

# Comparing Students' Achievement and Gender in Learning EFL

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The problem of the research is that all students have been treated as interchangeable parts with the same textbook for all regardless of students' style of learning and sociolinguistics factors such as gender and the students' specialisations. The aims of the research are identifying the students' achievement in learning English Foreign language and comparing the achievement among the colleges and genders. The research hypothesis is that there are no differences among the students' achievement in learning EFL; and there is no difference between the female and male in learning EFL. The sample for the study is 511 students at Baghdad University, from 9 different colleges during the academic year 2018-2019. The results show that there are significant differences among the students' achievement at Baghdad colleges, but the results also reveal that there is no difference between male and female in learning EFL of students at Baghdad University.

**Key words:** *EFL teaching, students' achievement, gender.*

## Introduction of the Research

### *The Problem and Its Significance*

Different learners have different requirements, and those requirements ought to be reflected both in the content of the textbook and the teaching process. Also, the modern approach to teaching is shifting from the teacher and textbook toward the learner (Nunan, 1999:10). The learner should be seen as being at the centre of the educational process. For the teaching institution and the teacher, this means that instructional textbooks should be centred on learners' needs and that learners themselves should exercise their own responsibility in the choice of learning objectives, content and methods, as well as determining the means used to assess their performance (Brindley, 1984:4-6). The content of the language textbook should reflect the purposes for which the students are learning the language in the first place, rather than fitting students to the course. The courses should be designed to fit students – not the

opposite (David Nunan, 1999:148). Styles often vary with age, achievement level, culture, global versus analytic processing preference, gender, language learning aptitude, academic motivation and multiple intelligences, etc. Gender discrimination is a hot debate running in education (Yusufy Demir & Mustafa Yavuz (2017), 2017). Learners in classroom characterised by a transmission model of learning are cast in a relative passive role. They are passengers, being carried forward in the learning experience by the teacher. But in language classrooms operating within such a transmission mode, learners practise patterns provided by teachers, textbook, and tapes. They are thus cast into passive, reproductive roles. Rather than learning how to use language creativity themselves, they spend most learning time copying and reproducing language written down by others (Nunan, 1999:75), Brindly, G. (2016). In order to meet the requirements of the learning and teaching, learner-centred pedagogies sought to select and sequence grammatical items as well as functionality of language. Besides this, they put a greater premium on the communicative needs of their learners (Munby, 1978 cited by B. Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 121). No textbook or set of materials is likely to be perfect and no textbook is likely to suit a majority of learners (J. McDonough & C. Shaw, 2003: 61-62).

Language learning strategies research areas need to be enhanced in the education process since they consist of different phenomena such as age, gender, individual differences and learning environment (Hatice KOC, 2017: 359). Also, gender discrimination is a hot debate running in education (Demir & Yavuz, 2017) J. Richards & R. Schmidt (2002).

Sociolinguistics has looked at speech communities based on social categories such as age, class, gender, profession and sexual identity (Ronald Carter & David Nunan, 2001:100). These are important sociolinguistic categories that are interacted and implicated in language use. Furthermore, any college or university and policy maker should not disregard these categories. Most institutions which work in the field of education and teaching agree that success of foreign language learning is affected by the social categories of learners.

But the policy of Baghdad University, which has forced English teachers at all the colleges to adopt “New Headway Plus” as an English textbook, disregards the specialisations i.e., students at the College of Physical Education are different from students at Science College, College of arts, College of Languages etc... (Baan Sadiq, 2019). Iraqi students spend 10 years learning general English and when they enter college again they learn general English. Baghdad University has neglected to acknowledge these 10 years and began “New Headway Plus, beginners level” in the first year.

Accordingly, the research has tried to reveal the differences among students’ achievement. Unfortunately, Baghdad University disregards the specialised differences between the Colleges. All Baghdad University Colleges adopted one textbook for teaching EFL: “New Headway Plus”. Thus, the students have been forced to study the same textbook, neglecting

the students' needs, intelligence, specialisation, and the teachers' creativity. Thus, Iraqi students are less motivated to learn the English language, and this affected their achievement. Also, the research has identified the differences between male and female Iraqi students in learning English at Baghdad University Colleges.

### ***Aim of the Research***

The research aims at the following;

- 1) Identifying and comparing students' English achievement.
- 2) Identifying and comparing female and male in learning EFL.

### ***Significance of the Research***

There are many benefits in conducting this research, as the following:

- 1) It enables the designer to develop a curriculum to address learners' differences, orientations and intelligence at college.
- 2) It may help Baghdad University to take a right decision to give more freedom for the Colleges and teachers to design English courses which are suitable for the students' needs.
- 3) It provides information to be taken into consideration by policy makers, language-planners, textbook developers, language instructors, teachers as well as learners. Hopefully, the present study will provide us with opportunities to look differently at the students, curriculum, instruction and testing.
- 4) The present research will provide a clear picture about EFL students' differences concerning their level of achievement in the colleges at Baghdad University.
- 5) It encourages teachers to design an appropriate English syllabus so that they can awaken students' motivation and take advantage of college specialisation areas. Furthermore, teachers' creativity will be strengthened and it will free them from relying just on textbooks.
- 6) The current research may spread awareness among EFL teachers on students' achievement differences among colleges and respect these differences.
- 7) It is expected that this research would open a new horizon for the instructors to adopt the student-centred teaching and relinquish the traditional teacher-centred instruction. Textbooks and contents are not the most important things in learning English; rather it is the students' needs for learning.
- 8) The results of the research may help curriculum developers in Iraq choose more meaningful activities based on the college's specialisation, motivation orientations and proficiency levels.

### ***Related Study***

The Senad Bec'irovic', (2017) study has investigated the relationship of gender, motivation and achievement in learning EFL. The sample for the study is 185 students of different age. The results have shown that there is a significant relationship between gender and students' achievement, favoring the female students. The current research also is focussed on learning EFL and deals with gender and achievement, but the sample is different in age and number. The most relative in the previous study is the relationship between gender and achievement.

### ***Research Questions***

The research is designed to measure and compare English students' achievement in different Colleges at Baghdad University. The following questions are addressed:

- 1) Are there any significant differences among Colleges at Baghdad University in EFL students' achievement?
- 2) Is there any difference between female and male in students' achievement of EFL at Baghdad University?

### ***Hypothesis of the Research***

- 1) There are no differences among Iraqi students' English achievement at Baghdad University Colleges.
- 2) There is no difference between female and male students' achievement at Baghdad University.

### **Methods of the Research**

It has adopted the descriptive method to fulfil the aims of the research; many scientific procedures have been taken into consideration to ensure the accuracy of the scientific conclusions.

### ***Definitions of Basic Terms***

The following are the operational definitions of the variables of the research:

English Achievement:

Attempts to measure what students have learned from a course or set of materials (Nunan, 1999: 301).



Gender:

It refers to sex as either a biological or socially constructed category (Richard & Schmidt, 2002: 220).

### ***Administering the Achievement Test***

An English test is applied to Iraqi students at Baghdad University.

The test is given to jury members consisting of five specialists in the field of teaching English to insure its validity. All the items of the test are applied in the final administration of the test. The test includes six questions, each consisting of five items. The first question is a 'true and false' sentence, depending on reading comprehension. The second question is 'multiple choice' with four options, and the third one is matching question. The fourth question is ticking the correct sentence – each item has two options depending on the grammar; the fifth one is putting the words in the correct list (place... job... food). The last question is re-order the words to make questions. English test questions are selected from "New Headway Plus, intermediate level".

### ***Validity of the Test***

The test was given to the same jury member to insure it face and content validly. The validity of the test is (92%) which indicates high percentage score. Thus, the test was adopted in the final version test.

### ***Reliability of the Test***

The test has been given to 30 students as a pilot study to reveal the difficulty and the time required. It has been used test re-test for reliability. The results have shown good reliability (100%). Also, reliability statistics score of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.666 of all the six questions. Thus it indicates a good reliability, and the test has been adopted without any modification.

### ***Sampling Procedures***

The population for the research is Iraqi students at Baghdad University in the academic year 2018-2019, which number 6211. The sample of the research has been chosen randomly as a cluster sample according to the Colleges of Baghdad University (Nursing College - Sciences College - Education College - Physical Education and Science Sport for Women - Agriculture Engineering College - Arts College - Islamic Sciences College - Languages College - - Sciences Education College). The sample for the research is 20% of the population: the age of the sample is between (19- 23). Many students' forms are excluded because they are above the

average age. Also, many students' forms are voided because they are not complete. Thus, the final size of the sample is 511 Iraqi students at Baghdad University: 206 male and 295 female participated in the final administration of the research.

## Results

The results of the research have analysed according to the Statistical Package for the Social Science Software (SPSS).

### *Statistics and Data Analysis of Students' English Achievement in Colleges at Baghdad University*

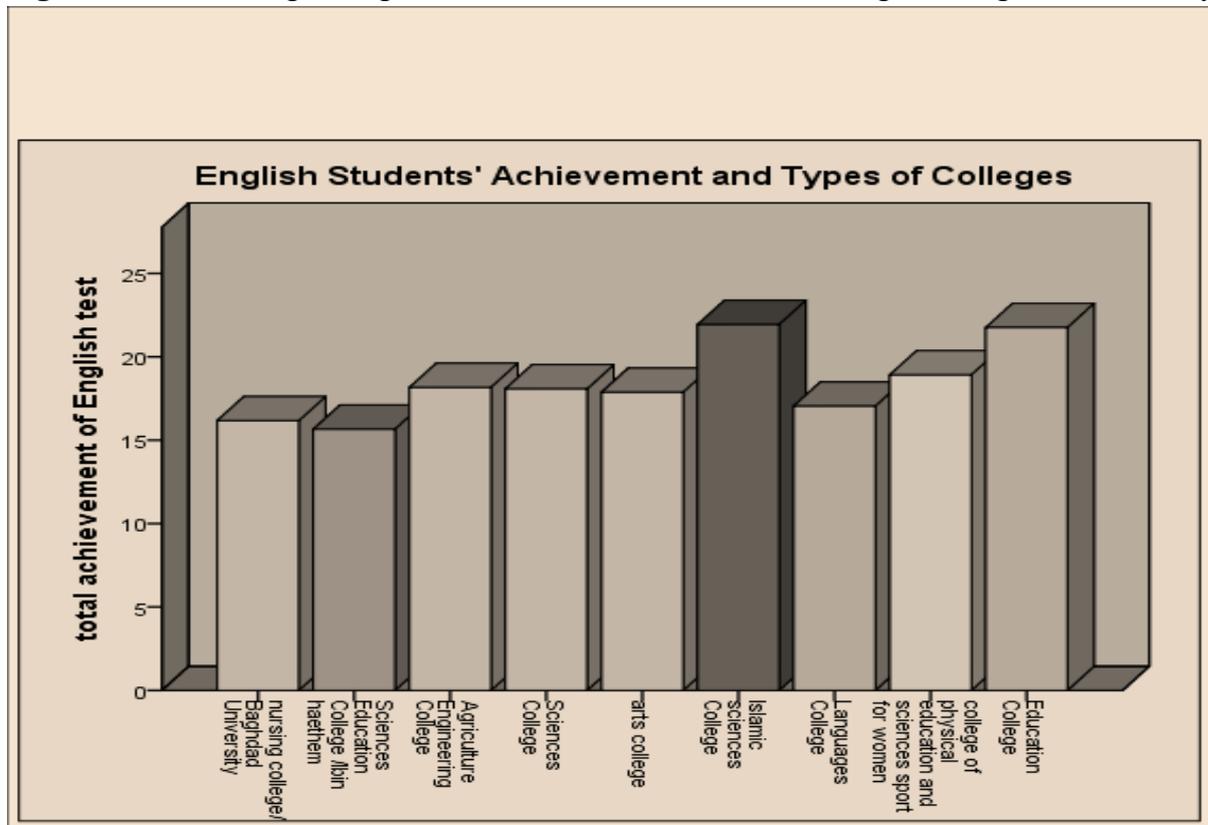
The ranking of the mean from the highest to lowest is the following: the mean of the Education College is (22.313), the mean of the Islamic Sciences College is (21.933), the mean of the Physical Education and Sciences Sports for Women is (20.911), the mean of the Sciences College is (19.656), the mean of the Languages College is (17.528), the mean of the Agriculture Engineering College is (17.108), the mean of the Arts College is (16.745), the mean of the Nursing College is (15.838), finally, the mean of Sciences Education / Ibin Haethem is (15.781). Figure (1) shows ranking bars of the Colleges at Baghdad University according to the English achievement of Iraqi students.

**Table 1:** The Mean and Standard Deviation of English Students' Achievement in Colleges

Name of College	Mean	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Nursing college/	15.838	.669	14.523	17.152
Sciences Education College /Ibin Haethem	15.781	.563	14.675	16.886
Agriculture Engineering College	17.108	1.805	13.561	20.655
Sciences College	19.656	1.833	16.055	23.257
Arts college	16.745	1.894	13.025	20.466
Islamic sciences College	21.933	1.366	19.250	24.617
Languages College	17.528	1.080	15.406	19.649
Physical education and sciences sport for women	20.911	2.674	15.657	26.166
Education College	22.313	1.479	19.407	25.218

Figure (1) shows the ranking bars for students' achievement at 9 colleges which participated in the research. See figure (1).

**Figure 1.** The Ranking of English Students' Achievement and Colleges of Baghdad University



### *Analysing the Data of Gender*

Table (2) has shown the gender results for the Colleges of Baghdad University. The ranking of gender attending the Colleges of Baghdad University from the highest mean to the lowest one: the mean of male in the Education College has showed the highest score is (23.25), the mean of male in the Language College is (19.00), the mean score of male in the Arts College is (18.17), the mean score of male in the Sciences College is (18.08), the mean of male in the Agriculture Engineering College is (17.97). Finally, the lowest score of male is (14.84) in the Sciences Education College.

The ranking of English students' achievement of female attending Baghdad University Colleges is Islamic Sciences (21.93), Education (21.38), Physical Education and Sciences Sports for Women (18.82), Agriculture Engineering (18.35), Sciences (17.88), and finally Arts College (17.81).

**Table 2:** The Mean and Standard Deviation of Gender According the Colleges of Baghdad University

Dependent Variable: total achievement of English test					
name of college	gender of tester	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
nursing college/ Baghdad University	male	16.630	.716	15.223	18.037
	female	14.957	1.097	12.801	17.112
Sciences Education College /Ibin haethem	male	14.865	.730	13.432	16.299
	female	16.718	.843	15.062	18.374
Agriculture Engineering College	male	17.889	.877	16.166	19.612
	female	18.353	.737	16.905	19.801
Sciences College	male	17.920	1.052	15.852	19.988
	female	18.074	1.013	16.084	20.064
arts college	male	18.200	.961	16.312	20.088
	female	17.719	.658	16.426	19.011
Islamic sciences College	male	. <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.
	female	21.933	1.359	19.264	24.603
Languages College	male	19.000	1.754	15.554	22.446
	female	16.056	1.240	13.619	18.493
college of physical education and sciences sport for women	male	. <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.
	female	18.913	.776	17.389	20.437
Education College	male	23.250	2.631	18.080	28.420
	female	21.294	1.276	18.786	23.802

a. This level combination of factors is not observed, thus the corresponding population marginal mean is not estimated.

The mean of the male students at Baghdad university is (18.251); while the mean of the female students is (18.224). See table (3).

**Table 3:** The Mean and Standard Deviation of Gender of Iraqi Students at Baghdad University

Gender of Tester				
Dependent Variable: total achievement of English test				
gender of tester	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
male	18.251 <sup>a</sup>	.532	17.206	19.295
female	18.224	.343	17.550	18.898

a. Based on modified population marginal mean.

Thus, the mean of both groups has shown that there are no differences between the male and female students at Baghdad University Colleges. Furthermore, the MONOVA formally prove these results. However, the results have shown that there are differences among students' English achievement at Colleges of Baghdad University. See table (4).

**Table 4:** MONOVA Results of Achievement and Gender of Iraqi Students at Baghdad University

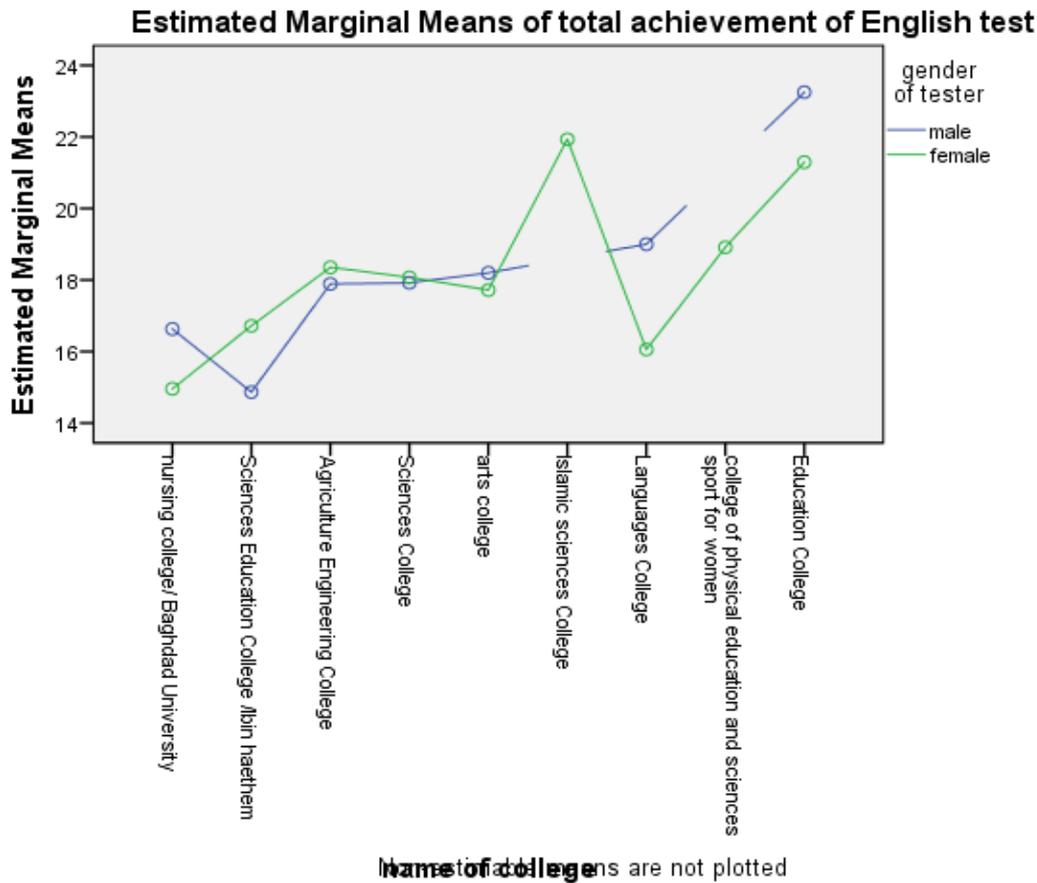
<b>Tests of Between-Subjects Effects</b>					
Dependent Variable: total achievement of English test					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1464.252 <sup>a</sup>	15	97.617	3.525	.000
Intercept	91898.399	1	91898.399	3318.567	.000
college	1091.559	8	136.445	4.927	.000
gender	27.805	1	27.805	1.004	.317
college * gender	195.040	6	32.507	1.174	.319
Error	13679.946	494	27.692		
Total	173157.000	510			
Corrected Total	15144.198	509			

a. R Squared = .097 (Adjusted R Squared = .069)

### ***Graphs Results of Gender at Baghdad University***

Figure (2) has shown that the highest score of male students achievement is indicated to Education College but the lowest score is recorded by Sciences Education/ Ibin Haetham, while the highest score of female students is recorded by Islamic Sciences College and the lowest score is Nursing College

**Figure 2.** Gender of Students According the Achievement at Colleges



## Discussions of the Results

The analysing of the results has shown that there are statistically significant differences among the Colleges of Baghdad University, thus the null hypothesis is rejected. But the results by gender have shown that there is no statistically significant difference between the female and male of English students' achievement in the Colleges of Baghdad University. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is accepted; there is no statistically significant difference between the female and male of English students' achievement in the Colleges of Baghdad University. Which is unexpected: the finding of the results are in disagreement with Bec'irovic' (2017). The previous study has recorded that there is a statistically significant difference in the gender and students' achievement. Also, Freeman & McElhinny (1996); S. Johnson & U. Meinhof (1997) have tackled gender and sociolinguistics factors, but they have indicated there are differences between female and male in learning English Foreign language.

Also, the results of the research have revealed unexpected findings in rating Baghdad University's Colleges, because students' achievement of English at the Education College has

got the highest score but the lowest has been recorded at the Science Education College/ Ibin Haethem. In fact, the Sciences Education College has taken higher total achievement than the Education College/ Ibin Rushid . From the researcher's point of view, this indicated that almost all the departments of the Sciences Education College are taught by non-specialist English teachers, which affected the total achievement of the sample. Furthermore, the results of the Islamic Sciences College, the second rating scale, is unexpected because the students in this college are specialists in the Arabic language and Al-Qurain; also, this result indicates that their English teachers are specialised in teaching English language. Moreover, the Nursing College's results are unexpected because the students should study most subjects in the English language – unfortunately, the students' achievement in English is not reaching the university standard.

### **Conclusions**

It has concluded the following:

- 1) Baghdad University should estimate the Iraqi students' achievement differences among the specialist Colleges. Thus, consideration should be given among Baghdad University Colleges in teaching EFL to using different textbooks, giving more freedom to students to choose their materials.
- 2) Sociolinguistics and individual differences should considered when the policy makers decided to take their decision about English language learning textbooks ,methods and tests.
- 3) Baghdad University should take the findings of the results into consideration to improve students' achievement and fill the gaps of teaching process (textbook - teachers - evaluation).



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**Appendix (A)**  
**English Test**

The internet started in the 1960s. The United States Department of Defense started it because they wanted a computer network to help the American military. In the 1970s, scientists worked on it and learnt how to send messages between computers. Then in the 1980s, telephone companies made it possible to communicate on the computer network in many more countries. An international computer language was born, and the Net went worldwide.

Q1- Read the passage, Are the sentences true (√) or false (X)

- 1-The Internet started in the 1970s.      2- Telephone companies started it  
3- It started in America.                      4-There is an international computer language.  
5- In the 1980s scientists sent messages between computers.

Q2- Choose the correct answer:

What's your name? ..... name's Annie. (my- our- your-her)

I .....two brothers a sister.and (has- have- am- is)

Do you live in Dundee? No, I .....(am- am not- do – don't)

Ali ..... up at 6:00. (get- gets- got- getting)

He .....the film yesterday. (watch- watches- watched- watching)

Q3- Match the verbs with their opposites

A	Leave	Love	Win	Start	Buy
B	Finish	Sell	Arrive	Lose	Hate

Q4- Tick(√) the correct sentence

- I'm wear a blue shirt today.                       I'm wearing a blue shirt today  
 Where are you going.                                       Where you going  
 Peter no working this week                       Peter isn't working this week  
 Why aren't you having a coffee                       Why you no having a coffee  
 I like leave early today                                       I'd like to leave early today.

Q5- Put the words in correct list:

Hotel- bread- cinema- seafood- fish- bank- writer- actor- rice- artist- driver- doctor- chicken- school-- eggs- café- car park- singer-salad-		
Places	jobs	Food

Q6- Re-order the words to make questions:

- 1- I/ can/ you/ help/?/ .....  
2- tell/ time/ me/ ?/ you/ the/ can/ . .....