A Cross-cultural Analysis of Iranian and Turkish Language Students' Attitudes towards Learning English

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A R T I C L E I N F O	**A B S T R A C T**
   K E Y W O R D S 	The dominance of English as an international language is quite accepted worldwide and many countries are teaching it in their public and private institutes. Iran and Turkey are two neighboring countries with a long tradition of relationship. This study aimed to investigate attitudes towards learning English among language students in these two countries. In this survey-based research, the participants, both male and female, completed a 39-item Likert-scale questionnaire (Iranian = 72 and Turkish = 73). They ranged in age between 20-30 and were from Akdeniz and Urmia Universities. T-test Analyses revealed students in both countries did not differ significantly in holding positive attitudes towards English. However, specifically, Iranian students were more positive with regard to studying other subjects through English, feeling relaxed when answering questions in English, and applying English in real life; while their Turkish counterparts were more positive as concerns speaking English fluently, being more knowledgeable if knowing more languages, and English letting them create new thought. Both groups scored similar in items related to communication with English speaking people and English helping them improve understanding, as well as feeling proud when speaking and learning English. To make the outcome of language programmes more efficient and productive, having a team of experts, both native and non-native can be invited to brainstorm in planning and revising the educational programmes, so that students' needs and feelings can be considered. Detailed findings along with complete discussion and implications are presented in the paper.

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1. Introduction

Social psychology is a powerful framework to account for how social and psychological variables can affect success in different walks of life, and attitude is one of the main areas of interest within this framework (Zhou, 2002). The role of attitude towards the subject matter on students' success and attainment is not unknown to anyone involved in the educational system. In language learning contexts, students' attitudes towards the language they are learning has a significant effect on their achievements, both cognitively when the role of language learning strategies and the like are being considered and affectively when the influence of different filters are dealt with. As a negative affective factor, attitude may arise out of internal and external sources and may lead to inhibitions and encouragements. Inside the complex dynamic system of language learning and the spider's web of education, teachers' teaching, motivation, environmental factors, political issues, family matters, as well as instrumental and integrative motivation on the part of the learner, all can influence attitudes towards the subject matter being learned (e.g., Getie, 2020; Oxford, 2016; Sadeghi & Abolfazli, 2020).

Over years, various studies have been carried out on students' academic performances in educational settings, some of them dealing with investigating any possible effect of students' attitudes towards the subject matter in this concern. In this regard, a variety of factors influence students' attitudes towards a target language being learned. Among the most important ones lies the first language, first language culture, and second language culture, etc. The culture and the place where one lives have a direct influence on the language and the attitudes of the people (e.g., Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Ratri et al., 2024; Tran et al., 2024; Abolfazli & Sadeghi, 2018). The existing relationship between culture and language makes these two factors to influence attitudes towards the second language in the same way. In an Iranian context where English is taught as a foreign language and where the educational system exerts a great deal of anxiety on students as a result of being dominated by examinations, understanding students' attitudes towards this subject may help provide a clear picture of what are the determining factors of their success or failure (e.g., Gilakjani, 2017; Sadeghi & Abolfazli, 2015). Turkey is a neighboring country of Iran and has somehow similar culture and language to some parts of Iran including West and East Azerbaijan and Ardebil which are the closest provinces in Iran to Turkey. Even some believe the language used in these three provinces are dialects of each other (e.g., Salehi & Neysani, 2017). Salehi and Neysani (2017) state that Azeri and Turkish are very similar in terms of cultural issues and claim Turkish language is intelligible in 56 percent of cases by Azeri speakers. Regarding the similarities between

Turkish and Azeri, Gooskens (2007) states, the degree of mutual intelligibility between two languages is a matter of one language speaker's attitudes towards the other language, the previous contact with the language, and the linguistic distance between the two languages. All of these factors can be found among Azeri speakers with regard to Turkish language. As Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) claim, motivation for learning a language is undeniably affected by attitude towards that language. In a similar vein, Ellis (1994) notes that students' ability to learn a target language may be affected by their attitude towards that language, the language speakers and their culture, and the social value of learning a specific language. Brown (2000) also states that students' positive attitudes towards the target language groups will enhance their proficiency.

Since, as stated above, attitude is seen as part of motivation in the present research, attitude as related to motivation is taken as the theoretical framework of the study. Generally speaking, as Ellis (2003) highlights, social factors including attitudes play a crucial role in language learning and have a major impact on foreign/second language learning. Iran and Turkey present unique contexts for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning due to their distinct language policies and educational systems (e.g., Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2023). In Turkey, for instance, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) makes and strictly monitors almost all decisions concerning education policies and implementation. Therefore, educational contexts do not have much freedom of action about staff employment and development. Based on the findings of Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) carried out by the OECD, Turkey ranks as one of the lowest among the participating countries as regards aspects of school autonomy in teacher hiring, firing, remuneration, allocation of funds for teacher professional development and deciding which courses to offer (OECD, 2009). By the same tokens, various studies have been carried out in Iranian context that investigated students and teachers' burnout due to negative attitudes (e.g., Moghadam et al., 2020). Iran's language policy tends to emphasize Persian as the medium of instruction, with English often positioned as a secondary language. This approach can create a learning environment where English is seen as less integral to academic and professional success, potentially impacting students' motivation and attitudes towards learning the language. Conversely, Turkey has made significant strides in integrating English into its educational system, reflecting its broader goals of aligning with Western educational standards and enhancing global competitiveness. This policy has led to a more prominent role for English in Turkish education, likely fostering more positive attitudes towards EFL learning among Turkish students (e.g., Pishghadam et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Abolfazli & Sadeghi, 2018).

These differing approaches create varied learning environments that influence how students from these countries experience and respond to EFL education. In Iran, the emphasis on Persian may limit exposure to English, thereby affecting students' confidence and proficiency in the language. In contrast, Turkey's advocacy on English education could enhance students' opportunities for practice and use, leading to better language outcomes. Examining these contexts helps in understanding the broader implications of educational policies on EFL learning and the specific challenges and opportunities faced by learners in each country (e.g., Salehi & Neysani, 2017). As mentioned in Derakhshan et al. (2022), Aydin and Kaya (2019) and Abolfazli and Sadeghi (2018), the unique linguistic and educational contexts of Iran and Turkey provide a rich backdrop for exploring these themes. Iran's emphasis on Persian and the secondary status of English contrasts with Turkey's more integrated approach to English education. This difference creates varied learning environments that offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of different language policies and pedagogical practices (e.g., Fathi et al., 2021; Mellom et al., 2018).

In summary, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, graduate language learners in Iranian contexts lack the necessary level of confidence for using their English knowledge academically and practically in everyday life. Indeed, this study was conducted to compare the status quo of Turkish students in this regard and to draw out any possible solutions to this problem in Iranian language programmes. By the same token, professionals from all over the world who would face the same difficulties in their educational systems in general and their language programmes in particular, could benefit from the results of such comparative studies.

2. Literature review

Learning a language is a complex dynamic phenomenon that has many interacting individualistic and community-related factors in-play simultaneously. Extensive research has been carried out on areas related to learning a language. Firstly, flexible language policies were found to enable learners to draw on their native language skills while acquiring the target language, which can enhance comprehension, reduce cognitive overload, and build confidence (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Hamid et al., 2019a, 2019b). Recent research by Li and Chen (2022) demonstrates that bilingual education models, which integrate native and target languages, significantly improve students' language proficiency and academic performance by leveraging their existing linguistic resources. This contrasts with restrictive language policies that mandate an English-only approach, which, as Wright (2020) suggests, can heighten anxiety and reduce learner engagement by creating a high-

pressure environment that disregards the linguistic and cultural assets students bring with them. Similarly, studies by Kim and Choi (2021) highlight that exclusive English-only policies can exacerbate learners' stress and lead to lower levels of motivation and participation, particularly in contexts where students are not fully proficient in English. Secondly, on the importance of educational policies in the context of bilingual systems, recent investigations by Rahimi and Atai (2022), for instance, have begun to address this gap by exploring the practical challenges and successes of implementing bilingual education in various countries, revealing that while open policies are advantageous, their success depends heavily on context-specific factors such as teacher training and resource availability. Understanding the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of language policies is crucial for developing strategies that not only enhance language proficiency but also align with learners' needs and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Wright, 2020). Thirdly, to support language students effectively, this exploration is essential for crafting policies that accommodate the complex interplay between target and native languages, optimize learning outcomes, and foster a supportive and engaging language learning environment. From another perspective and to address emotional aspects affecting learning success, recent research has provided compelling evidence supporting the strategic use of First Language (L1) in EFL classrooms. Studies by Lee and Macaro (2013) and Al Masaeed (2024) demonstrate that judicious use of L1 can significantly aid in vocabulary development, enhance comprehension, and improve classroom management, thereby contributing to better overall learning outcomes. These findings suggest that a balanced approach to L1 use can address learners' cognitive and emotional needs more effectively than an English-only approach (e.g., Lee and Macaro, 2013). Specifically, Lee and Macaro (2013) found that when L1 is used strategically, it can act as a cognitive scaffold, helping students make connections between their existing knowledge and new linguistic concepts, thus enhancing vocabulary retention and comprehension. Similarly, Al Masaeed (2024) showed that L1 use in classroom management can create a more inclusive and less stressful learning environment, which can lower affective barriers and increase student participation. Fourthly, research by Ellis and Shintani (2014) and García and Wei (2014) suggests that the socio-emotional aspect of language learning is equally important. Therefore, exploring these socio-emotional benefits in the context of EFL learning could offer valuable insights into how second language use can be optimized to enhance not just cognitive outcomes but also learner well-being and motivation. Fifthly, language attitudes, which encompass learners' perceptions and feelings toward the languages they are learning, are pivotal in determining their motivation and success. Positive attitudes towards English can significantly enhance learning outcomes by increasing engagement

and persistence, while negative attitudes can serve as substantial barriers to progress. Factors influencing these attitudes include cultural identity, perceived utility of English, and previous language learning experiences. By comparing the attitudes of students, the researchers can find out how different cultural and educational contexts shape learners' views on English learning. This understanding is crucial for fostering positive attitudes and devising effective language education strategies tailored to these specific contexts (e.g., Moghadam et al., 2020).

Recent studies have underscored the profound impact of learners' attitudes on their motivation and engagement in language learning. Some scholars (e.g. Lamb, 2017; Csizér & Lukács, 2021b) highlight that positive attitudes towards English are strongly correlated with higher levels of motivation and active participation in language learning activities. This relationship suggests that fostering positive attitudes can lead to more effective and sustained language learning efforts (e.g., Al Masaeed, 2024). However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding how specific cultural and educational contexts influence these attitudes. Understanding these nuances can help educators and policymakers develop more context-sensitive approaches to language teaching that resonate with learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, the socio-cultural environment and the perceived necessity of English proficiency play critical roles in shaping learners' attitudes. Ryan (2019) emphasizes that in contexts where English is seen as a valuable skill for economic and social mobility, learners are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards the language. However, in environments where English is perceived as a threat to cultural identity or is not deemed necessary, negative attitudes may prevail. This dichotomy points to the need for a deeper exploration of how EFL learners perceive the role of English in their lives and how these perceptions influence their attitudes towards learning the language.

According to Fakeye (2010), learner's attitude is one of the most important factors that impact on foreign language learning. While existing research has established the importance of language attitudes, there is limited exploration of why and how these attitudes form in specific cultural contexts. For instance, Iranian students often view English as a critical tool for academic and professional advancement, which leads them to develop positive attitudes towards English (e.g., Abolfazli & Sadeghi, 2018). Conversely, Turkish students navigate the dual pressures of achieving proficiency in English while maintaining their cultural identity (Salehi & Neysani, 2017). Investigating these dynamics can provide a richer understanding of the psycho-socio-cultural factors at play and help identify effective strategies for promoting positive language attitudes. In addition to cognitive factors, the emotional and psychological aspects of language attitudes deserve more attention. Recent studies by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) suggest that learners' emotional

experiences in language classes, such as anxiety, enjoyment, and self-confidence, significantly impact their attitudes towards the language. Furthermore, contemporary research by Yim and Yu (2022) indicates that learners' attitudes towards English can also be shaped by their exposure to global English media and their interactions with English-speaking communities, both online and offline. This suggests that external influences beyond the classroom significantly contribute to shaping language attitudes, necessitating a broader view of language education that includes these factors (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2017).

On the close relationship between culture and language, it has been found that differences in general and language barriers and low cultural elements in particular, negatively affect occupational safety among non-native English labor workers (De Jesus-rivas et al., 2016). Language attitudes significantly influence EFL learning (Lamb, 2017; Csizér & Lukács, 2021a). These studies show that positive attitudes towards English correlate with higher motivation and better learning outcomes. Ryan and Mercer (2011) further explore how cultural identity and perceived utility of English shape these attitudes, highlighting the complex interplay between socio-cultural factors and language learning. However, the relationship between language attitudes and learning outcomes is not straightforward. While positive attitudes generally enhance motivation, negative experiences in the classroom can undermine these attitudes. Moreover, there is limited research on how language attitudes evolve over time and how they are influenced by broader psycho-socio-cultural and political changes.

In the context of Turkey, Karatas et al. (2016) found gender, receiving preparatory training, language level, and high school differentiation does not affect students' attitudes towards learning English. In this regard, attitude is defined as one's beliefs about the outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior by Montana and Kasprzyk (2008) and by Gardner (1980), it is considered as the sum total of a man's instincts and feelings, preconceived notions, prejudice or bias, threats, fears, and convictions about any specified topics. Wenden (1991) classified attitude as consisting of three components, namely, *cognitive*, as made up of the beliefs and thoughts about the object of the attitude, *affective*, as involving the person's emotions towards an object, and *behavioural*, as one's consisting actions or tendency to adapt to special learning behaviors. Getie (2020) found that educational context factors like English language teachers, the English language learning situations (e.g., the classrooms, arrangements of seats and the physical learning environment) had negative impacts on students' attitude. However, his findings showed that second language students held positive attitudes towards other factors related to the educational context that is the English textbook which implies that the materials used for teaching English as a foreign language in the

study's context influences students' attitudes in a positive way. Kaharuddin et al. (2020) investigated the attitude factor as a mediator variable to see whether or not it could improve the impact of technology and culture as independent variables on students' interest as the dependent variable. Their findings revealed that implementing technology and culture in the context of classroom could affect explicitly and implicitly the students' motivation for learning English through attitude.

Yet, the absence of attitude as a mediator variable does not play any role on the effect of both technology and culture on motivation. In an experimental study by Bakeer (2018), the attitudes of students were compared between the groups to assess students' attitudes towards learning English and the possible effect of available technology to improve language skills and learner autonomy. The findings of her study revealed that language students' attitudes towards the incorporation of blended learning positively affects students' language skills, motivation, and autonomous learning. Sadeghi and Richards (2016) carried out a study on the Iranians' ideas towards English in Iran. they found that generally people felt some social needs for the English as an international language and had positive attitudes towards it.

As referred to above, previous studies have examined EFL learning in Iran and Turkey separately, but comparative studies are rare. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how differing language policies and cultural contexts influence EFL learning and attitudes in these two countries. Such comparative analysis can provide a deeper understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities faced by EFL learners in different contexts. Building on the existing literature, the present study offers several novel contributions. By comparing Iranian and Turkish EFL learners, this study provides unique insights into how different cultural and educational contexts impact language attitudes and learning outcomes. This comparative approach addresses a significant gap in the literature and offers valuable implications for policy and practice. Finally, this study provides context-specific insights into the experiences of Iranian and Turkish EFL learners, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the applications of the students' viewpoints in the educational systems of the two countries.

As a significant emotional factor contributing to students' feelings of security and mindfulness, investigations on Iranian and Turkish language learners' attitudes towards learning English is felt to be a must to improve the current status and to overcome any deficiencies or shortcomings in achieving the long-term objectives of the curriculum. Comparative studies of this nature can significantly improve the contents of the courses, classroom activities and assessment tasks. These insights can inform the development of tailored educational interventions that address

the unique needs and challenges of learners in different contexts. To these aims, this study aims to address the following key research questions:

- Is there any significant difference among Iranian and Turkish language students in terms of their attitudes towards learning English?
- What are the similarities and differences among Iranian and Turkish language students' attitudes towards learning English?

3. Research Method

Following a survey-based design, the study employed a random sampling method to collect data from 145 students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programme across Urmia University in Iran (N=72, 49.6%) and Akdeniz University in Turkey (N=73, 50.3%). However, the whole population in these two countries was not considered in this study, which is a limitation and should be taken care of in future similar studies. These two particular countries were chosen because they are neighboring countries with commonalities in language and culture in some parts and since the educational systems of these two countries offer a good number of language programmes to their students. However, the survey was designed using a researcher-developed questionnaire, which was distributed in-person in their classes. Participants received detailed instructions outlining the purpose of the questionnaire, the total number of items, and the procedure for completing the survey. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 30 years, ensuring a relatively homogeneous sample in terms of age.

To assess students' attitudes in this study, a researcher-developed questionnaire was utilized which was specifically designed for this research context. The instrument underwent rigorous validation and piloting processes to ensure its robustness. The final version of the questionnaire consists of 39 items, each rated on a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 0 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). This scale was selected to capture the nuances of participants' attitudes with adequate granularity. In general, the items dealt with students' attitudes towards English, towards learning this language, and towards people speaking this language. However, for the ease of analysis, the items were not put into separate categories, a limitation which can be taken into consideration in future replications.

The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR), which yielded a value of 0.89. This high CVR indicates strong content validity, suggesting that the

items included in the questionnaire are highly relevant to the construct being measured. Additionally, the reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in an alpha coefficient of 0.91. This high reliability score demonstrates excellent internal consistency, confirming that the items on the questionnaire reliably measure the underlying attitudes of the participants. The combination of high validity and reliability indices underscores the effectiveness of the questionnaire as a measurement tool for capturing students' attitudes accurately in the context of this study.

The data collection procedure for this study was systematically designed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the responses from participants in both Iran and Turkey. Prior to participation, all potential respondents were provided with an online informed consent document. This document was designed to ensure that participants were fully aware of the study's objectives, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The informed consent was integrated with the questionnaire to streamline the process and ensure that participants could review and agree to the terms before proceeding. The questionnaire was distributed among the participants. Upon accessing the questionnaire, participants were provided with detailed instructions on how to complete the items. The instructions emphasized the importance of reading each statement carefully and responding with their true level of agreement or disagreement using the five-point Likert scale provided. To minimize confusion and ensure consistency in responses, the instructions also included examples of how to use the scale effectively. The data collection period lasted for three months when a total of 145 completed questionnaires were received. Data from these responses were then compiled and prepared for analysis. Throughout the data collection process, measures were taken to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the participants' responses. All data were anonymized, and personal identifiers were removed to protect participants' privacy. Data security was maintained through encrypted storage and secure access protocols.

The data analysis for this quantitative study was conducted using several statistical techniques to ensure a thorough examination of language attitudes between Iranian and Turkish EFL learners. Descriptive statistics summarized participant demographics and calculated means and standard deviations for each of the 39 Likert-scale questionnaire items. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with a high Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.91$), and its validity was supported by a Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of 0.89. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare attitudes towards English between Iranian and Turkish students, with negative items reversed for consistency, and effect sizes (Cohen's d) calculated to determine the magnitude of

differences. All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28), ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive examination of the data.

4. Findings

To investigate potential differences in attitudes toward English between Iranian and Turkish EFL students, several analytical steps were undertaken. First, to facilitate a meaningful comparison of positive attitudes, negative items on the questionnaire were reversed so that all items reflected positive sentiment. A t-test was then conducted to compare the positive attitude scores between the two groups. In Table 1 beneath the mean scores of the groups, the first row indicates Iranian students' mean scores while the second row reveals that of Turkish students. The results of this analysis revealed that Turkish EFL students demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes toward English compared to their Iranian counterparts on the following items:

> *I wish I could speak English fluently.*
> *In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.*
> *Studying English enables me to create new thoughts.*
> *I like to practice English the way native speakers do.*

On the other hand, Iranian students had more positive attitudes towards English than their Turkish peers on the following items:

> *Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.*
> *I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.*
> *Studying English helps me to improve my personality.*
> *I am relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.*
> *I can apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.*
> *Studying English subject makes me feel more confident.*
> *I feel at ease and confident when speaking English.*

The two groups did not differ in their total attitudes towards English. In the following table, as regards group statistics, the first row shows data from Iranian students and the second one reveals data from Turkish students.

Table 1
T-test of attitudes towards English between Iranian and Turkish students

		Group statistics			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		M	SD						
1	Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	4.36	.756	Equal variances assumed	.681	.411	1.086	143	.279
		4.21	.957	Equal variances not assumed			1.087	136.545	.279
2	Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.	4.08	.852	Equal variances assumed	7.968	**.005**	2.385	143	.018
		3.70	1.076	Equal variances not assumed			2.389	136.617	.018
3	I feel proud when studying English language.	4.08	.783	Equal variances assumed	1.836	.178	.105	143	.917
		4.07	.918	Equal variances not assumed			.105	140.087	.917
4	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.	4.04	.941	Equal variances assumed	1.101	.296	-1.605	143	.111
		4.29	.905	Equal variances not assumed			-1.604	142.599	.111
5	Speaking English anywhere does not make me feel worried.	3.67	1.061	Equal variances assumed	3.658	.058	4.231	143	.000
		2.84	1.291	Equal variances not assumed			4.236	138.524	.000
6	Studying English helps me to have good relationships with friends.	3.25	1.071	Equal variances assumed	1.930	.167	-.642	143	.522
		3.37	1.173	Equal variances not assumed			-.643	142.173	.521
7	I like to give opinions during English lessons.	3.82	.954	Equal variances assumed	.256	.614	.066	143	.947
		3.81	1.076	Equal variances not assumed			.066	141.428	.947
8	I gain more knowledge and more understanding when studying English.	4.06	.785	Equal variances assumed	.386	.535	-.574	143	.567
		4.14	.918	Equal variances not assumed			-.574	140.218	.567
9	I look forward to studying more English in the future.	4.24	.831	Equal variances assumed	2.397	.124	-.165	143	.869
		4.26	.928	Equal variances not assumed			-.165	141.668	.869
10	I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.	3.56	1.099	Equal variances assumed	4.048	**.046**	2.076	143	.040
		3.15	1.244	Equal variances not assumed			2.078	141.320	.040
11	Studying English is enjoyable.	4.40	.816	Equal variances assumed	.139	.710	-.260	143	.795
		4.44	.833	Equal variances not assumed			-.260	142.994	.795
12	I am able to make myself pay attention during English classes.	4.17	.787	Equal variances assumed	.436	.510	-.517	143	.606
		4.23	.755	Equal variances not assumed			-.517	142.558	.606
13	When I hear a student in my class speaking	3.97	.903	Equal variances assumed	.534	.466	-1.197	143	.233

		Mean	SD		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
	English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.	4.15	.892	Equal variances not assumed			-1.197	142.903	.233
14	Studying English makes me feel good.	4.43	.747	Equal variances assumed	.355	.552	.359	143	.720
		4.38	.827	Equal variances not assumed			.359	141.918	.720
15	I prefer studying in English rather than in my mother tongue.	3.42	1.135	Equal variances assumed	.973	.326	-3.019	143	.003
		4.00	1.190	Equal variances not assumed			-3.020	142.841	.003
16	Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself.	4.00	.872	Equal variances assumed	2.039	.155	-.898	143	.371
		4.14	.962	Equal variances not assumed			-.899	141.999	.370
17	Studying English helps me to improve my personality.	3.93	.924	Equal variances assumed	3.934	**.049**	.151	143	.880
		3.90	1.169	Equal variances not assumed			.151	136.578	.880
18	I do not put off my English homework.	3.17	1.061	Equal variances assumed	.195	.659	-3.651	143	.000
		3.84	1.143	Equal variances not assumed			-3.653	142.490	.000
19	Studying English helps me get new information which I can link to my previous knowledge.	4.06	.710	Equal variances assumed	.648	.422	-1.225	143	.223
		4.21	.763	Equal variances not assumed			-1.225	142.517	.223
20	Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.	3.92	.960	Equal variances assumed	2.910	.090	-.838	143	.403
		4.07	1.206	Equal variances not assumed			-.839	136.963	.403
21	I enjoy doing activities in English.	4.25	.727	Equal variances assumed	.028	.867	-1.541	143	.126
		4.44	.745	Equal variances not assumed			-1.541	142.983	.126
22	I do not like studying English.	1.62	.971	Equal variances assumed	1.522	.219	-.494	143	.622
		1.71	1.148	Equal variances not assumed			-.495	139.727	.622
23	I am relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.	3.62	1.041	Equal variances assumed	7.460	**.007**	5.075	143	.000
		2.60	1.362	Equal variances not assumed			5.084	134.641	.000
24	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.	3.54	1.266	Equal variances assumed	1.459	.229	1.769	143	.079
		3.15	1.391	Equal variances not assumed			1.770	142.095	.079
25	I wish I could speak English fluently.	4.58	.666	Equal variances assumed	86.261	**.000**	-4.386	143	.000
		4.95	.229	Equal variances not assumed			-4.362	87.370	.000
26	I am interested in studying English.	4.53	.627	Equal variances assumed	.137	.712	-.700	143	.485
		4.60	.661	Equal variances not assumed			-.700	142.787	.485
27	In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.	4.29	.759	Equal variances assumed	5.328	**.022**	-.062	143	.951
		4.30	1.102	Equal variances not assumed			-.062	127.913	.951

28	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.	4.28	.791	Equal variances assumed	.648	.422	-.473	143	.637
		4.34	.853	Equal variances not assumed			-.473	142.458	.637
29	I can apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	3.35	.981	Equal variances assumed	5.864	**.017**	2.011	143	.046
		2.96	1.317	Equal variances not assumed			2.015	133.081	.046
30	Studying English subject makes me feel more confident.	4.08	.746	Equal variances assumed	9.881	**.002**	.981	143	.328
		3.93	1.084	Equal variances not assumed			.983	127.820	.327
31	To be honest, I really have interest in my English class.	3.79	1.138	Equal variances assumed	1.057	.306	-2.932	143	.004
		4.33	1.068	Equal variances not assumed			-2.930	142.158	.004
32	Studying English enables me to create new thoughts.	3.57	1.098	Equal variances assumed	4.846	**.029**	-4.300	143	.000
		4.29	.905	Equal variances not assumed			-4.294	137.234	.000
33	I like to practice English the way native speakers do.	4.29	.680	Equal variances assumed	16.999	**.000**	-5.117	143	.000
		4.78	.449	Equal variances not assumed			-5.103	122.696	.000
34	I wish I could have many English speaking friends.	4.29	.680	Equal variances assumed	.188	.665	-2.246	143	.026
		4.58	.832	Equal variances not assumed			-2.249	138.281	.026
35	When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.	3.93	1.130	Equal variances assumed	3.830	.052	.125	143	.901
		3.90	1.406	Equal variances not assumed			.125	137.417	.901
36	I feel at ease and confident when speaking English.	3.68	1.032	Equal variances assumed	10.839	**.001**	2.506	143	.013
		3.18	1.358	Equal variances not assumed			2.511	134.342	.013
37	I would take English even if it were not a compulsory subject at university.	4.14	.924	Equal variances assumed	3.377	.068	-2.516	143	.013
		4.51	.835	Equal variances not assumed			-2.514	141.158	.013
38	I like people who learn and teach English.	4.22	.755	Equal variances assumed	3.168	.077	-3.374	143	.001
		4.60	.595	Equal variances not assumed			-3.369	134.769	.001
39	I like people who attend English classes.	3.94	.870	Equal variances assumed	.035	.851	-3.612	143	.000
		4.42	.725	Equal variances not assumed			-3.608	137.790	.000
	Total	1.52	16.76	Equal variances assumed	.018	.892	-.751	143	.454
		1.54	17.33	Equal variances not assumed			-.752	142.943	.454

Overall, the analysis revealed that out of the thirty-nine items in the questionnaire, Iranian students showed significantly higher levels of positivity towards English in seven specific items related to their engagement with the language. Conversely, Turkish students exhibited significantly

higher positivity in four different items, highlighting their diverse ways of interacting with and valuing English. Despite these differences, Iranian students held a slightly more positive attitude overall, with a mean score of 17.33 compared to 16.76 for Turkish students. This slight difference, while not always statistically significant, underscores a general trend of higher overall positivity among Iranian students, reflecting varied motivational and engagement patterns between the two groups.

Similarities between the two groups, however, lied in items which states English makes me educated, makes me feel proud, feel excited when communicating in English, do not worry when speaking English, helps making good relationships with others, like to express myself, increases my knowledge and understanding, like to learn English more, learning English is enjoyable, pay attention in English classes, like to practice with those who know English, makes me feel good, prefer to study in English than in mother tongue, makes me feel confident in expressing myself, do not put off my English homework, helps me learn new information and to link it with previous knowledge, study it just to pass exams, like doing activities in English, feeling embarrassed when speaking English in front of others (scored around the mean), like learning English, helps me have effective communication, like English classes, like having many English speaking friends, do not ask for homework, would take English even if it was not a compulsory subject, like people who learn English, and like those who attend English classes. There was also a negative item (Item Number 22) in which both groups disagreed; the item was I do not like studying English.

Generally, as summarized in Table 2, the major theme of the items in which Iranian students scored higher than their Turkish counterparts were related to 'it helps learning other subjects, feeling relaxed when speaking it, it helps improving personality and applying it in real life, makes confidence in one's self). On the other hand, as regards Turkish students, the overall theme of their positive attitudes towards English was kind of (wishing to speaking it fluently, makes one more knowledgeable, helps creating new thoughts, and practicing it like native speakers). To be more concise, as regards similarities between the two groups, they can be categorized as: like learning English and practicing it, i.e., communicating in it and having relationships with others of the same group and English-speaking friends, and feeling confident, good, and excited when learning English, as well as, English helps improve understanding the course materials.

Table 2

Similarities and differences as regards Iranian vs. Turkish language students' attitudes towards learning English

N	Components	Degree of positivity		Similarities	differences
		Iran	Turkey		
1	Like to speak English fluently	-	high	-	*
2	Being very knowledgeable.	-	high	-	*
3	Studying English creates new thoughts	-	high	-	*
4	Like to practice English like native speakers	-	high	-	*
5	English helps me study other subjects well	high	-	-	*
6	Feel relaxed when answering a question in English	high	-	-	*
7	English improves my personality	high	-	-	*
8	Feel relaxed whenever speaking English	high	-	-	*
9	English can be applied in real life	high	-	-	*
10	English makes me more confident	high	-	-	*
11	Feel at ease and confident when speaking English	high	-	-	*
12	English is important and make us more educated.	high	high	*	-
13	Feeling proud when studying English language	high	high	*	-
14	Feel excited when communicating in English	high	high	*	-
15	Speaking English is not worrying	moderate	low	*	-
16	English helps us to have good relationships	moderate	moderate	*	-
17	I give opinions during English lessons.	moderate	moderate	*	-
18	English improves knowledge and understanding	high	high	*	-
19	I like studying more English	high	high	*	-
20	English is enjoyable.	high	high	*	-
21	I pay attention during English classes.	high	high	*	-
22	I like to practice speaking with those who know English	moderate	high	*	-
23	Studying English makes me feel good.	high	high	*	-
24	I prefer studying in English.	moderate	high	*	-
25	English makes me more confident in expressing myself.	high	high	*	-
26	I do not put off my English homework.	moderate	moderate	*	-
27	English helps me get new information which I can link to my previous knowledge.	high	high	*	-
28	I study English just to pass the exams.	moderate	high	*	-
29	I enjoy doing activities in English.	high	high	*	-
30	I do not like studying English.	low	low	*	-

31	Speaking English is embarrassing.	moderate	moderate	*	-
32	I am interested in studying English.	high	high	*	-
33	English helps to communicate in English effectively.	high	high	*	-
34	I really have interest in my English class.	moderate	high	*	-
35	I like to have many English-speaking friends.	high	high	*	-
36	When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.	moderate	moderate	*	-
37	I would take English even if it were not a compulsory subject at university.	high	high	*	-
38	I like people who learn and teach English.	high	high	*	-
39	I like people who attend English classes.	moderate	high	*	-

To put it in a nutshell, Iranian students scored higher in personality-related items like improving confidence, while Turkish students were more knowledge-inclined like creating new thoughts. Similarities, on the other hand, belonged to the major themes of communication, confidence-building, and meaningful learning.

4. Discussion

This study sought to investigate any similarities and differences between Iranian and Turkish language students' attitudes towards learning English. From among the thirty-nine items presented, it found some significant differences between Iranian and Turkish students in terms of their attitudes towards learning English, albeit in some items. A general technical look at the differing items reveals that Iranian students seemed to want to make use of English either in learning other subjects or in real life which is a logical standpoint towards English. By the same token, Turkish students were both logical and at the same time, more emotional in their viewpoints and wanted to use the target language as much as they can in various contexts and to hold relationships with English speaking people. The common theme which identified similarities among the students in both groups was related to communicating in English, however.

From the findings of this research, it can be concluded that among other things, students learning English as a foreign language, mainly focus on speaking and this skill is regarded as one of the key elements for holding a positive attitude towards learning this language. The other point is to be able to use English for creating relationships with other English-speaking people which was one of the sources of interest for Turkish students. It can be hypothesized that real communication

and authentic relationships is among the main factors for this group of students. On the other hand, Iranian students did not regard relationship as important as the other group. Sadeghi and Abolfazli (2020) studying the presence of wellbeing and character strengths among Iranian students have also found that these students did not enjoy the relationship element in their wellbeing scale as found in their language earning histories. Accordingly, the present researcher strongly recommends educational administrators to pay more attention to relationships and communication factor as they are highly influential both for the wellbeing of students and therefore, for possessing positive attitudes towards the subject matter being learned which ultimately leads to more academic and life achievements. In line with the present research, Lasagabaster (2005) attributes students' attitudes towards the languages being learnt to language competence, the socio-linguistic context, and the knowledge of the second/foreign language. Getie (2020) has also found that there are social factors (e.g., English native speakers, peer groups and learners' parents) affecting students' attitudes positively.

However, in contrast to the current research findings, a few studies have found students in Turkey have negative and mostly instrumental attitudes towards English (e.g., Saville-Troike, 2006; Yashima, 2002). This issue suggests an area for future research which is to investigate students' attitudes in more depth through mixed-method approaches and perhaps triangulation procedures. Some recommendations are for stakeholders, instructors, and students to enhance positive attitudes towards the language being learnt aiming to enrich knowledge and develop language skills and proficiency. This can be done through providing opportunities for having real and fulfilling communication with native speakers, incorporating variety in methods and materials, getting students involved in making use of what they are learning to improve their life style, etc.

The comparative analysis of Iranian and Turkish EFL students' attitudes toward English highlighted distinct patterns of engagement and proficiency between the two groups. Iranian students demonstrated superior performance in several key items related to their interaction with the English language. Notably, they exhibited a greater inclination to learn other subjects through English, which reflects their broader integration of the language into their educational experience. Additionally, Iranian students reported feeling more at ease when speaking English, both inside and outside the classroom, and they effectively applied their English skills in real-life situations. These findings suggest that Iranian students have a high level of comfort and practical usage of English in various contexts. In contrast, Turkish students displayed positive attitudes towards English in different aspects. They showed a clear preference for learning in English rather than their native language, which indicates a strong academic engagement with the language. Turkish students were

also noted for their punctuality in completing homework assignments, fluency in speaking English, and a keen interest in English classes. They demonstrated creativity in generating new ideas in English and practiced the language with a focus on native-like proficiency. Furthermore, Turkish students valued having English-speaking friends and appreciated individuals who spoke English or participated in English classes. This reflects a social dimension to their engagement with the language, as well as a broader appreciation for its role in their personal and academic lives.

National language policies significantly shape EFL learners' attitudes towards English in both Iran and Turkey, yet the impact manifests differently in each context. In Iran, recent research underscores the critical role that language policies play in enhancing students' attitudes towards English. Kamrani (2021) highlights that Iran's educational policies have increasingly emphasized English as a gateway to global knowledge and academic resources. This emphasis has led to a heightened appreciation of English among Iranian students, who see it as essential for accessing international academic and professional opportunities. This aligns with our findings, which show that Iranian students exhibit greater comfort and practical application of English. The integration of English into various academic subjects and its strategic importance in Iran's educational framework contribute to this positive engagement, reinforcing the value of English as a tool for both personal and professional advancement (Mousavi et al., 2022).

 Conversely, in Turkey, while national policies also promote English, the approach and resulting learner attitudes differ. Turkish language policies stress the importance of English for academic success and integration into global contexts, yet practical challenges remain. According to Erdem and Sönmez (2023), Turkish students often encounter difficulties in achieving native-like proficiency despite their enthusiasm for English. This aligns with our results showing that while Turkish students demonstrate strong positive attitudes towards English, particularly in academic and social contexts, they face significant challenges in applying their language skills practically. The Turkish educational system's focus on fluency and native-like proficiency, combined with the high value placed on English, creates a complex landscape where learners are motivated yet face considerable hurdles in practical language use.

Supporting the findings of the present research, the evolution of EFL learners' attitudes in response to socio-political changes and educational interventions reveals how dynamic and context-dependent language attitudes can be. In Iran, for instance, recent educational reforms that prioritize English have significantly influenced students' attitudes. Khajavi and Moinzadeh (2023) discuss how these reforms have not only increased the comfort and proficiency of Iranian students but also reinforced the perceived importance of English in their educational and professional lives.

This increased focus on English aligns with the observed higher positivity among Iranian learners, who view English as integral to their academic and career prospects. Similarly, the socio-political emphasis on English as a key component of global engagement has fostered a positive and proactive attitude towards the language (e.g., Sadeghi & Richards, 2016).

In a similar vein, in Turkey, the ongoing socio-political and educational reforms also play a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes. For example, Öztürk and Kurt (2022) explore how efforts to improve English instruction and increase exposure have led to positive attitudes among Turkish students. However, despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly in achieving fluency and native-like proficiency. Our findings that Turkish students exhibit strong positive attitudes towards English but encounter practical difficulties reflect this ongoing tension. The socio-political context, which values English both as an academic tool and a social asset, influences how Turkish students engage with the language. Educational policies that focus on enhancing practical application and addressing proficiency challenges are critical for further improving attitudes and outcomes. As far as attitudes play a crucial role in success, curriculum developers, administrators, and teachers are highly recommended to reflect on their praxis so that both knowledge and personality related strategies for improving students' attitudes towards the subject matter being learned can be applied.

The findings of this study have significant implications for language policy and educational practices in both Iran and Turkey. For policymakers and educators, the results suggest that while an emphasis on English integration and practical application, as seen in Iran, fosters higher levels of student engagement and proficiency, it is crucial to address the challenges related to achieving native-like fluency and practical usage, which Turkish students face. Tailoring language policies to incorporate not only comprehensive English instruction but also practical application and support mechanisms could enhance language learning outcomes across both contexts. Moreover, acknowledging and addressing the social, affective, cultural, and political factors that influence language attitudes can lead to more effective and contextually relevant educational strategies, ultimately contributing to more positive and sustained language learning experiences for students. One way to attain this objective would be to consult with native experts when designing language programmes in all of their stages. Another way would be to provide opportunities for EFL students in both countries to communicate with native speakers when pursuing their academic courses in university. In-service professional development programmes also need to be provided for language practitioners. Finally, and most importantly, the culture of the target language community of speakers needs to be more efficiently incorporated in the course materials.

5. Conclusion

A positive perspective is of utmost importance to succeed in every context. Positive attitudes towards the content, towards the subject, towards the future of one in the programme, towards the instructors, etc. having this important consideration in mind, authorities in charge of designing programme of studies should plan in a way to integrate elements to improve the attitude of students, although the same can be done for the teachers as well. Generally, by lowering the psychological variables (i.e. affective filters) for the target language students, it is possible to aid the language learning process. Thus, as the implication of this study considers, the learning environment should be improved to get more authentic, and to achieve this, the government should work in conjunction with the school principals, teachers and societies.

This study underscores the significant role that language attitudes play in shaping EFL learners' success in learning English in Iran and Turkey. The findings reveal that while Iranian students benefit from an educational framework that integrates English into various subjects and emphasizes its practical application, Turkish students navigate a complex landscape where the pursuit of fluency and native-like proficiency presents both opportunities and challenges. The distinct approaches in each country highlight the influence of language policies and socio-cultural changes on learners' engagement with English. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how educational and socio-cultural and perhaps political factors interact to shape language attitudes, offering valuable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to enhance English language education and address the evolving needs of learners in diverse contexts. Finally, it is recommended Turkish language programmes pay more attention to designing native-like materials and increase the number of languages taught. On the other hand, as mentioned in Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), Iranian language programme writers are strongly recommended to design curriculums which adheres to content-based instruction (learning other subjects through English), taking into account students as whole-persons with feelings and emotions and making programmes more applicable outside the class.

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