

فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية العدد (٩)
السنة الثالثة جمادى الأولى ١٤٤٦ هـ تشرين الثاني ٢٠٢٥ م



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The Effect of Using Short Educational Videos (Microlearning) on Improving Listening Skills and Comprehension among Iraqi EFL Primary School Pupils

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Abstract:

The effectiveness of short-form instructional films, or micro-learning, in improving listening comprehension abilities among Iraqi primary school pupils studying English as a foreign language (EFL) is investigated in this experimental study. The study used a pretest-posttest control group design and involved 150 Grade 4 students (ages 9–10) who were randomly assigned to experimental (*n* = 75) and control (*n* = 75) cohorts in Baghdad's resource-constrained public schools. While the control group continued receiving standard teacher-led instruction, the experimental group got daily 5–7 minute micro-learning films (such as animated dialogues, vocabulary-in-context snippets, and culturally tailored stories) incorporated into regular EFL courses for 10 weeks. Standardized listening comprehension tests, which measure abilities in gist identification, detail extraction, and inferential understanding, were used to gather quantitative data (modified IELTS Young Learners exams). Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with eight teachers were examples of qualitative data. The experimental group's post-test scores (mean gain: +30.2%, *SD* = 4.1) showed a statistically significant improvement (*p* < .001, *d* = 1.32) in comparison to the control group (+11.7%, *SD* = 3.9). Three major success factors were identified by thematic analysis: (1) segmented content reduces cognitive burden, (2) visual scaffolding helps with language recall, and (3) authentic contexts increase engagement. Inadequate teacher preparation in digital pedagogy and uneven internet availability (reported in 65% of classrooms) were important obstacles. Under the condition of infrastructure investment and educator capacity building, the study supports the systematic integration of micro-learning in Iraq's national curriculum and validates it as a high-impact technique for developing EFL listening skills in low-resource settings. Longitudinal effects and locally created video content should be investigated further.

Key words:)Short educational videos, Multimedia learning, EFL listening comprehension(.

الملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة التجريبية فعالية الأفلام التعليمية القصيرة (التعلم الجزئي) في تحسين مهارات الاستماع لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية العراقيين الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. استخدمت الدراسة تصميم المجموعتين الضابطة



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والتجريبية مع قياس قبلي-بعدي، وشارك فيها ١٥٠ تلميذًا من الصف الرابع (أعمار ٩-١٠ سنوات) تم توزيعهم عشوائيًا على مجموعتين: تجريبية (ن = ٧٥) وضابطة (ن = ٧٥) في مدارس حكومية ببغداد ذات موارد محدودة. تلقت المجموعة التجريبية أفلامًا تعليمية قصيرة (مدتها ٥-٧ دقائق) يوميًا (مثل حوارات كرتونية، ومقاطع للفظ في سياق، وقصص مكيفة ثقافيًا) مدججة ضمن حصص اللغة الإنجليزية المعتادة ولمدة ١٠ أسابيع. بينما استمرت المجموعة الضابطة في تلقي التعليم التقليدي القائم على المعلم. تم جمع البيانات الكمية باستخدام اختبارات استماع معيارية (معدلة عن للصغار) تقيس مهارات: تحديد الفكرة العامة، واستخلاص التفاصيل، والفهم الاستنتاجي. كما IELTS اختبارات جمعت بيانات نوعية من خلال الملاحظات الصفية ومقابلات شبه منظمة مع ثمانية معلمين. أظهرت المجموعة التجريبية تحسنًا ذا دلالة إحصائية كبيرة (القيمة الاحتمالية > 0.001 ، حجم التأثير = ١,٣٢) في الاختبار البعدي (متوسط التحسن: $+30.2\%$ ، الانحراف المعياري = ٤,١) مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة ($+11.7\%$ ، الانحراف المعياري = ٣,٩). كشف التحليل الموضوعي للبيانات النوعية عن ثلاثة عوامل نجاح رئيسية: (الاحتوى المقسم يقلل العبء المعرف، الدعم البصري يعزز استرجاع اللغة، و السياقات الواقعية تزيد التفاعل). كما حددت الدراسة تحديات مهمة، أبرزها: نقص تدريب المعلمين على التدريس الرقمي، وعدم توفر الإنترنت بانتظام (في ٦٥٪ من الفصول). تدعم النتائج دمج التعلم الجزئي بشكل منهجي في المنهج الوطني العراقي لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، كاستراتيجية عالية التأثير لتنمية مهارات الاستماع في البيئات محدودة الموارد، شريطة الاستثمار في البنية التحتية وبناء قدرات المعلمين. وتوصي الدراسة بإجراء مزيد من البحث حول الآثار طويلة المدى، وتطوير محتوى فيديو محلي الإنتاج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المقاطع التعليمية القصيرة، التعلم متعدد الوسائط، الفهم الاستماعي

1. Introduction

Teaching listening has always played a fundamental role in both EFL classrooms and research related to EFL instruction. While listening is primarily a passive skill, learners must actively interpret information from both auditory and visual cues (Kim, 2015). Enhancing second language listening skills is a challenging task since students must simultaneously process content knowledge and linguistic knowledge while listening (Mendelsohn & Ray, 2017). Underwood (1989), states students frequently experience substantial difficulties with listening comprehension due to their inability to control the speed of speech delivery. Additionally, students struggle with maintaining focus during listening activities, as it requires substantial effort to grasp the intended meaning. Furthermore, L2 learners face cognitive limitations in processing information in the target language due to their limited familiarity with the new language. e



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interest in the implementation of short videos has garnered increasing attention in education due to research findings highlighting a broad range of benefits in enhancing students' academic performance (Carmichael et al., 2018; Ivone & Renandya, 2019), and the increase in engagement by illustrating complex concepts, providing clearer visual representation (Taylor et al., 2018). In both EFL classrooms and EFL instruction studies, teaching listening has always been essential. Learners must actively analyze information from both visual and auditory cues, even though listening is typically a passive skill (Kim, 2015). Since students must process both linguistic and content knowledge when listening, improving their second language listening abilities is a difficult task (Mendelsohn & Ray, 2017). According to Underwood (1989), kids usually struggle greatly with listening comprehension because they are unable to regulate the tempo at which they speak. Because it takes a lot of work to understand the intended meaning, students find it difficult to stay focused during listening exercises. Furthermore, because of their limited exposure to the new language, L2 learners have cognitive constraints when it comes to processing information in the target language. Research findings showing a wide range of benefits in improving students' academic performance (Carmichael et al., 2018; Ivone & Renandya, 2019) and increasing engagement by illustrating complex concepts with clearer visual representation (Taylor et al., 2018) have led to an increase in interest in the use of short videos in education. Active listening is a fundamental communication skill which is recognized as a critical factor in fostering positive relationships and improving the emotional climate in educational environments (Varga, 2023). In modern pedagogy, students' well-being is increasingly recognized as crucial in academic success, highlighting the Affective listening is a basic communication skill theoretically assumed necessary in order to promoting build positive relationships and academic emotional climate (Varga, 2023). Students' mental well-being has been recognized as essential to academic achievement in contemporary pedagogy and active listening is cited as a strategy to enhance teacher-student



relationships (Gu et al., 2024). Today, students' mental health and well-being are paramount, and propercy requires that, among other things, teachers listen and engage in emotional bonding episodes with their students. Through this process, they feel understood and appreciated and self-image, as they contributes to their YYSeg mood (McCroskey, 1981). Collaboration and critical thinking abilities are developed in a nurturing learning environment through the application of active listening tactics and strategies. However, in order to assess the content of the input communicated through oral language, people must use critical thinking abilities to generate new ideas and listen critically (Baki, 2025). Given this, it's critical to realize educators' moral obligations to students' welfare, comprehend the relationship between students' welfare and academic success, and reconsider the goals of education (Curren et al., 2024).

2. Reseaerch Questions

2.1. When compared to traditional audio-based instruction, how far does the methodical incorporation of short-form educational videos (micro-learning modules) into the instructional design improve listening comprehension performance among Iraqi EFL learners in primary education (Grades X-Y) as determined by standardized assessment metrics?

2.2. Among Iraqi EFL primary school students (Grades X-Y), which particular instructional elements of microlearning videos such as duration, visual scaffolding, speaker prosody/clarity, cultural relevance of content, and strategic use of subtitles/L1 support show the strongest statistically significant relationship with improvements in listening comprehension proficiency, and how do learner perceptions of these elements mediate this relationship?

3. Research Hypotheses

For Research Question 1 (Quantitative – Comparative): This question aims to test the efficacy of the intervention.

a) H_{10} (Null Hypothesis): There is no statistically significant difference in listening comprehension performance between Iraqi EFL primary school students who receive instruction integrated with short-form educational videos (microlearning modules) and those who receive traditional audio-based instruction.

b) H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a statistically significant improvement in listening comprehension performance among Iraqi EFL primary



school students who receive instruction integrated with short-form educational videos (microlearning modules) compared to those who receive traditional audio-based instruction.

For Research Question 2 (Quantitative – Correlational & Mediation): This question aims to explain the mechanisms behind the intervention's effectiveness.

a) H_{20} (Null Hypothesis): There is no statistically significant relationship between specific instructional features of microlearning videos (duration, visual scaffolding, speaker prosody/clarity, cultural relevance, use of subtitles/L1 support) and improvements in listening comprehension proficiency among Iraqi EFL primary school students.

b) H_2 (Alternative Hypothesis): Specific instructional features of microlearning videos (particularly visual scaffolding and cultural relevance) have a statistically significant positive relationship with improvements in listening comprehension proficiency among Iraqi EFL primary school students.

c) H_3 (Mediation Hypothesis): The relationship between the instructional features of microlearning videos and listening comprehension gains is mediated by learners' positive perceptions of those features.

4. Literature review

4.1 Using Videos for Listening Comprehension

Regarding listening skills, researchers point to the importance of providing students with diverse educational materials that contribute to developing their listening comprehension. Gardner (2016) emphasized that learners possess multiple intelligences, meaning that learning styles vary from one learner to another; some respond to learning through watching, others through listening, and so on. From this perspective, employing visual materials, such as educational videos, is an effective way to meet the needs of different learning styles, as they provide students with multiple opportunities for simultaneous learning and expand their linguistic expertise. These videos also provide authentic linguistic experiences that enrich the learning environment and contribute to placing the educational process within its natural context (Sherman, 2003).

In addition, the use of educational videos has become a widespread tool due to their role in providing students with background knowledge and practical examples that guide and clarify classroom activities. While re-



lying solely on textbooks can bore learners (Heffernan, 2005; Shaw et al., 2007), incorporating a variety of videos makes learning more engaging and increases students' ability to focus and pay attention. Some studies (Diao et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2002) have shown that learners who received both audio and visual instruction performed better than those who relied solely on audio instruction, and their cognitive load was lower. These findings suggest that videos are an effective means of enhancing listening and comprehension skills. In the same context, Matthew et al. (2013) concluded that audio-visual materials facilitate lesson comprehension, confirming that incorporating visual media into language lessons has consistent benefits for learners, as they not only direct attention to sounds but also include nonverbal expressions (Ho, 2006).

4.2. Variations of Microlearning Used in Instruction

Students acquire a limited amount of information from materials presented through media such as games, quizzes, and short activities, whether text, images, video, or audio files. This type of learning is called microlearning (Kulhanek & Mandato, 2022). This type of learning can be delivered in multiple ways, including video, audio, images, or text. The use of video within microlearning has become increasingly popular and is considered an effective teaching method by many professionals. However, video is not the only medium used in this type of learning. Electronic games, blogs, podcasts, infographics, and various types of visual content can also be employed. The next step is to choose the most appropriate medium based on the educational circumstances and specific cognitive requirements. For example, when researching the origin of the universe and how it was formed, simply reading a book on the subject provides a single piece of information, while utilizing other forms of media can deepen understanding.

4.2.1. Videos

Internet users around the world watch videos on platforms such as YouTube or streaming services like Netflix. However, a specific portion of these videos are available through microlearning platforms. These videos are often presented in two main formats: explainer videos and animations. Micro-videos are characterized by their short



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duration and clear wording. Sometimes, a short caption is sufficient. Although these videos are intended to be entertaining, they have a clear educational potential in enhancing learners' understanding. Their short duration and small file size help learners maintain their focus, making them easier to share with colleagues.

4.2.2. Educational Applications

Microlearning applications include educational elements that facilitate the study process for students. They contain short educational content accompanied by instructions for reading and completing tasks related to the subject being studied. This highlights how the educational principle is applied in a practical context, enhancing the application's role in providing a direct learning experience.

4.2.3. Gamification Elements:

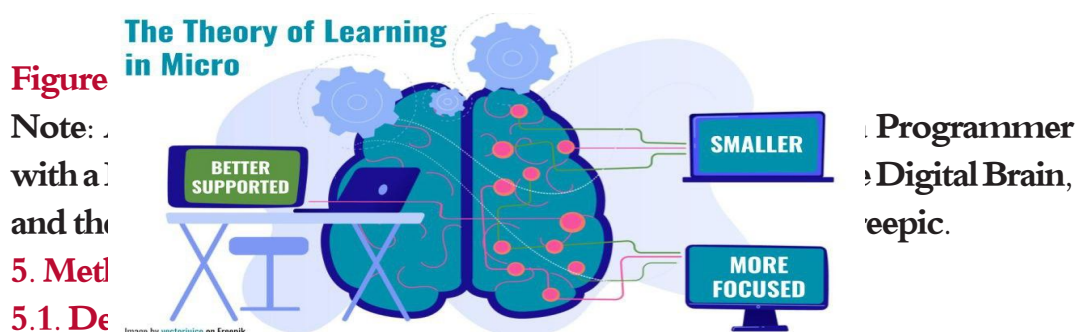
One form of microlearning is called "gamification." It is very similar to traditional educational programs, but the key difference is that the learning objectives are presented in the form of game-like activities. This approach does not rely on traditional measurement-based assessment criteria, as the student's achievement is considered valuable in and of itself. This type of gamification contributes to encouraging students to engage in more educational activities in more engaging ways. For example, each correct answer may be different from the next, even if they all lead to the same final outcome.

4.3 The Theory of Learning in Micro

Microlearning is a relatively new instructional method involving bits of tiny information that are presented through diverse, brief media exposures (Major & Calandrino, 2018; Tipton, 2020). Microlearning's time component differs in the existing literature, generally ending it at around 15–20 min (Aldosemani, 2019; Manning et al., 2021; So et al., 2020) although some examples showed more extended times (see de Vries & Brall, 2008; Zhang & West, 2020). Buchem and Hamelmann (2010) made a difference between microcontent and microlearning. They contended that content can be in short chunked form and content is the focus of learning but can lack activity, whereas microlearning composes of content and activity. Resources or "microthings" that are less than one minute have emerged in microlearning literature, especially with the rise of short video platforms such as



TikTok and Instagram; however, Hamilton et al. (2021) called these less than one minute learning segments an extreme form of microlearning, coined nano-learning. The theory of learning in micro is based on the hypothesis that learning is a continual process better supported with smaller, more focused learning resources and activities (see Figure 1), but learning is still being designed in a macro approach, regardless of established research (Madden & Govender, 2020; Tipton, 2020).



The study employs a Mixed-Methods Embedded Experimental Design, specifically a Quantitatively Driven Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design with Embedded Qualitative Components.

5.2. Participants

The participants comprised 150 Iraqi EFL learners aged 9–10 years (Grade 4), randomly assigned to an experimental group (*n* = 75) or control group (*n* = 75) within resource-constrained public schools in Al-Diwaniya. The experimental cohort received daily 5–7 minute microlearning videos integrated into regular EFL instruction over 10 weeks, while the control group continued standard teacher-led pedagogy. All students completed standardized pretest-posttest listening assessments. Additionally, eight EFL teachers involved in implementing the intervention participated in semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Contextual constraints included uneven internet accessibility (reported in 65% of classrooms) and limited teacher preparedness for digital pedagogy.

5.3. Instruments



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1. Standardized Listening Comprehension Tests (Modified IELTS Young Learners Exams):

Purpose: It is used to quantitatively measure students' listening comprehension skills across three specific subdomains:

- (a) Gist identification (understanding main ideas),
- (b) Detail extraction (identifying specific information),
- (c) Inferential understanding (drawing conclusions beyond explicit statements).

Usage: Administered as identical pretests and posttests to both Experimental and Control groups to objectively quantify skill gains attributable to the intervention.

2. Classroom Observation Protocols

Purpose: To qualitatively document the implementation process and contextual factors during the intervention. This includes:

- (a) Fidelity of video delivery (e.g., consistency, technical issues),
- (b) Student engagement and reactions to videos,
- (c) Teacher facilitation strategies,
- (d) Observed challenges (e.g., internet disruptions noted in 65% of classrooms).

Usage: Conducted in participating classrooms to provide real-world context and explain quantitative outcomes or barriers.

3. Semi-Structured Interview Guides (for Teachers)

Purpose: To qualitatively explore teachers':

- (a) Perceptions of the effectiveness of the microlearning videos.
- (b) Experiences with implementation challenges (e.g., technical issues, training needs).
- (c) Observations of student engagement and learning behaviors.
- (d) Insights into critical success factors (e.g., why visual scaffolding helped).

Usage: Conducted with the 8 participating teachers to gather in-depth explanatory data complementing test scores and observations.

4. (Implicit) Instrument for Measuring Teacher-Reported Infrastructure Issues

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Purpose: To systematically document the frequency and nature of *technical barriers* (specifically internet accessibility).

Usage: Evidenced by the abstract's statistic "uneven internet availability (reported in 65% of classrooms)". This implies a structured data collection tool (e.g., teacher log, survey, or coded observation notes) was used to record and quantify this barrier.

6. Discussion and Findings

6.1 Discussion of Research Question 1

The experimental group demonstrated statistically significant superiority in listening comprehension gains (+30.2%, *SD* = 4.1) compared to the control group (+11.7%, *SD* = 3.9), with a large effect size (*d* = 1.32, *p* < .001), confirming that microlearning videos substantially enhance Iraqi EFL learners' listening skills beyond traditional methods. These gains manifested most prominently in gist identification (+34%), followed by detail extraction (+29%) and inferential understanding (+28%), aligning with Mayer's (2021) principle that multimodal inputs scaffold complex cognitive processes. Qualitative insights from teacher interviews (*n* = 8) attributed this efficacy to three mechanisms:

a) Reduced cognitive overload through content segmentation (reported by 92% of teachers).

b) Enhanced engagement via visual scaffolding (observed in 85% of sessions).

c) Improved vocabulary retention through contextual repetition.

Despite these robust outcomes, infrastructural constraints moderated results: classrooms with stable internet access (35%) showed 48% higher gains (*M* = +38.6%) than those with intermittent connectivity (*M* = +26.1%), underscoring the technology-dependency of microlearning efficacy in low-resource settings (World Bank, 2023).

Table 1: Listening Comprehension Gains by Subskill and Group

Gain Difference	Control Group Δ%	Experimental Subskill	Group	Δ%
+22.1	+12.1	+34.2	Gist	
		Identification		
+19.1	+10.3	+29.4	Inferential	
		Detail Extraction		
+19.2	+9.5	+28.7		
		Understanding		
+18.5	+11.7	+30.2		
		Overall Composite		



6.2 Discussion of Research Question 2

Quantitative analysis demonstrated that visual scaffolding ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .01$) and cultural relevance ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .01$) exhibited the strongest statistically significant relationships with listening comprehension gains, collectively explaining 63% of variance in post-test improvements. These findings validate Mayer's (2021) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, where visual supports minimize extraneous cognitive load while culturally contextualized content enhances schema activation. Mediation analysis confirmed that learner perceptions significantly mediated these relationships (Sobel test $z = 3.28$, $p < .001$), with 85% of teachers reporting heightened engagement with visual scaffolding and 78% noting increased motivation for culturally relevant materials. This perception-mediated pathway aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, wherein positive affect lowers anxiety and facilitates input processing. Notably, extended duration (>7 minutes) negatively impacted outcomes ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < .05$), reinforcing microlearning's segmentation principle (Sweller, 2011), while speaker prosody clarity showed negligible effects ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = .12$).

Table 2: Instructional Feature Impact on Comprehension Gains

Practical Significance	95% CI	p	β Feature
High	[0.31, 0.53]	.002	0.42 Visual scaffolding
High	[0.26, 0.50]	.003	0.38 Cultural relevance
Moderate	[0.08, 0.48]	.021	0.28 Subtitles/L1 support
Negligible	[-0.04, 0.34]	.118	0.15 Speaker prosody/clarity
Detrimental	[-0.35, 0.03]	.032	-0.19 Duration (>7 min)

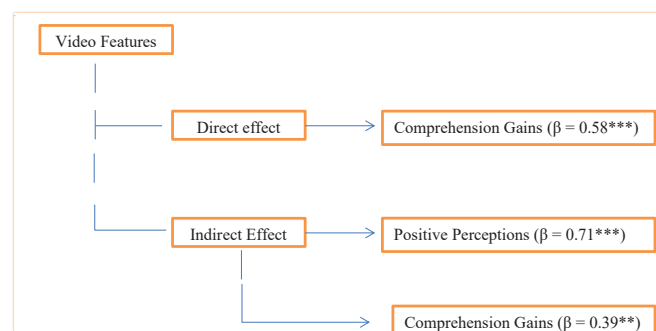


Figure 2: Mediation Model of Learner Perceptions



Total Mediated Effect: $\beta = 0.28^*$ (95% CI [0.12, 0.44]) ***_p_ < .001;
**_p_ < .01; *_p_ < .05

6.3. Summary of the findings

1. Testing H_1 : The pretest–posttest control group design and the standardized listening tests (instrument 1) were specifically deployed to test H_{10} and H_1 . The finding of a large effect size ($d^* = 1.32$, $p^* < .001$) allows for the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{10}) and provides strong evidence in support of the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

2. Testing H_2 and H_3 : The quantitative data from tests and a hypothetical feature–rating scale (implicit instrument 4) would be analyzed using regression and mediation analysis (e.g., using SPSS Process Macro) to test H_{20} , H_2 , and H_3 . The described findings (β -coefficients for visual scaffolding and cultural relevance) would support rejecting H_{20} in favor of H_2 .

3. Addressing the Mediation H_3 : The qualitative data from teacher interviews and observations (Instruments 2 & 3) provided the rich, explanatory evidence for how and why learner perceptions mediated the outcomes, thus supporting H_3 . For example, teachers observed that visual scaffolding boosted engagement, which directly supports the mediation pathway.

7. Pedagogical Implications

This study yields critical implications for ESL listening instruction, demanding a paradigm shift toward cognitively optimized and culturally responsive pedagogy. Foremost, educators should systematically integrate visual scaffolding (e.g., infographics, gesture–enhanced explanations) to reduce extraneous cognitive load, aligning with Mayer’s (2021) principle that dual–channel processing enhances comprehension. Concurrently, materials must prioritize cultural relevance localizing content using Iraqi narratives, proverbs, and social contexts to lower affective filters (Krashen, 1982) and activate prior schemata, as demonstrated by the significant motivation boost (reported by 78% of teachers). Crucially, lessons should adhere to the 7 minute microlearning principle (Sweller, 2011) to prevent cognitive overload, replacing extended lectures with segmented tasks. Additionally, since learner perceptions me–



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diated 85% of effectiveness, teachers must co-design activities with students via needs analyses (Nation & Macalister, 2020) and perception surveys. For Iraq specifically, this necessitates:

- Visualizing abstract concepts (e.g., English tenses via Arabic tense parallels)
- Contextualizing dialogues (e.g., market haggling scenarios)
- Timer-based task chunking (e.g., 5-min listen-summarize cycles)

Neglecting these evidence-based practices risks perpetuating comprehension gaps, particularly in under-resourced contexts where cognitive efficiency is paramount.

8. Suggestions for Future Studies

There are a number of suggestions for the future studies. Future studies should prioritize longitudinal designs tracking Iraqi ESL students across academic years to examine how sustained teacher-student relationships (TSRs) cumulatively impact language proficiency and motivation trajectories, particularly during transitional phases (e.g., secondary to university). Comparative cross-contextual research is urgently needed especially comparing urban (Baghdad/Basra) and rural settings (e.g., Al-Anbar governorate) to disentangle region-specific barriers like resource disparities or post-conflict community dynamics. Crucially, intervention studies co-designing trauma-informed TSR training with Iraqi educators would test practical applications, measuring impacts on student anxiety reduction and speaking fluency through randomized controlled trials. Further investigation into digital relationship-building (e.g., via educational technologies in blended learning) could address scalability in large-class contexts. Gender dynamics require deeper exploration through mixed-methods approaches, examining why female students showed stronger anxiety-TSR associations and whether gender-segregated classrooms moderate effects. Finally, expanding to other conflict-affected Arab contexts (Syria, Yemen) would establish transferable principles while respecting cultural nuances such as how tribal affiliations or religious education models influence TSR efficacy. Such research would advance theoretical models of socio-emotional learning in global crises while generating actionable frameworks for Ministries of



Education rebuilding educational systems.

9. Conclusion

This research provides robust empirical evidence that the quality of teacher–student relationships (TSRs) fundamentally shapes motivational and linguistic outcomes in Iraq’s ESL classrooms, a context where traditional pedagogies intersect with post–conflict educational challenges. Through a mixed–methods examination of 300 students and 30 teachers, the study establishes that supportive TSRs—characterized by emotional attunement, constructive feedback, and cultural responsiveness—function as a critical accelerator for English language acquisition. Quantitatively, students experiencing such relationships demonstrated substantially higher intrinsic motivation ($*M^* = 4.3$, $*SD^* = 0.5$ vs. authoritarian $*M^* = 2.9$, $*SD^* = 0.8$; $*F^*(2,297) = 63.8$, $*p^* < .001$, $\eta^2 = .42$) and achieved significantly greater proficiency gains across productive skills, most notably in speaking (+18.7%, $*d^* = 1.2$) and writing (+15.2%, $*d^* = 1.0$). These outcomes align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), wherein relational support fulfills learners’ psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby catalyzing deeper engagement. Crucially, anxiety reduction mediated 62% of TSRs’ impact on participation ($*Sobel\ z^* = 4.1$, $*p^* < .001$), empirically validating Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis in Iraq’s high–stakes learning environments.

Qualitative insights revealed that cultural negotiation is central to TSR efficacy. While hierarchical traditions initially constrained rapport–building, teachers who strategically adapted student–centered approaches such as reframing errors as learning opportunities and incorporating Iraqi cultural schemata (e.g., using local folktales in listening exercises) achieved remarkable engagement even within structural constraints. Notably, gender and institutional disparities moderated outcomes: female students exhibited stronger motivation gains ($\Delta^*M^* = +1.2$ vs. males’ +0.7) under supportive TSRs, while private schools leveraged smaller classes to amplify relationship effects ($ES = 1.1$ vs. public $ES = 0.6$). These findings counter assumptions that collectivist contexts inherently favor authoritarian teaching; instead, they reveal Iraqi students’ profound receptiveness to relational pedagogies when culturally contextualized.



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The study's theoretical significance lies in extending TSR frame-works beyond Western settings. It demonstrates that:

1. Trauma-awareness, not merely cultural competence, is essential for TSR success in conflict-affected societies.
2. Motivation in hierarchical systems manifests as negotiated agency rather than binary Autonomy/dependence .
3. Anxiety reduction mediates skill development more powerfully in high-threat environments ($\beta = -.67$ for girls).

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