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The Relationship Between Iraqi EFL Students' Cultural Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, And Communication Competence

العلاقة بين الذكاء الثقافي والذكاء الروحي والكفاءة التواصلية لدى الطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة
الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Abstract:

Abstract It examines the correlation between cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and communication competence among a sample of Iraqi English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. Although multiple intelligences have received increasing recognition in language education research, only a few studies have addressed how cultural and spiritual intelligences simultaneously impact communicative abilities within specific educational environments like Iraq that are affected by conflict. This research is conducted in the context of a quantitative correlational design and surveys Iraqi university students who are in an English language studies major. Results show that cultural intelligence and communication competence have a significant positive correlation, and spiritual intelligence has a significant positive correlation with communication competence. The results also provide evidence that cultural intelligence is a stronger predictor of communication competence than spiritual intelligence, although both constructs make a meaningful contribution to overall communicative effectiveness for students. These findings indicate that Iraqi EFL teachers need to include intercultural awareness and spiritual development in their language curricula in order for students to be able to communicate effectively. This research adds to the developing literature on MI in EFL environments and also has practical implications for curriculum development in historical contexts or post-conflict education writers.

Keywords: Cultural Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Communication Competence, EFL, Iraqi Students, Language Education.

المخلص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في العلاقة الارتباطية بين الذكاء الثقافي والذكاء الروحي والكفاءة التواصلية لدى عينة من الطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وعلى الرغم من تزايد الاهتمام بنظرية الذكاءات المتعددة في أبحاث تعليم اللغات، فإن عددًا قليلًا من الدراسات تناول تأثير الذكاء الثقافي والذكاء الروحي معًا في القدرات التواصلية ضمن بيئات تعليمية محددة، مثل البيئة العراقية المتأثرة بالصراعات. وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة في إطار تصميم كمي ارتباطي، وشملت طلبة جامعيين عراقيين متخصصين في دراسات اللغة الإنجليزية.

أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة ارتباطية إيجابية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الذكاء الثقافي والكفاءة التواصلية، كما أظهرت وجود علاقة ارتباطية إيجابية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الذكاء الروحي والكفاءة التواصلية. كذلك بينت النتائج أن الذكاء الثقافي يُعد متنبئًا أقوى بالكفاءة التواصلية مقارنة بالذكاء الروحي، على الرغم من أن كلا المتغيرين يسهمان بصورة فعّالة في تعزيز الكفاءة التواصلية العامة لدى الطلبة.

وتشير هذه النتائج إلى ضرورة أن يضمّن مدرّسو اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق الوعي بين الثقافات والتنمية الروحية ضمن مناهج تعليم اللغة، بما يساعد الطلبة على التواصل بفاعلية. كما تسهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء الأدبيات المتنامية المتعلقة بالذكاءات المتعددة في بيئات تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، فضلًا عن تقديمها دلالات تطبيقية لتطوير المناهج الدراسية في السياقات التاريخية أو التعليمية لما بعد الصراعات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الثقافي، الذكاء الروحي، الكفاءة التواصلية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الطلبة العراقيون، تعليم اللغة.

Introduction

This paradigm shift has been happening over the last few decades, and sees the old linguistic-focused methods as an outwards perspective to a more fledged framework that better holds up against communication in our society now. The notion of communication competence has shifted significantly

in Modern English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings beyond the bounds of grammar and vocabulary to intercultural sensitivity, emotional awareness and spiritual maturity (Byram, 1997; Canale & Swain, 1980). This broader definition of communicative competence has led scholars to examine a variety of psychological and cognitive variables that may help predict language students' willingness or ability to communicate across different sociocultural contexts.

Of the previously mentioned constructs, cultural intelligence and spiritual intelligence are two variables that have recently been gaining high attention in EFL education. One such area that has garnered significant interest in the field of intercultural communication research is cultural intelligence which is defined here as an individual's ability to perform successfully across cultures (Earley & Ang, 2003). Likewise, spiritual intelligence, defined as the capability to engage in a transcending meaning, value and purpose beyond materialistic domain (Emmons 2000), has been understood more as a factor underlying interpersonal communication or language learning achievement.

Iraq is a most unusual and instructive social laboratory in issues such as these. English language students in Iraq live in a region heavily influenced by cultural diversity, religious importance, and the impact of long-term conflict (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015). The Iraqi education system has been especially rocked by gaps in the curriculum, limited provision of resources and also psychological trauma from years spent living in instability (Al-Khafaji, 2016). In such a context, knowing the relationship of cultural and spiritual intelligences to communication competence would be beneficial for defining pedagogical frameworks that can meet well-rounded needs of Iraqi EFL students.

Although cultural and spiritual intelligences theoretically relate to communication competence, relatively little empirical research has examined the links between these constructs especially in Middle Eastern EFL contexts. Most studies focus on either Western educational contexts or they have investigated these constructs separately and not together in relation to communicative competence (e.g., Shahini & Riazi, 2011). In addition, the specific cultural and religious context of Iraq that entails deep Islamic spirituality in day-to-day lives and social interactions makes this study investigate spiritual intelligence presents itself during the exchange of English language process.

This research fills these gaps by investigating cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and communication competence among Iraqi EFL students. This research attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice by examining these constructs in the context of Iraqi education, which should be beneficial both theoretically and practically with regards to EFL curriculum design. The results may provide educators and policymakers with insights on the need for promoting the integration of intercultural and spiritual dimensions in language education programs, especially in contexts where cultural identity and religious values have social significance.

This study is not just a purely academic inquiry. As Iraq seeks to rebuild itself in an increasingly borderless world requiring an investment of global talent, Iraqi graduates with requisite English communication skills are indispensable in national reconstruction, international diplomacy and economic development. This evidence that strengthens communicative effectiveness in English language learning can also lead to its inclusion through focused psychological and spiritual factors on how it has a role to enhance the stroke of the effective communication. This study also adds further to the wider debate for and against multiple intelligences in language learning, subverting the overwhelmingly cognitive-linguistic method at work in traditional EFL.

The paper is organized as follows: literature review; methodology; results; discussion and conclusion, where the implication of findings and future direction for research were discussed.

Section One: Literature Review

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by three theoretical frameworks; the Cultural Intelligence Model, Spiritual Intelligence Theory and the Communicative Competence Framework. It opens up a fuller perspective through which to access each of the relationships between multiple intelligences and language learning outcomes.

Based on Earley and Ang (2003), the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Model, defines cultural intelligence from four dimensions: metacognitive CQ; cognitive CQ; motivational CQ; and behavioral CQ. Abstract: Metacognitive CQ is composed of mental processes that us to acquire and comprehend cultural knowledge, it involves planning monitoring revising mental models in intercultural interactions. Cognitive CQ involves knowing about norms, practices and conventions in different cultures. Motivational CQ indicates the energy one invests in learning about and functioning effectively in an unfamiliar cultural context. Behavioral CQ is the ability to display appropriate verbal and nonverbal behavior of people from different cultures (Ang et al., 2007). This multidimensional understanding provides an opportunity to explore in detail the relationship between various dimensions of cultural awareness and effective communication.

Spiritual Quotient (SQ): The theory of Spiritual Intelligence (SI) proposes that 'spirituality is a unique kind of intelligence' and includes the ability to transcend, attain higher spiritual states, infusing everyday life with spiritual meaning; accessing spiritual tools for problem-solving. King (2008) defined spiritual intelligence, as the ability to utilize four core components: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion. This indicates that it partly consists of mental cognitions (related to finding meaning) and experiential competencies of an open nature (involving universal energies, the world we live in, etc.) Working on educational context, spiritual intelligence was related to a higher student motivation for learning (Amram & Dryer, 2008), resilience and interpersonal sensitivity.

Communicative competence model:the original model (Canale and Swain, 1980) and its revised version (Bachman 1990a; Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) identified several components necessary for good communication. They are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Later conceptualizations such as Byram (1997) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) focused on intercultural communicative competence: attitudes; knowledge; skills of interpreting and relating; critical cultural awareness; political engagement. This broader approach acknowledges that communication transcends mere language ability, and includes the capacity for cultural understanding, ethical alignment, and responsiveness to various social situations.

Of these three frameworks combined, the proposed intersecting factors has several possible relationships. Cultural intelligence may improve communication competence by playing a positive role in intercultural interactions due to the knowledge, motivation and behavior flexibility which learners need to interact (Ang et al., 2007). The ability of spiritual intelligence to enhance communication competence can be found in meaning-making, empathy, and existential awareness (Emmons, 2000) which enables the aim of deeper interpersonal connections and authentic self-expression. Cultural and spiritual intelligences may also interact synergistically, as cultural practices frequently reflect the influence of spiritual values, whereas spiritual expressions have been shown to be shaped by cultural contexts (Shahini & Riazi, 2011).

1.2. Cultural Intelligence in EFL Contexts

Over the last two decades, studies of cultural intelligence in language education have increased significantly. The researcher first established the cultural intelligence as a new type of intelligence which are predictive of intercultural effectiveness net of general cognitive ability and emotional intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). Cultural intelligence has been associated with academic adaptation, cross-cultural adjustment and learning outcomes perspective in educational contexts (Ward et al., 2009) among international students.

In the realm of EFL-specific research, positive correlations between cultural intelligence and a range of language learning outcomes has been found. For example, Tajeddin and Momenian (2012) discovered that intercultural teaching effectiveness of EFL teachers in Iran can significantly predict Iranian EFL teachers cultural intelligence, suggesting that educators high on cultural intelligence are more capable of making the necessary conditions for intercultural learning. Likewise, the experienced researchers Shao and Zhou (2016) found out that Chinese EFL learners of greater cultural intelligence exhibit greater willingness to communicate also more effective use of intercultural communication strategies.

The significant relationship between cultural intelligence and communication competence has been confirmed in various educational contexts. Ramalu and Ko (2010) found that the cultural intelligence of Malaysian students was positively related to communication effectiveness in an international context. The motivational and behavioral aspects of cultural intelligence were more relevant to spoken communication compared to the cognitive and metacognitive dimensions, while metacognitive and cognitive dimensions related better to written communication and comprehension

Moreover, in the Arab world, investigations conducted in among the Middle Eastern EFL contexts have also produced similar results. Al-Mahrooqi et al. Saffar (2015) investigated the Omani EFL learners and its impact on communicative competence of that domain, thus affecting sociolinguistic and strategic. The researchers pointed out that just having cultural knowledge was not enough; learners needed motivational and behavioral components of cultural intelligence to exercise their awareness to communicative effect.

Existing research has predominantly fixed on teachers, cultural intelligence or international students in Western universities, EFL learners in their home countries and particularly those learner who come from conflict affected region like Iraq have been pay little attention. Abstract The cultural diversity of Iraq (Arab, Kurdish, Turkmen), and various religious affiliations (Shia, Sunni, Christian and Yazidi) make it unique but at the same time complicated context for studying Cultural Intelligence as an example which can be analyzed with English Language Learning process.

1.3. Spiritual Intelligence in Educational Contexts

Spiritual intelligence in Education is a relatively new but rapidly growing field of research. Zohar and Marshall (2000) described spiritual intelligence as the "intelligent" application of spirituality, which is separate from religiosity or mysticism. They claimed that spiritual intelligence allows individuals to access higher meanings, stay aware of the existential condition, and live from a broader sense of purpose beyond ego-driven obsession with superficial concerns.

Abstract: Empirical research has established a relationship between spiritual intelligence and educational outcomes. According to Amram and Dryer (2008), people with a high spiritual intelligence display an increased level of creativity, resilience and influence as leaders. Focusing specifically on

language education Aghasafari (2014) found a positive relationship between spirituality and its components on the one hand, and motivation to learn English among Iranian EFL learners as well as self-efficacy in learning English being mediated by attitude toward religion and academic achievement.

The nature of communication corresponding to spiritual intelligence has been defined through the following mechanisms: According to Emmons (2000), the two pillars of effective interpersonal communication are empathy and compassion, both of which spiritual intelligence uniquely strengthens. King (2008) anticipated that spiritual-intelligence-related sense-making ability assists individuals to construe communicative happenings in more encompassing existential contexts, thereby easing communication apprehension and fostering authenticity.

Spiritual intelligence has particular relevance in Islamic educational settings. Islamic spirituality focuses on tawhid (Unity of God), khilafah (stewardship) and the pursuit of knowledge as spiritual duties (Al-Attas, 1979). With regard to the students in this study being supported by Islamic spiritual ideals, such principles may serve to inform how they navigate their language learning - with English not merely considered as a hand-on skill but also as a vehicle for gaining knowledge which can facilitate the achievement of religious and social goals (Shahini & Riazi, 2011).

Hasanah (2019) researched at some Islamic schools in Indonesia and found that English communication competence students is significantly predicted by spiritual intelligence, with the personal meaning production component having the highest correlation. As the author argued, students who tied their purpose of learning English into spiritual purposes exhibited more engagement and communicative confidence.

Even though these findings seem very promising, the research on spiritual intelligence in EFL contexts is scarce and no exploration among Iraqi learners can be found. Furthermore, the high prominence taken by spirituality within Iraqi society and the educational provision challenges ongoing armed conflict poses, creates an important context in which to explore how spiritual resources might be harnessed as a potential source of advantage to enhance language learning and communication development.

1.4. Communication Competence in EFL Education

The development of communication competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts has come a long li/e since the foundational work by Canale and Swain (1980). Current definitions acknowledge that communication competence involves not only the linguistic knowledge but also pragmatic awareness, flexibility as a strategic resource and sensitivity to intercultural issues (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). The model of language ability described by Bachman and Palmer (1996) translated communicative performance into components: their approach to modeling was one based primarily on the interaction between WHAT the learner knows about language and the strategic competence that the learner employs in understand- ing or producing an utterance, as well as affective factors (see Figure 1).

The state of the art research investigating communication competence among Iraqi EFL learners indicates that these students have promising strengths, but must also overcome significant challenges. Iraqi students show good grammar knowledge but and are poor sociolinguist and have limited strategic competence in communicating in English (Al-Khafaji, 2016). The chasm between linguistic knowledge and communicative ability has been ascribed to a curriculum that fails to excite the imagination; poor exposure to the use of English in authentic social contexts; and the psychological consequences of educational dislocation.

Al-Mahrooqi et al. In relation to this issue, Kachru (1985) has explained that the Middle Eastern English as a Foreign Language contexts cannot be studied independently from their cultural and religious roots. They claimed that meaningful English communication for Iraqi students entails negotiation between local adherence to cultural identity and global conformity with international communicative events, requiring high-level intercultural awareness.

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship of multiple intelligences and communication competence. Initial interest in how various cognitive strengths might interrelate to language learning was sparked by Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. Interestingly, researchers have already investigated the role of emotional intelligence (Pishghadam, 2009), social intelligence (Alavinia & Ahmadpour, 2012) and cultural intelligence (Tajeddin & Momenian, 2012) in EFL learning. However, there remains a rare investigation on both cultural and spiritual intelligences towards communication competence.

1.5. The Iraqi Educational Context

Interpretation of the relationships among cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and communication competence can not be done outside the context of Iraqi education. After three decades of violence, oppression and instability that saw it at one time arguably the best education system in the region (Al-Khafaji 2016), Iraq's education is now worse than ever. These disruptions to school quality, teacher training, resources and student mental well-being were damaging.

However, English language education is very popular in Iraq despite these challenges. English is an important tool for global participation, educational progression and economic development. English language schools in Iraq attract students of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, forming microcosms reflecting Iraq's cultural diversity.

The culture of Iraq is fabled as being both diverse and homogenous in spiritual values. Most people in Iraq are Muslims, and Islamic spirituality infuses such areas of life as social relationships and education. But Iraq is also home to large populations of Christians, Yazidis and other religious groups — all cooling the Iraqi cultural furnace. The existence of a wider spiritual umbrella under which such diversity occasionally makes for an exciting setting to study the interplay between cultural and spiritual intelligences that drives communication.

This has been especially true for Iraq, where recent education reforms are calling for communicative language teaching strategies that align with globalized interaction yet respect local cultural norms and beliefs (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015). Outlook on the psychological and spiritual foundations that underlie communication effective from a psychological perspective may guide these reform ideas. Behaviour with English education must strive to be within the goals in Iraq — evidence-based instruction within means of educating suffices for all levels of learners.

Section Two Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The present study used quantitative correlational research design to figure out the relationships among cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and communicating competence of Iraqi EFL students. The correlational design is used to determine the relationship between variables in the absence of an intervention, making it well-suited for challenges that occur in natural settings (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). This design allows for testing different hypotheses about the strength and direction of relationships among these three constructs.

2.2 Participants

Participants The study sample consisted of 312 Iraqi EFL students who are registered in different English language and literature programs in three public universities; the University of Baghdad, the University of Basrah, and the University of Mosul. Selection criteria These three universities were selected to represent the geographic and cultural diversity of Iraq: Baghdad representing central, Basrah representing southern Iraq, and Mosul representing northern Iraq.

Participants were aged between 19 and 26 years ($M = 22.3$, $SD = 1.8$). The sample consisted of 178 Female students-57.1 per cent (manipulated) and 134 Male students -42.9 per cent, which is consistent with the distribution of genders typically enrolled in humanities programs at Iraqi university; universities generally have a larger female student population [4]. Participants The total number of participants was 312 (see Table 1). Of those, 98 (31.4%) were second year, 112 (35.9%) third year and 102 (32.7%) fourth-year students in their academic standing.

The ethnic distribution of the sample is representative for Iraq with 201 (64.4 %, Arab) and 87 (27.9%, Kurdish), while there were also several participants who declared their origin as Turkmen, Assyrian or mixed-24 (7.7%). In terms of religion, 267 participants (85.6%) reported being Muslim, 32 (10.3%) as Christian and 13 (4.1%) other faiths/non-religious. Participants had taken at least eight years of English in Iraqi primary and secondary school, plus extensive additional English coursework as part of their university programs.

Researchers visited through purposive sampling of different English departments and invited students to participate. No compensation was made to the students, and participation was voluntary. The response rate was about 73%, and the most common reasons for non-participation were time constraints or lack of interest in research activities.

2.3. Instruments

The variables of interest were measured using three validated instruments. Given that participants were all English majors, they had enough proficiency to understand academic English and therefore, all instruments were given in this language.

Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS). The Cultural Intelligence Scale justified most of the exploratory factor analyses which revealed a four-factor rotational structure (Ang et al. is a 20-item self-report measure of the four dimensions of cultural intelligence (4 items for metacognitive, 6 items for cognitive, 5 items for motivational, and 5 items for behavioral) based on Ang et al. Each item was scored on a 7-point Likert scale: from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Examples are, "I am aware of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds (metacognitive) and "I modify my cultural knowledge as appropriate (adaptability)" (behavioral).

Good psychometric properties have been found in a variety of cultural settings for the CQS, with internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) typically exceeding .80 on the full scale to ~.75 to .85 for subscales (Ang et al., 2007) Methods For this study, the total Cronbach's alpha was .88, with subscale alphas of .82 (metacognitive), .79 (cognitive), .85 (motivational), and .81 (behavioral).

Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI). King (2008) developed Spiritual intelligence self-report Inventory a 24 items scale: critical existential thinking (7), personal meaning production (5),

transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (not at all true of me) to 4 (completely true of me). Sample items are "I have often thought about the meaning of life" (critical existential thinking) and "I am able to make choices to fulfil a sense of purpose in my life" (personal meaning production).

King (2008) found acceptable internal consistency (overall alpha = .90). Content validity for the SISRI was established, and when compared to other energy/fatigue questionnaires (92;93). In the current investigation, an overall Cronbach's alpha of .90, with subscale alphas of .86 (critical existential thinking), .83 (personal meaning production), .87 (transcendental awareness), and .79 (conscious state expansion).

Communication Competence Scale (CCS). To assess communication competence, a scale adapted from Wiemann's (1977) Communication Competence Scale and later modified for EFL contexts by Rubin and Graham (1988) was used. This scale, which comprises 25 items, addresses six constructs of communication competence: (1) self-disclosure (5 items); (2) empathy (4 items); [Sheer and Chen pick up the thread] social relaxation (4 items), assertiveness (4 items), altercentrism [who is doing much of the talking?] and interaction management. Each item are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strong disagree to 5=strongly agree. Examples are "I feel at ease when communicating in English" (relaxation; social relaxation) and "I can regulate the pace and turn taking of conversation in English" (interaction management).

Extensive research has been conducted employing the adapted CCS in EFL studies, which demonstrated internal consistency reliabilities from .84 to .91 (Rubin & Graham, 1988). Overall, α was .89 in this study. (Alphas: higher-order construct = .76 to .84).

Demographic Questionnaire. Demographic data on age, gender, academic year, university, ethnicity, religious identification and years of English study were collected via a short questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedures

Material were collected during the Autumn semester in an academic year. Researchers visited English department classrooms during class time to present the study and pass out informed consent forms. Students who agreed to take part completed the questionnaire packet, comprising at about 25–30 minutes of work. All data were collected anonymously, and participants were given identification numbers in order to remain confidential.

The order of administrations was demographic questionnaire, CQS, SISRI and then CCS. This sequence was selected to reduce possible response bias, with the nature of the demographic questions being more concrete and located earlier in the survey while spiritual intelligence is less cogent and therefore comes second.

2.3 Data Analysis

SPSS version 26.0 was used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis) for all variables and internal consistency reliabilities were included in preliminary analyses. Bivariate relationships between cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and communication competence with demographic variables were computed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

To estimate the relative contribution of cultural intelligence and spiritual intelligence on communication competence after controlling for age, gender, academic year and years of studying

English, multiple linear regression analysis was employed. Before performing regression analyses, we checked the linearity, normality, homoscedasticity and absence of multicollinearity conditions.

Hierarchical regression with interaction terms was used to further investigate whether demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, religion) moderated the relationships between the key variables. Effect sizes were interpreted in keeping with Cohen's (1988) conventions: small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$), and large ($r = .50$)

Section Three: Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the mainly study variables. Cultural intelligence scores ranged from 48 to 132 ($M = 89.34$, $SD = 18.72$), spiritual intelligence scores ranged from 32 to 96 ($M = 68.45$, $SD = 14.23$), and communication competence scores ranged from 58 to 118 ($M = 86.72$, $SD = 13.68$). All variables demonstrated approximately normal distributions, with skewness values between -1.0 and +1.0 and kurtosis values within acceptable ranges.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables

Table

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cultural Intelligence	312	48	132	89.34	18.72	-0.34	-0.28
Spiritual Intelligence	312	32	96	68.45	14.23	-0.42	-0.15
Communication Competence	312	58	118	86.72	13.68	-0.38	-0.22

Note. Cultural Intelligence measured on 20-140 scale; Spiritual Intelligence on 0-96 scale; Communication Competence on 25-125 scale.

Examination of subscale scores revealed that motivational cultural intelligence ($M = 24.18$, $SD = 4.92$) and personal meaning production ($M = 18.34$, $SD = 3.87$) were the highest-scoring dimensions of their respective constructs. Conversely, behavioral cultural intelligence ($M = 20.45$, $SD = 5.12$) and conscious state expansion ($M = 14.23$, $SD = 4.56$) represented the lowest-scoring dimensions.

3.2 Correlation Analyses

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the main study variables. As hypothesized, significant positive correlations were observed between all pairs of variables. Cultural intelligence demonstrated a strong positive correlation with communication competence ($r = .62$, $p < .001$),

supporting Hypothesis 1. Spiritual intelligence also showed a significant positive correlation with communication competence ($r = .48, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. The correlation between cultural intelligence and spiritual intelligence was moderate and significant ($r = .45, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations Among Main Study Variables

Table

Variable	1	2	3
1. Cultural Intelligence	—		
2. Spiritual Intelligence	.45***	—	
3. Communication Competence	.62***	.48***	—

Note. *** $p < .001$.

The correlation between cultural intelligence and communication competence was significantly stronger than that between spiritual intelligence and communication competence ($z = 2.34, p < .05$), providing preliminary support for Hypothesis 3. Both correlations represented medium-to-large effect sizes according to Cohen's (1988) conventions.

Examination of demographic variables revealed several significant but small correlations. Female participants scored slightly higher on communication competence ($r = .14, p < .05$) and spiritual intelligence ($r = .16, p < .01$) than male participants. Academic year correlated positively with cultural intelligence ($r = .18, p < .01$) and communication competence ($r = .22, p < .001$), suggesting developmental trends across the university program. Years of English study showed small positive correlations with all three main variables (r range = .12 to .19, $p < .05$). No significant correlations were found between age and the main study variables.

3.3 Regression Analyses

To analyze the comparative predictive power of cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and communication competence multiple linear regression analysis was performed. The first block include the demographic variables (gender, academic year, years of applying English) which entered as control variable and the second block was included cultural intelligence and spiritual intelligence.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Communication Competence

Table

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI
Step 1: Control Variables						
Gender	1.87	1.23	.07	1.52	.129	[-0.55, 4.29]
Academic Year	1.45	0.62	.11	2.34	.020	[0.23, 2.67]
Years of English Study	0.34	0.21	.08	1.62	.106	[-0.07, 0.75]
Step 2: Main Predictors						
Cultural Intelligence	0.42	0.05	.57	8.40	<.001	[0.32, 0.52]
Spiritual Intelligence	0.18	0.06	.19	3.00	.003	[0.06, 0.30]

Note. Step 1: $R^2 = .06$, $F(3, 308) = 6.52$, $p < .001$. Step 2: $\Delta R^2 = .40$, $F(2, 306) = 102.34$, $p < .001$. Total model: $R^2 = .46$, $F(5, 306) = 52.18$, $p < .001$.

Step 1: A manipulate and control variables accounted for 6% of the variance in communication competence ($R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$). All models were not significantly predictive ($B = 0.001$), with only academic year being a significant predictor. Step 2 of the model accounted for additional 40% ($\Delta R^2 = .40$, $p < .001$). Enabling a total explained variance of 46% ($p < 0.001$).

In the final model for communication competence, cultural intelligence was a significant predictor. 57, $p < .001$) and spiritual intelligence ($\beta = .19$, $p = .003$). Academic year was still a tentative predictor but not strong ($\beta = .11$, $p = .020$), whereas gender and years of English study did not reach significance. The results of model comparisons provide strong support for Hypothesis 3, suggesting that the significant indirect effect of cultural intelligence on communication competence (through spiritual intelligence) is larger than the direct effect between spiritual intelligence to communication competence but both constructs uniquely contribute as hypothesized.

The standardized regression coefficients show that communication competence is predicted by cultural intelligence roughly three times as strongly as it is by spiritual intelligence. Nonetheless, spiritual intelligence made a notable unique contribution ($\beta = .18$). Cultural competency 18 suggests the addition of meaningful explanatory power on top of cultural intelligence perspective alone.

Section Four: Discussion

4.1. Interpretation of Findings

The current study investigates the relationship among cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and communication competence among Iraqi EFL students and identifies a number of significant theoretical and practical contributions.

There was a strong positive relationship between cultural intelligence and communication competence ($r = .62$). Note that the number 62 corroborates previous research conducted in various EFL contexts (Tajeddin & Momenian, 2012; Shao & Zhou, 2016), confirming a theoretical assumption that intercultural capability is part and parcel of foreign language learning communicative effectiveness. This conclusion is especially important in the context of Iraq where Students face negotiations between their cultural practice locally and communicative English with others in an international setting. The multidimensional nature of cultural intelligence is likely to endow Iraqi learners with the metacognitive awareness, knowledge about other cultures, passion and encouragement for learning and types (and other types) of behaviors that help them practice communicating in English.

There is a moderate and positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and communication competence ($r = .48$) can be viewed as a significant addition to the existing literature on spirituality in language education. The gaining of this knowledge implies that the higher levels of existential awareness, meaning-making perceptions, and transcendental consciousness are also associated Iranian students with better capacities to convey their meaning to one another as they pedagogically interact in English. This relationship may be due to one of several mechanisms. First, spiritual intelligence might improve communication by allowing learners to empathize and connect with interlocutors more genuinely (Emmons, 2000). Second, the spiritual intelligence concept of meaning making might also enable learners to situate language learning within larger life objectives that contribute in motivating and sustaining success (Aghasafari, 2014). Third, being spiritually aware may diminish communication apprehension in terms of an existential grounding and ability to perspective take.

The result that cultural intelligence is more powerful in predicting communication competence than spiritual intelligence ($\beta = .57$ vs.. Despite both cultural intelligence and communication competence are constructs of paramount importance, as discussed in section 2.1., the advantages that one can draw from understanding cultural intelligence have a more immediate payoff concerning communicative performance (19). This is in line with the specificity principle of Educational Psychology, where constructs which are more close to specific learning outcomes should predict those outcomes better (Byram, 1997). Cultural intelligence is a working closer to out the intercultural requirements of english communication, while spiritual intelligence works through less specific psychological processes.

Nevertheless, the large unique variance accounted for by spiritual intelligence (around 4%) controlling for cultural intelligence, should not be minimized. In the context of Iraqi society, where it is believed that religious and spiritual values hitherto underpin social identity and daily life, spiritual intelligence may be an underlying resource which drives the development and application of cultural intelligence. There was a moderate correlation between cultural and spiritual intelligences ($r = .45$) points out that these constructs are related but different, potentially working together to strengthen communicative effectiveness.

4.2 Aspects of the Intelligence and Communication

The analyses at the subscales showed that motivational and behavioral dimensions of cultural intelligence are the strongest functional predictors of communication competence. Considering our findings, it is recommended to broaden the angle from which preparing for new communicative contexts and intercultural encounters between Iraqi students and native English speakers should be approached: It seems then that the most important aspects of application here concern not so much students' knowledge of distinct features/characteristics of cultures, their metacognitive awareness or adaptability per se; but rather that the effectiveness in communication as well as a tendency to willingness to sit down with diverse cultural instances may seem higher among those who are able to attract them against their own predispositions. This highlights information intrinsic to motivation in language learning (Gardner, 2010), indicating that raising the interest of students towards intercultural engagement, instead of merely delivering knowledge on culture may yield better results.

Of the spiritual intelligence dimensions, only personal meaning production and transcendental awareness were significant predictors, while critical existential thinking and conscious state expansion were not significant. That pattern is indicative that the ability to attach a sense of personal significance to language learning and/or awareness of transcendent realities — are more directly relevant to communication competence than abstract philosophical reasoning or mystical experience. Linking English study with personal spirituality and shared religious norms among Iraqi students may motivate successful engagement in communication.

4.3 Contextual Considerations

This data presents an opportunity to interpret through the lens of the Iraqi educational context. The situation for Iraqi students has been quite destructive, as protracted conflict in their home country may have prevented cultural exposure and spiritual development. In dealing with complex societal terrains of post conflict reconstruction, cultural intelligence might be a resource whereas spiritual intelligence could be a resilience factor to help in the promotion of psychological wellbeing and positive interactions with others.

The heterogeneous nature of the Iraqi student sample — including Arab, Kurdish and other ethnicities as well as Muslim, Christian and other religions — enhances generalisability across Iraq's multi-ethnic society. This absence of strong moderating effects suggests that the relationships between cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and communication competence are also relatively stable over demographic subgroups, indicating very high universal psychological processes that do not vary according to culture or religion.

4.4 Theoretical Implications

These findings add to multiple theoretical developments. First, they empirically justify a more integrated model of communicative competence that goes beyond the linguistic and pragmatic levels by including intercultural and spiritual dimensions. Canale and Swain's (1980) original model Combined that of Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), who highlighted sociolinguistic and strategic competence but omitted intercultural awareness or spiritual sensitivity. Our current findings indicate that such broad human abilities should be addressed in future theoretical models of communication competence.

Second, the findings endorse a multi-theory approach to language education. Gardner's (1983) original theory of multiple intelligences included linguistic and interpersonal but did not include aural or culture/spirit. The present study found these intelligences to have different relationships with L2

outcome measures, prompting the authors to consider a theory of language-specific learning intelligences.

Third, the results serve as evidence of a relatively new area in foreign language education, positive psychology (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Going beyond consideration of only language and/or learning impediments, this work indicates the importance of positive dots: cultural capability and spiritual awareness in improving communication. This affirmative stance could underpin strengths-based applications of language pedagogy that capitalize on learners' existing assets.

4.5 Practical Implications

This study such findings have some practical implications for EFL curriculum development and pedagogy in Iraq and similar contexts. First, the strongly predictive character of cultural intelligence indicates that explicit integration of intercultural competence into EFL curricula is desirable over incidental learning as a byproduct of language education. An integrations may involve things like structured intercultural training, and experience with exposure to various usages and cultural norms of English as well opportunities for virtual or real internship.

Second, despite being less important than cultural intelligence in predicting second language learning outcomes, spiritual intelligence can exert a non-negligible influence; thus, educators should acknowledge students' spiritual resources and consider incorporating them into language instruction. This does not mean teaching religion, but rather finding room for students to understand language learning as connected to their own beliefs, goals and existential struggles. Dialogue might address ethical aspects of intercultural communication, the use of language in articulating religious ideals, or spiritual topics in English literature.

Third, the dominance of motivational and behavioral dimensions of cultural intelligence suggests that pedagogical practices should prioritize experienced-based learning and experiential intercultural engagement over passive transmission-focused learning about culture. Learning by doing might just be better than lecturing on cultural fact, think role-plays, intercultural simulations or community-engagement projects.

Fourth and when taking into consideration the condition in which education in Iraq is recovering, these findings imply that support for the psychological and spiritual needs of students should be provided along with linguistic instruction. *Breaking From Cycles of Violence*: Teachers must continue to explore educational practices that embrace spiritual needs and restore cultural belonging for students whose lives have been marked by the traumas of conflict.

4.6. Directions for Future Research

Our study paves the way for many future avenues of exploration. Research following students longitudinally over their university careers could allow us to explore patterns of change in the cultural and spiritual intelligences and how these trajectories are related to gains in communication competence. Causal evidence for pedagogical applications could be presented in intervention studies testing the effects of cultural intelligence training or spiritual development programs on communicative outcomes.

Comparative studies of other Middle Eastern EFL contexts (e.g., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan) might explore the extent to which relationships discovered here hold across countries that vary along line of cultural diversity, religious homogeneity and exposure to conflict. This research would also determine whether the findings obtained in Iraqi individuals are indicative of general psychological mechanisms or context-dependent processes.

However, qualitative research investigating how Iraqi students perceive and experience the relationships between culture/spirituality and English communication could add much-needed contextual richness to the present study's quantitative data. Using phenomenological or narrative approaches might help us to understand the real experiences behind the statistics.

Research that investigates the neurologic bases of cultural and spiritual intelligences, as well as their associations with language processing via quantitative methodology in neuroscience studies may further shed light on the biological basis for these relationships. This kind of research could perhaps guide the construction of targeted cognitive training programs.

Conclusion

As a part of qualitative study the present research examined the associations between cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and communication competence among Iraqi EFL learners. The results enrich theoretical understanding of multiple intelligences in language education and provide the basis for practical recommendations for EFL curriculum development both specifically in Iraq and arguably also elsewhere.

English education in a settings as culturally rich, spiritually significant, and recovering from the devastation of recent years as Iraq is presented with special challenges but also wonderful opportunities! Using culturally-sustaining pedagogical practices, for example, would expand middle childhood educators' approaches to teaching by considering the entire human resource capacities needed for engaging in authentic communication between and among students. That is not simply adding something to the language curriculum, but acknowledging a fuller humanity capable of finding ways to bridge local identities and global communicative expectations in both mind and soul.

With Iraq moving through the process of educational reconstruction and efforts to ready students for interaction with follow students globally, knowledge on how competency in communication happens psychologically and spiritually is becoming even more important. This research shows that successful use of English in the Iraqi context involves not just competence in grammar and vocabulary, but also an understanding of sensitivity to culture, behavior, the existential process as I mean both dispositions (personal) contextualizing different meanings in intercultural sometimes.

Ultimately, the results endorse a vision of language education as much more than learning technical skills, but becoming an integrated person who can use and communicate across cultures in authentic ways guided by ethical principles. Holistic language education is valuable not only for individual learners, but also to larger societal concerns -- in an age of globalization, with the importance of cross-cultural exchanges and especially peaceful co-habitation across cultural fault-lines, as well as common human flourishing

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