	Freq.	%
1.	(1-5) years	23	23 %
2.	(5-10) years	20	20%
3.	(10- 15) years	55	55%
4.	(More than 15) years	12	12%
Total		100	100%

3.2 Data Collection
3.2.1 Data Collection Methods
   The present study mainly employed questionnaires intended to gather Information about   learning strategies , and collect Information about teachers strategies in motivating students.
3.2.1 Learning Strategies Questionnaire
      The researcher uses another questionnaire for students to identify what kind of learning strategies do they follow for language learning. The questionnaire contains of 30 items, each six items of these 30 items are related to specific learning strategies whether they are direct learning strategies, such as memory, cognitive

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and compensation strategies or indirect learning strategies, such as metacognitive, effective and social strategies.

The questionnaire is based on a scale ranging from *always* to *never*; students will have to indicate their choice by ticking the choice that indicates their learning strategies. **(Appendix: A)**

3.2.2 Teachers Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed according to teachers' strategies proposed **by Keller**. **Appendix: B**). It is based on "Four Categories of Motivational Strategies" and is used to formulate the teacher questionnaire of the study.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion:

This section shows the analyzed data and discusses the learning strategies used by secondary school students to foster their language standards and how teachers motivate these students to develop their language.

4.1 Learning strategies:

Table 4.1 Analysis of Students' Overall Learning Strategies uses

Key: 5 = Always   4 = Usually   3 = Sometimes   2 = Rarely   1 = Never
N = 200

Learning Strategies		1		2		3		4		5		Mean	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Direct Strategies	**Memory**	0	00	30	15	25	12.5	75	37.5	70	35	3.0	1
	Cognitive	0	00	75	37.5	75	37.5	50	25	0	00	2.9	2
	Compensation	0	00	100	50	100	50	0	00	0	00	2.0	4
Indirect Strategies	**Metacognitive**	50	25	60	30	90	45	0	00	0	00	1.9	5
	Affective	85	42.5	90	45	25	12.5	0	00	0	00	1.5	6
	Social	0	00	10	5	90	45	100	50	0	00	2.8	3
Grand Mean												3.9	

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Learning Strategies Used by the Students
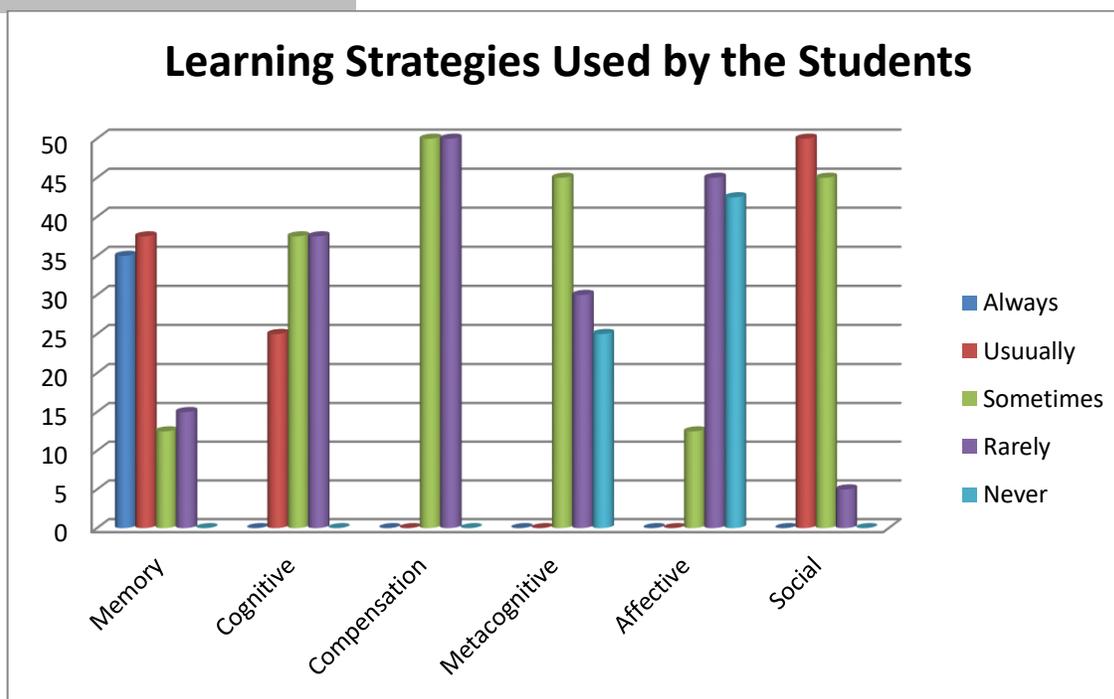
As can be seen from the table and graph (4.1), different learning strategies were provided as representatives. Accordingly, the frequency distribution of the use of these strategies by respondents is presented as follows.

Memory strategy is ranked number one in the above table. It was reflected by almost all students (85%) who provided the responses (always, usually, and sometimes) the students as it has been used frequently. Only 15 % of the respondents rarely use memory strategy. The mean value of the responses (3.0) indicates the same. In response to this item, students pretended that they use "Memory Strategies" frequently.

On the other hand, among common learning strategies presented in the table (4.1) , 'Cognitive Strategies' was ranked number (2), 25% of the respondents responses usually. 37.5% responded "sometimes" , and 37.5% of the respondents rarely use this strategy. The result indicate that this strategy is employed by the students. The mean value for cognitive is (2.9). This value also indicates frequent use of cognitive strategy by secondary school students. The other learning strategy favored by all the students was 'Social Strategies'. The mean value (2.8) indicates that most of the students use "Social Strategy" frequently.

The lesser used strategies were compensation, metacognitive and affective strategies . The mean value for 'Compensation Strategy' (2.0) indicates that only 50% of the respondents sometimes use this strategy. This value also indicates that the students (50 %) employ this strategy rarely, while the rest (50%) of the students rarely use this strategy.

Another less used learning strategy, "Metacognitive Strategy" is indicated by the mean value of 1.9. The mean value shows that the "metacognitive" learning strategy is not used by the students frequently. In the same way 'affective' is not frequently employed by the students. The mean values 1.5 also indicate the same The grand mean (3.9) is approaching to the value (3) Which is equal to the value for 'frequently'. From the students' responses, therefore, one can say that learning strategies are frequently used by the students except compensation, metacognitive and affective which are rarely used.
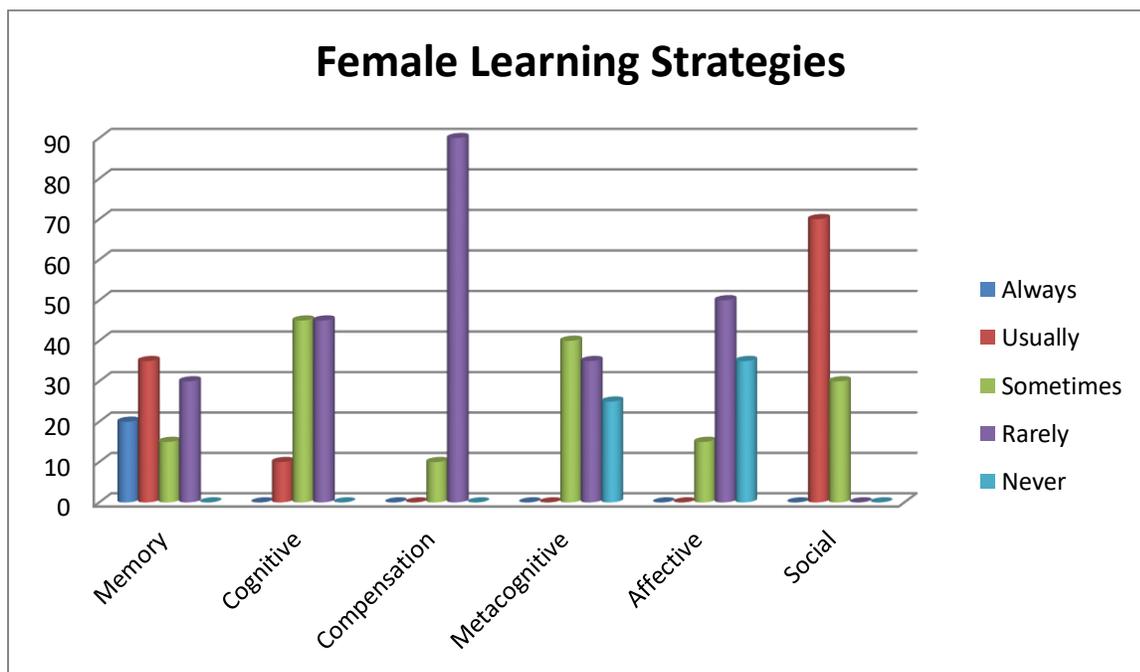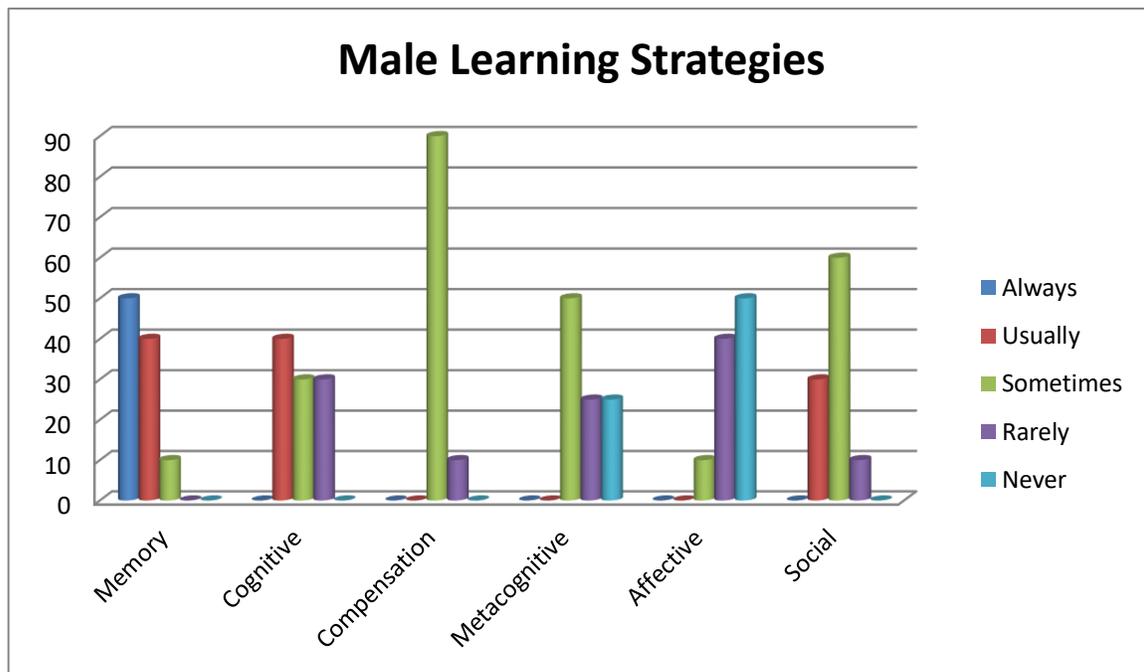
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Table 4.2. Frequency and Mean Values of use of strategy categories by gender

Learning Strategies			Direct Strategies			Indirect Strategies			Grand Mean
			Mem	Cog	Com	Met	Aff.	Soc.	
1	Male	F	0	0	0	25	50	0	
		%	00	00	00	25	50	00	
	Female	F	0	0	0	25	35	0	
		%	00	00	00	25	35	00	
2	Male	F	0	30	10	25	40	10	
		%	0	30	10	25	40	10	
	Female	F	30	45	90	35	50	0	
		%	30	45	90	35	50	00	
3	Male	F	10	30	90	50	10	60	
		%	10	30	90	50	10	60	
	Female	F	15	45	10	40	15	30	
		%	15	45	10	40	15	30	
4	Male	F	40	40	0	0	0	30	
		%	40	40	00	00	00	30	
	Female	F	35	10	0	0	0	70	
		%	35	10	00	00	00	70	
5	Male	F	50	0	0	0	0	0	
		%	50	00	00	00	00	00	
	Female	F	20	0	0	0	0	0	
		%	20	00	00	00	00	00	
Mean	Male		3.9	3.5	2.5	2.0	1.9	3.0	3.9
	Female		3.0	2.9	2.5	1.9	1.5	3.5	3.8
Rank	Male		1	2	4	5	6	3	
	Female		2	3	4	5	6	1	

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Key: 5 = Always   4 = Usually   3 = Sometimes   2 = Rarely   1 = Never

N = 200

The table and graphs (4.2) show frequency and mean values of   use of strategy categories by gender

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among 3rd year secondary school students.

The results revealed a statistically high frequency in the use of social strategies by female. The grand mean (3.8) indicates the same. Again, the result indicate high frequency in the use of memory strategies for male, the grand mean value (3.9) indicate the same.

The following is the detailed distribution frequency distribution of the use of the other strategies by gender.

Concerning   memory strategies" which is ranked (2) for female and ranked number one for male. The results shows that male students preferred "memory strategies" mean (3.9) more than female mean (3.0). It was reflected by mean (3.0 showing that it has been used frequently.

The analysis also shows that "social strategy" is one of the most strategies preferred by the respondents. Female students prefer this strategy more than male students. The mean value 3.5 for female and 3.0 for male indicate the same

As can be seen from the table male students prefer " Cognitive strategy " which is ranked number (2) in the above table and indicated by the mean (3.5). In response to the item "cognitive strategy" by male students the result presents that they use "cognitive Strategies" frequently. The item is ranked number (3) and the mean (2.9) indicate the same.

Concerning the use of "social strategies" by male is ranked number (3) indicating that males also prefer this strategies, the mean (3.0) reflect that social strategy is frequently used by males. While female students prefer "social strategies" more than male, the mean value (3.5) indicate the same.

Compensation strategies   presented in the table , was ranked number (4) showing that both males and females are engaged similarly with this strategies. The mean value (2.5) for both indicate the same.

Both males and females have approximately the same distance of less using of "metacognitive" and "affective" strategies. The mean value for 'Compensation Strategy' is from (2.0) to (1.5) . This values also indicates that the students   employ this strategies rarely.

The calculated grand means 3.9 for male and 3.8 for female, indicate that students are engaged with learning strategies except of some of them. From the result obtained above, the majority of the male students prefer "memory, cognitive and social strategies " subsequently. Compensation, Metacognitive and Affective strategies are lest used by male students. The result also conclude that female students prefer " social, memory, and cognitive strategies " subsequently. Compensation, Metacognitive and Affective strategies also are lest used by female students.   Therefore, it is possible to say that the students were inclined towards the use of memory, cognitive and social strategies, however they least used compensation, affective and metacognitive strategies.

4.2 Motivation Strategies:

Table 4.3 Attention strategies

No	Strategies	Not useful		Quite useful		Useful		Very useful		Extremely useful	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Item 1	0	0%	4	4%	8	8%	38	38%	50	50%
2	Item 2.	0	0%	0	0%	6	6%	40	40%	54	54%
3	Item 3	0	0%	20	20%	35	35%	28	28%	17	17%
8	Item 8.	0	0%	0	0%	15	15%	22	22%	63	63%

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9	Item 9	0	0%	18	18%	12	12%	40	40%	30	30%
10	Item 10	0	0%	30	30%	25	25%	30	30%	15	15%
16	Item 16	5	5%	25	25%	20	20%	40	40%	10	10%
24	Item 24	0	0%	15	15%	30	30%	35	35%	20	20%
25	Item 25	18	18%	12	12%	40	40%	25	25%	5	5%

Table 4.4 Satisfaction strategies

	Strategies	Not useful		Quite useful		Useful		Very useful		Extremely useful	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6	Item 6.	25	25%	10	10%	30	30%	22	22%	13	13%
7	Item 7.	15	15%	25	25%	30	30%	25	25%	5	5%
14	Item 14.	0	0%	20	20%	45	45%	28	28%	7	7%
15	Item 15..	20	20%	15	15%	35	35%	30	30%	0	0%
21	Item 21.	12	12%	18	18%	33	33%	37	37%	0	0%
22	Item 22	0	0	10	10%	18	18%	27	27%	45	45%
23	Item 23	5	5%	20	20%	34	34%	25	25%	16	16%
30	Item 30	10	10%	20	20%	27	27%	33	33%	10	10%

Table 4.5 Confidence strategies

No	Strategies	Not useful		Quite useful		Useful		Very useful		Extremely useful	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
13	Item 13	10	10%	30	30%	35	35%	25	25%	0	0 %
20	Item 20	0	0%	20	20%	40	40%	25	25%	15	15%
28	Item 28	18	18%	12	12%	42	42%	28	28%	0	0%
29	Item 29	0	0%	20	20%	38	38%	27	17%	15	15%

No	Strategies	Not useful		Quite useful		Useful		Very useful		Extremely useful	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
4	Item 4	15	15%	22	22%	38	38%	25	25%	0	0%
5	Item 5	18	18%	20	20%	37	37%	25	25%	0	0%
11	Item 11	28	28%	12	12%	40	40%	20	20%	0	0%
12	Item 12	33	33%	7	7%	50	50%	10	10%	0	0%
17	Item 17	16	16%	24	24%	42	42%	18	18%	0	0%
18	Item 18	10	10%	30	30%	52	52%	8	8%	0	0%

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19	Item 19	15	15%	10	10%	30	30%	25	25%	20	20%
26	Item 26	4	4%	21	21%	38	38%	25	25%	12	12%
27	Item 27	14	14%	23	23%	47	47%	10	10%	6	6%

Table 4.6 Relevance strategies

With regard to the research question, the reliability and the validity of formulating the four scales of the motivation strategies based on Keller' s model were acceptable.

In regard to   teachers' perceptions on the importance of the four scales, it is found that teachers rated the importance in the descending order of attention, satisfaction, confidence and relevance.

For the most useful attention strategies, teachers perceived that , arousing students' interest, teachers should use humorous analogies to introduce a top , asking students questions in order to arouse students' desire and curiosity to learn, using content-related anecdotes, case studies, biographies, etc. to arouse students interest in learning certain topics, teach with various methods and   activities in order to arouse students' interest, e.g. competition,, games, discussion, etc, and stimulating students to ask questions and   encourage them to discuss problems in order to arouse their curiosity to learn as the most useful attention strategies.

Regarding Satisfaction strategies, it is found that   teachers   rated using what students learnt to solve daily problems, providing immediate and corrective   feedback in order to improve the quality of performance and enhance students satisfaction in learning, using praise rather than threats and   surveillance for maintaining students' satisfaction in 1earning , using rewards to reinforce students to maintain good quantity of performance. (Rewards can be verbal praise, gift, good record in student's personal file), are perceived as the four useful satisfactory strategies preferred by teachers .

When teachers' responses on the 30 items were compared, it was found that confidence strategies is rated as the third in its importance with regards to other factors, the result shows that teachers' perceptions on emphasizing students self-improvement   rather than comparison of academic results among students, giving encouragement and appreciation for increasing students confidence in learning, e.g. smile, verbal praise, encouragement and reward(item 20), designing teaching topics and materials which should be from simple to complicated and suitable to students' level, setting test or examination papers which can allow students to answer in different ways,   were perceived as the most useful confidence strategies which can be used to enhance students' confidence to obtain better results.

The least useful strategies is relevance, the result revealed that giving students sufficient time for recess and lunchtime so that they can regain strength and a spirit to learn, using mother tongue when necessary, giving opportunities to students to   cooperate and communicate with other students in the process of learning, e.g. group discussion, submission of reports in group, etc, and considering students' individual   differences and needs, such as learning abilities, age, gender, family background, etc, are perceived as useful relevance strategies as the least strategies compared with attention, satisfaction and confidence subsequently.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that students are engaged with learning strategies except of some of them. From the result obtained, the majority of the male students prefer "memory, cognitive and social strategies " subsequently. Compensation, Metacognitive and Affective strategies are least used by male students. The findings also show that that female students prefer " social, memory, and cognitive strategies " subsequently. Compensation, Metacognitive and Affective strategies also are lest used by female students. Students were

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inclined towards the use of memory, cognitive and social strategies, however they least used compensation, affective and metacognitive strategies.

The study shows teachers motivational strategies in descending orders of the importance of the four scales. The sequence was from attention to satisfaction to confidence and lastly to relevance. It was found that the attention scale was significantly higher than other three scales and the relevance scale was the lowest. It means that the attention scale for teachers was the most useful and important scale while the relevance scale was the least important one.

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Appendix (A)
Learning Strategies Questionnaire
Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____
 Directions:
       This questionnaire has been designed to identify learning strategies which are used by Sudanese secondary school students.   Read each statement on the following pages. Please respond to the statements as they apply to your study of English.

     Decide to what extend do you use   these strategies by putting a tick (√) before the respected number of the suitable responses . Please answer all the questions.

No	Statements	Always	Usually	Sometimes	rarely	never
	Memory strategies					
1	I make a drawing either in my head or on paper, to help me remember a tasks.					

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2	I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English					
3	I physically act out English words.					
4	I often review English lessons.					
5	I often review newly learned vocabulary or expressions by repeatedly writing.					
6	I often review newly learned tasks by repeatedly mouthing.					
Cognitive Strategies						
7	I try to discover grammar rules of the English language.(For example, using is for singular and are for plural)					
8	I practice the sounds of English.					
9	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.					
10	I try to find patterns in English					
11	I often watch TV in English or I listen to English tapes or CDs.					
12	I read books in English					
Compensation strategies						
13	I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.					
14	I read English without looking up every new word.					
15	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.					
16	When I hear or read a new word in English, I try to guess the meaning by looking at the rest of the sentence.					
17	When I work alone, I learn better.					
18	When I can't find an expression in English, I try to find another way to say what I mean					
Metacognitive Strategies						
19	I look for people I can talk to in English.					
20	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.					
21	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.					
22	I think about my progress in learning English.					
23	I organize my time to study English (not just when there is a test).					
24	I notice my English mistakes and use that Information to help me do better					
Affective Strategies						
25	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.					

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26	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake					
27	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English					
28	Whenever I am stressed with language tasks, I try to relax.					
29	I will still encourage myself to participate even if I am afraid to make mistakes.					
30	When I succeed, I reward myself. (For example, taking a break or doing things					
Social strategies						
31	I work with classmates to practice English					
32	I ask questions in English.					
33	I practice English with other students					
34	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers					
35	If I don't understand what is said to me in English, I ask the person to help me by speaking slowly, repeating, or clarifying what has been said.					
36	I practice English with my parents (or other family members) or my classmates.					

Appendix (B)

Motivation Strategies Questionnaire

Directions:

In learning, motivation is of extreme importance and teachers play an important role in arousing students' motivation. This questionnaire aims at investigating how teachers use teachers' strategies more effectively to arouse Secondary school students' motivation to learn, and to stimulate their initiative and interest to learn.

General Information: (Please user a tick (√) to indicate your answer or fill in the Information in the appropriate space.

1. Gender:

    a.   Male   b. Female

 2. Qualifications

a. Diploma   b. B.A   b. MA   c. Others

3. Experience:

a.   (1- 5)   b. (5- 10)   b. (10 – 15)   c. (more than 15)

1. Not useful   2. Quite useful   3.Useful 4.Very useful 5. Extremely useful

No	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	In order to arouse students' interest, teachers should use humorous analogies to introduce a top					
2	Ask students questions in order to arouse students' desire and curiosity to learn.					
3	Use content-related anecdotes, case studies, biographies, etc. to arouse students interest in learning certain topics.					

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4	Tell students why they learn certain topics.					
5	Provide students more choices and autonomy to plan and organize their own work in learning.					
6	Use unexpected rewards rather than anticipated rewards. This can give students greater satisfaction.					
7	Use consistent standards and criteria to assess students.					
8	Teach with various methods and activities in order to arouse students' interest, e.g. competition,, games, discussion, etc.					
9	Stimulate students to ask questions and encourage them to discuss problems in order to arouse their curiosity to learn.					
10	In order to arouse students attention, teachers can change their tones at speech; use gestures, movement of body and eye contact, etc.					
11	Devise teaching topics and activities of moderate difficulties and encourage students to do their best.					
12	Give students opportunities in taking responsibility to help others, e.g. encourage those who finish first as deputy tutors.					
13	Emphasize students self-improvement rather than comparison of academic results among students.					
14	In order to increase students' satisfaction in learning, teachers should help students use what they have learnt to solve daily problems.					
15	Encouragement and recognition giver privately is more effective than publicly.					
16	Teach students more knowledge from what they have already known.					
17	Tell students how the materials ae useful for their future careers or for their further Studies.					
18	Give students sufficient time for recess and lunchtime so that they can regain strength and a spirit to learn.					
19	Use mother tongue when necessary					
20	Give encouragement and appreciation for increasing students confidence in learning, e.g. smile, verbal praise, encouragement and reward.					
21	To gain satisfaction in learning, teachers should help students get satisfactory results in tests or examinations.					
22	Provide immediate and corrective feedback in order to improve the quality of performance and enhance students satisfaction in learning.					
23	Use praise rather than threats and surveillance for maintaining students' satisfaction in 1earning					
24	Use different types of teaching aids and media to arouse students' interest in learning e.g. computer, internet, ETV, news, real objects colorful pictures, etc.					
25	In order to arouse students' curiosity introduce some facts or examples that seem to contradict with their past experience.					

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26	Give opportunities to students to cooperate and communicate with other students in the process of learning, e.g. group discussion, submission of reports in group, etc.					
27	Consider students' individual differences and needs, such as learning abilities, age, gender, family background, etc.					
28	Design teaching topics and materials which should be from simple to complicated and suitable to students' level.					
29	In order to enhance students' confidence to obtain better results, teachers should set test or examination papers which can allow students to answer in different ways.					
30	Use rewards to reinforce students to maintain good quantity of performance. Rewards can be verbal praise, gift, good record in student's personal file.					