

EFL Students' Cultural Intelligence and Their Performance in Speaking Skill: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Effective command of speaking skill is essential. Mastery of speaking skill, however, is best polished by having a good level of cultural intelligence. Therefore, the present study investigates the correlational relationship between these two important aspects, namely, cultural intelligence and speaking skill of Iraqi EFL learners. The study aims to better understand the correlation between these variables. It asks the question of whether or not there is any correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill. To achieve this aim, the null hypothesis is set, which hypothesizes that there will be no statistically significant difference in the correlation of the two variables. To test the hypotheses and attain the study aims, a sample of 60 undergraduate third-year students at the College of Education, Department of English for the academic year 2022-2023, in the morning study, were randomly chosen. A quantitative approach is followed within the correlational design. To collect the data from this sample, two research instruments were employed in this study. These instruments were an adopted Cultural Intelligence Scale (Self-Report Questionnaire) and an Oral Interview Test. The collected data were statistically analyzed using suitable statistical tests. The findings of the statistical analysis demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between the sample's cultural intelligence level and their performance in speaking skill. However, the results showed no statistically significant difference in the correlation between the male and female participants' performance on the tests.

المستخلص

يعد التحكم الفعال لمهارة التحدث أمر ضرورياً. ومع ذلك، فإن أفضل طريقة لصقل إتقان مهارة التحدث هي الحصول على مستوى جيد من الذكاء الثقافي. لذلك، تبحث الدراسة الحالية في العلاقة الارتباطية بين هذين الجانبين المهمين، وهما الذكاء الثقافي ومهارة التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في العراق. وتهدف الدراسة إلى فهم أفضل للعلاقة بين هذه المتغيرات. ويُطرح السؤال حول ما إذا كان هناك أي ارتباط بين الذكاء الثقافي ومهارة التحدث أم لا. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف تم وضع الفرضية الصفرية التي تفترض عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في الارتباط بين المتغيرين. ولاختبار الفرضيات وتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم اختيار عينة عشوائية مكونة من 60 طالباً وطالبة من طلاب السنة الثالثة في كلية التربية قسم اللغة الإنجليزية للعام الدراسي 2022-2023 في الدراسة الصباحية. وقد تم اتباع النهج الكمي في التصميم الارتباطي. لجمع البيانات من هذه العينة، تم استخدام أداتين للبحث في هذه الدراسة. كانت هذه الأدوات عبارة عن مقياس الذكاء

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الثقافي المعتمد (استبيان التقرير الذاتي) واختبار المقابلة الشفهية. وقد تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها إحصائياً باستخدام الاختبارات الإحصائية المناسبة. وأظهرت نتائج التحليل الإحصائي وجود علاقة ارتباطية موجبة بين مستوى الذكاء الثقافي لدى أفراد العينة وأدائهم في مهارة التحدث. ومع ذلك، أظهرت النتائج عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في العلاقة بين أداء المشاركين الذكور والإناث في الاختبارات.

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, mastering language skills, especially speaking, is crucial to use the target language. However, mastering the skills is not enough to achieve successful communication. Speakers need to be aware of others' cultural norms to adjust their speech according to the current relevant context of talk exchange to be marked as successful users in the target language.

Statement of the Problem

Ang & Van Dyne (2015, p.43) claim that language skills encompass the proficiency with which individuals are able to effectively and precisely communicate in the language necessary for cross-cultural relationships. Moreover, acquiring cultural knowledge, including comprehension of economic, legal, and social systems of diverse cultures, has to do with language skills. According to Earley (2002, p.292), individuals who demonstrate limited language acquisition abilities, particularly in terms of achieving a satisfactory degree of competency, are likely to exhibit lower levels of cultural intelligence (henceforth CQ). Speaking skill may be affected by the individual's level of cultural knowledge. In other words, people who are more open to other cultures seem to be more effective in demonstrating language command, especially in speaking. In this regard, Ang & Van Dyne (2015, p.248) explain that the language proficiency of individuals engaged in oral communication exhibits considerable variation, hence exerting a discernible impact. Moreover, they continue that, according to certain research findings, individuals with lower proficiency in the language being used tend to adopt a less active role and make fewer contributions in intercultural exchanges. The main argument is that possessing a high level of CQ in the context of professional communication encompasses more than just having a command of the English language. It also entails being aware of and understanding others' language usage and proficiency.

Scholars like Chastain (1976, p.404-405) emphasize the importance of teaching cultural norms to students. He suggests that teaching cultural norms is as important as teaching the language as abstract linguistic knowledge.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there are few, if any, studies that exclusively address the relationship between cultural intelligence and speaking skill in the context of Iraq. According to the findings and claims of the aforementioned studies concerning the significant relationship between CQ and speaking skill, this study, therefore, intends to investigate the correlational relationship between CQ and speaking skill among Iraqi EFL university students. In other words, it attempts to better understand whether or not the students' CQ level contributes to increase or decrease of their speaking skill through providing empirical results.

Aims of the Study

The current study aims to investigate the following:

1. The level of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students' cultural intelligence speaking skill ,
2. The statistical correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill,
3. Whether the variable of gender affects cultural intelligence and the correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skills.

Research Questions

To address the purpose of the current study, the following questions have been set:

1. What is the level of students' cultural intelligence and speaking skill ?
2. Is there any correlation between students' cultural intelligence and their speaking skills?

3. Is there any impact of gender on students' cultural intelligence level and the correlation between their cultural intelligence and their speaking skill?

Hypotheses the Study

1. There is no significant statistical difference between the subjects' theoretical and calculated mean scores in cultural intelligence.
2. There is no significant statistical difference between the subjects' theoretical and calculated mean scores in the speaking test.
3. There is no significant statistical correlation between students' cultural intelligence and their speaking skill level.
4. There is no significant statistical difference in the correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill due to the gender variable.

Limits of the Study

In terms of population, place, time, and targeted features, the present study is limited to EFL third-year students at the College of Education for Humanities / University of Mosul during the academic year (2022-2023). Additionally, the study focuses exclusively on cultural intelligence among the many types of intelligence. Regarding language skills, the study is only concerned with one component of productive language skills, namely, speaking.

Value of the Study

This study may be of value to:

1. All those involved in learning and teaching EFL at every level of education, especially the university level, because these variables are developed with maturation. It will help teachers to understand the students' level in CQ and speaking skill and increase their awareness of the psychological factors in learning a foreign language. It will also assist students in knowing about CQ and speaking skill and being aware of these factors that may affect their learning of a foreign language.
2. Curriculum designers may benefit from the analytical part of the present study.
3. Other researchers may benefit from the results and findings of this study to use them as a reference for further research. It can also enrich their information in the area of psychological factors in an academic context.
4. This study will make a valuable contribution to the available literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept and Definitions of Cultural Intelligence

CQ is a term introduced by Earley and Ang in 2003 (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. xii; Thomas, 2006, p. 78; Ang et al., 2007, p. 336; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. xv). Hence, CQ is a rather recent phenomenon, and its significance in international businesses is somewhat novel (Crowne, 2008, p. 396). However, the interest in CQ has spread worldwide within many disciplines ever since (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. xv). Due to the increased movement of business and people in the last decades, CQ is an important skill for anyone working in a multicultural setting (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004, p. 139).

According to Earley & Mosakowski (2004, p. 140), CQ is about scanning, observing and perceiving how people behave and act in a close physical environment. This scanning involves both detecting similarities and differences to one's own cultures. Earley (2002, p. 271) defines CQ as "a person's capacity to adapt to new cultural settings". Ang & Van Dyne (2015, p.3) define CQ as "an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings". Earley and Ang (2003) define cultural intelligence as "a person's capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings, that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context" (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 9; Earley et al., 2006, p. 5). In other words, CQ is to effectively interact and communicate with individuals from different cultures (Crowne, 2008, p. 392). Peterson (2004, p.89) defines CQ as "the ability to engage in a set of behaviours that uses skills (i.e., language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture-based values and attitudes of the people with whom one interacts". A more explicit definition of CQ is "multifaceted competency consisting of cultural knowledge, the practice of mindfulness, and the repertoire of behavioural skills" (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, p.182-183).

Earley and Ang (2003, p.3) built on the increasing consensus that the investigation of intelligence should go beyond mere cognitive abilities and theorized that CQ is a multidimensional concept that includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions. Metacognitive CQ reflects the mental capability to acquire and understand cultural knowledge. Cognitive CQ reflects general knowledge and knowledge structures about culture. Motivational CQ reflects the individual capability to direct energy toward learning about and functioning in intercultural situations. Behavioural CQ reflects the individual's capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions in culturally diverse interactions.

Definitions of Speaking Skill

According to Chaney (1998, p. 13), "speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal expressions in a variety of contexts". Chastain states (1975, pp. 330-358), "speaking is a productive skill and involves many components. Speaking is more than making the right sounds, choosing the right words or getting the constructions.". Bryne (1998, p. 8) views "speaking as a two-way process between speaker and listener and involves the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding". Nunan (2003, p. 48) explains that "speaking is the productive oral skill, and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning."

It is possible to conclude, based on the explanations that were given earlier, that speaking is a process that involves conveying and exchanging ideas and feelings verbally. Speaking consists certain components, including vocabulary, pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency. Students need to have a firm grasp of each of these components. Speaking, particularly in a foreign language, is an extremely important activity for learners of any age. Through this process, those who also use a foreign language may understand what is being said by others who speak that language.

Components of Speaking

Syakur (1987, p.5) claims that "speaking proficiency is a complex skill because at least it is concerned with components of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency". There are five components of speaking.

1.Pronunciation

Burgess and Spencer (2000, p.191) explain pronunciation as "the practice and meaningful use of target language phonological features in speaking, supported by practice in interpreting those phonological features in TL discourse".

2.Grammar

According to Brown, (2004) grammar encompasses the set of rules governing the structure and usage of both spoken and written languages. In order to achieve favourable outcomes, students need to adhere to the fundamentals of grammar.

3.Vocabulary

The term "vocabulary" is defined by Hatch and Brown (1995, p.1) as "a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of language might use." However, it implies that vocabulary is the collection of words individuals use to communicate and exchange ideas.

4.Fluency

Nation (1991, p.4) defines the term "fluency" as "the ability to get across-communicative intent without too much hesitation and too many pauses to cause barriers or breakdown in communication". In other words, fluency is the ability to speak without hesitating or pausing in order to be understood; conversely, if this ability is lacking, it will lead to misunderstandings.

5.Comprehension

In speaking the speaker and the listener must have a good understanding so that the conversation certainly requires a subject to respond to speech as well as to initiate it. But in this research, the researcher will call the comprehensibility (Brown, 2004, p.173).

Previous Studies

Mohammed (2022) conducted a study entitled “Iraqi EFL University Students' Cultural Intelligence and Language Proficiency: A Correlational Study”. The study aims to investigate the relationship between cultural intelligence and language proficiency and identify the cultural intelligence levels of Iraqi EFL university students. 400 students were randomly chosen from various Iraqi universities/colleges of education / English departments during the 2020-2021 academic year. A correlational research design with a quantitative approach was employed. Cultural Intelligence Scale and TOFEL language proficiency tests are the tools of the research. The analysis procedure is an Inferential statistical analysis (ANOVA and T-test). The results indicated that Iraqi EFL students at universities possess a good level of cultural intelligence and that there is a significant relationship between cultural intelligence and Language Proficiency.

Al-Momani (2016) examined “Cultural Intelligence Among Jordanian University Students”. The study aims to determine the level of cultural intelligence possessed by Jordanian university students and investigate distinctions in cultural intelligence based on gender, study specialisation, and place of residence. 366 male and female students from Jadara University were chosen. A quantitative approach is used in the study. The research instrument is a developed 30-item scale for measuring cultural intelligence. The analysis procedure is a descriptive statistical analysis. The research results indicated that the level of cultural intelligence was moderate according to the total scale scores and domains.

Senel (2020) carried out an investigation that was termed “Investigation of the Cultural Intelligence Levels of the Turkish University Students at Foreign Language Departments”. The study aims to investigate and explore the Cultural Intelligence level of students majoring in English, German, and French. It also seeks to determine if their Cultural Intelligence was related to their gender, age, or departments they attended. Two hundred students took part in the study at the English, German, and French Departments of the Faculty of Education at Samsun 19 May University throughout the 2018-2019 academic year. A quantitative approach is used in the study. The Cultural Intelligence Scale and Demographic Information Form are the research tools. Descriptive statistical analysis is the analysis procedure. According to the findings, some subcategories of Cultural Intelligence exhibited a statistically significant difference. In addition, it was noticed that the students who participated in the research differed substantially in the departments they were studying in and the high schools from which they graduated.

Astifo (2020) carried out a study entitled “Using Immersion Teaching Process to Develop EFL Learners' Speaking skill.” The study aims to investigate the impact of using immersion teaching process in developing students' speaking skills. It also aims to evaluate the students' level of implementation in their speaking performance. 66 students participated in the research from the second stage at Salahaddin University/ College of Education/ English Department. An experimental design is employed in the study. A questionnaire is designed as a research tool. The analysis procedure is an Inferential statistical analysis. The findings of the study indicate that developing students' speaking abilities necessitates an initial level of speaking competence.

In a study by Al-Jamal (2014), “An Investigation of the Difficulties Faced by EFL Undergraduates in Speaking Skills”. The study aims to describe potential challenges encountered in an EFL learners' setting. Five hundred sixty-six students at six public Jordanian universities participated in the research. A mixed method approach is used in the study. Survey questionnaires as well as semi-structured interviews were the research tools. The analysis procedure is a statistical analysis and qualitative descriptive analysis. The results of the study revealed a 'low' speaking proficiency level among EFL undergraduates and negligible instruction of speaking ability in university-level courses.

Discussion of Previous Studies

Many studies have investigated the cultural intelligence of students. Among these studies are Mohammed (2022), and Senel (2020), Al-Momani (2016) above mentioned. They all have the same objective; studying students' cultural intelligence. However, they differ in many aspects concerning different research principles. For example, al-Momani (2016) and Senel (2020) aim to investigate the students' cultural intelligence level; however, Senel's study was carried out in Turkey and was limited to foreign languages department students as its sample. In line with these studies, Mohammed (2022) conducted a study investigating the relationship between EFL learners' cultural intelligence and English language proficiency by analyzing the results obtained from each variable using inferential statistical analysis. Unlike Al-Momani and Senel, they analyzed the data using descriptive statistical analysis to determine possible results. These studies share the study at hand a similar objective. However, it differs from them in that it is carried out in different countries and regions, on different samples and testing different variables.

Al-Jamal (2014) and Astifo (2020) have studied speaking skills. Al-Jamal (2014), however, attempted to figure out the problems that learners face while speaking in EFL. On the other hand, Astifo (2020) conducted a study to examine a teaching method to improve speaking skills. These two studies both study speaking but differ in their approach as

the former uses descriptive statistics, and the latter uses an experimental design and research tools differ between these two studies. The current study applies a correlational study to investigate the correlation and association between cultural intelligence and speaking skill.

Therefore, it can be concluded that since this study differs from the ones cited above, a research gap needs to be studied. Consequently, this study attempts to investigate the correlation between Cultural Intelligence and speaking skill.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

According to Fraenkel et al. (2009, p.11), a correlational study refers to a statistical analysis that shows the propensity or possibility for two or more variables to exhibit some degree of predictable differentiation. The primary objective of this research methodology is to investigate and analyse the relationships and associations between two or more variables (Creswell, 2012, p.343). However, A correlational research design with a quantitative approach is employed in the study at hand.

Participants

This study targets third-year students at the University of Mosul/ College of Education for Humanities/ Department of English Language, during the academic year 2022-2023. The population comprises (180) male and female students. They are selected as the data source for this research because it is anticipated that they have achieved a sufficient academic proficiency level that enables them to express themselves clearly and appropriately in speaking. However, Including the whole of the targeted population as a research sample is difficult. Therefore, 60 students are randomly chosen to be the sample of the study, they were both males and females.

Sampling is another crucial component that demands attention, which refers to the strategy employed in selecting a representative sample from the entire population. One of the strategies employed in sampling is the *probability sampling* strategy, which ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Therefore, it is highly recommended to generalize the findings to the entire population. Expanding upon this point, it is worth noting that a probability sampling approach is associated with a reasonably high level of *external validity*. External validity, as defined by the source cited, is "the degree to which the sample represents the population from which it was selected". One example of a probability sampling strategy is *simple random sampling*, wherein individuals within a sample are selected randomly. Simple random sampling is widely recognised as the fundamental technique employed to improve the representativeness of a sample (Dattalo, 2008, pp.3,193,195).

Instruments

Cultural Intelligence Scale (Self-Report Questionnaire)

A structured questionnaire is adopted from Ang & Dyne (2008) to be implemented in the current study since it aims at eliciting specific data concerning language learners' cultural intelligence levels to test its correlation with speaking skill. The scale consists of 20 items that are categorised into four major categories. The first category (metacognitive) seeks to obtain insights into the participants' awareness of other people's cultures and their consistent evaluation of the accuracy of their knowledge to adjust their behaviour to unfamiliar ones. This category involves four items (1-4). The second category (cognitive) elicits information about participants' general knowledge and knowledge structures of other cultures. This category includes six items (5-10). The third category (motivation) extracts participants' ability, motivation, and interest to learn and function confidently in unfamiliar situations. This category includes five items (11-15). The fourth category (behaviour) elicits participants' manipulation of behaviour in cross-cultural interactions, including the use of appropriate statements and a suitable tone along with appropriate gestures and facial expressions. This category includes five items (16-20) (See Appendix A).

Oral Interview Test

To test the speaking skill of the participants', the researcher adopted Al-Obeidi's (2021, p. 65) Oral Interview Test. This test assists the researcher to test participants' speaking skill in the English language and provide statistical results comparable with the results of the other variable, which assist in finding out the correlation between these variables. The test is divided into two parts, with five questions in each. These questions are identical across the entire study sample. The tests include topics relevant to the samples' real life situations, with the first section focusing on 'Internet' and the second on 'Sports' (See Appendix B). The researcher asks participants, and they have to respond to him.

Scoring Scheme of the Oral Interview Test and its Criteria

The researcher adopted Alahmd's (2010, p.90) scoring scheme and made some modifications to suit the speaking test. This scoring scheme analyzes the flow of speech into discrete components to be scored based on a previously made description (See Appendix C). The total mark of the speaking test is 25, where each test component is given five marks. Table (1) explains the distribution of marks.

Table (1):Scoring Scheme of Oral Production Components

Components	High Mark	Low Mark
Pronunciation	5	0
Grammar	5	0
Vocabulary	5	0
Fluency	5	0
Comprehension	5	0
Total Mark		25

Procedures

Having chosen the population, assigned the participants and prepared the data collection instruments, the researcher applied the study instruments during the second term of the academic year 2022-2023. Participants were asked to take part in the study voluntarily. Therefore, the CQS questionnaire was distributed, and the Oral interview test was carried out according to an interview timetable (See Appendix D). Then, the data were collected and scored. The results obtained from scoring the data were statistically analyzed using SPSS software. The correlation between the results of the two instruments was computed. Then, the results of the statistical analysis were explained and discussed.

DATA ANALYSIS

The First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis proposed; "**there is no significant statistical difference between the subjects' theoretical and calculated mean scores in cultural intelligence**". The sample level of cultural intelligence is computed by calculating the mean score and the standard deviation. Moreover, the one-sample T-test is applied to determine the statistical significance of this mean score. The calculated mean score has been compared to the theoretical mean. The result is shown in table (2) below:

Table (2):The Mean Score, Standard Deviation and T-values of the Sample's Level of Cultural Intelligence

N	Calculated Mean	Theoretical Mean	Std.	T-values		Sig.
				T-cal.	T-tab.	
60	67.600	50	9.977	13.665	2.001 (0.05)(59)	0.000*

It is evident from the statistical analysis in table (2) that the calculated mean score of the sample scores is 67.600 with a standard deviation of 9.977, is greater than the theoretical mean score (50). One sample T-test is applied to test the statistical significance of the calculated mean score. It is found that the calculated t-value is 13.665 at 0.05 level of significance 0.05 and 59 degrees of freedom, whereas the tabulated value of the test is 2.001 and the Sig. Value is less than the level of significance. It seems clear that the calculated t-value is greater than the tabulated one. Consequently, this statistically means that the calculated mean score of the Iraqi EFL students' performance on cultural intelligence is significant. This result rejects the first null hypothesis claiming that the sample's calculated mean score is statistically insignificant.

The Second Hypothesis

This hypothesis states, "**there is no significant statistical difference between the subjects' theoretical and calculated mean scores in the speaking test**". The result of the statistical analysis is shown in the table below:

Table (3):The Mean Score, Standard Deviation and T-values of the subjects' Level of Speaking Skill

N	Calculated Mean	Theoretical Mean	Std.	T-test		Sig.
				T-cal.	T-tab.	
60	18.033	12.5	2.025	21.166	2.001 (0.05)(59)	0.000*

The study sample seems to possess a somewhat good level of speaking skill. The result in table (3) shows that the calculated mean score is 18.033 with a standard deviation of 2.025. This mean score is greater than the theoretical one, which is 12.5. Moreover, the standard deviation score demonstrates a slight spread from the central mean. Similar to what was done while testing the first hypothesis, the T-test of one sample is used to test the significance of the calculated mean score of the sample in the speaking oral test. The result of the T-test shows that the calculated T-value is 21.166 at 0.05 level of significance and 59 degrees of freedom. However, the tabulated T-value is found to be 2.001 at the set level of significance. This result indicates that the calculated T-value is greater than the tabulated one, and the Sig. value is less than 0.05. In statistical terms, this means that the second null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant statistical difference between the calculated mean and the theoretical one in favor of the calculated mean.

The Third Hypothesis

The third null hypothesis assumes; "**there is no significant statistical correlation between students' cultural intelligence and their speaking skill level.**" Two tests are applied to test the statistical correlation between the independent variable (cultural intelligence) and the dependent one (speaking skill). The first test is the Pearson correlation coefficient test, specifically used to calculate the correlation value between the two variables. The second one is a T-test, which is applied to determine whether or not this correlation is significant. The statistical result in table (4) is discussed to test the fourth hypothesis.

Table (4):The Correlation between Cultural Intelligence and the Speaking Skill

Variables	N	Correlation Coefficient	T-test		Sig.
			T-cal.	T-tab.	
CQ & Speaking	60	0.258	2.034	2.002 (0.05)(58)	0.023*

The Table above shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient value is 0.258. To see the significance of this r-value, the two-sample T-test is applied. The result shows a **significant positive correlation** between cultural intelligence and speaking skill because the calculated T-value is greater than the tabulated one at the significance level of 0.05 and 58 degrees of freedom, and the Sig. Value is less than the level of significance. Moreover, this result proves the rejection of the null hypothesis, which assumes no correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill. Although the correlation is positive, the r-value is low, indicating that it is not highly strong.

The Fourth Hypothesis

The seventh hypothesis states; "**there is no significant statistical difference in the correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill due to the gender variable.**" The correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill is tested and found to be positive, as shown in the third hypothesis result. However, this correlation between cultural intelligence and speaking skill is tested here in accordance with the gender variable. To this end, Z-test is applied to calculate the correlation coefficient for each gender. Moreover, the statistical significance of this correlation is found out in the following table:

Table (5):The Correlation between Cultural Intelligence and Speaking Skill Due to Gender Variable

Variables	Gender	N	Correlation	dr.	Z-test		Sig.
					Z-cal.	Z-tab.	
CQ & Speaking	Male	20	0.273	0.282	0.549	1.960 (0.05)	NS
	Female	40	0.120	0.121			

The result presented in Table (5) show that the male subjects' degree of correlation between the cultural intelligence and speaking skill is 0.273 with a standard degree for correlation coefficient of 0.282. Since the correlation coefficient (r) value is smaller than the standard degree for correlation coefficient (dr), this correlation is insignificant. On the other hand, female subjects scored a correlation of 0.120 with a standard degree for correlation coefficient of 0.121. The r-value is smaller than the dr-value, therefore, the correlation coefficient (r-value) is statistically insignificant. It seems that the correlation score of the male subjects is seemingly higher than that of the females. However, to find out whether this difference in the correlation coefficient value between the cultural intelligence and speaking skill of both gender is significant or not, the Z-test is applied since two variables are compared. The calculated Z-value is 0.549, whereas the tabulated one is 1.960 at a 0.05 significance level. So, the calculated Z-value is less than the tabulated Z-value. Consequently, there is no statistically significant difference in the correlation between males and females as far as gender is concerned, although the r-value of males is greater than females. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis, which claims "no correlational statistical difference between the two variables concerning gender", is accepted.

Discussion of Results

The analysis of the data that were collected for the accomplishment of the current study has revealed some findings that will contribute to the validity of the hypotheses set earlier. It is found that Iraqi EFL university learners have a good level of cultural intelligence and speaking skill as well. The result of the first hypothesis shows that the participants demonstrate a good level of cultural intelligence. This statistically significant level of cultural intelligence may be attributed to the fact that the sample subjects live in a multicultural society that includes people from different ethnicities such as Arabic, Mosuli Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmani and Assyrian, where they are supposed to have developed cultural awareness regarding different cultures. This finding is in line with the findings of Mohammed & Al-Bakri's (2022) study which found that Iraqi EFL University students have a good level of cultural intelligence. They contributed this finding to factors such as maturation of the brain and experience.

With regard to speaking skill, it is found that the participants scored good levels in speaking skill. This finding may be ascribed to the influence of cultural intelligence good level. This claim can be supported by the findings of a study carried out by Rafieyan, Golerazeghi, & Orang (2015) which emphasizes the impact of cultural intelligence on the learners' high level of pragmatic comprehension. Therefore, language use can be influenced by the level of cultural intelligence. In this sense, speaking skill can also be influenced by the learners' level of cultural intelligence.

Concerning the level of cultural intelligence and language productive skills due to gender variable, it is found that there is no significant statistical difference between the results of both genders and the correlation was negative. This can be explained in the light of the fact that both sexes are supposed to be exposed to almost the same cultural settings. A study done by Jasim & Al-Rashed (2021) seems to be in agreement with this finding. It confirms that there is no statistical difference between the levels of cultural intelligence of the Iraqi university students due to gender variable.

In relation to the correlation between the cultural intelligence and speaking skill, the results revealed that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. It appears that students with a high level of cultural intelligence also have a high level of speaking skill, and vice versa. The findings show that cultural intelligence has considerably influenced the variation in learners' levels regarding their oral performance. This fact may be interpreted as the result of factors that have increased the learner's cultural intelligence awareness. Such factors may include their maturation both physically and psychologically. Normally, mature people have more experience than young people because they have more life experience. This experience is gained by experiencing multiple cultural and social settings. Another factor is that learners may have been influenced by the effect of studying literary subjects such as novels, plays, and poetry. These subjects help to increase their cultural intelligence awareness. Such subjects expose them to different cultural contexts which, in turn, help them to adjust their cultural performance according to different cultural settings.

Another reason that could have contributed to the good level of cultural intelligence is the exposure to social media content from all over the world, which brought the world's cultures closer. All such factors can contribute to enrich and enhance the learners' cultural intelligence which is, consequently, help them to express themselves in a better way, since they are more aware and culturally competent. Hence, a higher level of cultural intelligence (CQ) would enhance an individual's ability to exhibit greater open-mindedness in both their written and spoken communication. Subjects who have high cultural intelligence level are able to speak more effectively than those with low cultural intelligence level. In this regard, Mohammed and Al-Bakri (2022) concluded that the high cultural intelligence level influences learners' language proficiency. This finding supports the finding of this study.

CONCLUSION

In light of the findings of the current research, it can be concluded that:

- 1) To answer the first question, "**What is the level of students' cultural intelligence and speaking skill ?**", Iraqi EFL university learners have a good level of cultural intelligence. This finding is attributed to exposure to multicultural settings and maturity. The study also revealed that Iraqi EFL university students exhibit good levels of oral communication abilities. This conclusion can be attributed to the positive impact of a good level of cultural intelligence.
- 2) To answer the second question, "**Is there any correlation between students' cultural intelligence and their speaking skills?**", the findings indicated a significant positive correlation between the two variables. Some factors, such as maturation, experience, studying literary subjects, and exposure to social media apps, led to this finding.
- 3) To answer the third question, "**Is there any impact of gender on students' cultural intelligence level and the correlation between their cultural intelligence and their speaking skill?**" the findings indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the results for both sexes, and the correlation was found to be negative.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)

Self-Report Questionnaire

Read each statement and select the response that best describes your capabilities. Select the answer that BEST describes you AS YOU REALLY ARE (Strongly agree; Strongly Disagree)

CQ Factors	Questionnaire Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Metacognitive	1. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.					
	2. I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me					
	3. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.					
	4. I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.					
Cognitive	5. I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.					
	6. I know the rules (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.					
	7. I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.					
	8. I know the marriage systems of other cultures.					
	9. I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.					
	10. I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviours in other cultures.					
Motivation	11. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.					
	12. I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.					
	13. I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.					
	14. I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.					
	15. I am confident that I can get used to the shopping conditions in a different culture.					
Behaviour	16. I change my non-verbal behaviour (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural situation requires it.					
	17. I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.					
	18. I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.					
	19. I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.					
	20. I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.					

Appendix B**Oral Interview Test**

Section one:

This part evaluates the students' ability to engage in a discourse on the topic of the Internet. The participants are required to provide both factual information and personal viewpoints in response to the following questions.

- 1) How often do you go online?
- 2) What do you use the internet for?
- 3) Do you use a computer or a mobile in accessing the internet?
- 4) Do you think children should be allowed to surf the net without parental supervision?
- 5) What is your favourite social media app? Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? Why?

Section Two:

The second part evaluates the students' capacity to discuss sports-related topics, such as the best player and their favourite sport, etc.

- 1) Do you like sport? Why?
- 2) What is your favourite sport? Why?
- 3) What is the most popular sport in your country?
- 4) Do you think Ronaldo or Messi is the best footballer in the world? Why?
- 5) Do you like to watch matches on TV or live in the stadium? Why?

Appendix C**Criteria for Scoring Oral Interview Test :Oral Production Components****(1) Grammar**

Mark	Description
5	If she/he produces and makes few noticeable errors of grammar.
4	If she/he occasionally makes grammatical errors.
3	If she/he frequently makes errors in grammar.
2	If she/he hardly produces grammatical constructions.
1	If she/he neither produces nor uses grammatical constructions.
0	If she/he gives an irrelevant answer or no answer at all.

(2) Vocabulary

Mark	Description
5	If she/he produces and uses vocabulary items appropriately.
4	If she/he frequently produces and uses vocabulary items appropriately.
3	If she/he occasionally produces and uses vocabulary items.
2	If she/he hardly understands vocabulary items and rarely uses them.
1	If she/he neither produces nor uses the right vocabulary items.
0	If she/he gives an irrelevant answer or no answer at all.

(3) **Pronunciation**

Mark	Description
5	If she/he produces and uses the correct pronunciation of foreign sounds.
4	If she/he frequently produces and uses the correct pronunciation
3	If she/he occasionally produces and uses the correct pronunciation
2	If she/he hardly produces and uses the correct pronunciation.
1	If she/he neither produces nor pronounces words and utterances correctly and clearly.
0	If she/he gives an irrelevant answer or no answer at all.

(4) **Fluency**

Mark	Description
5	If her/his speech is fluent and understands the other's fluent speech.
4	If the speed of her/his speech seems to be affected by language problems.
3	If her/his speed and fluency are rather strongly affected by language problems.
2	If she/he is usually hesitant and forced into silence by language limitations.
1	If she/he neither understands fluent speeds nor speaks fluently.
0	If she/he gives an irrelevant answer or no answer at all.

(5) **Comprehension**

Mark	Description
5	If she/he realises and understands the meaning of words without difficulty.
4	If she/he frequently realises and understands the meaning of words and utterances of what is said.
3	If she/he occasionally realises and understands the meaning of words and what is said.
2	If she/he hardly realises and understands the meaning of words.
1	If she/he neither recognises nor understands the meaning of words.
0	If she/he gives an irrelevant answer or no answer at all.

Appendix D :Interview Timetable

Day	Time	No. of Interviewees
Sunday	9- 12 AM.	15
Monday	9- 12 AM.	15
Tuesday	9- 12 AM.	15
Wednesday	9- 12 AM.	15