



**GENDER AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH AS A
SECOND LANGUAGE: A STUDY BASED ON THE 1ST YEAR
UNDERGRADUATES IN THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE,
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ABSTRACT

Attitudes are considered to be an individual difference and the attitudes influence in the process of Second Language Learning. According to Gardner, attitudes refer to “An evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent” (Gardner, 1985). Although many scholars like Gardner, Lambert and Dornyei etc. have identified a positive correlation between learner attitudes and the Second Language Learning process, the gender differences in the attitudes of the language learners have not been researched substantially, especially in the Sri Lankan language learning context. Therefore the main aim of the research is to identify the gender differences in the attitudes towards learning English as a Second Language and whether the variable of gender plays a main role in the attitudinal differences of the learners. The mixed method comprised of both the qualitative and quantitative data methods are used in order to collect data using Microsoft Excel application. The sample for the research is 78 1st year undergraduates from the Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya. According to the analysis, it is observed that the female learners demonstrate more positive attitudes than the male learners. While 90.90% of the females depict positive attitudes towards learning English as a Second Language, only 51.51% of the males have positive attitudes for the particular factor. Therefore it is possible to identify a difference of 39.39 % between the two genders. In analyzing the behavioural, cognitive and affective components of attitudes, it is observed that the females have more positive behavioural attitudes than the males with percentages of 87.87, 90.90 and 63.63 respectively. With regard to the language skills also the females demonstrate more positive attitudes than the males and the percentage is 93.93%. The attitudes of the learners towards formal and informal language learning contexts also demonstrate more positive attitudes with the female learners than the males. In conclusion, it is observed that the females have more positive attitudes to learning English as a Second Language than the male learners and it affirms the research findings of the scholars as Shoaib and Dornyei (2005) in the Sri Lankan second language teaching context as well. Therefore it is recommended to identify the reasons behind the gender differences in the attitudes of the Second Language learners and apply the knowledge to overcome the barriers in teaching English as a Second language.

Keywords: gender, attitudes, Second Language Teaching, language skills