Assessing EFL University Students' Language Ego

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Abstract

Language Ego is a concept deeply rooted in an individual's personality and sense of identity regarding his first language. This psychological phenomenon can either facilitate or hinder the learning process of a foreign language and the development of professional learning. This psychological phenomenon has received little attention in the context of language teaching and learning. In this sense, this study attempts to address this problem and to fill this gap. It aims to assess Language Ego. The study adopts Guiora's (1994) model of Language Ego. To achieve the aims, a sample of 100 out of 314 EFL third-year students from the University of Mosul for the academic year 2024-2025 is randomly selected. The data collected are then statistically analyzed by a statistician. The results of the study show that the sample has a moderate level of Language Ego. Moreover, the sample's perceived level and the performance-based level are approximately equal.

مجلة التربية للعلوم الانسانية

تقييم الأنا اللغوية لدى طلاب الجامعات الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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الملخص	معلومات الارشفة
على عكس اكتساب اللغة الأولى، يُعد تعلم اللغة الثانية عمليةً تتأثر بالعديد من المتغيرات النفسية والاجتماعية. ومن هذه المتغيرات النفسية "الأنا اللغوية". والأنا اللغوية مفهومٌ متأصلٌ في شخصية الفرد وشعوره بهويته تجاه لغته الأولى. يمكن لهذه الظاهرة النفسية أن تُسهّل أو تُعيق عملية تعلم اللغة الأجنبية وتطوير الكفاءة التواصلية. وبالتالي، فانها تؤثر على تحقق الأهداف المرسومة للتعلم أو التدريس بنجاح. ومع ذلك، تُعد "الأنا اللغوية" متغيرًا لم يحظَ باهتمام كاف في سياق تعلم اللغات وتعليمها، وخاصةً في سياق البيئة التعليمية العراقية. تحاول هذه الدراسة معالجة هذه المشكلة وسدّ هذه الفجوة. وتهدف إلى تقييم مستوى "الأنا اللغوية". تتبنى الدراسة نموذج Guiora 1994 للأنا اللغوية . وبناءً على ذلك، تم اعتماد التصميم الارتباطي لاختبار الفرضية المطروحة. تم اتباع النهج الكمي في تصميم هذا البحث. تم اختيار عينة عشوائيًا من 100 من أصل 314 طالب وطالبة من طلاب السنة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الموصل للعام الدراسي 2024–2025. وكانوا من الذكور والإناث. ولجمع البيانات، تم استخدام أداتان بحثيتان. وكانت استبيان الأنا اللغوية، واختبار مقابلة الأنا اللغوية التي صممها الباحث في ضوء النموذج المتبع و بناء على لأدبيات السابقة . ثم تمت معالجة البيانات التي تم جمعها إحصائيًا من قبل إحصائي. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن مستوى الأنا اللغوية لدى العينة متوسط.	 **معلومات الاتصال** فارس علي faris.eh68@student.uomosul.edu.iq

1.1 Statement of the problem

The desired goal of teaching a language communicatively is to develop and enhance learners' communicative competence in the target language (Dörnye, 2005, p. 207). In the Iraqi context, considerable emphasis is placed on applying communicative language teaching in classrooms. However, learners still struggle to achieve a high level of communicative competence in real situations where they use the target language in communicative situations. Many factors seem to influence or correlate with the tolerance or resistance to achieving a good level of communicative competence. These factors include personality-related variables such as anxiety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, learners' beliefs, willingness to communicate, and, lastly, language ego. Though some of these variables have been extensively studied, language ego is the least explored one in the context of language teaching and learning.

Regarding the context of Iraq, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has addressed this variable in relation to language learning. Moreover, the existing body of literature related to language ego mainly focuses on language ego as a learning style rather than a personality trait. These studies are further limited to two or three aspects of language behavior, such as pronunciation. Consequently, due to the lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between language ego and language learning, as well as the absence of such studies in the Iraqi context, the present study aims to address this gap. It attempts to relate language ego to the development of communicative competence and to examine how the boundaries, permeability, and thickness of language ego contribute to achieving a good level of communicative competence in the target language. Thin language ego boundaries can foster learning, while thick ones can obstruct it.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The present study aims to:

1. Find out the levels of university third-stage EFL learners' language ego levels.
2. Find out whether or not the gender variable affects the sample's level of language ego.

1.3 Model of the study

The model of Language Ego is based on Guiora's (1994) conceptualization of the concept. This concept is, in fact, first introduced in his 1972 work, "Construct Validity and Transpositional Research: Toward an Empirical Study of Psychoanalytic Concepts". He regards the language ego as a psychological construct related to identity and self-representation through the native language. It is seen as a kind of language identity. It is a maturational concept that either eases or obstructs second language learning, depending on whether the permeability of its boundaries is thick or thin. When thick, this ego can work as a shield that resists learning a new language. Conversely, when it is flexible and tolerates forming a new language identity, it eases achieving an advanced level in the target language. It has two faces: A Cognitive (internal) face, which is loosely tied to psychological integrity (language ego), and an Affective (external) face, which is strongly tied to psychological integrity (language ego, identity). It is conceptualized as a continuum with two axes: thick and thin, with varying degrees in between. Guiora (1972, p. 144) considers language as a form of linguistic behavior that evolved within a broader context of psychological growth. So, learning a second language depends on the flexibility of the psychological process, which is influenced by the thickness or thinness of language ego boundaries.

1.3 Limits of the Study

The study will be limited to:

Iraqi EFL undergraduate third-year students for the academic year (2024 – 2025), morning study at the Department of English/ College of Education for Humanities /University of Mosul.

1.4 Operational Definitions

a- Language Ego

For this study, Language Ego is defined operationally as a psychological construct related to identity and self-representation through the native language. It is a maturational concept that either eases or obstructs second language learning, depending on whether the permeability of its boundaries is thick or thin.

2. Language Ego Permeability

Guiora (1972, p. 145) asserts that "second language learning in all of its forms necessitates that the individual, to some degree, adopt a new identity" about language ego permeability. Guiora (1972) states that to overcome language-related ego barriers, one must possess a clearly defined, secure, and integrated ego or sense of self in the first language.

In learning a second language, specific second language learners may possess a positive language ego, enabling them to recognize the distinctions between their native language and the second language. In contrast, others with a negative language ego may view this as a threat and a challenge to their native language ego. The permeability of the language ego shapes this perspective. The permeability of the language ego refers to the degree to which new experiences, cultural traits, or views on learning a second language can penetrate the defenses of one's linguistic identity, allowing the language ego to be flexible and malleable (Dewaele & Wei, 2012, p. 365).

A greater score in Language Ego Permeability correlates with an increased likelihood of success in acquiring foreign languages. Individuals with high scores typically exhibit comfort in establishing new cultural and linguistic identities, demonstrate empathetic learning by effectively imitating native speakers of the target language, and possess adequate confidence in their language acquisition skills (Keely,2014, p. 71).

Guiora et al. (1972, pp. 144-145) assert that the evolution of the language ego is directly correlated with the progression of general ego development. During the initial phases of development, the characteristics of language ego are fluid, resulting in a highly adaptable pronunciation aptitude. A prominent indication of this situation is the child's relative proficiency in acquiring native-like pronunciation in a foreign language. Once these borders are established, the capacity to approximate accurate pronunciation in a second language will be significantly reduced in terms of the extent of permissible fluctuations under regular conditions. Guiora et al (1972, p.421) equates empathic capacity with the notion of ego boundary permeability. Individual differences in the capacity to achieve native-like pronunciation are somewhat influenced by specific psychological factors encompassed by the concept of empathy, or more generally, the idea of ego boundary permeability. Guiora thinks that pronunciation is the most prominent element of language ego, the most challenging to master while learning a new language, and the most difficult to abandon in an

individual's first language. Guiora et al. (1972) argue that second-language learning, in all of its forms, imposes a distinct requirement concerning self-representation. Learning a second language fundamentally involves adopting a new identity. Given that pronunciation is the element of linguistic behavior least vulnerable to alteration, it is consequently the most vital for self-representation. Therefore, it is suggested that the most sensitive indicator of the capacity to adopt a new identity, specifically the extent of permeability of language ego barriers, is reflected in the ability to attain native-like pronunciation in a second language.

2.1 Language Ego Permeability and Second Language Acquisition

Language Ego Permeability encompasses both social and emotional elements. The tendency to establish a firm identity during maturation can render adult learners more conscious of themselves than younger language learners, who may exhibit greater adaptability in changing or broadening their identity. Identities are constructed within distinct sociocultural circumstances unique to each individual. A deficiency in ego permeability and inflexible cultural identity might hinder adults from acquiring a new language, especially in the domains of phonology, accent, and fluency. Language Ego Permeability denotes the capacity to switch between languages and the distinct 'language personalities' that emerge during the language acquisition process. Individuals with highly permeable linguistic identities do not see a threat to their identity linked to their mother tongue when acquiring and utilizing new languages (Keely, 2014, p. 73).

Language Ego permeability refers to the phenomenon where individuals adopt a new identity when acquiring a new language and culture, reflecting their sense of safety and comfort during this process (Guiora et al., 1972, p. 145). A person's manner of speaking a language reveals clues about their social identity. Some individuals experience discomfort with their new social and cultural linguistic identities, perceiving it as a betrayal of their old social identities. Specific individuals exhibit worry about this change and the unfamiliarity it entails. Some individuals perceive their proficiency in a second language as insufficient relative to their native language. Some individuals anticipate that the novel linguistic and cultural experiences will diverge significantly from their original language and culture (Keeley, 2014, p. 78). Galetcaia's analysis of the impact of language ego on language acquisition revealed a strong correlation with the individual's cultural adaptation (Galetcaia, 2013, 4275).

Individuals who successfully acquire a new language and assimilate into a new culture exhibit heightened empathy and possess adaptive identity constructions. At this juncture, it is noted that the individual reduces his/her facial expressions and other communicative activities. Individuals can enhance their empathetic resonance with suitable mirror neuron circuits. In other words, they may exhibit more sophisticated responses beyond verbal and nonverbal communication, such as empathy (Keeley, 2014, p. 95).

Brown (1973) believes that imitation plays a substantial role in the acquisition of the mother tongue; however, its impact on the acquisition of second languages is minimal. Brown states that the primary reason for this is the prominence of an individual's attitudes and convictions regarding self-confidence or self-esteem. In other words, language ego appears as a personal and egocentric characteristic in the successful acquisition of a second language. Ehrman (1993, pp. 330-362) asserts that language ego can influence multiple aspects, including the speaker's perception, audience limitations, and the speaker's emotional connection to the host culture as a language. According to Fallon and Baker (2016, p. 99), when individuals recognize that their language ego is the primary obstacle to learning a second language, they can alter their linguistic identities, thereby achieving the removal of egoistic tendencies in the pursuit of a new identity through the acquisition of a second language. Fallon and Baker (2016) state that to eradicate language ego, a hindrance to acquiring a second language, it is essential to choose prevalent identities as models and to direct individuals' perceptions during the language learning process through various task strategies (such as fluency, accuracy, and linguistic complexity).

3. Methodology

The current study aims to determine the sample's level of Language Ego. Such an aim necessitates the collection of numerical data for statistical analysis. Therefore, this calls for adopting a descriptive research design within a quantitative paradigm for statistical analysis of the obtained results after gathering the data. Based on the aforementioned clarifications of the research design and justifications for its choice, the researcher selects the quantitative approach and descriptive design in this study to assess the sample's level of Language Ego.

3.1 population

The term "Population" is defined by Denscombe (2010, p. 23-24) as " all the items in the category of things that are being researched. It means a research population". Population refers to the total number of items that meet specific criteria and are involved in a study. The present study's population consists of all third-year undergraduate students in the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, during the morning study period of the 2024-2025 academic year. The population consists of male and female students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, Syriac, and Yazidi. The population consists of 314 students.

This population is chosen based on some justifications. Firstly, they are available at the data collection phase, which meets the condition of feasibility or accessibility. Secondly, they have undergone academic courses that have significantly enhanced their communicative competence. Thirdly, they represent the most advanced level available at the time of study, as fourth-stage students are in their internship course at schools. Fourthly, they have developed a strong sense of cultural, social, and linguistic identity. This means that they are suitable for the study as it seeks to language ego as a psychological aspect of their language identity. These attributes are the reasons that encourage the researcher to gather data from this population.

3.2 Sample

According to Kothari (2004, p. 152), sampling is defined as choosing part of the whole, and it is assumed that this selection can help to make an inference or judgment applicable to the totality. There are several types of sampling, including random sampling, stratified sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling. The sampling technique used in this study is stratified random sampling, as the population comprises two genders: males and females. The population is divided into two strata, and a random sample is chosen from each stratum. The participants are randomly selected to minimize bias, ensure a representative sample, and enhance the generalizability of the findings. A sample of (120) out of (314) third-year undergraduate students in the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, during the academic year 2024-2025, the morning study was chosen. However, 17 participants (out of 120) have dropped out of one of the tests due to their absence or unwillingness to continue participating. As a result, only 100 participants were chosen as the final sample size. The remaining (3) participants were dropped from the sample

to make it statistically homogenous, as two genders are included. This sample size is determined by the use of two data collection instruments. It consists of two genders (50) males and (50) females. Glen (2013) mentions that the acceptable sample size is equal to or greater than thirty. Students who participate in the study are informed that they will be asked to participate two times. The students of this sample are of relatively the same age. They are about 21-24 years old.

To ensure a homogenous sample that minimizes threats to the study's internal validity due to extraneous variables, only Arab students are selected to participate. Students who are older than 24 years old, those who have repeated academic years of study, multilingual students, those who come from different ethnic backgrounds, and those who have lived in a foreign country or have contact with foreign people are all excluded based on the bio-data collected by the information form.

3.3 Language Ego Questionnaire

There are three types of questionnaires, classified by their construction method. The three types of questionnaires are: structured, unstructured, and quasi-structured questionnaires (Aryal, 2020). In the structured questionnaire, participants must choose from a prepared set of answers, such as "yes" or "no," check a list of items, or select from multiple-choice options. Unstructured questionnaires, in contrast to structured questionnaires, are characterized by open-ended questions. The unstructured questionnaires provide participants with the opportunity to present their ideas and express their feelings without restriction. The quasi-structured questionnaires consist of items of the two previous types. The researcher adopted structured questionnaires in this study to save time and effort.

Based on Guiora's (1994) concept of Language Ego, the researcher developed a questionnaire to measure the participants' language ego. Gillham (2000, pp. 5-8) illustrates that gathering data through questionnaires helps researchers save effort, time, and cost. So, it is not difficult to apply. Many respondents can answer a questionnaire in a short time. These advantages make researchers choose questionnaires as a means to collect their data.

The Language Ego questionnaire is divided into two parts (faces). The two faces of Language Ego are: the Affective (external) and the Cognitive (internal) face. Each face is subdivided into different categories. The Affective face consists of six subcategories: Media Consumption, Listening, Reading, Culture, Speaking, and

Pronunciation. The cognitive face has three subdivisions: problem-solving, Grammar, and Vocabulary. Five items represent each of these subdivisions. So, the total number of items in the questionnaire is 45. They are (30) for the affective face and (15) for the cognitive face. It is observed that the Affective face has more subcategories than the cognitive one, which is related to the fact that the effect of the affective face of the language ego is more noticeable. That is, language ego is more evidently reflected in the behavioral aspects than the cognitive ones.

3.4 Interview

To ensure the accuracy of the results collected by the language ego questionnaire, one-on-one interviews are conducted with the participants. In this sense, Podsakoff et al. (2003) suggest that researchers can employ multiple methods for data collection to mitigate the risk of relying on a single process, thereby reducing bias. The questionnaire is one type of self-assessment tool in which participants may subjectively rate themselves. However, this subjectivity is reduced through the use of a performance-based test, such as an interview, which objectively assesses their level of language ego. To this end, the researcher develops a set of interview questions. These questions, like the questionnaire, are designed in accordance with Guiora's (1994) model of Language Ego. The questions of the interview reflect the subdivisions of the language ego questionnaire. A central question and a series of minor follow-up questions represent each subcategory of the questionnaire.

The questions are designed as open-ended questions that help the researcher elicits sufficient data for the subsequent rating process. The researcher requested permission from the department to allocate a room for conducting interviews with the participants. Having assigned a room, the interviewees are interviewed one by one. The interviewees are informed that this interview is conducted solely for research purposes, and their information will be kept confidential. The evaluation is unrelated to their academic assessment. They are also informed that the researcher requires their consent to audio record the interview using his mobile phone, with no video recording to be made. This assurance is designed to alleviate anxiety and foster honest participation. They are prompted to speak by asking them specific questions to have information about their language ego. The questions used allow interviewees to discuss their experiences in detail. The questions cover vocabulary, Grammar, problem–solving, Pronunciation, Speaking, Culture, listening, reading, and Media Consumption.

The procedures of the Interview consist of seven steps as follows:

1. Accessibility: Before starting the interview, it is necessary to have approval from the legal authority that the Head of the English Department represents. The interviewees are conducted in a designated room within the department to minimize noise and ensure accurate records.

2. Planning: The researcher decides to meet each participant alone and not in groups. This gives the participant a sense of freedom to answer the questions, and they will not feel shy as they make mistakes in front of their colleagues. Based on the pilot study, the time specified for each interview takes 8–10 minutes.

3. Introduction: When participants decide to join the interview, they are told that the interview is for research purposes and has nothing to do with their academic progress. The interview consists of nine parts. These questions relate to the language ego questionnaire, which the interviewees had previously completed. Each part of the interview involves a main question followed by follow-up questions to prompt the participants to speak. Participants are told that the interview is easy and allows them to express themselves in English. The interview is an authentic experience in which students can talk freely.

4. Warm-up questions: The researcher begins by asking the participants general questions, such as asking them about their names or whether they are ready or not. Questions like these help participants break the ice and naturally engage with the interview. Warm-up questions provide the interviewee with a sense of comfort and encourage them to participate actively in the interview.

5. Main interview questions: At this point in the interview, the researcher asks the prepared questions. These questions are designed to stimulate participants' ability to speak. They are open-ended questions, and the participants are asked to answer them. These questions are used to cover the language ego questionnaire.

6. Follow-up questions: When the participants are asked to answer the main questions, some of these questions may need to be clarified or paraphrased. Another type of question may be used to encourage participants to continue speaking. Such questions are called follow-up questions.

7. Closing: After finishing the interview, the researcher thanks the interviewees and expresses his gratitude for their participation. This helps to show the participants that their efforts are appreciated.

4. Results and Discussion

This study employs a questionnaire for data collection and an interview test. The questionnaire is described as a self-assessment test. This means that it allows the participants to evaluate or judge their abilities or attitudes based on a given scale. This dual-method approach is employed to address the inherent subjectivity of self-assessment tools by comparing what participants think they have or can do with what they actually possess or are capable of doing. This means, in other words, comparing their perceived Language Ego with their demonstrated performance. Since two types of tools are used, the data analysis will be presented into two main separate sections. The first one deals with the results of the questionnaire, whereas the second one focuses on those of the interview. After explaining each of these sections, a further section is allocated to assessing the effect of the gender variable on the sample's performance.

4.1 Assessing the level of university third-stage EFL learners' level in Language Ego

A. Learners' Perceived Level of L.E.

The first aim of the study is to "**find out the levels of Iraqi third-stage EFL learners' language ego level**." This section presents the results related to the first aim of the study, which is to determine the learners' levels of Language Ego. To achieve this aim, participants' responses to the respective questionnaire are analyzed, and the resulting scores are examined. The results in this section provide a general overview of the learners' performance as measured by measurement tool. They reflect the extent to which the participants demonstrate traits or constructs associated with Language Ego.

1. Table 4.1 presents the results that show the participants' perceived level of Language Ego

Table (4.1): learners' perceived level of Language Ego

Section	N	Mean	Test Value	Std. Deviation	T_test		Sig.
					Cal.	Tab.	
Vocabulary		16.5400	15	3.23934	4.754		S
Grammar		16.1400	15	2.81418	4.051		S
Problem-solving		16.0000	15	3.10099	3.225		S
Pronunciation		16.3600	15	2.89032	4.705		S
Speaking	100	16.1600	15	3.14215	3.692	1.987 (0.050 (99)	S
Culture		16.3500	15	2.61068	5.171		S
Reading		16.3900	15	2.79211	4.978		S
Listening		16.1100	15	2.93325	3.784		S
Media consumption		16.2700	15	3.21881	3.946		S
Total		146.3200	135	17.97410	6.298		S

As shown in the table above, the participants demonstrate a moderate level of Language Ego with a total mean score of (146.3200), which is slightly higher than the test or critical value, which is (135). The table also shows that the subcategories or subcomponents of the Language Ego variable all reflect moderate mean scores, which are (16). These values are slightly higher than the critical or the hypothetical mean scores, which are 15. It can also be observed that, among these subcomponents, vocabulary, pronunciation, culture, and Reading recorded relatively higher mean scores than the rest of the subcomponents of language ego. All the values of the mean scores exhibit a slight spread or deviation from the central mean. This implies consistency among the participants' scores. Nonetheless, to assess the statistical significance of the total mean score and the mean scores of the subcategories, the one-sample T-test is used. The results of the T-test are all greater than the tabulated T-value, which is (1.987). Therefore, the difference between the mean score and the test value or the hypothetical mean is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance and 99 degrees of freedom. This finding indicates that the participants exhibit a moderate level of Language Ego, which is statistically significant, as evidenced by the calculated T-value being greater than the tabulated one.

B. The Sample's Performance-Based Level of LE

In this section, the results obtained from the interview are dealt with. Unlike the questionnaires or the self-assessment tools that demonstrate how the participants perceive their language ego level, the test measures what actually they have or can do based on their performance. The results of the test are presented here in a way that they address the aims. The level of the sample is found to be moderate as the results of the language ego questionnaire revealed. However, the language ego level is shown in the following results of the language ego interview test.

Table (4.2): The Sample's Level of Language Ego

Section	N	Mean	Test Value	Std. Deviation	T_test Cal.	T_test Tab.	Sig.
Vocabulary		3.1100	2.5	.61783	2.011		S
Grammar		3.2800	2.5	.63691	4.396		S
Problem-solving		3.2400	2.5	.57066	4.206		S
Pronunciation		3.3000	2.5	.55958	5.361		S
Speaking		3.3000	2.5	.57735	5.196	1.987	S
Culture	100	3.4000	2.5	.58603	6.826	(0.050	S
Reading		3.1400	2.5	.61987	2.259	(99)	S
Listening		3.3000	2.5	.61134	4.907		S
Media consumption		3.2300	2.5	.58353	3.942		S
Total		29.3000	22.5	3.33788	6.891		S

It is clear that the overall mean score, which is (29.3000), is greater than the test value, which is (22.5). This means that the sample demonstrates a moderate level of language ego. Furthermore, the spread or deviation from the central value is slight, as shown by the overall score of the standard deviation. This implies that the sample performed consistently on the tests. The mean score is tested by the t-test and found to be statistically significant. The calculated t-value is greater than the tabulated one, which are (6.891) and (1.987) at (0.05) level of significance and (98) degrees of freedom. The table also shows that all the mean scores of the specific dimensions

appear to be approximately equal. They range from (3.1100) to (3.4000), which show an approximate range across all the sub-dimensions. These minor means are tested for significance and found to be significant as the calculated t-value exceeds the tabulated one at the given level of significance and the degree of freedom.

4.2 Results Addressing the Second Aim

The second aim is **to determine whether the gender variable affects the sample's level of Language Ego.** In the previous section, the samples' performance on the language ego questionnaire is assessed without reference to any demographic variables. However, gender is a personal variable that may affect the samples' performance on the test. As a result, this section re-examines the performance of the sample in light of gender differences. The aim is to explore whether male and female participants differ in their levels of language ego. The results are presented and analyzed by gender to determine any statistically significant differences between the two groups.

1. The Sample's Level of Language Ego Regarding Gender

Table (4.3): The Sample's Level of Language Ego regarding Gender

Section	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T_test Cal.	T_test Tab.	Sig.
Vocabulary	M	50	16.4600	3.25896	0.246		NS.
	F	50	16.6200	3.25068			
Grammar	M	50	16.3000	2.65153	0.567		NS.
	F	50	15.9800	2.98630			
Problem-solving	M	50	15.5800	2.91436	1.360		NS.
	F	50	16.4200	3.25194			
Pronunciation	M	50	16.4200	2.68852	0.207	1.987 (0.050) (98)	NS.
	F	50	16.3000	3.10530			
Speaking	M	50	16.1400	3.25771	0.063		NS.
	F	50	16.1800	3.05521			
Culture	M	50	16.2200	2.70517	0.496		NS.
	F	50	16.4800	2.53337			
Reading	M	50	16.1800	2.69308	0.750		NS.
	F	50	16.6000	2.89968			

Listening	**M**	50	15.7200	2.93494	1.335		**NS.**
	F	50	16.5000	2.90847			
Media consumption	**M**	50	15.7800	2.76487	1.533		**NS.**
	F	50	16.7600	3.57748			
Total	**M**	50	144.8000	19.04024	0.844		**NS.**
	F	50	147.8400	16.89627			

Table 4.3 clearly indicates that the difference in gender does not have a significant impact on the sample's level of language ego. The mean score of the male performers is (144.8000), whereas that of the females is (147.8400), with little deviation from the central mean score. These differences in the mean scores between male and female performers are tested to check their significance. It is found that the tabulated T-value is (1.987), which exceeds the calculated one estimated at (1.533) for males and (0.844) for females. Therefore, the gender difference is statistically not significant at the 0.05 level of significance and 98 degrees of freedom. Looking more closely at the Table, it can be observed that all the mean scores across the subcomponents of language ego enjoy approximately equal values, ranging between 16 and 15. This means that both males and females performed roughly equally on the language ego questionnaire. The differences in the mean scores between the two genders are not statistically significant.

5. Discussion of Findings

This section presents a discussion of the findings obtained through conducting this study. It also attempts to relate these findings to the existing body of relevant literature and to provide some possible interpretations. The results of the study were analyzed into two main separate sections. However, the findings obtained by the questionnaire or test with the same aim are combined here for discussion.

It is found that in both types of tools, the participants demonstrated a moderate level of language ego. This, in fact, is consistent with the theoretical and empirical studies that deal with the affective filters. In this sense, when the influence of the affective filter is strong, the inhibition will also be effective. In the case of this study, the influence of language ego is moderate, resulting in a moderate level of language learning. This correlates with Zakarneh's study (2018), in which thick LE, which refers to low permeability, affects learners' performance. In the case of this study, the

influence of LE is moderate, resulting in a moderate level of CC. This implies that they are psychologically flexible to a moderate level. They tolerate the formation of a new language identity, that is, English. This tolerance and flexibility may be attributed to the contextual factors. With the new technological advancements, learners have become open to a variety of experiences, which in turn have helped them reconstruct and adapt their identity to accept the new language identity or ego of the target language. Another possible reason is that the Iraqi context is a multicultural one, where people are accustomed to tolerating changes and coping with cultural differences.

With reference to the effect of the gender variable on the level of language ego, it is found that it has no significant effect. Language ego is a psychological trait that presents equally across genders. Both male and female learners form their first language ego boundaries as they mature. However, the thickness or thinness of these boundaries is significantly affected by some personality variables such as introversion, extroversion, wanting to assimilate a new language identity or ego, anxiety, self-esteem, etc. These psychological factors construct every personality regardless of gender. Among other factors, several contextual elements, such as societal openness and an individual's adaptability, can influence these psychological factors. Therefore, this would ultimately affect the learner`s level of language ego. The sample is equally exposed to the contextual or external variables, so gender has not affected levels of language ego. This result is consistent across the measurement tools used in this study.

6. Pedagogical Implementations

Although it is an effective factor in language learning, language ego has not been a primary focus of educational purposes. Great attention should be paid to the idea of language ego. Awareness of language ego must be raised in different academic environments, such as:

1. Teachers have to be careful to determine whether their students have thick or thin ego boundaries. And design the curriculum in accordance with learners' ego boundaries. They also help them to be more open to new learning experiences.

2. Teachers can concentrate on pronunciation lessons and encourage their students to pronounce words in a native-like way, as pronunciation is a significant factor for acquiring a language.

3. It is essential for learners to use and develop different strategies to overcome language ego boundaries and adapt to the new identity of the language they learn.

4. Technology is one of the most essential sources for learners, although it has its own disadvantages. Learners can use different applications to speak with native speakers and enhance their level in communicative competence, which can be reflected in language learners' thin ego boundaries.

5. Educational institutions, schools and universities should include information about cultural diversity to support learners to be open to different cultures and to accept learning other languages and respect their native language.

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Language Ego Questionnaire

Name: _____

Please, tick in one of the cells next to each item that best reflects your choice.

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
1	I am precise in using alternative vocabulary to state (describe) something in English.					
2	I am not keen on learning new English vocabulary that recognizes me as a native speaker.					
3	I enjoy exploring synonyms and alternative expressions in the English language.					
4	Mastering vocabulary is an essential part of my language learning process.					
5	Understanding the meaning of words in context helps me feel more confident.					
6	It is crucial to apply and learn the grammatical rules of the English language.					
7	Identifying sentence structure helps me understand standard and nonstandard sentences.					
8	My native language is shown via my use of English.					

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
9	I aim at learning how to construct complex English structures.					
10	Practicing grammar helps me develop my proficiency in English.					
11	I use problem-solving strategies to understand complex phrases or sentences.					
12	When I encounter unfamiliar expressions, I try to figure them out without external help.					
13	I am comfortable making errors in language as part of the learning process.					
14	I adapt quickly when I realize I've misunderstood something in English.					
15	I experiment with different techniques to improve my language skills.					
16	I prefer keeping my native accent when speaking English.					
17	I consider it unnecessary to achieve a native–like accent in English.					
18	I don't like to imitate native speakers' accents when I use English.					
19	I find it challenging to overcome my accent when speaking English in my native language.					
20	I believe that my native accent hinders my ability to integrate into English fully.					
21	I use English only for academic purposes, such as when I participate in a lecture.					
22	I don't tend to use English when I meet English people, such as tourists.					
23	I use words like "literally," "basically, " and "like" to sound like a native speaker.					

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
24	I rarely use English outside the university, even if I have the opportunity to do so.					
25	Even when I speak English, I still use my first language expressions, such as "Alsalamualaikum" and "Merhaba," etc.					
26	I feel disconnected from the English culture, even when I try to engage with it.					
27	I avoid exploring the cultural aspects of English because I find them unnecessary.					
28	I prefer to write my name on social media platforms in English rather than in my native language.					
29	I don't like to learn or use idioms in English.					
30	I borrow some greeting expressions even when I use my mother tongue.					
31	When I read in English, I try to be accurate rather than sound like a native reader.					
32	My reading in English is limited to my study purposes only.					
33	I am not interested in reading English outside of academic domains unless it is required.					
34	I don't like to read English books outside of my study subjects.					
35	I can easily understand jokes and idioms written in the English language.					
36	I am not interested in listening to native speakers of the English language.					
37	I avoid listening to audio materials in English.					
38	Listening to conversations in English makes me feel excluded.					
39	I struggle to understand English well because I have difficulty catching every single word.					

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
40	I feel upset when I cannot fully grasp (comprehend) spoken English.					
41	I am uninterested in watching movies or shows in English.					
42	I feel uninterested in engaging with songs or podcasts in English.					
43	I enjoy following celebrities on social media apps from English-speaking countries.					
44	I chat with my friends using English.					
45	I like sharing posts in English on my social media accounts.					