

# Syrian-Refugees Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language in Al-Mafraq Governorate

Kifah Rakan Alqadi<sup>1,\*</sup>, Reema Salah<sup>1</sup> & Ahmad Aref Shdaifat<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of English Language & Literature, AL Al-Bayt University, Jordan

<sup>2</sup>English Language Teacher, Ministry of Education, Jordan

\*Corresponding author: Dept. of English Language & Literature, AL Al-Bayt University, Jordan

Received: April 16, 2024 Accepted: May 23, 2024 Published: June 21, 2024

doi:10.5296/ije.v16i2.21839 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v16i2.21839>

## Abstract

This study aimed to identify the Syrian-refugees secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English language with regard to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. It also explored if there are any significant differences in the students' attitudes towards the English language according to their demographic factors, such as gender, year of study, Grade Point Average, and interest in immigrating abroad. A quantitative research design was employed within an attitude survey that focuses on attitudes regarding learning English using the instrument of Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The study participants consisted of 297 students in four secondary schools in Za'atary Camp in the north of Jordan. Software of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), ANOVA, and multiple comparisons were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the participants had a positive attitude towards learning English. Regarding the demographic factors, there were statistically significant differences in the students' year of study and interest in immigrating abroad; however, these differences were not the same for gender in the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects or for GPA in the cognitive aspect alone.

**Keywords:** attitude, aspect, Al-Mafraq, Za'atary Camp, Syrian-refugees, English learning

## 1. Introduction

For many years, English has been used as the universal language. Finding a nation where learning English is still unusual is now impossible (Mahu, 2012). The value of English as a universal language cannot be overstated. Therefore, English language is important since it promotes social integration, opens up new careers and educational prospects, and allows people to communicate their concerns in a variety of contexts (Ilyosovna, 2020).

In recent years, sociolinguistics has been increasingly interested in the concept of attitudes (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021). Different attitudes range in power or intensity. So, language attitude is a crucial idea since it affects both language learning and teaching in significant ways (Tahaineh & Daana, 2013). The learners' attitude might be described as a combination of their positive and/or negative perceptions of language usage and social position. These attitudes have the potential to effectively aid or hinder the learning process (Masadeh, 2021).

As stated in Zebaria et al. (2018) that attitudes are viewed as three distinct subcomponents, namely the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components, of three social constructions. These dimensions of attitudes are interconnected. These attitudes, which obviously relate to situations where English is taught, are as follows: The cognitive aspect of language learning includes the beliefs, opinions, and points of view that learners have or hold regarding everything that is related to the process of teaching and learning the language, with a primary focus on teachers and teaching materials as very important elements, along with students, form the cornerstones of the entire process. The emotional aspect takes into account how the process makes the learners feel, including any aspects of it they appreciate or dislike. The behavioral aspect explains learners' tendency to accept or reject specific behaviors or acts necessary to the language acquisition process (Zebaria et al., 2018).

It is important for language instructors, experts, and learners to recognize that a strong motivation and a positive attitude among students can greatly enhance their ability to learn a second language. Therefore, the educational landscape in Za'atari Camp emerges as a testament to resilience and determination amid challenging circumstances. The educational facilities, albeit makeshift, stand as pillars of hope, providing a semblance of normalcy and opportunity for the youth who call this temporary refuge their home. Eagerness to learn English often stems from a desire to connect with the world outside and rebuild their lives beyond the borders of the camp. Their attitudes toward learning the language are shaped by personal aspirations, familial hopes, and the understanding that language proficiency might have a path towards a more promising future. In this unique educational setting, the study aims to explore the attitudes of secondary school students toward learning the English language, recognizing the pivotal role education plays in shaping their aspirations and prospects beyond the confines of Za'atari Camp.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

Although learning English language receives a great interest from Syrian-refugees students, the cultural and living challenges faced by these students had a great impact on them. One of the researchers worked as an English teacher in Za'atari camp for four years and noticed that

the students' attitudes towards learning in general and towards learning English language in particular became less. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the attitudes of Syrian-refugees secondary school students towards learning English language in the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects.

### *1.2 Significance of the Study*

In the context of learning a foreign language, a number of variables can affect the process of learning, including motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning successes, aptitudes, intelligence quotient, age, and personality (Khasinah, 2014). It is well known that the attitude of the learner is one of the most important factors influencing language learning (Getie, 2020). Further, there were no studies found on the attitudes of students regarding learning English in Za'atary Camp that focused on secondary school students. This study could help teachers, educators, governments, and refugees' organizations to consider the needs of the students and help them overcome any obstacles they may be facing with English language. Hence, this study is thought to be timely and needed.

### *1.3 Objectives of the study*

The study aimed to identify the Syrian-refugees secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English in relation to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Also, it examined whether there are any significant differences in the students' attitudes towards English language based on some demographic factors, such as gender, year of study, GPA, and interest in immigrating abroad.

### *1.4 Questions of the Study*

We formulate the research questions as follows:

1. What are the attitudes of Syrian-refugees secondary school students towards learning English language in terms of their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference in Syrian-refugees secondary school students' attitudes regarding learning English language based on some demographic factors, such as, gender, year of study, GPA, and interest in immigrating abroad?

### *1.5 Key Terms of the Study*

**Theoretical Definitions of Attitude:** Attitude is defined as "merely one of the types of factors that give rise to motivation, which eventually results in the attainment of proficiency in a second language" (Read, 1982, 138). In addition, Success in a target language depends on the learner's attitudes toward language acquisition as well as their intellectual ability. This indicates that rather than being merely an academic activity, language learning should be viewed as a social and psychological process (Abidin et al., 2012).

**Operational Definition of Attitude:** In this study attitude refers to a student's score as determined by the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB).

### *1.6 Limitations of the Study*

The study includes a number of limitations. Firstly, the study only included students who are refugees from Syria. Therefore, applying the findings of the study to other English-learning students who live in Jordan and other countries is not possible. Secondly, the study is restricted to the refugee-students living in Za'atary Camp, not refugees in Azraq Camp or refugees living outside the camps.

## **2. Literature Review**

Za'atari Camp is one of the biggest camps for refugees in the Middle East, it established in 2012 to provide temporary safety for thousands of Syrian refugees seeking protection after their country's crisis. English, a language that extends bridges beyond the borders of this camp, becomes a focal point within the academic field. Its significance goes beyond linguistics; it symbolizes access to a broader world, offering prospects beyond the immediate borders of Za'atari.

Moreover, The Syrian-refugees students face many challenges, the most important of which are educational challenges represented by inappropriate educational backgrounds, discomfort with speaking English language, a shortage of qualified teachers to work with the Syrian-refugees, and low motivation towards learning the language. Major institutional-related issues include a lack of funding to address requests for extra educational resources, a new learning environment, a lack of educators and volunteers, as well as the low educational backgrounds of Syrian immigrants. The Jordanian government is working to encourage English language teaching in schools for Syrian-refugees so they can find better job opportunities (Alefsha& Al-Jamal, 2019).

Even though learning English is becoming increasingly important, it can be challenging to tell whether someone has actually mastered the language due to the complexity of the process. Attitudes toward the new language can either help or hinder the process in which a foreign language is learned, depending on how the learner sees the process. Learning might not occur if there is no motivation. However, pupils who have the necessary traits, including positive attitudes, will be greatly motivated to learn any new or foreign language. As a consequence, students who have a positive attitude regarding learning English may participate in a wider range of educational activities and may try out more strategies to help them overcome obstacles. However, in contrast, unmotivated students are less likely to participate in any of the learning activities (Masadeh, 2021).

Gardner (2010) stated that success in language learning is seen as the product of aptitude on the one hand and a motivated effort on the other. Learners' attitudes regarding the linguistic-cultural group of the intended language, among other things, play an essential role in their motivation to learn (Gardner, 2010). According to Zebaria et al. (2018), each of the aspects that make up attitudes—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—has been investigated, researched, and examined in light of the perceptions, emotions, and behaviors demonstrated by people in general and foreign language students in particular. Attitudes are made up of

these three aspects:

1. **Cognitive Aspect of Attitude:** The cognitive aspect of attitude demonstrates how learners view the information about the foreign language they are learning and how they view the foreign language learning process in general. The four phases of "connecting the previous knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking the knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations" represent the cognitive component of attitude (Abidin et al., 2012, 122).
2. **Emotional Aspect of Attitude:** Feng and Hong (2009, 94) noted that the "learning process is an emotional process, and it is affected by different emotional factors, the teacher and his students engage in various emotional activities in it, and varied fruits of emotions are yield". In another meaning, the way foreign language learners behave reflects or rather conveys their interest in and tendency towards the things and circumstances around them, which in turn affects how they see language acquisition (Choy & Troudi, 2006).
3. **Behavioral Aspect of Attitude:** The behavioral aspect of attitude describes the learners' ways of behavior and responses to particular circumstances. Positive attitudes about courses of study "lead to the exhibition of positive behaviors toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more," according to Kara (2009, 102). Additionally, it has been noted that these learners are more motivated to participate emotionally, learn the knowledge and skills necessary for daily living, and solve difficulties.

Attitude is one of the key factors in the effective learning of a second language. The process of learning a foreign language can be helped or hindered by attitudes about the new language. The literature in provided evidence that a positive attitude among the students leads to successful learning of English language. Attitude affects language competency; therefore, scholars studying first and second languages acquisition have given it a lot of attention. Learner attitudes are recognized as one of the most important factors influencing language acquisition and as a crucial component to succeed in learning a foreign language.

### *2.1 Previous Studies*

Previous studies related to the variables of the current study were reviewed, the majority of studies have been done outside of Jordan. Among the most important of these studies were the following:

Ahmed and Ahmed (2021) carried out a quantitative study to examine the attitudes of learners regarding learning EFL at the University of Dongola in Sudan. A convenient random case study of 139 undergraduate students was selected. The findings indicated that views about studying EFL in general had significantly improved. Learning EFL has a major impact on both the cognitive and emotional elements of attitudes. Additionally, the behavioral aspect of attitudes regarding learning English was somewhat less significant than the other two aspects.

In Afghanistan, a quantitative study was conducted by Orfan (2020) to examine the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes of Afghan students regarding learning English. A survey consisting of 30 closed-ended questions were utilized to gather data from 210 Takhar University students, who were chosen randomly. The findings demonstrated that the students' attitudes regarding learning English were positive on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral level. The survey also showed that those students' attitudes were not statistically different based on their gender, age, native language, or subject of study.

Imsa-Ard (2020) investigated Thai secondary school students' motivation and attitudes regarding learning English in comprehensive study conducted among 640 students at the public and private secondary schools. The researcher used a quantitative method by using a questionnaire adopted from Gardner's (2004) AMTB consisting of items from five aspects: private, emotional, academic, professional, and familial. The results showed that most learners have a strong motivation to study English because they think it would be useful to them for their professional and educational purposes. They also generally have positive attitudes regarding learning English. They had a strong interest in learning English and felt that it was important for them to do so.

Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019) carried out a qualitative study to identify the difficulties and issues associated with teaching English to Syrian refugees, along with potential solutions. The results showed that the difficulties are institutional, economic, educational, and social. The biggest factors preventing Syrian-refugees from achieving their educational goals were poor educational backgrounds, difficulties with the English language, a lack of qualified teachers, and a lack of passion.

Zebaria et al. (2018) conducted another study to look into how university students feel about learning English. They included a sample of 96 second-year students from the University of Zakho, Kurdistan region, Iraq. The findings of the study showed that the attitudes of the students about studying English were positive on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels, and there were gender differences among the students that were statistically significant.

In Penang, a qualitative study was conducted by Ganapathy and Ying (2016) to understand the students' perspectives on learning English and the attitudes they acquired towards the language and its usage. Twenty students were chosen as a sample from the school by the researcher to participate in the survey. Due to limited time and the ability to gather information based on the students' spontaneous reactions rather than predetermined answers, the researcher chose focus group interviews as the approach for gathering data. Based on the interview's findings, many participants in each group considered that learning English as another language would be beneficial for their future, particularly if they intended to enroll in professional programs. The students had a positive attitude regarding learning English, but a few found it difficult because they lacked the necessary resources.

Studies examining attitudes towards learning the English language were not limited only to secondary school and university students but also extended to include primary school students. For example, Mat and Yunus (2014) carried out a descriptive study to investigate

FELDA primary school students' attitudes and motivation regarding learning English. The data collected via a questionnaire survey and interviews from a sample consisting of 40 students between 10 and 12 years old. The results indicated that students are highly motivated and have positive attitudes regarding learning English, and these results might suggest that students understand the value of English beyond just acquiring it as an obligatory subject in school.

Through the review of the previous studies, their objectives varied, including a search to identify the attitudes of learners regarding learning English but focused on undergraduate students, not secondary schools students. So, little is known concerning the attitudes of learners regarding learning English among secondary school students in Jordan. Based on the above, it is obvious that a limited number of studies have explored the attitudes of Syrian-refugees secondary school students' in Jordan towards learning English regarding behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Further, there were no studies found on the attitudes of students regarding learning English in Za'atary Camp that focused on secondary school students.

### 3. Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study: the research design, sample and sampling, data collection, including instrument and procedures, and data analysis. In this study.

#### 3.1 Design

A quantitative design used to identify the attitudes of the Syrian-refugees secondary school students regarding learning English language in Za'atary Camp located in Al-Mafraq Governorate. The study utilizes a questionnaire as an instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire elicits information regarding the demographic factors of the students and their attitudes towards learning the English language.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

**Table 1.** Sample Distribution

Demographic factors	Variables	Frequency	Percent %
Gender	Male	146	49.2
	Female	151	50.8
Year of study	Eleventh grade	165	55.6
	Twelfth grade	132	44.4
Grade point average	Excellent	69	23.2
	Very Good	125	42.1
Interest in immigrating abroad	Good	103	34.7
	Yes	279	93.9
	No	18	6.1
	Total	297	100.0

The population for this study is 1317 Syrian-refugees secondary school students in Za'atary Camp (two secondary schools for boys and two secondary schools for girls). However, since it was impractical to include the entire population within these schools, the sample size was determined to be 297 according to a sample determination table (Sekaran, 2003). A total of 297 students participated in the survey. Female students were more than male students (50.8%). More than half of the participants (55.6%) were in the eleventh grade, and the majority of students had a very good GPA. Most of the participants had an interest in immigrating abroad at a rate of (93.9%) as shown in table (1).

### 3.3 Instrument of the Study

This study used the attitude questionnaire adapted from the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) created by Gardner (2010) and Abidin and Alzwari (2012). Two parts made up the questionnaire. The first part included demographic factors: gender, the year of study, GPA, and interest in immigrating abroad. The second part was divided into three parts: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. The researcher chose only 24 items (8 items for each aspect) from 104 items concerning language attitudes in terms of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects of attitude. Each item of the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of the questionnaire was assigned a score ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1). The following scale was adopted to analyze the results: 1.00–2.33 low, 2.34–3.67 Moderate, 3.68–5.00 High.

### 3.4 Validity of the Study Instrument

**Table 2.** Correlation coefficients between the item and the total score and the aspect to which it belongs for the scale

N	Pearson correlation With Aspect	Pearson correlation With total score	N	Pearson correlation With Aspect	Pearson correlation With total score	N	Pearson correlation With Aspect	Pearson correlation With total score
1	.63**	.54**	9	.65**	.66**	17	.59**	.52**
2	.70**	.54**	10	.37*	.42*	18	.74**	.78**
3	.60**	.47**	11	.67**	.59**	19	.64**	.47**
4	.82**	.73**	12	.47**	.45*	20	.70**	.81**
5	.66**	.64**	13	.64**	.52**	21	.46**	.64**
6	.75**	.70**	14	.81**	.68**	22	.63**	.79**
7	.69**	.80**	15	.65**	.59**	23	.60**	.66**
8	.47**	.63**	16	.88**	.69**	24	.76**	.63**

To ensure the validity of the study instrument, it was reviewed by (9) experts with experience and competence. The experts judged the degree of language appropriateness and the extent to



which each item belongs to the related domain, in addition to deletion or addition, and making the necessary modifications. Based on the consensus of the majority of experts, the questionnaire was modified based on their observations and suggestions and was approved in its final version.

The construct's validity: The correlation coefficients between each item and the total score, as well as between each item and the aspect to which it belongs, and the aspects and the total score were calculated in order to determine the significance of the construct validity of the scale. All correlation coefficients were statistically significant and of acceptable degrees, indicating an appropriate degree of the construct's validity. The correlation coefficients of the items with the instrument ranged between (0.42-0.81) and with the aspect (0.37-0.88) as shown in table (2).

### 3.5 Reliability of the Study Instrument

To verify the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was used. The questionnaire was applied to (30) students from outside the sample of the study. After two weeks, the same group was given new questionnaires. Then the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between their estimates both times. Table (3) show the reliability coefficient for the aspects, the overall score, and the aspects. These values were considered appropriate for the objectives of this study. The reliability coefficient of the internal consistency was also extracted according to the Cronbach Alpha equation, It reached (0.85). which shows acceptable consistency in reliability. This shows that the questionnaire items were completely appropriate for the research goals. The value of Cornbach's Alpha regarding the behavioral aspect is 0.82, the cognitive aspect is 0.77, and the emotional aspect is 0.80. The table underneath shows Cronbach's alpha coefficients values

**Table 3.** Values of Replay Stability Coefficients and Cronbach Alpha

Aspect	Cronbach Alpha	Test-retest
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	0.82	0.84
The cognitive aspect of language attitude	0.77	0.81
The emotional aspect of language attitude	0.80	0.86
Total score	0.85	0.89

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

First, ethical approval was sought from the appropriate authorities. Then, the researcher visited the schools to explain the study aims and procedures required for school administrators. Once he had been given permission to distribute the questionnaire to the students, the researcher explained the study's aims and procedures to them. If they agreed to participate, they were asked to sign the consent form to fill out the questionnaire in Arabic. To avoid difficulty, the researcher translated the questionnaire into Arabic , and he was available to provide help for students in case it was needed. All students were assured that

their contribution is not mandatory, and they can leave the study at any point.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Questionnaires that were partially completed or left blank were not included in the review of the completed surveys. Software of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), ANOVA, and multiple comparisons were used to analyze the data. Before the analysis, the data and errors were investigated and organized. Descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, frequency, level (high, medium, low), and percentage were used to describe the demographic factors and the students' attitudes. Inferential analysis, the t-test, the Scheffe test to compare the descriptive statistics, and correlation were utilized to analyze the statistical data.

## 4. Results

First research question: What are the attitudes of Syrian-refugees secondary school students toward learning the English language in relation to their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects?

**Table 4.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Attitudes Ranked in a Descending Order

Rank	N	Aspect	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	2	The cognitive aspect of language attitude	3.74	0.510	High
2	3	The emotional aspect of language attitude	3.73	0.547	High
3	1	The behavioral aspect of language attitude	3.67	0.564	Moderate
		Total	3.71	0.441	High

Table (4) shows that The Cognitive Aspect of Language Attitude receives the highest mean (3.74), while The Behavioral Aspect of Language Attitude is ranked last with a mean of (3.67). This table also shows that the total mean is (3.71), which is considered a high level. Tables (5, 6, and 7) display the means and standards deviation of the individual items under each aspect:

### 1. The behavioral aspect of language attitude

Table (5) shows that item (4), I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class, receives the highest mean (4.39), which indicates a notable discomfort or unease experienced by students when engaging in spoken English activities. This could imply a lack of confidence or anxiety when it comes to verbal communication in English language, while item (1), Studying English helps me to have good relationships with friends, is at the bottom with a mean (1.89), which suggests that students might not perceive English proficiency as significantly influential in fostering social relationships within their peer group. This indicates a divergence in their perceptions regarding the social benefits of learning English. This table also indicates that the mean of the behavioral aspect of language attitude as a

whole is (3.67).

**Table 5.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Behavioral Aspect of Language Attitude Items, Ranked in a Descending Order

Rank	N	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	4	I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class	4.39	0.920	High
2	5	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her	4.18	0.933	High
3	3	I wish I could have many English-speaking friends	4.14	1.009	High
4	6	Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself	4.11	1.019	High
5	7	Studying English helps me to improve my personality	4.06	1.064	High
6	2	I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson	3.87	1.037	High
7	8	I like to practice English the way native speakers do	2.74	1.243	Moderate
8	1	Studying English helps me to have good relationships with friends	1.89	1.217	Low
		The behavioral aspect of language attitude	3.67	0.564	Moderate

## 2. The cognitive aspect of language attitude

Table (6) shows that item (9), Studying English is important because it will make me more educated, received the highest mean (4.49), which suggests a prevailing belief among students that English proficiency directly correlates with education. This underscores their recognition of language as a tool for intellectual growth, aligning with the broader perception of English as a gateway to knowledge and learning, while item (15), Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams, was ranked last with a mean of (2.56), which indicates a lesser emphasis on studying English solely for examination purposes. This suggests that while academic performance might be a factor, it isn't the primary driver behind their engagement with the language. Instead, students seem to perceive English as a means to broader educational advancement beyond mere exam success. This table also shows that the mean of the cognitive aspect of language attitude as a whole is high (3.74).

**Table 6.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Cognitive Aspect of Language Attitude Items, Ranked in a Descending Order

Rank	N	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	9	Studying English is important because it will make me more educated	4.49	0.847	High
2	16	In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable	4.16	1.107	High
3	12	I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future	4.12	1.031	High
4	14	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively	4.12	1.022	High
5	11	Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts	3.97	0.963	High
6	10	I am able to think and analyze the content in English language	3.35	0.996	Moderate
7	13	I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life	3.11	1.135	Moderate
8	15	Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams	2.56	1.372	Moderate
		the cognitive aspect of language attitude	3.74	0.510	High

### 3. The emotional aspect of language attitude

**Table 7.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Emotional Aspect of Language Attitude Items, Ranked in a Descending Order

Rank	N	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	22	I wish I could speak English fluently	4.61	0.786	High
2	20	Studying foreign languages like English is enjoyable	4.11	0.948	High
3	18	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others	4.07	1.053	High
4	24	I enjoy doing activities in English	4.02	1.008	High
5	17	I feel proud when studying English language	4.01	1.095	High
6	21	I look forward to the time I spend in English class	3.74	.967	High
7	19	I do not get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class	3.46	1.136	Moderate
8	23	I do not like studying English	1.78	1.136	Low
		the emotional aspect of language attitude	3.73	0.547	High

Table (7) shows that item (22), I wish I could speak English fluently, receives the highest mean (4.61), which signifies a strong desire among students to achieve fluency in the English language. This aspiration suggests a deep-seated emotional motivation to attain a high level of proficiency, contrarily the item (23), I do not like studying English, comes in last place

with a mean of (1.78), which indicates a relatively low level of dislike or negative sentiment toward studying English. This implies that, on average, students do not harbor strong aversion or antipathy toward learning the language. This table also reveals that the mean of the emotional aspect of language attitude as a whole is nearly as high as the cognitive aspect, with a mean score (3.73).

Second research question: Is there any statistically significant difference in Syrian-refugees secondary school students' attitudes regarding learning English language based on some demographic factors, such as, gender, year of study, GPA, and interest in immigrating abroad? To find out if there are statistically significant differences ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the means of students' answers due to gender, year of study, GPA, and interest in immigrating abroad, t-test analysis was used for gender, year of study, and interest in immigrating abroad, while one-way analysis of variance was used for GPA. The findings are shown in the following tables.

## 1. Gender

**Table 8.** T-Test Results of Syrian-refugees Secondary Schools Students' Attitudes Regarding Learning the English Language Due to Gender

Aspect	Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	Male	146	3.64	.533	-.850	295	.396
	Female	151	3.70	.592			
The cognitive aspect of language attitude	Male	146	3.72	.482	-.534	295	.594
	Female	151	3.75	.537			
The emotional aspect of language attitude	Male	146	3.71	.555	-.635	295	.526
	Female	151	3.75	.541			
Total score	Male	146	3.69	.432	-.832	295	.406
	Female	151	3.73	.449			

Table (8) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) due to gender in all aspects and the total score. The absence of statistically significant differences based on gender suggests that, within this context, attitudes toward learning English remain consistent across male and female students. This indicates a level of uniformity in how both genders perceive and approach English language learning within the camp setting and implies that both genders likely share similar motivations, challenges, and perceptions regarding the language.

## 2. Year of study

Table (9) shows that there are statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) due to year of study in all aspects and total score with obtaining the behavioral aspect of language attitude a higher percentage of eleventh grade. The observation of a higher percentage of the behavioral aspect of language attitude among eleventh-grade students implies that this cohort might exhibit a particular focus or emphasis on behavioral aspects such as spoken communication

or engagement in English language activities. This could signify a heightened interest or confidence in practical application or interaction in the language. The differences across academic years could signify a developmental progression or changing priorities in students' attitudes toward learning English. Lower grades might focus more on foundational aspects, while higher grades could prioritize practical usage or application of the language.

**Table 9.** t-test Results of Syrian-refugees Secondary Schools Students' Attitudes Regarding Learning the English Language Due to Year of Study

Aspect	Year of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	Eleventh grade	165	3.72	.527	1.735	295	.084
	Twelfth grade	132	3.61	.603			
The cognitive aspect of language attitude	Eleventh grade	165	3.79	.435	2.201	295	.029
	Twelfth grade	132	3.66	.585			
The emotional aspect of language attitude	Eleventh grade	165	3.79	.489	2.192	295	.029
	Twelfth grade	132	3.65	.606			
Total score	Eleventh grade	165	3.77	.368	2.505	295	.013
	Twelfth grade	132	3.64	.510			

### 3. GPA

**Table 10.** Means and Standard Deviations of Syrian-refugees Secondary School Students' Attitudes Regarding Learning the English Language due to GPA

Aspect	GPA	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	Excellent	69	3.73	.460
	Very Good	125	3.58	.626
	Good	103	3.75	.534
	Total	297	3.67	.564
The cognitive aspect of language attitude	Excellent	69	3.79	.454
	Very Good	125	3.73	.475
	Good	103	3.70	.583
	Total	297	3.74	.510
the emotional aspect of language attitude	Excellent	69	3.89	.483
	Very Good	125	3.69	.529
	Good	103	3.66	.591
	Total	297	3.73	.547
Total score	Excellent	69	3.80	.362
	Very Good	125	3.67	.427
	Good	103	3.70	.496
	Total	297	3.71	.441

Table (10) shows a slight variance in students' means of the Syrian-refugees secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English language in terms of their GPA. To find out if there are statistically significant differences in these means, a one-way ANOVA was conducted, and the results are displayed in the following tables.

**Table 11.** One Way ANOVA Results of Syrian-refugees Secondary School Students' Attitudes Towards Learning the English Language Due to GPA

Aspect	Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	Between Groups	1.968	2	.984	3.142	.045
	Within Groups	92.091	294	.313		
	Total	94.059	296			
The cognitive aspect of language attitude	Between Groups	.354	2	.177	.678	.508
	Within Groups	76.722	294	.261		
	Total	77.076	296			
The emotional aspect of language attitude	Between Groups	2.527	2	1.263	4.311	.014
	Within Groups	86.162	294	.293		
	Total	88.688	296			
Total score	Between Groups	.863	2	.431	2.240	.108
	Within Groups	56.604	294	.193		
	Total	57.466	296			

Table (11) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the means of the Syrian-refugees secondary school students' attitudes regarding learning English language due to GPA in the cognitive aspect and the total score. However, significant differences are noted in the behavioral and emotional aspects of language attitude. The lack of statistically significant differences in the cognitive aspect and the total score across different GPA levels suggests that, academically, students with varying academic performances hold similar attitudes toward the cognitive benefits of learning English. This indicates a uniform appreciation for the educational aspects of language learning irrespective of GPA. Conversely, the significant differences observed in the behavioral and emotional aspects of language attitude based on GPA levels imply that students with varying academic performances might exhibit differing attitudes or emotions regarding the practical application of English (behavioral aspect) and their emotional investment in learning the language. Pair-wise Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Test using Scheffe method was conducted as shown in the following table.

**Table 12.** Pairwise Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests Using Scheffe Method between Syrian-refugees Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards Learning the English Language

Dependent Variable	(I) Grade average	point	(J) Grade average	point	Mean (I-J)	Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	Excellent		Very Good		.153		.084	.191
			Good		-.019		.087	.977
	Very Good		Excellent		-.153		.084	.191
			Good		-.172*		.074	.049
The emotional aspect of language attitude	Excellent		Very Good		.199		.081	.051
			Good		.235*		.084	.022
	Very Good		Excellent		-.199		.081	.051
			Good		.035		.072	.886
Good		Excellent		-.235*		.084	.022	
		Very Good		-.035		.072	.886	

\* The mean difference is signification at the 0.05 levels.

Table (12) illustrates there is a statistically significant difference at ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) between Very Good and Good in favor of Good in the behavioral aspect of language attitude. The table also shows there is a statistically significant difference at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between Excellent and Good in favor of Excellent in the emotional aspect of language attitude.

#### 4. Interest in immigrating abroad

**Table 13.** t-test Results of Syrian-refugees Secondary School Students' Attitudes Regarding Learning the English Language Due to Interest in Immigrating Abroad

Aspect	Interest in immigrating abroad	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
The behavioral aspect of language attitude	Yes	279	3.69	0.559	2.658	295	.008
	No	18	3.33	0.549			
The cognitive aspect of language attitude	Yes	279	3.75	0.504	2.333	295	.020
	No	18	3.47	0.539			
The emotional aspect of language attitude	Yes	279	3.74	0.546	2.324	295	.021
	No	18	3.44	0.491			
Total score	Yes	279	3.73	0.437	3.012	295	.003
	No	18	3.41	0.401			



Table (13) shows that there are statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) due to interest in immigrating abroad in all aspects and the total score in favor of interest in immigrating abroad. The statistically significant differences across all aspects and the total score indicate that students who express an interest in immigrating abroad exhibit more positive attitudes toward learning English compared to their counterparts who do not share the same interest. The observed differences highlight the motivational aspect tied to aspirations for immigration. Students interested in moving abroad may perceive English proficiency as crucial for their future prospects, leading to heightened enthusiasm and commitment towards learning the language.

## **5. Discussion**

### *5.1 Students' Attitudes Towards Learning English Language*

The results of this study revealed a positive attitude towards learning English among Syrian-refugees secondary school students. The positive attitudes towards learning English among Syrian-refugees secondary school students likely stem from a combination of factors, including the perceived value of language proficiency for future opportunities, aspirations for a better future, resilience amidst adversity, supportive educational environments, and cultural perceptions of the language. Understanding these multifaceted influences can aid in tailoring educational strategies that resonate with the motivations and aspirations of students within refugee settings like Za'atari Camp.

The study's result was consistent with the results of most previous studies carried out by Ahmed and Ahmed (2021), Orfan (2020), Imsa-Ard (2020), Zebaria et al. (2018), Ganapathy and Ying (2016), Mat and Yunus (2014), and Tahaineh and Daana (2013). This similarity in the results is due to the fact that students understand the value of English beyond just acquiring it as an obligatory subject in school.

Consistency with prior studies provides credibility and strengthens the validity of the study's findings. It underscores the robustness of the observed attitudes and suggests a certain degree of universality or consistency in the positive perceptions towards English learning within this demographic. This consistency also speaks to the resilience and aspirations of these students amidst challenging circumstances. It signifies their recognition of the value of English proficiency, possibly as a means of transcending barriers and accessing broader opportunities beyond the camp's borders.

On the other hand, this study conflicts with the findings of a study by Abidin et al. (2012), who conducted research on secondary school students' attitudes regarding studying English in Libya. They stated that the respondents' attitudes were negative in the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects due to the instructional and traditional techniques used by some of the English language teachers. The discrepancy in attitudes could stem from various contextual, instructional, or cultural differences between the two settings. Differences in educational systems, teaching methodologies, and the broader socio-cultural landscape between Libya and the Za'atari Camp might contribute significantly to the observed disparities in attitudes

toward learning English. In contrast, the unique circumstances of Syrian refugees in Za'atari Camp, marked by resilience, adaptation, and aspirations for a different future, could shape more positive attitudes toward English learning. The motivation to build new lives or access opportunities beyond the camp might influence their attitudes.

Moreover, the cognitive and emotional aspects of attitude are greatly influenced by English, but the behavioral aspect is less greatly affected. This finding matches with the results reported by Ahmed and Ahmed (2021), who investigated the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Dongola regarding learning English. They reported that learning EFL has a major impact on both the cognitive and emotional elements of attitudes. Additionally, the behavioral aspect of attitudes regarding learning English was somewhat less significant than the other two aspects. This disparity in the influence of English on cognitive and emotional aspects compared to the behavioral aspect might arise from instructional methodologies, resource constraints, cultural influences, and social contexts within the camp. Addressing these challenges by integrating more immersive and interactive language learning experiences could help bridge the gap, enhancing the impact on the behavioral aspect of attitudes toward learning English.

### *5.2 Statistically Significant Differences in Syrian-Refugees Secondary School Students' Attitudes regarding Learning English language based on their Demographic Factors*

The study revealed that there were no significant differences in the attitudes of the participants based on their gender. It approved the results of the study implemented by Orfan (2020). Nevertheless, it contradicts the findings of researches that have been done by Zebaria et al. (2018), and Abidin et al. (2012), who stated that respondents' attitudes regarding learning English varied depending on whether they were male or female. The discrepancy in findings regarding the influence of gender on attitudes towards learning English emphasizes the complexity of this relationship, influenced by contextual, cultural, and individual factors. Acknowledging these disparities can guide the development of inclusive language education strategies that cater to diverse gender perspectives within various educational settings.

The results also showed that Syrian-refugees secondary school students were not statistically significantly different in their attitudes based on their GPA in the cognitive aspect, unlike their behavioral and emotional aspects of language attitude. That is, students who have a good GPA have a more positive attitude regarding English than students who have a very good GPA regarding the behavioral aspect of language attitude, which indicates a disparity in practical engagement or application of English language skills. It is plausible that those with a good GPA might exhibit higher behavioral engagement or confidence in using the language practically compared to those with a very good GPA, while students who have an excellent GPA have a high positive attitude towards English than students who have a good GPA regarding the emotional aspect of language attitude, which suggests that emotionally, high achievers might hold a stronger positive connection or emotional investment in learning English. Achieving excellence academically might reinforce their emotional attachment to language learning and future prospects linked with proficiency.

Moreover, the findings of the research stated that Syrian-refugees secondary school students

were statistically significantly different in their attitudes based on their year of study. In which, students in the eleventh grade have a high positive attitude towards English than students in the twelfth grade regarding the behavioral aspect of attitude, which indicates that eleventh grade students might be at a stage where practical language application and communication skills are more emphasized in their curriculum compared to twelfth graders, potentially leading to a higher positive attitude in this aspect.

Additionally, the results of the study stated that the majority of Syrian-refugees secondary school students prefer to immigrate abroad and therefore have a more positive attitude regarding English than students who do not want to immigrate abroad, which indicates that students aspiring to immigrate abroad likely perceive English proficiency as essential for integration into new societies or accessing opportunities in potential host countries. Unfavorably, the researcher was unable to find any study in the literature that would corroborates or conflicts this exact finding.

## 6. Recommendations

According to the results of the study, there are some recommendations:

- Firstly, future researchers are recommended to use qualitative methods to explore the attitudes among students using more than one instrument, such as interviews and observation, in an effort to enhance the study's reliability and credibility.
- Secondly, it is recommended to conduct a research study with a larger sample to include all Syrian refugees in Jordan, inside and outside the camps.

## References

- Abidin, M., Pourmohammadi, M., & Alzwari, H. (2012). EFL Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language: The Case of Libyan Secondary School Students. *Asian Social Science*, 8(2), 119-134. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n2p119>
- Ahmed, S., & Ahmed, O. (2021). Attitudes of EFL students towards learning the English Language The case of Dongola University students. Retrieved 25 Sept. 2023 from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350091039\\_Attitudes\\_of\\_EFL\\_students\\_towards\\_learning\\_the\\_English\\_Language\\_The\\_case\\_of\\_Dongola\\_University\\_students/citations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350091039_Attitudes_of_EFL_students_towards_learning_the_English_Language_The_case_of_Dongola_University_students/citations)
- Alefesha, H. M., & Al-Jamal, D. (2019). Syrian refugees' challenges and problems of learning and teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Jordan as an example. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(1), 117-129. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/235>
- Choy, S., & Troudi, S. (2006). An Investigation into the Changes in Perceptions of and

- Attitudes towards Learning English in a Malaysian College. *The International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 18(2), 120-130.
- Feng, R., & Hong, C. (2009). An analysis on the importance of motivation and strategy in postgraduates English acquisition. *English Language Teaching*, 2(3), 93-97. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v2n3p93>
- Ganapathy, M., & Ying, G. (2016). Attitude and Motivation of Students towards Learning English as Second Language in a Secondary School in Penang. *Malaysian Journal of Languages and Linguistics (MJLL)*, 5(2), 39-56. <https://doi.org/10.24200/mjll.vol5iss2pp39-56>
- Gardner, R. (2010). *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition: The Socio-Educational Model*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Getie, A. (2020). Factors affecting the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language. *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 1-37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1738184>
- Ilyosovna, N. A. (2020). The importance of English language. *International Journal on Orange Technologies*, 2(1), 22-24.
- Imsa-Ard, P. (2020). Motivation and Attitudes towards English Language Learning in Thailand: A Large-Scale Survey of Secondary School Students. *REFlections*, 27(2), 140-161. <https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v27i2.247153>
- Kara, A. (2009). The effect of a 'Learning Theories' unit on students' attitudes toward learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(3), 100-113. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2009v34n3.5>
- Khasinah, S. (2014). Factors Influencing Second Language Acquisition. *Englisia : Journal of Language, Education and Humanities*, 1(2), 256-269. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v1i2.187>
- Mahu, D. (2012). Why Is Learning English So Beneficial Nowadays?. *International Journal of Communication Research*, 2(4), 374-376.
- Masadeh, T. (2021). Attitudes of University Freshman EFL Students toward Learning English as a Foreign Language. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 11(1), 29-40.
- Mat, S., & Yunus, M. (2014). Attitudes and motivation towards learning English among FELDA school students. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 8(5), 1-8.
- Orfan, S. (2020). Afghan undergraduate students' attitudes towards learning English. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1723831>
- Read, J. A. (1982). *Language Tests at School*. John W. Oller, Jr. London: Longman, 1979. Reviewed by. *RELC Journal*, 13(1), 100-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368828201300107>

- Sekaran, U. (2003). *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Tahaineh, Y., & Daana, H. (2013). Jordanian undergraduates' motivations and attitudes towards learning English in EFL context. *International review of social sciences and humanities*, 4(2), 159-180.
- Zebaria, H., Allob, H. A., & Mohammadzadehc, B. (2018). The role of personality characteristics in forming EFL university students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language: A case study. *Mjltm*, 8(6), 343-351.

### **Acknowledgments**

Not applicable.

### **Authors contributions**

Not applicable.

### **Funding**

Not applicable.

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### **Informed consent**

Obtained.

### **Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Macrothink Institute.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

### **Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

### **Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### **Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

### **Open access**

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

### **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.