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Do female students have higher motivation than male students in learning of English at the tertiary level?*

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Abstract

This paper focuses on gender differences affect the motivation factors towards learning of English as a second language among engineering and technology students. It also gives special emphasis on different motivation factors such as: integrative, instrumental, resultative and intrinsic with respect to gender differences.

The term 'feeling' is a synonym for emotion, although with a broader range. In the older psychological literature the term 'affect' was used. It is still used to imply an even wider range of phenomena that have anything to do with emotions, moods, dispositions, and preferences.

(Oatley and Jenkins 1996:124)

There is a wide variety of factors such as: *age, attitude, motivation, aptitude, amount of exposure, gender and anxiety etc* in second language learning. These are also responsible for individual differences in learning a second (L2) / Foreign Language (FL). In social Psychology, it is a widely accepted fact that learner's individual differences have significant impact on the learner's overall L2/FL performance. That is why the major focus of the recent research in social psychology has been on various social psychological variables like, attitude, motivation, age, aptitude, anxiety, intelligence etc, and their impact on Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Gardner (1985) proposes that second language acquisition is 'truly a socio-psychological phenomenon. It is concerned with the development of communication skills between an individual and members of another cultural community. The major area of investigation has been done on attitude, motivation, and their subsequent relation to second Language performance (in addition to intelligence).The main problem, as seems, arises from the very definition of various terms used in social psychological research, especially : *attitude* and *motivation*. It is not always clear in SLA research what the distinction is between attitudes and motivation (Ellis 1985:116).

- **Motivation :**

Second language acquisition theory leaves no doubt about the crucial importance of a further affective variable, motivation, which is actually a cluster of factors that 'energise behaviour and give it direction' (Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson and Atkinson 1979: 281). Chomsky (1988:181) points out the importance of activating learners' motivation: 'The truth of the matter is that about 99 percent of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material'. Motivation involves the learner's reasons for attempting to acquire the second language, but precisely what creates motivation is the crux of the matter. In the early work of Gardner and Lambert (1972), motivation was seen to be divided into two very general orientations: Integrative and instrumental.

- **Instrumental motivation:** desire to learn a language because it would fulfill certain utilitarian goals, such as getting a job, passing an examination, etc.
- **Integrative motivation:** desire to learn a language in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak it; the desire is also there to identify closely with the target language group.

- **Instrumental motivation vs Integrative motivation**

A distinction has been made in the literature between 'integrative' and 'instrumental' motivation: the desire to identify with and integrate into the target-language culture, contrasted with the wish to learn the language for purposes of study or career promotion. Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) showed that success in foreign / second language learning is likely to be less if the underlying motivational orientation is instrumental rather than integrative. But research since has cast doubt on the application of this claim to foreign language learners in

general. In any case, at least one other study (Burstall et al., 1974) has indicated that it may be impossible in practice to distinguish between the two. (Penny Ur (2005) A course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.p.276)

- **Resultative and intrinsic motivation**

Maslow's motivational pyramid which focuses on human needs, the 'resultative motivation hypothesis' (Skehan 1989:49) implies that success breeds success. Skehan proposes that:

.....motivation might be influenced by the success experienced by learners (the resultative hypothesis). (Skehan 1989: 49)

In comparison, 'the intrinsic hypothesis' (Skehan 1989:49) views motivational desires as arising from the materials and the tasks themselves. Skehan puts forward the hypothesis that '...motivation derives from an inherent interest in the learning tasks the learner is asked to perform' (Skehan 1989 ,cited in Ellis 1994 : 509). However, motivation has been extensively researched, particularly in individual differences in learners, there has been insufficient research on intrinsic motivation.

- **Gender and language learning strategy use :**

Here are some other studies, about the differences between males and females:

Bacon (1992)	no difference between the sexes
Gardner and Lambert (1972)	female learners are more motivated than male learners
Spolsky (1989)	girls have more positive attitudes towards speakers of the target language
Ludwig (1983)	male learners are more instrumentally motivated
Bacon and Finnemann (1992)	female learners of L2 Spanish at university level had the stronger instrumental motivation
Bacon (1992)	men use translation strategies more than women

It is not easy to find clear-cut explanations for these results. The explanations that follow are speculative in nature. One obvious explanation for females' greater success in L2 learning in classroom settings is that they generally have more positive attitudes. There also exists conflicting research on how sex or gender affects second language acquisition and whether one gender is more successful than the other (Ellis, 1994).

- Females are better at rejecting forms of language that are not proper.
- Females have better listening skills.

- Females are more concerned with input. (Listening)
- Females tend to have better attitudes towards learning.
- Males are less sensitive.
- Males tend to stick to forms that may not be correct.
- Males are more concerned with output. (Talking)
- Males think more analytically than females

- **Objectives and methods**

The study to be reported now draws on research question:

1. Do female students have higher motivation than male students in learning of English at the tertiary level?

The research was carried out from September 2006 to April 2007 in four engineering colleges and one Deemed university in and around Chennai. The subject included 408 first year Engineering and Technology students. (270 male students and 138 female students)

- **Research finding and discussion**

The raw data was fed into the computer and then was analysed by using **SPSS15**

The results are discussed below.

The calibration tool used to measure the responses was a five –point scale, with possible responses ranging from strongly agree, to strongly disagree (Bell 1999:186).The positively –scored items were scored as: (5) strongly agree & (4) agree and negatively –stated items were scored as (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree

and (3) for neutral. Motivation questionnaire consisted of twenty two structured questions (items) adapted and developed from two important sources: (Meng –Ching ho 1998, Questionnaire serial no 1 to 11), & (Sean Jose, 2003 Questionnaire serial no 12 to 22), including the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner & Lamber 1972), and the Achievement Motivation Questionnaire (Hayamizu et al 1989).

Question no: 3, 10, 12, 15, 17, & 20 were not taken for the discussion.

The focus was on four sub-scales of motivation factors such as:

- (a) integrative
- (b) instrumental
- (c) intrinsic and
- (d) resultative

Hypothesis:

Motivation factors affect the learning of English among Engineering and technology students and female students have higher and positive motivation towards the learning of English than male students.

Item	Gender	Mean	N*	SA*	A*	N*	DA*	SDA*
1. English will help me acquire new ideas and	Male	3.78	270	109	66	40	37	18
			%	40.3%	24.4%	14.9%	13.7%	6.7%

broaden my outlook	Female	4.46	138	98	20	12	02	06
			%	71.1%	14.4%	8.6%	1.5%	4.4%
2. English will enable me to better understand and appreciate English culture.	Male	4.05	270	98	102	62	04	04
			%	36.2%	37.8%	23.0%	1.5%	1.5%
	Female	4.57	138	102	20	10	06	00
			%	74.0%	14.4%	7.2%	4.4%	0%
4. I am interested in English music.	Male	4.39	270	174	20	26	40	10
			%	64.4%	7.4%	9.7%	14.8%	3.7%
	Female	3.78	138	45	50	15	25	03
			%	32.6%	36.2%	11.0%	18.1%	2.1%
5. I can learn more about the world through learning English	Male	4.41	270	176	57	13	20	04
			%	65.1%	21.1%	5.0%	7.4%	1.4%
	Female	4.73	138	112	20	02	04	00
			%	81.1%	14.4%	1.4%	2.8%	0%

<p>Over all mean</p> <p>Male = 4.15</p> <p>Female = 4.38</p>

Table1: Integrative motivation items based on gender

***Note: N= Number, SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, DA= disagree, SDA = strongly Disagree**

Integrative orientations, including four items which investigated to what degree the pupils learnt English in order to understand English people ways of life, to appreciate their cultures and to enlarge their own views.

Table1 shows that female students have relatively higher mean scores & percentage in Q1: ‘English will help me acquire new ideas and broaden my outlook’71% (mean 4.46), Q2: ‘English will enable me to better understand and appreciate English culture’, 74% (mean 4.57) &Q5: ‘I can learn more about the world through learning English’ 81.1% (mean 4.73) than male students (Q1:40.3% (mean 3.78), Q2 36.2% (mean 4.05), & Q5 : 65.1% (mean 4.41). However, 64.4% (mean 4.39) of male students were strong agreed with question no: 4 that is, ‘I am interested in English music’. The over all mean score of female students (mean 4.38) have higher than over all mean score of male students (4.15).

Hence, I conclude that female have higher integrative motivation towards learning English than male students.

Item	Gender	Mean	N	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
6. English is necessary to get a good	Male	4.48	270	177	63	20	04	06
			%	66.0%	23.3%	7.4%	1.4	2.2

job.	Female	4.65	138	107	20	07	02	02
			%	77.5%	14.4%	5.0%	1.4%	1.4%
7. English is essential to be active in society	Male	4.09	270	123	76	53	10	08
			%	45.5%	28.1%	19.6%	3.7%	2.9%
	Female	4.89	138	128	07	02	00	01
			%	92.7%	5%	1.4%	0%	0.7%
8. English will help me if I should ever travel abroad	Male	3.78	270	109	66	40	37	18
			%	40.3%	24.4%	14.8%	13.7%	6.6%
	Female	4.22	138	78	32	15	07	06
			%	56.5%	23.1%	10.8%	5.0%	4.3%
9. English is essential for personal development	Male	4.01	270	140	60	20	34	16
			%	51.8%	22.2%	7.4%	12.5%	5.9%
	Female	4.11	138	82	18	15	18	05
			%	59.4%	13.0%	10.8%	13.0%	3.6%
11. English will be helpful for my future career	Male	3.87	270	134	57	19	30	30
			%	49.6%	21.1%	7.0%	11.1%	11.1%
	Female	4.26	138	76	34	17	10	01
			%	55.0%	24.6%	12.3%	7.2%	0.7%
13. English will help me to pass my exams and graduate from the college.	Male	4.49	270	178	58	26	05	03
			%	65.9%	21.4%	9.6%	1.8%	1.1%
	Female	4.81	138	120	13	02	02	02
			%	86.9%	9.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Male = 4.12								
Over all mean								
Female = 4.49								

Table 2: instrumental motivation items based on gender

Table2 reveals that female students outnumber in mean scores of all the six instrumental items respectively: **Q1: 4.65, Q2: 4.89, Q3: 4.22, Q4: 4.11, Q5: 4.26 & Q6: 4.81** than male students mean scores (**Q1: 4.48, Q2: 4.09, Q3: 3.78, Q4: 4.01, Q5: 3.87 & Q6: 4.49**).

By seeing the over all mean scores of both male (4.12) and female (4.49) students, we can conclude that female students respondent have high instrumentally motivated than male students.

Item	Gender	Mean	N	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
14. I like to discuss something in English but not in first language.	Male	3.07	270	66	35	62	67	40
			%	24.4%	12.9%	22.9%	24.8%	14.8%
	Female	3.63	138	52	28	26	20	12
			%	37.6%	20.2%	18.8%	14.4%	8.6%
18. I enjoy discussions in English class.	Male	3.04	270	75	35	45	56	59
			%	27.7%	12.9%	16.6%	20.7%	21.8%
	Female	4.11	138	78	22	21	10	07
			%	56.5%	15.9%	15.2%	7.2%	5.0%
19. It is important to use a course book in class.	Male	3.56	270	102	54	20	82	12
			%	37.7%	20%	7.4%	30.3%	4.4%
	Female	3.97	138	71	25	16	20	06
			%	51.4%	18.1%	11.5%	14.4%	4.3%
Over all mean			Male = 3.22					
			Female = 3.90					

Table 3: Resultative motivation items based on gender

Table 4

Item	Gender	Mean	N	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
16. I feel	Male							

freer to express myself in English than I do in first language.		2.45	270	34	27	28	112	69
			%	12.5%	10%	10.3%	41.8%	25.5%
	Female	3.13	138	41	12	11	72	02
			%	29.8%	8.6%	7.9%	52.1%	1.4%
21. I try to use English as much as possible in class time.	Male	3.20	270	80	63	05	75	47
			%	29.6%	23.3%	1.8%	27.7%	17.4%
	Female	4.02	138	75	25	14	14	10
			%	53.3%	18.1%	10.1%	10.1%	7.2%
22. I always enjoy learning English.	Male	2.98	270	72	37	42	54	65
			%	26.6%	13.7%	15.5%	20%	24%
	Female	3.73	138	69	21	09	20	19
			%	50%	15.2%	6.5%	14.4%	13.7%
Over all mean			Male = 2.87					
			Female = 3.62					

Table 4 : Intrinsic motivation items based on gender

Table 3& 4 (Resultative & Intrinsic)

In responses to items 14, 16, 18, 19, 21 & 22 of female students have higher mean scores than male students.

Responses to items 16, 21 & 22, suggest that some female students may feel more comfortable discussing issues, and expressing themselves in English language than language one .There was also strong evidence in responses to item 19, that course books are considered an important factor in the classroom (Table 3).

We can look at the overall mean scores of resultative (table 3) and Intrinsic (table 4), female have higher than male students.

Motivation factors

The Results indicate that female students have scored higher mean average in all motivational categories such as integrative, instrumental, resultative & intrinsic than male students. However, we may conclude that male students have less motivated to learn English language, this can be clearly seen in the results are shown using the statistical means of average based on the response to four selected items in each motivational category, below (Table5):

Motivation	Gender	Integrative	Instrumental	Resultative	Intrinsic
Items		1, 2, 4 , & 5	6,7,8,9,11 & 13	14, 18, & 19	16, 21 & 22
Means Average	Male	4.15	4.12	3.22	2.87
	Female	4.38	4.49	3.90	3.62

Table 5: Average means of selected motivation items.

This becomes much clearer, and easier to analyse, if viewed on response scale based on the same selected items (Figure1), with 5 means average representing the highest possible response. This can be seen below:

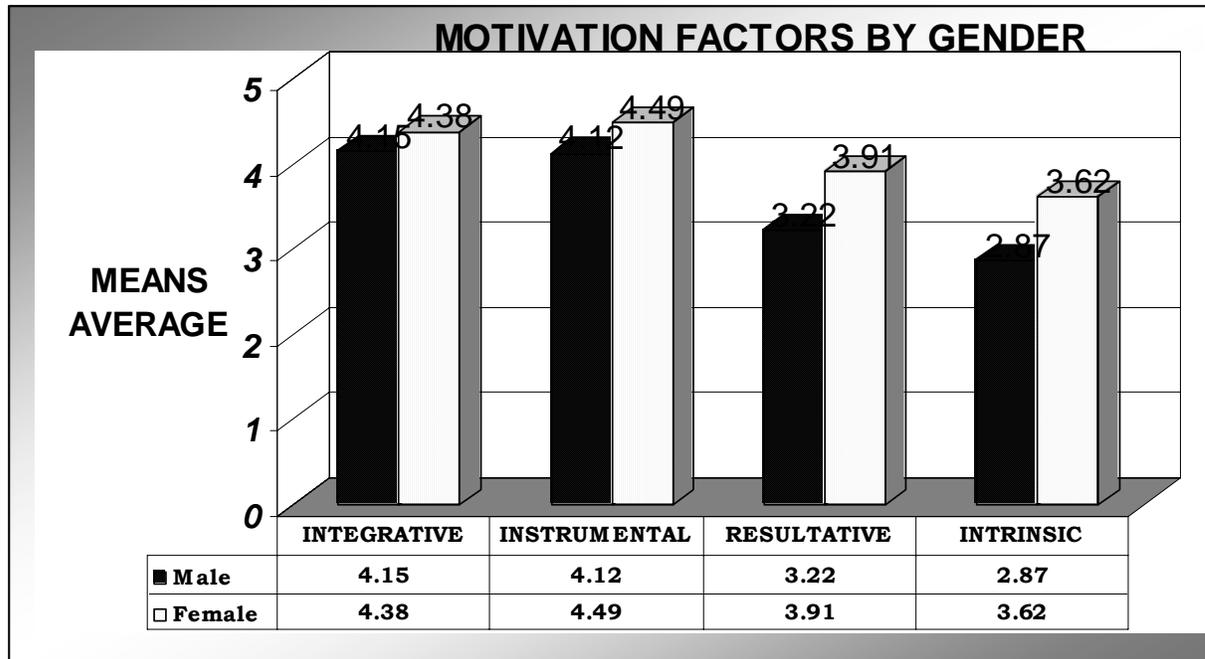


Figure 1: Selected motivation items based on responses.

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