

Gender Differences in Motivation Level for Learning English as an L2

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Abstract

L2 motivation is considerably important factor which may influence the learning process and achievement (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Oxford, 1996; Lasagabaster, 2011). This small-scale study focuses on potential differences that may prevail in language learning motivation based on gender particularly in the context of Sindh, Pakistan (Hashwani, 2008). This study used the quantitative approach to inquire the gender differences in the motivation level. The data was collected through a questionnaire, an adapted model of Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), from 103 participants - males (N=51) and females (N=52). The study used independent samples t-test in order to test the gender differences. Results of this study showed no gender differences in the motivational level of male and female English language learners.

Keywords: *Gender Differences, Language Motivation, English as an L2*

Introduction

During the past years, researchers have increased their focus on learner motivation in second language (L2) learning and the learners' perceptions for motivational dispositions (Csizer and Magid, 2014). As (Dornyei, 2002, p. 172) puts, "motivation is often seen as the key learner variable because without it, nothing much happens". The role of motivation is researched by many researchers but the gender differences in motivation are a new aspect for investigators to research.

The importance of motivation and gender cannot be denied in L2 learning. Akram and Ghani (2013) propose that studying learners' attitudes and motivation is one of the most pertinent ways to get insight into language learning process. Previous studies show that researchers are very much interested to know individual differences, learning styles, motivation levels, attitude towards language learning, learning strategies, learner beliefs and age (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Learners vary on a number of factors involving their learning style, age, language attitude, personality, beliefs, goals and academic success. Within individual differences and learner identity, gender may have a significant relationship with learners' L2 learning motivation.

Various motivational studies on gender differences in foreign learning context show that the motivation level of female language learners in learning second language is higher than of males (Mori & Gobel, 2006; Dornyei, Csizer, & Nemeth, 2006). Gardner



and Lambert in their research conducted in 1972 came up with a finding that female learners showed more motivation than male learners and comparatively showed highly positive attitudes towards learning an L2.

Aims of the study

The study aims to examine gender differences in motivation between male and female learners learning English language at the Institute of English Language and Literature (IELL), University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Furthermore, this research aims to know the level of motivation, keeping in view whether or not gender differences play any role in establishing motivation level in learners at the IELL, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

Research hypothesis

This research will investigate whether the stated hypothesis is valid or not.

Hypothesis: Female learners are more motivated than male learners for learning English.

Problem statement

The purpose of this study is to know gender differences in motivation level between boys and girls learning English language. This research will explore how gender differences affect learners' motivation level in learning English language and success rate.

Literature Review

The concept of L2 learning motivation was introduced by Gardner (1985) in his model which dominated the field for two decades. He explained motivation with reference to the "extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experiences in this activity" (p. 1). His definition focused on three main components: efforts for achieving goal, desire for learning foreign language and satisfaction with language learning task. After him, Dornyei (1994) presented his own model that focused on three things: the language, the learner, and the learning situation. He stated that "motivation in L2 is an eclectic, multifaceted construct" (p. 279). Dornyei (2002) considers motivation as "the key learner variable because without it, nothing much happens" (p. 172). Slavin (2001) defines, "Motivation as an internal process that activates, guides and maintains behavior over time". Ghazvini and Khajehpour (2011) have identified three components of motivation: motivation in intensity, desire to learn the language and an attitude towards the act of learning the language. Discussing the relationship between motivation and attitude, Gardner and Lambert (1972) state that "motivation for language learning is determined by the (student's) attitudes and readiness to identify with the language speaking community..." (p.132). This definition implies the positive relationship of motivation and attitude in second language learning process. Moreover, gender is considered an important perspective in second language learning process as some of the researchers proved their female participants to show more positive attitude towards language learning process as compares to males (Aacken, 1999; Dornyei & Shoaib, 2005). Various other

researchers have been done to find out the gender differences in motivation and most of them found higher motivation level among girls than boys in learning foreign language (Mori & Gobel, 2006; Dornyei, *et al.*, 2006; Dornyei, 2009). In their study, Sung and Padilla (1998) observed that female secondary school students, who were learning Chinese and Korean as foreign language, were motivated than male secondary school students. Second language theorists think that female learners possess superiority in learning ESL (Ehrlich, 1997). Moreover, Xiong's (2010) study on gender and motivation revealed female students to be more motivated in learning a second language as compared to male students. This might be due to their learning process as You *et al.* (2016) states in a recent study, "students with more developed processing skills are likely to be more successful than others in classroom learning and will this find the learning experience more satisfying" (p. 109). You and Dornyei (2016) also recently conducted the study on Language Learning Motivation in the context of China where they found higher score of female second language learners than their male second language learners which might be because of the difference lied "in their self construal, with women's possible selves being characterized by more independence and interpersonal qualities than those of men" (Henry, 2010; cited in You and Dornyei, 2016, p. 506). However, Abu-Rabia (1997) observed gender differences of Arab students in ESL learning. Her study concluded stronger level of motivation in her participants (male and female) equally in learning English language. Akram and Ghani (2013) have conducted the research on gender motivation differences in Pakistani context and the results of their MANOVA analysis showed no difference in the gender of participants in learning English language. This result is consistent with Bacon's (1992) result which observed no any gender difference in his participants' motivation level. There are some researches which contradicts the above studies. For instance, Skolverket (2006) found that male students performed better than female students.

Research methodology

This study uses quantitative research is "an official system processes to get information through numerical data or the data can be converted into usable statistics" (Burns & Grove, 2005, p. 23). Amedi (2013) writes that "because of the aim to analyze the learners' motivational attitudes towards the English language, using a questionnaire is a good method" (4). Therefore, in order to know gender differences in motivation level between male and female learners learning English language we adapted Gardner's (1985)AMTB based on a Likert Scale questionnaire having close-ended options ranging between strongly agree and strongly disagree. Out of 104 statements given in the Gardner's AMTB,15 statements (which fitted the most in the context of Pakistani English language learners) were selected to design our questionnaire which best expressed participants' motivation level. Moreover, in order to know the reliability of AMTB, SPSS was used where 60 English language learners (Male= 30, Female=30) participated in the pilot study. The results of the pilot study showed .899 Cronbach's alpha value which is acceptable according to the set standards of reliability.

Participants

A total of 103 English language learners participated in this research. Among them, 40 students were from final year, 40 were from third year and 24 students were from second year at the IELL. The participants were requested to complete the questionnaire with respect to all items to investigate their motivational level for learning English. These students were briefed about research before administering the questionnaire among them and an informed consent was sought.

Data analysis method

In this research, statistical procedure was used for data analysis. There are multiple types of t-tests in SPSS software but the researchers used independent t-test in this research because they want to compare two different groups (male and female) to know their motivation level. As such, this study was based on two variables i.e. an independent variable (gender) and a dependent variable (L2 motivation). An independent sample t-test would show different statistical mean scores of two groups (whether or not there was any difference in motivation due to gender differences of the English language learners). The number of participants were $N=103$, i.e. male=51 and female=52. Male and female participants were coded as 1 and 2 respectively.

Findings and discussion

Group statistics Table 1

Gender motivation	N	MEAN	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
male	51	3.03	.415	.058
female	52	3.06	.396	.055

Gender column shows male and female participants. N shows gender wise number of participants who participated in filling up of the questionnaire. Mean column shows average scores between male and female participants. The column standard deviation expresses by how much the members of a group differ from the mean value for the group. The standard error mean column expresses the statistical accuracy of an estimate, equal to the standard deviation of a large population.

Independent samples t-test evaluated the effect of gender differences in motivation level for learning the English language. The above result shows that there is statistically no significant difference ($M = 3.03$, $SD = .415$) to ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .396$), $df(101) = -.345$, $p > .731$ (two-tailed) between male and female participants in their motivation for learning the English language. Group statistics mean scores suggest that female learners are slightly more talkative when asked "I am calm whenever I have to speak in my English class" than male learners. All participants showed strong desire to know English language when they were asked "to know all aspects of English language". This clearly suggests that both male and female participants were equally motivated to know all aspects of English language.

Another t-test of independent samples was calculated to find out difference in motivation level between male and female learner in English language learning.

Independent sample t-test table 2

Equal variance assumed MOTIVATION Equal variances not assumed	Levene's Test for equality variances	t-test for equality of means							
		F	Sig	Df	Sig 2 tailed	Mean difference	Std.err diff	95% confidence interval of difference	
		.092	.762	101	.731	-0.28	.080	Lower -.186	Upper .131
				100.56	.731	-0.28	.080	-.186	.131

Independent samples t-test results and interpretation

If the value of sig 2-tailed column between male and female is equal or less than < 0.05 then there is a significant difference in the mean scores of dependent variable for each of the two groups. If the value of p is above 0.05 or $>$ greater than it then it would not be considered as significant difference between two groups (Pallant, 2006). Results tabulated in the table show that the value of (p) two sig. (2-tailed) values for male and female is .731 respectively, is greater than 0.05. It proves no significant gender difference in motivation level of the participants. As the mean difference values of male and female are 3.03 and 3.06 respectively. Standard error difference values between male and female are .080 and .080 respectively. Above values of mean difference and standard error difference clearly manifest no differences between male and females' motivation level in learning English language.

Confidence interval difference values of upper and lower for males are -.186 and .131 and for female are -.186 and .131. As the values for both of the groups (male and female) are same, so it, clearly, shows no significant gender difference related to motivational level of the participants.

This result contradicts the above studies which found a significant higher level motivation in females as compared to males (Mori & Gobel, 2006; Dornyei, et al., 2006; Sung and Padilla, 1998; Xiong, 2010). Furthermore, these outcomes support the findings of Bacon (1992) and Abu-Rabia (1997) in which no gender differences were found.

Conclusion

The findings of this study do not claim any significant gender differences related to the motivation level of L2 learners. As this research study focused on only three classes of IELL, it does not mean that all male and female learners were equally motivated. Motivation level varies from learner to learner either male or female and even context to context. This study can also be further carried out at wider level in other different contexts. Researchers can find out gender differences in motivation at all skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking.

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