Foreign Language Anxiety in an Intermediate Arabic Reading Course:  
A Comparison of Heritage and Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract

This mixed-methods, qualitative dominant study investigated the issue of foreign language anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course. The first, quantitative phase of the study collected data from twenty-two students using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Foreign Language Reading Scale (FLRAS) as well as a background questionnaire. The second, qualitative phase collected data from five participants: three Foreign Language Learners (FLLs) and two Heritage Language Learners (HLLs) via interviews, classroom observations, and participant journals. The nature of the anxiety that both types of learners experienced varied due to their differing backgrounds. Although the HLLs had lower scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS in comparison to the FLLs, they still experienced anxiety that was at times debilitating. Furthermore, the qualitative data shows that the low levels of anxiety that the HLLs felt may have been a disadvantage to them, as it prevented them from feeling a type of facilitating anxiety, associated with emotionality rather than worry (Scovel, 1978), that may have motivated them to put forth more effort and achieve what they were truly capable of. These findings reiterate the importance of qualitative data, particularly when examining a phenomenon as complex as foreign language anxiety.
Dedication

Dedicated to my children Iman and Malek
Acknowledgements

Many individuals have been instrumental in making this dissertation a reality; however, without the divine help of God Almighty, it would not have been possible. Thank you, God, the most Beneficent and Merciful, for making my dream a reality and making my journey an easier one. Next, I would like to thank my mother, father, and siblings who have been my inspiration and motivation. They have encouraged and supported me throughout my studies and dissertation, and I am forever grateful to them. I also owe many thanks to my two young children, Iman and Malek, who were very patient with me throughout the entire process. They put up with endless hours of my writing, and without their patience, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation. My sincere thanks go out to you, my beloved children, and I promise to make life more exciting after this! Thanks also go out to you, my dear husband, for giving me the emotional support I needed to be strong enough to finish.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Learning a language is not an easy process – it requires a great deal of effort to become a successful language learner, particularly in less commonly taught languages. For example, while the Foreign Service Institute estimates that it takes students about 480 hours to learn a language such as Spanish or French, it takes more than double that (about 1320 hours of instruction) to learn a language such as Arabic (Omaggio Hadley, 2001).

The nature of the target language, especially in relationship to the characteristics of the learners’ native language, certainly plays an important part in the learning process. The degree of similarity that exists between the two contributes to the relative ease and time in which a language can be learned. For instance, Arabic’s derivational morphology and complex writing system may be challenging and thus more time-consuming for native speakers of English to learn. Other factors, such as the dichotomy between spoken and written varieties (diglossia), may further complicate the language learning process and cause students frustration and anxiety.

Even though there are a variety of factors that influence language learning, many of which can be changed to improve success, it is a known fact that some language learners are more successful than others. What accounts for these differences in language learning? While there is no single correct answer, there is a consensus in the field of
second language acquisition (SLA) that both cognitive and affective factors have an influence. These include affect, social distance, age, aptitude, motivation, personality, and learning styles and strategies (Gass & Selinker, 2008). While there are some characteristics that are fixed and very difficult to change (i.e. aptitude), there are others that can be changed to enhance language learning, such as affect. The affective or emotional aspect of learning can be just as important as the cognitive side and should be given the attention it deserves, as it can lead to more effective language learning (Arnold & Brown, 1999).

Although affect involves both individual factors that are part of the learner’s personality as well as environmental or relational aspects, an individual’s “anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 8). As it is, language learning places learners in a vulnerable situation considering that they are asked to express themselves in a language in which they may feel inadequate. Certain teaching methodologies and even a lack of awareness and understanding of the potential discomfort and anxiety that students can experience in the language classroom can have detrimental effects on learners. Even though anxiety is a combination of emotions, which may seem insignificant to some, the fear and nervousness that it generates leads to worry, which occupies cognitive areas that are used for memory and processing (Eysenck, 1979). This can become a major obstacle for students and hinder their language learning success.

In their seminal article, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conclude that foreign language anxiety (FLA) does have an effect on students’ performance and learning
experiences in the classroom. They define FLA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1993) define language anxiety as “the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient” (p. 5). While a low level of anxiety may “facilitate” learning, high levels have a “debilitating” effect (Scovel, 1978) that may prevent language learners from achieving their full potential or possibly abandoning their language study altogether.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is no doubt that learning Arabic requires a lot of dedication and perseverance; however, many students are losing their enthusiasm for it fairly quickly, that is, after just a year or two of language study (Ryding, 1991). Although enrollment rates in Arabic language programs in U.S. institutions of higher learning since 1995 have shown rapid growth, doubling from 5,505 to 10,584 students between 1998 and 2002 and from 10,584 to 23,974 between 2002 and 2006 (Modern Language Association, 2007), Arabic has a higher attrition rate than other foreign languages (Belnap, 1995). In fact, according to the Modern Language Association (2007), less than 12% of students go on to study Arabic at the advanced level, resulting in the production of very few highly competent speakers of the language. At no point in time was this more evident than after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. Allen (2007) writes:
Since that day, the status of Arabic in the national consciousness has been transformed almost overnight to become the number-one desideratum of the American government and its various agencies. Huge amounts of money are being spent and will be spent in an attempt to produce an increased number of Americans who are competent in the Arabic language at levels considerably higher than those of the majority of previous learners of the language (p. 258).

Regardless of students’ motivations to learn Arabic, enrollments have dramatically increased, and Arabic has even moved off the list of less commonly taught languages (Modern Language Association, 2007). Nevertheless, not many students are continuing their studies of the language beyond the introductory level, and if the goal is a high level of competency, then the focus should now shift to the retention and advancement of students.

Investigating what makes the language learning experience more successful for some than others entails an examination of affective issues, including anxiety. The study of anxiety in the language classroom has been a widely examined topic, especially in the past several decades. Quantitative studies have measured levels of FLA, examined predicting factors, and even established correlations with other variables. While these studies have been very important in advancing our knowledge of the topic and establishing that “language anxiety is a pervasive and prominent force in the language learning context” (Gardner, 1991, p. vii), they do not look at the entire picture. Learners’ voices cannot be measured numerically – they can only be heard qualitatively. With the exception of Price’s (1991) interview study of ten highly anxious students and Bailey’s (1983) diary study, there are relatively few studies that have examined FLA using a qualitative approach. Furthermore, most of the studies that have been carried out have
dealt with the more commonly taught languages. Naturally, more commonly taught languages such as Spanish and French have been the most studied, followed by less commonly taught languages. Although Arabic has recently made the tenth spot in the ten most studied languages in the U.S. (Modern Language Association, 2007), little research on the teaching and learning of Arabic has been carried out, and even less has been done exploring FLA in the Arabic classroom (Elkhafaifi, 2005).

Like other language classrooms in the U.S., Arabic classrooms consist of two general types of learners: traditional foreign language learners (FLLs) and heritage language learners (HLLs). Broadly speaking, the former term refers to students who do not have prior experience with the language when coming to the classroom, whereas the latter group of students does have experience, particularly from familial connections to the language. Considering that the U.S. has historically had two conflicting language policies, (1) a subtractive policy involving language assimilation for language minorities and (2) an additive policy involving foreign language studies for mainstream monolinguals (Wiley & Lukes, 1996), more and more students who have been educated in mainstream, monolingual schools and have, to some degree, lost their heritage language (HL) are choosing to study it in foreign language classrooms – both at the high school level, if available, and at the university level (UCLA Steering Committee, 2000). With an increased number of HLLs in the traditional FL classroom, more attention has been given to the distinct and differing needs of HLLs (Campbell & Peyton, 1998).

Even though Arabic HLLs account for only about 20% of the total number of students in U.S. universities (Belnap, 2006, p. 174), they are a growing number and may
have much to offer. According to Brecht and Ingold (2002), HLLs should be seen as a national resource, as they possess an “untapped reservoir of linguistic competence” (p. 2). Webb and Miller (2000) assert that HLLs are proficient in their language in ways that traditional FLLs are not and can provide skills that are rarely attained by non-heritage speakers. At the same time, due to the ways in which they have learned the language, they may have gaps in their knowledge of their HLs that FLLs do not have, and these gaps may prevent them from performing certain kinds of tasks, particularly in reading and writing. As a consequence, when teachers attempt to apply a standard foreign language curriculum and foreign language teaching strategies to the teaching of a HL, it can lead to discomfort, if not frustration and failure, for both students and teachers alike.

Very little research has addressed the affective needs, specifically FLA, of HLLs in the foreign language classroom. In a recent study, Tallon (2009) compared the anxiety levels of 209 Spanish HLLs to 204 traditional FLLs in various types of classes at different instructional levels at a large university in the southwestern U.S. Tallon (2009) found that although the HLLs had lower levels of anxiety than the FLLs, the HLLs still experienced considerable levels of anxiety and in some instances even had higher levels of FLA than their counterparts. The results of his study are illustrated in Figure 1.1.
Tallon (2009) found that HLLs had lower levels of anxiety than traditional FLLs in all the Spanish courses with the exception of “Phonetics and Pronunciation,” which he attributes to the possibility of the “lecture” nature of the course as well as the need for specialized linguistic vocabulary. He speculates that “it is possible that heritage students experience much more anxiety in a linguistics course than non-heritage students due to the specialized vocabulary; furthermore, because this course is a lecture course, the non-heritage students may feel less anxious because they do not have to speak in class as much as they do in other Spanish courses” (Tallon, 2009, p. 121). Although Tallon (2009) does offer possible explanations as to why HLLs experienced more anxiety than FLLs in this particular course, he does not present any qualitative data that accurately depicts what the learners were actually experiencing. Hence, while Tallon’s (2009) study does present some interesting findings, all the data presented is quantitative in nature; the feelings behind the numbers are not explored, and there is much room left for a better
understanding of HLLs’ experiences learning Spanish. Furthermore, the fact that the language explored was Spanish, the most commonly taught language in the U.S., leaves room for the further exploration of other languages, such as Arabic.

Arabic is a language spoken by more than 256 million people in 30 different countries (Sehlaoui, 2008). Although it is not the native tongue of all 1.5 billion Muslims in the world, it is a language that is highly revered and often learned in order to perform religious duties, including reading the Quran. Dahbi (2004) writes, “like English, Arabic is very much a global phenomenon today not only because it is the language of Arab countries...but also, and more importantly, because it is the language of Islam” (p. 630). The religious motivation to learn Arabic has not been limited to Muslims - both in Europe and in the United States theologians have sought to study the original Hebrew biblical text and turned to Arabic for new information (Versteegh, 2006). Arabic was introduced in U.S. universities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to fulfill that purpose (McCarus, 1992).

Aside from the religious motivation that many students of Arabic have, there are several other reasons that have motivated learners of Arabic to study the language. Western scholars studied Classical Arabic to gain access to scientific, philosophical, and literary texts. Some even used the study of Arabic grammar as a pedagogical tool to develop disciplined thinking (Ryding, 2006). It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that economic and political reasons came to the forefront of Arabic teaching and learning. World War II “revealed how woefully unprepared the nation was in terms of [Arabic]” (McCarus, 1992, p. 208), which led to an increase in Arabic
education and training, especially by governmental agencies. The attacks of September 11th, 2001 sparked even greater interest in the study of Arabic, triggering the number of U.S. colleges offering Arabic to nearly double from 264 in 2002 to 466 in 2006 (Modern Language Association, 2007).

With the great increase in the number of students learning Arabic, a number of issues have come to light – including the issue of diglossia: a sociolinguistic characteristic where spoken Arabic differs from the standardized, literary Arabic. The presence of diglossia in Arabic presents unique issues to language learners, especially to HLLs, who usually bring their colloquial dialects with them to the classroom. While knowledge of the colloquial form of the language does have many advantages, it may also present HLLs with difficulties and discomfort as they try to learn the standardized form of the language used throughout the Arab world. As a HLL of Arabic myself, I have personally experienced anxiety in the classroom and predict that others do too.

Given the potentially significant role that anxiety can play in foreign language learning, particularly a foreign language like Arabic that is considered to be challenging, there is a need to explore the nature of anxiety in the Arabic classroom. An understanding of how two different groups of learners, HLLs and FLLs, who come to the learning process with different backgrounds but still experience anxiety in the classroom, is an essential step to improving Arabic pedagogy and training teachers of Arabic more effectively. This, in turn, will help minimize any feelings of apprehension and
nervousness that may hinder students’ learning or discourage them from continuing their studies of the language.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the issue of FLA in a university intermediate-level Arabic reading classroom consisting of both FLLs and HLLs. The nature of the anxiety that students experienced as they developed their Arabic reading skills was examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. Although participants’ levels of anxiety were measured quantitatively, the vast majority of the data was collected qualitatively in order to capture students’ voices to gain a deeper understanding of how they experienced anxiety and how it affected their learning. Even though students’ emotions play a significant role in their language learning experiences and can often influence their success, their voices are often unheard in foreign language research. Listening to the participants in this study and observing how anxiety played out in the classroom provided more insight into this issue, which will hopefully lead to improvements in Arabic pedagogy so that all students, both FLLs and HLLs, can achieve their full potential.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions that this study sought to answer are listed below:

1(a): To what extent do foreign language learners (FLLs) experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?
1(b): What is the nature of that anxiety?

2(a): To what extent do heritage language learners (HLLs) experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?

2(b): What is the nature of that anxiety?

Thus, the research questions were used to guide the investigation of the general foreign language anxiety that is experienced by FLLs and HLLs, with a particular focus on reading anxiety. The latter form of anxiety was chosen because it has received very little attention in the research literature, despite the fact that reading is one of the core language skills students must acquire.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Given that more and more students are expressing an interest in learning Arabic, it is our obligation to conduct more research exploring the affective needs that both HLLs and FLLs have in the classroom, especially since developing reading fluency in Arabic is not an easy feat. The complexity associated with reading Arabic, particularly for FLLs with an English language background, often causes students a great deal of frustration and anxiety leading to failure and high attrition rates. This study, which examined how students experienced FLA in an Arabic reading course both quantitatively and qualitatively, has great pedagogical significance, as it has generated valuable insights into students’ differing needs. Whereas most previous studies have examined FLA quantitatively, this study examined the issue qualitatively as well and thus provides a
deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The data go beyond just numbers, thereby providing practical information that will allow educators to improve pedagogy to better meet the affective needs of Arabic students so that they can attain higher levels of competency.

In addition to the pedagogical significance that this study carries, there are theoretical implications as well. First, the study makes a contribution to the existing literature on FLA by studying two different types of Arabic students: FLLs and HLLs – both of which are severely under-researched student populations. The study of HLLs, in particular, is an important contribution to the growing field of heritage language education, which contains very little research on Arabic HLLs.

Additionally, this study contributes to the literature on second language reading, specifically Arabic. Although there are several studies that have explored the reading process in Arabic (Abu-Rabia, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002), they have mostly addressed native speakers of the language. While these studies are very important, especially since learning to read in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is almost like learning a second language for native speakers (Ayari, 1996), there are undoubtedly unique issues that HLLs and FLLs experience. Issues such as the importance of diacritical marks (short vowels used as case endings and mood markers) and reading aloud, a common and valued practice in Arabic classrooms, and the impact they have on students’ anxiety levels, were explored. Examining these particular issues that are fairly
unique to the teaching and learning of the reading of Arabic offers a better understanding of the anxiety that both HLLs and FLLs experience in the classroom when reading Arabic texts and engaging in various reading activities. In this way the study makes an important, and new, contribution to the limited literature that currently exists in this area.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The following operational definitions are given in order to provide consistency in meaning throughout this study:

1. **Heritage language learner (HLL):** There are various definitions of this term. While some define HLLs as having a family or emotional connection to the target language (Fishman, 2001), others take a more proficiency-based approach (Valdés, 2001). For the purposes of this study, a HLL is “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the HL, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the HL” (Valdés, 2001, p. 38). Therefore, HLLs must have some linguistic proficiency in Arabic and are seeking “to learn, re-learn, maintain or expand knowledge of their heritage language in the classroom” (Kondo-Brown, 2006, p. 1). In this study, HLLs must either have been born in the United States or have immigrated at a young age.
2. **Foreign language learner (FLL):** In this study, a traditional foreign language learner is one who is not a HLL and has no prior background in learning the target language. Although a FLL may have emotional or religious ties to the language (Fishman, 2001), he/she was considered a FLL if he/she was not “raised in a home where Arabic was spoken (Valdés, 2001).

3. **Foreign language anxiety (FLA):** In this study, the following definition of FLA was used: “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 128).

4. **Reading language anxiety:** Reading language anxiety is anxiety associated with the act of reading in the foreign language and is typically measured quantitatively by the FLRAS: an anxiety scale developed by Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999). The FLRAS “elicits students’ self-reports of anxiety over various aspects of reading, their perceptions of reading difficulties in their target language, and their perceptions of the relative difficulty of reading as compared to the difficulty of other language skills” (p. 204).

5. **Diglossia:** Ferguson’s (1959) definition of diglossia was used in this study. He states that “diglossia is a relatively stable situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is
learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal
spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary
correspondence” (p. 336). In the case of Arabic, the two varieties are Modern
Standard Arabic (MSA) and colloquial Arabic – each of which is defined below.
6. **Modern Standard Arabic (MSA):** Alosh’s (1997) definition of MSA was used in
this study. He defines MSA as “the standard formal language used today that is
based on and has features of Classical Arabic and adheres to its grammatical rules
with a rich vocabulary that meets the demands of modern times” (p. 86). Though
MSA is usually used in reading and writing, it is also used orally in formal
situations such as sermons, newscasts, and political speeches (Ferguson, 1959).
7. **Colloquial Arabic:** For the purposes of this study, colloquial Arabic is any variant
of spoken Arabic that is used for everyday interaction. Colloquial Arabic differs
from one Arab country to another and even from village to village within the
same country. Some variants of colloquial Arabic differ enough to be mutually
incomprehensible. Colloquial Arabic is not usually written, although there is some
literature (particularly in the genres of theater and poetry) that is written in the
Egyptian and Lebanese dialects.
8. **Vowelized text:** Arabic text that contains diacritical marks is said to be
“vowelized”. The diacritical marks include (a) “a set of three short vowels that are
used above and below letters to indicate correct pronunciation and grammatical
categories, and (b) two additional orthographic signs: sukun to indicate the
absence of a vowel, as well as shaddah to indicate consonantal germination”
(Khaldieh, 2001, p. 419).

9. **Unvowelized text:** Unvowelized Arabic text is text that lacks diacritical marks and is the norm for most printed text in the Arab world.

### 1.7 Assumptions of the Study

This study was guided by the following assumptions:

1. The Arabic HLLs and FLLs were representative groups of learners.

2. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) are reliable and valid measurements of general classroom anxiety and reading anxiety, respectively.

3. Reading is a separate language skill that can be measured.

4. The complicated writing system of Arabic causes some anxiety in all learners of the language.

5. The participants in this study were voluntarily engaged in the investigation and were completely honest when communicating with the researcher.

6. Foreign language anxiety exists and can be measured.

7. Foreign language reading anxiety exists and can be measured.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

All studies have limitations, as it is nearly impossible to design and carry out a study without certain limits. The major limitation of this study is the fact that it cannot be generalized to a larger population of Arabic language learners, both HLLs and FLLs. Undoubtedly, this study provides further insight into the nature of FLA experienced by learners and how it affects their learning; however, the participants in this study were a small and specific group of people learning Arabic at a specific time. Furthermore, the findings may be specific to the Arabic language and may or may not be generalizable to other diglossic languages. Before any larger generalizations can be made, this study must be replicated by other sets of data. Nevertheless, this study provides an initial examination of the anxiety that FLLs and HLLs of a diglossic language deal with in the classroom, particularly when reading.

Another limitation of this study is that it only examined Arabic learners at a specific university in a specific classroom employing a particular Arabic language curriculum. The instructor’s teaching methodologies and approaches may have been unique and certainly not representative of all teachers and approaches. Each teaching context is a unique situation, and the interactions that occur in the classroom affect its social structure – all of which may have an impact on affect in learning. Therefore, the results of this study should be viewed in light of the specific context in which it took place.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a review of the literature on various topics. The first topic, foreign language anxiety (FLA) starts with (2.2) an overview of affect in language learning, followed by: (2.3) the establishment of FLA as a unique construct; (2.4) the effects of FLA on language learning; (2.5) the debate regarding whether FLA is the cause or result of poor language achievement; (2.6) an examination of FLA and specific language skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading); and (2.7) the examination of FLA and individual factors (self-perception, perfectionism).

The second topic that this literature review will address is the teaching and learning of Arabic. It starts with (2.8) an introduction to the teaching of Arabic in the U.S., followed by: (2.9) a discussion of diglossia in Arabic; (2.10) a brief overview of reading models; (2.11) a discussion of first and second language reading; (2.12) an examination of some important issues in first language reading in Arabic; and (2.13) a discussion of issues in second language reading.

The third topic that will be addressed is heritage language education. First (2.14) the issue of defining heritage language learners (HLLs) will be examined. A discussion of the importance of heritage language maintenance and development will ensue (2.15), followed by (2.16) an examination of HLLs in the foreign language classroom.
2.2 Affect in Language Learning

What makes one language learner more successful than another? This has been a question that the field of second language acquisition has attempted to answer for many years. There is no single correct answer, as there are a number of factors that come into play when learning a language; however, there is agreement that both cognitive and affective variables play a role. Although affective variables may be summed up and referred to as “individual differences” (Dornyei, 2005), an “individual” does not exist alone in a vacuum. An individual interacts with others, especially in a foreign language classroom, and these social influences must be taken into consideration. In fact, Gass and Selinker (2008) maintain that the term “individual differences” is misleading because it seemingly neglects the crucial influence of society. Arnold and Brown (1999) point out that there are two perspectives to affectivity in second language learning: “that which is concerned with the language learner as an individual and that which focuses on the learner as a participant in a socio-cultural situation, an individual who inevitably relates to others” (p. 8). The individual factors they include are: anxiety, inhibition, extroversion-introversion, self-esteem, motivation, and learner styles. The relational aspects that Arnold and Brown (1999) address are empathy, classroom transactions, and cross-cultural processes. While each one of the individual and relational factors influences language learning (and often interact with one another), they assert that “anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process” (p. 8). Since anxiety can be a big obstacle to successful language learning, a closer examination and discussion of it is warranted.
2.3 Establishment of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Although FLA is a more recent phenomenon, general anxiety has been studied for many years by psychologists and has been defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Spielberger, as cited in Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 125). Despite the fact that these feelings are usually associated with negative performance, there are cases where anxiety actually enhances performance. In his review of the literature on anxiety and language learning, Scovel (1978) distinguishes between facilitating and debilitating anxiety. He writes, “facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to ‘fight’ the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approval behavior. Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, motivates the learner to ‘flee’ the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior” (Scovel, 1978, p. 139). Thus, a certain amount and type of anxiety associated with emotionality rather than worry may enhance learning instead of hindering it. This was demonstrated in two oft-cited studies by Chastain (1975) and Kleinmann (1977).

Chastain (1975) studied introductory French, German, and Spanish college-level classes and found a negative correlation between anxiety and students’ final course grades in an audio-lingual French class; however, no correlation in regular French or German classes was found. On the other hand, Chastain (1975) found a positive correlation between anxiety and the scores of German and Spanish students in traditional classes. Moreover, he discovered a positive correlation between FLA and Spanish
learners’ grades. He speculated that “perhaps some concern about a test is a plus while too much anxiety can produce negative results” (Chastain, 1975, p. 160).

Chastain’s (1975) speculations were confirmed in a study done by Kleinmann (1977), who also found both positive and negative effects of anxiety on language learning. Kleinmann (1977) studied Arabic and Spanish-speaking students of English and compared the syntactic structures in English that are usually avoided by foreign students to those of the students’ native languages. He found that facilitating anxiety helped students take more risks and use the normally avoided structures (infinitive complements and direct object pronouns for the Spanish-speaking students and the passive form for the Arabic-speaking students). Kleinmann (1977) concluded that the evidence “seems to support the notion that certain affective measures influence learner behavior in a foreign language” (p. 105).

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope’s (1986) seminal article paved the way to a better understanding of how anxiety affects language learning. Rather than being treated as a “trait” anxiety that transfers from other domains, FLA was established as a separate construct specific to learning a foreign language. The authors defined FLA as a specific situational anxiety. This type of “state” anxiety, where one feels moment-to-moment apprehension as an emotional reaction to the situation at hand, is experienced in well-defined situations such as classrooms. Unlike those who experience anxiety in various contexts, learners who have situational anxiety only experience it in very specific situations.
Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) characterize FLA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). They argue that language learning is a one-of-a-kind situation, where otherwise intelligent, socially-adept adults are challenged as competent communicators. Amid taking risks and engaging in complex mental operations in order to perform in the foreign language, language learners may become aware of their limited range of communicative abilities – leading to feelings of reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) claim that it is unlikely that any other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression as much as language study does, making FLA a very unique construct. And, in order to make this unique construct researchable, the authors introduced a 33-item, self-report Likert-scale type instrument called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The items in the FLCAS reflect three related performance anxieties: (1) communication apprehension; (2) test anxiety; and (3) fear of negative evaluation – all of which usually occur in the foreign language classroom.

2.4 Effects of FLA on Language Learning

After the establishment of FLA as a situational-type anxiety distinctive to language learning and the presentation of a reliable instrument (the FLCAS) to measure this anxiety, numerous studies were done to better understand the newly-defined concept and the effects it may have on students’ success. The first study was done by one of the authors, Horwitz (1986), who administered the FLCAS to 108 students enrolled in
introductory foreign language classes at the University of Texas at Austin. Horwitz (1986) found a significant moderate negative correlation between FLA and the final grades students expected and received: -0.49 and -0.54 for two intact Spanish and French classes, respectively. The students with higher levels of anxiety both expected and received lower grades than their less anxious peers (p. 561).

Similarly, in a study of 96 students enrolled in a second year college-level Japanese class, Aida (1994) examined the relationship between FLA and language achievement. The FLCAS as well as background questionnaires were administered at the beginning of the semester asking students to recall their experiences and feelings the prior semester. The final course grade was used as the measure of language proficiency and achievement. Table 2.1 below illustrates that, in comparison to the results of Horwitz (1986), the reliability, mean, standard deviation, and range are quite similar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Reliabilities of The FLCAS in Two Studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students status</td>
<td>first year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach's alpha</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>47–146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test-retest reliability</td>
<td>r = .80, p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 54; over one semester)</td>
<td>(n = 108; over eight weeks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Reliabilities of the FLCAS in two studies (Aida, 1994, p.159)
The mean score (96.7) in the present study is slightly higher than that in Horwitz (1986), but Aida (1994) attributes this to the fact that Japanese is a non-Western language, which is generally more difficult to learn than Western languages (i.e. Spanish and French). After performing a factor analysis to detect an underlying structure of the 33 items in the FLCAS, Aida (1994) concluded that although communicative apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are important components of FLA, there was no evidence to support Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope’s (1986) claim that test anxiety is the third component of FLA— which supports MacIntyre and Gardner’s (1989) findings.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) focused on a specific language task, learning vocabulary, in their three-phase study of 104 psychology students. They first administered a questionnaire consisting of a series of nine anxiety scales. Then, participants were given four trials to learn 38 English-French pairs and were tested prior to each trial. Finally, the students were asked to produce the French vocabulary and recall the paired associates through a Free Recall test. In order to examine the relationship between anxiety and both the learning and production of French vocabulary, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) used a model that has postulated three levels at which anxiety might influence learning: Input, Processing, and Output (Tobias, 1986). It was found that anxious students learned the vocabulary items at a slower rate than less anxious students (Input/Processing stages) and had more difficulty in the recall of previously learned vocabulary items (Output stage). Furthermore, after performing various analyses, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989), like Aida (1994), concluded that test anxiety did not
contribute to the communicative anxiety in the language classroom and is therefore a general anxiety problem not specific to FLA.

In another similar study, MacIntyre & Gardner (1994b) investigated the subtle effects of language anxiety on the cognitive processes in each stage of Tobias’ (1986) model. The participants, 97 French-as-a second-language students at a Canadian university, were given a series of nine tasks representing each of the three stages: Input, Processing, and Output. Three language anxiety scales were developed to focus on these three stages, which were validated by other reliable anxiety instruments (i.e. FLCAS). While final course grades were used as a measure of attained proficiency, three different performance measures were used to provide scores at each of the three stages (for a total of nine tasks). For example, a French Achievement Test, a paragraph translation, and a paired associates learning task were used as measures of the Processing stage. The results indicated that language anxiety was negatively correlated with course grades as well as scores on each of the Input, Processing, and Output anxiety scales. More importantly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994b) demonstrated that the effects of language anxiety at the Output stage could be reduced by increased effort at the Processing stage. They assert that “performance measures that examine only behavior at the Output stage may be neglecting the influence of anxiety at earlier stages as well as ignoring the links among stages” (p. 301). Nevertheless, most of the research has examined the effects of FLA on some type of language production.

Saito and Samimy (1996) conducted one such study – examining the effects of FLA on language performance in Japanese. Saito and Samimy (1996) studied 257
students enrolled in beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes at the college level. A variety of instruments were used to collect data in six different areas: language class anxiety, sociability, risk-taking, motivation, strength of attitude, and concern for grade. It was found that while anxiety was a predictive variable for the intermediate and advanced level students, class status was one of the best predictors for beginning students’ final grades. Saito and Samimy (1996) hypothesize that this may due to the fact that first-year college students have not yet developed effective foreign language learning strategies and study skills. Contrary to the results of other research, Saito and Samimy (1996) found that advanced students had higher levels of anxiety than beginning students; whereas intermediate students had the lowest levels of the group. The authors attribute this to instructional style: advanced classes focus on reading and writing, which may make students more apprehensive about other language skills such as speaking. Regardless of the instructional level, however, the results indicated that FLA has a negative impact on learners’ performance.

2.5 FLA: Cause or Result of Poor Language Achievement?

The majority of studies investigating FLA have shown that there is a consistent negative relationship between it and language achievement, which has been explained as pervasive effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994b). Anxiety arousal is thought to be associated with self-related thoughts that compete with task-related thoughts for cognitive resources. Due to the fact that
information processing capacity in humans is limited, the self-related cognition emerges as a hindrance during cognitive performance. Thus, the majority of the literature views anxiety as a cause of lower language achievement; however, there are some that hold the opposite view.

Some researchers believe that anxiety, like other affective variables, is the result and not the cause of poor foreign language performance. Sparks and Ganschow (1991) proposed the Linguistic Coding Differences Hypotheses (LCDH) which states that “FL learning, being an attempt to learn language, is enhanced or limited by the degree to which students have control over the phonological, syntactic, and semantic components of the linguistic code” (p. 10). Hence, difficulties in linguistic coding in the native language causes foreign language learning difficulties, which then give rise to anxiety.

Sparks and his colleagues have conducted a series of studies examining whether FLA is a cause or a consequence of differences in students’ language learning skills, particularly their native language learning skills and foreign language aptitude. The results of their studies have “supported their hypothesis that language factors cannot be dismissed as confounding variables in studies on anxiety and foreign language learning” (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007, p. 263). More recently, Sparks and Ganschow (2007) published the results of a 10-year study that followed 54 students in a rural public school district. The students were selected based on their first-grade reading abilities (good, average, and below average) and their scores on native language measures were collected five times throughout the study. After the students completed two years of foreign language study (in ninth and tenth grade) data was collected regarding their FLA using
the FLCAS as well as their proficiency in the language using a variety of instruments. The results showed that the high, average, and low anxiety groups had significant overall differences on the native language measures. The students with the highest levels of anxiety had the lowest levels of native language skill, especially in reading and spelling. Sparks and Ganschow (2007) concluded that FLA is likely to be a consequence of a student’s level of native language learning and that early native language skills serve as an important foundation for later foreign language learning (p. 279).

Given Sparks and Ganschow’s (2007) stance on FLA, their reaction to Saito, Horwitz, and Garza’s (1999) work establishing reading anxiety, the subject of this research study, as a separate phenomenon was not surprising. They claim that reading anxiety, like general FLA, is a consequence rather than a cause of poor foreign language achievement. Sparks, Ganschow, and Javorsky (2000) argue that there are four problems with the work of Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999): (1) participants’ native reading skills were not determined; (2) the questions on the FLRAS may have measured FL reading anxiety, FL reading skill, or both; (3) the study’s internal validity is weak because there was no randomization; and (4) participants’ FL reading skill was neither measured nor controlled. These four problems, they assert, lend support to the LCDH. Horwitz (2000) responded to these arguments and asserts that although anxiety may be the result of linguistic difficulties for some learners, it is not an explanation for anxiety in all learners. After all, more than a third of foreign language learners report experiencing moderate to severe levels of FLA (Horwitz, 2000, p. 257) and they cannot all have cognitive disabilities. Horwitz (2000) maintains that “participants in the anxiety studies are students
at prestigious universities who have been selected on the basis of rigorous SAT and grade point average entrance requirements” (p. 257). Furthermore, many successful and advanced language learners also report experiencing FLA. Hence, she dismisses the LCDH as the reason for FLA in all learners. In regards to Sparks et al.’s objection to items on the FLRAS, Horwitz (2000) writes, “they object to the FLRAS because it includes items concerning decoding and comprehension in reading. Although it is true that learners with language disabilities will likely endorse such items, it would be impossible to measure people’s reading anxiety without asking them about reading” (p. 257). In conclusion, Horwitz (2000) argues that Sparks et al. have an overly simplified view of language learning that dismisses the role of individual differences.

MacIntyre (1995a) agrees with Horwitz (2000); he maintains that Sparks and Ganschow’s (1991) LCDH underestimates the influence of FLA in the recursive relationship that exists between anxiety, cognition, and behavior. MacIntyre (1995a) points to an experimental study done by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a) where a video camera was used to induce state anxiety in a computerized vocabulary learning task. The results showed that “anxiety arousal was associated with performance deficits in the learning, recall, and functional use of the vocabulary items. When the effects of the video camera had dissipated and no longer lead to state anxiety arousal, performance improved relative to those who were experiencing more anxiety arousal” (MacIntyre, 1995a, p. 93). MacIntyre (1995a) asserts that this is strong evidence that anxiety arousal can act as a causal agent in creating individual differences in FL learning – and these differences, as
opposed to the cognitive-linguistic deficits proposed in the LCDH, may contribute to problems in foreign language learning and achievement.

It may very well be that native language learning experiences do have an effect on second language learning, but the claim that native language difficulties are the cause of FLA is a contested claim, especially by those who are in the field of second language teaching and learning. As a fairly intelligent person with no native language difficulties or deficiencies, I have experienced anxiety in foreign language classrooms and know that other similar learners do as well. Although the anxiety that I have personally experienced has not been completely detrimental, I know that it has prevented me from achieving my full potential. To me, the effects have been negative, and the next section will summarize the numerous studies that have examined the impact of FLA on specific language skills.

2.6 FLA and Language Skills

Since speaking is considered to be the most anxiety provoking skill for language learners, researchers have examined the relationship between students’ anxiety scores and their oral output in the target language. In such a study, Phillips (1992) used an oral exam, the FLCAS, and interviews to collect data from 44 intermediate French students at a southwestern college. She investigated the association between FLA and exam scores as well as the relationship between FLA and several researcher-identified performance variables on the oral exam (i.e. length of communication units, number of dependent clauses and target structures used, etc.). Even after ability in the form of students’ written examination averages was statistically controlled, Phillips (1992) found significant
negative correlations between four of the eight performance criteria and FLA, confirming that students with higher language anxiety tended to say less, produce shorter communication units, and use fewer dependent clauses and target structures than low anxiety students (p. 18).

In another study examining the effects of FLA on oral output, Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) studied 20 Spanish-speaking adults enrolled in an intensive university ESL program. The participants were separated based on their language proficiency (high or low) and were randomly assigned to either an anxiety condition or a non-anxiety condition. The former included video-recording and a stern environment; while the latter environment was warm and inviting with no video cameras. The participants were given the task of objectively describing as well as subjectively interpreting three pictures from Murry’s Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Their anxiety was then measured by an affective checklist. Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) found that “subjects undergoing an experimental treatment aimed at making them feel anxious and ‘on the spot’ described visual stimuli less interpretively than did subjects in a relaxed, comfortable environment” (p. 135). Thus, the more relaxed group of participants was able to produce more complex responses in comparison to their more anxious counterparts – clearly demonstrating the negative effects of FLA.

Whereas the majority of the studies exploring the effects of FLA on language achievement in general, and speaking in particular, have demonstrated negative correlations, Young’s (1986) study did not. In a study of 60 university-level majors in French, German, and Spanish, Young (1986) compared participants’ scores on an
unofficial administration of the Oral Proficiency Test (OPI) to their anxiety scores (measured by four separate anxiety instruments). It was found that there was a significant negative correlation between the OPI and anxiety; however, when language ability was controlled for, that significant correlation disappeared. Young (1986) hypothesizes that this may be due to the fact that the OPI was not administered as an official test and was thus not perceived as difficult and threatening – conditions which are known to induce high levels of anxiety. Moreover, she suggests that the participants are advanced learners of the language and therefore anxiety would probably be a greater hindrance to their ability to perform than to their language development.

Another language area that has been investigated in relation to FLA is listening comprehension. In a study of 140 intermediate college-level Spanish students, Vogely (1998) administered questionnaires and found that 91% of the students experienced listening anxiety to some extent. Although no inferential statistical analyses were performed, Vogely (1998) was able to identify several sources of listening anxiety based on the students’ responses. The majority of the students (51%) attributed the listening anxiety they experienced to some characteristic of input (i.e. nature of speech, level of difficulty); 30% of the students commented on process-related aspects of FL learning as a source of anxiety, followed by personal factors (13%) and instructional factors (6%). Table 2.2, shown below, illustrates the study’s findings. The author also suggests ways in which listening comprehension anxiety can be alleviated, based on her experiences and the students’ own suggestions.
Table 2.2: Sources of listening anxiety (Vogely, 1998, p. 69)

In a similar, but more comprehensive study, Elkhafaifi (2005), sought to
determine the relationship between FLA and listening anxiety and how it affects student
achievement and listening comprehension performance in Arabic courses. The
participants were 233 undergraduate and graduate students of Arabic at six different
universities in the U.S. Background questionnaires as well as two anxiety assessment
measures were administered to the students. The FLCAS and an adapted version (for
listening) of the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale developed by Saito, Garza,
and Horwitz (1999) were used. Final course grades and listening comprehension grades
provided by the instructors were used as achievement measures. Elkhafaifi (2005) found
that although those students who had higher levels of FLA also tended to have higher
levels of listening anxiety, the two phenomena are distinct, yet related, constructs.
Additionally, significant negative correlations among listening anxiety, listening comprehension grade, and final course grade were found – supporting the findings of other studies that increased anxiety adversely affects student performance.

In a study examining the effects of FLA on a different language skill, writing, Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert (1999), studied 433 Taiwanese English-majors. Adapted measures of the FLCAS and the second language version of the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (SLWAT) were used as data collection instruments to investigate the associations of these two anxiety constructs with second language speaking and writing achievement. It was found that although the two constructs are independent, they are related. The findings suggest that FLA is a more general type of anxiety about learning a second language with a strong speaking anxiety element, whereas second language writing anxiety is a language-skill-specific anxiety. Furthermore, the results indicated that low self-confidence is an important component of both anxiety constructs.

Cheng (2002) further explored the relationship between second language writing anxiety and learner differences by studying 165 English-major students at a university in Taiwan. The participants were administered the SLWAT, an adapted version of the FLCAS, and a background questionnaire. Additionally, since Cheng (2002) wanted to investigate the correlation between L1 and L2 writing anxiety, she designed and gave the participants two L1 anxiety scales. Cheng (2002) found four dimensions of learner differences to explain more than half of the variance (57%) in L2 writing: (1) confidence in English writing (34%); (2) English writing motivation/attitude (11%); (3) extracurricular effort to learn English (10%); and (4) English writing achievement (2%).
Cheng’s (2002) findings lend support to theories that posit that there is a close link between self-confidence and language anxiety (L1 or L2). However, she asserts that she is unable to make causal links between self-confidence and L2 writing. Nevertheless, the results of this study indicate that self-confidence has a much stronger contribution than writing achievement to L2 writing anxiety (34% vs. 2%) and therefore “language teachers should recognize that student writers’ perceptions of competence plays a much more important role in their experience of L2 writing anxiety than their actual writing competence” (Cheng, 2002, p. 652).

Although FLA is mostly associated with oral aspects of language use, Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999) sought to examine a seemingly low anxiety inducing language skill: reading. In their study, 383 students enrolled in French, Russian, and Japanese university classes took the FLCAS as well as the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), which was developed and designed to elicit students’ self-report of anxiety over various aspects of reading. Students’ final course grades were used as measures of performance. The authors found that students who had higher levels of FLA also had higher levels of FL reading anxiety and received lower grades than students with lower anxiety levels. Differences between the three languages examined were also found: those reading Japanese experienced the highest levels of anxiety, followed by French and Russian – a finding the authors attribute to the unfamiliarity of the Japanese writing system. However, it was expected that Russian, a “semicognate” language, would induce more anxiety than French, a “cognate” language, but the results indicated the opposite. Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999) predict that this may be because readers were deceived
by the Roman alphabet of French only to find out that it is a phonetically complex language. On the other hand, although Russian has Cyrillic symbols, it is phonetically dependable once learned (p. 212). The authors conclude that although FL reading anxiety is related to FLA, there is evidence that it is a distinct phenomenon that warrants more attention and study.

Sellers (2000) conducted a similar study examining reading and FLA. She used the FLCAS and an adapted version of a Reading Anxiety Scale developed by Zbornick and Wallbrown (1991, as cited in Sellers, 2000) to measure the anxiety levels of 89 college students of Spanish. The students then read a passage in the target language and took a Cognitive Interference Questionnaire and two reading comprehension assessments. The results indicated that more anxious students recalled less passage content and experienced more off-task interfering thoughts than their less anxious counterparts. Like Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999), Sellers (2000) confirmed that reading anxiety is in fact a separate and distinct phenomenon in language learning that merits more recognition, particularly in theoretical models of the reading process.

2.7 FLA and Individual Factors

The majority of the research has reported a moderately negative relationship between FLA and overall language achievement as well as performance in specific language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Research results suggest poorer performance for learners with high levels of anxiety, and in order to better
understand the causes of this inverse relationship, a number of studies have sought to establish associations between individual factors and FLA.

Several studies have investigated the link between learners’ self-perceptions and language anxiety, including that of MacIntyre, Noels and Clément (1997). In a study of 37 students with a range of competence in French, the authors examined perceived competence in an L2 as a function of actual competence and language anxiety. Participants completed a series of French proficiency tests as well as a questionnaire consisting of two scales: a language anxiety measure and a scale of self-rated L2 proficiency. MacIntyre, Noels and Clément (1997) found that language anxiety correlated negatively with both actual and perceived proficiency in the L2. In comparison to more relaxed students, anxious students communicated less information in all four tasks of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Interestingly, the authors also found that anxious students tended to underestimate their level of ability while relaxed students were inclined to overestimate theirs – placing anxious students in a vicious cycle consisting of feelings of incompetency and anxiety.

Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) also examined the association between students’ self-perceptions and FLA. 210 university students of French, Spanish, German, and Japanese were given a battery of six instruments (including the FLCAS and various self-perception measures) and three aspects of self-perception were found to be predictors of FLA: (1) students’ expectations of their overall achievement in foreign language courses; (2) perceived self-worth; and (3) perceived scholastic competence. Students with high levels of perceived intellectual ability and perceived scholastic competence had
lower levels of FLA than did their peers—illustrating that “self-esteem and self-concept play a role in determining levels of foreign language anxiety” (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley, 1999, p. 229).

Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) investigated the relationship between FLA and the individual personality characteristic of perfectionism in a study of 8 students from a group of 78 who were enrolled in a second-year English language class at a university in Chile. The sample consisted of the four most anxious and the four least anxious students (based on their FLCAS scores) from a larger group participating in a related quantitative study. Each of the eight participants was videotaped in a one-on-one oral interview to elicit a sample of their conversational English ability. Then the participants viewed their taped interviews and reflected on what they saw, all of which was audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were then analyzed by three raters who catalogued indications of perfectionist or non-perfectionist tendencies (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002, p. 565). It was found that anxious language learners and perfectionists may have a number of characteristics in common, including: higher standards for performance; a greater tendency toward procrastination; more worry over the opinions of others; and a higher level of concern over their errors. They concluded that these characteristics can hinder their language learning success.

Unlike most of the quantitative studies that have been done investigating FLA, Price (1991) elected an alternative approach to obtain descriptive information on variables not easily assessed through empirical research. In an interview study of 10 students who considered themselves anxious about foreign language classes, Price (1991)
found that all of participants feared speaking the target language in front of their peers the most. They were also concerned about making errors in pronunciation as well as not being able to communicate effectively. Furthermore, Price (1991) found that two personality variables, fear of public speaking and perfectionism, may be related to FLA.

In another qualitative study, Bailey (1983) analyzed the diaries of 11 learners and found that competitiveness played an important role in FLA. Students became anxious when they compared themselves with other learners in the class and found themselves less proficient. Bailey (1983) noted that as the learners perceived themselves becoming more proficient, and therefore better able to compete, their anxiety decreased. She found that anxiety in adult second language learners was related to such competitive characteristics as 1) overt self-comparison with peer learners; 2) emotive responses to the comparison; 3) a desire to out-do other language learners; 4) emphasis on or concern with tests and grades; 5) a desire to gain the teacher’s approval; 6) anxiety during the language lesson; and 7) withdrawal from the language learning experience.

Although both of these qualitative studies provide needed insight into the bigger picture of FLA and explore the phenomenon from the students’ points of view, they still leave much room for further exploration. The concerns and voices of Arabic students are yet to be heard, and this study will address the issues that this group of students deals with in the classroom when trying to learn the language, especially when learning to read.
2.8 Teaching Arabic

While Arabic has been taught in American universities since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (McCarus, 1992), students had different reasons for learning the language. “As with many other languages, Arabic was taught in the grammar-translation tradition for centuries, and focused on building a reading knowledge of the classical language for access to Arabic literature, both sacred and secular” (Ryding, 2006, p. 14). As the Arab world increasingly became politically and economically important in the twentieth century, and the need for specialists in the language grew, the study of Classical Arabic was replaced with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Though both forms of the language are grammatically similar, MSA has “a rich vocabulary that meets the demands of modern times” (Alosh, 1997, p. 86). With the transition from the teaching of Classical Arabic to MSA, the diglossic nature of the language became an important, and contested, issue in the teaching and learning of Arabic.

2.9 Diglossia in Arabic

Arabic is a diglossic language where natives read and write in a standardized form of a language and communicate in everyday situations in other variants. The term “diglossia” was introduced by Charles Ferguson in a seminal article published in 1959. He gave the following definition:

Diglossia is a relatively stable situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned
largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (p. 336).

Essentially, Ferguson (1959) states that diglossic speech communities have a High variety that is very prestigious and a Low variety with no official status, and the two are in complementary distribution with each other. For example, the High variety is used for religious sermons, political speeches, news broadcasts, and the vast majority of literature. On the other hand, the Low variety is used for ordinary conversations with family and friends, captions on political cartoons, soap operas, and folk literature.

Although some scholars are of differing opinions as to whether or not diglossia is a form of bilingualism, Ferguson (1959) asserts that that the High and Low varieties present in a diglossic situation are closely related and not two entirely separate languages – therefore diglossia is not bilingualism. Ferguson (1959) describes nine defining features of diglossia, which are represented in Table 2.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Variety</th>
<th>Low Variety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>Elegant, formal</td>
<td>Informal; everyday communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prestige</strong></td>
<td>Prestigious variety</td>
<td>Stigmatized variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary Heritage</strong></td>
<td>Highly esteemed and long literary tradition</td>
<td>Used in less esteemed literature—i.e. cartoons; speech of characters in novels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acquisition</strong></td>
<td>Learned in a formal, educational setting</td>
<td>Acquired as a first language by children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardization</strong></td>
<td>Established norm for grammar, vocabulary; abundance of dictionaries/material</td>
<td>No established rules; fewer materials available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stability</strong></td>
<td>Long-lived phenomenon – very stable</td>
<td>Less stable; susceptible to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>More complex grammar</td>
<td>Simpler morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexicon</strong></td>
<td>Technical terms</td>
<td>Popular expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonology</strong></td>
<td>Preserved underlying phonological system</td>
<td>Divergent and evolving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: A comparison of the high and low varieties of a diglossic language

A very important component of diglossia is that speakers have the personal perception that the High variety is the “real” language whereas the Low variety is not. This has been a long held belief among Arabs and is attributed to the fact that Arabic is the language of Islam. After the revelation of the Quran – the words of God – fourteen centuries ago and the spread of Islam across the globe, Arabic became a sacred language. This sacred language became standardized with a set of norms that the early Arab grammarians called *fusha* (Maamouri, 1998). The language of the Quran and literary heritage became the written norm and its sacredness left little, if any, room for changes,
as it would be considered religious deviation. The language has been safeguarded from all attempts of reform and there is a “prevailing traditional ideology which has validated and persevered until now the cultural and historical uniqueness of Arabic by manifesting a highly pronounced sensitivity for purism and a low level of tolerance (and even some disdain) towards mistakes and error of common language use” (Maamouri, 1998, p. 22).

Although the written form of Arabic has enjoyed great stability throughout many centuries, the spoken form, like other languages, has evolved over time. Nonetheless “Arabic grammar was written and continued to develop as a closed system independently of living usage and continuous linguistic change” (Ibrahim, 1989, p. 40).

As much as there is standardization in *fusha*, there is variation in colloquial varieties. Not only does the colloquial vary from one Arab country to another, but it also varies from region to region within the same country. In fact, there may be some variation from village to village. Despite its “use as the dominant medium of the spoken word in conversation, and in various cultural or artistic contexts such as songs, stage and movies, the colloquial lacks the prestige enjoyed by the Classical and is looked upon, often with a considerable degree of contempt, as a stigma of illiteracy and ignorance” (Altoma, 1969, p. 3). While children acquire their parents’ colloquial variety effortlessly, they must learn the standard variety of Arabic in school. As Maamouri (1998) eloquently states, “*fusha* is nobody’s mother tongue and is rarely or almost never used at home in the Arab world” (p.34). Naturally, those who receive an education and learn *fusha* enjoy greater social mobility than those who are illiterate; however, it is important to note that
even those who do not receive an education still have (at least) some receptive ability in fusha through their exposure to the media, religious practices, and possibly work (Alosh, 1997).

Even though the standard (fusha) and the colloquial are different in many ways and are placed on differing ends of the spectrum by Ferguson (1959), the use of each is neither strictly dichotomous nor static, particularly in speech. Alosh (1997) asserts that a number of sociolinguistic variables (i.e. age, gender, level of formality, status, topic, and context) influence native speakers’ decisions on how much of each variety should appropriately be used. He states that “apart from the extreme situations, no single norm is exclusively used in a given situation, but rather both of them are in a state of dynamic interaction, where the contribution of each norm to oral discourse fluctuates constantly in response to the sociolinguistic variables in the context of the speech event” (Alosh, 1997, p. 80). While Ferguson (1959) failed to address this issue in his original article, he discusses register and dialect variation within social interactions in a more recent article (Ferguson, 1991).

Alosh (1997) proposes a “refined” and “expanded” version of Ferguson’s (1959) model of diglossia where three different variables (situation, event, and setting) result in output that ranges from pure Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) to pure colloquial, occurring at some point on the continuum, as shown in Figure 2.1. Alosh (1997) defines MSA, a common term used in the literature, as “the standard formal language used today that is based on and has features of Classical Arabic and adheres to its grammatical rules with a rich vocabulary that meets the demands of modern times” (p. 86).
Thus, in the lives of native speakers, specifically educated Arabic speakers, the separation between MSA and the colloquial is not clear-cut. They are engaged in “constant style shifting along a cline at opposite ends of which are ‘pure’ MSA and the ‘pure’ regional dialect, more accurately conceived of as idealized constructs than real entities” (Holes, 1995, p. 39). In addition to the situation, event, and setting, there are a number of other sociocultural factors that play a role in how much of each variety is used. And although students are expected to be proficient in MSA and one other dialect (ACTFL, 1989, p. 374) and have the sociolinguistic adaptability to be able to use both forms depending on the situation in which they are in, the vast majority of U.S. universities teach MSA almost exclusively, giving the colloquial little attention.

One may wonder: why are colloquial variants of Arabic given such little attention in the classroom despite their use as the everyday, communicative form of the language among native speakers? Understanding the deeply rooted perceptions associated with
MSA and the colloquial varieties is essential when examining the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. Arabic instructors, most of whom are native speakers, bring with them to the classroom the belief that MSA, also known as the High variety of the language, is “real” Arabic. It is the only form that should be “taught” to students. In fact, instructors would feel guilty, as if they are doing their students a disservice, if they use their everyday dialect, the language of illiteracy, in the classroom (Younes, 2006). Only recently have more Arabic instructors begun to realize that not teaching students a colloquial variety is the true disservice. Not enabling students to communicate with ordinary native speakers in a normal and informal way leads to the “undermining of learner confidence in spoken interaction … [and] the net result of this has been the early discouragement of many potential Arabic students” (Ryding, 1995, p. 227).

While there has certainly been more awareness of students’ unpreparedness with colloquial Arabic, there continues to be a “debate about what form of Arabic and which dialects should be taught” (Abdalla, 2006, p. 317). This lively debate has led to a variety of teaching approaches that are used in classrooms – ranging from the exclusivity of either MSA or a colloquial dialect to a mixture of the two (Al-Batal, 1992). However, most Arabic programs in the U.S continue to use the MSA approach, with varying levels of integration of the colloquial. “The educational establishment [in the U.S.] has for decades enforced the concept of MSA first and foremost” (Ryding, 1995, p. 226). Thus, most of the interaction, including speaking, that takes place in the classroom is in MSA, and students are expected to take it upon themselves to learn a colloquial dialect.
Despite the fact that the goal of foreign language education has shifted to communicative competency in recent years and more attention has been given to speaking, the goal of teaching and learning Arabic was, and in many cases still is, to become literate in the language in order to have the ability to read. Hence, reading has and continues to be a significant part of the Arabic classroom.

2.10 Reading Models

To say the least, reading is a complex process. There have generally been three models that explain the reading process in one’s native language: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive. The bottom-up models emphasize the “lower-level” reading processes and assume that “a reader constructs meaning from letters, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences by processing the text into phonemic units that represent lexical meaning, and then builds meaning in a linear manner” (Hudson, 2007, p. 33). On the other hand, top-down models view a fluent reader “as being actively engaged in hypothesis testing as he proceeds through the text” (Stanovich, 1980, p. 34). In the top-down model, reading is seen as a psycholinguistic game (Goodman, 1968) where readers use their knowledge of syntax and semantics to reduce their dependence on the print and phonics of the text. As such, higher-level processes direct the flow of information through lower-level processes.

Current approaches to reading are more of a balance between the bottom-up and top-down models – generally called interactive approaches. These approaches recognize that fluent reading entails both skillful decoding and relating information to prior knowledge (Eskey, 1988). In such approaches, not only is there interaction between the
reader and the text (Grabe, 1991), but there is also interaction between bottom-up recognition skills and top-down interpretation strategies, and fluent reading can result only from a constant interaction between these processes.

Despite the interaction between the two different processes, Grabe and Stoller (2002) note that this leads to a self-contradictory model because the key aspects of bottom-up approaches are incompatible with strong top-down controls on reading comprehension. They posit that a more accurate representation of the reading process is a "modified interactive model," where primarily bottom-up processes are highlighted in fluent reading. Context and background knowledge come into play when a reader comes across an ambiguous word or a complex sentence. Such a model that pays particular attention to lower-level processes is especially helpful when examining the process of reading in Arabic.

Lower-level processes that include lexical access, syntactic parsing, semantic proposition formation, and working memory activation (Grabe & Stoller, 2002) are essential when reading in Arabic. Brustad (2006) argues that while fluent reading in Arabic is indeed an interactive process, the focus should be on the bottom-up processing skills that are essential in developing fluency. She posits that linear processing where students read one word at a time is rarely a successful strategy. Instead, reading in Arabic requires a deconstructing, reconstructing approach where "students must parse long sentences and reconstruct them as meaning" (Brustad, 2006, p. 344).

Brustad (2006) contends that the key to successful reading in Arabic is applied grammar: "grammar put to its proper use in the service of constructing meaning" (p.
She points out that there are key morphological and syntactic differences between English and Arabic – all of which may present challenges to learners. She writes:

Reading in Arabic demands close attention to word order because of key differences between Arabic and English in sentential syntax. Verbal sentence Verb Subject Object (VSO) word order, indefinite relative clauses, which are not signaled by a distinct surface-level syntactic marker, the absence of the present-tense verb to be marking the sentence break between subject and predicate, and complex noun and noun-adjective constructions all present potential stumbling blocks for students in unfamiliar contexts after they have ‘learned’ them in grammar class. Reading Arabic also requires a sophisticated knowledge and constant attention to morphology because it provides essential clues for word recognition. These characteristics of Arabic necessitate the well-planned and sustained attention to developing ‘applied grammar’ skills in the reading classroom (p. 344).

2.11 First (L1) and Second (L2) Language Reading

While there may be many similarities between first (L1) and second language (L2) readers, there are several important differences. Hudson (2007) points out three major differences between the two types of readers, the first of which is the likelihood that L2 readers are literate in their L1. The reading skills that they may have in their L1 may transfer to their L2 reading and either assist or interfere with that process. Second, learning to read in the L1 usually begins after speaking is at an advanced stage, which is generally not the case in the L2. Second language learners usually learn to speak and read at the same time, resulting in “the absence of a knowledge of the syntax and vocabulary of the target language” (Hudson, 2007, p. 60). Third, there are cognitive differences between children L1 readers and adult L2 readers. Similarly, Koda (1994) posits that there are three differences between L1 and L2 readers: (1) extent of linguistic proficiency
acquired before reading; (2) effects of readers’ prior experience of L2 reading; and (3) the
cross-linguistic nature of L2 reading.

While there are undoubtedly differences between first and second language
reading, L1 and L2 readers of Arabic may share more similarities than in other languages
– largely due to diglossia. While native Arab children acquire their parents’ colloquial
variety effortlessly, they must learn MSA in school, which is not an easy feat. “Literary
Arabic differs from spoken Arabic in vocabulary, phonology, syntax, and grammar”,
which means that children must learn to read in a language they are not very acquainted
with (Abu-Rabia, 2000, p. 147). Even though there are great differences between MSA
and the colloquial, they are not considered two entirely separate languages (Ferguson,
1959), as there are in fact similarities between them. Nevertheless, the two forms of the
language are different enough, and many believe that learning how to read and write in
MSA is almost like learning a new language for native speakers (Ayari, 1996). Thus, due
to the diglossic nature of the Arabic language and the fact that it differs from the
everyday spoken colloquial varieties that native Arabs communicate in, it may be useful
to examine some issues that are of importance to native Arabs learning to read MSA.

2.12 First Language (L1) Reading in Arabic

Although it is recognized that there are differences between L1 and L2 learners, it
is useful to understand the process by which L1 learners of Arabic learn how to read,
particularly because they may experience similar hardships as L2 learners. There is no
doubt that the diglossic situation in Arabic plays a role in the reading process. The fact
that literary Arabic (MSA) and spoken Arabic differ in vocabulary, phonology, syntax, and grammar makes learning to read a challenging task. Although children may have had some receptive exposure to literary Arabic throughout the early years of their life, it is neither significant nor interactive exposure. When they are exposed to literary Arabic before they embark on learning to read, a positive impact is observed. Abu-Rabia (2000) demonstrated this when he studied first-and second-grade native Arab students. One group of students was experimentally exposed to literary Arabic for two years (preschool and kindergarten), while the control group was only exposed to colloquial Arabic. Abu-Rabia (2000) found that the children’s exposure to MSA improved their listening comprehension and oral linguistic abilities as well as their reading comprehension of literary Arabic texts.

After native Arabs learn the 28 consonantal letters of the alphabet, they must learn how they are written in three to four different forms, as the way each letter is written varies depending on its position in the word (initial, middle, or final). Furthermore, there are different writing rules for these letters that learners must know. In addition to the 28 consonants, there are three short vowels which are represented by diacritical marks above and below individual letters in a word. These vowels are usually printed for beginning readers, making an “almost predictable sound-symbol correspondence between letters and their sounds” (Abu-Rabia, 1995, p. 353). Thus, in order to identify words and decode them, beginning readers must know the writing rules for the letters in their different positions and then recognize the different vowels written above and below them – all of
which “may demand considerably more than usual cognitive attention by readers in the process of print perception” (Abu-Rabia, 1995, p. 354).

With the exception of the Muslim holy book, the Quran, most texts are printed without diacritical marks. Therefore, as readers become more advanced, they are given text without the representation of short vowels, which complicates the reading process even further. The shallow orthography of vowelized text becomes deep orthography when it is unvowelized and readers must use considerable prior knowledge of literary Arabic, including morphology and syntax, as well as contextual clues, to deduce the short vowels in order to pronounce words correctly and recognize their meanings (Abu-Rabia, 2002). The widespread phenomenon of homographs in Arabic makes diacritical marks even more significant. Diacritical marks often distinguish otherwise visually identical words with very different meanings (Abu-Rabia, 1998). When they are absent, the burden is upon the reader to determine the meaning of each word using sentence context and knowledge of syntax. “Thus, the mastery of fluent reading in Arabic demands holistic simultaneous automatic processing of many variables… by using the vowelized print, teachers help trigger the phonemic awareness that is essential for efficient reading acquisition” (Abu-Rabia, 1998, p. 110).

The impact diacritical marks have on reading in Arabic has been a topic of investigation by several researchers, but Abu-Rabia has done the most extensive research in this area. In a study of 64 native Arabs, Abu-Rabia (1998) examined the effect of vowels on reading accuracy of four different kinds of texts presented in three conditions (vowelized, unvowelized, and wrongly vowelized) and found that vowels significantly
influenced the reading of both poor and skilled readers. He concludes that even “skilled Arabic readers need vowels for phonological information to facilitate reading even though they are reading in context” (p. 116).

In a similar study of the impact of diacritical marks on reading, this time reading comprehension, Abu-Rabia (1999) studied native elementary students whom he asked to silently read Arabic texts in two conditions (vowelized and unvowelized) and then answer multiple-choice reading comprehension questions. He found that vowels were a significant facilitator of reading comprehension and concluded that reading in Arabic orthography is not an autonomous word recognition process but a context-dependent reading process involving vowels and context.

In another related investigation, Abu-Rabia (2001) examined the impact of diacritical marks on both reading accuracy and comprehension. By studying 65 adult native Arabic speakers he found that the presence of vowels improved both reading accuracy and comprehension; “however, the reading comprehension results did not positively and significantly correlate with the reading accuracy results” (p. 52). This leads to an important conclusion that Abu-Rabia (2001) makes about the differences between the two reading processes in Arabic:

The lack of a match is due to the possibility that in the silent reading comprehension process with unvowelized texts the reader’s cognitive effort is focused on morphological aspects of words: the triliteral/quadriliteral-root model of words for lexical access. Sentence context and prior knowledge strengthen initial understanding, which compensates (Stanovich, 1980) for the absence of vowels. The cognitive effort is focused more on deep reading comprehension through visual-orthographic roots, and not on retrieval of phonological representations for each word in the text. Relying on context and schema compensation (Rumelhart, 1984) is one possible way that readers make mistakes, so reading with unvowelized texts is less comprehensible (p. 53).
In other words, the lack of phonological information given by the vowels is compensated for by other skills such as schematic knowledge and sentence context. Thus, Stanovich’s (1980) Interactive Compensatory Model is at work here – the lack of diacritical marks may lead to a deficit in word recognition which causes readers to rely on other skills.

Abu-Rabia (2002) has put forth two reading models, one illustrating the reading process in poor readers (Figure 2.2) and another illustrating the reading process in skilled readers (Figure 2.3) – both of which are presented below. In Figure 2.2, the poor or beginning reader uses the diacritical marks posted on words to decode orthographic units. On the other hand, skilled readers who read without the assistance of diacritical marks rely more heavily on sentence context and other resources they bring to the text (i.e. reading strategy, knowledge of morphology and syntax). It should be noted that Figure 2.2 includes all of the lower-level, bottom-up processes addressed by Brustad (2006).
Figure 2.2: Arabic poor readers’ reading model (Abu-Rabia, 2002, p. 306)
2.13 Second Language (L2) Reading in Arabic

As mentioned before, research in the area of L2 reading in Arabic is very scarce. There are only several studies that address the issue of reading among non-native speakers of the language, the most notable being Khaldieh’s (2001) study of 46 proficient and less-proficient English L1 students. In his investigation, Khaldieh (2001) examined the roles that knowledge of *i’raab* (the inflectional grammar of Arabic represented by

Figure 2.3: Suggested Arabic good/skilled readers’ model (Abu-Rabia, 2002, p. 307)
diacritical marks) and knowledge of vocabulary play in reading comprehension. In contrast to Abu-Rabia’s (1998, 1999) findings indicating that diacritical marks aided reading accuracy and comprehension in both skilled and unskilled native readers, Khaldieh (2001) found that non-native learners relied more on lexical knowledge rather than morphological markers of mood and case to construct meaning from texts. Thus, diacritical marks did not play as big of a role as vocabulary knowledge when students were presented with a 331-word authentic newspaper article discussing male-female relationships within the Arab family. Khaldieh (2001) concludes that lexical knowledge is more important than morpho-syntactic knowledge and that “helping students with vocabulary building should be a priority in developing reading comprehension” (p. 426).

Although the findings of Abu-Rabia (1998) and Khaldieh (2001) may appear to be contradictory, it must be kept in mind that the designs of their studies were completely different. After completing a recall-protocol, Khaldieh (2001) asked students to complete a vocabulary task and an “i’raab” task where they were asked to explicitly give the grammatical category and assign the proper case or mood endings to selected words from the text – a task that requires significant knowledge of syntax. On the other hand, Abu-Rabia (1998, 1999) presented readers with the same text in different conditions (vowelized, unvowelized, and wrongly vowelized) and measured students’ comprehension and found that readers received higher comprehension scores on the vowelized texts. Students were not asked to demonstrate their explicit knowledge of mood and case endings by placing diacritical marks on words on their own. Hence, it may very well be that diacritical marks do help both native and non-native readers when
they are trying to construct meaning from texts. Khaldieh (2001) makes this
acknowledgement: “i’raab may be introduced where mood, as well as case endings, are
made explicit in reading materials. It may raise the learners consciousness and increase
their awareness in the sight acquisition of words that may lead to a positive effect on their
perceptual processes” (p. 427). It may therefore be concluded that diacritical marks do
have a positive impact on reading in Arabic. Whether or not they affect students’ anxiety
is yet to be known and will be addressed in this study.

Another issue in Arabic reading that has not been particularly addressed but holds
pedagogical significance and may impact students’ anxiety is the practice of reading
aloud in the classroom. Traditionally, reading aloud has been an important part of
teaching in the Arabic classroom (Brustad, 2006). There are various reasons for this, one
of which is the fact that “the ability to read standard Arabic aloud correctly is a valued
skill in the Arab world” (Larkin, 1995, p. 167). Hence, teachers, especially those whom
are native Arabic speakers, often have their students engage in reading aloud. Oral
reading has both advantages and disadvantages, and Larkin (1995), a proponent of this
practice, points out the many advantages. She makes a case that “guided oral reading”,
where the teacher helps students as they read aloud to develop a set of reading habits,
should have a place in the Arabic classroom, particularly at the elementary level. Larkin
(1995) asserts that while most agree that oral reading at the early stages of learning to
read is not advisable, “guided oral reading” arms the student with skills and strategies to
better extract meaning from texts. She contends that “this technique encourages students
to focus naturally on meaningful units of text and to become, using the cues provided by the language system, more skilled contextual guessers” (Larkin, 1995, p. 169).

On the other hand, Brustad (2006) argues that “reading aloud, while serving to check and correct students’ pronunciation and word recognition, is of little aid in comprehending a text” (p. 341). She does however acknowledge that it helps students with morphological recognition and processing. Nevertheless, she posits that oral reading is “unlikely to be an efficient use of class time” (p. 342). While further research on the topic is certainly needed to determine the usefulness of oral reading, it remains a common practice in Arabic classrooms. As such, the impact it has on anxiety will be explored in this study.

Albeit a minority in the foreign language classroom, heritage language learners (HLLs) are a growing number and have much to offer. This study will explore the factors that account for the similarities and differences in the reading anxiety experienced by HLLs and traditional foreign language learners (FLLs) in order to improve pedagogy and address each group’s differing needs. As such, a discussion of heritage language education follows.

### 2.14 Defining Heritage Language Learners (HLLs)

Although the term *heritage language* has been used since the early 1970s in other countries, it has only gained significance in the United States since the 1990s (Hornberger & Wang, 2008). Since that time, much attention has been given to the term itself and issues pertaining to heritage language education. Despite the fact that the issue
has garnered more interest and attention, there is no consensus on who the term heritage
language learner (HLL) includes; however, there is agreement among all that the
difficulty of giving a precise account and definition of a HLL stems from the
heterogeneity that exists within this population.

Since there is great diversity that accompanies the concept of a HL and those who
identify with one, there are varying perspectives and definitions of the term within the
literature (Kondo-Brown, 2003). The concept of HLL “remains ill-defined and is
sensitive to a variety of interpretations within social, political, regional, and national
contexts” (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003, p. 212). Despite the various understandings of the
term HLL, it is of utmost importance that there is a precise description of this term,
particularly in the realm of education. Not only is this essential when designing courses
and making decisions regarding curriculum, materials, assessment, and teacher training,
but it is also important in language revitalization efforts and developing theories of
heritage language learning (Carreira, 2004).

Definitions of the term HLL range from broad and inclusive to narrow and
restrictive. In general, the former perspective is based on an ethnic, historical, or
sociopolitical investment in the language, while the latter is based on linguistic
proficiency and familial affiliation. The two most cited and widely accepted definitions
on differing ends of the broad to narrow spectrum are those given by Fishman (2001) and
Valdés (2001), respectively.

Fishman (2001) has given the most inclusive definition of HLLs, basing it on
individuals’ sociohistorical relationships with the United States. He places HLs into
three categories: indigenous, colonial, and immigrant languages (Fishman, 2001, p.81). Indigenous languages are spoken by Native American tribes, while colonial languages are those that were brought by the European settlers to the U.S. And, immigrant languages are those that came with the influx of immigrants to the U.S. Although Fishman’s (2001) categories acknowledge HLLs’ ancestral heritage and their ties to the HL and culture, linguistic proficiency in the HL is not a requirement. In fact, to him a HLL could have never heard the language before, as long as he has established an identity for himself with ancestral ties to that language. Wiley (2001) uses the example of an African-American student who, in order to reconnect to his African roots, chooses to study Swahili, which according to Fishman (2001) would be his HL.

On the other end of the spectrum, Valdés (2001) gives a much less inclusive and quite restrictive definition of the term HLL. She defines a HLL as “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the HL, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the HL” (Valdés, 2001, p. 38). Although this proficiency-based definition of a HLL is restrictive and excludes those who have family or personal connections to the HL, it is a definition based on practical grounds when dealing with HLLs in the classroom. Furthermore, Valdés, an authority on Spanish-for-Native-Speakers (SNS), uses linguistic proficiency as a defining factor for identifying HLLs because the general consensus among SNS specialists and U.S Latinos is that the Spanish language is an integral part of the ethnic identity and experience of U.S Latinos (Carreira, 2004). Although other languages may share similarities with Spanish, the situation for each language is different and highly
dependent on a variety of contextual factors. In fact, even within the same language, there are varying contexts that may affect the requirements for linguistic competence in the HL in order to be identified as a HLL and placed in such a track if it is available. For example, the requirements for linguistic proficiency and thus a HLL identity in a community such as Miami, Florida are different from the requirements in an area such as San Antonio, Texas. Miami has a large number of foreign-born Latinos and Spanish enjoys a fairly high status commercially, socially, and professionally; whereas in San Antonio the majority of the Latino population is U.S. born and therefore lower proficiency requirements for a HLL identity may exist (Carreira, 2004, p. 9).

Naturally, since the definitions of HLLs given by Fishman (2001) and Valdés (2001) are on differing ends of the spectrum, others have proposed alternative perspectives on the matter – most of which emphasize the heterogeneity of the HLL population and that there is no single profile that can fit or accommodate all HLLs. Hornberger and Wang (2008) posit an inclusive “ecological perspective” which acknowledges both ethnic/sociopolitical and linguistic definitions and accepts anyone who self-identifies and exerts his/her agency as a HLL of a particular language (p. 6). Hornberger and Wang (2008) propose a continua of biliteracy model in which the context, content, media, and development dimensions of HLLs must be studied and understood by both learners and educators in order for effective HL education to take place.

Carreira (2004) supports Hornberger and Wang’s (2008) proposal, but makes an effort to provide “explanatory adequacy” by offering insight into the particular needs of
HLLs when learning the HL. She makes a distinction between different types of HLLs: HLL1s have an active connection to the HL community, whereas HLL2s have a remote or secondary connection. This same distinction is made by Van-Deusen Scholl (2003) – she describes the two types of learners as *heritage learners* and *learners with a heritage motivation*. The former group has been exposed to the HL in the home or has been raised with a strong cultural connection to the HL; whereas, the latter group perceives a connection to the HL that is more distant (p. 222). Although Van-Deusen Scholl (2003) makes this distinction, she fails to “offer a recipe for teaching different types of HLLs,” which Carreira (2004) does (p. 8). She also makes a distinction between HLL3s and HLL4s, the main one being linguistic competence. HLL3s have primary membership in the HL community and therefore usually have access to the culture and language and have some degree of competence in the two areas. On the other hand, HLL4s may or may not have primary membership in the HL community and usually do not have linguistic competence in the HL. Carreira (2004) emphasizes that, although these students may be placed in SLA classes, as opposed to a HL track, the resources that they bring to the class must be utilized in a way to validate and strengthen their HL identity. Otherwise, these students, who feel strongly connected to their ancestry, will have disappointing language learning experiences (Carreira, 2004). She provides pedagogically useful foci of instruction for each of the types of HLLs, summarized in Table 2.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HLL Type</strong></th>
<th><strong>Focus of instruction</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HLL-1</td>
<td>Group notions of culture, membership in the HL community, the learner’s part in preserving the cultural and linguistic legacy of his community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLL-2</td>
<td>Individual notions of culture, the search for personal identity, the learner’s prerogative to define himself in terms of his ancestry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLL-3</td>
<td>Building linguistic and cultural skills that are consonant with external realities of how the HL is used outside the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLL-4</td>
<td>Countering identity negation, tapping into background knowledge, student as resource</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Different types of HLLs with appropriate foci of instruction (Carreira, 2004, p. 20)

Although there is no single profile of HLLs, Carreira’s (2004) differentiation between the four different types of HLLs allows researchers and educators alike to better understand the varying backgrounds that HLLs bring with them, especially in regards to their personal connection to the HL and culture as well as their membership in the community – and of course, their proficiency in the language. Similarly, Hornberger and Wang (2008) stress the diversity and heterogeneity that exits within the HL population and offer an inclusive “ecological perspective” that takes into consideration both the linguistic and ethnic/sociopolitical dimensions of HLLs. Both views support and complement each other with the ultimate goal of making researchers and teachers aware of the diverse backgrounds, abilities, and multifaceted identities that HLLs bring with them to the classroom.

Despite the fact that the works of Carreira (2004) and Hornberger and Wang (2008) provide useful frameworks and invaluable insights into better understanding
HLLs, the simple definition of a HLL that Valdés (2001) has given, where a HLL is to some degree bilingual in English and the HL, is the most widely accepted and will be the one used in this study. In fact, in their Heritage Language Research Priorities Conference Report (2000), the UCLA Steering Committee agreed to use Valdés’s (2000, 2001) definition because of their intention to focus on a pedagogical research agenda. Kondo-Brown (2006) captures this pedagogical aspect by defining a HLL as “a heritage speaker who seeks to learn, re-learn, maintain or expand knowledge of their heritage language in the classroom” (p. 1).

2.15 The Importance of Heritage Language Maintenance and Development

Although there are some that believe that bilingualism can lead to divisiveness and political unrest (Krashen, 1998, p. 5), the vast majority of the research has shown that bilingualism is beneficial to both individuals and societies. Language professionals and policymakers are increasingly aware of the potential value of HLs as a resource to the nation. Brecht and Ingold (2002) note that more than 175 languages are used in the U.S, many of which are taught in colleges and universities. However, developing high levels of proficiency in the language may require many more hours of instruction than a typical college curriculum provides. They point to an “untapped reservoir of linguistic competence” (p. 2), HLLs, and the skills that they can provide, which are rarely attained by non-heritage speakers.

Tse (2001a) also points out the resourcefulness that HLLs can offer society. She identifies three benefits when bilingualism is embraced and supported. First, individuals
who are able to speak two languages are better skilled to be active participants within the international community. Second, post-9/11, those who are bilingual in specific languages such as Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Farsi are being sought to participate in diplomatic and security endeavors. Third, there is a potential benefit to educational systems because of an increase in the pool of individuals with foreign language skills who can enter the workforce as teachers.

In addition to the many benefits that HL maintenance and development has to society in general, the advantages to the individual are numerous. The cognitive benefits of bilingualism were first demonstrated in a landmark study by Peal and Lambert (1962), where age and socio-economic factors were controlled for. Contrary to the results of previous studies, where bilingualism was seen as a handicap, Peal and Lambert (1962) found that the balanced bilingual enjoyed a “mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, and a more diversified set of mental abilities” (p. 3). Bilingual students outperformed monolingual students of the same SES in almost all cognitive tests. Although this study was a very significant one in that it presented evidence that bilingualism had positive effects on cognition, it was not without flaws. Peal and Lambert (1962) failed to demonstrate the cognitive consequences of different levels of bilingualism. Nevertheless, the major findings of this study have consistently been upheld by other research.

One such study that has confirmed the superior academic performance associated with bilingualism is that of Rumbaut (1995). He compared fluent bilinguals, limited bilinguals (of the same national origins), and English monolinguals in the San Diego
school system in the late 1980s. Rumbaut (1995) found that, without exception, the fluent bilinguals outperformed the limited bilinguals and the English monolinguals in standardized academic tests and grade point averages (GPAs) within each ethnic group. On average, the first- and second-generation fluent bilinguals also had higher GPAs and achievement scores than did their native-born monolingual peers.

In a synthesis of the literature on the effects of bilingualism, Krashen (1998) concludes that “as long as English language development occurs, continued heritage language development is related to superior scholastic achievement” (p.7). Thus supporting the views of Lambert (1975) and Cummins (1977), who assert that “additive bilingualism” is associated with positive cognitive and educational effects. It is only when a child learns to speak a second language fluently while retaining the first that these benefits can be seen (Cummins, 1977). These cognitive benefits are not observed in “subtractive” environments, where the HL is replaced by the dominant language.

In addition to the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, there are numerous other personal advantages to the development of HLs. In a study of Mexican-American eighth graders, Huang (1992) examined the relationship between bilingualism and self-esteem. He found that those who described themselves as biliterate, being able to read and write in their HL in addition to English, were more self-confident than their monoliterate peers. He argues that it is biliteracy, as opposed to oral proficiency, that contributes to the growth of self-esteem in minority children. Huang (1992) adds that proficient bilingualism makes it possible for one to “reconcile cultural differences, manage identity tensions, and cultivate an in-depth understanding of both the minority and mainstream
cultures” (p. 12) – thus illustrating the importance of not only maintaining a HL orally, but also seeking to develop literacy in it in order to reap the full benefits, particularly when dealing with identity and culture issues. This view is further supported by Krashen (1998), who asserts that HL development helps promote a healthy sense of multiculturalism.

Tse (1997, 1998) reviewed current research on ethnic language programs to investigate the effects of these programs on ethnic language attitudes, ethnic group opinions, and the students’ views of themselves. Although the studies reviewed varied in terms of the languages and ages of the students in these programs, the overall effect was the same. Through her review, Tse (1997, 1998) came to the conclusion that there is a positive relationship between enrollment in ethnic language programs and student attitudes toward themselves and toward other ethnic groups and their languages, particularly amongst ethnic minorities who were learning their HL. From these studies, Tse (1998) concludes that ethnic minority individuals may benefit from HL development through positive attitudinal changes. She points out that the “most positive attitudes seem to be in those students who are in programs sanctioned by their day school and are integrated into the regular school curriculum” (1998, p. 68). She attributes this to the validation that the students feel when their schools recognize the value of their HL and promote it.

The personal benefits of HL maintenance were also explored in a study by Cho, Cho and Tse (1997). A group of 24 Korean-American students enrolled in a private Korean HL program participated in the study, which explored their motivations for
studying the language. It was found that even though the participants were born or raised in the U.S., they described their language as an integral part of their Korean identity. They felt that the Korean language was part of their heritage that they did not want to lose, especially when raising children of their own. “In addition to wanting to communicate with family, friends, and community, and a desire to hold on to the Korean heritage, a number of the respondents mentioned career benefits of being bilingual as a reason for their desire to acquire the HL” (Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997, p. 109). The personal benefits of bilingualism to the participants were strong motivating factors for them to develop their HL. Moreover, many of them wanted to overcome their feelings of frustration, shame, and embarrassment when interacting in the language.

The research on HLLs has shown that those who maintain their HL and culture benefit cognitively, socially, and personally. They are more likely to succeed in school and enjoy greater social mobility. Additionally, they are able to experience pride in their heritage and enjoy close relationships with their parents, relatives, and community members. On the other hand, the research indicates that those who fail to maintain their HL and experience language shift encounter negative consequences.

Wong-Fillmore (1991) explored the language use patterns of children belonging to language minority families, and the conclusions that she reaches are not very encouraging. She asserts that HL loss is happening at a very rapid rate and that if this issue is not given the attention it deserves, tragic consequences may occur. Wong-Fillmore (1991) examined the effects that attending preschool conducted partly or entirely in English had on the language of children from a number of diverse
backgrounds. She compared the results of 690 ethnically diverse families to a sample comparison group consisting of 311 Spanish-speaking families whose children attended preschool exclusively conducted in Spanish. She found that as the immigrant children learned English, their use of the HL decreased, and the younger they were when they learned English, the greater the effect. This can have detrimental effects on parent-child relationships. As Wong-Fillmore (1991) notes, “when parents are unable to talk to their children, they cannot easily convey to them their values, beliefs, understandings, or wisdom about how to cope with their experiences” (p. 343). Rifts develop within the family and the intimacy that comes from shared beliefs and understandings is lost. Some families have even been torn apart because of HL loss, as detailed by Wong-Fillmore (1991, p. 343-344). She describes a Korean family whose children began experiencing language loss and were unable to communicate respectfully with their visiting grandfather. This resulted in the physical punishment of the children, who were consequently taken away into protective custody.

Following Wong-Fillmore’s (1991) study highlighting the social and psychological impact of HL loss on individuals, family, and society, Kouritzin (1999) conducted life-history interviews of 21 Canadians who had either lost their HL or failed to acquire it. She found that the participants had difficulties having relationships with extended family members because they had trouble communicating with them. Additionally, the participants reported feelings of anger, shame, and disappointment when viewing themselves in home videos using the HL and not being able to understand what they, themselves, were saying. This led to negative self-images as well as negative
views of their heritage culture. Some even felt a lack of belonging to both the dominant culture and their heritage culture.

The negative impact of HL loss is also examined in Cho & Krashen’s (1998) study of 72 Korean-American university students, some of which were enrolled in HL classes in California. The study reveals that nearly all of the students faced communication problems with their parents and relatives. Many of the participants reported that although they were able to convey the big picture in Korean, they lacked the linguistic ability to express more subtle thoughts and emotions – causing them to feel isolated not only from their relatives, but from a much wider social group as well.

Cho’s (2000) study provides even more evidence demonstrating how HL competence influences one’s relationships, interactions, and ethnic identity. In a study of 114 second-generation Korean-Americans, Cho (2000) compared two groups of participants who self-assessed themselves as either having strong or weak competence in the HL. She found that those who had strong HL competence had a strong sense of who they were, were strongly connected to their ethnic group, and had greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners (p.338). These factors enabled them to have better relationships with HL speakers, both in and outside the HL community. On the other hand, those who belonged to the “weak HL competence” group had difficulty interacting with the HL community and felt isolated and excluded from members of their own ethnic group.

In another study investigating HL maintenance versus loss, Guardado (2002) examined four Spanish-speaking families in British Columbia. Two of the families had
children who had successfully maintained their HL, while the other two had children who were already losing Spanish. By conducting semi-structured interviews and observations, Guardado (2000) was able to examine some of the causes and consequences of HL maintenance and loss. Even though not all of the children were able to maintain their HL, all four of the families acknowledged the economic and social benefits of HL maintenance. One of the parents reported that “one of the advantages of being bilingual is that it opens up new horizons at the employment level” (p. 355). However, only the language maintenance families made an association between identity, moral, and development issues and HL maintenance. Such a parent said, “at the mental development level, you have the possibility of doing analyses through two cultures, two different visions, which I believe is very enriching for anyone. When children have a second language, they are able to value other cultures and other kids that speak other languages, besides English” (p. 355). Apparently this parent was aware of the cognitive, social, and personal benefits that one can enjoy through HL maintenance. This form of “additive bilingualism” where the HL is being added to children’s language, at no cost to their English proficiency (Lambert 1975; Cummins, 1977), positively affects interactions and relationships with parents, relatives, and HL speakers. Furthermore, HL maintenance plays an important role in the personal, social, and intellectual life of those who seek to maintain and develop it.
2.16 Heritage Language Learners in the Foreign Language Classroom

Despite the numerous benefits of HL maintenance and development, historically there have been two conflicting language policies in the U.S: (1) a subtractive policy involving language assimilation for language minorities and (2) an additive policy involving foreign language studies for mainstream monolinguals (Wiley & Lukes, 1996). The first policy promotes transition from the L1 or HL to English instruction; whereas the second policy promotes monolingual students to learn a foreign language in the classroom (p. 511).

An ironic result of this conflicting situation is that in recent years, more and more students who have been educated in mainstream, monolingual schools and have lost their HL are choosing to study it in foreign language classrooms (UCLA Steering Committee, 2000). With an increased number of HLLs in the traditional FL classroom, more attention has been given to the distinct and differing needs of HLLs (Campbell & Peyton, 1998).

Based on their observations and those of others who work with the HL population, Campbell and Rosenthal (2000, p.167-168) posit that “typical” HLLs display the following general characteristics: (1) they have acquired nearly 90% of the phonological system of their ancestral language; (2) they have acquired 80% to 90% of the grammatical rules; (3) they have acquired extensive vocabularies, although the semantic range is limited to a few sociocultural domains; (4) they have typically acquired appropriate sociolinguistic rules; (5) they have learned and adopted many of the customs, values, and traditions (i.e. the culture) of their community; (6) they rarely have opportunities to gain literacy skills in their ancestral languages; and (7) they present a
wide range of reasons for wanting to study their ancestral languages. Although these “working hypotheses” could not be supported by empirical studies or analyses at the time, other researchers have acknowledged and supported the view that foreign language learners (FLLs) and HLLs are two different groups with diverse needs.

Webb and Miller (2000) point out HLLs are proficient in their language in ways that FLLs, and sometimes even their foreign language teachers, are not and may never be. At the same time, they may have gaps in their knowledge of their HLs that FLLs do not have, and these gaps may prevent them from performing certain kinds of communicative tasks, particularly reading and writing. As a consequence, when teachers attempt to apply a standard foreign language curriculum and foreign language teaching strategies to the teaching of a HL, it can lead to discomfort, if not frustration and failure, for both students and teachers alike.

The outcome of a lack of awareness on the part of foreign language educators of the unique needs that HLLs have in the classroom can be devastating, especially when dealing with different varieties of a language. Tse (2001b) notes that HLLs have encountered a “devaluing or dismissing of their HL ability because their dialect or accent was considered substandard” (p.697). This can have damaging effects on the HLL and may cause him/her to abandon learning the HL entirely – as is described in a case study done by Wiley (2008). He analyzes the case of Devin, who was born and raised in Taiwan until the age of 5, when he immigrated to the U.S. with his family. Upon his arrival, he rapidly acquired English, but still spoke Taiwanese and some Mandarin, with a Taiwanese accent. He decided to enroll in Chinese classes in college to re-learn his HL.
He was placed in a Chinese (Mandarin) reading and writing course for native speakers, although his oral Taiwanese was much stronger than his Mandarin. He did not succeed in the class because his professor looked down upon his Taiwanese accent and was constantly correcting him. Devin felt stigmatized and very self-conscious in the class and decided not to take any more classes. Wiley (2008) notes that “had the course been designed to take into account the background and needs of ‘dialect’ speakers, his regional ‘Taiwanese’ accent in Mandarin might not have been treated in a stigmatizing way” (p. 101). It is unfortunate that although Devin was enrolled in a HL class, he still had a negative experience trying to re-learn his HL. This clearly demonstrates the need for better HL program planning, which includes the recognition of the special needs of multilingual students.

While many universities have separate language tracks for HLLs, not all institutions have the resources to divide HLLs from FLLs. Furthermore, separate tracks for HLLs are a rarity in less commonly taught languages with fewer student enrollments, such as Arabic. In such situations, students who seek to develop their HL are enrolled in the same classes as FLLs. And, for the most part, foreign language courses are designed for monolingual speakers of English (Campbell & Peyton, 1998). When HLLs are placed in such classes without special recognition and attention, their unique needs are not being met.

Although there seems to be a consensus in the field that there are differences between HLLs and traditional FLLs, empirical evidence supporting this claim is not abundant. Nevertheless, several studies have explored the differences between the two
groups of students. The findings indicate that HLLs bring to the classroom distinct linguistic, educational, cultural, and socio-affective experiences that set them apart from FLLs.

Due to their exposure to the HL throughout childhood and, for some, even into early adulthood, heritage speakers’ strongest skill is generally aural comprehension (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Their “speaking abilities fall within a continuum, from rather fluent speakers, who can sound almost like competent native speakers, to those who can barely speak the home language” (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 371). However, generally the research shows that HLLs have oral proficiency and pronunciation that is more advanced than FLLs.

In a case study of two groups of students enrolled in a Japanese HL course at the University of California, Douglas (2008) found that the oral proficiency of Japanese HLLs was by far higher than that of Japanese FLLs. The students were administered the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Test (OPI) by a certified tester and even the lowest score (Intermediate High) of the HLL group was higher than the FLLs’ scores (p. 218). However, the FLLs had higher scores in reading and writing. Douglas (2008) concludes that Japanese HLLs have a different type of language competence than FLLs: the former group has greater interpersonal communication skills, while the latter has greater cognitive/academic language proficiency. However, after the implementation of an individualized curriculum that included awareness training in strategy use and the development of kanji knowledge, HLLs were able to focus on their personal areas that needed improvement.
The results of Matsunaga’s (2003) study produced similar conclusions. Matsunaga (2003) compared Japanese oral performance, kanji knowledge, and reading comprehension among three groups of students enrolled in intermediate and advanced level college Japanese courses. The 40 participants consisted of HLLs and FLLs (who were divided into two groups: those with kanji background and those with none). The HLLs outperformed both FLL groups in oral tests that assessed pronunciation, appropriate use of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, naturalness, and communication. Matsunaga (2003) also found that the weakness of the HLLs was not an underdeveloped reading proficiency, but rather an insufficient knowledge of kanji – as they only outperformed the FLL group without kanji knowledge. This reiterates the fact that the instructional needs of language learners with different backgrounds must be addressed so that all learners’ needs are met.

Recognizing the great heterogeneity that is present within HLLs, Kondo-Brown (2005) explored the differences between various subgroups within the HLL population in order to demonstrate language behaviors that are distinctively different from those of traditional FLLs. She separated her 185 participants into a FLL group and three HLL subgroups based on their degree of connection to Japanese heritage (HL descent group, HL grandparent group, and HL parent group). Kondo-Brown (2005) compared the three HL subgroups and one FLL group in terms of: (a) Japanese listening, grammar, and reading proficiency test scores; (b) self-assessed use of Japanese in various domains; (c) self-assessed language choice or Japanese-English dominance in various communication situations; and (d) self-ratings of ability to carry out various oral tasks (p. 565). The
results of the study indicate that there were striking similarities in language use and skills between the FLL group and the HL descent and grandparent groups when assessed by either proficiency tests or self-assessment measures. On the other hand, the language use and skills (listening, grammar, and reading) of the HL parent group were significantly higher than the other three groups. Kondo-Brown (2005) concludes that HLLs with parents who speak the language have distinct needs and may be placed in a separate track. However, since the results suggest that there are no learning differences between FLLs and HL descent groups, they may be placed in the same track. Nonetheless, Kondo-Brown (2005) stresses that this does not eliminate sociocultural factors (i.e. affective factors) that may influence the HL descent groups. Their identity issues, for example, need to be recognized and addressed even if they are placed in a regular FLL track.

In a study examining the academic writing proficiency of Russian HLLs, native speakers, and advanced FLLs of Russian, Friedman and Kagan (2008) found that there were substantial differences between all three groups of learners. First, there were differences between the writing of the native Russian speakers and the HLLs: while the HLLs were able to form complex sentences with relative clauses and to achieve temporal cohesion in their essays, they used a relatively limited range of linguistic devices in comparison to those employed by the native speakers (p. 195-196). At the same time, the HLLs differed from the FLLs in their command of a wider range of linguistic resources, such as adverb clauses of time and a greater variety of temporal logical connectors.

Although there were differences between the HLLs and the FLLs, Friedman and Kagan (2008) point out that there were many benefits to having a mixed class. Because the
course was not a conversation class, the FLLs were not intimidated by the advanced oral
skills of the HLLs and were therefore able to improve both their listening and speaking
skills. Nevertheless, the unique needs of the HLLs need to be addressed, even in a mixed
class. The authors assert that it is “a challenge to the language teacher to devise curricula
c conducive to developing the heritage learners’ existing oral language proficiency into a
full command of the literary language” (p. 198).

Another study, done by Triantafillidou and Hedgcock (2007), investigated the
differences between Greek HLLs and FLLs. The participants, 16 FLLs of Modern Greek
and 26 HLLs, were enrolled in Greek language courses at the University of Houston and
at the Annunciation Greek Language and Cultural School. The learning and acculturation
patterns of the two groups were compared through oral performance assessments (OPI)
and ethnographic interviews. While the FLLs attributed their proficiency in the language
to sophisticated metalinguistic knowledge and social strategies, HLLs cited prior
language instruction, the use of Greek as a home language, and their ethnicity, as the
most meaningful contributors to their linguistic success. Triantafillidou and Hedgcock
(2007) highlight the differences between the two groups in Table 2.5
Based on years of teaching HLLs of Spanish in Long Beach City College, Parodi (2008) gives a general overview of what HLLs bring with them to the classroom. She asserts that bilingual speakers have very high oral/aural proficiency and have internalized the Spanish phonological system completely, a claim also supported by Valdés (2000). Parodi (2008) also states that HLLs have internalized the core grammar of Spanish and learn and expand their knowledge of their HL intuitively without consciously using the rules of grammar, a conclusion that Triantafillidou and Hedgcock (2007) reached as well. Additionally, Parodi (2008) states that HLLs engage in code-switching, lexical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HL Learner Characteristics</th>
<th>FL Learner Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Heavy reliance on intuitions and recall knowledge in L2 communication</td>
<td>• Reliance on explicit knowledge of grammatical forms in L2 communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heavy reliance on intuitions in detecting errors and monitoring for accuracy in L2 communication</td>
<td>• Reliance on recall of explicit knowledge of grammatical forms and patterns to detect errors and monitor for accuracy in L2 communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frequent preoccupation with fluency and effective expression of meaning over formal accuracy</td>
<td>• Strong concern for effective expression of meaning while maintaining formal accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discernibly greater communicative fluency when compared to FL learners</td>
<td>• Discernibly higher accuracy in oral production when compared to HL learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rare disfluencies in oral production</td>
<td>• Frequent disfluencies in oral production due to limited grammatical and lexical knowledge, as well as more pervasive monitoring for form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low awareness of/receptivity to negative error feedback in oral interaction, except at advanced stages of L2 development</td>
<td>• High alertness and sometimes strong reactions to negative feedback; among some learners, high receptivity to negative error feedback in oral interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frequent deployment of sometimes highly efficient compensatory strategies, along with noticeable circumlocution tactics</td>
<td>• Development and deployment of new compensatory strategies to express meaning and produce L2 forms accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moderate to high risk-taking behavior</td>
<td>• Low to moderate risk-taking behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exaggerated self-appraisal of L2 knowledge, skills, and proficiency</td>
<td>• Accurate self-appraisal of L2 knowledge, skills, and proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes strong but often contradictory allegiance to HL and culture; occasional rejection of U.S. culture in favor of preserving ethnolinguistic ties</td>
<td>• Strong affinity for TL culture, but primary identification with U.S. cultural practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Characteristics of HLLs and FLLs (Triantafillidou and Hedgcock, 2007, p. 14)
borrowing, and semantic extensions – all of which are usually stigmatized by monolingual speakers, thus causing HLLs feelings of insecurity and stigma. This is especially true when HLLs bring with them a stigmatized variety of the HL to the classroom. Parodi (2008) discusses this issue at length because of the potential damaging effects this can have on HLLs in any language (i.e. the case of Devin in Wiley, 2008). She encourages instructors to show tolerance by recognizing and validating the different language varieties that HLLs have by building on their existing knowledge so that they are not discouraged from continuing their study of the language.

In yet another effort to better understand what HLLs bring with them to the classroom, Oh and Au (2005) focused on sociocultural background variables that may influence the success of HLLs. Oh and Au (2005) assert that while sophisticated models exploring the sociocultural context for FLLs exist, such models for HL learning do not. In an attempt to provide insight into the sociocultural context of HLLs, Oh and Au (2005) studied 55 Spanish HLLs enrolled in a second-year college-level Spanish language class at a university in Southern California. Based on questionnaires, three sociocultural variables were found: how strongly the participants identified with the heritage culture; how much they participated in it; and how often they used the Spanish language (in high school and current use). It was found that the mastery of the Spanish accent was positively related to all of the sociocultural variables. Those who more strongly identified with Latino culture, who participated more often in Latino cultural activities, and who used Spanish more often outside the classroom in high school and currently (in college) had better accents (p. 238). Similarly, the HLLs who used Spanish outside the classroom
more often, in high school and college, had better productive grammar abilities. While cultural identification and cultural participation were related to mastery of Spanish accent, they were not related to Spanish grammar production.

Though Oh and Au’s (2005) study has not yet led to a model of HL learning, it certainly is a step in the right direction. Lacorte and Canabal (2003) assert that it is essential to explore the uniqueness of HLLs in order to understand their interaction with their native and non-native instructors, as well as their FLL peers in mixed classrooms (p. 111). Although it is difficult to match HLLs’ individual learning abilities in every FL course, it is crucial that teachers are aware of the unique needs that HLLs have. Whether placed in a track of their own or in a classroom with FLLs, HLLs have distinct linguistic, educational, cultural, and socio-affective experiences that set them apart from FLLs. If HLLs are to achieve their full potential, educators must be aware of all the factors that may influence their success in the classroom. Hence, it is the goal of this study to explore HLLs’ affective experiences (particularly FLA) in comparison to those of FLLs – all in hopes of gaining a better understanding that will enhance students’ language learning achievement. Campbell and Rosenthal (2000) note that “it is extremely encouraging that there is growing evidence that language educators at all levels have already begun to recognize the great, mostly untapped, source of bilingual and bicultural talent embodied in the HL pool of students” (p. 172).
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology of the study. First, (3.2) the research questions will be restated, followed by: (3.3) a description of the research design; (3.4) rationale for the selection of a case study; (3.5) description of the research setting; (3.6) participants; (3.7) data collection instruments; (3.8) procedures; (3.9) data analysis; and (3.10) establishing the trustworthiness and dependability of the study.

3.2 Research Questions

As mentioned before, the research questions that this study addressed are as follows:

1(a): To what extent do FLLs experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?

1(b): What is the nature of that anxiety?

2(a): To what extent do HLLs experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?

2(b): What is the nature of that anxiety?

3.3 Research Design

In order to generate answers to this study’s questions, a mixed methods sequential explanatory design was chosen where the quantitative data collected in the first phase
provided a basis for the collection of the qualitative data in the second phase (Creswell, 2003). The quantitative data served two purposes: it gave a general idea about the levels of anxiety experienced by students in the Arabic classroom, and it aided in the selection of participants for the second, more extensive phase of the study. Thus, although the study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the primary emphasis was on the qualitative data, making it a qualitative dominant study (Creswell, 2003).

Why was more weight given to the qualitative phase of the study? As discussed in Chapter Two, the topic of foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been widely examined quantitatively; however, very little research has taken a qualitative approach. Although quantitative studies have shed light on the subject of FLA, there is still much more to learn about this complex issue. Studies that are qualitative in nature can achieve this purpose, as they allow for a more in-depth understanding of the interplay of factors that contribute to anxiety in the foreign language classroom. The whole phenomenon of FLA, particularly reading anxiety, is a complex one that cannot be meaningfully reduced to linear causal relationships. As such, a qualitative approach allowed for an exploration of the “interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Learning more about students’ feelings and experiences, through interviews, journals, and observations, made it possible to gain a much deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the anxiety that is experienced in an Arabic reading course – something that could certainly not be captured through numerical data.
3.4 Case Studies

In order to gain a holistic understanding of the nature of anxiety that was experienced by heritage language learners (HLLs) and foreign language learners (FLLs) in an intermediate-level Arabic reading course, a case study method was used in the second phase of the study. Case studies are an ideal methodology when an in-depth understanding of a topic is desired (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). Yin (1994) identifies three types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Given that this study sought to better explain the complex phenomenon of foreign language anxiety by identifying patterns or themes that emerged from the data, it is an explanatory study (Yin, 1994).

3.5 Research Setting

The site of this study was an intermediate-level Arabic language course entitled “Intermediate Literary Arabic Reading” where students develop their reading skills through reading adapted and authentic Arabic texts. The class, which was offered at a research university in the Midwest of the United States, met twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, for two hours during Autumn quarter 2009. The course was a 400 level course and is usually taken by students who have either declared a minor or major in Arabic. This particular course was selected for two main reasons: the fact that it was a reading course and that it was aimed at intermediate level students. A major focus of this study was foreign language anxiety as related to reading, an under-researched domain of FLA,
and therefore a class that exclusively teaches reading skills was considered an appropriate selection. This would allow for a concentration on reading-related anxiety apart from, and in addition to, overall FLA, thus offering an opportunity to investigate both reading-based anxiety and general FLA. Furthermore, an intermediate-level, as opposed to a beginning level or higher level course, was selected so that the participants would have enough experience reading in Arabic to gain a meaningful sense of how anxiety is manifested in Arabic language study. Anxiety experienced in a beginning level course could be caused by the simple fact that the students were being exposed to a new and very different language. On the other hand, students in a higher level (i.e. advanced) course would presumably be so comfortable with the target language that anxiety would no longer be an issue for them. Thus, an intermediate level course offered the best opportunity to gain a realistic measure of FLA. It is at this level that students begin reading authentic texts and can draw on a reasonable amount of previously acquired knowledge of the target language.

3.6 Participants

The participants in the first phase of the study were twenty-two of the twenty-three enrolled students in the Arabic 401 course. Five of those students, three FLLs and two HLLs, participated in the second phase of the study, as shown in Table 3.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Major(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>FLL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Arabic &amp; Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>FLL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Geography; minor: Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>FLL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Arabic &amp; Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>HLL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Arabic &amp; Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>HLL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Arabic &amp; Psychology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Participants in second phase

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

This study employed the use of the following data collection instruments: (1) the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS); (2) the foreign language reading anxiety scale (FLRAS); (3) a background questionnaire; (4) classroom observations; (5) interviews; (6) and participant journals.

1. FLCAS:

The FLCAS was designed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) for assessing student anxiety in foreign language classrooms, specifically Spanish language classrooms. This instrument has played an important role in FLA research since it was introduced. The survey was adapted to the Arabic language context by replacing the words foreign language with the word Arabic. It consists of 33 items, each accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The range for FLCAS scores is 33 to 165, with
lower scores indicating lower levels of anxiety and higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety. This scale has been shown to demonstrate internal reliability, “achieving an alpha coefficient of 0.93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 129). Similarly, Aida (1994) reports Cronbach’s alpha reliability to be 0.94. Since the FLCAS has been used by researchers as an accurate and reliable tool to quantifiably measure the anxiety levels that foreign language learners experience, it was used as such in this study.

2. FLRAS

The FLRAS, developed by Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) as a modified version of the FCLAS aimed specially at reading, “elicits students’ self-reports of anxiety over various aspects of reading, their perceptions of reading difficulties in their target language, and their perceptions of the relative difficulty of reading as compared to the difficulty of other language skills” (p. 204). The FLRAS consists of 20 items scored by a 5-point Likert scale similar to the one found in the FLCAS. The score ranges for the FLRAS are from 20 to 100, with lower scores indicating lower anxiety and higher scores indicating higher anxiety.

3. Background Questionnaire:

In order to learn more about students’ backgrounds, a short questionnaire seeking the following information was given to all participating students in Phase 1: age, gender,
country of origin, academic major, the number of years the student has studied Arabic, and students’ perceived abilities in the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The questionnaire was adapted from others used for the same purpose. The information obtained played an important role in generating an overall picture of the students enrolled in the Arabic course, and it generated interpretive possibilities for the five students who were eventually selected for the qualitative phase of the study.

4. Classroom Observations:

Observations, one of the primary data collection techniques for qualitative research, were used in this study. According to Patton (1980), observations not only allow for a better understanding of the overall research context, but they also offer researchers opportunities to gather information that may otherwise be unattainable. For this study, observations were an important tool in gaining insight into how students experienced FLA and reading anxiety in the classroom. There are two types of observation strategies: participant and non-participant (Patton, 1980); non-participant observation was used for this particular study. Since the purpose was strictly to observe the students’ behavior during class sessions, it was necessary to operate on a non-participant basis and thus not interfere with or influence what took place.

Merriam (1998) suggests six areas in which to focus on during observations: the physical setting, participants, activities and interaction, conversations, subtle factors, and the researcher’s own thoughts and behaviors. Each of these areas was addressed in the observations. Special attention was given to the classroom environment, including the
atmosphere and the teaching strategies used. Students’ interactions with other classmates and the instructor were focused on as well as subtle factors such as nonverbal behaviors, including facial expressions and gestures, as they are important in gaining a holistic understanding of the nature of FLA experienced by the participants. Finally, I made note of my thoughts throughout each observation. Using a human instrument, myself, to collect data undoubtedly involves subjectivity, and acknowledging my thoughts and reflections on what was observed was necessary in order to examine any biases that I may have had.

5. Interviews

Interviews, another commonly employed data collection technique in qualitative research, were used in this study to gain a holistic understanding of participants’ feelings and thoughts about foreign language anxiety and reading anxiety, as well as their intentions behind observed behaviors and events (Patton, 1987). Interviews can fall anywhere on a continuum ranging from very structured to unstructured, and the purpose an interview serves dictates the type selected (Merriam, 1998). Since the goal of this study was to capture students’ voices as they relate their feelings and experiences with anxiety while developing their Arabic reading skills, semi-structured interviews were used to allow for flexibility.

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout the study, during weeks three, six, and nine of the quarter, where both pre-determined and spontaneously generated questions left the participants considerable room in which to respond. I asked
“open-ended questions, listened to and recorded the answers, and then followed up with additional relevant questions” (Patton, 1987, p. 108). The flexibility in such an interview format allowed the participants to share any and all of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences that they deemed relevant. Although the questions shown in Tables 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 seem specific, they were open-ended and formulated as a guide to elicit participants’ feelings regarding the issues at hand (Yin, 2003). They were not strictly adhered to: the order in which the questions were asked sometimes changed, and additional questions depending on the participants’ answers usually arose. Essentially, every attempt was made to capture participants’ voices as accurately as possible, keeping in mind that there is no single reality or truth, but rather there are multiple realities constructed differently by people.
Interview 1: Week Three

1. Tell me about how and why you started learning Arabic.
2. Tell me about your best experiences learning Arabic.
3. Tell me about your worst experiences learning Arabic.
4. Tell me about your abilities in the different language skills in Arabic (speaking, reading, writing, and listening). How comfortable are you with each of the skills?
5. Tell me about your feelings regarding reading in Arabic.
6. How would you rate your reading abilities (on a scale of 1 to 10)?
7. How do you work on developing your reading skills/strategies in Arabic?
8. What are the most difficult/easiest aspects of reading in Arabic for you?
9. How do you work through the difficult parts of reading?
10. How do you feel about reading out loud in class?
11. How do you feel about silent reading in Arabic?
12. How do you feel about diacritical marks (vowels) in reading?
13. How do you deal with any discomfort that you may feel while reading?
14. What do you think is the teacher’s role in helping students deal with discomfort or uneasiness in the class?
15. How do you feel about having heritage language learners in the classroom? OR
16. How do you feel about being a heritage language learner in the class?

Table 3.2: Interview 1

---

Interview 2: Week Six

Part 1 (after reading a passage from the textbook)

1. Describe how you felt reading the passage? How confident were you reading it? Did you feel any anxiety?
2. Did reading the passage before in class make reading it now easier? Explain.
3. Did you understand the gist of what it was saying? How did you handle words you did not know? What other reading strategies did you use?
4. How did the absence of diacritical marks make you feel?
5. Do you have any other thoughts/feelings about reading the passage?

Part 2

1. Describe your feelings about the course so far.
2. Has your confidence or comfort level with the different skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) changed since the beginning of the course?
3. How did you do on the midterm exam? What was difficult? What was easy? How did it make you feel?
4. Have your feelings about reading aloud changed? If yes, how so?
5. How do you like the course so far?

Table 3.3: Interview 2
Interview 3: Week Nine

1. As the course nears an end, how are you feeling?
2. What were your feelings before, during, and after the class presentation?
3. Have you started preparing for the final exam? How are you feeling about it?
4. Do you feel you have grown since the beginning of this course? How so? If not, explain why.
5. Thinking back to the beginning of the course, how has your anxiety changed throughout the quarter?
6. Have your feelings about reading out loud in class changed?
7. Has the course met all of your needs? How so? What could be improved?
8. Have you interacted with heritage language students at all this quarter? If yes, how so and how was the experience? OR
9. As a heritage language learner, how was your experience in this course? Did you interact with other students?
10. Did the course meet your needs? What could have been changed to make it better?
11. Do you have any other thoughts/feelings you would like to express about your experiences?

Table 3.4: Interview 3

6. Participants’ Journals:

Journals are yet another way to collect qualitative data and were used in this study. Participants were asked to write about their positive and negative learning experiences in class on a weekly basis (in English). They were not asked to respond to specific questions, as the goal was to have them record their feelings freely and discuss any issues that they deemed relevant. Asking students to write down their thoughts and feelings gave them time to reflect, which led to introspective information that may have otherwise been unattainable. Similar to Bailey’s (1983) analysis of highly anxious students’ diaries, the journals that the five participants wrote produced rich and valuable information that, in combination with the other data gathered, made it possible to
generate deeper and richer portraits of the participants’ experiences and attitudes pertaining to FLA.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the approval granted by the researcher’s institutional IRB, consent from the Arabic department as well as the course’s instructor was obtained to conduct the study in the 401 Intermediate Literary Arabic Reading Course. Then, after the approval of the IRB, which was obtained on September 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2009 (see Appendix F), students enrolled in the class were informed of the research study. They were given an overview of what the study entailed, and any questions they had were answered (see Appendix D). Next, students were given consent forms where they indicated their desire to participate in the first phase of the study. All of the students (except one) in the class agreed to participate in Phase 1. After signing the “Informed Consent” forms (see Appendix E), students were given the FLCAS, the FLRAS, and the background questionnaire during class (see Appendices A, B, and C). The information collected from these three instruments was tabulated, and the second phase of the study was launched.

Phase 2 of the study began with an email that was sent out to three FLLs, with low, medium, and high scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS, and all three of the HLLs asking if they would like to participate in the second phase. Two of the three HLLs and all three of the FLLs responded indicating their desire to continue with the study. After an explanation of details concerning how data would be gathered (reflective journals,
interviews, and observations), the five students signed a second consent form (see Appendix E) and the data collection commenced.

The three FLLs and two HLLs were observed during classroom meeting times twice a week for the duration of the quarter (ten weeks), totaling 40 hours. Considering that not all of the students enrolled in the course participated in the second phase of the study, and in order to be minimally obtrusive during classroom sessions, no audio or video-recording took place. Instead, extensive notes were taken covering the six areas suggested by Merriam (1998) discussed earlier.

The participants started writing their weekly reflective journals as soon as they signed the consent forms. They were asked to write about their positive and negative experiences after each class session as well as any thoughts and feelings they felt were important. The journals were sent to me via email at the end of each week, usually on Fridays. Each of the journals was read carefully, and any points that needed further clarification were communicated electronically as well.

The five participants were interviewed three times throughout the quarter, at weeks three, six, and nine. All of the interviews took place individually with each of the students at a local bookstore and were digitally recorded and transcribed. As mentioned before, the interviews were semi-structured in order to allow the participants to share any and all of their feelings. A summary of all the data collection techniques as well as the purposes of each is shown in Table 3.5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection Technique</th>
<th>Time/Frequency</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLCAS Survey</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>To establish students’ general foreign language anxiety levels</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLRAS Survey</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>To establish students’ foreign language reading anxiety levels</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Questionnaire</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>To collect students’ background information and distinguish between heritage language learners and traditional foreign language learners</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 1</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>To gain an in-depth understanding of participants’ feelings about learning Arabic, particularly reading</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 2</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>To gain an understanding of students’ thoughts/feelings as they read an Arabic text as well as to get an update on their experiences and feelings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 3</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>To gain an understanding of how participants’ anxiety has changed over the course of the quarter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>To gain insight into students’ positive/negative feelings about their learning experiences throughout the quarter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observations</td>
<td>Twice a week throughout the quarter (10 weeks)</td>
<td>To observe participants’ classroom activities and interactions as well as their setting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Summary of data collection

3.9 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from Phase 1 of the study was organized and initially analyzed immediately after it was collected, as the results guided the data collection and analysis in Phase 2. Participants’ responses to the background
questionnaires along with their FLCAS and FLRAS scores were compiled in a table for manageability (see Table 4.1). Students’ scores on the two anxiety scales were calculated by assigning a point value to each of the five possible responses on the Likert scale used on both of the instruments. For example, a score of 5 was given to a “strongly agree” response, whereas a score of 1 was given to a “strongly disagree” response. Some items were reverse-scored so that a high point value indicated higher anxiety and a low point value indicated lower anxiety. For example, item 13 on the FLRAS, which states “I feel confident when I am reading in Arabic” was reverse scored so that a “strongly agree” response to this item received a score of 1, indicating low anxiety. The means and standard deviations were then calculated and compared to the results of other studies (see Tables 5.3, 5.4, and 5.6). Upon the completion of the course, students’ final grades were added to the quantitative results and further analysis took place. Patterns (or a lack thereof) were noted and comparisons between HLLs and FLLs were made.

The qualitative data from Phase 2 was analyzed throughout data collection, as the two processes are recursive and dynamic (Merriam, 1998). As I collected data from interviews, observations, and participants’ journals, I read and re-read the data, made notes, and wrote memos on my “reflections, tentative themes, hunches, ideas, and things to pursue” (Merriam, 2009, p. 170) in subsequent rounds of data collection, particularly in the interviews. This allowed for a thorough investigation of each participant’s experiences, which ultimately revealed the great complexity associated with the phenomenon of FLA. Although the experience of each individual was unique and influenced by a variety of factors, the data showed that the five participants generally felt
two types of anxiety that either enhanced their learning or interfered with it. Hence, when describing the nature of the anxiety that was experienced by the FLLs and the HLLs, I used the two terms “facilitating” and “debilitating” (Scovel, 1978). Although these terms have been used in quantitative contexts, I chose to use them because they accurately described the effects that anxiety had on the participants’ learning.

The steps that I used for the final data analysis, largely based on Merriam’s (2009) recommendations, were as follows:

1. Open coding-- After reading and re-reading the data for each participant, notations were made next to data that was interesting, important, or relevant.

2. Analytical coding-- I grouped open codes that went together in order to construct categories. I compared notes and comments from each of the participants, refined, and revised and determined that four major categories emerged from the data: (1) oral reading; (2) diacritical marks; (3) reading comprehension; and (4) listening, speaking, and writing.

3. Sorting evidence-- I read through the data again and sorted evidence from the observations, interviews, and journals into the four categories for each of the participants.

4. Repeated open and analytical coding-- I repeated the first two steps in order to determine emerging themes from the data. It is here that I made inferences and theorized about the two groups of learners, the FLLs and the HLLs, finding both similarities and differences among them (See Figure 5.2).
3.10 Trustworthiness and Dependability

Given that the emphasis of this study was on the qualitative data, the first quantitative phase was a much smaller part in comparison. Hence, the number of participants was small – too small for any inferential statistical analysis to take place. However, the validity and reliability of the two instruments used, the FLCAS and FLRAS, have been established in many studies (though the former much more than the latter). The FLCAS has been shown to demonstrate internal reliability, “achieving an alpha coefficient of 0.93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 129). The construct validity of the FLCAS has also been established. Horwitz (1986) compared it to various criterion-related studies such as the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale and Test Anxiety Scale and found that “foreign language anxiety can be discriminated from these related constructs” (p. 561). The FLCAS has been used in numerous other studies (i.e. Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; Saito, Garza & Horwitz, 1999; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Tallon, 2009) and has been found to be consistently reliable.

The FLRAS, on the other hand, has not been used as widely, and although it has been criticized by Sparks, Ganschow, and Javorsky (2000) as possibly measuring reading skill in addition to anxiety, its authors, Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999), confirm its validity. In their study of 383 students, the FLRAS showed an internal consistency coefficient of 0.86, in comparison to “0.94 for the FLCAS computed on the same sample” (p. 204), which they assert “compares reasonably well.”
While the terms validity and reliability are used to refer to the quality of quantitative studies, the terms trustworthiness and dependability are used in reference to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the purpose of qualitative research is not to replicate or generalize findings, the conclusions must be consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1998). To establish the trustworthiness and dependability of this study, triangulation, member-checks, and researcher-reflexivity were used. First, to achieve triangulation, three data collection techniques were used: interviews, observations, and participant journals. The use of multiple data sources allowed for an in-depth examination of the phenomenon and ensured that the findings were consistent and dependable. Second, member-checks occurred throughout the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe member checks as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). As such, interview transcripts and analyses were member-checked with each participant to assure that misinterpretations did not occur. The goal of this study was to capture students’ voices as they described their experiences with anxiety in the Arabic classroom. Hence, member-checking was an essential part of the process of co-constructing data with the participants. Third, to attain researcher-reflexivity, I explored my personal biases as I made classroom observations and wrote field notes. I also took reflective notes after interviews with participants. This reflexivity made me aware of my assumptions and biases, especially during the analysis process.
Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four focuses on a presentation of the data obtained from Phases 1 and 2 of the study. A discussion of the data will take place in Chapter Five. This chapter starts with (4.2) an overview of the Arabic class where the study took place and (4.3) a description of the textbook used for the course. Then, (4.4) quantitative data from phase one will be reported. Next, (4.5) the qualitative data from the second phase will be presented. An introduction to the five participants (3 FLLs and 2 HLLs) will be given followed by a presentation of the data as it pertains to four areas: (4.6) oral reading; (4.7) diacritical marks; (4.8) reading comprehension; and (4.9) speaking, writing, and listening activities related to reading.

4.2 Overview of Arabic 401 Class

The research setting of this study was an “Intermediate Literary Arabic Reading” course, also known as Arabic 401. This course is usually taken by students who are either majoring or minoring in Arabic. The following description of the course is given by the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department:

There is a clear need to enable students of Arabic to become more efficient readers in Arabic, particularly those who intend to pursue further studies at the 600 level and beyond, where they are required to read in the original texts of considerable length which belong to various periods. In order that students may
handle the increased amount of readings, they first must be helped to increase their reading speed, which has been shown to have a direct impact on comprehension. Other factors which contribute to reading efficiency, such as developed reading strategies, richness of vocabulary, and mastery of frequently used syntactic structures, need to be dealt with in a systematic manner. This course aims at developing students’ abilities to understand and analyze Arabic texts linguistically and stylistically.

The instructor of this course for the particular quarter in which this study took place was a soft-spoken lecturer, given the pseudonym Sam. An Arab native, Sam had been in the U.S. for about fifteen years, had completed his masters’ degree in Arabic at the university which served as the research site, and had been teaching undergraduate Arabic courses for several years. The course syllabus that Sam provided to his students on the first day of class listed the course objectives as the following:

- Initiating and sustaining communication in Modern Standard Arabic.
- Developing the four language skills of the language in different contexts.
- Developing skills in the art of oral discourse through weekly discussions.
- Increasing our knowledge of Arabic culture through authentic passages of various genres.

Although Arabic 401 is called, by title, an intermediate level reading course, the course objectives do not solely focus on reading. Students are expected to develop their Arabic skills not only in reading, but in speaking, listening, and writing as well, as all of these language skills are interconnected. Still, reading was a major component of the course. Regarding assessment of students’ performance, the following breakdown was given to them: class participation (15%); homework and journals (15%); quizzes and tests (15%); midterm exam (15%); presentation (10%); and final exam (30%).

Typically, each class session started with the instructor walking around the classroom from student to student and individually checking homework. He would check
for completion and answer any quick questions that some students may have had. Meanwhile, students would be working on a small group assignment or an individual assignment that Sam assigned at the beginning of class. Afterwards, the class would review the homework together as well as the short assignment that was given to them to complete. For the remainder of the two-hour class session, students would engage in a variety of reading activities and discussions, including reading aloud and lessons on grammatical concepts and topics.

In addition to some short writing that was required of students in homework exercises, students had to submit a weekly journal consisting of either a day-to-day description of their activities or several more in-depth writings on a topic of interest to the student. The goal of these journals was to give students ample practice in writing – putting their newly acquired vocabulary and grammatical concepts to use in Arabic. The instructor would read these weekly journals, correct students’ grammar mistakes, and return them.

At the beginning of the quarter, Sam conducted class in English, with some Arabic mixed in. He gradually increased his usage of Arabic, and by the third week of class, he was exclusively using Arabic. He even answered questions asked by students in English in Arabic; however, it is important to note that he did not prevent students from using English. He strongly encouraged the use of Arabic, but did not make students uncomfortable when they chose to use English.
4.3 Arabic 401 Textbook

The textbook used for the course is part two of a three part series entitled *Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-Arabiyya with DVDs* by Kristen Brustad, Abbas Al-Tonsi, and Mahmoud Al-Batal. The book is divided into ten chapters; however, only chapters four, five, and six were covered in this course. Each chapter covers a different topic and begins with an Arabic-English vocabulary list, followed by grammar mini-lessons (mostly in English) and drills. Authentic texts from a wide variety of genres (including stories, plays, articles, advertisements, and poems) are presented to students accompanied by various exercises. Although this textbook is used for a reading course and does contain many texts, reading is not the only objective. Hence, the authors write that the materials are structured around two axes: the raw material of vocabulary and grammar and the skills of reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

The first axis, centering on vocabulary and grammar, involves students not only memorizing the vocabulary lists given at the beginning of each lesson, but also listening to them on the DVDs and using different grammatical forms of them. Students are given plenty of practice with the new vocabulary with exercises for them to do both at home and in the classroom. Grammatical explanations and exercises are also presented to students focusing on the root and pattern system in Arabic as well as complex sentence structure. The former often requires students to do fill-in-the-blank exercises and fill in charts, while the latter usually involves translation exercises from Arabic to English.

The second axis focuses on the four language skills, with a special emphasis on reading. The authors inform students that there are two types of reading required in the
textbook: (1) intensive reading involving basic texts, where students internalize the vocabulary and learn about the relevant cultural background beforehand; and (2) reading comprehension, where students read texts that are slightly more difficult than the basic texts, pushing them to go beyond their linguistic ability and level. Similarly, each lesson contains two types of listening exercises: (1) close listening demanding a high degree of accuracy in understanding texts that the authors composed reviewing relevant vocabulary and grammatical concepts; and (2) listening comprehension, where students use the same skills and strategies for reading comprehension to listen and gain a “global” understanding of authentic texts. The only exclusive speaking activities that the textbook provides are exercises related to the encounters (shown on the DVDs) that a family has during a visit to Egypt. Each lesson includes some of the colloquial vocabulary and expressions that are used alongside several exercises where students can practice using them. As for writing, students are expected to write coherent paragraphs. As such, there are a number of open-ended questions throughout each lesson where students can practice writing short essays.

4.4 Phase One

Of the twenty-three enrolled students, twenty-two agreed to participate in the first phase of the study, which consisted of a background questionnaire, the FLCAS, and the FLRAS. The goal of this phase of the study was to gain insight into the levels of anxiety experienced by all students in the Arabic classroom as well as to select participants for the second phase. Table 4.1 displays the results; students’ final course grades were
obtained from the instructor with permission of the participants and are shown in the table as well. The first three students with asterisks are heritage language learners (HLLs), while the remaining nineteen are foreign language learners (FLLs).

Table 4.1: Summary of results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. years studied Arabic</th>
<th>Perceived reading ability</th>
<th>FLCAS Score</th>
<th>FLRAS Score</th>
<th>Final course grade</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Senior</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there is a full eleven year difference between the youngest student in the class (18 years) and the oldest (29 years), most of the students were in their early twenties – making the average age for the class 22 years. Over half of the students (~64%) were
seniors; the rest were freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, indicating that this intermediate class was taken at different times by students. The average number of years the FLLs had studied Arabic is 2.42, while the average for the three HLLs is 10.67 years, suggesting that the HLLs had a much more extensive background in the language than their FLL counterparts.

As for their scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS, the majority of the students received scores within the medium range on both (a description of how ranges for low, medium, and high scores were calculated is given in Chapter Five). Of the nineteen FLLs, three received low scores, three received high scores, and the remaining thirteen received medium scores (15.79%, 15.79%, and 68.42%, respectively). This indicates that although there were some students who were experiencing high and low anxiety, most students had medium anxiety levels, suggesting that anxiety did in fact have a prominent presence among students in this particular classroom and thus this class was an appropriate site for the study.

While all of the FLLs had studied Arabic for two to four years, their perceptions of their reading abilities varied greatly, ranging from two to eight (on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the best). Apparently, some believed their reading skills were better than others, but this perception does not seem to correlate with their anxiety scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS. For example, two students who rated themselves with the same score (a four out of ten) had widely varying scores of 80 and 48 on the FLRAS. Although it is difficult to detect a pattern between perceived reading ability and anxiety amongst the FLLs, it is much easier to see a correlation with the HLLs. All three gave themselves
a nine out of ten and all had low scores on the FLRAS. Thus, for the HLLs, self-
perceptions of having high Arabic reading skills translated to less anxiety.

Examining the data table, it is fairly easy to see that students’ final course grades
generally correlate negatively with their anxiety levels. In other words, the lower their
anxiety scores, the higher their grades. Two of the FLLs with low anxiety earned final
course grades of A, while the third earned an A-. The only other FLL earning an A in the
class was one with medium anxiety scores. Similarly, all three of the HLLs had low
scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS and also earned an A. Thus, six out of the seven
students who received an A in the course had low anxiety, suggesting a negative
correlation between anxiety level and overall achievement, supporting the findings of
other studies (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Saito and Samimy, 1996). In short,
students with low levels of anxiety tend to perform better than those with high levels of
anxiety.

4.5 Phase Two

Introduction

The purpose of the second phase of the study was to take an in-depth look at the
nature of the anxiety that was experienced by both FLLs and HLLs. As such, qualitative
data was collected from five students who agreed to participate in this part of the study:
three FLLs and two HLLs. Low, medium, and high score ranges for the FLCAS and
FLRAS were determined in a manner that will be further discussed in Chapter Five. One
FLL from each category was asked to participate in the second phase of the study. Hence,
a total of three FLLs with high anxiety (Lucas), medium anxiety (Eric), and low anxiety (Marie) partook in the qualitative data collection. Only three HLLs were enrolled in the course, and although all three participated in the first phase of the study, only two agreed to continue with the second phase: Adam and Jenna. A summary of the five participants is presented in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>No. years studied Arabic</th>
<th>Perceived reading ability</th>
<th>FLCAS Score</th>
<th>FLRAS Score</th>
<th>Final course grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>133</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
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<td>Marie</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Summary of five participants

Looking at Table 4.2, it is evident that the HLLs had studied Arabic for many more years than their FLL counterparts. They also received low scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS and earned an A as their final course grade. Their high achievement is not surprising given their extensive background in the language and the fact that this Arabic course is not specifically intended for HLLs (a course for HLLs might have different standards for achievement given their additional exposure to the language). Hence, the issues they dealt with as a minority in the classroom, including any anxious feelings they may have had, will be explored further in the coming sections.
The Participants

LUCAS

Lucas, a 20-year old junior at the university double majoring in Arabic and Russian, was a quiet, seemingly reserved young man, who was experiencing Arabic as a true foreign language. After completing the FLCAS and receiving the second highest score in the class (133) and a high score on the FLRAS (80), Lucas was asked if he would be interested in participating in the second phase of the study. He enthusiastically agreed and thus began the series of interviews, observations, and journal entries.

Lucas had a deep love for different languages and cultures growing up and studied both German and Spanish in high school. Though he did well in both the Romance languages, he believed that they were not challenging him enough. The summer after he graduated from high school, he decided to start learning Arabic. Why did he make such a decision? For several reasons, including: he wanted to learn a challenging language, and he believed that Arabic would present him with many good job opportunities upon graduation. He therefore bought materials on his own and started his learning journey the summer before he began college. As Lucas progressed through his Arabic coursework, the classes became more challenging for him. Though he wanted to quit Arabic at one point during this study, he decided to continue; however, during the study he felt that he would not be able to work in a job that exclusively relies on his knowledge of Arabic. The fact that he received a C- in this course made him realize that he may not be able to learn the language as well as he would have liked.
ERIC

Eric was a 25-year old senior majoring in Geography and minoring in Arabic. After completing the FLCAS and FLRAS and receiving scores within the medium range (100 and 60, respectively), Eric, a mature and articulate man, agreed to participate in the second phase of the study. Although Eric had already completed the coursework for a minor, he continued to take Arabic classes because he enjoyed them. Eric developed an interest in Arabic several years before when he was stationed in an Arabic-speaking country as part of the military. Although he only learned a little Arabic during his stay in Bahrain, he started taking courses at the university upon his return to the United States. Eric hoped to use his Arabic knowledge to find a good job, which he believed was most likely going to be a governmental position. His journey learning Arabic had been an enjoyable one, albeit not without struggles along the way. He found the language quite challenging and felt that the Arabic program could use some improvement, but put forth his best effort to learn the language as best as he could. His grade of a B in this course reflects his hard work and demonstrates that he had learned the material well, though he could certainly have done better.

MARIE

Marie was a 20-year old senior who, like Lucas and Eric, was learning Arabic as a true foreign language. After completing the FLCAS and FLRAS and receiving scores within the low-anxiety range (68 and 41, respectively), Marie came directly to me and informed me that she really wanted to participate in the second part of the study. Of
course, her enthusiasm was very welcomed and she was invited to partake in the qualitative phase. Marie, a very outgoing and talkative young lady, was very eager to share with me her Arabic language learning experiences. Upon entering college, she put behind her the two languages she learned in high school, French and Spanish, and picked what she thought were the two most difficult languages to learn: Arabic and Chinese. Not only did she have a love for different languages and cultures, but she also believed that these two languages were “in demand,” which would increase her chances of finding a good job. Like Lucas and Eric, her motivation to learn Arabic was mainly instrumental. Nevertheless, she truly enjoyed learning Arabic and believed that she had “a natural gift for languages” (Interview 1: 10/7/2009). While her experiences at the university had generally been positive, Marie felt that the courses were not challenging enough for her. Given that she felt that she was “a very motivated, very hard-working, very intense, focused person” (Interview 1: 10/7/2009), her grade of an A for the course was not surprising.

ADAM

Adam, an 18-year old freshman, was double majoring in Biology and Arabic. Although the two majors are seemingly distant from each other, he selected them for well-thought out reasons: biology because he was planning on a career in medicine and Arabic because he wanted to continue learning his heritage language – hence his motivation was personal rather than instrumental in nature. Adam’s family originated from Syria; however, he was born and raised in the United States. Given that he rarely
had the opportunity to visit Syria, his parents made every effort to teach him Arabic while
growing up. For several years he went to a weekend Arabic school – until it was shut
down. Then, he went to private tutors that taught him reading and writing several times a
week. Whatever the source, his parents were adamant about teaching him his heritage
language. Now, as a college student, Adam wanted to continue his Arabic studies and felt
that there was still a lot out there for him to learn. He earned an A in this particular
course, his first Arabic class at the university, which was not surprising given his 10-year
experience with the language. Although he received low scores on the FLCAS and
FLRAS, 61 and 42, respectively, he dealt with issues that caused him anxiety at times –
all of which will be further discussed.

JENNA

Jenna, the second heritage language learner, was a 22-year old double majoring in
Psychology and Arabic with 12 years of experience learning the language. Like Adam,
she too received low scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS (43 and 25, respectively), as well
as an A for the course. As in Adam’s case, these scores were not surprising given her
background with the language. However, despite the fact that she emigrated to the U.S.
from Algeria at the age of ten and had a good foundational knowledge of Arabic, she felt
that she still needed to learn her heritage language, as it was a very important part of who
she was as a person. Thus, her motivation with respect to learning the language was
personal rather than instrumental. Like Adam, she too dealt with issues that made her
uncomfortable and anxious in class, and these aspects of her experience will be discussed in the coming sections.

**Sources of Data**

Qualitative data was collected from all five of the participants via three sources: classroom observations, interviews, and participant journals. Students were observed during classroom sessions, twice a week throughout the duration of the course; they were interviewed three times during weeks three, six, and nine of the quarter; and they wrote personal journals detailing their thoughts and feelings after each class session. A presentation of the data from all three of these sources will follow; however, a thorough analysis and discussion will not take place until Chapter Five. As noted earlier, the data detailing the nature of participants’ anxiety will be presented as it pertains to the three reading areas that were examined: (1) oral reading; (2) diacritical marks; (3) reading comprehension; it will also be presented in the connected areas of listening, speaking, and writing.

**4.6 Oral Reading**

Reading aloud in a foreign language in front of a teacher and twenty-two students is not an easy task. It involves displaying one’s reading skills for all others to see, and this is bound to create some anxiety in students, albeit more so in some than in others. Oral reading is a common practice in Arabic language classrooms (Larkin, 1995). It is a valued skill in the Arab world and many teachers, especially native speakers, require their
students to engage often in oral reading. In this particular course, an intermediate Arabic reading course, oral reading was a very important part of the classroom. Students were required to read aloud during almost every class session. As such, the anxiety that students experienced in relation to oral reading was explored.

During the first week of class, students were given the FLRAS and were asked about how comfortable they felt when reading aloud. Number 17 stated: “I don’t mind reading to myself, but I feel very uncomfortable when I have to read Arabic aloud.” This statement reflected a commonly held attitude among the students. As for the participants in the second phase of the study, the responses of the three FLLs and two HLLs are shown in Table 4.3. A score of 5 indicates students strongly agree with the statement, while a score of 1 indicates that they strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lucas</th>
<th>Eric</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Jenna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Results of number 17 on FLRAS

**LUCAS**

Lucas, a highly anxious student, selected a score of 5 to describe his great discomfort when reading aloud. He further reiterated his anxiety during this activity in the first interview:
I have to say in-class reading is more difficult and more nerve wracking than when reading on my own. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009).

In his journals, Lucas wrote more about his feelings regarding reading aloud:

There wasn’t much reading in class today and I was glad. It takes a lot of pressure off during class knowing that I’ll only have to read a sentence or two instead of an entire paragraph. It also helped me relax because I was sitting next to a heritage speaker. His reading is clearly better than the other students in the class as well as his comprehension. And whenever I don’t read well in class I feel as if I’m letting the professor down. I don’t want to come off as if I have not prepared for class or haven’t studied. I feel pressure to appear as though I am trying and learning and making progress. Sometimes when I’m nervous before I read, I forget a lot of the basic things that we’ve learned. I get so focused on trying to sound fluent that I forget to pronounce letters properly. And I find myself reading quickly, just to get through the read as fast as possible. Reading too quickly means that I will make more mistakes which will only make me more nervous. I often don’t volunteer for reading, even if I feel confident about reading. I often hope that we run out of time before I get called on to read. (Journal: 10/6/2009)

The anxiety that Lucas felt while reading aloud was quite apparent while observing him during class. He would often tap his feet and twirl his short curly hair throughout the reading. When he was a little more confident and less nervous, his demeanor would change and the tapping and twirling would decrease, and at times disappear altogether.

Lucas’s level of anxiety while reading aloud seemed to correspond with how well he felt he prepared the day’s material. If he felt he prepared well, his confidence and perception of his abilities increased, and in turn, he felt less anxious while reading. He described this in the journal entry below:

Today in class I was not very stressed out about reading. I had read the passage before and understood what it was saying. There was plenty of time to figure out the case endings and vowelization. While most people were focusing on what the text was saying, I was reading to myself to make sure I could pronounce things fluently. When other people read out loud, I always analyze what it is they’re doing. I try to remember the mistakes they made so that I do not make the same
ones. Knowing that other people struggle with reading as much as I do takes some of the pressure off, but it seems as if there are few people that really worry about their reading skills. If anyone else is nervous about reading, I don’t notice. It feels as if I am the only one who gets nervous. When it is my turn to read, I try not to panic and try to remember to read slowly and carefully. I only stutter once or twice and then move on. When I get to numbers in the text, my mind goes blank for a while. I read through the numbers, unsure of the proper order for the last two digits. After I finish reading, I realize I read the numbers in the wrong order. Sometimes, I get my languages mixed up and I will switch the grammar rules accidentally. I often compare languages to find similarities to help me remember certain rules. But when I read, I get so nervous sometimes that I will forget completely. (Journal: 10/8/2009)

Although Lucas still felt nervous while reading aloud, despite the fact that he had prepared for class in advance, his nervousness and level of anxiety was considerably less than they were on days when he had not prepared at all. On days such as the one described below, he felt like a mess. He was so lost that he could not even follow along while his classmates were reading:

I hadn’t prepared for class today. Normally on the syllabus there is a section for assigned reading, and normally I look over the reading section at least once. But I just didn’t have the time or the motivation. In class the reading was nerve-wracking. I was unsure of myself and what I was reading. I hadn’t really understood anything the professor had said before we began reading. I was having trouble getting into the proper mindset for Arabic. I felt very behind in the class, and it seemed as if I had forgotten a lot of things I had previously learned. I was very distracted before it was my turn to read. I couldn’t find where we were in the text. I spent a good amount of time trying to catch up to whoever was reading. Once I caught up, I tried to focus on understanding pieces of the texts, but everything seemed very unfamiliar. When it was my turn to read, I stuttered and stopped frequently. I tried to slow myself down and concentrate, but I just could not focus. So I struggled through the reading. Afterwards, I felt a little stupid. The reading was not extremely advanced. I should have been able to read it with relative ease. But I did notice that most everyone in the class seemed to be struggling as well. Everyone just seemed very unsure of themselves and we all ended up guessing instead of thinking about what we were doing. I made corrections in my book, but I still didn’t seem to understand what I was reading. And reading out loud just seemed to make it worse. (Journal: 10/15/2009)
Despite being very nervous on this particular day, Lucas did make note of other students’ struggles with reading. Previously, Lucas had thought that he was the only person in the classroom who struggled with oral reading. He did not notice others being nervous, which only made him feel more unsure of himself and his abilities. In the journal entry above, Lucas seems to be realizing that he was not the only one who had difficulties with reading – others in the class dealt with the same issues. As the course progressed, he continued to become more aware of his classmates’ struggles, and this seems to have helped him feel more at ease when his personal struggles were put out for everyone to see and potentially criticize:

There was a second round of reading that was much longer than the previous reading. And this time, many people make mistakes. I’ve noticed it lightens the mood when someone jokes about their mistakes. It seems that everyone felt very unsure of themselves, but we realize that we are all going through the same struggles. When it is my turn to read, I’m not as nervous as I was for the previous reading. Once I begin reading, I focus on the sentence structure and what position each word is in. I read slowly, but it is smooth, and I make very few mistakes. The more I read the more confident I felt as I continued. I finished reading the sentence faster than when I began. I felt a little guilty that I read more smoothly than some people in the class, but I was happy that I did so well this time. (Journal: 10/22/2009)

Mid-way through the quarter, Lucas was asked during an interview about whether his comfort level with reading aloud had changed. Although he indicated that it had improved a little, it was still apparent that reading aloud caused him considerable anxiety:

I think it has gotten a little bit better. I have my bad days where I just don’t seem to know what’s going on and it seems like I forget everything, but for the most part I think it’s gotten a little better. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)
Reading aloud seemed to cause Lucas even more anxiety than taking the midterm exam. As long as he knew that he was not going to be required to participate in oral reading, he felt comfortable and at ease. In the comments below, Lucas shows that it was not reading in Arabic that bothered him; it was only the act of reading aloud that caused him great anxiety. When reading was a private act done without the possible judgment of others, he was more comfortable, as described in the journal entry:

There was no reading in class today, due to the mid-term examination. There was however a reading section on the test. We were required to read the text, comprehend it, and then answer questions according to what we had read. I wasn’t nervous while I had to read the text because I knew I wouldn’t be reading it out loud. I was able to take my time and really understand what I was reading. The text was not very difficult. There were only a few words or phrases I did not recognize. Journal (10/28/2009)

Lucas seemed to be a lot less anxious and more comfortable during class in the latter part of the course. By observing him, it was apparent that his demeanor was more relaxed. Whereas in the beginning it appeared that Lucas was always sitting on the edge of his seat, both literally and figuratively, towards the end Lucas seemed more engaged and at ease. He even laughed with the class at others’ mistakes and on one occasion laughed at himself for accidentally pronouncing the word “Asia” the way it is pronounced in English instead of Arabic (Observation: 11/12/2009). Lucas’s realization that other students make mistakes, too, seemed to give him the confidence he needed to believe in his abilities, thus making him feel less anxious. He described these feelings in the following journal entries:

Overall, I have noticed that I haven’t been getting as nervous as I used to. I’ve gained a little bit more confidence in my own ability. And I’ve also come to
realize that many of my classmates are in the same position as me. We all seem to have trouble and we all have our bad days. (Journal: 11/3/2009)

The overall atmosphere of the class was very carefree and light. There didn’t seem to be any pressure on anyone to read or at least not to read perfectly. When everyone else feels no pressure, the reading seems to be a little bit easier. I don’t know why this happens but it helps the class go by faster and I enjoy it more when the atmosphere is more pressure free. (Journal: 11/5/2009)

So when it came time to read out loud, I read pretty fluently and with only one or two mistakes. I was very proud and confident that I had finally been able to read with some fluency and with some actual near-native speed. I actually was wishing that I could have read a little more than I did. Practicing at home is not necessarily the same as reading in front of people. There is no one to correct my mistakes and I don’t get the same anxiety when I read alone. (Journal: 11/12/2009)

I have noticed that I have less anxiety when it comes to reading than before. Most of my attention is usually turned toward understanding what the professor is saying. I think now that I’ve been focusing on how I feel about reading, I’ve taken the time to stop and think about what it is I need to work on. It has become less of a chore and more of something that I enjoy doing. I’ve become more fluent in my reading, whether it be out loud or to myself. Overall, my confidence in my reading abilities has improved and I believe my actual abilities have improved. But I know that I still have a long way to go before I become proficient. (Journal: 11/17/2009)

At the end of the course, Lucas became much less anxious about reading aloud. He attributed some of this to the fact that he was asked to reflect on his feelings about reading, which allowed him to analyze his strengths and weaknesses and what he needed to work on. His realization that he was not alone in struggling with oral reading and the apparently increased comfort level among the students in the class also proved useful. Ultimately, oral reading became an activity that he learned to enjoy instead of dread. During the last interview, upon the conclusion of the course, Lucas further described his
growth and the positive changes that took place over the course of the quarter in regards to reading aloud:

Since the beginning of the quarter, my anxiety has gone down in terms of reading, specifically reading out loud. Focusing on reading has forced me to take a look at what it is that I do wrong and that allowed me to correct these mistakes. Reading out loud in class is still my least favorite thing to do, but it has become much less of a chore for me. Instead it is now something that I focus on making better and easier. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

It is evident that although oral reading still made Lucas anxious, his outlook on the activity changed throughout the quarter. The fact that he was asked to reflect on reading as part of this study gave him the opportunity to focus on his feelings, allowing him to work on his weaknesses.

*ERIC*

Eric, a student with medium levels of anxiety, selected a score of 4 in response to question 17 on the FLRAS, indicating that he too felt uncomfortable when reading aloud in Arabic class. He described how he felt during our first interview:

Everyone is really nervous when you first start reading because you don’t know how good everyone else is. So if you figure out that you’re better than everyone else, you’re less nervous about it. I would be nervous if I knew I was in the bottom. I’m not saying that I’m the best reader in class, but I know that I don’t struggle as much as other people do. And I know that other people get really nervous. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)
Based on Eric’s interviews and journal entries, the anxiety he experienced seemed to be closely related to how well-prepared he felt. When asked to describe his worst experiences learning Arabic, he responded with the following comments:

When I’m not prepared, I’m pretty nervous. You get over it, and it’s not nearly as bad as you think it’s going to be, but definitely the anxiety of not being prepared is the worst. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

To avoid feeling very anxious while reading aloud, Eric prepared in advance for the day’s reading material. He did this by listening to the DVD that accompanies the text book as well as by learning the vocabulary beforehand. All of this preparation gave him confidence in his abilities and prevented him from feeling very anxious while reading aloud in class:

We read from a passage entitled “The Death of Tawfiq Al-Hakim” where the passage was divided into paragraphs for groups to read aloud to the rest of the class. The out loud reading was better than usual because students felt more comfortable with the passage because they were given time to prepare as well as because the text is read aloud on the book’s DVD. Therefore, I think that the reading passages that work for the class best are the ones that students can listen to on the DVD prior to coming to class; however, some students disregard listening to the DVD and I think those are the students who are most nervous about reading in class. (Journal: 10/20/2009)

On occasion, like the one described in the journal entry below, Eric was unable to prepare for class, and this certainly made him feel more anxious while reading aloud:

Today’s class was all in-class reading. The passage was about (yet another) Arabic literary character named “Deezee Al-Ameer” and her works and life. My reading anxiety today went up because I did not know the vocabulary and I could not listen to the passage on DVD before class. (Journal: 10/22/2009)
Even some in-class preparation before students were asked to read aloud seemed to alleviate Eric’s anxiety:

It was extremely helpful to break the reading into different sections and tell the groups which section(s) they would be responsible for – this definitely reduced any anxiety a group member might have had when it was their time to read because they had ample time to prepare for the read aloud. (Journal: 10/8/2009)

As the course progressed, Eric felt more comfortable reading aloud. He became more familiar with the material and better acquainted with his classmates, and this helped reduce his anxiety, as was the case with Lucas. He grew to care less about what others thought of him or how they judged him, which put him at ease while reading in front of others:

Today’s class was mostly in-class reading. The class knew which passages they would be reading aloud so I suspected people were less nervous about it. I am becoming more comfortable with in-class reading as we do more, so right now I am about a 7/10 (comfort level). I think this is a result of more in-class reading and becoming more comfortable with other people listening to me read – I think other people are feeling this as well. Thus, as the class becomes more at ease with each other, students are less nervous about reading aloud and those listening care less about how much better (or worse) their fellow students can read. (Journal: 10/27/2009)

Eric also attributed his increased comfort during oral reading to the classroom atmosphere, largely created by the teacher. He described the enjoyable, relaxed environment that helped make him feel more comfortable during an interview:

I’m definitely feeling more comfortable. It’s totally relaxed, which I think the teacher is really good at it – facilitating a relaxed atmosphere. He doesn’t judge like some professors do and make you nervous to speak. But I notice the class has a more fun atmosphere. People are not afraid to laugh. That has definitely affected me. I’m right there with the rest of the class, just enjoying it – not really fearing
having to read out loud because I know it’s not going to be as bad as I think. The teacher will jump in and help you out when you’re having trouble, so that’s a major help. If it was just like you reading and it was quiet and you can feel the judgment going on, it would be a different story. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Near the end of the course, when Eric was asked whether his anxiety about reading aloud had changed over the course, he gave a very insightful answer:

That’s an interesting question because anxiety is often a result of the context in which you are learning. I can say of course that I am less nervous about reading aloud in my present class than I was in the beginning; however, I cannot say that I will not be equally as nervous in the next level after this. In this light, for every class people will start out as shy readers, then after things loosen up, they will become more comfortable – but then the class is over and the process starts over again. However as far as my overall skill level, I feel I have progressed as a better reader, but given that the next class will most likely be a 600 level class and have more advanced speakers, I will most likely become more nervous than I was starting out in 401. Again, this is only because in the 600-level classes students are very serious about learning the language, whereas in the present 401 class many people are just completing their minor so they are not that serious and they seem less judgmental to those who are nervous. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

Eric seemed to be very aware of his feelings and the context in which they took place. He knew that the more familiar he, and others, were with the material and the learning environment, the more comfortable and less anxious they would feel. He also makes reference to the judgment of others, suggesting that what other people in the classroom thought played an important part in how anxious he felt.

**MARIE**

Marie, a student with low anxiety, selected a score of 3 to describe her level of comfort while reading aloud. This score, right in the middle, on the scale of 1 to 5,
reflected that although she received overall low scores on both the FLCAS and FLRAS (68 and 41, respectively), she still experienced some anxiety when it came to reading aloud in class. This shows, as in the cases of Lucas and Eric, that reading aloud is an important component of foreign language reading that can impact on students’ anxiety. During our first interview, she explained to me her feelings about oral reading and why she selected a score in the middle:

I actually really, really, really like reading out loud. I love hearing that and I want to be able to read it flowingly because Arabic is so beautiful. And I’m not very good, so sometimes it’s embarrassing if you’re reading out loud and you have an audience and you mess up, but I’m okay with that. That’s a part of learning, so yeah, it’s embarrassing, but that doesn’t make me not want to read in the future. It motivates me, and hearing other people read better than me really motivates me. I wish I can read as well as them. So, I really enjoy the chance to read out loud when I’m in class, because it’s actually one of the only chances that I get to read out loud. When I’m doing my homework, I’m so busy. I should, but I don’t stop and practice reading it out loud to myself. I really should, but when you’ve got one hour to finish your homework, you don’t have time to practice out loud. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Although Marie loved reading aloud and was a very motivated learner, she still had some anxiety when “messing up” in front of her classmates. Nevertheless, she realized that making mistakes is a normal and expected part of learning a language. This realization and awareness seemed to help her deal with any anxiety that she may have had:

We worked on “place nouns” in class today. I studied those this summer in Syria, so I felt pretty comfortable going over them and reading in class. I was actually really eager to read because I know I need to practice reading out loud in order to get better. I was kind of hoping I wouldn’t make any mistakes, because no one likes to do that, but I wasn’t nervous or worried. I was also excited at the chance to try and read and say out loud all the case endings (which weren’t written into the text, so I had to use my knowledge of grammar and guess). I felt envious when some of the other students read out loud, because I wanted to be as good as
them, and I felt scornful, though I tried not to, at some of the other students who read out loud because they did so poorly. (Journal: 10/6/2009)

An interesting point here is how much Marie paid attention to and reacted to her classmates’ performances while reading aloud. Her envy of those who read well suggests a kind of competitive attitude she may have enjoyed and even benefited from, while her scorn toward those who read poorly reflects a judgmental attitude she regretted. Thus, reading aloud helped shed light on Marie as a language learner.

While Marie started the course very enthusiastic and fairly confident in her abilities, about a month later, during the second interview, she indicated to me that her confidence level dropped shortly after our first interview when she realized that she needed to practice more:

I think I’m getting more confident, at least in reading and comprehension just because I’m getting more practice. I was already pretty confident before. I would say I’m a little more confident…maybe not a whole lot better, but some better. In a way, when I interviewed with you, I had a little confidence drop and then it picked back up again because I thought I was better than I actually was. And then a couple weeks into it, reading more, I realized that I needed to practice more. So I did and I got a little bit better. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Marie described one such occasion where she experienced some nervousness while reading aloud in class. Although she had skimmed the reading for that particular day before coming to class, she did not spend too much time on it. This made her feel a little unprepared, and thus caused her some anxiety. Despite feeling a little anxious and embarrassed at times, she did not worry much about it. Instead, she felt that she needed to work a little harder in order to improve. Simply put, it motivated her to do better:
This Thursday, our main exercise in class was reading a passage that we had read beforehand as homework. We also had to answer questions about it for our homework. The passage was about a conference that was being held to discuss the topic of the history of the Arabian Peninsula during the Omayyad period. It was in the usual, small Arabic script, and it covered a page, so it was a good length. I was kind of nervous reading this time, mostly because the teacher started on it rather suddenly and picked me to read first, so I was slightly unprepared mentally to begin. I guess, usually, when I know I’m going to read I look over what I think I’ll probably have to read and read it aloud to myself a few times, and think over what the case endings should be, so I don’t make as many mistakes in class. I had already read it beforehand for homework, but I was just skimming it for understanding; I didn’t have time to practice reading it out-loud. I guess it is similar in English in that when you skim a reading, you aren’t saying the words aloud in your head. When I try to read Arabic fast, I just try to recognize the general “shape” of a word. But if I want to understand the text well, I will go slowly and read it aloud in my head. I read the first few lines pretty well, though there were some words I didn’t know (and so didn’t know how to vowel, since the vowels weren’t written in the text). The teacher had to correct my guesses. Then he asked me to translate it into English, and I had to ask the meanings of some words, which was embarrassing but not a big deal. I wish I had known them, but I know the point of the reading isn’t so that you could understand every single word. So I wasn’t too worried. I felt a little jealous of some of the other students who got really easy passages to read (all very easy, familiar words that we learned in, like, 101), since they didn’t make any mistakes, but I was glad I got a hard part because I like challenges and I don’t like things being easy (because then it’s no fun!). (Journal: 10/8/2009)

As this journal entry suggests, Marie’s motivation and desire to challenge herself drove her to practice more. She also seemed to be motivated by a competitive spirit, as she once again acknowledged a feeling of envy toward classmates who read well in class and expressed a sense of unfairness about them being assigned easier passages to read. At the same time, she expressed appreciation for the opportunity this gave her to challenge herself to do better. In short, reading aloud seemed to have a strong motivational aspect for Marie. For instance, in addition to practicing at home, she would practice reading
quietly to herself while others in class took turns reading. She described this process in
the following journal entry:

Near the end of class, we started taking turns reading another passage, but we ran
out of time so I didn’t get to read. I felt as I usually did, relieved and annoyed
both at once because I wanted to get the chance to read, but I knew that I would
make mistakes (since I’m not perfect) and I didn’t want to look bad in front of the
class. Usually, though, when other people are reading, I’ll read the passage “out-
 loud” to myself and try to read it a tiny bit faster than them so I can practice the
pronunciation and then listen to them and see if I was right (or if they were
wrong!). It gives me a chance to practice reading even if I don’t get called on.
(Journal: 10/20/2009)

Here, again, it is evident that reading aloud tapped into Marie’s competitive spirit. She
wanted to be among the best readers in the class. She was therefore motivated to read to
herself while others were reading. In this way she was able to practice even if she did not
have the opportunity to read in front of others.

ADAM

Adam, a HLL with low anxiety, selected a 3 in response to question 17 on the
FLRAS. Although he felt fairly confident in his reading abilities and enjoyed reading
aloud, he set standards for himself that were very high. Being a HLL with a background
much more in-depth than most of his classmates, Adam believed that his oral reading
should be near perfect. His reading was in fact excellent and seemed much better than his
classmates, which gave him more confidence and not much anxiety about oral reading.
Nevertheless, he did experience some nervousness while reading aloud, largely due to his
high standards and his desires not to disappoint himself, his teacher, and his classmates:
I like reading aloud. I enjoy it a lot. I get a chance to show the teacher and others in the class what I know. But I hate making mistakes, because I shouldn’t be making mistakes. I’m a native speaker. And almost everybody in the class isn’t. So naturally I should be reading better because I’ve had so much practice. So, when I make a mistake I feel disappointed in myself. I feel like I disappoint the teacher too. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Adam’s reference to himself as a native speaker of Arabic and the expectations this created for him relative to his classmates is an interesting reflection on the heritage language aspect of foreign language reading. His concern about disappointing the teacher is also noteworthy, as it suggests that teachers may have higher expectations for HLLs. In order to avoid such disappointments and reduce the number of mistakes that he could potentially make while reading aloud, Adam would practice the text he knew he would be reading during class right before it was actually his turn. During an interview, when asked if he practiced reading aloud at home, he described why he did not feel the need to do so:

I don’t think that I need to practice reading at home. I’m already pretty good at it. My other classes are much more difficult than my Arabic class, so when I have time, I usually study for those. The only time I prepare for reading out-loud in Arabic is during class when other kids are reading. I usually know what paragraph or sentences I am going to read because the order is usually predictable. So I just look ahead and read it a few times in my head so that I don’t make any mistakes. And, usually, I don’t. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Sometimes Adam did make mistakes while reading aloud. It was during those times that he felt a little uncomfortable, and his discomfort was obvious to me as an observer. On one occasion, while reading aloud, Adam mispronounced a passive verb that was unvowelized. The teacher gently corrected him; Adam then glanced at the class and let
out a little, nervous laugh (Observation: 10/20/2009). When asked about this incident during the second interview, Adam said that he “felt stupid making that mistake,” and he should have known how to pronounce the word correctly (Interview 2: 11/4/2009). This comment is another example of how the status of a HLL generates higher expectations for performance than may be the case for FLLs. Aside from a few mistakes that made Adam feel a little nervous, he felt quite comfortable while reading aloud the majority of the time. He was confident in his reading abilities and had the perception that he was better at reading than most of his classmates. This often caused him great boredom during class, particularly when others were struggling while reading aloud. He described his feelings in the following journal entry:

Today we did a lot of in-class reading. It felt like it was forever until it was my turn. I was bored to death. Sometimes I feel sorry for others in class because they struggle so much, but sometimes I also feel sorry for myself. I have to sit and listen to my classmates read what I already know how to read. Can this class get any more boring? (Journal: 10/13/2009)

Adam’s boredom during class was very apparent during my observations. He always sat in the very back of the classroom. While students were reading aloud, he was usually playing with his phone. When it was almost his turn to read, he would quickly find where the last person was reading and pick up the place as if he had been following along the entire time (Observations: 10/13/2009; 10/20/2009). On one occasion, Adam even fell asleep while others were reading aloud. A classmate, sitting next to him, gave him a little nudge and woke him up as his turn to read aloud neared (Observation: 10/15/2009). Thus, it is clear that Adam experienced reading aloud differently than the FLLs in the class.
JENNA

Jenna, another HLL in the class, also with low anxiety scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS, selected a score of 3 to describe her comfort level while reading aloud – indicating that she did experience some anxiety. However, from observing Jenna during class, it seemed that she was very comfortable during oral reading. Whenever it was her turn to read, she sped through the reading. In fact, she would read so fast that the teacher often asked her to slow down (Observations: 10/8/2009; 10/20/2009). Jenna would attempt to slow down a bit, but she still read much faster than her classmates. Her confidence in her reading abilities was obvious – why then did she select a 3 to question 17 on the FLRAS? When presented with this question during an interview, she responded with the following comments:

I love reading in Arabic. I do lots of reading for leisure. I read books, newspapers, and websites online. It makes me feel connected to my heritage and it gives me more practice. But of course, I read everything to myself. I never really read out loud – unless I’m reading the Quran. I like to read that out loud because it makes me feel more connected to the words. It makes me feel more spiritual. So sometimes when I have to read aloud in class, I get a little nervous because everybody is listening to me. They know I’m a native speaker and I feel like they think that I shouldn’t be making any mistakes. I feel a little more pressure because more is expected from me – especially from my classmates. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Like Adam, Jenna’s status as a HLL had an impact on her thoughts about herself reading aloud in class, though in her case the focus was on what others expected of her rather than what she expected of herself. Despite the fact that Jenna enjoyed reading in Arabic a great deal and did it often on her own time, and she acknowledged herself as a native speaker of the language, she still felt some anxiety when she had to read in front of
her teacher and peers. The way she manifested this anxiety was with reading quickly. She described this in the following journal entry:

Reflecting about reading in Arabic has made me think about the way I read in class. Today the teacher asked me to slow down twice when I was reading. I tried to slow down the first time and I thought I was reading slower, but then he asked me to slow down again. I tried to slow down even more. I guess I was reading too fast for others to follow along. Maybe I was reading so fast because I was a little nervous. I shouldn’t be nervous because I think my reading skills are excellent. But sometimes I can’t help it. My heart skips a beat because I feel like I have to be perfect. Everybody knows that I’m a native speaker and I have to live up to that expectation. (Journal 10/20/2009)

Being one of three HLLs in the class, Jenna felt like the standards were much higher for her than for the FLLs in the classroom, and this seems to have strongly affected her. Although these expectations were never explicitly stated, Jenna had the perception that the teacher and other students expected perfection from her. She even expected herself to help out her peers with any questions they had. Many times, I observed Jenna talking to a friend of hers, who almost always sat next to her. During an interview, I asked her what it was that she talked about with “Julie”. She gave me the following response:

Julie is my friend. We’ve known each other for two years now and sometimes she has questions about the way to pronounce things. She asks me and I feel like I need to help her out. So I try to teach her how to say the words. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. When somebody asks me something, especially since I’m a native speaker, I have to help them as much as I can. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Once again, Jenna’s status as a HLL influenced her attitudes toward reading in particular and learning Arabic in general. In this case, she draws attention to a role she can perform as an informant due to her extensive background in the language. While Jenna helped her
friend Julie often during oral reading, she also talked to her about topics unrelated to class. Since I usually sat directly behind Jenna and her friend while observing the class, I overheard the two often chatting about topics such as a culture club, food, and even parties (10/20/2009; 11/3/2009; 11/12/2009). On one occasion the talking got a little out of hand, at which point the teacher addressed the problem by asking her: “Jenna, this is too boring for you. Why did you take this class?” She responded, “Because I have to, it’s my major.” (Observation: 11/3/2009).

The chatting that Jenna often engaged in was usually a reflection of her boredom, which was, in turn, a reflection of her heritage learner background. It was an outlet for her, especially when her classmates were reading slowly. Although she did not specifically address her excessive talking, she did describe the boredom she felt when the class went at a much slower pace than her in the following journal entry:

I got so bored in class today. We were reading about Tawfiq Al-Hakim and I had already read the entire text with no difficulties. Many of the students in class struggled with the reading. I hate to see them struggle—it’s unfair that they have to struggle while I don’t. I feel a lot of empathy for them. (Journal: 10/20/2009)

Jenna clearly felt sympathy for her struggling classmates and believed it was unfair that conditions were so difficult for them and much easier for her. Her comments reveal that, as a HLL who had studied Arabic for 12 years, she had a clear advantage over the FLLs in the class. She was aware of this fact and hence felt the need to help them out as much as she could.
Summary of Findings about Oral Reading

Table 4.4 summarizes the main findings for the five participants with respect to reading aloud, which was clearly an activity that affected the participants strongly in one way or another, particularly in the context of their status as FLLs or HLLs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Level of Anxiety</th>
<th>Nature of Anxiety</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Lucas  | FLL with high anxiety | • Experienced great anxiety while reading aloud  
• Made him forget things he already knew  
• Perceived others having better reading skills than himself  
• Expected himself to read with native-like fluency with few mistakes  
• Felt pressured to read perfectly  
• Advanced preparation made him feel more at ease, yet still nervous  
• At times, felt unmotivated/overwhelmed to prepare at home  
• Felt more comfortable and confident as course progressed |
| Eric   | FLL with medium anxiety | • Experienced some anxiety while reading aloud; mostly when unprepared  
• Aware that reading Arabic is a struggle for all, including natives  
• Expected himself to make some mistakes  
• Thorough preparation was a must for him not to feel nervous  
• Felt that teacher’s nonjudgmental attitude was conducive to a relaxed classroom atmosphere – making him feel comfortable making errors  
• Felt more at ease as course progressed |
| Marie  | FLL with low anxiety | • Experienced little anxiety while reading aloud  
• Enjoyed reading aloud; it gave her a chance to practice and improve  
• At times, she felt envious of others better than her  
• Aware that making mistakes is a normal part of language learning; not afraid to make them  
• Felt more comfortable with advanced preparation, but did not do a great deal of work at home  
• Practiced reading to herself during class |
| Adam   | HLL with low anxiety | • Experienced little anxiety while reading aloud, usually when making mistakes  
• Believed that he should not be making mistakes as a “native speaker”  
• Rarely prepared reading material outside of class due to time constraints  
• and feeling that it was not necessary  
• Prepared material during class  
• Felt bored and unchallenged often during oral readings due to slower pace of others |
| Jenna  | HLL with low anxiety | • Experienced little anxiety while reading aloud, mostly when making mistakes  
• Believed that she should not be making mistakes as a “native speaker”  
• Felt that both teacher and classmates expected her to read perfectly  
• Did some preparation outside of class and lots of leisure reading  
• Felt bored often during oral readings and talked and/or helped classmates as she felt great empathy for them |

Table 4.4: Summary of nature of anxiety related to **Oral Reading**
4.7 Diacritical Marks

The text used for the course was unvowelized, meaning it did not have diacritical marks, which include (a) “a set of three short vowels that are used above and below letters to indicate correct pronunciation and grammatical categories, and (b) two additional orthographic signs: sukun to indicate the absence of a vowel, as well as shaddah to indicate consonantal germination” (Khaldieh, 2001, p. 419). The diacritical mark on the last letter of each word in Arabic indicates the inflection case or conjugation mood – often referred to as case endings.

Around the second week of class, the teacher told the students that he wanted them to start placing the case endings on all words. Furthermore, he wanted students to start reading aloud with the appropriate case endings in place. In order for students to place the correct case ending, they must know the grammatical category of each word in the sentence – a skill that is certainly not an easy one, even for native speakers.

LUCAS

For Lucas, a highly anxious FLL, diacritical marks played an important role in the way he felt about oral reading. While reading aloud in general caused Lucas great anxiety, texts with vowel markers gave him an added sense of security, thus making him feel more comfortable and lowering his anxiety. The absence of diacritical marks made him feel quite anxious. He discussed this in our first interview:

I think everyone has issues with vowel markers, specifically in Arabic. Of course, you don’t know how to pronounce a word properly unless it has vowel markers. So it’s nerve-wracking when the teacher says open your books to page whatever
and read. On the other hand, if the vowel markers are there, I feel more fluent in my reading because I know what’s coming. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Placing case endings on words was not an easy task for Lucas – it required a lot of grammatical knowledge that he sometimes felt he lacked. Given that the material for this course was more advanced than what he was used to, he had an especially hard time at the beginning of the course getting acquainted with different sentence structures and learning new grammatical concepts. His lack of grammatical proficiency translated to a difficult time placing case endings on words. He expressed his feelings in the following journal entry:

The texts we have in this class are intermediate to advanced. It takes a little time to get used to the new sentence structure. So right now, it’s a little difficult for me to figure out the correct case endings for each word. If I do it in advance where I have a little more time to think about things, it’s a little easier – but it’s still hard. I have no way of knowing if I’m right or wrong until I come to class and read aloud. (Journal: 10/15/2009)

Since placing case endings was in fact a difficult task for Lucas, he often lacked the motivation to do it at home in preparation for class, because he felt like he would be doing them incorrectly and so there was no point in trying. This lack of motivation, and thus lack of preparation, often led him to attempt marking the case endings in class. At times, he did this while others were reading aloud and at other times he did it with some help from the textbook DVD, which the teacher often played at the beginning of a class session:

When it was my turn, I had to take a moment to figure out where we were in the text. I had been so focused on how to do the case endings, I had forgotten to follow along with the previous reader. Once I found it, I tried to read slowly, but
the words and sounds ended up coming out faster than I wanted. I stumbled a few times. As I read, I marked the case endings, and corrected them when as I was corrected by the teacher. (Journal: 10/22/2009)

When it was my turn to read I didn’t seem to panic. I read slowly and carefully, making sure I wasn’t rushing through the text. I only needed to be corrected once or twice. I had written in the vowels while someone else was reading before me. The less that I have to worry about when I am reading, the easier the reading seems to be for me. When I finished reading the professor told me I did a good job. This always helps my confidence in class and makes me want to read more. (Journal: 10/26/2009)

At the beginning of class the professor turns on the audio of a reading from the book. I usually try to follow along with the reader, filling in the case endings. But I get a little frustrated that not all the vowels are said. Nevertheless, it helps me to have them in when I’m reading it. They allow me to focus more on understanding the text instead of having to worry about the vowels and endings. (Journal: 11/3/2009)

While Lucas found it difficult to place case endings on words – a task that he was required to do for class – he did not find the absence of them to hinder his comprehension much. Furthermore, the absence of diacritical marks did not seem to affect his anxiety if he was reading to himself. It was only when he had to read aloud with the proper case endings that his anxiety was great. During the second interview, Lucas was presented with a few paragraphs from his textbook to read silently and comprehend. Later, he was asked about his feelings regarding the fact the text did not have any diacritical marks:

Sometimes having the vowel markers there helps – it lets you know what the positions of words are in a sentence, which can be helpful if you’re totally confused about the meaning. But for the most part I don’t really notice that they aren’t there. I think I find it more difficult when I have to put them. It just takes a lot more concentration to figure out what each word is in a sentence. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)
It is evident from Lucas’s comments that while he found diacritical marks helpful, he did not find them necessary for comprehension. However, the task of placing case endings was quite difficult for him, as it not only required good grammatical knowledge, but it also took time and concentration as well. He often felt unmotivated to take the time to prepare the case endings at home because he did not have confidence in his abilities. This lack of preparation usually made him anxious during class, as he felt hurried when he tried to place them while others were reading and sometimes fell behind on other activities taking place.

**ERIC**

For Eric, a FLL with medium anxiety, diacritical marks were an added bonus – they were helpful to him if they were there, but if they were not, he did not miss them terribly. He described his feelings about diacritical marks to me in our first interview:

> When they’re there, they’re extremely helpful, obviously. I’m getting at the point now where I don’t necessarily need them, but for certain verbs like passive verbs, it’s just really hard to tell when they’re not there. So, overall I feel that I can one day grow out of them, but for now they are pretty handy. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Eric’s need for diacritical marks seemed to be directly associated with his familiarity with the word. If he knew the word, then the presence or absence of the vowel markers made no difference to him in understanding the word. On the other hand, if he was not familiar with the word, he found the diacritical marks to be very helpful:

> I think once I learn a word, it’s just there. When I see a familiar word, I don’t sound it out still. I just say it and then forget those diacritical vowels are still there. But when I don’t know the word, I notice them more. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)
When the teacher informed the class that they would be required to place correct case endings when reading aloud, Eric expressed his thoughts in the journal entry below:

Most people seem to struggle with case endings – which now the teacher wants students to use all the time during in-class reading. This seems to be quite a challenge for a lot of students. For me, it’s neither extremely difficult nor very easy. It’s right in the middle. As long as I have some time to think about it and I don’t have to do it on the spot, especially if I have to read aloud, then I am pretty comfortable putting them on. If I have to read in class with case endings, I definitely have to prepare the text before class to feel comfortable. Reading aloud and putting case endings at the same time is just too much for me to do at once. I can’t focus on both things at the same time. (Journal: 10/15/2009)

Thus, diacritical marks could impact on Eric’s anxiety toward reading aloud, depending on the circumstances. The journal entry below offers more insight into this situation:

Today the readings were from a text not in the book. I think this made me more nervous than usual – because the reading could not be prepared. The reading however did have all the diacritic marks and this made it much easier and less intimidating. Also the vocabulary was simple and there was ample time to look up words that we did not know while preparing for the in-class reading. (Journal: 11/19/2009)

As Eric described, when he was given the text to read aloud in class that was not from the course textbook, he was nervous initially, since he could not prepare the material beforehand. However, his nerves were calmed when he saw that the text was vowelized, and he would not have to place the case endings on the spot. Thus, as long as Eric had ample time to think and focus on placing the correct case endings, he was fairly comfortable completing the task. On the other hand, if he was required to do it quickly, or on the spot, he got quite anxious.
Marie, a FLL with low anxiety, had mixed feelings about diacritical marks when it came to reading aloud. To her, there was both an advantage and a disadvantage to reading vowelized texts. She explained her thoughts to me during our first interview:

If I was reading something out loud, then I’d really like diacritical marks, because then I would know how to say it. But then again, if I already knew most of the words, they would probably inhibit my reading because I would want to be focusing on the diacritical marks and use them as a guide. Whereas if I just see the word as a whole, see that picture, I already know how to say that. So instead of just going with the flow, I’d be focusing on the diacritical marks to make sure I got it right. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Marie’s feelings seemed to change a bit once she found out that she would be required to read with the proper case endings put in place. She found the task quite daunting, and although she was usually very eager to read aloud in class, this new requirement made her more hesitant and impacted on her feelings of anxiety:

The teacher told us he wanted us to start reading with the case endings added on, which I’ve never done before. It is pretty hard to concentrate on trying to read the words with the correct vowels while trying to figure out the grammatical function of each word and put the right case endings on them. I didn’t get called on to read anything, which was nice because I wasn’t really thrilled about trying to come up with case endings on the fly. (Journal: 10/13/2009)

Given that Marie was very confident in her abilities and did not usually feel anxious, she did not usually prepare much for class, unless the homework was going to be checked or turned in. She usually did not go through the reading and fill in the case endings before coming to class, which caused her some anxiety:
I was still a little nervous when it came my turn to read, but I wasn’t the first one this time, so I had a while to listen to other people reading and read along in the book while marking down the case endings. So I felt more confident about picking the right endings when it was my turn to read. I did a fair job. I felt a little annoyed though, because even if I had practiced it at home, I had no way of knowing if the endings I guessed at were right or not until I read it in class, so what was the point of practicing anyway? Yes, I know it’s good to practice all the time, but with all the other homework I have to do, it’s really low on my priority list. Sorry, but that’s how life works sometimes. (Journal: 10/15/2009)

While Marie did usually skim over each day’s reading before coming to class, she found that it was much more effective for her to fill in the case endings during class, either while others were reading or during some preparation time that the teacher would sometimes give students in class:

On Thursday, we read a passage about Deezee Al-Ameer, an Arab writer. The teacher gave us about 5-10 minutes to read as much as we could in class while he went around and looked at people’s homework, then we took turns reading out loud (as always, reading with the case endings in proper MSA). I went first and read the first paragraph. I was a bit nervous, and I think I read more slowly than I thought I could have, but I did ok. Then for the next, probably 20 minutes or so, the rest of the students took turns reading a couple lines. I followed along in my book and wrote in all the case endings on all the words. Not only does this help me read it better if I have to do it out loud again in the future, but it also gives me very good practice guessing/knowing what case endings go on each word. If students read a word incorrectly, the teacher corrects them, so that way I know if the case ending I guessed was correct or not. I think this is much better than trying to figure them all out at home, because I have no way of knowing if I’m right or not. (Journal: 10/22/2009)

Thursday we went over the same passage again, though only about half, and put in the case endings. As usual, I read along to myself and tried to guess the endings before whoever said them, and wrote them all in as I went along. (Journal: 11/12/2009)
While having the case endings put in before reading aloud was key to making Marie feel confident and comfortable reading, she felt that having them there for comprehension when she was reading to herself was not as necessary – although she thought that they would be helpful, particularly if she was reading a more difficult text:

For comprehension, sometimes I’ve been frustrated with reading a passage and not being really sure if a word was a subject or an adjective. If it had just the case endings at the end of the words that would be helpful in comprehension. It would help me understand it better without needing to look stuff up. I would see the ‘damas’ and the ‘fathas’ and the ‘kasras’ as I’m reading it and I’d see verb, noun, adjective…so it would be like little flags or markings. But I don’t feel like them not being there is a huge detriment or a huge barrier to understanding the text. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Marie had good grammatical knowledge and, given the time, was able to correctly place the case endings on words and even explain her reasoning for doing so:

For reading today in class, we were each assigned a paragraph from a passage in our book that we were supposed to read at home (which I did) and we had to figure out all the case endings for the words, then we had to read it out loud and explain why the words had those case endings. I did very well with the grammar and knowing why which words had their case endings, and with the case endings written in it was much easier to read the passage (of course). (Journal: 10/20/2009)

Marie’s comments show that though she started off unsure of her abilities to select the correct case endings and often guessed, she grew more comfortable with the task as the course progressed and she gained more confidence in herself. Thus, just as with Eric, as long as she spent some time preparing, she was at ease and relaxed during oral readings. If she did not spend the required time selecting the case endings (even if it was in class),
she got anxious when it was her turn to read. Clearly, placing case endings is a cognitively demanding task.

**ADAM**

For Adam, a HLL with low anxiety, diacritical marks only seemed to make a difference to him when he was reading aloud – mostly just helping him with the pronunciation of words. When asked about his feelings regarding diacritical marks in an interview, he said the following:

I like them when they’re there because they give you an added sense of security when you’re reading it aloud because you can’t go wrong. When I’m reading to myself I don’t feel like I really need them because most of the time I can comprehend everything and figure out the meanings of words – even ones I haven’t seen before – from context. So, yeah they’re definitely nice when they’re there when I have to read something out loud.  (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Once Adam had to start putting the case endings in when reading aloud, per his teacher’s request, he had some difficulties. While observing him in class, he often made several mistakes by selecting the incorrect case endings. On one occasion, he used the genitive case instead of the nominative on a subject in a sentence. The teacher stopped him and asked him, “Now why are you using the genitive case? Is that correct?” Adam looked up with a nervous smile and replied with a quiet “no”. He then said the word correctly with the nominative case ending and continued reading. Shortly thereafter in the next sentence, he made another mistake. The teacher gently corrected him (Observation: 10/22/2009). Later that day, he wrote his feelings in his journal:
Today when I was reading I messed up too much. We were reading about Deezee Al-Ameer and even though I glanced at the reading, skimming it quickly before coming to class, I did not take the time to put in the case endings. I had way too much studying for my other classes and I did not have the time to sit there and think about the case endings for each word. Besides, the reading was quite long, almost a page. That would take me forever. And, even if I did take the time to put them on, how would I know if I was doing it correctly? I wouldn’t really know until we read it aloud in class – at which point I would be making the same mistakes anyways. I hate making mistakes when I’m reading in front of the class because I feel like I shouldn’t be. So today I was not happy with the way I read. (Journal: 10/22/2009)

From that point on, I observed Adam usually going through and putting the case endings on the reading during class, while the teacher checked students’ homework, during classroom breaks, or even while the teacher was explaining grammatical concepts (Observations: 10/27/2009; 11/3/2009; 11/10/2009). Seemingly, Adam wanted to feel somewhat prepared for the oral readings, but he still did not take the time to do it outside of class. As the course progressed, Adam did make fewer mistakes with case endings while reading aloud, and he attributed this to an increase in his grammatical knowledge:

I feel like I’m getting better with putting the right case endings on words. This is my first real Arabic class at OSU (since I tested out of all the other classes up to this one). Even though I have studied Arabic for many years and it is my heritage language, I haven’t really studied that much grammar. I mean, I have when I was younger and my parents used to send me to Arabic school. But that was a long time ago – I forgot most of it. And it was all in Arabic. I never learned the grammatical terms in English and I was so confused when the other students used all these weird terms – I had no idea what they were talking about. I felt quite stupid. But how was I supposed to know them anyways? (Journal: 11/19/2009)

Here, interestingly, Adam references his heritage language status, as he did when discussing reading aloud, but in this case, he does not invoke a higher set of expectations for himself. In fact, it was almost the opposite (“How was I supposed to know them...
anyways?”) Once Adam started working on his grammatical knowledge and built a better foundation, he found it easier to select the correct case endings. He felt more confident in his ability to do so, which was apparent towards the end of the course. He no longer let out nervous laughs and was corrected much less often by the teacher than at the beginning of the course. This was because he was no longer guessing which case endings were correct; he used the grammatical knowledge he gained to help him make more accurate choices. Nonetheless, he still felt like he had to place the case endings before reading aloud, because it was too difficult for him to do while actually reading aloud:

Even though I’m better at picking the right case endings, I have to do it before it’s my turn to read in front of the class. There’s no way I can just pick the right case endings on the spot while I’m reading. That would be impossible for me to do – accurately that is. There’s too much thinking involved. (Journal: 11/19/2009)

Adam’s comments reveal that placing case endings was a demanding task even for HLLs with an extensive background in the language. Like Lucas, Eric, and Marie, Adam had to have had the case endings put in place to feel confident and comfortable while reading aloud.

JENNA

Jenna, another HLL with low anxiety, experienced a change of feelings throughout the quarter about diacritical marks. During our first interview, she told me that she did not really think about diacritical marks and was able to read and comprehend just fine without them. To her, they were not a major issue:
I don’t worry too much about case endings. I just read without them because that’s the way I’m used to reading. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

When asked if she would be able to put them in if required to do so, she was unsure of her abilities. She said, “I’m not very good at that.” (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Before taking this class, Jenna had only taken one other Arabic course. She had tested out of several courses, four to be exact, due to her ability in the language. She had not yet taken the two grammar courses, which should technically be taken before the Arabic 401 course. This left her feeling a little unsure of her grammatical skills, especially when she found out that she would have to place the case endings on all words when reading aloud for this course:

Today the teacher told us that we have to put the case endings on words when we read out loud. He said that in the advanced courses, professors always expect good use of case endings, and they often get frustrated when they are not used correctly. That got me a little worried. I’m not really sure if I can always pick the right case endings, because I’ve never had to do this before. Plus I forget a lot of the grammar that I learned when I was younger. At this point, I’m feeling nervous. (Journal: 10/13/2009)

On one occasion during class, Jenna was asked to find the active participle in a sentence. She had no idea what that was and said to the teacher, “I forget what that is.” She seemed quite frustrated that she had forgotten. She then turned around and said to me, “I feel a lot of anxiety now” (Observation: 11/12/2009). Clearly, Jenna’s deficiencies in grammar made her feel anxious.

Jenna’s gaps in grammatical knowledge translated to a lot of guesswork when she had to place the correct case endings on texts. Relying on her intuitive knowledge of
Arabic as a HLL, she picked what sounded right. Most of the time, she was correct, which made her feel very relieved:

We read about the death of Tawfiq Al-Hakim in class together and were parted into groups to work on different paragraphs. We were supposed to fill in all the case endings. I worked with Mike and Erica on paragraph 7 and we finished very quickly. We all helped each other; well of course I did most of the work. And when I read it out loud in class, it was correct. Great! Usually I do not read with case endings. As a native speaker I don’t worry about the case endings but since I was forced as part of the class work I was worried that it won’t be correct but thank god it was. (Journal: 10/20/2009)

Here Jenna has once again referenced her native speaker status, but in this case she acknowledged the complexities that arose from that background. In the situation just described, she seemed to benefit from that background and expressed relief over it. At other times, she made some mistakes, which did not make her too happy:

Today when it was my turn to read a few sentences from the text “Deezee Al-Ameer” I made two mistakes with the case endings. Before class, I went through the reading and put in all the case endings that I knew. There were many that I wasn’t sure of. I left those blank. With my luck, I had to read from the paragraph that I wasn’t really sure of. So I made several mistakes, which I shouldn’t be doing. I’m not setting a very good example for the rest of the class. (Journal: 10/22/2009)

Jenna’s desire to know everything and be correct all the time pushed her to learn and grow throughout the course. With the grammar mini-lessons and reviews that the teacher often did, Jenna slowly got better, and her confidence in her ability to select the proper case endings increased:

The course is almost over and now I feel much better about case endings. I feel pretty confident that I can do it correctly. Not 100% of the time, but a good percentage of the time. I think I came into this course with not a lot of grammar
knowledge – or at least I had forgotten a lot of it. With the reviews and lessons that the teacher did, I am now feeling much more comfortable with case endings. (Journal: 11/30/2009)

Jenna, like the other participants, had difficulties with the task of placing case endings on texts for oral reading, largely due to some deficiencies in her Arabic grammar. While this caused her anxiety, her desire to meet the high expectations she believed others had of her drove her to improve her skills and overcome that anxiety.

**Summary of Findings about Diacritical Marks**

Table 4.5 summarizes the main findings for the participants regarding the effects that adding diacritical marks (case endings) had on their feelings of confidence and anxiety about reading aloud. Also included is the impact diacritical marks (their presence or absence) had on their feelings during silent reading. Here, too, some differences emerge with respect to the participants’ status as FLLs or HLLs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Lucas</strong></th>
<th>FLL with high anxiety</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Vowel markers gave him an added sense of security when reading aloud</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Had great difficulty placing case endings on words due to gaps in grammatical knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lacked motivation and was too overwhelmed to prepare case endings at home</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Absence of diacritical marks did not make him anxious if he was reading to himself</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Worrying about case endings while reading prevented him from understanding the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Could not place endings while simultaneously reading aloud – made him even more anxious</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Eric</strong></th>
<th>FLL with medium anxiety</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Felt that they were an added bonus, helpful but not necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Diacritical marks were more helpful when he encountered unfamiliar words</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Felt fairly confident and comfortable placing case endings on words as long as he had sufficient time</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Having to place case endings while simultaneously reading aloud made him very anxious – must have text prepared before class</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Marie</strong></th>
<th>FLL with low anxiety</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Viewed case endings as little flags marking grammatical categories of words – very helpful if she encountered unfamiliar words</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Did not prepare case endings before coming to class – unsure of abilities, yet had good grammatical knowledge</td>
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<td>- “Guessed” case endings while others read</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Felt like she did not need case endings to comprehend what she read, but found them helpful if the text was difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Trying to put case endings while reading aloud made her very anxious</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Adam</strong></th>
<th>HLL with low anxiety</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Felt like he needed them only when reading aloud</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Case endings were not necessary for him to comprehend what he read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Initially had some difficulties placing correct case endings due to gaps in grammatical knowledge – improved over quarter</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Had to have case endings written in before reading aloud or he felt anxious – though he did this in class</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Jenna</strong></th>
<th>HLL with low anxiety</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Prior to this course, never really thought about them or needed them for comprehension</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Unsure of abilities to place correct case endings, guessed often and picked what sounded right</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Gaps in grammatical knowledge made her feel anxious</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Selecting incorrect case endings made her uncomfortable/anxious</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Her abilities improved and her confidence grew as the course progressed</td>
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Table 4.5: Summary of nature of anxiety related to Diacritical Marks
4.8 Reading Comprehension

Although reading aloud was a seemingly major part of the course, understanding what one read was just as important. The textbook had quite a few translation exercises that were either assigned for homework or were done in class. There were also different types of exercises throughout each lesson assessing students’ comprehension of the reading material – all of which were usually reviewed and discussed in class. Students’ reading comprehension was tested during every class session informally, with the exception of exam and quiz days, where students were formally assessed.

LUCAS

For Lucas, a highly anxious FLL, understanding what he read was an important factor in his confidence (and thus level of anxiety) when reading. If he understood what he was reading, he felt like he knew what he was doing:

I have noticed that if I understand what I am reading, I will be less nervous. It makes me feel as if I’m reading something real instead of just making foreign sounds. (Journal: 10/6/2009)

However, reading comprehension was a struggle for Lucas, especially if he had to answer comprehension questions that really tested his understanding of the text. In the first interview, Lucas explained to me that while finding main points that indicated an overall understanding of the text was easy for him, gaining a deeper understanding was more difficult for him:
I actually have an internship where I translate Arabic to English, so that’s helped me a lot. Like just being able to recognize words and to skim through and find main points has been very helpful. But reading, like when it’s on a test...I have to comprehend to answer a question. That gets a little more difficult. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

When I asked whether the testing situation in particular had an impact on his ability to comprehend a text, he said the following:

I feel that there is more pressure during a test to get a good grade and there is a time limit. You can’t spend all day reading and understanding. So, naturally testing is a stressful situation. But I feel like even if it isn’t on a test, answering in-depth comprehension questions is difficult for me. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

In other words, while test anxiety may have affected him, Lucas acknowledged that addressing reading comprehension questions under any circumstances was challenging. Lucas’s difficulty with answering comprehension questions was evident during the mid-term exam. Although the reading selection on the test was one that the class had read and went over several times, Lucas still struggled to answer the tougher comprehension questions. He described his feelings during our second interview:

The reading section on the exam was a little bit difficult. We had already read it. So I understood a little bit. But once you have to go on your own and figure out how to say things in Arabic, it’s a little more difficult. Because normally in class (101-104) you can just read a text and then read the question and it’s easy to go back to the paragraph that you read and just fill in the blanks with the entire sentence that you read. I think now it’s not so much just answering straightforward questions. It’s more thinking about what you’re writing and what you read. You can’t just copy and paste what you read. I think that was the most difficult part. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Lucas attributed his difficulty with understanding what he read to a variety of factors – namely his lack of sufficient knowledge in vocabulary as well as sentence structure:
Whenever I have a hard time understanding what I read, I feel stupid. It seems like everybody else understands what they read. I wonder why. Perhaps it’s because I don’t have enough vocabulary knowledge or I’m having a hard time with the different sentence structure. It seems like the sentences in this course are more advanced than the ones I was used to in the beginning courses. It’s a lot more complex. (Journal: 11/17/2009)

The fact that Lucas felt “stupid” when he believed his classmates understood what he did not suggests that he did experience some anxiety with respect to reading comprehension, as he believed he was underachieving compared to them.

**ERIC**

For Eric, a FLL with medium anxiety, vocabulary was a major part of understanding what he read. He was aware of the significant role that vocabulary played in his comprehension and found it very logical that each chapter in the course textbook contained authentic texts selected based on the vocabulary presented. For Eric, this reinforced his usage of the new vocabulary and made it “stick”:

Today in class there was some in class reading and translation exercises. There was a full-length newspaper/magazine article about an academic symposium that would occur in Riyadh. The article did not seem that intimidating once it was broken up for groups in the class to read aloud and translate. Much of the vocabulary in the article was easy as it pertained exactly to the new vocabulary in the current chapter that we are studying of Al-Kitaab part II – this I think is key to helping the new vocabulary to stick because it enforces it well. (Journal: 10/8/2009)

In addition to vocabulary, culture played an important role for Eric in reading comprehension. The fact that the new vocabulary and grammar were taught through authentic texts that directly dealt with Arab culture really helped Eric learn. The more
cultural knowledge he had about the Arabic-speaking world, the better he felt he could relate to what he read and understand it:

I have grown in my basic understanding of Arabic vocabulary and some grammar, and I also feel I have acquired a stronger knowledge of Arabic culture from the book’s exercises. I really like the way the new vocabulary and grammar was taught in the context of culture. Culture really helps it stick in my mind, and now I am more familiar with more parts of culture, so I feel more confident in the use of the language in these contexts especially. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

These comments suggest that knowledge of Arabic vocabulary and culture reduced Eric’s feelings of anxiety while reading and in fact increased his confidence. Topic familiarity was another important component of easier reading comprehension for Eric. The more familiar he was with a topic, the more confident and the less anxious he was reading it. This allowed him to focus on extracting the meaning of the text. He speculated about the logic that the textbook’s authors may have used in the journal entry below:

I am beginning to notice a pattern that makes reading easier, that is the topic of the passage. It seems most passages in Al-Kitaab 2 are about authors, or famous literary figures. Perhaps there is some methodology behind this…or not. I think that the book’s publishers choose to make passages consistently about the same things (Arab authors) because students are more comfortable with vocabulary that pertains to this topic. If the book were to change gears, perhaps talk about Abdul Nasser (or some random famous politician), perhaps the passages would be harder and instill less confidence in student readers. (Journal: 10/8/2009)

Although the reading passage on the mid-term exam was familiar to Eric, he had forgotten the meaning of some words, which made him a little nervous. Nevertheless, he worked slowly through the passage trying to determine the meanings of those words from
context. He did not panic and was able to get through the reading comprehension questions successfully:

The reading passage on the exam was directly from the book, which is something that we read aloud in class. Reading passages on exams can cause some anxiety for students when they first see them (they look very intimidating). The pressures of the classroom compound this effect. Personally I was not nervous about the reading passage because I recognized it right away as something we had previously read in class; however, I felt more nervous about those words that I had forgotten the meaning. I can only imagine the anxiety this may have caused for other students less prepared than I was. My personal strategy is that I just have to take the passage slowly, line by line, and then keep going back to make sure I can answer the questions. As far as relieving this initial anxiety during test taking, I feel that there is really nothing that can be done by the teacher or the overall classroom environment, however, the classroom environment that teachers can facilitate during the time leading up to the class has a lot to do with how relaxed students are during the tests, which in itself determines how well they do. (Journal: 10/29/2009)

Eric points out several important points in these insightful comments. First, he makes reference to the fact that his familiarity with the passage reduced his anxiety, suggesting that being prepared and knowing what to expect on a test alleviates students’ anxiety. Second, Eric refers to the important role of the teacher as the facilitator of a relaxed classroom environment, which he believes affects how comfortable or anxious students feel during exams. Third, Eric suggests that how well students do is directly related to how relaxed they feel. If they are feeling very anxious, then their performance will likely be affected negatively. Lastly, Eric mentions his strategy for overcoming the nervousness he felt when he realized that he had forgotten the meanings of some words. The fact that he was aware of what caused him anxiety may have helped him work through the passage calmly without panicking.
MARIE

For Marie, a FLL with low anxiety, the realization that she did not have to agonize over every single word to understand the gist of a passage was an important part of being able to enjoy reading, allowing her to experience it more often while minimizing her anxiety. Naturally, this gave her more practice, making her a better reader:

I actually think that I’m getting a little bit more into reading. I’m getting more natural at reading texts for contents’ sake, not reading it and agonizing over every single word – which has been a block in the past – being not as enthusiastic about reading something as I could be because there are these words that I don’t know and I have to look everything up. You just have to get over that and let it go. It’s okay if you don’t understand everything. I’m getting more comfortable, which I think is making me a better reader. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

I know the point of the reading isn’t so that you could understand every single word, so I wasn’t too worried about not knowing the meaning of some words. (Journal: 10/8/2009)

Marie’s reference to no longer “agonizing over every single word” suggests that she had in fact experienced anxiety related to reading comprehension. However, as the course progressed and she read more and more, she grew more comfortable not looking up every single word in a text, which led her to another realization – that repetitive reading meant more meaning extraction.

I think it’s cool that every time I read a passage, or look at it again, I see new things and understand stuff I didn’t before. So it’s almost like it’s new every time I read it. (Journal: 10/6/2009)

To Marie, the most important component of reading comprehension was vocabulary. Given that Arabic is a root based language, where the vast majority of verbs and nouns
are made up of triliteral roots, one can derive the meaning of a word based on knowledge of the root and the ten verbal patterns. Marie used this strategy whenever she encountered unfamiliar words, as she described in our first interview:

Vocabulary is a really big thing, because when you memorize vocabulary, like “rakaza”, you know the root and whenever I see that root in my readings, I know that it has something to do with “concentration”. When you memorize the vocabulary and start connecting the triliteral roots with general meanings, then even though you really don’t recognize a lot of words in whatever you’re reading, you get general ideas of what’s going on. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

These comments suggest that, for Marie, increased vocabulary knowledge was one means of reducing anxiety about reading, as it gave her a “general idea of what’s going on” and thus built her confidence in reading. In addition to vocabulary, topic familiarity was also an important part of reading comprehension for Marie. When reading a text on a familiar topic, Marie already knew a lot of the vocabulary associated with that topic, which naturally made comprehension much easier for her. On the other hand, when she was given a passage on a topic she was unfamiliar with, she had more difficulties and felt more anxious:

When you study in your classes things that talk about your university, your home, classes, and maybe a history lesson…we studied the history of the Middle East while I was in Syria – the four caliphs…those topics are familiar, so I understood them. If you give me a text about something I have no clue about, then I’ll most likely not know a lot of the vocabulary that’s used. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)
Thus, topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge played important roles in minimizing
Marie’s anxiety while comprehending texts in Arabic. The stronger she was in these two
areas, the more confident (and less anxious) she felt in her ability to understand what she
read.

**ADAM**

For Adam, a HLL with low anxiety, reading comprehension was not a struggle. In
fact, he seemed to understand most of what he read. Though he did not volunteer much,
he was often called on by the teacher to answer seemingly tough questions that nobody
else could answer, presumably because of his heritage language background. The vast
majority of the time, Adam was able to answer the teacher’s questions, indicating a good
On one occasion, when the class was reading a text about Tawfiq Al-Hakim, the teacher
asked him to give the meaning of a particular sentence. Adam read the sentence quietly to
himself, and then looked up and told the teacher, “I don’t know what the words ‘athara
daja’ mean.” The teacher asked the rest of the class, several students made some close
attempts, but they were all incorrect. The teacher then informed everyone that it meant
“to cause an uproar,” which made Adam nod his head with an “I knew that” look on his
face, perhaps reflecting his expectations of himself as a native speaker of Arabic
(Observation: 10/20/2009).
While Adam did lack some vocabulary knowledge, he felt like his comprehension was much better than his classmates, presumably as a result of his heritage language background. This often caused him frustration as he described in this journal entry:

Today I worked with two kids in my group. We were supposed to translate a paragraph about Huda Sharawee. We tried to work together and break down the paragraph to several sentences for each of us. But it seemed like my partners had no idea what they were doing and they kept on asking me questions. Eventually I got sick of how long the translation was taking and I ended up doing the whole thing. I only had to look up one word in the dictionary. (Journal: 11/10/2009)

Here, Adam’s heritage language background put him in an interesting and ultimately frustrating situation with his classmates. For him, seemingly, there was little if any anxiety associated with reading comprehension. His advanced skills often led him to do his homework at the last minute, sometimes even in class while the teacher was checking other students’ homework in the front of the room. By the time the teacher got to Adam, who always sat in the back of the classroom, he would be done with the exercise and earn the required points (Observations: 10/8/2009; 10/15/2009). When asked about why he did this, he responded with the following comments:

Sometimes I don’t have time to do the homework outside of class – like when I have a test or a quiz in one of my other, tougher classes. Other times, I just don’t feel like it. I mean, if I can do it in class, why bother and take the time to do it outside of class? I can do it just as well either way. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Adam’s lack of motivation to challenge himself beyond what was required of him in the course prevented him from increasing his vocabulary and growing as a reader. Although
he knew that his vocabulary needed improvement, he did not find the motivation or time 
(with his busy schedule) to go the extra mile. He describes this in the journal entry below:

I can definitely improve my vocabulary. I feel like I do have good vocabulary, but 
sometimes when I’m reading, I don’t know the exact translation of a word. I may 
kind of know what it is talking about, but I can have a hard time finding the exact 
translation in English. And when an exercise requires translations or I have to 
answer a comprehension question and I can’t find the right word in English, I get 
very annoyed. I know I should work on this if I want to get better, but if it’s not 
required for class, I can’t seem to find the time to do it. (Journal: 10/27/2009)

In a sense, the lack of any apparent anxiety regarding reading comprehension may have 
inhibited Adam’s progress to a small degree. With no anxiety at hand, he felt no 
motivation to push himself, as the above comments suggest.

JENNA

Jenna, another HLL with low anxiety, also had no problems understanding what 
she read. She seemed very confident in class and would often help all those sitting around 
her with understanding the reading. Her friend, Julie, who almost always sat next to her, 
would often ask for help and Jenna would eagerly help her. Whenever she worked with 
other group members, Jenna would take the lead and do most of the work, explaining 
sentences to her classmates with great confidence (Observations: 10/8/2009; 10/13/2009; 
11/5/2009). On one occasion, when the class was reading a text about a world seminar 
regarding Algeria, Jenna came across a word she was a little unsure of. I was sitting 
within close proximity of her – so she turned around and asked me in Arabic if the word 
“Alnamsa” was Austria. I, myself, was unsure of the word as I had never heard it before.
She asked the teacher and he confirmed to her that it was the Arabic name for Austria. It was apparent that she was quite proud of herself for knowing the word (Observation: 10/8/2009).

Jenna’s vocabulary was rich because she enjoyed reading in Arabic and did it often on her own time. During our first interview, she told me that she loved reading Arabic “books, newspapers, and websites online” (Interview 1: 10/7/2009). She knew that the more she read, the better she would get, which was important to her. She had a deep desire to become better in Arabic, especially in reading:

I read because I enjoy it and because I want to become better in Arabic. I love Arabic literature and I want to be able to read and understand many famous works. So I read a lot. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Jenna’s extensive reading exposed her to new vocabulary all the time, which she would usually decode by locating the meaning from context. If she was unable to determine what the word meant, she would look it up online, using an Arabic-English dictionary. She described this during our first interview:

Lots of times, I come across words that are new to me. It really bothers me if I don’t know what a word means – so usually I try to figure it out from context. If I try and I still can’t, then I’ll look it up online. I think this really helps make my vocabulary better. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

While Jenna was always eager to help her classmates understand the reading, at times she felt bored and unchallenged. Either she would finish answering questions much faster than her classmates or she would do most of the work when working in groups. In these
regards she was very much like her HLL classmate, Adam. She described her feelings in her journal:

I love helping others, especially because Arabic is not their native language. I feel that it’s unfair that I know a lot more than they do, so I feel like I have to help them. If we’re working in groups and they need help, I help them. Actually, most of the time I end up doing most if not all of the work. It’s easy for me, sometimes too easy. Sometimes I feel like I need to be learning more, especially vocabulary and grammar. I’m happy that things are easy for me and I get good grades, but at the same time I feel like I need to be challenged so that I can become a better reader. (Journal: 11/12/2009)

Jenna’s references here to her native speaker status are interesting in two different ways. First, they suggest that she had complex feelings about that status relative to her classmates, seeing both unfairness in the situation and a sense of responsibility toward them. Second, in the latter part of the quotation she hints at a kind of underlying anxiety, in that she feels she could be making greater progress as a reader of Arabic and regrets the lack of challenges in the class.

Although Jenna did not find reading comprehension to be a challenge for her, at times she would struggle to find the right word in English. Sometimes if she was asked to translate from Arabic to English or if she wanted to explain a word to a classmate, she had a hard time finding the equivalents of words in English. She understood the material herself, but could not convey the meaning to others – which frustrated her. She described this in the following journal entry:

Today we had to translate a paragraph from Arabic to English from the passage about Dezee Al-Ameer. I understood pretty much everything, but when I had to translate I couldn’t find the right words in English. I find that this happens to me more than I’d like. And it makes me feel frustrated. It just seems like the words don’t come to me – like I know what it means but I can’t find the right word in English. (Journal: 10/22/2009)
It is clear from Jenna’s comments that her background as a HLL may have interfered with her ability to perform certain tasks, such as translate from Arabic to English. While she was still generally more advanced than the FLLs in the class, this particular task caused her some anxiety. This may be due to the fact that she informally acquired, rather than formally learned, a good amount of her Arabic vocabulary. As a HLL, she had not previously memorized vocabulary lists that contained the English equivalents of words, though she started doing this for this course.

**Summary of Findings about Reading Comprehension**

Table 4.6 summarizes the main findings for each participant with respect to reading comprehension and anxiety. The findings reflect an interesting array of differences across the five participants, with each person’s status as a FLL or a HLL seemingly playing an important role.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Nature of Anxiety Related to Reading Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lucas  | FLL     | High          | - Comprehending what he read was important for his confidence  
- Comprehension was a struggle; finding main points easy but deeper, more detailed meaning was more difficult, which made him very anxious  
- Contributing factors to difficulties in comprehension: not enough vocabulary knowledge and different, more complex sentence structure  
- Had a hard time adjusting to more advanced reading material  
- Felt too overwhelmed to work on developing his skills |
| Eric   | FLL     | Medium        | - Aware that culture, vocabulary, and topic familiarity were important factors in comprehension – appreciated set-up of textbook  
- Worked extensively on all three of the above areas to develop comprehension skills  
- Prepared material well at home  
- Experienced anxiety when he didn’t understand some words in reading passage on exam, but slowly and calmly worked through it |
| Marie  | FLL     | Low           | - Agonized over knowing every word in a passage (showing her anxiety)  
- Realized that understanding everything is unnecessary; overcame urge to look up every word  
- Became more enthusiastic about reading; did it more often; got more practice  
- Worked on developing her vocabulary a lot – used strategies such as root system when encountering unfamiliar words  
- Topic familiarity and culture were important to her comprehension and reduced anxiety  
- Gained much cultural knowledge that helped her during intensive studies during stay in Syria over summer |
| Adam   | HLL     | Low           | - Comprehension not a struggle in class; understood most of what he read  
- His advanced knowledge and classmates’ slower pace caused him frustration/boredom  
- Lacked motivation to spend much time on homework outside of class; did assignments during class  
- Knew that his vocabulary needed improvement, yet did not challenge himself beyond what was required for class |
| Jenna  | HLL     | Low           | - Comprehension not a struggle in class; understood mostly everything  
- Often helped classmates understand material; felt that she had to given her status as a “native”  
- Had rich vocabulary and often read a lot on her own  
- Often felt bored and unchallenged with class’s slower pace  
- Had some difficulty translating from Arabic to English, which frustrated her and made her anxious at times |

Table 4.6: Summary of nature of anxiety related to Reading Comprehension
4.9 Listening, Speaking, and Writing

In addition to oral reading and comprehension exercises, students in the course were required to engage in a number of other activities related to the reading that involved speaking, listening, and writing. Thus far, students’ feelings about the actual act of reading as well as understanding have been explored, with a particular focus on anxiety. Given that this reading course included other activities (involving other language skills) that the students were expected to participate in and sometimes graded on, a presentation of their thoughts and feelings follows. Since these skills, which can have their own anxiety dimensions, were not directly related to the topic of this study – reading anxiety – this subsection receives less treatment than the previous subsections. Nevertheless, how the students experienced these other skills provides a backdrop to the learning environment in which they studied Arabic and offers additional perspectives on the role of anxiety in their learning.

LUCAS

For Lucas, a FLL with high anxiety, listening caused him a great deal of anxiety. He had a hard time understanding the teacher when he spoke in Arabic, which was a vast majority of the time. His great frustration with comprehending what he heard overwhelmed him so much that mid-way through the quarter he felt like giving up the Arabic major and just settling for a minor:

I’m kind of going back and forth with whether or not I’m going to carry on with a major or just a minor. I think right now I’m in a rough spot. I have a lot of trouble understanding when he’s talking in Arabic. I have a lot of trouble picking up what
he’s saying. I think that comes from the fact that we don’t do a lot of speaking-like free speaking. We just do a lot of reading. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

The DVDs that accompany the textbook did not seem to help Lucas, as the fast pace just overwhelmed him and led him to lose motivation. During one of our interviews, I suggested to him to listen to other materials, including television and radio stations and materials online. He took the suggestion and started listening to more Arabic. He made some progress, but most importantly his attitude changed, and it appeared that his level of anxiety was reduced. He no longer wanted to quit learning Arabic. He told me this during our last interview:

I’ve done what you suggested with the listening and I think I have gotten a little better. I’ve been encouraged to continue my studies in Arabic and to be more conscious of how I learn and how my feelings can affect my learning. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

Speaking in Arabic was also a struggle for Lucas. To him, listening and speaking were in the same place. He felt like he was unable to have a regular, unscripted conversation. He did not receive enough practice speaking in classes and he did not seek opportunities outside of the classroom where he could practice using his Arabic with native speakers:

I feel intimidated when I’m around native speakers I guess. And I always feel bad asking for help even though I know that most people want to help if you’re learning the language. I get to use Russian a lot more outside of class than I do Arabic. I just had friends already that knew how to speak it. To me, it’s not as an intimidating language to go find help with. I don’t know, for some reason Arabic speakers always intimidate me. I don’t know why. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)
Not surprisingly, Lucas’s anxiety level with respect to speaking and listening to Arabic was apparently high, particularly during interactions with native speakers, and this impacted on his feelings about reading-related discussions. With not much practice speaking, having a discussion about the reading was difficult for Lucas. He never volunteered during class discussions and when called on would appear very nervous and flustered (Observation: 11/12/2009). When asked about his feelings, he indicated that he was not confident in his abilities because he did not have enough vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to be able to put his thoughts together spontaneously:

Since we don’t really focus a lot on speaking in the classes, especially free-speaking, I don’t feel like I can have a conversation without the book in front of me. I don’t have enough vocabulary so I have to think about what I have to say and write it out to be able to say anything coherent. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Of all the skills, Lucas felt the most comfortable and confident about writing. He was a good writer in English and his love for writing in his native language made him favor writing in Arabic over the other skills:

I love writing in English and I think my best skill in Arabic is writing. It just gives me time in my head. I write a lot slower than I speak. With writing, I can put my thoughts together and make sense of what I’m doing. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

In other words, unlike in speaking and listening, writing allowed Lucas to monitor his language use, which made him feel less anxious. Hence, he enjoyed writing the weekly journals for class and felt that he could express his thoughts well through those. By the end of the quarter, he felt that his writing improved greatly, and that confidence spilled
over to an overall increased level of confidence for him in Arabic. He described his feelings to me in an interview:

I loved writing the journals. I feel like they helped me improve in all areas of Arabic. As the quarter draws to an end, I can say that I definitely have gained some confidence in my abilities to communicate in and understand Arabic. This study has opened my eyes as to how I really perceive and understand the language. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

With Lucas we have seen how anxiety can vary across the different language skills and how the opportunity to reflect on his learning through the journal entries enabled him to put his learning in perspective and perhaps reduce his overall level of anxiety as his confidence in his overall Arabic ability increased.

**ERIC**

For Eric, a FLL with medium anxiety, listening to Arabic was something he constantly worked on because he felt like it helped him the most. Everywhere he went, he listened to Arabic (including the material on the textbook’s DVDs) on his personal iPod. If he was at home, he followed along in his book. If he was on the bus, he just listened – but he did a great deal of listening because he felt like it facilitated his learning greatly, especially in reading:

I think listening is the key to good reading. It’s just like a child is read to at night before he can actually read the words himself. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Listening not only helped Eric with reading, but it also helped him with speaking. Just by listening (and often following along), Eric felt like he acquired a great amount of Arabic
Eric, however, did try to seek opportunities outside of class to gain some practice speaking. He was friends with several international students from Arabic-speaking countries and was able to practice using the language with them at times – but he mostly used Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) because that is what he had learned and was most comfortable using:

I feel comfortable with the MSA, but not with the colloquial. Although when I get a little time here and there to learn the colloquial, it seems a lot easier. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Despite not feeling very comfortable with impromptu speaking, Eric was not afraid to participate in classroom discussions about the reading and often volunteered his answers (Observations: 10/20/2009; 11/3/2009; 11/12/2009). Thus, anxiety while speaking was not an issue for him. Nonetheless, he indicated to me that he would feel much more confident if there were more opportunities for him in the classroom to practice spontaneous speaking in MSA:

I feel like we need to do more conversation in class. We never talk to each other. We just read from the script. And that’s probably bad in terms of learning to think in Arabic. I mean I know the class is reading, but I don’t really think we should just be learning how to read better. Learning how to speak with each other and
interact would probably be beneficial for all the skills, including reading. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

It is interesting here to see how Eric foregrounds the importance of learning to think in Arabic and how he sees connections between the various language skills. Of all the skills, Eric was the least confident in writing Arabic, especially when it was an open-ended question, like on the mid-term exam:

We had to write 100 words and there was a prompt. It was totally unstructured. When you’re out there on your own, it’s way harder. That definitely took me the longest time and made me more nervous of any section. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Thus, there was some anxiety associated with writing for Eric. Interestingly, whereas he wanted to move away from scripted situations to develop speaking ability, he preferred more structured situations for writing. His writing did improve throughout the quarter, especially since he had ample practice while writing the journals. He really liked these opportunities to practice and was happy with his improvement by the end of the quarter:

I feel like the journals really helped me with writing a lot. Open-ended writing used to be very hard for me. Not only did I have to put my thoughts together in Arabic and make grammatically correct sentences, but I also had to think about organization and creativity and other things that make writing good writing. That was difficult, but I think that I got a lot better over the quarter and the journals helped tremendously. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

On the whole, it appeared that anxiety was not a major factor for Eric with respect to these other (non-reading) skills. The fact that he continually sought opportunities to listen to Arabic and thus provided ongoing input for his language development may have been

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a key factor in this, particularly since he articulated a strong belief in the interconnectedness of language skills.

**MARIE**

For Marie, a FLL with low anxiety, speaking in Arabic in class was not a problem at all. In fact she felt very comfortable doing it; she often asked questions when she did not understand something and eagerly volunteered her answers as well as opinions in class, all in MSA. She was not afraid to take risks with her speaking and was therefore able to put herself out there, even in front of her peers, to practice. When asked about her feelings about speaking during an interview, she said the following:

> I think I’m really good at speaking, but not because I’m especially good at the language but because I’m a really good talker. I have an ability to connect with people because of my outgoingness and my uninhibitedness. I’m not afraid to try and take risks and connect with people. Through that, it helps me learn how to speak better. Once I’m in a country and I have an opportunity and I have people around to talk to, I really get into it and I try really hard, even if I make mistakes and I look dumb. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

When it came to listening, Marie also felt very comfortable. Even though she did not understand every single thing that the teacher would say all the time, she was able to follow along. And, if she was unable to, she would ask questions until she understood. Her eagerness to work with the language was revealed at the beginning of the quarter, during our first interview, when Marie indicated to me that she was upset that the teacher was speaking in English instead of Arabic:

> I feel like it’s a temptation to use English because teachers want to make sure the students understand, but I think it would be more effective to take more time to
explain it in Arabic than just use the English so they understand immediately. I know I learn a lot when I hear a teacher say something several different ways until I understand it. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

When the teacher started using Arabic exclusively in class by the third week, Marie was much happier. She described her feelings to me during our second interview:

Even though I don’t understand every single thing that comes out of his mouth, which I don’t think I’m supposed to anyways, I am much happier that he is using Arabic. I feel like I’m learning a lot more. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

When it came to writing, Marie was a little less confident. Prior to this course, she had not done much free writing and therefore had the least confidence in this skill. She explained to me why in our first interview:

I feel like my writing is a little worse than reading, speaking, and listening. I’m able to make good grammatical sentences that flow, but sometimes I have to look up a lot of words. I’m really not content to say it a simple way with the words I know. I want to say it the way it should be said – even using words that I don’t know. So it takes me a long time, which makes it dreadful. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

While anxiety was apparently not an issue for Marie with respect to speaking and listening, her use of the word “dreadful” with regard to writing suggests that for this skill there was some anxiety involved. However, as the quarter progressed and Marie practiced writing regularly with the weekly journals, she gained more confidence in herself as a writer. She no longer dreaded writing and grew to enjoy it. In fact, she felt like it helped her become a better reader:

I’m actually liking writing. I’m getting a lot more practice writing longer pieces regularly with the journals and homework. So I’m getting more confident with
putting words together to create writing, which I think is also making a better reader – at least with understanding things. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Here, Marie echoes Eric’s belief in the interconnectedness of language skills, at least between writing and reading. The growth of her positive attitude toward writing, coupled with her high comfort level with speaking and listening, suggests that, as her survey scores showed, she was a low anxiety language learner, at least with respect to Arabic.

**ADAM**

For Adam, a HLL with low anxiety, listening was not a problem at all. He understood pretty much everything the teacher said in class as well as what was said on the DVDs, including the Egyptian colloquial dialect:

> Since I grew up listening to Arabic, both MSA and colloquial, I have no problems at all with listening. I actually think it’s my best skill. I grew up using the Syrian dialect, but I have had friends from many different countries, including Egypt. So I also understand the Egyptian dialect. I also listen to MSA on T.V. and sometimes the internet, so I don’t have a problem understanding that either. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)

Although Adam had no problems with listening, he had quite a few issues with speaking. While he was fairly confident sharing simple answers that were made up of a few words, he lacked the confidence to speak freely in MSA. Growing up, he listened to many lectures in MSA, especially religious ones, but was never in the position where he had to give lectures or participate in any formal events where the use of MSA was required. Hence he lacked confidence in his abilities and therefore shied away from expressing his
opinions on reading texts and was hesitant to join in any discussions (Observations: 10/22/2009; 11/3/2009). As he explained:

Today we read an excerpt from Mustafa Amin’s book describing university life and how it has changed over the years. Then we had a class discussion about our personal university life. The teacher asked for volunteers to share their opinions, and I wanted to share mine, but I felt like I couldn’t formulate my thoughts in MSA. I could say it in a heartbeat in my colloquial dialect, but that would probably be unacceptable. I’ve never heard anyone speak in class in the colloquial. (Journal: 10/8/2009)

Adam was even reluctant to ask any questions when he was confused or needed help. He felt like he should not be using his colloquial dialect at all. While the teacher did not explicitly ban the usage of colloquial dialects, one of the course objectives, stated in the syllabus, was “initiating and sustaining communication in Modern Standard Arabic”. Furthermore, the Arabic program at this particular university was an exclusively MSA program, with very little integration of colloquial dialects. Hence, Adam did not feel that it was acceptable to use his Syrian dialect and felt “stupid” using the formal form of the language, as he simply was just not used to communicating with others so formally:

I didn’t understand the teacher’s explanation about active participles and I needed some clarification, but I was too shy to ask. Why? Mostly because I felt stupid asking in MSA. All my life, I’ve spoken in colloquial, and it just feels awkward to me to speak in MSA. (Journal: 11/12/2009)

This situation offers insight into a dilemma faced by many HLLs, whose primary contact with the target language has been in informal contexts where colloquial language use dominates. When Adam had to leave the comfort zone of that form of Arabic, he “felt stupid” and, as a recognized native speaker of Arabic among his classmates and teachers,
felt anxiety when asked to use MSA. Interestingly, when it came to writing (of course in MSA), Adam was much more confident and comfortable. Although he did not write often in Arabic, he knew how to write when he had to. It was not difficult for him; indeed, it was fairly easy—he just did not enjoy writing in general. Nonetheless, at the end of the quarter, he found that the weekly journals were a helpful learning tool that improved his writing skills:

I know that you need to practice writing to become a good writer. Before this class, I never found the time to practice my writing in Arabic. I actually haven’t written something long in Arabic for several years—since I last went to Arabic school during the beginning of high school. Even though I didn’t really enjoy writing the journals, in the end they really helped me become a better writer. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

As a HLL, Adam’s journey across different language skills and levels and uses of Arabic, as well as levels of anxiety, was somewhat different than that experienced by his FLL classmates.

JENNA

Like Adam, Jenna, a HLL with low anxiety, had no problems comprehending what she heard in Arabic. She understood everything that was said in MSA, but had a little trouble understanding some words in the Egyptian colloquial dialect:

Listening is not a problem for me. I grew up listening to Arabic. But sometimes, I have some difficulty understanding some words in the Egyptian dialect. I haven’t really had much experience with that dialect, since I am from Algeria. So that’s probably why. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)
Although Jenna was not afraid to ask what those several words meant, in simple MSA, she was more hesitant to speak in longer sentences. She enthusiastically volunteered to answer questions that consisted of several words, but did not participate much in discussions that involved more speaking. She described her feelings to me during our second interview:

\[\text{I like to participate because that’s the way I am. I like to show that I know the material. But when I have to speak in MSA in class, I’m a little unsure of myself. I mean if I take the time to think about it, I can speak in MSA, but it takes me more time to find the right words. I haven’t really had much practice speaking in MSA, because most of the talking that I do in Arabic is in my Algerian dialect. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)}\]

In addition to not receiving enough practice speaking MSA, Jenna also felt that it was “weird” speaking in this formal, unnatural way with her teacher.

\[\text{It feels a little weird speaking in MSA because we don’t use it. We always speak our dialect. (Interview 2: 11/4/2009)}\]

Thus, for Jenna, like for Adam, being a HLL of Arabic was not always an asset in this Arabic course. It may even have led to some uncharacteristic anxiety when it came to speaking MSA, since she found it to be “a little weird” due to her lack of experience.

On the other hand, Jenna had plenty of practice writing in MSA. She loved to write in Arabic and was very happy that the 401 course included a journal writing component. She enjoyed expressing her ideas in writing and liked the fact that the teacher would correct her mistakes and return them to her. This, she felt, was a great way for her to become a better writer in Arabic:
I love writing journals because it's an opportunity for me to get practice and get better. I generally like writing in Arabic and do it often to keep in touch with some of my family members that still live in Algeria – but whatever mistakes I make are not corrected. With the journals that I have been writing for class, all of my mistakes are corrected so that I can learn from them and hopefully not make them again. (Interview 3: 12/3/2009)

These comments provide some interesting insight into Jenna’s experience of anxiety, in that she was open to having her mistakes corrected, at least in writing. Instead of feeling anxious about making mistakes, especially as a HLL, she saw writing practice and corrective feedback as a valuable source of language learning.

**Summary of Findings about Speaking, Listening, and Writing**

Table 4.7 provides a summary of the main findings regarding the participants’ experiences of, and feelings towards, listening, speaking, and writing in the Arabic 401 course. These findings once again show a wide variety of responses and reveal that there was not a uniform experience of anxiety across the five participants. They also show interesting differences between the experiences of the FLLs and HLLs and how anxiety was manifested among them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Challenges and Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lucas | FLL   | High      | - Listening caused great anxiety; almost caused him to drop major  
|       |       |           | - Textbook DVDs did not help; too fast-paced for him; overwhelming  
|       |       |           | - Listened to other Arabic materials – led to a positive change in attitude  
|       |       |           | - Unscripted speaking caused great anxiety; didn’t feel he had enough practice in class and did not seek opportunities outside of class  
|       |       |           | - Did not volunteer during class discussions; very nervous when called on  
|       |       |           | - Native Arabic speakers intimidated him; no “real” interactions made language feel unreal to him  
|       |       |           | - Felt that writing was his best skill; it gave him time to collect thoughts  
|       |       |           | - Enjoyed writing journals for class, which helped his overall confidence  |
| Eric  | FLL   | Medium    | - Constantly worked on listening on iPod; felt that it helped him with all skills, especially reading  
|       |       |           | - Did not feel comfortable speaking without preparation due to lack of practice; desired more in-class free speaking  
|       |       |           | - Sought opportunities outside of class to interact with native speakers (in MSA); not very comfortable using colloquial  
|       |       |           | - Not afraid to participate in class discussions; volunteered often  
|       |       |           | - Writing made him anxious; especially open-ended questions  
|       |       |           | - Journals helped him improve his writing over quarter  |
| Marie | FLL   | Low       | - Felt very comfortable speaking MSA in class; volunteered often; asked many questions; not afraid to take risks  
|       |       |           | - Felt comfortable listening to Arabic; wanted it used all the time in class  
|       |       |           | - Listening/speaking in colloquial made her a little nervous  
|       |       |           | - Felt writing was worst skill; made her anxious and she dreaded it  
|       |       |           | - Journals helped her develop writing skills over quarter and she began to enjoy it  |
| Adam  | HLL   | Low       | - Listening was not a struggle; understood both MSA and colloquial  
|       |       |           | - Volunteered simple answers; did not participate in discussions  
|       |       |           | - Felt anxious speaking in MSA; not confident in his abilities  
|       |       |           | - Very comfortable speaking colloquial (Syrian), but felt it was unacceptable using it in class  
|       |       |           | - Reluctant to ask questions when confused; belief that he must use MSA  
|       |       |           | - Writing was not difficult for him; the journals gave him lots of practice  |
| Jenna | HLL   | Low       | - Listening was not a struggle; understood MSA but had a little trouble understanding the Egyptian colloquial on DVDs  
|       |       |           | - Volunteered simple answers; was unsure of her MSA speaking abilities; had to “think about” things before she could say them; felt “weird” using MSA in class  
|       |       |           | - Very comfortable speaking colloquial; felt it was unacceptable to use  
|       |       |           | - Enjoyed writing journals and getting feedback on mistakes  |

Table 4.7: Summary of nature of anxiety related to **Listening, Speaking, and Writing**
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyze and discuss the data that was presented in the previous chapter. It starts with summaries of the quantitative data (5.2) and the qualitative data (5.3), followed by answers to the research questions (5.4-5.7). Next, a summary of the study’s emerging themes is presented (5.8), followed by the common thread that was found across participants (5.9) and a more focused discussion of themes related specifically to the two groups of primary interest in this research: foreign language learners (FLLs) in section (5.10) and heritage language learners (HLLs) in section (5.11). Conclusions arising from the study are then presented in section (5.12), followed by a discussion of the pedagogical implications arising from the study (5.13), suggestions for future research (5.14), and some concluding remarks (5.15).

The study was designed to investigate, mainly qualitatively, the following research questions related to anxiety in the foreign language classroom:

1(a): To what extent do foreign language learners (FLLs) experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?

1(b): What is the nature of that anxiety?

2(a): To what extent do heritage language learner (HLLs) experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?
2(b): What is the nature of that anxiety?
Thus, the research questions investigated the general foreign language anxiety that was experienced by FLLs and HLLs, with a particular focus on reading anxiety.

5.2 Summary of Quantitative Data

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the study’s quantitative data (demographic information, scores on the anxiety scales administered at the beginning of the study, and the students’ final grades for the Arabic 401 course that was the research site for the study). This information was also presented in Chapter Four.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. years studied Arabic</th>
<th>Perceived reading ability</th>
<th>FLCAS Score</th>
<th>FLRAS Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Summary of quantitative data - (students with asterisks are HLLs)

The quantitative data shows that the class as a whole featured a wide mix of students in terms of age, gender, level of study (freshman, sophomore, etc.), degree of anxiety, and performance in the course as reflected by their final grade. The average age for all twenty-two of the participating students was 22 years, with over half of the students being seniors (64%) and males (64%), as shown in Table 5.2.
Table 5.2: Breakdown of classroom demographics (n=22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>64% Seniors</td>
<td>64% Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18% Junior</td>
<td>36% Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9% Sophomore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9% Freshman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though there were only three HLLs in the class, there was a high level of consistency across the factors reflected in Table 5.1. As shown in Table 5.3, the HLLs stand out from the FLLs in several ways: their amount of experience with Arabic; their very high levels of self-perceived reading ability in Arabic; their low levels of anxiety as reflected in the FLCAS and FLRAS scores; and their high performance in the course (with all three receiving an A).

Table 5.3: Data averages for FLLs and HLLs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Years Studied Arabic</th>
<th>Perceived Reading Ability</th>
<th>FLCAS</th>
<th>FLRAS</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLLs (n=19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>97.84</td>
<td>56.37</td>
<td>A: 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B: 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C: 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D: 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLLs (n=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55.67</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>A: 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Data averages for FLLs and HLLs
The results portray an interesting and diverse situation with respect to the FLLs, who, unlike the HLLs, were neither consistent nor predictable. While the HLLs had studied Arabic for an average of ten and a half years, the FLLs only had about two and a half years experience with the language: a difference that, as shown by both the quantitative and qualitative data, affected how each of the two groups of learners experienced anxiety in the classroom. Not only did the FLLs rate their reading abilities much lower than the HLLs (5.42 vs. 9), but they also had anxiety levels almost double what the HLLs had on both the FLCAS and FLRAS, as shown in Table 5.3. Hence, it is not very surprising that their performance in the course was generally lower than that of the HLLs. In fact, most of the FLLs (48%) earned grades in the C range: a reflection, perhaps, of the difficulty of the language and the amount of experience it requires to achieve high competency.

Although there was consistency in the relationship between HLLs’ anxiety levels and course grades, there were no such patterns amongst the FLLs. While in a number of cases those with high levels of anxiety had lower course grades, as might be expected, there were also cases where students with high levels of anxiety also had high course grades, a situation which might be unexpected. This kind of information, about both the HLLs and the FLLs, provided a valuable backdrop to the views they expressed in the qualitative portion of the study. These results also hint at the complexities that can arise when FLLs and HLLs are mixed in the same class, where one group (HLLs) looks uniform and the other (FLLs) does not.
5.3 Summary of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data that was collected from the five participants (three FLLs and two HLLs) via classroom observations, interviews, and participant journals is summarized in three reading-related areas: (1) oral reading; (2) diacritical marks; (3) reading comprehension; and a fourth seemingly separate, yet connected, area that involved (4) listening, speaking, and writing.

**Oral Reading**

Oral reading was generally an anxiety-inducing activity that made all five of the participants anxious – though some more than others. The three FLLs experienced varying levels of anxiety for a number of different reasons. Lucas experienced the most anxiety, as he had unrealistic expectations of himself that made him worry a great deal about what others thought of him. He usually became so anxious while reading aloud that he often forgot things he already knew. Although some beforehand preparation alleviated that anxiety, he often felt too overwhelmed to study and prepare the reading material on his own, making him even more anxious. Eric’s anxiety, on the other hand, was usually quelled with the extensive preparation that he did at home. He was aware of the language learning process and the struggles that usually came with it – which helped him cope with any anxiety that he experienced during oral reading. Marie, too, was aware of the process and was not afraid of making mistakes. This usually made her feel at ease while reading aloud, allowing her to enjoy getting the practice she wanted in order to improve her skills. She had a competitive streak that sometimes made her envious of others who read
better than her, but that only motivated her to work harder. In short, there was considerable variation among the FLLS with respect to reading aloud and anxiety.

While the HLLs generally experienced less anxiety during oral reading than the FLLs, they still felt anxious, usually when making mistakes. Both Adam and Jenna viewed themselves as native speakers and had very high (and unrealistic) expectations that left little room for error making. Thus, whenever they did make mistakes, they felt uncomfortable and anxious. Nonetheless, on the whole, they felt less anxious than the FLLs and often felt bored and unchallenged when the class was reading aloud.

**Diacritical Marks**

Generally, all five of the participants felt that diacritical marks were helpful, but not necessary, for reading comprehension. They found them to be the most useful when they encountered unfamiliar words. Otherwise, their presence or absence did not have much of an impact on their understanding. However, when it came to the task of placing diacritical marks on words during oral reading in class, particularly case endings, all of the participants faced difficulties. Given that the task required excellent grammatical knowledge, those who felt less confident in this area felt more anxious. This addition of a formal grammatical component to their reading activity placed their experiences with anxiety in a somewhat different light.

Among the FLLs, Lucas felt like he lacked competency in Arabic grammar, which made him feel too overwhelmed and unmotivated to prepare the case endings at home. Eric, on the other hand, knew that he needed ample time to be able to correctly
place the case endings and therefore made certain that he did this task at home so he could feel at ease during oral readings. Although Marie felt like she had good grammatical knowledge, she usually did not take the time to complete the task at home. This often resulted in her trying to “guess” the case endings during class while others read, causing her some anxiety.

Even the HLLs, Adam and Jenna, struggled a little with the task of placing case endings. They also had some gaps in their grammatical knowledge and often relied on their intuition to “guess” the correct case endings. Here their heritage language background was both an asset and a disadvantage. Because they had acquired a sense of Arabic naturally, through exposure, as they were growing up, they had a perhaps deceptive sense of how well they actually knew the language. They had a “feel” for it the FLLs may have lacked and felt a high degree of confidence as a result. However, this was separate from formal knowledge of its grammatical system, which they had not acquired outside of class. As such, they initially lacked knowledge of how the diacritical marks operated. However, as the course progressed and their grammar improved, they became much more comfortable (and less anxious) with the task.

Regardless of how much time each of the participants spent on preparing the case endings, they all had to engage in some degree of preparation before oral readings – as attempting to do the two at the same time was just too cognitively demanding and anxiety-inducing. In that regard both the FLLs and HLLs were alike.
Reading Comprehension

When it came to reading comprehension, the HLLs generally had very few problems and very little anxiety. Both Adam and Jenna had more advanced comprehension skills than their classmates and often felt bored with the class’s slower pace. This was not surprising given the high scores they had awarded themselves in their self-assessment of their reading ability, as shown earlier. While Adam’s vocabulary needed some work, he lacked the motivation to work beyond what was required of him. Jenna’s vocabulary was fairly rich, as she did a lot of reading in Arabic on her own. Nevertheless, she often struggled with translating from Arabic to English – a skill that she knew she needed to improve and often worked on.

The FLLs, on the other hand, had to put forth much more effort in order to develop their comprehension skills. Lucas had a difficult time adjusting to the more complex sentence structure in the course’s textbook and felt too overwhelmed to work on developing his skills. He therefore felt very anxious when he was asked to show his understanding of reading material. Eric was more comfortable with understanding what he read. He knew that three components played an important role in comprehension: vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and topic familiarity. He worked extensively on developing his skills to prevent himself from feeling anxious – and it usually put most of his anxiety at bay. For Marie, overcoming the need to understand every single word in a text was a major step in developing her comprehension skills and feeling less anxious about it. Once she got over the urge to look up every word in a passage, she became more
enthusiastic about reading, which helped her develop both her reading skills and strategies and thus reduce her level of anxiety.

**Listening, Speaking, and Writing**

Although listening did not generally cause the participants anxiety, it was a site of struggle for one of the FLLs. Lucas had a difficult time understanding what he heard – so much so that he wanted to discontinue his studies of Arabic altogether. The fast pace of the textbook DVDs as well as the teacher’s speech made him feel overwhelmed; however, once other listening materials were suggested to him, he was able to practice more and improve. The other participants, both FLLs and HLLs, generally did not feel anxious when it came to listening. Eric listened to Arabic all the time on his iPod and was fairly comfortable comprehending what he heard. Marie was also confident in her listening skills, though mostly to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Understanding the colloquial form of the language made her a little nervous, but she had worked on this during an intensive summer trip to Syria and was getting better at it. Adam and Jenna, the HLLs, generally had no problems understanding both MSA and the colloquial forms.

When it came to speaking, the HLLs and FLLs had somewhat opposite issues. The HLLs were more proficient in their colloquial dialects – Adam Syrian and Jenna Algerian- and felt very comfortable speaking it. However, when it came to speaking MSA, they felt less confident and more anxious. As HLLs, most of their experience with Arabic was in informal settings that used the colloquial forms of the language. Thus, they both shied away from classroom discussions that required them to speak in MSA,
preventing them from receiving the practice they needed to develop this particular skill. Ironically, then, being HLLs of Arabic was not necessarily an advantage in this regard and may even have caused them more difficulties than those experienced by their FLL counterparts. This reflects the different kinds of needs HLLs may have in studying a foreign language. The FLLs had the opposite problem: this particular course, as well as the vast majority of all the other Arabic courses, was taught almost exclusively in MSA, with some, but usually very little, colloquial language integrated every so often. The FLLs therefore had ample input in MSA and very little exposure to colloquial dialects, which made them feel anxious in informal settings (i.e. Marie in Syria and Eric with his local native speaking friends). Regardless of the setting that they were in, some participants felt a general sense of anxiety while speaking Arabic because they lacked confidence in this skill. Lucas and Eric in particular felt that they did not receive enough in-class opportunities to practice unscripted speaking, which they believed would make them feel more confident and less anxious.

The participants had mixed feelings about writing: some enjoyed it while others dreaded it. Whereas Lucas felt that writing was his best skill because it gave him time to put his ideas together, Eric and Marie dreaded writing in response to open-ended prompts. They struggled with general writing issues, such as organization and creativity, as well as with the actual act of writing coherent, complex sentences. As the course progressed and they wrote their weekly journal entries for class, they became much more comfortable and less anxious about writing in Arabic. The HLLs, Adam and Jenna, also benefited greatly from the journals. Though they were not particularly anxious about
writing beforehand, they both needed the practice, and the journals were an excellent
learning tool for them.

5.4 Research Question 1

To what extent do FLLs experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading
course?

Using data from Table 5.1, the means on both the FLCAS and FLRAS for the
nineteen FLLs were calculated and found to be 97.84 and 56.37, respectively. The
standard deviations, 22.65 and 11.71, were used to determine the high, medium, and low
anxiety score ranges using the same technique employed by Sellers (2000). A score was
determined to be within the high range if it was more than one standard deviation above
the mean. Likewise, if it was one standard deviation below the mean, it was considered to
be a low anxiety score. Scores that fell in-between were considered to be medium anxiety
scores. Table 5.4 visually displays this information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FLCAS</th>
<th>FLRAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>97.84</td>
<td>56.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
<td>22.65</td>
<td>11.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Anxiety</strong></td>
<td>120 and above</td>
<td>68 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Anxiety</strong></td>
<td>76-119</td>
<td>45-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Anxiety</strong></td>
<td>75 and below</td>
<td>44 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4: FLCAS and FLRAS score ranges for FLLs (n=19)
The majority of the FLLs enrolled in the Arabic 401 course received scores within the medium range on both the FLCAS and FLRAS. Of the nineteen FLLs, three received low scores, three received high scores, and the remaining thirteen received medium scores (15.79%, 15.79%, and 68.42%, respectively). This indicates that although there were some students who were on the low and high ends of anxiety levels, most of the FLLs had medium anxiety levels in this course. The pie graph, Figure 5.1, illustrates the breakdown of anxiety scores among FLLs in the classroom.

![Pie chart showing anxiety scores among FLLs](image)

Figure 5.1: Breakdown of FLCAS and FLRAS scores among FLLs

Although the number of students in the present study was relatively small (nineteen for the FLLs), the mean and standard deviation on the FLCAS for the FLLs (M=97.84, SD= 22.65) are similar to those found in other foreign language studies (Aida,
1994; Horwitz, 1986; Saito, Garza & Horwitz, 1999; Tallon, 2009), and the only other study that has investigated anxiety in the Arabic classroom (Elkhafaifi, 2005), as shown in Table 5.5.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLCAS Mean</strong></td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>90.06</td>
<td>94.66</td>
<td>97.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLCAS SD</strong></td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.81</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>22.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5: Comparison of FLCAS means/standard deviations

The mean in the present study is a little higher than the other studies involving various foreign languages, as well as Elkhafaifi’s (2005) study involving the Arabic language. This may be due to a number of factors, including the level of students’ language study. Elkhafaifi’s (2005) study included students from beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses. The present study only examined students in an intermediate course, where they are just beginning to make an adjustment from simpler texts to more advanced and authentic texts with more complex sentence structures – which may translate to increased levels of anxiety.

The mean and standard deviation on the FLRAS for the nineteen FLLs in this study is similar to the seminal study by Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) that established
foreign language reading anxiety as a separate and distinct phenomenon from general foreign language anxiety. Although Sellers (2000) also explored reading anxiety, she did not use the same instrument, the FLRAS. Hence, a comparison of the mean and standard deviation between the present study and that of Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) is shown in Table 5.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Saito, Garza &amp; Horwitz (1999)</th>
<th>Present Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLRAS Mean</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>56.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLRAS SD</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>11.71</td>
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Table 5.6: Comparison of FLRAS means/standard deviations

The present study has a slightly higher mean, 56.37, which may be due to students’ perceptions of how difficult reading Arabic is. Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) found reading anxiety to vary by target language, with students experiencing more anxiety if they perceived the language to be more difficult, especially if it had a non-Roman writing system. For example, students of Japanese were more anxious about reading than students of French (56.0 and 53.14, respectively). The present study examining students of Arabic shows that the average anxiety experienced during reading is even a little higher (M= 56.37). This may be due to the fact that Arabic has a non-Roman writing system and is generally perceived to be one of the more difficult
languages to learn, particularly when students have an alphabetic language background as, these students, being native speakers of English, did.

To summarize the answer to Research Question 1(a), the majority of the FLLs in the Arabic classroom where this study took place experienced medium levels of anxiety. Based on their FLCAS and FLRAS scores, the FLLs participating in this study felt a little more anxiety in comparison to students in other studies. The qualitative results support this finding despite only investigating three of the nineteen FLLs. Furthermore, the qualitative data suggests that even those with lower scores on the anxiety measures may experience anxiety that is at times debilitating, suggesting that anxiety is a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a simple number. Hence, the necessity for the second part of the research question.

5.5 Research Question 1(b)

What is the nature of that anxiety?

The qualitative portion of the study was conducted so as to address this question; therefore in this section only the qualitative results will be discussed. These involved three students: Lucas with high anxiety, Eric with medium anxiety, and Marie with low anxiety. The nature of anxiety experienced by each of the FLLs will be analyzed in three areas that are important components of reading in Arabic: (1) oral reading; (2) diacritical marks; and (3) reading comprehension. A fourth area (listening, speaking, and writing) will also be analyzed as these skills played an important role in the dynamics of the classroom and affected students’ anxiety as well.
With respect to oral reading in class, the nature of the FLLs’ anxiety was both facilitating and debilitating. For Lucas, it was overwhelmingly debilitating, as it often made him forget things he already knew. Given that worry occupies cognitive areas that are used for memory and processing (Eysenck, 1979), it is not surprising that when FLLs get very anxious, their ability to think and perform is impaired, as was the case with Lucas. When the FLLs experienced lower levels of anxiety, as Eric and Marie did, it was generally facilitating. Eric felt anxious when he was unprepared, so he was motivated to “fight the new learning task” by preparing the reading material extensively at home (Scovel, 1978, p. 139). He was emotionally charged by this facilitating anxiety to practice thoroughly to gear himself for approval behavior (Scovel, 1978). Similarly, when Marie made mistakes she experienced some anxiety, but it was facilitating because it helped her work hard so that she could attain higher levels of reading proficiency. Thus, the nature of the anxiety experienced by the FLLs differed from person to person: it was facilitating for the two FLLs with low and medium anxiety scores, but debilitating for the FLL with high anxiety.

Similarly, the nature of the FLLs’ anxiety with regard to the task of placing diacritical marks (case endings) was both facilitating and debilitating. A certain level of anxiety that was experienced by Eric and, at times, Marie, motivated these FLLs to work hard and complete the task before coming to class – which prevented them from feeling anxious during oral readings. This is understandable, since “the mastery of fluent reading in Arabic demands holistic simultaneous automatic processing of many variables” (Abu-Rabia, 1998, p. 110). Reading aloud while trying to place case endings at the same time is
cognitively demanding and caused the FLLs a considerable amount of anxiety. This potential anxiety was facilitating because it pushed them to prepare the material well. The case was, however, different for Lucas. The anxiety he experienced trying to complete the task at home was debilitating, as the deficiencies in his grammatical and syntactical knowledge made the task too overwhelming for him. He therefore became trapped in a vicious cycle involving feeling overwhelmed, unmotivated, and thus unprepared and anxious. In sum, the nature of the anxiety the FLLs experienced was variable. Seemingly, low to medium levels of anxiety were facilitating for the FLLs, while high levels were debilitating.

Likewise, the nature of the FLLs’ anxiety in regards to reading comprehension could be characterized as both facilitating and debilitating. The anxiety associated with not understanding what they read was generally facilitating for the FLLs with low and medium anxiety scores and, not surprisingly, debilitating for the FLL with high anxiety. While the anxiety that Lucas felt as a result of not comprehending what he read just made him feel inadequate and unmotivated to study, the anxiety that Eric and Marie felt motivated them to develop skills that aided in their reading comprehension, such as vocabulary and culture. However, it was at times debilitating even for the FLL with low anxiety scores, Marie. She agonized over the need to know the meaning of every single word in a passage, which prevented her from feeling enthusiastic about reading in Arabic and therefore limited the amount of practice she gave herself. The nature of this anxiety was somewhat surprising and unexpected – especially coming from a person with low anxiety scores on the FLCAS and FLRAS. Nonetheless, it shows that even FLLs with
seemingly low anxiety may feel anxious about certain aspects of reading that can hinder their learning if not addressed and dealt with appropriately.

In terms of listening, speaking, and writing, the nature of the FLLs’ anxiety was also variable. Generally, the anxiety that the FLLs with low and medium anxiety scores experienced in relation to listening and speaking was facilitating, as it motivated them to seek more opportunities to develop those two particular skills. Interestingly, however, that was not the case with writing. Both Eric and Marie experienced anxiety that was somewhat debilitating in this area. In fact, of all the skills, it was the most anxiety-inducing for them. The exact opposite was true for the highly anxious FLL, Lucas: writing caused him the least anxiety, while the anxiety he felt in relation to listening and speaking was quite debilitating. In sum, the FLLs experienced different types of anxiety in the different language skills. That anxiety might be skill-specific is an interesting finding.

In general, the answer to Research Questions 1(b) is that low to medium levels of anxiety were facilitating for the FLLs while higher levels were debilitating.

5.6 Research Question 2(a)

To what extent do HLLs experience anxiety in an intermediate Arabic reading course?

As mentioned earlier, there were only three HLLs enrolled in the Arabic 401 course, which is a number that was expected due to the general trend that HLLs make up about 20% of the students in Arabic foreign language classes (Belnap, 2006, p. 174).
While only two of the three HLLs participated in the second phase of the study, all three HLLs partook in the first phase. Using the data from Table 5.1, the means for the three HLLs on both the FLCAS and FLRAS were calculated and found to be 55.67 and 33.33, respectively. The standard deviations were found to be 11.02 and 8.50 for the FLCAS and FLRAS, respectively – shown in Table 5.7.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FLCAS</th>
<th>FLRAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>55.67</td>
<td>33.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>11.02</td>
<td>8.50</td>
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Table 5.7: FLCAS and FLRAS results for HLLs (n=3)

Although I do not know of any studies that have measured FLRAS scores of HLLs, Tallon (2009) has measured HLLs’ FLCAS scores (M= 78.78, SD= 24.52). The three HLLs in this study received scores significantly lower on the FLCAS than the HLLs in Tallon’s (2009) study, as shown in Table 5.8. This may be due to a number of reasons; however, the most apparent reason seems to be the fact that these HLLs had studied Arabic for many years throughout their life. Not only did they grow up in homes speaking and listening to colloquial Arabic, but they also had some type of formal schooling and learned reading and writing prior to becoming college students. Undoubtedly, this had an effect on their comfort and confidence levels while reading Arabic. On the other hand, most of the HLLs in Tallon’s (2009) study had not formally
studied the language growing up. Hence, they experienced higher levels of foreign language anxiety and received higher scores on the FLCAS.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tallon (2009)</th>
<th>Present Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>FLCAS Mean</td>
<td>78.78</td>
<td>55.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLCAS SD</td>
<td>24.52</td>
<td>11.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 5.8: Comparison of FLCAS means/standard deviations for HLLs

In comparison to the quantitative results, the qualitative results for the two HLLs who participated in that portion of the study show that despite having low scores on both the FLCAS and FLRAS, the HLLs still experienced anxiety that at times hindered their learning. Furthermore, the qualitative data suggests that when the HLLs did not feel much anxiety about certain aspects of reading, such as comprehension, they were not motivated to push themselves to work hard and achieve their full potential. Hence, the lack of facilitating anxiety was in fact detrimental to the advancement of the HLLs’ reading skills.

What these results show, then, with respect to Research Question 2(a) is that, based on their FLCAS and FLRAS scores, the HLLs participating in this study experienced low levels of anxiety, though the qualitative results indicated that this pattern was not as uniform as the quantitative results suggested. That is, under certain circumstances, the HLLs did experience some anxiety not reflected in their broader quantitative scores.
5.7 Research Question 2(b)

What is the nature of that anxiety?

Here, again, this question will be addressed strictly by the qualitative results, as that was a key function of the qualitative portion of the study, that is, to dig more deeply into the students’ experiences of anxiety. As mentioned earlier, only two of the three HLLs participated in the second, qualitative phase of the study: Adam and Jenna. Both of these students received scores within the low range on the FLCAS and FLRAS. Nevertheless, they experienced anxiety in the classroom that at times hindered their learning and prevented them from achieving their full potential. As such, the data collected from these two HLLs from classroom observations, interviews, and participant journals will be analyzed in the following sections.

The anxiety that the HLLs experienced in relation to oral reading generally did not have much of an impact on their reading: it was neither facilitating nor debilitating. The HLLs’ advanced skills in comparison to their FLL classmates caused them relatively little anxiety during oral reading. Seemingly, this may appear to be a positive finding; however, the fact that the HLLs did not experience much anxiety may have hindered their learning, as a certain amount of anxiety associated with emotionality rather than worry may enhance learning instead of hindering it (Scovel, 1978). The HLLs lacked this and therefore did not have the motivation to push themselves to advance their reading skills even further. Interestingly, this lack of progress seemed to cause the HLLs an underlying feeling of anxiety.
The nature of anxiety the HLLs experienced in relation to the task of placing case endings was generally facilitating. The fact that the HLLs were somewhat lacking in their Arabic grammar affected their abilities to select the proper case endings. Relying on their intuition for this task, a common practice among HLLs (Triantafillidou and Hedgcock, 2007), did not always prove to be correct, which resulted in the HLLs making mistakes and feeling anxious. This anxiety, however, was facilitating because it motivated them to put forth more effort to learn the grammar they needed to be able to methodologically select the correct case endings. Hence, the anxiety the HLLs experienced in relation to diacritical marks, specifically case endings, was ultimately helpful to them, as it facilitated their learning.

The HLLs did not experience much anxiety when it came to reading comprehension. In comparison to the FLLs in the class, they had advanced skills that made comprehension related exercises too easy for them. The fact that they generally did not feel much anxiety in this area hindered their advancement because it did not motivate them to push themselves beyond what was required of them. Thus, they met the requirements that were expected from the FLLs and failed to work on further developing their own reading skills. At times, the HLLs did feel some anxiety that facilitated their learning – such as when Jenna worked on developing her vocabulary skills because she had difficulties translating from Arabic to English. Nonetheless, on the whole, the HLLs did not experience much anxiety related to reading comprehension, which may have hindered their advancement.
In terms of listening and writing, the HLLs generally experienced very little anxiety. The small amounts of anxiety that they did feel, particularly with regards to writing, was facilitating because it motivated them to write more in their weekly journals, which helped them further develop their writing skills. Speaking for the HLLs, however, was a different case, as they experienced quite a lot of anxiety in this area that was clearly debilitating. Given their HLL backgrounds, Adam and Jenna both had a lot of experience speaking their colloquial dialects and much less experience speaking in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). This made them unsure of their abilities and quite anxious, which prevented them from participating in class and receiving the practice they needed to develop this skill. They were trapped in a vicious cycle of anxiety, lack of practice, and more anxiety. Hence, for the HLLs, the anxiety they felt speaking in MSA was debilitating because it hindered their learning.

An additional point of interest with respect to the nature of the HLLs’ experience of anxiety, when they did experience it, has to do with their background with the language and the perception they had, and that may have been shared by their FLL classmates, of themselves as native speakers of the language. As shown in Chapter Four, this native language speaker status was sometimes anxiety-inducting, in that they realized they faced higher expectations for performance than did their FLL classmates. Thus, for them, anxiety was to some extent filtered through their native language speaker status, an experience not at all shared by the FLLs in the course.

To summarize, the answer to Research Question 2(b) is that the HLLs generally experienced low levels of anxiety that may have been debilitating. Although low anxiety
is seemingly positive, it may in fact have hindered the HLLs’ learning, as it did not give them the motivation they needed to advance their reading skills.

5.8 Emerging Themes

The themes that have emerged from the data will be addressed next. First, the themes that came out of the data collected from the FLLs will be discussed, followed by those from the HLLs. A summary of the themes is presented in Figure 5.2. The FLL themes are: (1) real connections to the language alleviated anxiety; (2) awareness of personal struggles as well as others’ struggles reduced anxiety; and (3) thorough preparation increased confidence and decreased anxiety. The HLL themes are: (1) the pressure to perform like a “native” increased anxiety; (2) gaps in grammatical knowledge increased anxiety; and (3) lack of experience speaking MSA increased anxiety. Some of the themes listed are not entirely exclusive to each group of learners (such as awareness of struggles); however, they are listed in the group where they are the most significant. The underlying similarity that both the FLLs and HLLs have is represented by the overlapping box: fear of negative evaluation.
The themes experienced separately by the two groups will be discussed shortly in a subsection for each group. The theme that ran across the two groups, fear of negative evaluation, will be discussed first.

5.9 A Common Thread

The common thread that runs through all of the themes is one of the components of anxiety established by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), which is students’ fear of
negative evaluation. Both the FLLs and HLLs feared negative evaluation by their teacher and classmates when they made mistakes. While they feared the judgment of others to varying degrees, each of the five participants was alike in being worried about what others in the classroom thought of them when they made errors. For example, Lucas, the highly anxious FLL, feared making mistakes when reading aloud because he equated mistakes with stupidity. Adam, a HLL with low anxiety, got anxious when he made mistakes because he viewed himself as a “native” speaker, which left little, if any, room in his mind for committing errors. How comfortable each of the learners was with making mistakes affected their vulnerability to negative evaluation by others. The more aware they were of the fact that mistakes are a normal and expected part of language learning, the more comfortable and less anxious they were making them. For each of the learners, having realistic expectations and goals was an important part of their growth. As the course progressed and the participants became more acquainted with themselves (as learners) and their environment (the teacher, classmates, and material), their fear of negative evaluation decreased, causing their overall anxiety levels to lessen as well.

That fear of negative evaluation was a feature that ran across the participants, regardless of background, is a reminder of the power of the affective domain of foreign language learning and teaching. In the final analysis, learning a foreign language is a very personal experience, and, as the results of this study show, one that individuals cannot easily separate from their ego or sense of themselves. The foreign language classroom is a place where mistakes or a lack of ability are exposed, which is perhaps a major reason why foreign language study is avoided by many students. The fact that even those with a
heritage language background are subject to the fear of negative evaluation is especially interesting and important, particularly at a time when there are increasing calls for the creation of separate learning tracks for FLLs and HLLs in college foreign language programs (Kim, 2007; Kondo-Brown & Fukuda, 2007).

5.10 FLL Themes

Theme 1: Real connections to the language alleviated anxiety

The first theme that emerges from the data is that real connections to the language help reduce learners’ anxiety. Students who had meaningful interactions with native speakers of Arabic experienced less foreign language anxiety in general, which translated to less reading anxiety as well. Marie, a FLL with low anxiety, interacted with native speakers very often both locally and overseas. She was one of the leaders of the university’s Arabic Language and Culture Club. This provided her with numerous opportunities to interact with local native speakers of the language and to learn more about their cultural ways. It made the language real for her. Marie also had the chance to spend an entire summer abroad in Syria, where she studied at a university in Damascus. She described the experience as “invaluable” because she learned so much from it. Not only was she able to study Arabic intensively at the university, but she was also able to interact with native Syrians and form friendships that proved to be invaluable learning tools for her.

Eric, a FLL with medium anxiety, also had connections to the language that made it “real” for him. Although he had not yet had the opportunity to study abroad, he had
been stationed in an Arabic speaking country as part of the military, which is what sparked his interest in studying the language. He was very familiar with the culture before he even started learning Arabic. And, as he started his studies at the university, he sought opportunities where he could interact with native speakers. He regularly went to tutoring sessions organized by the international department where he met Arab exchange students. He helped them with English, and they helped him with Arabic in exchange. He formed several friendships this way that are still ongoing. He goes to these friends whenever he feels like he needs more practice or has questions. They, too, are an invaluable resource to him: they have helped him learn and encouraged him to continue his studies of Arabic to learn even more. Hence, Eric’s connections to the language have undoubtedly helped build his confidence in the language and alleviate some of the anxiety he has reading Arabic.

Lucas, a highly anxious FLL, did not have such connections or interactions to help make the language “real” for him. He had never been to an Arabic speaking country; nor did he interact with local native speakers. He was intimidated by them and did not have friends who could help him overcome the formidable task of initiating interactions that could provide him with meaningful learning opportunities. Being a double major in Russian and Arabic, Lucas had Russian friends with whom he interacted regularly. They helped him whenever he had problems and provided him with motivation and encouragement to continue his studies; however, he did not have the same personal connections in Arabic. This lack of a real connection to the language undoubtedly impacted on Lucas’s anxiety levels in general and reading anxiety in particular. Given the
interconnectedness of the four language skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking, the lack of practice that Lucas got outside of the classroom affected his anxiety in all areas, including reading.

**Theme 2: Awareness of personal struggles as well as others’ struggles reduced anxiety**

It is only a natural part of being human that one is concerned about the negative evaluation of others when learning a new language; however, how concerned or even fearful one is varies from one person to another. Generally, the more fearful a learner is of negative evaluation, the more anxiety he or she has (Horwitz, 1986). All five of the participants in this study, both FLLs and HLLs, were concerned to some degree about being judged negatively by the teacher and other students, usually when making mistakes. What made some more anxious than others was how aware they were of the fact the making mistakes is a normal and expected part of language learning. The more awareness a learner had that reading Arabic is not an easy task, the more accepting he or she was of making mistakes, and the less fearful that person was of negative evaluation.

Marie, a FLL with low anxiety, was very well aware of the fact that making mistakes is a normal part of language learning. Although she did not particularly enjoy “messing up,” she knew that it was an expected part of the learning process. She knew that she was not perfect, because nobody is, and reading Arabic is not easy. Hence, when she did make mistakes she did not feel anxious.

Similarly, Eric was also aware that making mistakes was normal. He therefore accepted it as part of the experience and did not fear others’ judgment. While he did care
a little about what others would think of him when he made mistakes, he made a
conscious effort to not allow himself to worry much about it. He mentally trained himself
to set those thoughts aside to be able to focus on actual learning. He described this in an
interview:

    If I notice that I’m not doing very good, I don’t get down on myself. Like the
    other day in class, someone was like “ugghh” after they read out loud because
    they were embarrassed. I just don’t let that happen to myself. I don’t really care if
    people think that I am struggling, because I am. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

Eric was also aware of the fact that even native speakers struggle with learning MSA, the
language of literacy. This understanding really helped him with accepting his own
struggles in learning. In his mind, it eliminated any shamefulness that may be attached to
having difficulties reading. If native speakers struggled, he too could struggle. Hence, this
realization gave him permission to make errors in front of others and not feel very
nervous about it. He explained his thoughts during the first interview:

    It’s encouraging because I know a lot of native speakers learning MSA. They’re
    just not that good at it because it’s not something they did very often. They’re
    awesome in dialect, but they’re not that good in formal. So it’s good to know that
    it’s kind of hard for everyone eventually. (Interview 1: 10/7/2009)

On the other hand, Lucas, a highly anxious FLL, did not have the same awareness as Eric
and Marie. He was not as conscious of the fact that making mistakes is a normal part of
language learning. He therefore expected himself to read fluently without them, which
naturally set him up for disappointment. When he made mistakes, he felt ‘stupid.’ Since
he equated mistakes with feelings of incompetence, he got very anxious whenever he
made errors. He feared what others in the class would think of him. Does he not know his material well? Does he not prepare at home? Does he not know how to read? All these thoughts were concerns and worries of his. He usually got so preoccupied with what others would think of him when making errors that it prevented him from focusing on the actual reading. It was not until later in the quarter that he began to realize that his classmates also struggled with reading. Once he became aware of this, he began to relax a little and his anxiety decreased. He realized that reading Arabic is not easy for anyone, and this made him a little less fearful of the negative evaluation and judgment of others.

The data from the three FLLs suggests that being aware that language learning is not an easy process and having realistic expectations reduces learners’ anxiety. Often times, students have unrealistic beliefs and are disappointed and frustrated when they do not live up to those high expectations. Horwitz (1988) found that more than a third of foreign language students believed that they should achieve language fluency after two years of university study, with only about an hour a day of studying. This belief is far from being realistic and is bound to cause students great anxiety. Having achievable goals and being aware of the language learning process gives students “permission” to make mistakes, as they are attentive to the fact that it is normal and expected. Students are then able to relax and not worry as much about how others in the class will judge them. Essentially, they are less likely to be fearful of the negative evaluation of others.
Theme 3: Thorough preparation increased confidence and decreased anxiety

The third theme that emerges from the data is that the more prepared the learners felt, the more confident they were in their abilities and the less anxiety they experienced. Generally, the learners’ confidence was directly related to how well they prepared for each class. When the three FLLs prepared the reading material well, they felt more confident about their abilities and were less anxious. When they were unprepared, they lacked confidence, worried more about making mistakes, and felt nervous.

Marie, a FLL with low anxiety, felt her best when she was prepared. At times, she did not have the time to prepare the reading material well at home, so she would do some additional, last-minute, preparation in class. This preparation made her feel more confident in herself, which made her more relaxed, especially during oral reading. Even though she was not one to experience much anxiety, if she felt unprepared, she got nervous.

For Eric, a FLL with medium anxiety, preparation was key to his confidence. He rarely fell behind on his preparation because he knew it caused him great anxiety, as he told me during our first interview “when I’m not prepared, I’m pretty nervous” (Interview 1: 10/7/2009). He therefore worked hard to avoid feeling anxious. He listened to Arabic extensively, memorized vocabulary, practiced reading aloud numerous times, filled in case endings, wrote his weekly journals, and did the homework assignments carefully so that he would feel confident in his abilities. The more confident he felt about himself, the less reading anxiety he experienced.
Lucas, a highly anxious FLL, often lacked the confidence to even prepare the reading material at home, which put him in the middle of a vicious cycle involving lack of preparation, lack of confidence, and anxiety. He perceived himself to have lower abilities than his classmates, a common belief held by highly anxious students (Bailey, 1983; Price, 1991). This lowered his confidence and frequently made him feel too overwhelmed to thoroughly prepare the material before class. As the course progressed and he became more aware of his peers’ struggles and the fact that everybody had difficulties in reading Arabic, he gained more confidence in himself and became less anxious.

The qualitative data collected from the three FLLs, Marie, Eric, and Lucas, shows that the more confidence these learners had in their abilities, the less anxious they felt. This finding supports other studies that have found a strong, inverse link between self-confidence and foreign language anxiety (FLA): a high degree of confidence leads to lower levels of anxiety. In their study examining the effects of FLA on writing, Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert (1999) found that self-confidence is an important component of general FLA as well as FL writing anxiety. Similarly, Cheng (2002) found a strong correlation between self-confidence and writing anxiety. And, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) assert that “self-esteem and self-concept play a role in determining levels of foreign language anxiety” (p. 229), an observation supported by the results of this study.
5.11 HLL Themes

Theme 1: The pressure to perform like a “native” increased anxiety

Although the two HLLs, Adam and Jenna, were in fact HLLs who grew up in the United States, they both felt like they were native speakers of Arabic. Adam’s parents emigrated from Syria, and he was born and raised in the United States. Jenna’s family came to the U.S. when she was ten years old, and she has not been back to visit since that time. Using Valdés’s (2001) definition, a HLL is “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the HL, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the HL” (Valdés, 2001, p. 38). Hence, Adam and Jenna were HLLs who were seeking “to learn, re-learn, maintain or expand knowledge of their heritage language in the classroom” (Kondo-Brown, 2006, p. 1). Despite being HLLs, both felt like they were native speakers. Because they had a much more in-depth background in Arabic in comparison to their FLL classmates, Adam and Jenna believed that it made them natives. Furthermore, they had the perception that native speakers were “perfect” and thus rarely made mistakes. This perception proved to be an important component in their experience of anxiety in this course.

As a “native” speaker, Adam felt like his reading should be perfect. He believed that both the teacher and his classmates had higher expectations of him since he was a “native” speaker. This made him feel that making mistakes was unacceptable. He feared what others would think of him when he did make errors, which made him feel disappointment in himself and anxious.
Similarly, Jenna felt like she should not be making any mistakes as a “native”
speaker. When she did make errors, she felt anxious, because she was, in her view, letting
everybody down. She was not living up to the expectations that she believed others had
of her, which made her overly worried about making mistakes.

Both Adam and Jenna had several misperceptions related to the native speaker
situation that caused them anxiety. First, they viewed themselves as native speakers, an
inaccurate description that caused them to have much higher expectations of themselves
than they should have. Second, they believed that native speakers did not make mistakes
– another inaccurate belief. Given the diglossic nature of the language, reading Arabic is
not an easy feat, even for native speakers (Maamouri, 1998). Adam and Jenna were
unaware that reading Arabic is in fact difficult for all those learning it, including native
speakers. This made them worry about making mistakes and, in turn, more vulnerable to
the fear of others’ negative evaluation.

Adam and Jenna’s perception that native speakers were perfect and their desire to
attain that perfection made them anxious, lending support to Gregersen and Horwitz’s
(2002) study that found that anxious language learners and perfectionists may have a
number of characteristics in common, including: higher standards for performance, a
greater tendency toward procrastination, more worry over the opinions of others, and a
higher level of concern over their errors. These characteristics are an almost exact
description of Adam and Jenna. They believed that the teacher and classmates expected
more from them in comparison to other students; they were very concerned about making
errors; and they tended to procrastinate when it came to doing the assignments. In fact,
Adam did his homework in class while the teacher checked others’ work and prepared the reading material while his classmates were reading. Clearly, Adam and Jenna’s misidentification of themselves as native speakers rather than HLLs as well as their misperception that educated native speakers were perfect caused them anxiety that hindered their language learning success. In this respect they differed significantly from their FLL peers.

**Theme 2: Gaps in grammatical knowledge increased anxiety**

Both Adam and Jenna had gaps in their grammatical knowledge that affected their oral reading. Even though they both studied Arabic when they were younger, they had not studied grammar in a while and had forgotten most of it. As discussed earlier, most of their acquisition of Arabic had occurred under natural circumstances of exposure. Thus, learning of the formal properties of the language had not been emphasized. Furthermore, they had not studied Arabic grammar in English, using English terminology. They both studied grammar in Arabic and only knew the grammatical terms and concepts in Arabic. Hence, whenever the teacher talked about grammar and used terms in English, they were clueless. This caused them confusion and feelings of nervousness, as everyone in the class seemed to know the material except for them. Adam was even hesitant to ask for further clarification for fear of appearing “stupid.” He felt like he should have known the material, despite never studying it at the university, and was fearful of others’ negative evaluation if they knew that he in fact did not know the material as a “native” speaker.
Similarly, the gaps in Jenna’s grammatical knowledge caused her quite a bit of anxiety in class. She felt like she did not know enough grammar to be able to select the correct case endings on words in reading texts. Jenna also felt anxious during grammar lessons when she was unsure of what the teacher was talking about. Like Adam, she was usually too embarrassed to ask the teacher for further explanations because she believed that she was supposed to know the material as a “native” speaker. When the teacher asked her grammar questions she was unable to respond to, she felt very anxious. She bluntly expressed her anxiety to me by once telling me “I feel a lot of anxiety now” after she was unable to find the active participle in a sentence (Observation: 11/12/2009). Clearly, Jenna’s deficiencies in grammar made her feel anxious.

Lacking explicit grammatical knowledge is not an uncommon finding among HLLs. HLLs often internalize the core grammar of their HL and learn and expand their knowledge intuitively without consciously knowing the rules (Parodi, 2008; Triantafillidou and Hedgcock (2007). Although Adam and Jenna had, for the most part, internalized the core grammar of Arabic, they did not know the grammar rules that their FLLs counterparts had thoroughly studied. Furthermore, the fact that both Adam and Jenna took Arabic placement tests that placed them out of all four of the Arabic introductory courses further complicated matters. Not only were they unable to learn the English grammatical terms, but they were also unable to review concepts that they had long forgotten. Consequently, this made them anxious about reading, as it affected the confidence they had in their abilities.
Theme 3: Lack of experience speaking MSA increased anxiety

Although the focus of this study was reading anxiety, an interesting finding among the HLLs was discovered and, because it caused them more anxiety than reading in class, is deserving of special attention. Speaking in MSA was found to cause the HLLs a considerable amount of anxiety. Given that Adam and Jenna were HLLs who grew up in a family where colloquial Arabic was spoken, they learned to speak Arabic very well. In fact, they spoke it as fluently as native speakers. This in and of itself is a great accomplishment for Adam and Jenna, as HLLs’ “speaking abilities fall within a continuum, from rather fluent speakers, who can sound almost like competent native speakers, to those who can barely speak the home language” (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 371). Adam and Jenna were fortunate enough to have learned how to speak Arabic so well; however, they faced a problem: Arabic is a diglossic language. Although their interpersonal skills were excellent, as they usually are among HLLs (Douglas, 2008; Parodi, 2008; Triantafillidou and Hedgcock, 2007), their speaking skills in the more formal form of the language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), were not as developed.

Adam and Jenna had very little experience speaking in MSA. They communicated in their colloquial dialects and rarely needed to use the formal form of the language. They therefore lacked confidence in their abilities using MSA. Although they understood it very well due to the fact that they heard it often, they struggled a little more when it came to producing it. It was not impossible for the HLLs to do; it just took them more time to put their thoughts together, and time is of the essence when one is speaking with others.
Words must be put together quickly to make coherent sentences in order to express thoughts – and this was sometimes a difficult task for the HLLs.

Not only did Adam and Jenna struggle a little with putting their thoughts together in MSA, but they also had a hard time adjusting to such a formal form of communication, because they were so used to interacting with others in their colloquial dialects. Using MSA to speak with others, the teacher, and their classmates, felt “unnatural”, “awkward” and “weird” to them. Thus, due to the awkwardness of speaking in MSA and the lack of experience that the HLLs had using it, they felt anxious when they had to express their thoughts in class. Although they usually volunteered and were eager to participate when not a lot of speaking was involved, the HLLs shied away from participating in discussions that required more extensive usage of MSA and did not get the practice they needed. Their anxiety likely caused them to underestimate what they were capable of achieving, a common practice done by anxious students (MacIntyre, Noels and Clément, 1997).

5.12 Conclusions

The overall, general conclusions arising from this study will be summarized and discussed in the three reading areas that were examined: (1) oral reading; (2) diacritical marks; and (3) reading comprehension, as well as in the connected areas of listening, speaking, and writing. Then, a brief summary comparing FLLs and HLLs based on the quantitative and qualitative data will be presented.
Oral Reading

Oral reading is a common practice in Arabic classrooms (Brustad, 2006), as having the ability to read aloud accurately is a greatly valued skill in the Arab world (Larkin, 1995). Students’ feelings about oral reading was one of the areas examined in this study, and while this activity induced anxiety in some students (especially Lucas), it was an overall positive learning experience for all. Generally, both the FLLs and HLLs benefited from reading aloud because it helped them with their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills. With the exception of Lucas, all of the participants enjoyed reading aloud, and any anxiety they experienced was outweighed by the benefits they reaped from this activity. By the end of the quarter, even Lucas, the highly anxious FLL, grew to like oral reading. Hence, this activity was a beneficial one that should be continued in Arabic classrooms, particularly reading courses.

While some educators in the field of Arabic teaching feel that oral reading is an inefficient use of class time because it “is of little aid in comprehending a text” (Brustad, 2006, p. 341), the help it provides with developing morphological recognition and processing is still acknowledged (Brustad, 2006). Larkin (1995), who believes that oral reading is a worthwhile activity, points out that “guided oral reading” is useful to students because it helps them develop reading strategies, especially to extract meaning from texts. While this is certainly not the only benefit of oral reading, it is one that the teacher, Sam, in the present study did often engage his students in. He usually guided students during the readings and was very gentle and non-threatening in his error correction technique – alleviating students’ anxiety and allowing them to maximize the benefits
from this reading activity. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that when oral reading is done correctly, students’ anxiety levels can be minimized so as to not hinder their learning and allow them to reap the benefits of this useful activity.

**Diacritical Marks**

The presence or absence of diacritical marks and the impact they had on students’ anxiety was another component of reading that was investigated in this study. Since the course textbook contained authentic reading texts, they were mostly unvowelized. This did not seem to affect students’ anxiety, because they had generally become accustomed to reading texts without diacritical marks. Their comprehension was usually not affected; however, if they encountered unfamiliar words, the diacritical marks did seem to be helpful. Thus, the results of this study suggest that reading authentic unvowelized texts for comprehension does not cause students anxiety.

The task of placing case endings on texts was a different story. Understandably, this rather difficult task that requires in-depth grammatical knowledge caused anxiety in both the FLLs and HLLs. Some students thoroughly prepared the case endings at home and were more confident in their abilities and thus less anxious during oral readings (Eric and Marie), while other students were too overwhelmed (Lucas) or unmotivated and too busy (Adam and Jenna) to prepare them well before coming to class and resorted to in-class preparation that sometimes led to anxiety. Regardless, all of the participants had to have had the case endings put in place before reading aloud to feel confident and comfortable. Trying to place the case endings while reading aloud at the same time was a
difficult task for all. Thus, the results of this study suggest that students must be diligent about putting in the time and effort to place the correct case endings before coming to class in order to avoid feeling high levels of anxiety that may be debilitating. Moreover, they must learn or review Arabic grammar thoroughly in order to feel confident, and less anxious, about the task.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension was the third area that was examined in the present study, and while it was found that understanding reading was generally easier for the HLLs than the FLLs, both groups had areas that needed to be developed. The FLLs had to work diligently on building their vocabulary and cultural knowledge – something that the HLLs did not have to work nearly as hard on due to their personal cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, the HLLs had to work on developing their vocabulary and translation skills. They sometimes had difficulty finding meanings of words in English, as they understood what a word meant in Arabic but could not translate it into English. Nonetheless, at times the lack of anxiety that the HLLs felt left them unmotivated to work beyond the standard expectations (of the FLLs), which was lower than what they were capable of. Thus, the results of this study show that FLLs and HLLs have differing needs in reading comprehension that both teachers and students must be aware of. Recognizing the differences between the two groups of learners will allow teachers to: (1) help FLLs minimize any debilitating anxiety that they may experience in
this aspect of reading; and (2) challenge the HLLs with some facilitating anxiety that will motivate them to work at higher levels.

**Listening, Speaking, and Writing**

While the HLLs generally had very little trouble with listening and writing, they experienced considerable anxiety that hindered their language growth when it came to speaking in MSA. Hence, the results of this study suggest that speaking in MSA is an area that may cause HLLs considerable anxiety – it must therefore be addressed and developed through ample practice and encouragement.

FLLs, on the other hand, did not have similar issues with MSA, since it was generally the only form of the language that they had studied. They were accustomed to interacting with others in MSA, but were usually unfamiliar with the colloquial uses of the language. With the exception of Marie, who had the opportunity to study abroad, the FLLs had little exposure to dialects and were therefore uncomfortable using colloquial Arabic – whether it be listening to it or speaking it. While it is understandable that MSA is used exclusively throughout all of the Arabic courses in the university’s program, the results of this study suggest that students must be exposed to colloquial Arabic at the university so that they are comfortable interacting with native speakers, as it is the form of the language that is used for everyday communication. Not all students have the opportunity to study abroad, and so there needs to be a local alternative that provides FLLs with the exposure and practice they need in colloquial Arabic.
Listening and writing were generally not anxiety inducing for the FLLs, with the exception of Lucas. He had an extremely difficult time comprehending what he heard in Arabic – to the point that it almost discouraged him from continuing his study of the language. This was largely due to him feeling overwhelmed and unmotivated to do a lot of Arabic listening on his own. He became frustrated with listening to the DVDs that accompanied the textbook and wanted to give up practicing listening altogether. However, with the right guidance he was able to pick up listening to a variety of materials in Arabic, which increased his confidence, lowered his anxiety, and improved his abilities. Thus, the results of this study show that anxiety may be skill-specific, that is, students may feel anxious in some skills more than others. Given that foreign language classes generally involve the use and development of all four language skills, teachers must be aware of the areas that cause students debilitating anxiety to be able to help them address it effectively.

**Comparing FLLs and HLLs**

In brief, the quantitative results of this study show that HLLs experienced much lower anxiety levels on both the FLCAS and FLRAS in comparison to their FLL counterparts, as shown in Table 5.9.
While this is not surprising given the in-depth language backgrounds of the HLLs, the qualitative results paint a different picture that reveals the complexities associated with foreign language and reading anxiety. Despite having low scores on both the anxiety measures, the HLLs experienced some debilitating anxiety that was not detected in the quantitative scales. Furthermore, the qualitative data shows that the low levels of anxiety that the HLLs felt may have been a disadvantage to them, as it prevented them from feeling a type of facilitating anxiety, associated with emotionality rather than worry (Scovel, 1978), that may have motivated them to put forth more effort and achieve what they were truly capable of. These findings reiterate the importance of qualitative data, particularly when examining a phenomenon as complex as foreign language anxiety. While the FLRAS may not be the best measure of students’ reading anxiety levels (Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky, 2000), it is a step in the right direction because it recognizes reading anxiety as a separate and distinct phenomenon, a finding that is supported by this study. Though there may be a need to develop a better scale to quantify students’ anxiety levels in foreign language reading, it is my belief that each students’ experiences are unique and can only be accurately explored qualitatively.
5.13 Pedagogical Implications

Given that one of the goals of this study was to investigate students’ feelings in the classroom in order to improve the teaching and learning of Arabic, the following pedagogical implications will be discussed: (1) foster awareness and self-reflection in students; (2) address the differing needs of HLLs in the classroom; and (3) better train teachers to be more aware of foreign language anxiety.

1. Foster awareness and self-reflection in students

The results of this study show that awareness is a critical part of alleviating anxiety and maximizing learning. Students must be aware of foreign language anxiety. They must know what it is and how it can be dealt with effectively. Students must also be aware of the language learning process. They need to know that making mistakes is a normal part of language learning, and that without taking risks, which involves making errors, there is no room for growth and development. Students need to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses as learners, especially as readers. They need to know where they are lacking confidence so that they can work on building their skills in those areas. Awareness is key.

Horwitz (1988) asserts that “as students’ beliefs about language learning can be based on limited knowledge and/or experience, the teacher’s most effective course may be to confront erroneous beliefs with new information. In some cases students may never have had their views about language learning challenged” (p. 292). Foss and Reitzel (1991) concur and maintain that students must recognize their irrational beliefs in order
to interpret anxiety-provoking situations and eventually approach rather than avoid such situations. This can be done in a variety of ways, including what is essentially an open discussion, called rational emotive therapy by Foss and Reitzel (1991). Thus, the responsibility is upon the instructor to discuss with students any irrational beliefs that they may have and make them aware that they are not alone in their fears. More often than not, teachers do not openly address anxiety related issues with students, and they are left to deal with their anxiety alone, which, as the research has shown, can lead to negative language learning experiences.

Another extremely beneficial way in which awareness could be fostered among students is through journal writing, a suggestion also made by Foss and Reitzel (1991). Journals are an excellent tool where students can engage in self-reflection to better learn about themselves as learners. Self-reflection is an invaluable resource that should be encouraged to be a part of the language learning process. Learning a foreign language is not easy, and reflecting on one’s thoughts and feelings is bound to be helpful and insightful. The benefits of journal writing were demonstrated in this study. It was an especially useful tool for Lucas, a highly anxious FLL, as it helped open his eyes to how he “really perceives and understands the language” (Interview 3: 12/3/2009). Not only are journals helpful to the learner in developing awareness about him or herself, but they can also be an excellent communication tool between teacher and student. By reading the journals, teachers can gain insight into students’ feelings and find out about issues that they may likely not discover otherwise. For example, Lucas’s struggles with listening were very close to causing him to abandon his studies of Arabic. I, as a researcher, was
able to read his journals (in addition to talking with him during interviews) and discover this struggle of his. I was therefore able to give him suggestions, guidance, and encouragement to find other ways to develop this skill. Teachers can, and should, do the same in order to find ways to improve what they do in the classroom to create the best learning environments for students.

This study has also shown how journals are an important source of insight into students’ experiences with anxiety, and how those experiences may vary according to students’ background (FLL or HLL). Teachers should not rely on their own perceptions of what causes students to feel anxious in the foreign language classroom, as these causes can sometimes be unpredictable. Being able to read students’ journals would draw teachers’ attention to important information about anxiety.

2. Address the differing needs of HLLs in the classroom

The results of this study show that while HLLs do share some similarities with FLLs, they do in fact have differing needs that must be addressed so that these learners, albeit a minority, are able to achieve their full potential. Granted, both of the HLLs in this study received an A as the final course grade; however, this does not necessarily mean that they learned as much as they potentially could. The data from the present study shows that the two HLLs, Adam and Jenna, often felt unchallenged. They generally had more advanced skills than their FLL counterparts and were therefore bored when the class was moving at a much slower pace than what would engage them and keep them interested. The HLLs resorted to distracting activities, unrelated to class, that could have
been avoided had their needs been addressed. Simply put, time spent wasted could have been time spent learning and growing. It is disappointing to see the “untapped reservoir of linguistic competence” (Brecht and Ingold, 2002, p. 2) that the HLLs possess remain untapped. HLLs should be seen as a national resource, as they are proficient in their language in ways that traditional FLLs are not and can provide skills that are rarely attained by non-heritage speakers (Webb and Miller, 2000).

How can teachers better meet the needs of HLLs? The most obvious answer is to have a separate class for them. There have been increasing calls for separate language tracks for HLLs, as HLLs seem to benefit from different types of instruction since their proficiency levels, processing styles, cultural backgrounds, and interests generally differ from those of FLLs (Kim, 2007, p. 99). However, having separate classes for HLLs, especially when their enrollment numbers are low, as is the case with Arabic, is not always financially feasible. Hence, teachers may have to address HLLs’ needs in traditional foreign language classrooms. How can this be done? First, teachers must be aware that HLLs bring with them unique issues to the classroom, many of which were brought to light by Adam and Jenna in the present study. They may be very fluent in their colloquial dialect, yet feel inexperienced and inept in MSA. They may seem to know grammar well, yet not know the actual rules. They may feel like “native” speakers, yet have never lived in an Arab country. They may feel inadequate when making mistakes, yet still not feel the need to prepare the material well. They may feel unchallenged, yet not seek challenges on their own. They may even feel isolated in a classroom where the vast majority of students are FLLs.
Given that all of these issues may hinder HLLs’ language development, especially in reading, teachers must not only be aware of them, but they must also take steps to effectively address them. As should be done with FLLs, an open discussion should take place between the teacher and students regarding the misconceptions and erroneous beliefs that HLLs have. They need to be aware of the fact that they may be different from “native” speakers, and that even natives make mistakes when reading. They must embrace the fact that errors are a part of the learning process so that they are more comfortable making them. Self-reflection and communication should take place, as discussed earlier, and journal writing would be an effective way of doing so.

Furthermore, it is important for teachers to realize that HLLs need to be challenged, since they often have more advanced reading skills than their FLL counterparts. This study has shown that certain levels of anxiety may be necessary for HLLs in order for them to feel motivated to push themselves to work harder, to go beyond what is required of the FLLs. When the HLLs in this study lacked anxiety and were too comfortable with the reading material, they failed to put forth more effort to further develop their reading skills. As a result, their reading in Arabic did not advance as much as it could have. Hence, some anxiety may be facilitating, while too much of it may be debilitating. It is a delicate situation and the right balance must be achieved.

Yu (2007) offers some ways to address the needs of HLLs in a mixed classroom, including giving different homework assignments, using individualized CALL instruction, and using a peer mentoring system (p. 191-192) – all of which are excellent
ways to challenge HLLs. In addition to these measures, some other practical suggestions are presented in Table 5.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Possible Resolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort speaking MSA</td>
<td>Provide encouragement for practice; involve HLLs in pair or group work where they can practice MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of challenges; boredom</td>
<td>Give HLLs different assignments both in and out of class that keep them engaged and challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate placement</td>
<td>Have more thorough placement exams and provide HLLs with an intensive, speedy refresher course they must take before proceeding with other courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in grammatical knowledge</td>
<td>Review topics in grammar using both English and Arabic terminology; provide extra tutoring sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of thorough preparation</td>
<td>Have high expectations of HLLs and do not accept mediocre work when they are capable of so much more; require thorough preparation at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Create out-of-class groups where HLLs and FLLs can interact and exchange resources – FLLs can get colloquial input and HLLs can practice speaking in MSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10: Practical suggestions for effectively dealing with HLLs’ issues in the classroom

3. Better train teachers to be more aware of foreign language anxiety

Given that teachers play a vital role in helping students to effectively deal with their anxiety, they, themselves, must be trained and aware of the issues that learners deal with in university classrooms. More often than not, teachers at the university level do not receive enough training to be able to provide the best and most accommodating learning
environments for students. Often, language teachers at the university are graduate students who do not really know much about teaching. This is unfair to the students, as it can have detrimental effects on their language learning experiences. While the teacher in the present study, Sam, was very gentle and usually attentive to students’ needs, better training would have been very beneficial to all.

Since instructor beliefs about language teaching and the way they interact with students are common sources of anxiety for learners (Young, 1991), it is of utmost importance that teachers are better trained. They need to question, analyze, and reflect on the way they teach. Is it effective? Is it meeting every student’s needs? Are learners comfortable? Is the classroom environment relaxed and conducive to learning? How can things be done better? Teachers need to be trained to constantly think about these and other questions that will improve their teaching. One useful tool that may be helpful in self-reflection is a video recorder. Young (1991) suggests that teachers videotape themselves teaching or participate in reciprocal class visits with other teachers to be able to “see” their assumptions and beliefs about language teaching. They may realize that the way they correct students’ errors is harsh and humiliating or that they exude an authoritative aura that intimidates students or that they are not engaging every learner. Regardless of the way teachers choose to reflect on their teaching, they must be trained to engage in self-reflection frequently – as it is a very important part of good teaching. And good teachers are aware of students’ affective needs, including those that may hinder their learning.
In addition to better general teacher training, it would extremely beneficial to specifically train teachers in issues regarding foreign language anxiety (FLA). It can be a simple and quick workshop where teachers are at least made aware of the anxiety that students can experience, the effects it can have on their learning, and how to effectively deal with it. Many teachers, especially those at the university level, know very little about FLA and are therefore unable to help their students effectively deal with it. Training them will allow them to train their students to be better learners, as Crookall and Oxford (1991) state, “by helping students to deal with anxiety, we are training them to be better learners” (p. 145).

Finally, teachers need to receive some training on how to effectively teach HLLs. As the results of this study have shown, HLLs have different needs that must be addressed. It would be ideal to have a separate track for HLLs, as is the case with several languages, but given that HLLs only make up about 20% of the number of students in Arabic classrooms (Belnap, 2006, p. 174), that is a seemingly unfeasible option. Nevertheless, special attention needs to be given to these students. Just because they are a minority in the classroom does not mean that their needs, both cognitive and affective, should be ignored. The least that could be done to help HLLs achieve their full potential is to make teachers aware of the issues that they may have so that they can address them effectively.

As the results of this study have shown, having a certain amount and type of anxiety, associated with emotionality (Scovel, 1978), may be facilitating to students’ learning, particularly for the HLLs. On the other hand, having too much anxiety,
especially if it is related to worry, is debilitating as it hinders learning. Teachers must be aware of this and work to minimize debilitating anxiety while at the same time challenging HLLs with some facilitating anxiety.

5.14 Suggestions for Future Research

Although the results of this study are insightful to those in the field of Arabic teaching and learning, there certainly remains room for further research. The number of participants in both phases of the study was small. It would be beneficial to replicate the study with a larger number of students, particularly HLLs, as the present study was only able to explore the experiences of two HLLs. It would be worthwhile to investigate the experiences of more Arabic HLLs to gain an even better picture of the issues that they deal with. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine the anxiety that both HLLs and FLLs experience as they continue their Arabic studies in more advanced courses, especially reading courses. Do they experience more or less anxiety as they become advanced learners? Are there new issues that arise? These are just a few of the questions that may be answered through such a study.

It would also be worthwhile to investigate the impact that some of the suggestions that were given in this study have on anxiety. If journal writing were implemented as part of the course, would it be helpful to students? If open discussions took place about the language learning process and realistic expectations, would students feel more comfortable taking risks and making mistakes? If teachers were better trained to be more attentive to students’ affective needs, would students’ learning improve?
Finally, future studies should investigate the views and experiences of Arabic instructors. The present study focused on learners’ experiences, and while attempts were made to investigate the teacher’s viewpoints and feelings, they were unsuccessful. Given that instructors play a critical role in alleviating students’ anxiety, their viewpoints should be examined. Some possible research questions are: Are teachers aware of foreign language anxiety? How do they try to deal with it? What strategies have they found to be effective? What are their thoughts and feelings about HLLs? Learning more about Arabic teachers would undoubtedly be a helpful step in addressing the affective needs of Arabic learners.

5.15 Concluding Remarks

The present study has not only investigated an aspect of language learning that is often underestimated, foreign language anxiety, but it has also examined it in a context that is severely understudied– an Arabic classroom. By examining the nature of anxiety that occurs amongst FLLs and HLLs in an intermediate Arabic reading course, this study has made important contributions to the field.

First and foremost, this study has lent support to the belief that foreign language anxiety does in fact play a prominent role in students’ learning. While there are some who question the whole notion of FLA (Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky, 2000), the data collected in this study, particularly the qualitative data, revealed the importance of the affective side of language learning. Each of the participants’ backgrounds, regardless of their status as a HLL or a FLL, affected the way in which they experienced anxiety in the
classroom, which in turn influenced how well they learned and performed in the course. At times, the anxiety the participants experienced was debilitating, and thus interfered with their learning. And at other times, the anxiety they felt was facilitating, acting like a powerful force that motivated them to put forth great effort in order to avoid the discomfort of anxiety. Regardless of whether the effect of the anxiety was positive or negative, this study has shown that there is a role, indeed a fairly powerful role, that anxiety plays in language learning. This role cannot, and should not, be dismissed. The fact that the participants experienced anxiety, albeit differently, is not an indication of deficiencies in their native languages (Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky, 2000), as all of the participants were very intelligent individuals who were enrolled in a prestigious university with rigorous entrance requirements. Moreover, the participants were members of highly competitive programs: Adam was part of the medical admissions pathway program; Lucas was in the honors program; and Marie and Jenna were the recipients of prestigious scholarships. All of these learners, despite being well-rounded, bright students, felt anxiety that affected their achievement – evidence that, at least for these students, anxiety was the cause, and not the result, of poorer language achievement (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). Although this study has certainly not settled the debate, it has extended our understanding of the notion of foreign language anxiety and the complexities associated with it.

Second, this study has presented evidence that foreign language reading anxiety is a distinct phenomenon from general FLA that warrants special attention. Utilizing qualitative data collection methods allowed for an in-depth examination that would
otherwise be impossible with just quantitative instruments. The interviews, observations, and journals revealed the complexities of the phenomenon and how a variety of factors influenced the way each individual experienced anxiety in the classroom. Although the focus of this study was reading anxiety, the qualitative data showed that the FLLs and HLLs experienced different types of anxiety in the different language skills. For example, Lucas felt great anxiety when listening to Arabic – so much so that it almost caused him to abandon his studies of Arabic altogether. Adam’s anxiety speaking in Modern Standard Arabic held him back from participating in class discussions, preventing him from receiving the practice he clearly needed in this formal form of the language. Marie felt anxious about not being able to understand everything she read, which prevented her from enjoying the activity and engaging in it often. The qualitative data was able to reveal all of these intricacies – which lends support to the literature that has found anxiety to be skill specific, in particular with regards to reading (Saito, Garza & Horwitz, 1999; Sellers, 2000).

Third, this study has confirmed the negative ramifications that anxiety can have on a learner, yet at the same time, it has revealed a positive effect of anxiety. All of the participants, regardless of their scores on the anxiety measures, experienced anxiety that was at times debilitating. While the effects ranged from person to person, every participant experienced some anxiety that hindered their learning. At the same time, some learners experienced facilitating anxiety. For example, Eric, a FLL, worked very hard throughout the entire course because he knew that he would become very anxious if he was unprepared. On the other hand, the HLLs generally lacked anxiety associated with
reading, which prevented them from feeling motivated to work harder and advance their skills. Hence, the results of this study show that some levels of anxiety facilitated learning for students, while higher levels were debilitating, suggesting that having low amounts of anxiety, associated with emotionality, is better than having no anxiety at all. This was especially true for the HLLs. Although this finding is not a new one (Scovel, 1978; Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977), it is an aspect of FLA that has been neglected in more recent research, which has generally focused on the negative consequences of anxiety. Perhaps the positive effects are deserving of more attention and research.

Fourth, this study examined reading in an increasingly important, yet under-researched language: Arabic. Some of the unique issues that were involved in the reading of this diglossic language were examined. For example, the impact that diacritical marks had on students’ feelings of anxiety as well as the common practice of oral reading were investigated. Factors that increased students’ debilitating anxiety that hindered their reading development were explored, leading to some important pedagogical implications for both HLLs and FLLs. These implications have the potential to improve the way reading is taught to students, making it a more meaningful, comfortable, and stimulating experience for them.

Fifth, this study has shown the important role that cultural knowledge plays in students’ feelings of anxiety while reading. This was especially true for the FLLs, who unlike the HLLs, had to actively seek this type of knowledge as they were foreigners who did not “live” the Arab culture. Marie and Eric were well-aware of the impact that cultural knowledge had on their comfort reading the language and sought opportunities to
engage in meaningful interactions with natives who could provide them with an inside view of the culture. Marie spent a summer in Syria interacting with native Syrians and learning as much as she could about the culture. She was also part of the university’s Arabic Language and Culture Club, which was an invaluable learning tool for her. Similarly, Eric interacted with natives to learn more about their culture. To him, the more he knew about Arab culture, the more comfortable, and less anxious, he felt about reading in Arabic. He was appreciative of the way the reading skills in the course textbook were taught in the context of culture, which were especially useful in helping the “grammar and vocabulary stick in his mind” (Interview 3: 12/3/2009). Lucas, on the other hand, was not as aware of the significant role that cultural knowledge plays in language learning, and had very little contact with natives who could expand his knowledge. This, as the data showed, affected his anxiety and interfered with his learning. Hence, this study has expanded our understanding about the role that cultural knowledge plays in students’, particularly FLLs’, comfort levels while reading Arabic.

Lastly, this study has made an important contribution to the field of heritage language education, as it appears there are no prior studies investigating Arabic HLLs. Despite the fact that data was collected from only two HLLs, the information they provided is new information that has shed light onto some important, yet complicated, issues within the field of HL education. Who is a HLL? Are they or are they not native speakers? How do they view themselves? How are they affected by teachers’ expectations? These, and other, issues revealing the complexity associated with HLLs and HL education were brought up through this study. Both Adam and Jenna viewed
themselves as native speakers of Arabic, although Adam was born and raised in the United States and Jenna had not been back to Algeria since she emigrated to the U.S. at the age of ten. This view affected the way they experienced anxiety, as it caused them to have much higher, and at times unrealistic, expectations of themselves. To further complicate matters, the teacher, albeit implicitly, had higher expectations of the HLLs, which directly affected their anxiety. Thus, this study has shown that there are a number of complexities associated with HLLs, and although the two HLLs in this study had fairly similar backgrounds, HLLs in general are a very diverse group of learners with varying experiences and abilities (Kondo-Brown, 2003; Valdés, 2000; Fishman, 2001). This only makes the matter more complex. Nonetheless, this study has shown that HLLs bring with them vast knowledge that needs to be recognized and built upon in a manner that challenges them to achieve what they are truly capable of. Their unique needs must be addressed in the Arabic classroom so that their linguistic and cultural competence does not go wasted. Modifying pedagogy, especially in the area of reading, to better meet HLLs’ needs will allow them to thrive as learners and perhaps one day become teachers or leaders who can pass their knowledge on to others.
References


Appendix A: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Statements 1-33 refer to how you feel about learning Arabic. For each statement, please indicate whether you (SA): Strongly Agree; (A): Agree; (N): Neither Agree nor Disagree; (D): Disagree; (SD): Strongly Disagree. Please give your first reaction to each statement and mark an answer for every statement.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my Arabic class.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

2. I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

3. I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in Arabic class.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

4. It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in Arabic class.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

5. It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more Arabic classes.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

6. During Arabic class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at Arabic than I am.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my Arabic class.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in Arabic class.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my Arabic class.
    SA   A   N   D   SD

11. I don’t understand why some people get so upset over Arabic classes.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
12. In Arabic class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.
   SA A N D SD

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Arabic class.
   SA A N D SD

14. I would not be nervous speaking Arabic with native speakers.
   SA A N D SD

15. I get upset when I don’t understand what the teacher is correcting.
   SA A N D SD

16. Even if I am well prepared for Arabic class, I feel anxious about it.
   SA A N D SD

17. I often feel like not going to my Arabic class.
   SA A N D SD

18. I feel confident when I speak in Arabic class.
   SA A N D SD

19. I am afraid that my Arabic teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
   SA A N D SD

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on in Arabic class.
   SA A N D SD

21. The more I study for an Arabic test, the more confused I get.
   SA A N D SD

22. I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well for Arabic class.
   SA A N D SD

23. I always feel that the other students speak Arabic better than I do.
   SA A N D SD

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking Arabic in front of other students.
   SA A N D SD

25. Arabic class moves so quickly I worry about getting behind.
   SA A N D SD

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my Arabic class than in my other classes.
   SA A N D SD
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my Arabic class.
   SA A N D SD

28. When I’m on my way to Arabic class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
   SA A N D SD

29. I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the Arabic teacher says.
   SA A N D SD

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak Arabic.
   SA A N D SD

31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak Arabic.
   SA A N D SD

32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of Arabic.
   SA A N D SD

33. I get nervous when the Arabic teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared in advance.
   SA A N D SD
Appendix B: Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS)

Statements 1-20 refer to how you feel about reading Arabic. For each statement, please indicate whether you (SA): Strongly Agree; (A): Agree; (N): Neither Agree nor Disagree; (D): Disagree; (SD): Strongly Disagree. Please give your first reaction to each statement and mark an answer for every statement.

1. I get upset when I’m not sure whether I understand what I am reading in Arabic.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

2. When reading Arabic, I often understand the words but still can’t quite understand what the author is saying.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

3. When I’m reading Arabic, I get so confused I can’t remember what I’m reading.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

4. I feel intimidated whenever I see a whole page of Arabic in front of me.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

5. I am nervous when I am reading a passage in Arabic when I am not familiar with the topic.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

6. I get upset whenever I encounter unknown grammar when reading Arabic.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

7. When reading Arabic, I get nervous and confused when I don’t understand every word.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

8. It bothers me to encounter words I can’t pronounce when reading Arabic.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

9. I usually end up translating word by word when I’m reading Arabic.
   SA   A   N   D   SD
10. By the time you get past the funny letters and symbols in Arabic, it’s hard to remember what you’re reading about.

SA A N D SD

11. I am worried about all the new symbols you have to learn in order to read Arabic.

SA A N D SD

12. I enjoy reading Arabic.

SA A N D SD

13. I feel confident when I am reading in Arabic.

SA A N D SD

14. Once you get used to it, reading Arabic is not so difficult.

SA A N D SD

15. The hardest part of learning Arabic is learning to read.

SA A N D SD

16. I would be happy just to learn to speak Arabic rather than having to learn to read as well.

SA A N D SD

17. I don’t mind reading to myself, but I feel very uncomfortable when I have to read Arabic aloud.

SA A N D SD

18. I am satisfied with the level of reading ability in Arabic that I have achieved so far.

SA A N D SD

19. Arabic culture and ideas seem very foreign to me.

SA A N D SD

20. You have to know so much about Arabic history and culture in order to read Arabic.

SA A N D SD
Appendix C: Background Questionnaire

Name: _____________________________________________

Email address: ______________________________________

Major: __________________________________________________________________

Age: ____________

Gender: _________

Number of years studied Arabic: _______________________

Do you have any family connections to Arabic? ______
If yes, how so?

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the best), please rate your abilities in the following skills in Modern Standard Arabic:

Speaking: ______

Writing: ______

Reading: ______

Listening: ______
Appendix D: Recruitment Script

Hi. My name is Dima Alghothani and I am a doctoral student in the Foreign and Second Language Department here at Ohio State. I am doing my dissertation study exploring foreign language anxiety, specifically in regards to reading. I’d like to learn more about your frustrations, concerns, and feelings as you build your reading skills in Arabic. Of course, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and optional. You will not be penalized by your instructor.

The study consists of two parts. The first part involves taking two short surveys and filling out a background questionnaire. This should take about 30 minutes and they will be given during class. The second part of the study involves three interviews, weekly journal writing, and classroom observations. You don’t necessarily have to participate in both parts of the study. You may participate in the first part and then I may or may not ask you to participate in the second part. You will be given two consent forms. One for the first part and then if I do select you to participate in the second part, you will be given a second consent form that will further explain what would be asked of you.

Do you have any questions/concerns/points of clarification?
Appendix E: Informed Consent Forms

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Arabic Student,

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Your participation is voluntary. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

I am a graduate student under the supervision of Dr. Alan Hirvela in the department of Foreign and Second Language Education at The Ohio State University. I am conducting a research study exploring foreign language anxiety, specifically reading anxiety, in the Arabic language classroom. I am interested in learning more about your positive and negative experiences as you embark on developing your Arabic reading skills.

I am inviting you to participate in this study, which consists of two parts. This consent form is only for the first part, which involves two short surveys and a brief background questionnaire. These will be given during class and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Based on those results, I will be selecting students to partake in the second part of the study, which involves several interviews, journal writing, and classroom observations. If you are selected to participate in the second part of the study, you will be given a second consent form to ask for your permission to participate as well as to explain what that part of the study entails in further detail.

The results of the surveys will be kept confidential. They will not be shared with your instructor nor will your name be used in connection to any of the results. Upon completion of the study, results may be published and/or used in presentations; however, at no time will your identity be revealed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate or withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. Your decision will not affect your course grade. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study. While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in the first part of the study, the results will help me assess who may participate in the second part – which will yield useful information in the development of teaching strategies specific to Arabic.
For questions, concerns, or complaints you may contact me, Dima Alghothani, at alghothani.2@osu.edu or my advisor, Alan Hirvela, at hirvela.1@osu.edu.

By signing below, you are indicating that you have read this form and voluntarily agree to participate in **Phase 1** of this study

Printed name of participant:  
Signature of participant:  
Date:
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Arabic Student,

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Your participation is voluntary. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

I am inviting you to participate in the second part of the study examining foreign language anxiety. This phase of the study involves interviews, classroom observations, and journal writing. You will be interviewed three times, at weeks 3, 6, and 9 of the quarter. Each interview may last anywhere between 30 minutes and an hour. This individual, audiotaped interview will be set up to take place outside of class meeting times at a time and location that is convenient for you. I will also be observing you during class meeting times throughout the quarter and will be taking written notes. Finally, you will be asked to keep a journal expressing your positive and negative experiences in class for that week. These journals will be submitted electronically at the end of each week. If any further clarification is needed, I will be communicating with you via email.

Considering that one of the goals of this study is to capture students’ voices regarding anxiety in the Arabic classroom, direct quotes from interviews and journals will be used and may be published. However, your real name will never be used. Furthermore, no information will be shared with your instructor. Upon completion of the study, data will be stored securely for three years and may be used for publications and/or presentations; however, at no time will your identity be revealed.

You have the right not to participate or withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. Your decision will not affect your course grade. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study. Given that participation in this study will require some of your time, you will be compensated at a rate of $15 dollars an hour for all interviews.

For questions, concerns, or complaints you may contact me, Dima Alghothani, at alghothani.2@osu.edu or my advisor, Alan Hirvela, at Hirvela.1@osu.edu.

By signing below, you are indicating that you have read this form and voluntarily agree to participate in Phase 2 of this study.

Printed name of participant: _________________________ Signature of participant: _________________________
Date: _________________________
Appendix F: IRB Approval

FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING ANXIETY IN THE ARABIC CLASSROOM: A COMPARISON OF HERITAGE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Monday, September 28, 2009 2:36 PM

From: "Pettey, Cheri" <pettey.6@osu.edu>
To: Hirvela.1@osu.edu
Cc: "Dima Alghothani" <alghothani@yahoo.com>

Dear Dr. Hirvela,

The above project has been determined to be exempt under categories 1 & 2; the project number is 2009E0743. You may begin your data collection. I’ll send your official letter soon, but I wanted to let you know the status so you could begin if needed.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Good luck with your research!

Thanks,

Cheri

Cheri Pettey, MA, CIP
Senior Protocol Analyst--Exempt Research
Office of Responsible Research Practices
Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210
phone: 614.688.0389
fax: 614.688.0366
email: pettey.6@osu.edu
October 2, 2009

Protocol Number: 2009E0743
Protocol Title: FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING ANXIETY IN THE ARABIC CLASSROOM: A COMPARISON OF HERITAGE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS, ALAN HIRVELA, DIMA ALGHOTHANI, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

Type of Review: Request for Exempt Determination

ORRP Staff Contact: Cheri M. Pettey
Phone: 614-688-0389
Email: pettey.6@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Hirvela,

The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced protocol exempt from IRB review.

Date of Exempt Determination: 09/28/2009
Qualifying Exemption Category: 1, 2

Please note the following:

• Only OSU employees and students who have completed CITI training and are named on the signature page of the application are approved as OSU Investigators in conducting this study.

• No procedural changes may be made in exempt research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, enrollment numbers, etc.).

• Per university requirements, all research-related records (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least three years after the research has ended.

• It is the responsibility of the Investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the ORRP staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Cheri Pettey, MA, Certified IRB Professional
Senior Protocol Analyst—Exempt Research