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Examining the Relationship between EFL Learners' Motivation Patterns and Cultural Attachments

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between EFL learners' motivational profile and their home cultural attachment. For this purpose, two questionnaires, Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2011) The Student Motivational State Questionnaire and Pishghadam, Hashemi and Bazri (2013) Cultural Attachment Scale, designed for the context of Iran, were distributed among two hundred EFL learners studying English in language institutes all over Iran. Various statistical analyses were conducted to examine the associations between the variables. The ideal self was strongly related to Western and artistic attachments; the ought self-demonstrated a strong relationship with Western attachment; and the linguistic self-confidence showed minimal correlation with cultural attachment. The results revealed significant gender differences in motivational profiles, with girls showing stronger alignment with ideal and ought-to-selves, as well as higher levels of linguistic self-confidence and more positive attitudes toward learning English. Boys, on the other hand, exhibited slightly higher attachment to Western cultural influences, while girls showed stronger attachments to traditional, Iranian, and artistic dimensions. The results underscore the intricate relationship between cultural identity, motivational dynamics, and emotional reactions in language learning. These findings carry important implications for tailoring language teaching strategies to address gender-specific motivational drivers and cultural affinities, while also offering applications in designing more inclusive and personalized educational approaches that enhance engagement and outcomes for both boys and girls.

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1. Introduction

Motivation is a foundational concept in psychology, playing a crucial role in initiating and sustaining language learning. It provides the initial impetus for engaging in second or foreign language (L2) acquisition and helps learners persist through the often challenging and monotonous learning process (Dörnyei, 2005; Gearing, 2024). Contemporary theories of L2 motivation acknowledge its dynamic and multifaceted nature, emphasizing that different motivational factors become salient at various stages of language learning (Boo et al., 2015; Tadayonifar et al., 2021). For instance, social influences, such as the perceived value of the target language and its associated community, often shape initial motivation, while intrinsic factors, such as personal enjoyment and self-fulfillment, become increasingly critical for sustained engagement (Oxford, 2011; Sarbandi et al., 2017). Recent research further underscores the fluctuating and context-dependent nature of motivation, highlighting the necessity of flexible and adaptive motivational strategies (Li, 2024; Sato, 2024).

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding L2 motivation is Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), which is rooted in the broader psychological theory of self-concept. This model proposes that motivation emerges from the discrepancy between a learner's present self and their envisioned future self, with three key components:

1. **Ideal L2 Self:** The idealized vision of oneself as a proficient L2 user, which serves as a powerful motivator for learners who aspire to engage in international communication, academic pursuits, or career opportunities that require English proficiency.
2. **Ought-to L2 Self:** The attributes that individuals feel they should possess to meet societal expectations or avoid negative consequences, often shaped by external pressures such as parental expectations, job requirements, or cultural norms.
3. **L2 Learning Experience:** Situation-specific motives related to the learning environment, such as the quality of instruction, peer interactions, and personal experiences with language learning.

Dörnyei's model is closely aligned with Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, which posits that individuals are motivated to close the gap between their actual self and either their ideal self (who they aspire to be) or their ought self (who they feel obligated to be). Beyond individual motivation, an essential factor influencing L2 learning is learners' cultural perceptions and attachments. Nizregorodcew (2013) identified two dominant perspectives: one that views L2 learning as a potential threat to native cultural identity and another that perceives it as an opportunity for cultural enrichment. Bakhtin's (1981) notion of "mutual cultural enrichment" supports the latter view, suggesting that engaging with a new language and culture does not necessarily lead to cultural loss. However, research in specific sociocultural contexts presents a more complex picture. For instance, Pishghadam and Navari (2009) argue that in Iran, English learning can lead to a sense of cultural detachment, as learners may strive to emulate Western norms at the expense of their native identity. Similarly, Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2009) found that Iranian learners' pursuit of native-like pronunciation could contribute to a diminished sense of cultural belonging. In contrast, studies in other contexts, such as Poland (Otwinowska-Kasztelanic, 2011), suggest that learners can maintain strong cultural identities while incorporating elements of the target language culture.

The concept of cultural attachment—the emotional bond learners feel toward their own cultural heritage (e.g., national traditions, religious beliefs) as well as foreign cultural influences (especially those linked to Western culture)—plays a pivotal role in shaping L2 motivation (Yap et al., 2019). Some learners with strong national attachment may view English as a tool for accessing global knowledge without compromising their cultural identity. Others who feel a strong affinity for Western culture may see English as a gateway to participating in Western media, arts, and academic discourse (Farangi, & Rashidi, 2022). Conversely, learners with strong religious or nationalist ties may resist English learning, perceiving it as a foreign influence that conflicts with their values. While research has explored cultural attachment's role in L2 motivation across different contexts (e.g., Henry, 2009; Papi, 2010), there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the Iranian EFL context.

Iran presents a unique sociocultural environment where learners navigate a dual exposure to global influences and deeply ingrained local cultural, religious, and national identities. This complexity suggests that Iranian EFL learners' motivation may be shaped by multiple, often conflicting, cultural attachments. However, previous studies have largely examined isolated dimensions of cultural attachment (e.g., religious or national identity) rather than investigating how these attachments interact to shape motivation. Additionally, gender differences in the relationship between cultural attachment and motivation remain underexplored. Addressing these gaps is crucial for understanding how motivational factors operate in socioculturally complex settings like Iran and for designing pedagogical strategies that cater to diverse learner motivations (Bahraman & Movahed, 2021).

Recognizing the intricate relationship between motivation and cultural attachment, this study aims to examine how different dimensions of cultural attachment—religious, national, Western, and artistic—influence the motivational profiles of Iranian EFL learners. By doing so, it seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how cultural factors shape motivation in language learning. Given the increasing prominence of English language learning in Iran and the fundamental role of motivation in language acquisition (Gearing & Roger, 2019; Tadayonifar et al., 2020), this research offers valuable insights into how Iranian learners' cultural attachments influence their motivation to learn English. Specifically, the study will investigate the relationships between these cultural attachments and key motivational variables such as the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, linguistic self-confidence, and motivational intensity. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do various dimensions of cultural attachment (religious, Western, Iranian, and artistic) relate to English language learners' motivational profiles, particularly concerning their ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, linguistic self-confidence, and motivational intensity?
2. What role do gender differences play in these relationships?

2. Literature Review

Over recent decades, the field of second language (L2) motivation has undergone significant development, marked by the introduction of Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) as a pivotal advancement. This framework suggests that L2 motivation is primarily influenced by learners' self-concepts, including their "ideal L2 self" (an aspirational image of themselves as proficient language users) and their "ought-to L2 self" (a self-image shaped by external expectations and perceived obligations). These self-representations play a crucial role in directing learners' motivation and guiding their behaviors toward language acquisition. Additionally, the model incorporates the L2 learning experience, which reflects learners' attitudes toward the process of language learning. This component is shaped by situational factors, such as the curriculum design, teaching practices, and the overall learning environment.

Research on the L2MSS has highlighted the pivotal role of the ideal L2 self in driving learner motivation. Evidence suggests that learners with a clear and appealing vision of their ideal L2 self are more likely to demonstrate consistent and sustained language learning efforts (Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Farangi & Zabbah, 2023). In contrast, the ought-to L2 self, which is shaped by external pressures such as societal expectations and family demands, has been found to have a less consistent and sometimes negative impact on learners' motivation, particularly when it induces anxiety or stress (Farangi, & Nejadghanbar, 2024; Papi, 2010). One of the key developments in the field has been the growing recognition of the importance of cultural identity and attachment in shaping learners' motivational profiles. Cultural attachment refers to the emotional bond individuals feel towards their cultural heritage and the values, traditions, and practices associated with it. This concept has gained prominence in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, as learners' cultural identities can significantly influence their motivations to learn a second language. Recent studies have highlighted the relationship between learners' cultural attachments—such as religious attachment, national attachment, and attachment to foreign cultures (e.g., Western cultures)—and their motivation to learn English (e.g., Henry, 2017; Papi, 2010; Kormos & Csizér, 2009).

For example, in Iran, a country where English language learning is increasingly seen as a necessity for economic and social mobility, studies have found that cultural factors such as national pride and attachment to Iranian

traditions can impact EFL learners' motivation. Papi (2010) found that while the ideal L2 self was positively correlated with learners' motivation to learn English, cultural attachments to Iranian traditions and religious practices influenced how learners viewed English language learning. These attachments, in some cases, led to ambivalence or even resistance toward Western culture, which is often associated with the English language. The role of religious attachment has also been explored in relation to motivation. In many non-Western contexts, including Iran, religious beliefs can shape learners' attitudes towards foreign languages. Papi (2010) found that learners with strong religious attachments were more likely to feel that learning English conflicted with their religious values, especially when it involved exposure to Western media and cultural practices. This could lead to reduced motivation to learn English, especially if learners felt that their cultural and religious identity was threatened by the language.

Conversely, in other contexts, attachment to Western culture has been found to positively influence EFL learners' motivation. Research in East Asia and other regions has shown that learners who identify with or are attracted to Western cultural products—such as movies, music, and fashion—tend to be more motivated to learn English (Farangi, & Khojastemehr, 2024; Henry, 2011; Taguchi, 2009). Attachment to Western culture can significantly enhance the ideal L2 self, as learners often perceive English as a gateway to success and active participation in a globalized world. Additionally, research has explored the link between artistic attachment and motivation. Learners with a strong connection to Western artistic products, such as films, literature, and music, tend to exhibit greater motivation to learn English. This attachment is especially relevant in settings where English serves as a bridge to accessing global cultural resources. In such cases, the ideal L2 self is intricately connected to the aspiration to engage with Western media and cultural expressions, thereby intensifying learners' motivation (Farangi et al., 2024).

In Addition, recent studies have also explored the role of gender in shaping the relationship between cultural attachment and motivation. For instance, research by Henry (2009) found that gender plays a significant role in the development of the ideal L2 self. In a longitudinal study conducted in Sweden, the ideal L2 self-became significantly stronger in adolescent girls over time, while it decreased in boys. This pattern suggests that girls may be more attuned to the benefits of language learning in terms of identity formation, while boys might experience more resistance due to societal expectations around masculinity and language learning. Similarly, gender differences in cultural attachment have been observed, with females often showing stronger emotional connections to both their national cultures and foreign cultural attachments (e.g., Western culture), which can influence their language learning motivation.

In sum, the existing literature underscores the multifaceted nature of L2 motivation, particularly the role of self-concept, cultural attachment, and gender differences in shaping learners' motivational profiles. While research has explored the influence of cultural identity on motivation, prior studies have often examined isolated aspects of cultural attachment rather than their combined impact. Moreover, the role of gender in these interactions remains underexplored, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Iran, where learners navigate complex sociocultural dynamics. By addressing these gaps, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how different dimensions of cultural attachment—religious, national, Western, and artistic—interact to shape Iranian EFL learners' motivation. This research not only advances theoretical discussions in the field but also offers practical insights for educators seeking to design instructional approaches that acknowledge learners' diverse cultural backgrounds and motivational needs.

3. Methodology

Using a new conceptualization of language learning motivation, the researchers in this study attempted to explore how EFL learners' look towards the foreign culture can impact their motivation. For this purpose, the following steps were taken.

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 200 English language learners enrolled in various Iran Language Institutes (ILIs) across Iran. These institutes, which have a distinguished 50-year history, are known for their rigorous language programs and play a central role in language education across the country. The selected institutes spanned multiple regions, including major cities such as Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Ahvaz, Yazd, Kerman, Zahedan, and Hamedan, ensuring a diverse and representative sample from various cultural and geographical backgrounds. The data were collected by English teachers from these institutes, who received a specified monetary thank-you gift for each questionnaire they returned. To maintain consistency, 20 learners were randomly selected from each of the participating institutes, resulting in an equal distribution of 100 male and 100 female participants. The age range of participants was between 16 and 21 years ($M = 19.5$), ensuring that the sample was primarily composed of young adults, a demographic typical for language learners at these institutes. The study focused specifically on learners at the upper-intermediate level of proficiency in English. This decision was made to control for varying levels of language competence, ensuring that all participants had a relatively advanced understanding of English, which was necessary for the research objectives. The upper-intermediate level was determined based on the common proficiency levels defined by the institutes, which align with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

English language teachers from each participating institution collaborated in data collection to provide necessary support and guidance. Their roles included assisting with informed consent, distributing questionnaires, and clarifying instructions for learners. All participants were fully informed about the study's objectives and their involvement, and provided informed consent. Data confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. These ethical considerations were crucial for maintaining research integrity and safeguarding participant rights.

3.2. Instrument and procedure

Two validated instruments were employed to collect data for this study. The Student Motivational State Questionnaire (Papi&Abdollahzadeh, 2011) and the Cultural Attachment Scale (Pishghadam, Hashemi, & Bazri, 2013) were both designed and validated specifically for the Iranian context using rigorous statistical procedures.

3.2.1. The Student Motivational State Questionnaire

This questionnaire comprises two main sections. The first section assesses language learners' situation-specific motivations and general attitudes towards language learning. This includes both specific motivational traits related to language learning and general dispositional characteristics. The situation-specific portion focuses on linguistic self-confidence, motivational intensity, and attitudes toward learning English, adapted from various scholars. The general dispositional section includes the Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self scales, representing the attitudinal components of the L2 Motivational Self System. The questionnaire consists of 35 items, rated on a 6-point Likert scale for statements and a 6-point rating scale for questions, with a high internal consistency and reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$). The second section of the questionnaire collects background information about the learners, including age, nationality, previous English teacher experience, overseas experience, and self-rated English proficiency levels. The variables measured in the questionnaire include Ideal Self, Ought-to Self, Linguistic Self-Confidence, Motivational Intensity, English Anxiety, and Attitudes Toward Learning English. The Persian version of the questionnaire was used in this study to ensure contextual relevance for the participants.

3.2.2. Cultural Attachment Scale

This 36-item questionnaire, developed and validated by Pishghadam et al. (2013) for use in Iran, assesses [briefly state the purpose of the questionnaire, e.g., "language learning anxiety"]. It utilizes a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. Factor analysis conducted by the researchers identified five distinct factors within the questionnaire.

1. **Religious Attachment:** This factor includes 7 items (items 7, 14, 18, 21, 28, 31, and 35) that measure individuals' general adherence to religious practices. These items reflect behaviors such as fasting, attending

the mosque, making a pilgrimage to Mecca, donating to the poor in accordance with religious guidelines, participating in religious ceremonies, and wearing black clothing during mourning periods. The items assess whether individuals believe in and observe these religious rituals.

2. **Western Attachment:** This factor consists of 11 items (items 12, 23, 26, 27, 30, 33). Items 12, 27, and 33 assess preferences for Western clothing and makeup. Item 30 examines attitudes toward rejecting Iranian traditional marriage customs, while item 26 gauges openness to marriage with individuals from English-speaking countries. The remaining items measure attitudes toward various aspects of Western culture, including music, food, language, and names, with item 23 specifically evaluating the perceived advantages of Western culture.
3. **Iranian Attachment:** This factor includes 6 items (items 5, 8, 13, 19, 29, and 32). Items 5 and 19 measure appreciation for Iran's traditional heritage. Items 8 and 32 assess preferences for Iranian customs and national traditions, such as celebrating the Iranian New Year. Items 13 and 29 gauge appreciation for classical Iranian poets and Persian literature.
4. **Cultural Attachment:** This factor comprises 7 items (items 3, 6, 9, 11, 16, 34, and 36). Items 3, 6, 11, 16, and 34 evaluate learners' attachment to different aspects of traditional culture, including architecture, music, food, dialects, customs, and clothing. Item 9 assesses familiarity with Persian literature, a key element of Iranian culture, by asking about both Iranian and Western writers.
5. **Artistic Attachment:** This factor includes 5 items (items 2, 10, 15, 17, and 24). Items 10, 15, 17, and 24 measure the extent to which Western films are attractive and meaningful to learners, while item 2 assesses their preference for reading Western stories over Persian ones.

The Farsi version of the SCoA was tested for reliability, yielding a coefficient of 0.87 when administered to 30 learners at the same language proficiency level in a language school. This version of the questionnaire was used in the present study.

3.3. Procedure

The data collection for this study involved two hundred upper-intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners enrolled in various Iran Language Institutes (ILIs) across Iran. These institutes are well-known for their high standards of language instruction and widespread presence in both major urban centers and more remote areas. The selected participants were aged between 16 and 21 and were randomly chosen from a pool of upper-intermediate learners to ensure homogeneity in terms of language proficiency. Before administering the questionnaires, language instructors from each institute were involved in a thorough briefing session conducted via Skype. This session, led by one of the researchers, aimed to clarify the objectives of the study, explain the purpose of the questionnaires, and address any questions instructors had regarding the administration process. This ensured that instructors had a clear understanding of their role in the data collection process and could guide participants effectively while maintaining consistency across institutes. On the day of data collection, the two questionnaires were distributed to the participants during their regular class sessions. The questionnaires, designed to assess both motivational profiles and cultural attachment, were administered in paper format. Each participant was given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires, which took approximately one hour. To minimize distractions and ensure the accuracy of responses, participants were asked to complete the questionnaires independently and without any external help. Incentives were provided to encourage full participation and accurate responses. Learners were informed that they would receive a bonus or extra credit for their involvement upon successful completion of both questionnaires. This incentive was presented as a reward for their time and effort, and it was made clear that the bonus would be contingent on completing the questionnaires thoroughly and honestly.

The language instructors were responsible for distributing and collecting the completed questionnaires at the end of the session. Afterward, the researchers reviewed the questionnaires to ensure that they were fully completed and that no data were missing. Only valid and complete responses were included in the analysis. This standardized

procedure ensured consistent data collection across all participating institutions, providing a clear and supportive framework for participant engagement. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and informed consent was obtained from all learners prior to their participation in the study.

3.4. Data analysis

The data analysis for this study aimed to examine the motivational profiles of EFL learners and their cultural attachment, as well as to explore the relationships between various components of the two constructs. Several statistical techniques were employed to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to provide an overview of the participants' motivational profiles and cultural attachment. This included the calculation of means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each component of the two questionnaires. The descriptive statistics provided a general understanding of the central tendencies and variability of the responses across all participants. These measures allowed the researchers to identify trends and patterns in both the motivational factors and the participants' cultural attachment, helping to better understand how these dimensions manifested in the sample.

To explore any significant differences between various subgroups within the sample, the researchers employed inferential statistical tests, such as t-tests and ANOVAs, to assess the impact of demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, language proficiency) on motivational and cultural attachment factors. To explore the relationships between motivational profiles and cultural attachment, researchers performed a correlational analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficients. They examined significant correlations between components like the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, linguistic self-confidence, motivational intensity, and attitudes toward learning English, alongside cultural attachment components such as religious, Iranian, western, cultural, and artistic attachment. The analysis identified both positive and negative correlations, aiming to understand how motivational dispositions related to learners' attachment to different cultural aspects, and revealed patterns such as whether stronger cultural attachment correlates with higher motivation levels or specific motivational traits. The reliability of the questionnaires was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha before proceeding with further analyses. This analysis assessed the internal consistency of items within each questionnaire section, ensuring the scales accurately measured the intended concepts. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 for the overall questionnaire indicated excellent reliability, confirming the trustworthiness of the data for subsequent analyses.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics for both questionnaires are provided below. Several correlations were run to investigate the relationship between motivational state and cultural attachment component. Also, to investigate the difference between boys and girls, some independent sample t-tests were run. The results are provided in the following tables.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for motivational state questionnaire

Components	N	Whole M	SD	Boys M	SD	Girls M	SD
Ideal self	200	4.12	1.03	3.84	1.01	4.38	1.05
Ought to self	200	4.88	1.11	4.65	1.54	5.01	1.05
Linguistics self confidence	200	3.98	1.56	3.79	1.15	4.14	1.15
Motivational intensity	200	4.14	1.10	4.05	1.11	4.20	1.13
English anxiety	200	4.00	1.00	3.89	1.36	4.15	1.16
Attitudes to learning English	200	4.42	1.12	4.36	1.18	4.75	1.32

Across all components, girls consistently scored higher than boys, particularly in their ideal and ought-to selves, attitudes toward learning English, and linguistic self-confidence. These results highlight gender differences in motivation and attitudes, with girls showing greater alignment with positive motivational constructs and slightly higher levels of anxiety. Overall, girls showed stronger alignment with their ideal and ought-to selves, greater linguistic self-confidence, higher motivational intensity, and more positive attitudes toward learning English compared to boys. However, girls also reported slightly higher levels of anxiety. Boys exhibited lower scores across most components, suggesting less intensity and alignment with motivational constructs. These findings indicate notable gender differences in both the motivational and emotional dimensions of English learning. To investigate the difference on motivational profile based on the gender independent sample t-test was run. The results are provided in the following table.

Table 2

Independent Sample T-Test of Motivational Profile

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
comprehension	Equal variances assumed	.203	.589	-.156	199	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-.178	198.325	.000

The t-test results indicated a statistically significant difference in the motivational profiles of boys and girls, with a p-value less than 0.01. This finding underscores a meaningful distinction in how motivation manifests between the two groups, suggesting that gender plays a critical role in shaping learners' motivational dynamics. Descriptive statistics regarding participants' cultural attachment is provided in the following table.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Cultural Attachment

Components	N	Whole M	SD	Boys M	SD	Girls M	SD
Religious attachment	200	2.48	1.05	2.22	1.11	2.64	1.16
Western attachment	200	2.88	1.24	3.01	1.46	2.65	1.15
Iranian attachment	200	3.01	1.31	2.89	1.17	3.14	1.03
Cultural attachment	200	2.65	1.17	2.33	1.22	2.88	1.24
Artistic attachment	200	3.01	1.24	2.89	1.44	3.23	1.23

The results reveal differences in attachment across various dimensions. Girls showed stronger attachment to religious, Iranian, cultural, and artistic aspects compared to boys. Conversely, boys demonstrated a slightly higher attachment to Western influences than girls. These findings highlight distinct patterns of cultural and personal alignment between genders, with girls tending toward more traditional and artistic connections, while boys leaned slightly more toward Western influences. The highest means in the cultural attachment scale were related to Iranian attachment and artistic attachment. Independent sample t-test was used to investigate the difference between boys and girls. The results are provided below.

Table 4*Independent Sample T-Test for Cultural Attachment*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
comprehension	Equal variances assumed	.189	.335	-.145	199	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-.168	198.452	.000

As indicated, there was a statistically significant difference between boys and girls in their cultural attachment ($p < 0.01$). Boys exhibited higher attachment to Western influences, while girls demonstrated stronger connections across all other cultural dimensions, including religious, Iranian, cultural, and artistic aspects. This suggests that boys are relatively more oriented toward Western cultural elements, whereas girls maintain stronger ties to traditional and artistic domains. To investigate the relationship between components of the two questionnaires, several correlations were run. The results are provided in the following table.

Table 5*Correlation between Ideal Self and Cultural Attachment*

	Religious attachment	Western attachment	Iranian attachment	Cultural attachment	Artistic attachment
Ideal self	0.489**	0.786**	0.514**	0.523**	0.713**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The findings indicate that the ideal self has a relatively strong relationship with Western attachment and artistic attachment, suggesting a closer alignment with these cultural dimensions. However, its relationship with other components of the cultural attachment scale, such as religious, Iranian, and broader cultural attachment, appears to be relatively weak. This highlights a selective influence of certain cultural aspects on individuals' ideal self-concept.

Table 6*Correlation between Ought to Self and Cultural Attachment*

	Religious attachment	Western attachment	Iranian attachment	Cultural attachment	Artistic attachment
Ought to self	0.456**	0.712**	0.623**	0.662**	0.654**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The results reveal a strong and significant relationship between the ought self and Western attachment, indicating a notable alignment between external obligations and Western cultural influences. Additionally, the relationship between the ought self and Iranian attachment, cultural attachment, and artistic attachment was acceptable and substantial, suggesting that the ought self is influenced by a broader range of cultural dimensions beyond just Western elements.

Table 7*Correlation between Linguistics Self-Confidence and Cultural Attachment*

	Religious attachment	Western attachment	Iranian attachment	Cultural attachment	Artistic attachment
Linguistics self-confidence	0.487**	0.548**	0.555**	0.598**	0.489**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The results indicate that linguistic self-confidence does not have a strong relationship with the components of cultural attachment. Among these, the strongest, though still modest, relationship was with general cultural attachment, suggesting a limited connection between learners' confidence in their linguistic abilities and their cultural alignments.

Table 8*Correlation between Motivational Intensity and Cultural Attachment*

	Religious attachment	Western attachment	Iranian attachment	Cultural attachment	Artistic attachment
Motivational intensity	0.568**	0.523**	0.478**	0.421**	0.520**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The findings suggest that motivational intensity does not have a strong correlation with any component of cultural attachment. The highest, though modest, correlation was observed with religious attachment, indicating that motivation to learn may be influenced slightly by religious factors but not strongly tied to cultural dimensions overall.

Table 9*Correlation between English Anxiety and Cultural Attachment*

	Religious attachment	Western attachment	Iranian attachment	Cultural attachment	Artistic attachment
English anxiety	0.496**	0.612**	0.541**	0.589**	0.549**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The results show that, like motivational intensity, English anxiety does not exhibit a significant relationship with any component of cultural attachment. The highest, albeit weak, correlation was with Western attachment, suggesting a minimal connection between anxiety in English learning and cultural dimensions.

Table 10*Correlation between Attitudes to Learning English and Cultural Attachment*

	Religious attachment	Western attachment	Iranian attachment	Cultural attachment	Artistic attachment
Attitudes to learning English	0.564**	0.756**	0.623**	0.487**	0.723**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The results revealed that attitudes toward learning English were strongly correlated with both Iranian attachment and artistic attachment, suggesting a deeper connection between these cultural dimensions and learners' perceptions of English. However, the correlations with other components of cultural attachment were relatively weak, indicating that these cultural factors have a more limited influence on attitudes toward English learning.

5. Discussion

This study explored the relationships between various motivational, emotional, and cultural components in English learning among a sample of 200 learners. The results revealed significant gender differences in motivational profiles, with girls showing stronger alignment with ideal and ought-to selves, as well as higher levels of linguistic self-confidence and more positive attitudes toward learning English. Boys, on the other hand, exhibited slightly higher attachment to Western cultural influences, while girls showed stronger attachments to traditional, Iranian, and artistic dimensions. In terms of cultural attachment, the ideal self was strongly related to Western and artistic attachments, while its connection to other cultural components was weaker. Similarly, the ought self-demonstrated a strong relationship with Western attachment, as well as moderate relationships with Iranian, cultural, and artistic attachments. Linguistic self-confidence showed minimal correlation with cultural attachment, with the strongest link being to general cultural attachment. Motivational intensity was weakly correlated with cultural components, with religious attachment showing the highest correlation. English anxiety, like motivational intensity, exhibited no strong relationships with cultural attachment, though it was weakly correlated with Western attachment. Finally, attitudes toward learning English were strongly related to both Iranian and artistic attachments, but only weakly correlated with other cultural dimensions.

Participants demonstrated the highest mean scores in the Ought-to-self section, suggesting a strong perceived obligation or expectation to learn English. This may indicate that learners view English proficiency as beneficial for both social and economic advancement. Their positive attitudes towards English language learning are further supported by their mean scores on the attitudes scale. Additionally, their Ideal-self scores suggest an inclination towards living in an English-speaking country. Regarding the cultural attachment, the participants had the highest means on the Iranian and Artistic attachment. This may seem quite contradictory at first but it is not so. This results may show that Iranian students respect their own culture but they are open to books, medias and other stuff which have entered into their social and cultural life. Many Iranian students follow English movies and TV series and read their book. In the age of globalization, this may seem quite ordinary.

Based on the analysis, it was found that female language learners preferred more to read English books, listen to English music, watch English movies and enjoy them more. The male learners also demonstrated these characteristics while they were also inclined toward foreign clothing, hair style, marriage and etc. Regarding the religious attachment, it was the female group showed more religious attachment. Females were more interested to perform the religious activities than the male group. Independent sample t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between male and female students in terms of their motivational profiles and cultural attachment. Female learners seemed to be more motivated and attached to their own culture. Several correlations were run to investigate how cultural attachment can affect learners' abilities. Ideal-self showed close relationships with western attachment and artistic attachment. This can be explained by the fact that when learners consider their Ideal self like someone in the foreign culture, they will be inclined to learn their life style and culture including books, media, movies, etc. This fact may apply to the relationship between learners' Ought-to-self and their cultural attachment. Learners' attitudes to learn English was also strongly related to western and artistic attachments. This finding was something

expected as when one holds a positive attitude toward a culture, it can be argued that he or she is interested in its life style, movies, medias, etc.

The researchers were not able to find close relationships between linguistics self-confidence, motivational intensity and English anxiety. These findings may be explained based on the fact that these three components in the motivational state behavior are mostly related to learners' classroom behavior which is situated and controlled. It refers to learners' day to day interaction with English which cannot be directly related to cultural factors. The findings indicated that all participants exhibited high levels of motivation to learn English. This was evident in their consistent engagement with extra English courses, active participation in the diary study, expressed desire for increased social interaction with foreigners, and self-reported comfort in speaking English with friends and acquaintances.

The results of this study highlight important insights into the relationships between motivational factors, cultural attachments, and emotional responses in English language learning, with notable gender differences. The findings suggest that girls generally have stronger connections to their ideal self, ought-to self, and cultural dimensions, particularly Iranian and artistic attachments, while boys show a higher attachment to Western influences. These results align with previous studies emphasizing the role of cultural identity in language learning (Kramsch, 1993; Dörnyei, 2009). The greater attachment to cultural and artistic aspects among girls could reflect a more intrinsic motivation toward language learning, as girls often demonstrate higher emotional engagement and a stronger connection to personal identity in educational settings (Liu & Zhang, 2014). Conversely, boys' higher attachment to Western influences might reflect the global dominance of English in modern media and technology, which has been shown to shape learner attitudes and perceptions (Liu, 2017).

The significant gender differences found in this study regarding motivational profiles, with girls showing stronger ideal and ought-to self-concepts, are consistent with previous research. Studies have indicated that girls tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation and effort in language learning (Pae, 2008), possibly due to socialization patterns that emphasize emotional and relational dimensions of education (Liu & Zhang, 2014). The difference in motivational intensity, linguistic self-confidence, and attitudes toward learning English, with girls outperforming boys, suggests that gender may influence how learners internalize and express their motivations in relation to language learning. Interestingly, the study found that boys showed higher attachment to Western influences, which could be interpreted through the lens of globalization and the increasing dominance of Western culture in media, technology, and education (Phillipson, 2009). This finding complements studies that have pointed out the appeal of Western culture and its perceived association with economic success and modernity, especially among male learners (Liu, 2017).

The study's results also suggest that motivational intensity and English anxiety did not correlate strongly with cultural attachment components, which is consistent with previous work highlighting the complex and sometimes indirect relationship between cultural identity and language learning anxiety (Peng, 2023). While some studies have found that learners' cultural identity can mitigate language learning anxiety (O'Reilly&García-Castro, 2022), the present study's findings suggest that motivational intensity and anxiety may be influenced by factors outside of cultural attachment, such as personal learning experiences and the perceived utility of the language. However, the strong relationship between attitudes toward learning English and both Iranian and artistic attachments indicates that learners' perceptions of English may be shaped significantly by their cultural values and identities. This is in line with the theory of language and identity proposed by Norton (2000), which posits that learners' investment in language learning is deeply tied to their cultural and social identities. In this case, the positive attitudes toward English among those with strong Iranian and artistic attachments may suggest that learners see English not just as a tool for communication, but as a way to engage with broader cultural and artistic expressions, which could foster greater intrinsic motivation.

The study revealed the significant impact of Western cultural influence on Iranian society at the turn of the 20th century. This influx of new cultural codes clashed with traditional Iranian culture, leading to ongoing social and political conflicts (Shahramnia&Tadayon, 2012). Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune (1996, cited in Lessard Clouston, 1997) emphasize the importance of explicit culture teaching in language classrooms, despite its inherent

presence within the language itself. Explicit instruction helps learners develop intercultural competence, fostering acceptance, flexibility, and tolerance towards diverse cultural practices. This attitudinal shift, expressed through language use, can significantly impact learners' motivation to learn English.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study have important theoretical and practical implications for both second language acquisition research and language teaching practices. Theoretically, this study expands the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) by integrating the concept of cultural attachment, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural identity influences language learning motivation. By examining the interplay between religious, national, Western, and artistic attachments, this study contributes to the broader discussion on the sociocultural dimensions of motivation, particularly in non-Western contexts. Practically, the results of this study can inform educators and policymakers about the diverse motivational factors influencing Iranian EFL learners, enabling them to develop more culturally responsive teaching strategies (Farangi, & Naami, (2024). For instance, understanding the role of cultural attachment can help teachers design curricula that balance global perspectives with local cultural values, making language learning more engaging and personally relevant for students. Furthermore, by shedding light on gender differences in motivational profiles, this research provides valuable insights into how educators can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments that address the distinct needs of male and female learners. Ultimately, this study offers a deeper understanding of the complex factors shaping language learning motivation, paving the way for more effective pedagogical approaches that foster long-term engagement and success in language acquisition.

In terms of generalizability, while this study focuses on Iranian EFL learners, its findings have broader implications for other national and international contexts where cultural identity and attachment play a significant role in shaping language learning motivation. Many countries with strong cultural and religious identities, such as those in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia, may exhibit similar motivational patterns among learners. Additionally, in multicultural and immigrant contexts, such as in Western countries, where learners navigate multiple cultural influences, the interplay between cultural attachment and motivation can provide insights into how identity negotiation affects language learning. Thus, the study's findings contribute to a more global understanding of L2 motivation, offering valuable perspectives for researchers, educators, and policymakers across diverse linguistic and cultural landscapes.

In conclusion, the results of this study underscore the significance of cultural identity in shaping learners' motivation and emotional responses to English language learning, with gender differences playing a prominent role. The findings support previous research that highlights the connection between cultural attachment and language learning, while also revealing the complexity of these relationships. The study provides valuable implications for educators, suggesting that understanding learners' cultural backgrounds and identities can help tailor more effective and engaging language learning experiences.

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