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Cross-Cultural Perspectives on ChatGPT Acceptance: A Mixed-Methods Study Comparing Iranian EFL Learners and International Students in the UK

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the acceptance of ChatGPT as a language learning tool among 536 learners, including international English language learners in the UK (N = 414) and Iranian EFL learners (N = 122), highlighting cross-cultural differences in technology adoption. Using a mixed-methods approach guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which also incorporated a deeper exploration of cultural and contextual factors, this study examined perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitudes, behavioral intention, actual usage, perceived enjoyment, facilitating conditions, and technological complexity. Quantitative surveys revealed that Iranian EFL learners exhibit higher engagement and acceptance of ChatGPT, potentially driven by more favorable facilitating conditions and intrinsic motivation observed in that group. Qualitative interviews further emphasized cultural and educational influences, with Iranian EFL learners valuing accessibility and consistent feedback, while UK international learners stressed creative applications and contextual accuracy. The findings underscore the importance of considering the context-dependent nature of technology acceptance and adapting AI-powered tools to diverse learner needs and specific educational environments, rather than assuming universal benefits. These results offer practical implications for educators and developers aiming to integrate such technologies into language education.

Keywords: AI, ChatGPT, TAM, language learning, cross-cultural, educational technology

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1. Introduction

The rapid incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into education fundamentally reshapes language learning paradigms(Dennehy et al., 2022). AI-powered tools, such as ChatGPT, have introduced personalized and interactive learning experiences, offering features like question-answering, feedback provision, and conversational practices (Li et al., 2023; Shiri, 2023). These advancements have the potential to enhance educational resources, minimize reliance on human intervention, and foster deeper student engagement (Huang et al., 2021). Tools such as ChatGPT align closely with modern pedagogical goals by delivering tailored feedback and creating adaptive learning environments (AbuSahyon, 2023; Javaid et al., 2023; Koraishi, 2023; Xiao & Zhi, 2023).

Studies on technology acceptance in language learning (Copeland & Franzese, 2021; Nistor et al., 2019; Salloum et al., 2019) and AI chatbots in education (Fryer et al., 2019; Haristiani, 2019; Kim et al., 2023; Lin & Chang, 2020; Ragheb et al., 2022) are prevalent. Despite its potential, the adoption of ChatGPT and similar AI technologies in language education is influenced by cultural, educational, and contextual factors. Studies indicate that perceptions of ease of use and usefulness significantly shape learners' acceptance of AI tools (Davis, 1986; Grassini et al., 2024).

While the foundational Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) offers predictive power regarding AI tool adoption, its universal applicability is questionable across culturally and educationally diverse settings. Research on ChatGPT acceptance has predominantly focused on specific, high-resource regions (e.g., Norway, China, Spain), leading to a dearth of comparative studies that rigorously analyze how contextual factors mediate core TAM constructs, particularly in contrast to resource-constrained or collectivist settings. A study by Grassini et al. (2024) found that high performance expectancy drives ChatGPT adoption in Norway, indicating its utility in resource-rich educational systems. However, a national context like Iran, characterized by distinct educational traditions and limited access to native-speaker interaction and certain technological resources, may interpret 'usefulness' and 'facilitating conditions' differently. Specifically, there is limited understanding of how learners in this Middle Eastern context (Iranian EFL learners) compare to international students in a highly individualistic, resource-rich Western context (UK international learners) regarding their perceptions of usefulness, enjoyment, and support structures.

However, cultural dimensions often play a pivotal role in shaping these perceptions. Previous studies (Nistor et al., 2012; Alsheddi et al., 2020) highlighted how individualistic and collectivist cultural orientations can influence learning preferences. Drawing on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, learners from individualistic societies like the UK may prioritize self-directed learning and individual achievement with technology, whereas those from collectivist cultures like Iran emphasize social feedback and community support. According to Hofstede's theory, the UK's culture is highly individualistic while Iran's is collectivistic, suggesting UK learners approach technologies through independent exploration, while Iranian learners rely more on community guidance (Hofstede, 2011). Understanding these perspectives is critical for tailoring AI integration strategies to accommodate diverse educational needs and cultural influences. A justification for selecting these contexts—the UK, representing a Western nation with an established digital education infrastructure, and Iran, representing a Middle Eastern developing nation with distinct educational traditions—allows for nuanced comparative analysis.

Prior studies have demonstrated the role of technology acceptance models (TAM) in predicting students' attitudes and intentions toward AI tools in education. Research by Chen et al. (2020) and Belda-Medina and Calvo-Ferrer (2022) has shown that perceived usefulness and ease of use are significant predictors of behavioral intention, often outweighing other factors. Studies have demonstrated that cultural contexts can significantly affect students' acceptance and integration of technology into their learning processes (Wang et al., 2023).Research on ChatGPT adoption has primarily focused on specific regions and learner groups, with a limited exploration of cross-cultural dynamics. Belda-Medina and Calvo-Ferrer (2022) found that undergraduates in Spain and Poland viewed

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conversationa, particularlyl AI its positively for ease of use and attitude, although behavioral intention was notable moderate, with genfferences noted. Liu and Ma (2023) showed that perceived usefulness influences attitudes and increases ChatGPT use among Chinese EFL learners. Similarly, Grassini et al. (2024) highlighted that performance expectancy and habits significantly drove ChatGPT adoption among Norwegian students, with academic performance enhancement encouraging frequent use. Despite these findings, addressing cultural differences in the adoption patterns of technology using TAM in the context of Iranian EFL learners and their comparison with UK international learners remains sparse.

The primary objectives of this research are twofold:

To quantitatively determine the statistically significant differences in the adoption patterns of ChatGPT (across TAM dimensions including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes, behavioral intention, actual usage, perceived enjoyment, facilitating conditions, and technological complexity) between Iranian EFL learners and international students learning English in the UK.

To qualitatively explore and explain the cross-cultural nuances in perceptions, motivations, and contextual factors that shape the adoption of ChatGPT, thereby providing a deeper, triangulated understanding of the quantitative findings.The following research questions guided this study:

1- Is there a statistically significant difference between UK and Iranian EFL learners in their perceptions and experiences of ChatGPT across TAM dimensions, including perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitudes, behavioral intention, actual usage, perceived enjoyment, facilitating conditions, and technological complexity?

2- What are the perspectives of the UK and Iranian learners on the benefits and limitations of ChatGPT in language learning?

Literature Review

ChatGPT in Language Learning

ChatGPT offers personalized feedback, which is crucial for enhancing writing and language skills (AbuSahyon, 2023; Amin, 2023), and promotes active participation and self-directed learning (AbuSahyon, 2023; Betal, 2023). It generates engaging materials for vocabulary development and skill enhancement (Wei, 2023; Fan, 2023), aligning with the findings that AI facilitates personalized and interactive learning (Rusmiyanto et al., 2023). The adoption of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in language education is driven by their adaptive and personalized learning capabilities (Kohnke, et al; 2023 Li, 2024; Wong, 2024). ChatGPT features create a dynamic, interactive environment that boosts motivation and confidence (Athanassopoulos, 2023; Firat, 2023). However, while these studies highlight potential benefits, many focus on general capabilities without deeply analyzing how specific features are perceived or utilized across different learner populations, particularly when accounting for cultural and contextual variances. Cultural factors also affect learner interaction (Prasetya, 2023; Widianingtyas, 2023). Yet the mechanisms through which culture shapes these interactions often remain underexplored in the existing literature.

Research has explored the role of ChatGPT in developing writing skills. Doctoral students benefit throughout the writing process despite concerns about limitations and academic integrity (Zou & Huang, 2023). Harunasari (2023) emphasized the need for structured policies to optimize ChatGPT in EFL writing programmes. Studies have shown its ability to enhance formal writing skills and foster motivation despite challenges in tone and adaptability (Teng, 2024;

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Punar Özçelik & Yangın Ekşi, 2024). These studies confirm the utility of ChatGPT in academic writing; however, they often do not delve into how learners from different educational backgrounds or those with varying levels of technological access and literacy might experience these benefits or challenges differently.

However, the use of ChatGPT is limited by the lack of authentic human interaction, potential biases (Betal, 2023), and the risk of undermining critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Betal, 2023). Broader challenges include cultural sensitivity (Al-Khresheh, 2024), balancing traditional and technological methods (Kostka & Toncelli, 2023), reduced creativity (Ali et al., 2023), and ethical concerns (Cotton et al., 2024; Farr, 2024; Liu et al., 2024). While these limitations are acknowledged, there is a significant gap in understanding the nuanced interplay between these challenges and specific cultural contexts. For example, what constitutes "cultural sensitivity" for an AI tool can vary dramatically between societies, and this requires more than a cursory mention. Gaps remain in understanding ChatGPT's acceptance, particularly regarding the cultural context and familiarity with instructional technologies (Al-Khresheh, 2024; Strzelecki, 2023). Addressing these challenges is essential for maximizing the potential of ChatGPT and similar AI tools in language learning. This study aims to contribute to filling this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of two distinct cultural settings, thereby providing a more detailed understanding of how cultural context specifically impacts the acceptance and use of ChatGPT.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Davis (1986), is a key framework for understanding technology adoption. Davis suggested that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) in TAM are crucial in shaping a user's attitude towards technology, influencing their intention to use it and actual adoption behavior. Perceived usefulness relates to how technology enhances performance (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020), whereas perceived ease of use concerns the effort required for its adoption (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

In educational settings, TAM helps to understand instructors' technology adoption, despite mandates (Teo, 2011). Research on e-learning platforms shows that perceived ease of use and usefulness significantly influence students' adoption intentions (Granić & Marangunić, 2019). TAM extensions include social influence and facilitating conditions, with studies indicating that these positively impact behavioral intentions (Khanchel, 2023). E-learning research underscores the role of social influence in adoption decisions. Extended models, such as UTAUT, add constructs to better understand technology acceptance.

Recent studies have applied TAM to AI tools. Zou et al. (2023) reported a high acceptance of AI speech evaluation tools among Chinese EFL students, improving their speaking skills and confidence. Grassini et al. (2024) found that behavioral intention predicted ChatGPT usage among Norwegian students, with performance expectancy crucial. Hwang, Lee, and Lee (2025) extended the TAM to explore EFL learners' acceptance, highlighting the significance of anxiety and self-efficacy in L2 contexts [Chen, 2024]. Furthermore, Ma (2024) examined the acceptance of generative AI among EFL postgraduate students, emphasizing that usefulness and enjoyment are critical predictors. However, cultural and geographic factors in technology adoption are underexplored. For example, there is a limited understanding of AI tool acceptance among Iranian EFL learners, where cultural context, gender, and prior AI experience may be relevant (Porto et al., 2019; Tandon et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2024). Previous research has shown that gender, context, and experience significantly influence AI adoption (Ameen et al., 2021; Bodani et al., 2023; Du & Gao, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023), emphasizing the need for further exploration in these areas. While TAM has been widely validated, its original formulation does not account for cultural variations or socio-technical context. This study integrates Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions to address cultural factors. This dimension describes how individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic cultures like the UK, personal achievement is emphasized, and learners adopt technology for personal efficiency. In collectivist cultures like Iran, group harmony is valued, and learners are

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influenced by social norms and how technology enables collaborative learning. Thus, the 'social influence' construct in extended TAM models may be more significant in collectivist contexts. (Hofstede, 2011)

Context-based AI acceptance factors

Cultural differences, gender, emotions, and geographic location significantly influenced attitudes toward AI. Research shows that men generally have more favorable attitudes toward AI than women owing to different exposure levels (Albarrán et al., 2021; Sindermann et al., 2022). Emotional responses to AI significantly affect acceptance. Although AI discussions often evoke strong reactions, Wang et al. (2022) found a link between knowledge and attitudes, suggesting that emotions alone do not determine acceptance. In educational settings, students' attitudes towards AI affect their effectiveness (Teng et al., 2022), with perceived usefulness, ease of use, and cultural relevance vital for fostering positive attitudes.

Cultural elements significantly influence individuals' perceptions and the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT. Cultural differences affect technology acceptance, including perceived usefulness and ease of use (Jacobs-Basadien et al., 2022). Individuals from individualistic cultures are more likely to adopt innovative technologies independently, while students from collectivist cultures, such as Iran, may prioritize social influences and community feedback (Lee et al., 2013; Jacobs-Basadien et al., 2022; Alshare et al., 2011). Integrating cultural dimensions into the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and extending the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model can better explain technology acceptance across cultures. What is considered useful can be culturally shaped. In an individualistic, low-context culture, usefulness might be tied to task efficiency and individual goal achievement. In a collectivist, high-context culture, usefulness might also encompass how well the tool supports group learning or aligns with social expectations (Nistor et al., 2012). Understanding the cultural background and prior experiences of UK international and Iranian EFL students is crucial for effectively integrating AI tools into the educational context.

Method

Design

This study utilized a Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods design(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), combining quantitative and qualitative methods, to understand EFL learners' acceptance of ChatGPT for learning English. A survey (quantitative phase) identified overall patterns and, these quantitative results subsequently informed the selection of participants (purposive sampling). In contrast, interviews (qualitative phase) provided insights into the personal motivations and cultural nuances influencing the acceptance of English language learners in Iran and the UK. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data aimed to provide a more comprehensive and triangulated understanding of the phenomenon by having qualitative data explain the quantitative differences observed.

Participants

Convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Dorney, 2007) were used to gather diverse and representative samples. Convenience sampling targeted individuals who were readily accessible and enrolled in English language courses or programs at various Iranian and UK language schools. Snowball sampling involved initial participants inviting peers from different schools to participate in both contexts. The study included two groups of participants: UK international students learning English recruited by one of the researchers, who served as an English language teacher at several UK international schools, and Iranian EFL students recruited by the second researcher in Iranian language schools and universities. Recruitment occurred through social networks, online platforms, and language-learning centers. A total of 536 English learners (414 UK international learners and 122 Iranian EFL learners) participated in this study and completed an online questionnaire. A subset of participants voluntarily participated in the online semi-structured interviews. Voluntary participation was ensured and informed consent was obtained by providing

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participants with an opening statement at the start of the survey, which included information about the study's purpose, their right to participate in the survey or follow-up interviews, and their confidentiality (anonymous information sharing in the study).

Instruments

Online survey

This study employed a two-stage data-collection method: a quantitative online survey and semi-structured qualitative interviews. An online survey (Appendix A) designed on Google Forms was a quantitative data collection tool open to demographic questions that employed a nominal scale to gather data on participants' gender, age, field of study, English proficiency level, academic degree, frequency of ChatGPT use, and prior experience with language-learning technology. Using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5), the second part included eight TAM constructs measuring participants' **PEU (five items), perceived usefulness PU (five items), attitude (A, five items), behavioral/continuance intention (BI, five items), actual use** (AU, five items), perceived enjoyment (PE, three items), facilitating conditions (FC, eight items), and technological complexity (TC, five items) of ChatGPT for English learning. The structure and core constructs of the TAM survey were adapted and refined from multiple validated previous TAM studies [e.g., Huang et al., 2020; Liu & Ma, 2023]. Cronbach's Alpha values for all TAM constructs exceeded 0.84, indicating excellent internal consistency. The total reliability of the scale across items was exceptionally high ($\alpha = 0.92$), confirming strong scale reliability.

Semi-structured interviews

A subset of participants who volunteered for further exploration provided their email addresses at the end of the survey. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants with varied academic backgrounds and degrees of ChatGPT use based on their quantitative survey scores (e.g., ensuring representation across high and low reported usage levels within each cultural group). WhatsApp voice chat was used to conduct semi-structured interviews to ensure convenience and accessibility for participants in Iran. Each interview lasted 10–20 minutes and was recorded using screen-recording technology with the participants' awareness of subsequent analysis. The questions were open-ended, designed to elicit detailed narratives about participants' experiences with ChatGPT, their perceptions of its benefits and drawbacks, the influence of their cultural and educational backgrounds, and factors facilitating or hindering its use. UK participants shared their responses via email. Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) investigated participants' experiences with ChatGPT for learning English. The main focus was their evaluation of their advantages and disadvantages, the factors influencing their utilization, and any challenges encountered.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection proceeded sequentially, aligning with the QUANT \rightarrow QUAL design. The first stage involved disseminating the online survey instrument via institutional contacts, social media, and language centers in both the UK and Iranian contexts, primarily employing convenience and snowball sampling. This stage aimed to gather large-scale quantitative data on technology acceptance constructs. Ethical compliance was maintained throughout the distribution process via a required initial informed consent statement. The second stage involved qualitative data collection. Participants who indicated willingness to participate in follow-up interviews and provided contact details were contacted. Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees whose quantitative scores could provide explanatory depth to the observed statistical patterns. Interviews were conducted remotely (WhatsApp for Iranian participants, email responses for UK participants) to ensure accessibility across geographical locations.

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Data Analysis

Quantitative Results

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were calculated to summarize participant demographics and responses to the TAM constructs. Inferential statistics, such as independent samples t-tests or Mann-Whitney U tests (depending on data distribution), were planned to compare the mean scores on TAM dimensions between the UK and Iranian learner groups. Prior to comparative analyses, assumptions of normality were tested using skewness and kurtosis ratios. Following the recommended threshold for large samples, ratios outside the \pm 1.96 range were deemed indicative of a severe violation of normality.

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, skewness, and kurtosis ratio values for the eight components of the TAM questionnaire in the Iranian and UK context.

Table 1: ***Descriptive Statistics and Skewness and Kurtosis Ratio Values for the Eight Components of the TAM Questionnaire in the Iranian and UK Contexts***

	N	Mean	SD	Var	Skewness			Kurtosis		
					Statistic	Std. Error	Skewness Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Ratio
UK Perceived Ease of Use	414	3.75	.90	.819	-.820	.120	-6.83	.492	.239	2.06
UK Perceived Usefulness	414	3.18	.97	.94	-.154	.120	-1.28	-.392	.239	-1.64
UK Attitude	414	3.01	1.05	1.10	-.039	.120	-0.33	-.557	.239	-2.33
UK Behavioral/Continuance Intention	414	2.89	1.08	1.17	.023	.120	0.19	-.708	.239	-2.96
UK Actual Use	414	2.67	1.12	1.27	.182	.120	1.52	-.711	.239	-2.97
UK Perceived Enjoyment	414	2.69	1.09	1.20	.156	.120	1.3	-.572	.239	-2.39
UK Facilitating Conditions	414	2.99	.87	.76	-.048	.120	-0.4	.120	.239	0.5
UK Technological Complexity	414	2.48	1.03	1.07	.433	.120	3.61	-.306	.239	-1.28
IR Perceived Ease of Use	120	3.79	1.11	1.23	-.909	.221	-4.11	-.119	.438	-0.27
IR Perceived Usefulness	120	3.78	1.06	1.12	-.932	.221	-4.22	.204	.438	0.47
IR Attitude	120	3.65	1.07	1.15	-.730	.221	-3.3	-.096	.438	-0.22
IR Behavioral/Continuance Intention	120	3.64	1.07	1.15	-.616	.221	-2.79	-.489	.438	-1.12
IR Actual Use	120	3.52	1.20	1.45	-.664	.221	-3	-.631	.438	-1.44
IR Perceived Enjoyment	120	3.53	1.15	1.33	-.558	.221	-2.52	-.683	.438	-1.56

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IR Facilitating Conditions	120	3.25	.98	.967	-.103	.221	-0.47	-.603	.438	-1.38
IR Technological Complexity	120	2.29	.98	.970	.604	.221	2.73	.219	.438	0.5

As demonstrated in the above table, almost all the skewness and kurtosis ratio values for either the Iranian or UK datasets, or both, are out of the range of +/-1.96, which indicates that the datasets violate the normality assumption. The only exception is the facilitating conditions component, which yielded skewness and kurtosis ratio values within the range of +/-1.96 for both the Iranian and UK datasets. Accordingly, an independent samples t-test was used to uncover any statistically significant differences in facilitating conditions between the UK and Iranian English Language Learners. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was performed for the remaining seven components. Table 2 displays the independent samples t-test results for the facilitating conditions between UK and Iranian English Language Learners. **Due to the widespread non-normality across the remaining seven dimensions, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was performed for the remaining seven components, offering a robust comparison of location parameters that does not rely on distributional assumptions.**

Table 2: ***Independent Samples T-Test for the Facilitating Conditions between UK and Iranian English Language Learners***

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		**t-test for Equality of Means**						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Both Facilitating Conditions	Equal variances assumed	5.39	.021	-2.79	531	.005	-.26	.09	-.44	-.07
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.61	177.31	.010	-.26	.09	-.45	-.06

With F (5.39) and *p*=.021, it can be inferred that the homogeneity of the variances was not met. Thus, with t (-.261) and *p*=.010, it can be concluded that the mean scores of the UK and Iranian English Learners in terms of facilitating conditions are significantly different, with the Iranian learners outscoring their English counterparts (Iranian mean=3.25> 2.99=English learners' mean).

Table 3 demonstrates the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for the remaining components between UK and Iranian English Language Learners.

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Table 3: ***Mann-Whitney U Test for the TAM Components between UK and Iranian English Language Learners***

Categories	Mann-Whitney U	Standardized Test Statistic	Sig.	Decision
Both Perceived Ease of Use	26890.000	1.428	.153	Retain the null hypothesis.
Both Perceived Usefulness	33816.000	6.095	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Both Attitude	33615.000	5.962	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Both Behavioral Intention	34421.500	6.505	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Both Actual Use	35031.000	6.923	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Both Perceived Enjoyment	35058.500	6.962	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Both Technological Complexity	22103.000	-1.811	.070	Retain the null hypothesis.

As indicated in the above table, the mean scores of UK and Iranian English Learners are significantly different in terms of Perceived Usefulness ($U = 33816$, $z = 6.09$, $p = .00<.001$), attitude ($U = 33615$, $z = 5.92$, $p = .00<.001$), Behavioral Intention ($U = 34421$, $z = 6.50$, $p = .00<.001$), Actual Use ($U = 35031$, $z = 6.92$, $p = .00<.001$), and Perceived Enjoyment ($U = 35058.5$, $z = 6.96$, $p = .00<.001$), with Iranian learners outperforming their UK counterparts in all these dimensions as Iranian learners have obtained higher means compared to UK students (See Table 1). However, the mean scores of UK and Iranian English Learners were not significantly different in terms of Perceived Ease of Use ($U = 26890$, $z = 1.48$, $p = .153>.05$) and Technological Complexity ($U = 22103$, $z = -1.81$, $p = .07>.05$).

The study revealed notable differences in UK and Iranian EFL Learners' perceptions and interactions with ChatGPT. Iranian EFL learners outperformed UK counterparts in Perceived Usefulness, Attitudes, Behavioral/Continuance Intention, Actual Use, Perceived Enjoyment, and Facilitating Conditions. These results suggest Iranian EFL learners find ChatGPT more beneficial, enjoy its use more, hold a more positive attitude, and are more inclined to continue using it than UK EFL learners. This indicates more substantial acceptance and engagement with ChatGPT among Iranian EFL learners.

However, no statistically significant differences were observed in perceived ease of use and technological complexity. This suggests UK and Iranian EFL learners experience similar comfort in using ChatGPT and do not find its complexity a considerable obstacle. These findings imply ChatGPT's interface and functionality are comparably accessible for both groups. The significant difference in Facilitating Conditions indicates Iranian EFL learners may have more favorable conditions or support systems enabling more straightforward and frequent use of ChatGPT than UK learners. This could mean Iranian learners have better access to resources, training, or encouragement to use ChatGPT, contributing to their higher engagement and positive perception of the tool.

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Qualitative Data

Comparative Findings

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to explore cross-cultural differences in the technology acceptance of ChatGPT. Qualitative data from the Semi- interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, following the rigorous six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). They were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This study highlights the shared benefits, distinct challenges, and contextual factors influencing adoption by synthesizing interview findings from both contexts. These insights aim to provide a nuanced understanding of how cultural and educational dynamics shape the perceptions of AI-powered language tools. Participants were asked about their experiences with ChatGPT in language learning, focusing on its benefits, limitations, and perceived role in their educational journeys. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns, ensuring a robust comparison of the findings across both groups. The primary coding and theme development were conducted by the lead researcher. The research assistant independently coded a subset of the transcripts (approximately 20%) and ensured the confirmability of the emergent themes. Methodological triangulation was achieved by integrating the quantitative findings from the survey with the qualitative findings from the focus group interviews. Specifically, the qualitative data were used to explain and elaborate upon the statistically significant cross-cultural differences (e.g., differences in Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Enjoyment, and Facilitating Conditions), moving beyond correlational patterns to explore cultural and contextual mechanisms. While full member checking was not feasible due to logistical constraints, key summary findings from the qualitative phase were shared with a few interview participants for feedback on resonance and accuracy, which provided an additional layer of validation. The following overarching themes emerged from thematic analysis of the data:

Accessibility and Convenience

Iranian and UK participants highlighted ChatGPT's accessibility as a significant advantage, although the specific benefits differed slightly between the two groups. Iranian learners frequently emphasized the tool's 24/7 availability, which enabled consistent practice even when live-language partners were unavailable. Participant 16 remarked, "While real language partners sleep and get busy, ChatGPT never does!" This accessibility was particularly appreciated for accommodating busy schedules, as Participant 27 explained, "It's there for me, whether I need a short chat or hours of practice." Additionally, Iranian participants valued how ChatGPT eliminated barriers, such as time zones and the availability of human partners. Similarly, learners in the UK praised the tool's flexibility in fitting their schedules, especially for self-directed studies. Participant 6 explained, 'One can have access to a tutor regardless of time and place.' At the same time, Participant 3 underscored its efficiency, stating, '"It saves me so much time because I do not need to search for materials'." These features make ChatGPT particularly useful for learners to balance their academic and personal commitments.

Engagement and Motivation

ChatGPT's interactive and scenario-based learning approach was highly engaged by participants in both groups. Iranian learners appreciated how the tool simulated real-life situations, making language practice more relevant and enjoyable. Participant 24 shared, "Pretending to be in a job interview or debate makes grammar practice exciting." At the same time, Participant 10 described the interaction as "fun to interact with it as if you're in a real conversation." This engaging nature helps learners connect language learning to practical, real-world contexts. Similarly, UK participants valued ChatGPT's ability to create immersive and interactive learning experiences. Participant 2 explained, 'I can ask it to simulate real-life scenarios, like ordering food at a restaurant or having a job interview.'

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Participant 5 highlighted the tool's supportive role: "It feels like having a patient teacher who is always there." The combination of interactivity and consistent support made ChatGPT an effective motivator for Iranian and UK learners.

Language Skill Enhancement

Participants across both groups identified ChatGPT's role in improving specific language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and phrasing. Iranian learners frequently mentioned how the tool provides targeted feedback to refine their written and spoken English skills. Participant 5 explained, "ChatGPT can look over my answers, point out spelling mistakes, and suggest better wording," Participant 11 added, "I've learned new words and better ways to phrase my sentences." For the UK learners, emphasis was placed on enhancing their grammar and writing style. Participant 6 noted, "It replaces my elementary structures with better-written phrases," while Participant 4 highlighted its utility for creative applications, stating, "It helps me practice writing dialogues and makes my text sound more natural." These features support both formal and conversational language development.

Feedback and Personalization

Both groups praised ChatGPT's ability to deliver immediate and personalized feedback despite some differences in their experiences. Iranian learners valued how feedback boosted their confidence and motivation. Participant 27 remarked, "ChatGPT is like having your personal language coach," and Participant 8 highlighted, "The corrections it gives are instant and precise, which keeps me motivated to improve." However, some Iranian participants expressed concerns about becoming overly dependent on the feedback. In the UK, learners similarly appreciated ChatGPT's tailored responses, with participant 1 stating, "When I structure my prompts well, it feels very customized to my needs." At the same time, UK learners noted limitations in the tool's contextual understanding. Participant 4 explained, "Sometimes, it does not understand the context or gives incorrect examples," pointing to areas where personalization could be improved.

Limitations of AI

Despite its benefits, the limitations of ChatGPT were a concern for the participants in both contexts. Iranian learners highlighted their inability to mimic natural conversational flow. Participant 8 observed, "It does not quite resemble how real conversations go back and forth," while Participant 33 pointed out, "It sometimes mislabels my responses, which is frustrating." These limitations are seen as barriers to the practice of authentic communication skills. The UK participants similarly raised issues with the tool's handling of nuanced contexts and cultural relevance. Participant 6 explained, "The collocations provided were not considered natural in any dictionaries." Participant 4 noted, "It oversimplifies complex grammar explanations, which isn't always helpful." These concerns underscore the need for further technological improvements to enhance the accuracy and conversational abilities of ChatGPT.

Ethical and Practical Concerns

Both Iranian and UK learners shared concerns about over-reliance and ethical misuse. The Iranian participants were worried that excessive feedback might discourage independent learning. Participant 17 cautioned, "Too much feedback may discourage self-learning," while Participant 21 raised ethical concerns, stating, "The potential to misuse it for creating fake content is worrying." UK participants also expressed fear of dependency, with Participant 6 admitting, "I feel like I am getting way too reliant on it." Additionally, verifying the ChatGPT outputs was considered a challenge. Participant 4 explained, "I need to double-check its outputs, which can sometimes be time-consuming." These issues emphasize the importance of fostering critical thinking and responsible use of AI in education.

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Role in Learning Ecosystem

Both groups agreed that ChatGPT serves as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for traditional teaching methods. Iranian Participant 21 explained, "It cannot replace traditional methods, but it complements them." Participant 6 noted, "It works best when combined with real-life practice and teaching." UK participants shared similar perspectives, with Participant 4 stating, "Practicing the language with ChatGPT should complement conventional lessons," and Participant 5 adding, "It's an excellent tool for extra practice but not a replacement for teachers." This highlights the tool's value as an adjunct to existing teaching strategies.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis of Iranian EFL learners and UK international students provides insights into ChatGPT as an AI-powered language learning tool. Both groups highlighted common benefits like accessibility, engagement, personalized feedback, and skill enhancement, while revealing differences shaped by cultural and educational contexts. Iranian learners emphasized the tool's availability for consistent practice, whereas UK learners valued its integration into self-directed study routines. Despite strengths, participants noted limitations in conversational authenticity, contextual understanding, and ethical concerns, underscoring the need for advancement and responsible use. ChatGPT is recognized as a supplementary tool that enhances, rather than replaces, traditional learning approaches. These findings contribute to understanding AI's potential in cross-cultural educational contexts, offering considerations for developers and educators aiming to harness such technologies effectively.

Discussion

This study, grounded in an extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and informed by intercultural frameworks such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011), reveals nuanced insights into ChatGPT acceptance among English language learners in the UK and Iran. While fundamental TAM constructs, namely Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), emerged prominently across contexts, their significance and interaction with Perceived Enjoyment (PE), Facilitating Conditions (FC), and cultural orientations varied notably. These findings highlight that the perceived advantages of AI tools like ChatGPT are not universally consistent but are substantially shaped by learners' socio-cultural and educational backgrounds.

Quantitative findings indicated comparable user-friendliness (PEOU) and similar perceptions of technological complexity across both groups, echoing previous research affirming the universal importance of user-friendly interfaces (Lai, 2023; Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022; Liu & Ma, 2023; Zou & Huang, 2023). However, Iranian EFL learners reported significantly higher levels of PU, behavioral intention, actual usage, perceived enjoyment, and favorable FC compared to their UK counterparts. These significant quantitative differences strongly suggest that while the 'how' of using ChatGPT is universal (high PEOU), the 'why' (PU and PE) is highly context-dependent.

The heightened acceptance among Iranian learners aligns theoretically with the educational and cultural context described by Abuhassna et al. (2023), who note increased reliance on technology in contexts where traditional educational resources are limited. In Iran, ChatGPT's utility in providing accessible practice opportunities, instant feedback, and diverse language exposure addresses specific educational needs, as qualitative responses underscore. Iranian learners frequently utilized ChatGPT for conversational practice, vocabulary expansion, grammar explanations, and generating writing prompts—tasks directly addressing their EFL challenges. Furthermore, higher perceived enjoyment among Iranian students could be linked to the novelty effect and empowerment derived from overcoming resource limitations, coupled with supportive peer networks enhancing technology adoption through social influence (Nistor et al., 2012; Sulistiyo et al., 2022).

Conversely, UK-based learners demonstrated more critical engagement with ChatGPT, reflecting their established, resource-rich educational context. Their access to extensive academic resources, native speaker interactions, and structured support rendered ChatGPT supplementary rather than central, thus leading to more evaluative usage

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centered on refining academic writing, exploring complex vocabulary, and sophisticated language structures. Such critical attitudes align with characteristics of individualistic, low-context cultures (Hofstede, 2011), where technological adoption depends heavily on individual assessments of utility and efficiency. Pedagogical approaches in the UK, emphasizing critical thinking and learner autonomy, further encouraged more evaluative rather than wholesale acceptance of new technological tools (Abdaljaleel, 2023).

These differing contexts were evident in learners' nuanced applications of ChatGPT, highlighting that PU is contextually interpreted based on individual learner needs and educational priorities. UK learners utilized ChatGPT primarily for targeted academic enhancements, sophisticated language refinement, and exploring complex ideas, whereas Iranian learners leveraged it extensively for foundational language skill development. This underscores the importance of aligning AI integration strategies with specific learner needs, proficiency levels, and educational objectives (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023; Yuan, 2022).

Facilitating Conditions (FC) emerged distinctly favorable among Iranian learners despite potentially greater infrastructural challenges. This paradoxical finding suggests Iranian learners' proactive attitudes toward overcoming barriers, motivated by the perceived high value of ChatGPT. Social networks and peer influence, evident in qualitative data showing collaborative learning strategies among Iranian participants, likely enhanced FC perceptions (AlDakhil & Alfadda, 2021; Li, 2023). The sequential explanatory mixed-methods design successfully integrated quantitative results with qualitative data to explain the cross-cultural variations. Specifically, the statistical finding that Iranian learners reported significantly higher Facilitating Conditions (FC) ($p=.010$) was qualitatively elaborated by the theme of 'Accessibility and Convenience.' For Iranian learners, FC was defined not merely by physical infrastructure but by the ability of ChatGPT to overcome social barriers (24/7 availability, lack of human partners) and systemic resource constraints, highlighting a culturally distinct interpretation of facilitating conditions linked to collective coping mechanisms and resource optimization. In contrast, UK learners exhibited more cautious assessments of facilitating conditions, likely due to their higher baseline expectations for technology integration within a resource-abundant educational system.

Intrinsic motivation and enjoyment significantly influenced continued engagement among Iranian learners, consistent with literature connecting intrinsic motivation to enhanced technology engagement and perceived benefits (Chocarro et al., 2021; Kanont, 2024; Shahzad, 2024). However, this raises concerns about potential dependency, underscoring the need for balanced AI integration promoting autonomous learning rather than complete reliance (Zou, 2023).

Ethical considerations emerged prominently across both groups, highlighting concerns about misinformation, potential misuse, and reliability of AI-generated content (Bernabei, 2023; Vo, 2024; Al-Kfairy, 2024). Iranian learners particularly emphasized ethical risks related to generating misleading content, underscoring a critical need for developing robust digital literacy competencies. UK learners, while similarly concerned about over-reliance, emphasized verifying outputs for accuracy, reflecting practical considerations around reliability and cultural relevance.

Overall, these findings, derived from learners' self-reported perceptions, emphasize that effective AI integration must be sensitive to learners' specific cultural, educational, and resource contexts. Tailored strategies that consider nuanced differences in technology acceptance, usage patterns, motivation, facilitating conditions, and ethical awareness are critical for optimizing ChatGPT's educational potential across diverse learner groups.

Conclusion

This study investigated ChatGPT acceptance among English language learners in the UK and Iran, revealing that while the tool offers potential as a supplementary learning resource, its adoption and effectiveness are significantly mediated by cultural and educational contexts. The findings emphasize the context-dependent nature of technology acceptance rather than universal benefits. The methodological demonstration, confirming the non-normal distribution of TAM

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constructs in these populations, necessitated the use of the Mann-Whitney U test, ensuring the statistical validity of the significant cross-cultural differences reported.

The pedagogical implications suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to integrating ChatGPT is unlikely to be effective. For learners in contexts like Iran, where acceptance is high, efforts could focus on digital literacy training to deepen usage and sustain positive perceptions. For UK learners, where reliance may be lower, targeted programs highlighting practical benefits for specific tasks could enhance engagement. The study emphasizes promoting balanced usage strategies to prevent over-reliance and maintain independent learning skills. While ChatGPT's interface was generally accessible, addressing learners' cultural priorities is crucial. AI personalization could better align ChatGPT with diverse learner needs, increasing relevance for those emphasizing contextual applicability. The study underscores the need for critical digital literacy to help learners evaluate AI-generated content and mitigate risks of misinformation.

However, this study has some limitations. The use of convenience and snowball sampling may limit generalizability to broader EFL learner populations. The study did not control for variableslike English proficiency levels or digital literacy skills, which could have affected ChatGPTperceptions. Additionally, the findings rely on self-reported data, which may be subject to socialdesirability bias.

Future research should address these methodological gaps through randomized sampling techniques and larger, diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal studies are needed to track ChatGPT perceptions over time. Studies should also control for language proficiency and digital literacy to isolate their impact on technology acceptance.By acknowledging AI acceptance's context-dependent nature and addressing ethical and pedagogical challenges, policymakers, educators, and developers can work towards harnessing these tools more effectively.

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Appendix A

Online Survey

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ioCMujZt6pM_Scbar3gLrS3C-oqPhY-c/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=101814137630099309066&rtpof=true&sd=true

Appendix B

Interview Guiding Questions

1. How well do you know ChatGPT and have you used it for learning languages?
2. What impressions do you have about language learning with ChatGPT?
3. What are the principal advantages of learning languages with ChatGPT?
4. Could you discuss any specific example where ChatGPT was beneficial in your language learning process?
5. In your experience, does ChatGPT have any shortcomings in providing precise or useful information?
6. Do you experience any confusion or frustration with responses from ChatGPT?
7. How does ChatGPT compare to conventional language teaching approaches?

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