

## Role of Gender in Predicting High School Students' Motivation in Learning a Second Language

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### Abstract

Teachers and researchers referred to motivation as a salient factor that influence the rate and success of second language learning. Considering the association between gender and motivation is one of the most important issues for teaching and learning a second language. The current research examined the relationship between gender and students' motivation. For this purpose, 375 high school students were asked to complete Language Learning Orientations Scale – Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation Subscales (LLOS – IEA). Using t-tests among variables, the results revealed significant relationships between the subscales of the LLOS – IEA and students' gender. Specifically, all subscales of motivation except External Regulation had a significant difference in mean scores. Identified Regulation, Intrinsic Motivation – Accomplishment, Intrinsic Motivation – Knowledge, Intrinsic Motivation – Stimulation in female students were more than male students and Amotivation in male students was more than female students. These results can be interpreted within the context of how teachers behave to enhance

students' motivation in learning a second language based upon their gender.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Gender, Second Language Learning

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Motivation to learn a second language

According to Dörnyei (1998), both teachers and researchers referred to motivation as one of the salient factors that affect the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. Motivation refers to the desire that starts learning in the first place and keeps it on during the difficult situations. Motivation can even make up for an aptitude deficiency. Accounting for a great deal of variability among individuals, Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that, aptitude motivation is actually more important than the effects of aptitude. They argued that people still manage to learn a second language without considering aptitude.

In line with research on motivation, there have been many studies related to the reasons of learning another language. Gardner and Lambert (1959) have indicated these reasons as “orientations” which should not be wrongly considered with the concept of motivation (Gardner, 1996). Gardner (1985) Referred to three characteristics of motivation: desire to achieve a goal, effort expended toward the goal, and pleasure associated with the task. Therefore, orientations, are key factors of motivation.

Regarding the definition of motivation to learn a second language based on Gardner (1985) as “the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p. 10), it is realized that his construct of motivation had three salient components: motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, and an attitude toward the act of learning the language. According to Gardner, one can find all three components in a truly motivated individual. The motivation to learn a second language is different from the motivation to learn other subjects. Taking on the identity and culture of the target language are, to some degree, associated to mastery of a second language. Gardner’s theory implies that one of the elements which will affect success in learning language is students’ attitudes toward that target language group. The amount of contact between the two cultures can significantly influence the relationship between attitudes and L2 motivation. Another issue which would have impact on L2 motivation is gender.

## **1.2 Gender differences in motivation**

Boys and girls start school with having different views about their abilities and interests (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). Researchers and educators have considered gender differences in motivation and attitudes in the field of educational psychology and second language learning for a long time (Bacon and Finnemann, 1992; Burstall et al., 1974; Clark and Trafford, 1995; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Ludwig, 1983; Muchnik and Wolfe, 1982). Among the researchers, Dornyei and Clement (2001) indicated that there would be a possibility of gender differences in motivation. Regarding their research, female students had higher scores than male students on the scales of motivational dimensions in most of the target languages. Regarding motivational research

in second language learning, findings showed greater motivation and more favorable attitudes in female students (Burstall et al., 1974; Pritchard, 1987; Williams et al., 2002), particularly, focusing on the instrumental and integrative types of motivation, female students are more motivated and show more positive attitudes toward studying a foreign language than male students (Bacon and Finnemann, 1992; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Muchnik and Wolfe, 1982; Sung and Padilla, 1998).

According to the Atkinson (1957, 1964) expectancy-value theory, gender differences in motivation were associated to motives which approach or avoid success and also concerned about failure, and expectations for success. Atkinson’s research also indicated that there were differences in men and women concerns about failure. For example, females had higher scores on measures of test anxiety (Hill & Sarason, 1966; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) and boys and males tended to have higher expectations for success than their female counterparts (Crandall, 1969; Feather, 1966; Veroff, 1969).

Self-efficacy theory is the other theory that has been used to understand gender differences in motivation and achievement. Many studies have done in this area like reporting of higher self-efficacy and expectancy beliefs of boys than girls about their performance in math and science (Anderman & Young, 1994; Pajares, 1996; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990).

Meece, Glienke, and Burg (2006) investigated gender differences in motivation. These authors used four theories of achievement motivation: attribution, expectancy-value, self-efficacy, and achievement goal perspectives. Their findings revealed that the beliefs and behaviors of girls and boys related to motivation continue to follow gender role stereotypes. Furthermore, the results

suggested that boys were more interested in mathematics and science, whereas girls were more stronger in language arts and writing. The other factors such as ability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and classroom context would moderate gender effects too.

In line with these studies, Martin (2004) found that there were also differences in the degree to which boys and girls are motivated. In particular, girls were significantly higher in learning focus, planning, study management, persistence and anxiety whereas boys got higher scores in self-sabotage or self-handicapping.

Yau, Kan, and Cheng (2011) investigated the different levels of intrinsic motivation towards study, curiosity and external regulation among males and females. They concluded that there was no difference between males and females in their levels of intrinsic motivation.

There were other research carried out on motivation and gender. In congruent with these studies, Xiong (2010) found that the girls were more interested in English and their motivations in learning English were stronger than the boys. So schoolgirls' internal motivation is stronger than the schoolboys while studying a second language.

Moreover, several studies showed that males are less motivated to learn French than females (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Netten, Riggs, & Hewlett, 1999). Based on study done by Amedi (2013), more female students than male students thought that motivation was important when learning a second language. They also had higher instrumental motivation and believed that English was difficult to learn.

Thus, long arguments can be put forward to show that motivation is of paramount importance in the realm of language learning (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985). Different factors can impact students' motivation. One variable with an undeniable influence is gender. There are some surveys related to gender differences in motivation and achievement especially in learning math, science (Anderman & Young, 1994; Pajares, 1996; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990) and learning French (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Netten, Riggs, & Hewlett, 1999). However, there are few studies done on the effect of gender on learning English (Amedi, 2013; Xiong, 2010) and different levels of motivation towards study, curiosity and external regulation (Yau, Kan & Cheng, 2011). Therefore, the present study attempts to highlight the potential gender differences in motivation of learning the second language considering three types of motivation with their subscales: amotivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

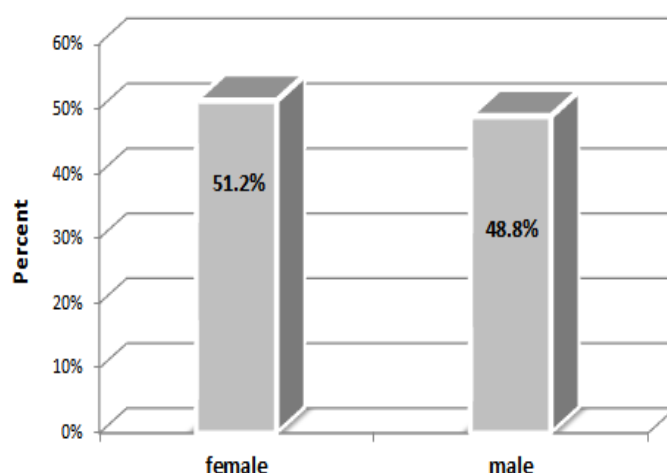
## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Participants**

375 high school learners of English language in Kerman province (183 male and 192 female) and took part in this research. The learners were chosen from seven high schools of Kerman province (in Iran). All the participants were native speakers of Farsi and had an average age of 15-17 years.

**Table 1 Distribution of respondents according to gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	192	51.2%
Male	183	48.8%
Total	375	100%



**Chart 1 Percentage distribution of students gender**

## **2.2 Materials**

The questionnaire used in this study was Language Learning Orientations Scale – Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation Subscales (LLOS – IEA) by Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2000).

## **2.3 Motivation**

It assessed the scales of Amotivation, Extrinsic Motivation and its subscales, including External, Introjected and Identified Regulation and Intrinsic Motivation and its subscales, containing Knowledge, Accomplishment and Stimulation. This questionnaire was adapted from the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992; Vallerand et al., 1993) and used in many studies (Ardasheva, Tong, & Tretter, 2012; Hassanzadeh & Mahdinejad Gorji,

2014; Noels, 2001; Vandergrift, 2005; Wu, 2003). The internal consistency estimate of reliability for the this questionnaire was calculated, and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.79. Cronbach's alpha was one of the standard ways of expressing a test's reliability (Foster, 1998). In this paper, the researchers considered the following elements:

1. Amotivation,
2. Extrinsic Motivation and two of its subscales: External and Identified Regulation;
3. Intrinsic Motivation and its subscales: Knowledge, Accomplishment and Stimulation.

By using this questionnaire, the researcher attempted to find:

1. Does gender have any significant effect on the students' amotivation, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning a second language?

### 3. Results

An independent-sample t-tests was conducted to compare amotivation scores for males and females (Table 4.2). There was no

significant difference between boys ( $M = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 3.19$ ) and girls ( $M = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 2.52$ ;  $t(346.23) = .001$ ,  $p = .001$  (two-tailed). The magnitude of differences in the means was small ( $\eta^2 = .000$ ).

**Table 2 Independent t-test to compare Amotivation in view of male and female students**

	<i>Amotivation</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
gender	Total number	Mean	SD	0.001	-3.258	346.23	0.001
Female	192	5.27	2.52				
Male	183	6.24	3.19				

The results showed that there was no significant difference between boys ( $M = 10.78$ ,  $SD = 2.46$ ;  $t(373) = .169$ ,  $p = .8$

(two-tailed) in external regulation (Table 3). The magnitude of differences in the means was small ( $\eta^2 = .000$ ).

**Table 3 Independent t-test to compare External Regulation in view of male and female students**

	<i>External Regulation</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig.
Gender	Total number	Mean	SD	.76	0.169	373	0.8
Female	192	10.78	2.46				
Male	183	10.74	2.52				

The findings revealed that there was no significant difference between boys ( $M = 9.31$ ,  $SD = 2.64$ ) and girls ( $M =$

$9.31$ ,  $SD = 2.95$ ;  $t(373) = .169$ ,  $p = .8$  (two-tailed) in introjected regulation (Table

4). The magnitude of differences in the means was small (eta squared = .000).

**Table 4 Independent t-test to compare Introjected Regulation in view of male and female students**

	<i>Introjected Regulation</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig.
gender	Total number	Mean	SD	0.04	.834	371.488	0.4
Female	192	9.31	2.95				
Male	183	9.07	2.64				

The results showed that there was significant difference between boys (M = 12.96, SD = 2.34) and girls (M = 11.91, SD = 2.67;  $t(373) = 3.86$ ,  $p = .000$  (two-tailed) in identified regulation (Table 5). The magnitude of differences in the means was moderate (eta squared = .042).

.000 (two-tailed) in identified regulation (Table 5). The magnitude of differences in the means was moderate (eta squared = .042).

**Table 5 Independent t-test to compare Identified Regulation in view of male and female students**

	<i>Identified Regulation</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig.
gender	Total number	Mean	SD	0.2	4.05	373	0.000
Female	192	12.96	2.34				
Male	183	11.91	2.67				

The results revealed that there was no significant difference between boys (M = 12.96, SD = 2.34) and girls (M = 11.91, SD = 2.67;  $t(373) = 3.86$ ,  $p = .000$  (two-tailed) in accomplishment (Table 6). The magnitude of differences in the means was small (eta squared = .000).

(two-tailed) in accomplishment (Table 6). The magnitude of differences in the means was small (eta squared = .000).

**Table 6 Independent t-test to compare Intrinsic Motivation – Accomplishment in view of male and female students**

	<i>Intrinsic Motivation – Accomplishment</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig.
gender	Total number	Mean	SD	0.2	3.86	373	0.000
Female	192	11.87	2.211				
Male	183	10.95	2.389				

The findings showed that there was significant difference between boys (M = 11.25, SD = 2.389) and girls (M = 11.87, SD = 2.211;  $t(359.944) = 4.15$ ,  $p =$

.000 (two-tailed) in knowledge (Table 7). The magnitude of differences in the means was moderate (eta squared = .044).

**Table 7 Independent t-test to compare Intrinsic Motivation – Knowledge in view of male and female students**

	<i>Intrinsic Motivation – Knowledge</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig.
gender	Total number	Mean	SD	0.05	4.15	359.944	0.000
Female	192	12.30	2.25				
Male	183	11.25	2.60				

The results showed that there was significant difference between boys (M = 12.61, SD = 2.19) and girls (M = 12.30, SD = 2.25;  $t(348.457) = 3.71$ ,  $p =$

.000 (two-tailed) in stimulation (Table 8). The magnitude of differences in the means was small (eta squared = .035).

**Table 8 Independent t-test to compare Intrinsic Motivation–Stimulation in view of male**

	<i>Intrinsic Motivation – Stimulation</i>			Sig.	T	df	Sig.
gender	Total number	Mean	SD	0.01	3.71	348.457	0.000
Female	192	12.61	2.19				
Male	183	11.66	2.74				

**and female students**

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

Gender had strong effects on students' motivation. Based on the present results, female students were more intrinsically and extrinsically motivated than male students. Various reasons for low motivation of boys can be considered such as school, their parents, peers as well as the environment. Not being sure about finding a job which male second language learners need in future might also have led to low motivation in boys. Teachers can regard these results and help school boys to increase their motivation by giving unexpected external rewards, offering positive praise and feedback when they do something better in comparison to the others, and creating an appropriate atmosphere of learning for them.

According to the Atkinson (1957, 1964), there were differences in men and women concerns about failure. Crandall (1969), Feather (1966) and Veroff (1969) indicated that boys and males tended to have higher expectations for success than their female counterparts. Inconsistent with their studies, the researcher found out that the male students were not likely to be amotivated in learning a second language than female ones.

As Martin (2004) stated, girls were statistically significantly higher in learning focus, planning, study management, and persistence. Also, Xiong (2010) found that

schoolgirls' internal motivation is stronger than the schoolboys' when studying a second language. In line with these studies, our results revealed similar findings. In many subscales of motivation including identified regulation, intrinsic-motivation–knowledge, intrinsic-motivation–stimulation, female students appeared more motivated than male students.

The present results were inconsistent with Yau, Kan, and Cheng's (2011) study who concluded no differences between males and females in their levels of intrinsic motivation. According to the present findings, girls seemed to be more intrinsically motivated than boys.

Based on study done by Amedi (2013), female students had higher instrumental motivation in learning English whereas the researcher found no differences between girls and boys in external regulation.

In conclusion, the overall result of the study shows that there are significant differences between males and female's motivation when it comes to learning a second language. As a teacher, it is important to know how to behave and motivate both male and female students in the classroom. This study can also let teacher identify gender differences in levels of extrinsic and intrinsic



motivation. Therefore, he can decide about ways of teaching and implementing different practical methods to improve students' learning performance and also how to gradually diminish gender differences in motivation and lead students to have confidence in their academic abilities and value the importance of learning a second language for their future.

Throughout different steps of the study, especially during the data collection, a number of limitations were distinguished which should be considered before interpreting the results. First, there were limitations in choosing the male and female participants of the study due to the rules of schools; therefore, the researchers themselves were not able to monitor the process of data collection. Furthermore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized because it was just carried out among seven high schools in Kerman province.

Based on the result of the research, the following recommendations are made for further research on the students' motivation. Evidently, more research in larger groups is needed before making generalizations and conclusions. Besides, researchers can replicate the study using other factors, such as school environment, peers, teaching and learning strategies to investigate their impacts on students' motivation.

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## Introduction

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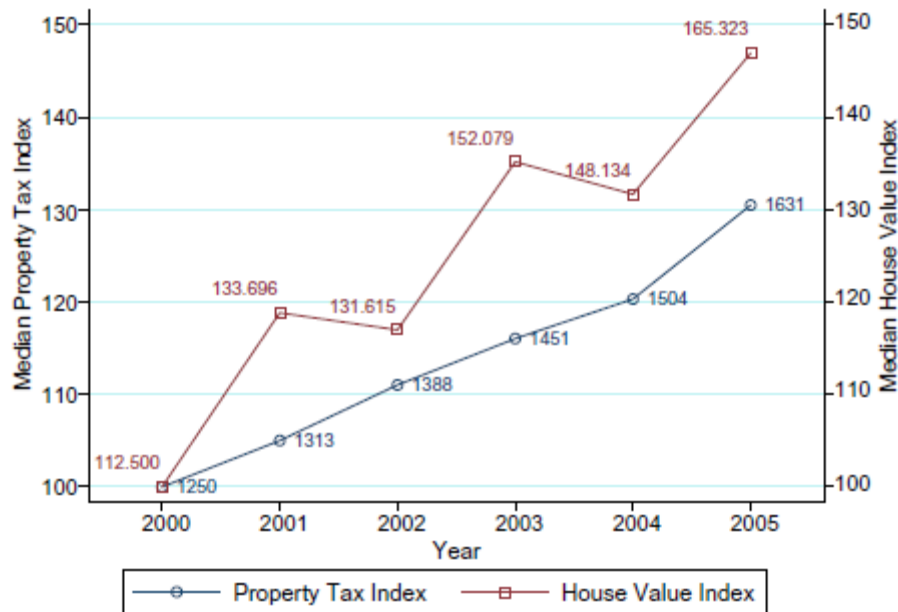
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Route number	City 1	City 2	City 3	City 4	City 5	City 6
1	Halifax	Sheffield	Nottingham	Bedford		
2	Plymouth	Exeter	Salisbury			
3	Tiverton	Taunton	Frome			
4	Bristol	Bath	Reading			
5	Southampton	Winchester				
6	Portsmouth	Chichester				
7	Canterbury	Rochester				
8	Yarmouth	Ipswich	Colchester			
9	Norwich	Bury				
10	King's Lynn	Ely	Cambridge			
11	Berwick	Newcastle	South Shields	Sunderland	Durham	
12	Bradford	Leeds				
13	Whitby	Scarborough	York			
14	Manchester	Derby	Northampton	Leicester		
15	Hereford	Gloucester	Circenster			
16	Beverley	Hull	Lincoln	Boston		
17	Whitehaven	Liverpool	Macclesfield	Lancaster	Carlisle	Kendal
18	Shrewsbury	Birmingham	Wolverhampton	Coventry	Dudley	
19	Worcester	Oxford				
20	Kidderminster	Warwick	Banbury			
21	Chester	Lichfield	Coventry			



**Figure (1) median property taxes and house valuse in the united states, 2000-2005**

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