

The Title of the research paper: The Impact of Self-Directed Learning and Andragogy on EFL College Students' Communicative Proficiency: A Statistical Analysis

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أثر التعلم الموجه ذاتياً والأندراغوجيا على الكفاءة التواصلية لطلاب الكلية من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية
كلفة أجنبية: تحليل إحصائي

أرسالان علي قادر، طالب دكتوراه في اللغويات التطبيقية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية التربية الأساسية /
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الملخص

تُحدد معظم الأدبيات المتعلقة بتعلّم طلاب الجامعة للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في إقليم كردستان العراق مشاكل جادة في مدى تمكن هؤلاء الشباب من التواصل بهذه اللغة، على الرغم من مرور عقود من الإصلاح في التعليم. ويعود ذلك إلى استمرار الممارسات التربوية التقليدية القائمة على الإلقاء والتركيز على المعلم، وبطريقة تتعارض تماماً مع مبادئ تعليم الكبار، وهو ما يختلف عن الممارسة الجيدة المصممة لتعزيز المتعلمين المستقلين. لذا، أُجريت الدراسة الحديثة لمعرفة مدى إمكانية تحسين مهارات تحدث الطلاب في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلال استراتيجيات التعلّم الذاتي المدمجة بتعليم يستند إلى مبادئ (تعليم الكبار) والأندراغوجيا. يُعدّ هذا البحث بحثاً شبه تجريبي طولياً بطبيعته، وقد أُجري على (١٠٠) طالب جامعي من السنة الثانية يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في كلية التربية بجامعة صلاح الدين-أربيل. جرى توزيع المشاركين بالتساوي على المجموعة التجريبية (n=50) أو مجموعة الضبط (n=50). تم وضعهم في مجموعة تجريبية (متعلمين ذاتي التوجيه (SDL)-أو مجموعة ضابطة تلقت تعليمًا شفهيًا تقليديًا يركز على المعلم. في الدراسة، استخدمنا اختبارًا دوليًا "IELTS" كاختبار قبلي واختبار بعدي وفق معايير مُقيّمة، وهي: الطلاقة والاتساق؛ والثروة اللغوية؛ والمدى النحوي والدقة؛ والقدرة على النطق لتقييم مستوى ترابط مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب. تم إجراء تحليل التباين (ANCOVA) للفروق الجوهرية بين المجموعتين فيما يتعلق بمتغيرات النتائج لتحليل البيانات الإحصائية. وأشارت النتائج إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المجموعتين لصالح المجموعة التجريبية، على المستوى الإحصائي (F=56.41, p<.001). وبالمقارنة بين المجموعة التجريبية ومجموعة الضبط، التي حققت فيها الطالبات فقط تحسناً قدره (٠.٣٨) على مقياس IELTS، فإن المشاركين في المجموعة التجريبية حققوا تحسناً ملحوظاً بلغ (١.٣٠) نقطة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، لوحظ حجم أثر كبير تقريباً لمهارات التحدث المستهدفة الأخرى (Cohen's d = 2.51-2.89)، مما يدعم التحقق من الفعالية الكلية للتدخل التجريبي المستخدم في هذه الدراسة. توفر هذه النتائج تأكيداً تجريبياً قوياً لملاءمة معايير الأندراغوجيا الموجودة في أطر التعليم المتقدم غير الغربي لإظهار قدرات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة خارجية (بعيدة). وفي الختام، تقدم المقالة توصيات راسخة وقابلة للتنفيذ لصنّاع السياسات حول كيفية تطوير المنهج، وإصلاح أنظمة التقييم، وتدريب

المعلمين في إقليم كردستان العراق وما وراءه. الكلمات المفتاحية: الأندراجوجيا؛ التعلم الذاتي الموجّه؛ التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ الكفاءة التواصلية؛ IELTS؛ التصميم شبه التجريبي لدراسة البحث على حافة الأسطورة والواقع لمتعلمي EFL في إقليم كردستان العراق

Abstract

While there has been educational reform in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) for decades, a large number of these EFL university students remain only marginally communicative due to ongoing transmission-based, teacher-centered pedagogical practices that are antithetical to supporting adult learning and learner autonomy. The current research explored whether andragogical-based instruction through SDL strategies was effective in improving EFL speaking ability. The longitudinal quasi-experimental study involved 100 second-year undergraduate students researching English as a foreign language at the College of Education, Salahaddin University-Erbil. The participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental ($n = 50$) or a control group ($n = 50$). The experimental group had participation in speaking instruction rooted in andragogical principles, SDL-oriented practices; the control group received traditional teacher-centered methods of speaking instruction. An altered IELTS speaking assessment was applied as both a pre and post-test to evaluate the students' speaking cohere across 4 dimensions: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to assess clinically relevant differences between the two groups with respect to their outcome variables. The results showed large and educationally significant differences between groups in favor of the experimental group on overall speaking performance ($F=56.4$, $p<.001$). Compared to the control group (0.38 IELTS band points), those in the experimental group improved an average of 1.30 IELTS band points. Moreover, very large effect sizes were obtained in all speaking domains (Cohen's $d = 2.51-2.89$), demonstrating the overwhelming efficacy of the treatment intervention. The results provide evidence for the application of andragogical principles and self-directed learning strategies in non-Western higher education systems for EFL speaking instruction. Policy implications for curriculum development, assessment reform, teacher education in the KRI and similar educational contexts are offered. Keywords: andragogy; self-directed learning; EFL speaking; communicative competence; IELTS; Kurdistan Region of Iraq; quasi-experimental design, adult education

1. Introduction

Given the growing prevalence of English as an international language of scholarship, commerce and diplomacy worldwide, development of EFL curricula promoting communicative competence has become an urgent issue in non-anglophone higher education (CelceMurcia, 2008; Flowerdew and Miller, 2005). This is a pressing problem particularly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI): A long-established and extensively documented gap remains between the communicative targets of EFL curricula, and the actual oral performance which graduates display upon entering international academic and professional spheres (Al-Dabbagh, 2019; Sherwani, 2015). A core explanation for this gap contains its basis in epistemological assumptions that characterize two paradigms operating widely in higher education institutions of KRI. In this context, EFL instruction tends to be teacher-centred in nature, employing grammar-translation methodology with an emphasis on rote memorisation and declarative knowledge of linguistic forms that does not provide what students need to produce spontaneous oral language (Al-Tamimi and Shuib, 2009; Karim and Hasan, 2007; Rashidi and Rafieerad, 2010). Freire's (1970) concepts of the 'banking model' of education can be drawn upon here; these didactic tendencies treat learners as passive recipients of knowledge transmitted — an incommensurable characterization with goals consistent with respective cognitive, motivational, and experiential profiles typical to adults in post-secondary contexts. Andragogy — the discipline of understanding how adults learn, as theorised by Malcolm Knowles (1970, 1980, 1984) — provide a more theoretically justified alternative. Andragogy, based on six core assumptions about adult learners (need to know how and why learning is important, self-concept of the learner as a self-directing human being, prior experience of the learner is what meets their needs or delivery system, readiness is driven by life tasks requiring developmental change, orientation to learning is problem-centered and relevance-oriented need for immediate application and intrinsic motivation), offers both a diagnostic framework for identifying limitations in traditional EFL instruction and an innovative design-driven framework that supports efforts to create more effective pedagogical alternatives. Alongside the andragogy is Self-Directed Learning (SDL), which in this research was operationalised via Garrison's (1997) tripartite model depicting self-management, self-monitoring and motivation, which offers concrete instructional scaffolding for learner autonomy & metacognitive regulation. While these frameworks theoretically hold great promise, on the ground empirical evidence specifically for all of their potential effects on EFL communicative competence is scarce,

methodologically diverse in nature and mostly situated in intentionally narrow geographical areas (Western anglophone or East Asian) (Taylor and Kroth, 2009; Hiemstra, 2004). To the best of our knowledge, KRI as a post-conflict context with its unique multilingual ecology and higher education structure and culture offers this type of educational environment as no other systematic empirical explorations of andragogical EFL instruction have been reported thus far. This research fills this gap directly. Using a quasi-experimental comparison-group design with mixed-methods analysis, this research examines the influence of a fourteen-week andragogy/Self-Directed Learning (SDL)-informed instructional intervention on the IELTS assessed speaking performance of second-year undergraduate EFL students at the University of Salahaddin-Erbil, College of Education, English Department, KRI. This paper is a quantitative analysis reporting five sets of null hypotheses related to speaking performance and the four IELTS rubric dimensions. Qualitative outcomes related to the learner and teacher experiences of the intervention are reported separately.

1.1 Research Hypotheses

For the quantitative strand five null hypotheses are proposed, all evaluated at the Bonferroni-corrected $p < 01$:

1. (Main Effect): there is no statistically significant difference between the mean IELTS speaking score gain of the experimental group and the control group.
2. (Fluency and Coherence): There is no significant difference exist for improvement on the fluency and coherence dimension between the experimental group and control group
3. (Lexical Resource): There is no statistically significant difference in the lexical resource scores within or between the experimental and control groups.
4. (Grammatical Range & accuracy): there is no statistically-significant difference displayed between the experimental group and the control group in terms of improvement on that dimension.
5. (Pronunciation) : There is no statistically significant difference between the experimental group and control group in terms of improvement on the pronunciation dimension.

2.Theoretical Framework

2.1 Andragogy in Adult EFL Learning

The andragogical theory developed by Knowles is based on six assumptions which serve to differentiate between adult and child learners, leading to direct instructional implications. There are some assumptions about adult learning: Or they need to know why it is important for them to learn before they will engage in learning; They have a self-concept that involves being responsible for their own decisions and the practice of dependent personalities has no room for the psychological need of adults — dependence is seen as aversive; Their prior experience, perhaps more than any other single factor, should be a resource in learning (increasingly recognized as an actual classroom's richest resource); They are ready to learn those things they feel they need to know or perform their social roles effectively rather than chronological age being a defining factor; They like problem solving and relation directly to by reference problems, tasks, not content being placed at centre stage "learning" with just timetables in few minds of learners because what many do not think foundational knowledge persisting over time is irrelevant what people deal with day-live problems or Issues (deferred vs present) and finally The motivation is intrinsic (adult-learning topics starting at encyclopedic from intrinsic told educational theorist Knowles, 1984)(Knowles et al.2005).In EFL contexts usually characterised by educational systems which place great emphasis on teacher centred, exam driven teaching and learning, these assumptions are systematically undermined. Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners find themselves seen as passive recipients of grammatical knowledge not active agents of communicative development, are understood without reference to their previous linguistic and communicative experience, and intrinsic motivation recognised by andragogical theory as the greatest driver in adult learning is replaced with extrinsic pressure through high-stakes examinations (Karim and Hasan, 2007; Salih, 2017). In reverse, this research has tested an andragogical intervention that is framed to amend these violations by operationalising all six of Knowles's assumptions through specific pedagogical practices.

2.2 Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning (SDL), defined by Knowles (1975, p. 18) as a process in which learners take the initiative to diagnose their own learning needs, set their own learning goals, identify resources for learning strategy; and evaluate their learning outcomes is operationalised in this research as Garrison three-dimensional model [1]. Explicit strategy training in this intervention emphasizes the three dimensions of (1) self-management (task and context control), (2) self-monitoring (cognitive and metacognitive regulation), and (3) motivation (entering and sustaining engagement). A considerable body of SDL research, conducted in EFL contexts, suggests that explicit strategy instruction (which can be realized by directing strategies usage as part of a motivationally

activating instructional environment), leads to significant improvement in learners' metacognitive capability and consequently in linguistic performance (Oxford, 2011; Nguyen and Gu, 2013).

2.3 Communicative Competence as a Construct in IELTS

With respect to communicative competence, the research understands it as a multifaceted ability to make appropriate and effective use of language in context (Canale & Swain 1980) and focusing at least on grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. In the quantitative strand, communicative competence in speaking was operationalised as fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy and pronunciation across the four IELTS speaking rubric dimensions. First: The IELTS rubric is selected based on theoretical (the four approaches map nicely to Canale and Swain's model), psychometric (so much construct validity, test-retest reliability, inter-rater reliability, etc. are well-documented by its authors) and practically familiar grounds (its contextually relevant given what KRI learners want to do internationally).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Research Design: non-equivalent comparison group quasi-experimental design Two intact second-year undergraduate classes at the University of Salahaddin-Erbil, College of Education, English Department, Erbil, KRI were chosen as experimental and control groups based on pre-test equivalence. The administrative structure of the institution allowed for true random assignment of individual students. The research comprises both qualitative (reported elsewhere) and quantitative elements, and the present paper reports only the quantitative results.

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 100 second year undergraduate students at the University of Salahaddin-Erbil, College of Education, English Department: 50 in a experimental group and 50 control. The overall sample had a mean age of 21.55 years (SD = 1.23), which further qualifies each participant as an adult learner in this context. Results There was no significant difference between the two groups on all measured demographic and background variables (gender, mean age, L1 background, years of English study) and pre-test IELTS speaking scores (all $p > .05$; all Cohen's $d \leq .10$), establishing baseline equivalence. Demographics of sample – Table 1

Table 1 Participant Demographics

Variable	Experimental (n = 50)	Control (n = 50)	Total (N = 100)
Male	23 (46.0%)	24 (48.0%)	47 (47.0%)
Female	27 (54.0%)	26 (52.0%)	53 (53.0%)
Mean Age (years)	21.4	21.7	21.55
Kurdish L1	44 (88.0%)	46 (92.0%)	90 (90.0%)
Arabic L1	6 (12.0%)	4 (8.0%)	10 (10.0%)
Mean years studying English	12.3	12.1	12.2

3.3 Instruments

An adapted IELTS Speaking Module developed by the researcher and two IELTS examiners, who were trained in KRI context, was chosen as the main quantitative instrument. The modified instrument mimics the three-section design of an original IELTS speaking test: a discussion about personal topics (Part 1), an individual long turn on a cue-card theme (Part 2), and a two-way conversation of abstract issues (Part 3) with an overall time for recording per candidate of around eleven to fourteen minutes. To avoid testing effects, forms were developed in parallel for pre-test and post-test administration. Although an adapted version of the test was utilized, scoring strictly adhered to the official IELTS nine-band descriptive rubrics across all four language domains. A panel of three EFL assessment specialists, two with active IELTS examiner status, established content validity for the instrument. Inter-rater reliability, evaluated by ICC, was excellent at both pre-test (ICC = .81–.0 to .18 for pre-test (ICC = 0.77), 87 across distances) and post-test ICC = .83–.89), all exceeding the. The ideal reliability value has been argued to be 80 threshold (Dörnyei, 2007) in the applied linguistics research. Intra-rater reliability coefficients were. 88 and. Two raters 91

3.4 Intervention

The lesson sessions: The experimental group were provided with a fourteen-week forty-two-hour andragogy/SDL instructional intervention based on the course book Empower B1(Second Edition; Cambridge University Press), which also represented the basic syllabus of both groups throughout the period of time that this study conducted. The intervention was structured within a three-phase model that draws on Grow's (1991) self-direction framework. Phase one (Weeks 1–4): establishes the collaborative learning climate, activates prior experience in learners, introduces SDL awareness, and uses a learning contract which stands for written individually negotiated agreements that specify personal communicative goals and planned activities as well as criteria for self-evaluation. The development phase (Weeks 5–10) incorporated andragogical principles into a series of problem-centred, experience-based communicative task sequences that explicitly taught SDL strategies for self-assessment, goal-setting, time management and self-monitoring. The consolidation phase (Weeks 11–14) gradually transferred control of instruction to the learner using independent speaking development projects and student-facilitated reflection activities. Indeed, every one of the six andragogical assumptions (know why, self-concept, and past experience/learning readiness for self-directed learning; availability of authentic tasks that solve real-world problems do not need to be motivated.) was systematically operationalised throughout the intervention. Meanwhile, the control group experienced a traditional EFL instruction by the institution's regular programme for equal duration.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 27. The Shapiro-Wilk test (all $W \geq .96$, all $p > .05$) and visual inspection of histograms and quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plots confirming approximate normality across the analyses. Levene's test indicated the homogeneity of variance for all markers (all $p > .05$). To assess pre-test group equivalence, independent samples t-tests (continuous variables) and chi-square tests (categorical variables) were conducted.

ANCOVA: The main inferential analyses utilised Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with group (experimental vs control) as the between-subjects factor, post-test IELTS scores as the dependent variable and pre-test scores treated as a covariate. Separate ANCOVAs were performed for overall speaking (H1) and for each of the four rubric dimensions (H2-H5). RESULTS Effect sizes are reported as partial eta squared (η^2p) and were interpreted per Cohen's (1988) conventions (.01 = small, .06 = medium, .14 = large). It were applied a Bonferroni correction across the four comparisons of rubric dimensions (criterion alpha: .01. In addition, the significant within-group pre-test to post-test gain from pretest to posttest between groups for the experimental group was examined using paired samples t-tests alongside Cohen's d effect sizes.

4. Results

4.1 Pre-test Equivalence

Panel A of Table 2 shows the pre-test descriptive statistics and group equivalence results. There were no significant differences between groups on any pre-test measure (all $ps > .05$; all Cohen's $d \leq .10$), confirming baseline equivalence. The means for the pre-test scores for both groups were between about 4.63 and 4.76 across all four rubric dimensions, which corresponds to an overall score of IELTS Band 4.5–5.0 in line with our expectations that second-year EFL undergraduates in the KRI system would not exceed these levels of proficiency (Table Keywords: Table 1).

Table 2 Pre-test Descriptive Statistics and Group Equivalence Tests ($N = 100$)

Dimension	Exp M	Exp SD	Con M	Con SD	T	df	p	d
Overall Speaking	4.71	0.62	4.68	0.59	0.22	98	.826	.04
Fluency & Coherence	4.69	0.65	4.63	0.61	0.42	98	.678	.06
Lexical Resource	4.74	0.60	4.71	0.57	0.23	98	.821	.05
Grammatical Range & Accuracy	4.66	0.63	4.69	0.60	-0.22	98	.830	.05
Pronunciation	4.76	0.58	4.70	0.62	0.45	98	.654	.10

Note. Exp = Experimental group; Con = Control group; M = mean IELTS band score; SD = standard deviation; t = independent samples t-statistic; p = two-tailed p-value; d = Cohen's d.

4.2 Results of Post-test and ANCOVA

Table 3 provides post-test descriptive statistics, mean gain scores, and ANCOVA results across each of the five measures. The experimental group's overall mean score from post-test 6.01 (SD = 0.55) was a mean gain of 1.30 IELTS band points from pre to post compared to control which had a score of 5.06 (SD = 0.53) and gain of only 0.38. The F-statistics from the five ANCOVA tests were all statistically significant (all $F > 48$, all $p < .001$), and three of the directional hypotheses (H1–H3) were supported at the Bonferroni-corrected significance criterion of $p < .01$. $\eta^2 p = .417$ (grammatical range and accuracy) to $\eta^2 p = .478$ (fluency + coherence), well above Cohen's (1988) standard of .00 (or .14 for a large effect), suggesting that between 41.7% and 47.8% of variance in post-test scores was accounted for by group membership, over and above pre-test performance. Statistical power was .99 across analyses, indicating that the sample was more than sufficient for identifying effects of the observed size.

Table 3

Post-test Descriptive Statistics, Mean Gains, and ANCOVA Results (N = 100)

Dimension	Exp M	Exp SD	Con M	Con SD	Exp Gain	Con Gain	F	$\eta^2 p$
Overall Speaking (H01)	6.01	0.55	5.06	0.53	+1.30	+0.38	56.4***	.455
Fluency & Coherence (H02)	6.09	0.57	5.06	0.55	+1.40	+0.43	62.3***	.478
Lexical Resource (H03)	5.97	0.54	5.09	0.51	+1.23	+0.38	50.1***	.424
Grammatical Range & Accuracy (H04)	5.89	0.58	5.03	0.56	+1.23	+0.34	48.7***	.417
Pronunciation (H05)	6.09	0.52	5.07	0.54	+1.33	+0.37	54.8***	.446

Note. Exp = Experimental; Con = Control; M = post-test IELTS band score mean; SD = standard deviation; Exp/Con Gain = mean difference (post-test minus pre-test); F = ANCOVA F-statistic with pre-test as covariate; $\eta^2 p$ = partial eta squared. *** $p < .001$ (Bonferroni-corrected criterion $\alpha = .01$).

4.3 Effects Pattern for IELTS Rubric Dimensions

The pattern of effect sizes among the four rubric dimensions (H2–H5) warrants a more targeted interpretation. The largest impact is the fluency and coherence ($\eta^2 p = .479$) then understanding w ($\eta^2 p = .446$), lexical resource ($\eta^2 p = .424$), and grammatical range and accuracy ($\eta^2 p = .417$). This ordering is thus theoretically plausible and consistent with the directional hypotheses of the research. The predominance of the fluency and coherence effect indicates that the direct relationship between andragogical principles focusing on sustained, goal-driven oral production free of anxiety through automatization processes fostering fluency (Skehan, 1998). Fluency is a matter of practicing in communicatively demanding but psychologically safe conditions — exactly the sort of circumstances that andragogic learning climate create systematically. This is theoretically provocative because an effect of this magnitude on pronunciation challenges the widespread assumption that phonological development in adult L2 learners is especially impervious to short-term instructional influence as a result of critical period effects (Scovel, 1988; Long, 1990). The considerable pronunciation improvements that the experimental group made relative to the control suggest that a training component as SDL where maueve — explicit self-directed phonological monitoring and audio self-evaluation — in it, mobilizes adult learners metacognitive resources for phonological development in ways conventional instruction (passive imitation) struggles. The effect for grammatical range and accuracy is much smaller but still large ($\eta^2 p = .417$) and it is noted it is well established in SLA research that morphosyntactic development is the dimension of communicative competence most resistant to short-term instructional intervention (Ellis, 2006; Norris and Ortega, 2000). That said, a large effect of this size represents strong support for the inclusion of greater focus-on-form in future studies seeking to disentangle the many benefits from communicative task practice and above all strengthens the claim that metalinguistic awareness activities, self-monitoring strategy training, and

controlled peer feedback on grammatical accuracy are necessary ingredients of any effective grammar development intervention — even one delivered over only fourteen weeks.

4.4 Within-Group Improvements within the Experimental Group

Within group paired comparisons for the experimental group are detailed in Table 4. The results of all five paired t-tests were statistically significant (all p s < .001). Compared to pre-testing, gains (mean difference $\pm$ SD = 35.7 ± 18.4 ; $p < 0.001$), and Cohen's d effect sizes for within-group gains were extremely large across all subscales ($d = 2.51$ - 2.89). These findings validate that on all of the rubric dimensions, improvement in speaking performance was both large and statistically significant for the experimental group independent of between-group comparison. Effect sizes with this magnitude indicate radical gains — far exceeding what is found for standard short-term EFL instruction in related studies conducted around it — and are detectable not just to trained IELTS assessors but also by learners themselves in real-world communicative interaction.

Table 4 Within-Group Paired Comparisons for the Experimental Group ($n = 50$)

Dimension	Pre M	Post M	Gain	SD diff	t	p	d
Overall Speaking	4.71	6.01	+1.30	0.48	16.05	<.001	2.71
Fluency & Coherence	4.69	6.09	+1.40	0.50	16.57	<.001	2.80
Lexical Resource	4.74	5.97	+1.23	0.47	15.49	<.001	2.62
Grammatical Range & Accuracy	4.66	5.89	+1.23	0.49	14.88	<.001	2.51
Pronunciation	4.76	6.09	+1.33	0.46	17.15	<.001	2.89

Note. Pre M = pre-test mean; Post M = post-test mean; Gain = mean difference (post minus pre); SD diff = standard deviation of difference scores; t = paired samples t-statistic; d = Cohen's d effect size for within-group gain.

5. Discussion

The results from this research offers strong and consistent empirical evidence for the value of the blended pedagogical framework informed by SDL as an effective approach to EFL speaking development in a non-Western, post-conflict higher education context. Consequently, all five null hypotheses are rejected with effect sizes dramatically surpassing the large benchmark ($\eta^2 p > .14$) and within-group gains of momentous scale ($d > 2.50$). This warrants a discussion of three principal theoretical contributions of these findings. The research makes three contributions: First, it diverges from SDL ideations grounded in the concept among populations living in Western cultures where the universalist assumptions of andragogy have been theorized as problematic. A physics role-playing game Also, Pratt (1988) and Li and Campbell (2008), critics of the model have argued that its emphasis on individual autonomy, self-direction, and intrinsic motivation are premised in Western culture traits which do not transfer well into a collectivist, authority-deferential context. The Kurdish cultural setting of the present research — marked by norms requiring deference to authority and face-saving orientations that would tend to be expected to depress autonomous learning — seems a particularly strong test of andragogical instruction. That the intervention elicits effects of considerable magnitude in this context indicates that the andragogical assumptions encapsulated within it—when operationalised in culturally-sensitive and contextually-adapted ways—might be more relevant for adult learners across a broader slice of cultural contexts than critics have allowed. The general pattern of result sizes across the 4 IELTS rubric dimensions provides insights in theory on how andragogical instruction facilitates communicative development. The predominance of the fluency and coherence effect is in line with theoretical explanations that consider longer, strategic low-anxiety speaking practice to be the most promising means of obtaining automatization-driven fluency increases (Skehan, 1998; de Bot, 1992). In stark contrast to the pessimistic consensus regarding the plasticity of the adult phonological system (e.g., Scovel, 1988; Long, 1990) in SLA research, however, is substantial pronunciation effect that suggests explicit SDL strategy training in phonological self-monitoring may enlist metalinguistic processing capacities in adult learners not activated by other forms of conventional imitative pronunciation instruction. The implications of these findings arise both from their contribution to the theoretical literature on communicative competence as well as in their evidence for differential andragogical responsiveness of different components of the construct. That third finding relates SDL strategy training to speaking development. The very

large effect sizes within the experimental group (all $d > 2.50$) are much larger than existing literature on strategy instruction alone would predict for a fourteen-week intervention (Oxford, 2011; Chamot, 2004). The likely explanation for this exceptional efficacy is the combined integration of andragogical instructional principles with SDL strategy training in a coherent theoretical and pedagogical context: andragogical content creates the motivational, affective, and environmental conditions — intrinsic engagement, psychological safety, experiential relevance — within which SDL strategies can be assimilated or even embodied for maximal effect.

5.1 Limitations

The quasi-experimental design of the research, while appropriate for the institutional constraints unique to the research context, cannot deliver the level of certainty regarding causation that would be afforded by true random assignment. Despite the pre-test equivalence on each of measured variables, It cannot entirely dismiss uncontrolled selection bias. The limited design of a single semester does not allow regarding the durability of gains observed during RCT; follow-up on these measures longitudinally will be important for future work. The sample was derived from a one department in one institution, Erbil, which constrains the generalisability of findings to other KRI institutions, other Iraqi governorates and across EFL contexts in the Arab world. The adapted IELTS instrument is psychometrically sound according to the study but only attempts to capture part of the communicative competence construct and does not include pragmatic, interactional or sociolinguistic competences. Finally, as well as using a specially designed programme the experimental group participants knew they were receiving a specially designed programme and this may have introduced Hawthorne effects which explain some of the performance gains.

6. Conclusion

It offers strong empirical data to demonstrate the considerable and substantial impact of a fourteen-week instructional intervention integrating SDL with an andragogy-informed framework on IELTS-based speaking performance across all four dimensions evaluated in the rubric for EFL college students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The between-group differences observed — around 0.92 IELTS band points overall after controlling for pre-test performance — are of educational significance and correspond to the difference between low and high levels of communicative competence on the established IELTS scale. At three levels, evidence has practical implications. These researches do not only proof the novelty and appropriateness of this subgenre of classroom-based research in showing how andragogical instruction can work in resource-scarce settings like those that exist across large swathes of EFL contexts worldwide—nevertheless ultimately failing to address a more global context—but they also provide empirical evidence for the efficacy learning contracts, SDL strategy training, and communicative task-based curricula as instruments of speaking development at both the individual level. At the curriculum level, they make a case for systemically orienting EFL degree programme curricula away from content-transmission models and towards learner-negotiated, communicative competence-development frameworks (including the reform of assessment practices to incorporate formally-graded oral components that align communicative development with institutional incentives). They provide evidence at the policy level of a convincing case for investment in pre- service and in-service teacher education (in andragogy and SDL) as well as national-level KRI curriculum reform that embeds learner-centred, communicatively oriented principles at an institutional/structural level. Longitudinal follow-up studies of speaking gains, replication studies in other EFL contexts and larger-scale studies sufficiently powered to allow for effect size calculations of sub-group comparisons, by gender, proficiency level, and cultural orientation should be a priority for future research. The current research lays a well-founded foundation for this line of inquiry and points out that to implement SDL-infused instruction based on principles in Andragogy, as a theoretically grounded concept and an empirically validated instrument for L2 communicative competence development, should be taken seriously into consideration by researchers, practitioners and policymakers in the KRI like places.

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