

## Age, Gender, Attitudes and Motivation as Predictors of Willingness to Listen in L2

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the current research is to investigate the relationship between the attitudes and motivation of EFL learners and their willingness to listen (WTL); possible effects of age and gender on EFL learners' WTL, attitude and motivation. A quantitative study was designed in which 239 participants, intermediate level EFL learners at a public university, took a set of instruments, namely a reduced version of the AMTB, mini-AMTB, and WTL scale in Likert type. The participants were also asked to specify their gender and age during data collection procedure. Data was analysed using SPSS 24.0. Percentage and frequency analyses, independent samples t-test, Kruskal Wallis H test, Pearson correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis were employed in data analysis phase. The results of the study showed that gender affects EFL learners' attitudes and motivation while age has no effect on attitudes and motivation; also it was found that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants. According to the findings of the current study the predictive power of mini-AMTB of WTL has been found statistically meaningful. The findings have revealed that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants. Gender affects EFL learners' attitudes and motivation as female participants' mini-AMTB scores were found higher than those of male participants. Also a meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL has been found according to regression analysis. The paper concludes with implications for further research to investigate the WTL in various contexts with other personal variables.

### INTRODUCTION

Based on Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, L2 learning is believed to be influenced by several personal and social factors such as attitude, anxiety, aptitude, motivation and intelligence. Learner motivation is probably one of the most widely studied personal variable in language learning. The relevant literature provides a wealth of data on the causative and/or predictive relationships between or among aforementioned concepts. Yet, there is a research gap in terms of the relationship between any personal or social variable and willingness to listen in L2, a relatively new concept in language learning and teaching research.

#### Theoretical Background

While it was previously accepted as a fixed, easily measurable variable, contemporary conception of motivation points out its dynamic and moment-to-moment nature (Tatar, 2017). Gardner (1985) proposed that attitude and motivation have great impact on L2 learning as they are the key drives for learners who pursue communicative purposes in L2 learning. Gardner's integrative and socio-educational conceptions of motivation were followed by Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory in which intrinsic and

extrinsic motivation types were defined. Intrinsic, extrinsic and integrative motivational orientations in L2 learning have been proposed based on self-determination theory (Noels, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000). Several studies have investigated process-based models of motivation (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998; Ushioda, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Dörnyei (2005) has become influential with his L2 motivational self-system theory in which he defined the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience. According to his model, 'the sense of a discrepancy between a learner's actual self and ideal future L2 selves result in the motivation for language learning' (Tatar, 2017, p. 701). Along with self-system theory, dynamic system theory and studies on learner identity have also shaped current conceptualization of L2 learner motivation (Gayton, 2018; Mercer, 2016; Moskovsky, Assulaimani, Racheva, & Harkins, 2016; Papi, Bondarenko, Mansouri, Feng & Jiang, 2018; Roshandel, Ghonsooly, & Ghanizadeh, 2018).

MacIntyre and Charos (1996) included motivation, personality and context to McCroskey and Baer's (1985) original structural model of willingness to communicate to develop willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 as one of the personality factors. WTC in L2 is defined 'as a readiness

to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2' (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998, p. 547). The causal correlations between willingness to communicate (WTC) and personality factors namely attitudes and motivation in L2 learning have been popular research topics since then (Altuner, 2018; Bursali & Öz, 2017; Joe, Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Yashima, 2002; Yousef, Jamil & Razak, 2013). Yashima (2002) investigated the effect of WTC on motivation in Japanese EFL context. In another study, Munezane (2014) argued that L2 WTC can be enhanced by applying motivational strategies to develop ideal L2 self. Peng and Woodrow (2010) investigated WTC in Chinese EFL context and found that WTC is indirectly influenced by motivation. In another study, Peng (2007) expressed the close relationship between WTC and motivation as these two variables are 'tightly woven' (p. 50). Studies have highlighted the role of WTC in motivational orientations as an extension or background variable (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Kormos & Dörnyei, 2004). Most of the studies employ WTC scale (Peng, 2010) adapted from the WTC structure (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Conrod, 2001) and the mini-AMTB (Bernaus & Gardner 2008) a shorter version of the Attitude-Motivation Test Battery developed by Gardner (1985) to investigate the relationship between WTC, attitudes and motivation in L2.

Based on the original WTC structure, several WTC scales have been developed to measure WTC in different contexts for example speaking and writing context (Weaver, 2005), classroom based research (Peng, 2013; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Ryan, 2009; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2016), instructional models of WTC (Khatib & Nourzadeh, 2015) and intercultural WTC (Ulu, Weiwei & Yu, 2015). However, current WTC structure lacks 'listening' dimension of communication (Akdemir, 2016). As he suggested 'the original form of WTC is mainly focused on speaking and writing abilities' (p. 130). Current WTC scales lack the items to measure listening dimension which is defined as one of the crucial parts of communication (Roberts & Vinson, 1998). Regarding this lack, it is impossible to infer the relationship between willingness to listen (WTL), attitude and motivation in L2 from current research which employs WTC structure. To determine the relationship between WTL and other variables (attitude and motivation), WTL scale developed by Akdemir (2016) is used in this study. WTL is a Likert-type scale with 19 items which constitute a four-factor structure. The factors are defined as speaker, listener, task and topic.

Mini-AMTB (Bernaus & Gardner 2008) is a brief version of the original Attitude-Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) construct which employs a scaling format suggested by Guilford (1954), in which each item corresponds to one of the 11 scales in the full version of the scale (Tennant & Gardner, 2004). The inclusionary variables measured in the AMTB are (1) integrativeness, (2) attitude toward learning situation, (3) motivation and (4) language anxiety (Gardner, 2011). The main difference between the AMTB and the mini-AMTB is that the latter gives a comprehensive view of attitudes and motivation and also it consists of 12 questions measuring different attributes of motivation on a 7-point Likert scale (Bernaus & Gardner 2008).

The studies in the relevant literature, which use the AMTB and mini-AMTB, vary in various aspects in that they explore the relationship between motivation and related issues. A number of studies used the adaptations of the AMTB to measure the L2 motivation (Baker & Macintyre, 2000; Gardner & Macintyre, 1992; Ghani & Azhar, 2017; Lockhart, 2016; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001). Some of the highlights include a French version (Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1977), a mini-version (Gardner et al, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993), a children's form of the mini-AMTB (Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001), and an international version for English language learners from different native language settings (Gardner, 2010). Mini-AMTB have also been used in a number of WTC studies (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996).

### Research Questions

The aim of the current research is to investigate the relationship between the attitudes and motivation of EFL learners and their WTL; possible effects of age and gender on EFL learners' WTL, attitude and motivation.

The research questions of this study are as follow:

RQ1- Do gender and age factors have any effect on EFL learners' WTL (with its dimensions), attitude and motivation?

RQ2- Is there any relationship between the attitudes and motivation of EFL learners and their WTL and its dimensions?

RQ3- Do EFL learners' attitude and motivation predict their WTL?

### METHOD

A quantitative study was designed in which 239 participants, intermediate level EFL learners at a public university, took a set of instruments, namely a reduced version of the AMTB, mini-AMTB, and WTL scale in Likert type. The participants were also asked to specify their gender and age during data collection procedure.

### Participants

The study was conducted with 239 EFL learners from an ELT department of a public university. The participants were all at least intermediate level language learners. Sixty six of them were male (27.6%), and 173 were female (72.4%). The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 33. A detailed table for demographics of the participants is given in the next section (See Findings).

### Instruments

#### WTL scale

A Likert-type scale, developed by Akdemir (2016) in order to measure willingness to listen in L2 context, was used to determine the participants' WTL. The scale has 19 items with four factors. The factors of WTL and Cronbach's alpha

coefficient for the reliability of the factors were determined as follow: Listener (.83), Speaker (.70), Task (.70), Topic (.83). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found .79 for the total scale (Akdemir, 2016, p. 143). In this study, the reliability has been found .84 for the total scale.

### Mini-AMTB

The mini-AMTB (Gardner, 2010) is a reduced version of the original AMTB scale developed by Gardner (1985). Though the first version of mini-AMTB consisted of 11 items each corresponding to a scale of the full version, a twelfth item was added on parental support (Gardner, 2010). In its final version, the scale is aimed to assess 'participants' integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, language anxiety, instrumentality, and parental encouragement' (Meyer, 2013, p.42) with seven grades for each item. The reliability of the dimensions of mini-AMTB were computed as follow: Integrativeness ( $\alpha=.86$ ), Motivation ( $\alpha=.65$ ), Attitudes toward the learning situation ( $\alpha=.89$ ), and Language anxiety ( $\alpha=.48$ ). In this study, the reliability for the whole scale has been found.78. These figures show that the scale has a high level of reliability.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS 24.0, a statistical package programme for social sciences. Percentage and frequency analyses was conducted in order to determine the demographic features of the participants. Independent samples t-test was conducted to explore whether WTL and mini-AMTB scores of the participants significantly differ according to their gender. Kruskal Wallis H test was applied to find whether WTL and mini-AMTB scores of the participants significantly differ according to their age. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to define the relationship between WTL and

mini-AMTB. Simple linear regression analysis was used to explore whether EFL learners' attitude and motivation predict their WTL.

## RESULTS

Descriptive and quantitative findings of the study is presented in this section.

Descriptive statistics of the participants are shown in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, %72.4 (N=173) of the participants were female; %27.6 (N=66) of them were male EFL learners. The distribution of the participants according to their age were grouped with fixed intervals: %72.8 (N=174) of them were between 18-20 ages; %24.3 (N=58) were between 21 and 23 ages; and % 2.9 (N=7) were 24 or older.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference between gender of the participants and their mini-AMTB scores. Fe-male participants' mini-AMTB scores are higher than male participants' scores. The gender effects also exist in WTL scores for Speaker dimension. Female participants' WTL scores for the Speaker dimension are found to be higher than male participants' scores. There is no significant difference between gender and WTL with its Listener, Task and Topic dimensions.

The results of Kruskal Wallis H test applied to find whether WTL and mini-AMTB scores of the participants significantly differ according to their age is given in Table 3.

There is no significant difference between participants' age and their mini-AMTB and WTL (with all dimensions) scores. Age is not a predictor of EFL listeners' attitude, motivation and willingness to listen levels for this study.

Table 4 shows the findings related to the relationships between mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants.

There is a positive and meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants. However, this relationship was found at low level ( $r=.20$ , Sig.  $<.01$ ). Also, there are positive and meaningful relationships between mini-AMTB and WTL's Speaker and Task dimensions. These relationships are at low level. Besides, no meaningful relationship exists between mini-AMTB and WTL's Listener and Topic dimensions.

Simple linear regression analysis was used to explore whether EFL learners' attitude and motivation predict their WTL. Before conducting simple regression analysis, attention is paid to meet the prior conditions. In other words, simple regression analysis has several assumptions such

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of the participants

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	173	72,4
	Male	66	27,6
Age groups	18-20	174	72,8
	21-23	58	24,3
	24 +	7	2,9

**Table 2.** Mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants according to gender

	Female N=173		Male N=66		t	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
Mini-AMTB	4.19	0.44	3.87	0.56	4.748	237	0.00*
WTL	3.26	0.53	3.22	0.52	0.495	237	0.62
Speaker	3.46	0.73	3.22	0.68	2.299	237	0.02*
Listener	3.12	0.89	3.09	0.86	0.281	237	0.78
Task	3.89	0.75	3.72	0.75	1.587	237	0.11
Topic	2.87	0.74	3.02	0.77	1.397	237	0.16

\*Sig.<.05

**Table 3.** Mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants according to age

	Age groups	N	Mean rank	df	Chi square	Sig.
Mini-AMTB	18-20	174	121.11	2	0.426	0.808
	21-23	58	115.51			
	24 +	7	129.57			
WTL	18-20	174	124.05	2	2.198	0.333
	21-23	58	109.27			
	24 +	7	108.29			
Speaker	18-20	174	126.12	2	5.586	0.061
	21-23	58	101.52			
	24 +	7	121.00			
Listener	18-20	174	123.01	2	1.284	0.526
	21-23	58	111.20			
	24 +	7	118.21			
Task	18-20	174	119.19	2	0.886	0.642
	21-23	58	119.53			
	24 +	7	144.00			
Topic	18-20	174	122.87	2	2.702	0.259
	21-23	58	116.06			
	24 +	7	81.21			

\*Sig.&lt;.05

as multicollinearity, outliers etc. Before performing simple regression analysis, its assumptions are checked. Sample size is large enough to make simple regression analysis and multicollinearity is checked. Additionally, in order to check for the outliers, Mahalanobis distances are investigated and outliers are discarded. In order to check multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance value, and CI condition index are checked. After all of these conditions are fulfilled, regression analysis are made.

The findings of simple regression analysis to determine whether participants' mini-AMTB scores predicts their WTL scores are given in Table 5.

As Table 3 shows, there is a meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL ( $R=0.20$ ,  $R^2=0.04$ ,  $F=10.188$ ,  $\text{Sig}<0.01$ ). Besides, the predictive power of mini-AMTB of WTL is found statistically meaningful; mini-AMTB predicts %4 of the total variance of WTL.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, this chapter aims at presenting and discussing the results in the light of current literature. This study aimed at investigating the relationship between the attitudes and motivation of EFL learners and their WTL; possible effects of age and gender on EFL learners' WTL, attitude and motivation.

The first research question was related to any possible effects of gender and age factors on EFL learners' WTL (with its dimensions), attitude and motivation. According to the findings, gender affects EFL learners' attitudes and motivation. Female participants' mini-AMTB scores were found higher than those of male participants.

**Table 4.** The correlation coefficients of Mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants

	1	2	3	4	5	6
AMTB	-					
WTL	0.20**	-				
Speaker	0.24**	0.62**	-			
Listener	0.07	0.75**	0.27**	-		
Task	0.25**	0.42**	0.24**	0.08	-	
Topic	0.07	0.83**	0.31**	0.57**	0.04	-

\*\*Sig.&lt;.01; \*Sig.&lt;.05

**Table 5.** The results of simple linear regression analysis to determine the predictive validity of mini-AMTB to WTL

Model	B	SE	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Constant	3.484	0.196	-	17.735	0.000
WTL	0.190	0.060	0.203	3.192	0.002

 $R=0.20$   $R^2=0.04$   $F=10.188$   $\text{Sig}=0.002$ 

The effect of gender on attitudes and motivation has been discussed in several studies (Feng, Fan & Yang, 2013; Fontecha, 2010; Gardner, 2006; Hyde, 1970; Mori & Gobel, 2006). Baker and MacIntyre (2003) reported gender as an important variable in L2 motivation. Research findings showed that female language learners have higher motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, Csizér, & Nemeth, 2006; Mori & Gobel, 2006; Sung & Padilla, 1998). Mori and Gobel (2006) investigated the effect of gender on motivation in Japanese EFL context. They used a motivation scale based on Gardner's AMTB structure. Their study



showed that female learners have higher motivation in terms of integrativeness; this finding coincides with the study of Dörnyei and Clément (2001) in which they argue that female learners score significantly higher on direct contact with L2 Speakers and Integrativeness. They attribute this finding to the assumption that 'female participants have a greater interest in the cultures and people of the target language community, a greater desire to make friends with those people, and are more interested in travelling and/or studying overseas than male participants' (p. 205). In another study, Mahdavy (2013) used a scale to investigate the effect of gender on motivation. Based on Dörnyei's motivational self-system theory, his research found a significant difference between male and female learners' motivational orientations. He explained this difference in terms of social roles of male and female individuals. Baker and MacIntyre (2000) also mentioned this kind of relationship between male learners' high job-related orientations in their motivational tendencies. Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2017) found that female learners have higher intrinsic motivation while male learners have higher extrinsic motivation in a research study in which they conducted structural equation modelling to determine the interrelationships between motivational regulations and engagement. The findings of the current research coincide with the findings of the relevant literature.

Current study has shown that gender effect also exists in participants' WTL scores only in Speaker dimension. This dimension of WTL was designed to investigate the willingness to listen according to the speaker factor. Female participants' WTL scores have been found to be higher than male participants' scores. It is found that there is no difference for the total WTL scores in terms of gender. As WTL is a newly developed scale, it is difficult to find any evidence from previous studies regarding this relationship. However, it is possible to have an idea by looking at the relationship between WTC and gender in previous research studies. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2003) reported that girls had higher WTC compared to boys. In a more recent research, Gholami (2015) investigated the relationship between gender and WTC in Iranian context. According to her findings, female EFL learners have higher WTC compared to male ones. Alavinia and Alikhani (2014) also found that female EFL learners outperformed in terms of WTC and emotional intelligence. Though being few in number, there are some studies reporting no difference between gender and WTC (Bashosh, Nejad, Rastegar, & Marzban 2013).

Studies related to the age factor in language learning have mainly focused on the critical period or the age of onset (Dewaele, 2009; Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2014; Muñoz, 2011; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2016). The possible effects of gender and age in L2 motivation have been studied along with WTC in an immersion setting by MacIntyre, et al. (2003). They found differences on motivation levels based on the participants' age. In another study, Kormos and Csizér (2008), investigated the motivational orientations of three groups of language learners. Their study showed that there are differences between motivational orientations of language learners of different age groups. They explained the differences in reference with Dörnyei's (2005) motivational

self-system model. According to the findings of the present study, age is not a predictor of attitude, motivation and WTL in L2. Though this does not correspond with the findings of relevant literature; it should be noted that the present study focused on tertiary level learners in which age have ranged between close spans (97% of the participants were between 18-23 ages).

RQ2- Is there any relationship between the attitudes and motivation of EFL learners and their WTL and its dimensions?

The findings related to the second research question showed that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL scores of the participants. Though being at low level ( $r=.20$ , Sig.  $<.01$ ), this relationship should be noted for being the first data on the relationship between WTL and mini-AMTB. Mini-AMTB and WTC have widely been studied in terms of their correlation. Hashimoto (2002) found a moderate relationship between WTC and mini-AMTB in a Japanese ESL context. Peng (2007) investigated the relationship between WTC and integrative motivation. She found that L2 WTC correlates with integrative motivation. As she found, attitudes towards the learning situation did not predict WTC. It should be noted that, correlational analyses of WTC and mini-AMTB did not consider dimensions of WTC. Thus, it is difficult to make inference about the relationship between attitudes, motivation and dimensions of WTC. However, current study reports positive and meaningful relationships between mini-AMTB and WTL's Speaker and Task dimensions. These relationships are at low level. Besides, no meaningful relationship exists between mini-AMTB and WTL's Listener and Topic dimensions.

The predictive power of mini-AMTB of WTL has been found statistically meaningful. This finding answered the third research question: Do EFL learners' attitude and motivation predict their WTL? A meaningful relationship between mini-AMTB and WTL ( $R=0.20$ ,  $R^2=0.04$ ,  $F=10.188$ , Sig.  $<.01$ ) has been found according to regression analysis. As the findings suggest, mini-AMTB predicts 4% of the total variance of WTL. This finding is an evidence to support the relationship between attitudes, motivation and WTL structure. In a regression model, Peng (2007) reported that while motivation strongly predicted WTC, attitudes did not predict it. Peng and Woodrow (2010) found that motivation predicts WTC indirectly. These findings support the results of the present research as WTL structure is mainly based on WTC.

## CONCLUSIONS

Current research was devoted to seek the relationship between the attitudes and motivation of EFL learners and their willingness to listen (WTL); possible effects of age and gender on EFL learners' WTL, attitude and motivation. To this end, a survey study was designed in which WTL construct and a reduced version of AMTB were used to gather data. The data was then analyzed to seek answers to the research questions.

This study found relationship between gender, attitude, motivation and WTL. According to the findings of the study,

age has no effect on attitude, motivation and WTL. Also, mini-AMTB predicted WTL for the current research context. This study is the first example in which the relationship between WTL, attitude and motivation has been investigated. Previous studies have mostly focused on WTC and its relationships with other variables. Yet, current WTC lacks listening aspect of communication which makes it impossible to assess WTL structure and its relationships with other variables.

Further studies should focus on exploring the predictive power of WTL on personal variables such as age, gender, attitudes, motivation. The relationship between WTL, attitude and motivation across L1 and L2 should also be investigated. Mini-AMTB, a reduced form of AMTB, has been used in this study. However, further studies should expand the research design to include other scales for attitude and motivation in order to re-test the possible relationships between the concepts.

Current research is expected to contribute language pedagogy in determining the profile of language classroom in context with WTL, attitudes and motivation. Language teachers are expected to benefit from the results and discussion for their curriculum planning and development. Pedagogical implications of the study can be generalized by accompanying action research in which teacher-researcher driven qualitative data will accompany the statistical findings.

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