

67. Exploring the language learning attitudes and efforts of Turkish tertiary EFL learners¹

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to explore the attitudes of Turkish tertiary EFL learners towards learning English and the effort they put into this endeavour. Utilizing an attitude and an effort scale, the study incorporates a descriptive correlational quantitative research design with multiple independent variables likely to affect attitudes and efforts. A total of 333 participants, who were selected through the convenience sampling method, constitute the research sample for the study. The results indicate that EFL learners have overwhelmingly positive attitudes, and these attitudes significantly correlate with their learning efforts. It is also discovered that the EMI level of the enrolled majors, gender, and proficiency turn out to predict the levels of attitude and effort, with some exceptions, especially in the subscales. In this regard, the EMI percentage variable seems to predict the attitude but not the effort, except for the substantive effort. Participants registered in fully EMI departments show more positive attitudes than those in partially EMI ones. Although there is no significant difference in general attitudes across genders, female learners show greater levels of effort and compliance, especially in procedural activities. Moreover, as learners advance in proficiency, their awareness of the benefits of learning English also increases, reducing avoidance behaviours and enhancing focused effort. The insights gained can inform educators and policymakers in designing interventions to foster positive attitudes and increase learning effort among EFL students. Future research could further explore these dynamics across different cultural and educational contexts to build on the findings of this study.

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Türkiye'de yükseköğrenim düzeyindeki İngilizce öğrencilerinin dil öğrenme tutum ve çabalarının araştırılması⁴

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de yükseköğrenim gören yabancı dil öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğrenmeye yönelik tutumlarını ve bu amaçla harcadıkları çabayı keşfetmeye yönelik bir girişimdir. Bir tutum ve bir çaba ölçeği kullanan çalışma, tutumları ve çabaları etkilemesi muhtemel çoklu bağımsız değişkenler içeren betimsel ilişkisel nicel bir araştırma tasarımı kullanmaktadır. Kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen toplam 333 katılımcı, çalışmanın araştırma örneklemini oluşturmaktadır. Sonuçlar, İngilizce öğrenenlerin büyük ölçüde olumlu tutumlara sahip olduğunu ve bu tutumların öğrenme çabalarıyla önemli ölçüde ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, kayıtlı olunan bölümlerin İngilizce öğretim yüzdelerinin, cinsiyetin ve yeterlik düzeyinin, özellikle alt ölçeklerde bazı istisnalar dışında, tutum ve çaba düzeylerini yordadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda, İngilizce öğretim yüzdesi değişkeni tutumu tahmin eder görünse de, genel çabayı yordamamaktadır. Tamamen İngilizce bölümlerde kayıtlı olan katılımcılar, kısmen İngilizce bölümlerde kayıtlı olanlara kıyasla daha olumlu tutumlar sergilemektedir. Cinsiyetler arasında genel tutumlarda önemli bir fark olmamasına rağmen, kadın öğrenciler özellikle prosedürel faaliyetlerde daha fazla çaba ve uyum göstermektedir. Dahası, öğrencilerin yeterlik düzeyi arttıkça, İngilizce öğrenmenin faydaları konusundaki farkındalıkları da artmakta, kaçınma davranışlarını azalmakta ve odaklanmış çabaları artmaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular, İngilizce öğrenenler arasında olumlu tutumları teşvik etmek ve öğrenme çabasını artırmak için aksiyonlar alma konusunda eğitimcilere ve politika yapıcılara yol gösterebilir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, bu çalışmanın bulgularını geliştirmek için farklı kültürel ve eğitim bağlamlarında bu dinamikleri daha derinlemesine araştırabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dil yeterliliği, İngilizce dilinde öğretim, öğrenme çabası, tutum, yabancı dil öğrenimi

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Introduction

English, as the *Lingua Franca* of the modern world, has long been considered an important subject at all levels of the Turkish educational system, though most of the students fail to attain a desirable level of proficiency during their education (Karahan, 2007). Yet, there has been a growing tendency towards offering English medium instruction (EMI) at Turkish universities due to the internationalization of higher education. At the tertiary level, English is taught during a one-year compulsory language preparatory program for the students of departments which adopt English as the medium of instruction. English preparatory programs are responsible for preparing students for their departmental courses offered in partially or fully EMI departments. During this intensive period of English as a foreign language (EFL) education, students' achievement is likely to be affected by several factors, including the attitudes towards learning English (Fakeye, 2010; Getie, 2020) and the effort put into this endeavour (Karabiyık & Mirici, 2018). In this regard, it has been stated in the educational research literature that positive attitudes towards learning a topic, course content, or language contribute to the success of learning (Bai, 2020; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Fakeye, 2010), while negative ones considerably hinder it (Cakici, 2007; Kim, 2021). Similarly, there is evidence in the existing literature that learning effort has positive effects on successful learning (Karabiyık & Mirici, 2018; Yeung & McInerney, 2005). Despite the abundance of research on attitudes towards learning a foreign language, effort as a determinant of successful learning, and foreign language learning in higher education, the literature lacks comprehensive research on the mutual relationship between the attitude and the effort within the context of foreign language learning at the tertiary level. Moreover, existing studies fail to investigate any existing correlation in light of multiple variables such as gender, EMI percentage, and EFL proficiency level, which may function as important determinants of foreign language learning achievement. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the correlation between the attitudes of tertiary-level English preparatory program students towards learning a foreign language and the efforts they put into learning English in terms of multiple variables.

English Medium Instruction and Foreign Language Learning

Since the majority of the international research and academic texts which the advancements in all the related fields build on are published in English, access to these materials requires a good command of English, which is most likely to be acquired during the formal education process (Peacock & Flowerdew, 2001). Due to the aforementioned realities of the modern world, there has been a growing tendency towards adopting English medium instruction (EMI) at the tertiary level all around the world. Besides, EMI is believed to help universities gain an international profile, foster more internationally competent graduates, employ international faculty members, and enable their students to overcome their foreign language obstacles in their academic and professional careers (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). In order to gain proficiency in a foreign language, learners need to have strong motivations, positive attitudes, high levels of self-efficacy, and a high amount of effort (Stewart, 2008). In this regard, individual differences play a central role in learning a foreign language (Dörnyei, 2010).

Language Learning Attitude

The ultimate success of learning relies on a number of factors such as motivation, anxiety, aptitude, age, attitude, and personality traits (Carbonaro, 2005; Karabiyık & Mirici, 2018; Kasap, 2021; Kasap & Power, 2019; Stewart, 2008), and learner attitudes are named among the most important determinants affecting foreign or second language learning (Fakeye, 2010). As a psychological and sociological

construct, attitude, which is mostly shaped by experiences and observations (Dörnyei, 2019), shapes human behaviors and feelings (Bandura, 1986). An early definition of attitude by Gardner (1985) is that “an attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent” (p. 5). However, it can simply be defined as “the psychological tendency to exert some degree of favor or disfavour towards any entity” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). As a key determinant of achievement, success or failure in foreign or second language learning is also attributed to attitudes (Thompson, 2021). Cakici (2007) asserts that favorable attitudes towards the target language and culture increase the success potential of the learning process, while negative attitudes may block learning. In a similar way, positive attitudes towards the target language community enhance the language learning motivation of individuals (Liu, 2007). In a recent study with English language learners in China, Bai (2020) found that the positive attitudes of the learners directly and significantly correlated with their achievement test scores. On the other hand, there is evidence that negative attitudes may result in dissatisfaction among the learners with language class and they might even quit learning a foreign language (Kim, 2021).

In the literature, EFL learner attitudes have been studied by many scholars using several common variables. For instance, in an early study, Oller et al. (1977) found that the positive attitudes of Chinese foreign language learners also positively affected their learning motivation and language proficiency attainment in English. As for gender as a variable affecting the attitudes towards learning English, Karahan (2007) found out that females had significantly more positive attitudes towards gaining proficiency in English when compared to males in the same study. However, in a similar study in the Turkish context, Durer and Sayar (2013) concluded that gender did not actually show up as a significant determinant of attitudes towards EFL. Likewise, Kiziltan and Atlı (2013) also reported no significant difference between the genders regarding their attitudes towards learning English. On the other hand, another study with Iranian medical students (Soleimani & Hanafi, 2013) revealed that the male participants had more positive attitudes towards learning English than the females. The findings of the existing studies, therefore, seem to suggest that gender's effect on language learning attitudes varies a lot depending on contextual factors, and it is crucial to explore the possible effects of this variable in any research context to come up with comprehensive conclusions. Another line of research on EFL learning attitudes has focused on the language proficiency level of learners. As an example of such studies, Johnson (2012) investigated the English language learning attitudes of Japanese learners and found that there was a significantly positive correlation between their attitudes and language proficiency. Similarly, Bagheri and Andi (2015) reported that attitudes correlated positively with the language learners’ levels of language proficiency. In a recent study, Muftah (2022) also discovered that foreign language learners with more learning experience and at higher levels were more enthusiastic about learning English. On the other hand, there is also evidence against the assumption that language learning attitudes correlate with language proficiency levels. To exemplify, a scale development study with a particular focus on EFL grammar instruction (Akay & Toraman, 2015) revealed that the proficiency level of the learners did not have any significant impact on learner attitudes.

Language Learning Effort

Along with the previously mentioned factors influencing the success of learning, Yeung and McInerney (2005) emphasize ‘effort’ among the most significant determinants of foreign language learning achievement. Gardner (2001) identifies effort as a key component of motivation, along with desire (to achieve a goal) and attitude (towards achievement). Carbonaro (2005) defines learning effort as “the time and energy that is spent on meeting the academic needs established by the teacher or the

institution” (p. 28). Depending on the requirements of the goals, the amount of effort exerted may differ, and from this point of view, the effort is a goal-oriented and goal-specific notion. Therefore, in the context of the present study, foreign language learning effort basically refers to the amount of time and energy that is spent during the foreign language learning process.

Carbonaro (2005) classifies effort under three categories as rule-oriented, procedural, and intellectual. According to his classification, a rule-oriented effort is related to compliance with school and classroom rules such as presence in classes and demonstrating appropriate behaviors. Avoiding misbehaviour during the lessons is an example of a rule-oriented effort. Procedural effort is characterized by actively participating in lessons, doing and submitting assignments on time or meeting other requirements of the lessons. These requirements may be determined by the teacher, the school administration, or even a higher authority. Lastly, intellectual effort corresponds to the time and energy spent on critically thinking about the contents and understanding them (Carbonaro, 2005). Bozick and Dempsey (2010), on the other hand, make the classification as procedural effort, substantive effort and non-compliance. According to this classification, behaving appropriately at school, following the school and classroom rules, completing the assignments and tasks, and paying necessary attention to course contents in order to meet the requirements of studying at a minimum scale refer to procedural effort. Substantive effort refers to being actively engaged with learning tasks and exerting extra energy and time to do well in courses. Finally, non-compliance indicates student behaviors that hinder learning such as not following the rules and requirements of the classes, coming late to lessons or daydreaming during the classes. As for foreign language learning effort, Karabıyık and Mirici (2018) suggest another dimension as the ‘focal effort’ which points to attentiveness and mindfulness during foreign language lessons. Paying attention to the existing classifications of effort in the literature is of vital importance since the majority of the existing studies have examined the notion in a quantitative manner as the amount of time spent learning in or outside the classroom (Arratibel & Bueno-Alastuey, 2015).

In the existing educational research literature, there have been studies focusing on the relationship between learning effort and academic achievement, learning motivations, and self-efficacy (Carbonaro, 2005; Karabıyık & Mirici, 2018; Shih, 2019; Stewart, 2008). However, there has been little empirical research examining this variable in English language learning itself within the Turkish context (Genç & Köksal, 2021; Özer, 2020). Furthermore, the literature lacks multidimensional research investigating the mutual relationship between the notions of attitude and effort in tertiary EFL settings. Thus, the present study aims to explore the relationship between the foreign language learning attitudes and efforts of tertiary level English language learners in the Turkish context in light of multiple variables such as the EMI percentage of the enrolled majors, gender, and the EFL proficiency level of the learners.

With these aims, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitude levels of EFL students towards learning English?
2. What are the effort levels of EFL students in learning English?
3. What is the relationship between EFL students’ attitude and their efforts in learning English?
4. Do the enrolled EMI level, gender, and EFL proficiency affect the EFL learners’ attitude and effort levels?

Method

The study employs a descriptive correlational quantitative research design which aims to uncover the EFL learners' attitudes and efforts in their attempt to learn English by collecting comprehensive data from a relatively large sample.

Participants

A total of 333 participants (143 females and 190 males) studying in the English preparatory program of a Turkish state university took part in the study by providing valid data through online surveys sent on the MS Teams online learning platform.

Table 1. Demographic variables regarding the participants of the study

Variables		N	%
Gender	Female	143	42.9
	Male	190	57.1
Medium of instruction	Partially English (30%)	217	65.2
	Fully English (100%)	116	34.8
Level of proficiency	A2	20	6
	B1	195	58.6
	B2	118	35.4
Total		333	100

As illustrated in Table 1, 65.2 % ($n=217$) of the participants were enrolled in partially EMI departments, and 34.8 % ($n=116$) of them were enrolled in fully EMI majors. While the majority of the participants were either in B1 ($n=195$) or B2 ($n=118$) levels, relatively few of them were studying in A2 ($n=20$) level classes.

Instruments

The data were collected through two scales, which were developed and used in the Turkish higher education context, which is also representative of the present study. Adıyaman's (2020) Scale of Attitudes Towards Foreign Language Learning which consists of 16 5-point Likert scale items was utilized to uncover the attitudes of the participants towards learning English as a foreign language. The effort that the participants exerted in learning English was measured by using The Foreign Language Learning Effort Scale for Turkish Tertiary-Level Students which was developed by Karabıyık and Mirici (2018). The scale consists of 17 5-point Likert scale items under four subscales as non-compliance, procedural, substantive, and focal. In terms of the reliability of the instruments with 333 participants, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated as .885 for the effort scale, while it was calculated as .863 for the attitude scale.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the present study was collected online in the Spring Term of the 2022-2023 Academic Year in Türkiye. Upon receiving the required institutional and Ethical Committee approvals, the scales were sent to a total of 430 students studying in the English Preparatory Program at Manisa Celal Bayar University. With a return rate of 77.44 %, 333 participants provided data for the study. Since the data collected met the normality assumptions suggested in the literature (George & Mallery, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), parametric tests were used in the analysis of the quantitative data.

Therefore, descriptive tests, Pearson Correlation Coefficients, Independent Samples t-Test, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey's HSD post hoc tests were utilized to analyse the data through the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 21.0 software package program.

Results

As a quantitative inquiry into the language learning attitudes and effort put into this endeavour by the tertiary Turkish EFL learners, the present study yielded a number of descriptive, correlational, and inferential results in order to answer the research questions. To begin with, the participants' levels of attitude towards learning English were calculated using descriptive statistics, and presented as overall attitude and attitude subscale scores (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean scores of the EFL students' attitude and effort levels

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>
Avoidance (R)	333	3.381	.917	Non-compliance (R)	333	3.561	.546
Interest	333	3.759	.704	Substantive effort	333	3.188	.763
Benefit	333	4.491	.685	Procedural effort	333	3.768	.917
				Focal effort	333	3.933	.711
Overall attitude	333	3.877	.598	Overall effort	333	3.862	.584

As seen in Table 2, mean scores were calculated for the attitude scale and its sub-dimensions in order to determine the attitude levels of EFL students towards learning English. As a result of the analysis, students' level of effort seems to be at a good level as indicated by their overall attitude ($M=3.877$). When subscales are examined, the benefit subscale ($M=4.491$), which had a good level of effort, had the highest mean score and the reversed avoidance subscale ($M=3.381$) had the lowest mean score although it was also at a good level. Similarly, the mean score of the interest subscale ($M=3.759$) presented a good level of effort. As also shown in Table 2, mean scores were also calculated for the effort scale and its subscales in order to determine the effort levels of EFL students in learning English. As a result of the analysis, students' level of effort seems to be at a good level as seen in the overall effort ($M=3.862$). When subscales are examined, focal effort ($M=3.933$), which had a good level of effort, had the highest mean score and the substantive effort ($M=3.188$) had the lowest mean score although it was also at a good level. Similarly, the mean score of procedural effort ($M=3.768$) and reversed non-compliance ($M=3.561$) presented good levels of effort.

In order to assess the relationship between participants' attitude levels and their effort levels, a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed (Table 3).

Table 3. The correlations between EFL students' attitudes and efforts

		Interest	Avoidance (R)	Benefit	Overall attitude
Substantive effort	<i>r</i>	.495**	.208**	.117*	.346**
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.032	.000
Non-compliance (R)	<i>r</i>	.167**	.086	.081	.141*
	<i>p</i>	.002	.118	.139	.01
Procedural effort	<i>r</i>	.287**	.04	.128*	.182**

	<i>p</i>	.000	.472	.019	.001
Focal effort	<i>r</i>	.373**	.175**	.155**	.295**
	<i>p</i>	.000	.001	.005	.000
Overall effort	<i>r</i>	.427**	.157**	.155**	.307**
	<i>p</i>	.000	.004	.005	.000

There was a significant positive correlation between the overall effort levels of the participants and their interest subscale ($r(331) = .427, p = .001$); avoidance subscale ($r(331) = .157, p = .004$); benefit subscale ($r(331) = .155, p = .005$) and overall attitude levels ($r(331) = .307, p < .001$). Similarly, the focal effort levels of the participants presented a significant positive correlation with the interest subscale ($r(331) = .373, p < .001$); avoidance subscale ($r(331) = .175, p = .001$); benefit subscale ($r(331) = .155, p = .005$) and overall attitude levels ($r(331) = .295, p < .001$). The substantive effort also has a significant positive correlation with the interest subscale ($r(331) = .495, p < .001$); avoidance subscale ($r(331) = .208, p = .001$); benefit subscale ($r(331) = .117, p = .032$) and overall attitude levels ($r(331) = .346, p = .001$). Besides, it was found that there was a significant correlation between procedural effort and the interest subscale ($r(331) = .287, p < .001$); benefit subscale ($r(331) = .128, p = .019$) and overall attitude levels of the participants ($r(331) = .182, p = .001$). On the other hand, the non-compliance subscale of the effort scale presented a significant correlation with only the interest subscale ($r(331) = .167, p = .002$) and overall attitude levels of the participants ($r(331) = .141, p = .010$).

In order to find out whether the EMI level of the enrolled departments had an impact on the learners' attitudes, an independent samples t-test was run. Also, Cohen's *d* was calculated to show the effect size of the results (Table 4).

Table 4. Independent samples t-test results for learning attitude levels in terms of EMI

	EMI	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Interest	Partially English	217	3.671	.725	-3.185	331	.002	.37
	Fully English	116	3.925	.633				
Avoidance	Partially English	217	2.702	.931	2.284	331	.023	.26
	Fully English	116	2.463	.872				
Benefit	Partially English	217	4.418	.740	-2.927	331	.004	.32
	Fully English	116	4.627	.546				
Overall attitude	Partially English	217	3.796	.637	-3.761	331	.000	.41
	Fully English	116	4.030	.483				

As a result, the overall score of the learners whose enrolled departments are fully English ($M = 4.030, SD = .483$) was significantly higher ($t(331) = -3.761, p = .000, d = .41$) than the ones whose departments are partially English ($M = 3.796, SD = .637$). Similarly, in terms of the interest subscale, learners enrolled in fully English programs ($M = 3.925, SD = .633$) had slightly but significantly higher score means ($t(331) = -3.185, p = .002, d = .37$) than the learners in partially English programs ($M = 3.671, SD = .725$). Also, learners in fully English programs ($M = 4.627, SD = .546$) had significantly higher score means ($t(331) = -2.927, p = .004, d = .32$) than the learners registered in partially English programs ($M = 4.418, SD = .740$) in terms of the benefit subscale. In light of these findings, unsurprisingly, learners in partially English programs ($M = 2.702, SD = .931$) had significantly higher score means ($t(331) = 2.284, p = .023, d = .26$) than the learners enrolled in fully English programs ($M = 2.463, SD = .872$) in terms of the

avoidance subscale.

In order to find out whether the enrolled EMI level had an impact on the learners' effort in learning English, an independent samples t-test was run. Also, Cohen's *d* was calculated to show the effect size of the results (Table 5).

Table 5. Independent samples t-test results for language learning effort levels in terms of EMI

	EMI	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Substantive effort	Partially English	217	3.126	.736	-2.021	331	.044	.23
	Fully English	116	3.303	.801				
Non-compliance	Partially English	217	4.556	.527	-.205	331	.838	.02
	Fully English	116	4.569	.582				
Procedural effort	Partially English	217	3.780	.896	.342	331	.733	.04
	Fully English	116	3.744	.958				
Focal effort	Partially English	217	3.897	.676	-1.259	331	.209	.14
	Fully English	116	4.000	.771				
Overall effort	Partially English	217	3.840	.561	-.954	331	.341	.11
	Fully English	116	3.904	.624				

In terms of substantive effort, the score of the learners whose departments are fully English ($M = 3.303$, $SD = .801$) was significantly higher ($t(331) = -2.021$, $p = .044$, $d = .23$) than the ones whose departments are partially English ($M = 3.126$, $SD = .736$). However, no significant difference was found in the subdimensions of non-compliance ($t(331) = -.205$, $p = .838$, $d = .02$), procedural effort ($t(331) = .342$, $p = .733$, $d = .04$), focal effort ($t(331) = -1.259$, $p = .209$, $d = .14$), and overall scores of the participants ($t(331) = -.954$, $p = .341$, $d = .11$).

An independent samples t-test was utilised to examine whether the gender of the participants had an impact on the learners' attitudes (Table 6).

Table 6. Independent samples t-test results for language learning attitude levels in terms of gender

	Gender	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Interest	Female	143	3.826	.668	1.498	331	.135	.17
	Male	190	3.709	.727				
Avoidance	Female	143	2.806	.952	3.291	331	.001	.36
	Male	190	2.477	.865				
Benefit	Female	143	4.601	.543	2.695	331	.007	.29
	Male	190	4.407	.766				
Overall attitude	Female	143	3.873	.564	-.097	331	.923	.01
	Male	190	3.880	.623				

The results of the *t*-test showed that there was a significant difference in the avoidance ($t(331) = 3.291$, $p = .001$, $d = .36$) and the benefit subscale ($t(331) = 2.695$, $p = .007$, $d = .29$). In the avoidance subscale, the significant difference was in favour of female learners ($M = 2.806$, $SD = .952$) when compared to male learners ($M = 2.477$, $SD = .865$). As for the benefit subscale, female participants ($M = 4.601$, $SD =$

.543) scored significantly higher than male participants ($M = 4.407$, $SD = .766$). On the other hand, there was no significant difference in the interest subscale ($t(331) = 1.498$, $p = .135$, $d = .17$) and the overall scores of the learners ($t(331) = -.097$, $p = .923$, $d = .01$) in terms of gender.

Another independent samples t-test was calculated to test whether the gender of the participants had an impact on the learners' effort to learn English (Table 7).

Table 7. Independent samples t-test results for language learning effort levels in terms of gender

	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Substantive effort	Female	143	3.347	.743	3.366	331	.001	.37
	Male	190	3.067	.757				
Non-compliance (R)	Female	143	4.650	.473	2.707	331	.007	.29
	Male	190	4.493	.586				
Procedural effort	Female	143	4.030	.809	4.775	331	.000	.52
	Male	190	3.570	.945				
Focal effort	Female	143	4.000	.661	1.496	331	.136	.17
	Male	190	3.882	.743				
Overall effort	Female	143	4.007	.521	4.015	331	.000	.45
	Male	190	3.753	.605				

As for the effect of gender variable on the learning effort, the results indicated that, in terms of substantive effort, the score of female learners ($M = 3.347$, $SD = .743$) was significantly higher ($t(331) = 3.366$, $p = .001$, $d = .37$) than the male learners ($M = 3.067$, $SD = .757$). Similarly, in terms of procedural effort, female learners ($M = 4.030$, $SD = .809$) had significantly higher ($t(331) = 4.775$, $p = .000$, $d = .52$) than the male learners ($M = 3.570$, $SD = .945$). Also, female learners ($M = 4.007$, $SD = .521$) had significantly higher score means ($t(331) = 4.015$, $p = .000$, $d = .45$) than male learners ($M = 3.753$, $SD = .605$) in terms of overall scores. When the learners' scores were compared in terms of focal effort, female learners ($M = 4.000$, $SD = .661$) had slightly higher score means than male learners ($M = 3.882$, $SD = .743$) although the difference was not significant ($t(331) = 1.496$, $p = .136$, $d = .17$). As for the non-compliance subscale, the scores were reversed and the calculations indicated that female learners ($M = 4.650$, $SD = .473$) had significantly higher compliance to the rules, and procedures ($t(331) = 2.707$, $p = .007$, $d = .29$) than male learners ($M = 4.493$, $SD = .586$).

To compare the effects of learners' proficiency levels on their effort levels, a one-way ANOVA was conducted (Table 8).

Table 8. One-way ANOVA results for the effect of EFL proficiency on the effort levels

		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	
Substantive effort	Between Groups	.081	2	.040	.069	.933	
	Within Groups	193.141	330	.585			
	Total	193.222	332				
Non-compliance	Between Groups	4.610	2	2.305	8.065	.000	B1-A2
	Within Groups	94.308	330	.286			B1-B2
	Total	98.918	332				

	Between Groups	.920	2	.460			
Procedural effort	Within Groups	278.231	330	.843	.546	.580	
	Total	279.152	332				
	Between Groups	5.732	2	2.866			
Focal effort	Within Groups	162.215	330	.492	5.830	.003	B1-A2
	Total	167.947	332				
	Between Groups	1.991	2	.996			
Overall effort	Within Groups	111.124	330	.337	2.957	.053	
	Total	113.115	332				

The one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant effect of learners' proficiency levels on their non-compliance ($F(2,330) = 8.065, p < .001$) with Tukey's HSD post hoc test showing B1 learner group scored significantly higher than both the A2 ($p = .003$) and B2 ($p = .027$) learner groups. In addition, learners' proficiency levels had a significant effect on their focal effort ($F(2,330) = 5.830, p = .003$) with Tukey's HSD post hoc test showing that B1 learner group scored significantly higher than the A2 group. On the other hand, a one-way ANOVA revealed that learners' proficiency levels had no significant effect on their substantive effort ($F(2,330) = .069, p = .933$), procedural effort ($F(2,330) = .546, p = .580$) and overall effort ($F(2,330) = 2.957, p = .053$).

A one-way ANOVA test was also run in order to compare the effects of learners' proficiency levels on their attitude levels (Table 9).

Table 9. One-way ANOVA results for the effect of EFL proficiency on attitude levels

		SS	df	MS	F	p	
Interest	Between Groups	2.089	2	1.044			
	Within Groups	162.577	330	.493	2.120	.122	
	Total	164.666	332				
Avoidance	Between Groups	8.688	2	4.344			
	Within Groups	270.544	330	.820	5.298	.005	B2-B1
	Total	279.231	332				
Benefit	Between Groups	3.499	2	1.749			
	Within Groups	152.474	330	.462	3.786	.024	B2-B1
	Total	155.973	332				
Overall attitude	Between Groups	4.019	2	2.010			
	Within Groups	114.652	330	.347	5.784	.003	B2-B1
	Total	118.671	332				

The calculations revealed a significant effect of learners' proficiency levels on their mean score in the avoidance subscale ($F(2,330) = 5.298, p = .005$) with Tukey's HSD post hoc test showing that the B2 learner group scored significantly higher than the B1 ($p = .013$) learner group. In addition, as a result of Tukey's HSD post hoc test, the B2 learner group had significantly higher scores than the B1 ($p = .024$)

learning group, which was the source of the significant difference ($F(2,330) = 3.786, p = .024$) in the benefit subscale of attitude towards learning English. The proficiency level of the learners also had a significant effect on their overall attitude scores ($F(2,330) = 5.784, p = .003$) with Tukey's HSD post hoc test showing that the B2 learner group scored significantly higher than the B1 ($p = .004$) learner group. On the other hand, it was also found that learners' proficiency levels had no significant effect on their mean score in the interest subscale ($F(2,330) = .069, p = .933$).

Discussion

The findings regarding the attitudes of the EFL learners towards learning a foreign language indicated that they had predominantly positive overall attitudes and were well aware of the benefits of learning English for their academic and professional lives. These results align with previous studies in the Turkish EFL context (İnal et al., 2005; Tok, 2010) which also proposed positive attitudes among the participants towards learning English. As attitudes are shaped by experiences (Dörnyei, 2019), the positive findings could also result from the participants' favourable learning experiences, as well as their awareness of the importance of learning a foreign language for their future. Besides, it is commonly accepted that the participants' positive attitudes towards the target language, its speakers, and the culture it belongs to might have directed their attitudes towards a positive direction (Li et al, 2024). The level of overall effort put into learning English was also found to be moderately high in the present study. This finding aligns with previous research by Hsu (2005) who reported that Business English students had relatively high attitudes but their efforts to learn needed to be further increased. As effort is seen as an outcome of positive attitudes and motivation, the level of effort put into learning English as a foreign language can be attributed to the participants' mastery and performance goals and language learning motivations (Shin & So, 2018). In the present context, the participants need to be successful in the English preparatory program so as to be able to study in their EMI departments in the following academic year. Therefore, their motivation to fulfil the requirements of the program triggers their incentives to put more effort into learning.

As for the correlation between the attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and the effort put into learning English, the findings of the present study are in line with several others in the literature. For instance, Ghenghesh (2010) also found that attitudes and learning efforts of pre-university EFL learners correlated positively in the Libyan context. Another study by Hsu (2005) presented a similarly positive correlation between the two variables in Taiwan's higher education EFL context. This finding not only confirms the theoretical assumption that the learning effort is an outcome of learning motivation and positive attitudes, but it also highlights the fact that by fostering positive attitudes among EFL learners, educators can also increase the amount of effort they spend in learning English.

In the present study, being enrolled in an English medium instruction (EMI) department proved to be an important determinant of attitudes towards language learning. Those enrolled in fully EMI departments significantly outweighed those enrolled in partially EMI departments in all the subscales of attitude. The findings seem to validate the assumption that cognitive and affective factors have a strong influence on language learning attitudes (Lei & Hu, 2014). In this context, although the participants have not even begun studying their EMI departments, their expectations and motivations seem to differ as they are aware of the requirements of studying in a fully or partially EMI department in the future. The findings are also in line with the propositions of Expectancy Value Theory, which suggests that the high value placed on learning a language leads to an increased level of effort and more time dedicated to learning (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

The present findings regarding the influence of gender on language learning attitudes seem to partly contradict previous studies (Durer & Sayar, 2013; Kiziltan & Athi, 2013) which reported no significant difference between the attitudes of males and females towards learning a foreign language. However, although the overall attitudes did not differ significantly between the genders, there are significant variations in the avoidance and benefit dimensions in the present study. As female learners showed higher avoidance and benefit attitudes, males did not outweigh females in any of the sub-dimensions in the scale. Therefore, the findings clearly contrast with Soleimani and Hanafi's (2013) results which demonstrated that males had more positive attitudes towards EFL learning than females.

In terms of gender as an independent variable, female learners exhibited significantly higher levels of language learning effort than males in the overall effort scale and the subscales except for the focal effort. In the literature regarding language learning efforts, a number of researchers employed gender as an independent variable and have come up with varying results. For instance, Hsu (2005) reported that males, though not significantly, outweighed females in terms of the effort they exhibited in their business English courses. On the other hand, McMullen (2004) concluded that females put more effort into their homework and studies than males, which is in line with the procedural effort subscale results of the current study. Substantive effort findings are also in parallel with those of a recent study (Özer, 2020), which similarly revealed that female students demonstrated greater diligence than male students, prepared for their exams, carefully revised their assignments, and diligently sought guidance from their language instructor or other experts. As no significant difference was found in the focal effort dimension, it can be concluded that gender did not have an effect on how carefully the learners listened to the course instructions, instructors, and peers during the teaching and learning activities. Lastly, it was discovered that, as in several other studies (McMullen, 2004), female EFL learners exhibited less non-compliance than males, which implied that they complied with the classroom rules and the instructions, met the deadlines, and followed the language learning procedures more meticulously than male learners.

The findings of the present study indicate that the proficiency level of the learners is a significant determinant of the attitudes towards learning English. Post-hoc tests particularly revealed that B2-level students had significantly more positive overall attitudes than B1 level learners. Besides, similar significant differences also occurred in all the subscales except for the interest subscale. These findings seem to contradict another study (Akay & Toraman, 2015) in the Turkish context reporting no significant difference in the attitudes of EFL learners across different proficiency levels. Yet, there are also studies with similar findings in Iranian (Bagheri & Andi, 2015), and Japanese (Johnson, 2012) EFL contexts. Furthermore, the significant difference in the Benefit subscale implies that learners at a higher proficiency level perceive more benefits from learning English, such as improved communication skills or academic and career opportunities (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). This positive perception of benefits may contribute to their overall motivation, engagement, and eventually attitudes toward language learning activities (Dörnyei, 2005; Getie, 2020). Lastly, the results regarding the Avoidance subscale also suggest that learners with a higher proficiency level (B2) are less likely to avoid engaging with English language learning activities compared to those at a lower proficiency level (B1) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This finding aligns with previous research indicating that as learners become more proficient, they tend to experience less anxiety and avoidance in language learning contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986).

As for the effort variable, as Berowa et al. (2018) also conclude, second language learners' self-perception of achievement and competence is an important indicator of their language learning effort. So, the finding that learners with higher proficiency levels reported higher levels of effort put into learning

English than those with lower levels of EFL proficiency supports this conclusion. In terms of Non-compliance, Post hoc comparisons demonstrated that the B1 learner group scored significantly higher than the A2 learner group. This suggests that learners at a higher proficiency level (B1) may exhibit higher levels of non-compliance, possibly indicating difficulties in adhering to instructional directives or engaging fully in language learning tasks. Such findings underscore the importance of considering learners' proficiency levels when designing instructional materials and activities to minimize non-compliance behaviours. Similarly, in the dimension of focal effort, proficiency levels also had a significant effect, and the B1 students scored significantly higher than the A2 students. This implies that learners at a higher proficiency level may allocate more focused attention and concentration towards language learning tasks compared to those at a slightly lower proficiency level. Understanding variations in focal effort across proficiency levels can inform educators in tailoring instructional strategies to better support learners' engagement and concentration during language learning activities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study provides a comprehensive examination of EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English and the effort they invest in this process. The results demonstrate primarily favourable attitudes among learners, emphasising their recognition of the educational and career advantages of becoming proficient in English. The findings align with prior studies conducted in comparable settings, further supporting the idea that positive attitudes are shaped by pleasant educational encounters and a distinct acknowledgement of the language's significance for future achievements. The study also highlights a moderately high level of effort among learners, aligning with existing literature that associates effort with positive attitudes and motivation. This correlation suggests that fostering positive attitudes can significantly enhance learners' engagement and diligence in language learning. Furthermore, the influence of being enrolled in an EMI department on attitudes underscores the role of cognitive and affective factors in shaping language learning experiences. Gender differences in attitudes and effort were also explored, revealing nuanced variations. Although there was no significant difference in general attitudes across genders, female learners showed greater levels of effort and compliance, especially in procedural activities. These data indicate that employing tactics tailored to individual genders may be advantageous in optimising learning results. Similarly, the level of proficiency was found to be a key factor in determining attitudes and effort, as learners with better proficiency showed more positive attitudes and greater involvement. As learners become more proficient, they recognise the advantages of studying English, which leads to decreased avoidance behaviours and increased focused effort.

To conclude, the study enhances the comprehension of the complex relationship between attitudes, effort, and many influencing factors in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. The acquired insights can guide educators and policymakers in creating specific interventions to cultivate favourable attitudes and enhance the effort put forth by EFL students. For instance, orientation programs with a specific emphasis on the importance and value of learning English in the globalized world can be held in the EFL programs. Besides, co-curricular tasks and assignments can be demanded from the students in order to increase the amount of effort they put into learning English. Subsequent research endeavours could delve into these processes in diverse cultural contexts and educational environments to expand upon the discoveries of this study.

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