

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS UNDERGOING CULTURE SHOCK:  
PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD

A dissertation submitted to the  
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By

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SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS UNDERGOING CULTURE SHOCK:  
PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD (179 pp.)

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The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods. This research is important for several reasons. Much research has been conducted on the effectiveness of ELT methods. The vast majority of this body of research has been conducted from an instructor's point of view and focused mostly on applications and implications of language teaching styles, instructional lessons, and types of curriculum materials to promote language growth. However, very little, to no, research has been conducted on investigating EL teaching methods from the perceptions of actual English language learners. Therefore, this study aims to investigate perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods.

This study concludes that the lack of any focus on the students' perceptions in research articles in recent years indicates that there is no emphasis placed on the learners who are undergoing culture shock, and their views

regarding their teachers' English teaching methods. The articles seemed to mostly explore general narrative experiences of language learners, their most notable challenges and hindrances, while others tackled several issues the teachers of students undergoing culture shock may have faced. The lack of attention on the students' perceptions would lend itself to a number of implications for future practices of teaching English to second language learners who are undergoing culture shock. In addressing the research question of the views of the participants undergoing culture shock towards their teacher's English teaching methods, the study produced 5 themes from the collection and analysis of the data. The lack of attention on the students' perceptions would lend itself to several implications for future practices of teaching English to second language learners who are undergoing culture shock. In addressing the research question of the views of the participants undergoing culture shock towards their teacher's English teaching methods, the previously mentioned 5 themes were produced from the collection and analysis of the data.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods. This research is important for several reasons. Much research has been conducted on the effectiveness of ELT methods. The vast majority of this body of research has been conducted from an instructor's point of view and focused mostly on applications and implications of language teaching styles, instructional lessons, and types of curriculum materials to promote language growth. However, very little, to no, research has been conducted on investigating EL teaching methods from the perceptions of actual English language learners. Therefore, this study aims to investigate perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods.

Furthermore, while an abundance of research currently exists on culture shock, particularly the phases of culture shock and its impact on individuals (Xia, 2009; Bochner & Furnham, 1985; Oberg, 1954, Greene & Kennedy, 2012), little, if any, research has been conducted that investigated perceptions of EL learners on teaching methods while they are in the midst of experiencing culture shock. This research, then, is significant because it seeks to address two gaps in the professional literature on English language teaching. One gap is the lack of

research that investigates perceptions of English language teaching methods from the language learners' point of view. The other gap is the lack of research that investigates perceptions of English Language Teaching Methods from language learners' who are in the midst of experiencing culture shock. By addressing these two gaps in the professional literature, the goal of this research is to gain insights into the complex nature of English Language Teaching Methods from language learners' point of view so that these insights can inform curriculum development and pedagogical practices for second language learners, particularly those undergoing culture shock.

### **Difficulties of Learning a Second Language While Experiencing Culture Shock**

Acquiring a new language will often entail that the learner is exposed to new concepts and words that may or may not exist within the language learner's culture. These concepts can present obstacles that will either halt the learning process entirely or at best slow it down. To that end, language teachers and researchers alike, have attempted to identify the leading causes of culture shock, as well as teaching methods that might help mediate the impact on language learners. Additional factors that are explored include the degree of culture shock experienced by the learners, as well as the preferred methods of teachings utilized by the language instructors of the learners who are undergoing the phenomenon. Ellis (1989) notes how the lack of practicing speaking skills through cultural

interactions with native speakers of a target language would hinder the learning processes of a given language. Similarly, Gass (2013) has documented the impact of exposing learners to authentic language input situations as an integral part of second language acquisition. Therefore, in applying specific teaching methods to adhere to language learners' needs and their challenges of undergoing culture shock, Hayes & Hayes (1971) set an overall goal to establish a means for communication in the target language, enabling the learners to include a number of social functions, while the content would utilize academic or job related materials. Exploring these tenants of teaching will guide the research to draw upon the activities used by the language instructors, and determine whether they support the learners' ability to assimilate into the target culture or ultimately hinder their assimilation.

While culture shock is certainly a phenomenon to be cautious of, the process of undergoing culture shock can take place in several stages. Xia (2009) highlights these stages, with the initial ones emphasizing expectations among the learners, and the final stages documenting their need to acculturate themselves by self-integrating into the target culture, or refusing to accept it entirely. Acculturation, can be defined by Berry, et al (1987) as a change that impacts an individual's values, beliefs, behaviors, and day to day way living, due to attempts to adapt to a new mainstream cultural norm and behavior.

### **Challenges of Second Language Learners: Two Vignettes**

When learning a second language, learners often are faced with numerous new and challenging situations that hinder their ability to learn a second language. These challenging situations can be described through two vignettes.

Vignette #1: Recently, a colleague of mine displayed feelings of anxiety after having been exposed to new and unfamiliar day to day routines within a culture that was foreign to him. Some of these routines were paying for a bill over the phone and enrolling his children in public school. He later expressed that his inability to cope and accomplish these simple tasks were occupying his mental chain of thought, and thus made it challenging for him to grasp the English language lessons that were being taught in his classroom. At times, some of the topics for his listening and speaking class would cover cultural activities that were helpful on an academic spectrum, but did not seem to touch on the specific broader activities he was having trouble adapting to. In addition, my colleague found himself constantly contemplating in and out of class with his other classmates on how to resolve some of the cultural issues he was having trouble adapting to, this ultimately occupied him from the language lessons and the applied method of teaching.

Vignette #2: Another colleague, who had only briefly arrived in the US, refused to practice her speaking skills with native speakers of the target language over the phone, claiming they made her feel uncomfortable talking to a foreigner

with a beginner proficiency level, and in some cases refused to repeat themselves or elaborate on what was certain phrases of the particular conversation meant. This caused some level of frustration to my colleague, because before traveling to the US, her husband commonly took care of these tasks, but because of her beginner proficiency language level, she was asked to take care of all the household bills and rent, a role she was never accustomed to before. Again, levels of anxiety and frustrations were expressed during the initial weeks, as this colleague has to learn the ins and outs of how to adapt to these cultural norms, she reported finding it difficult to pay attention in class, and often was late turning in her homework because one issue or another were at her household were still unresolved. These new cultural norms added to her new leading role of her family lead to what symptoms that can be describe as culture shock, she explained that her focus in class was tethered, more importantly, the teaching methods applied did not facilitate her experiences, she further entailed that while some of her classes focused on writing skills, it was necessary for her to learn communicative skills in order to better adhere to cultural norms she was facing at the time.

### **Lessons Learned From the Two Vignettes**

As a result of the experiences within the vignettes, the students face a number of challenges throughout their studies, including a resistance to assimilate and adapt to the new culture, and ultimately having difficulties practicing the target language as needed. The challenge for the learners therefore, becomes

overcoming culture shock while also adapting to the norms of the target culture in order to facilitate the learning of a target language, since, Ellis (1989) among others place and emphasis on practicing the target language as a necessity to language learning, while students undergoing culture shock show a tendency to shy away from practicing the target language.

One critical aspect to learn from the vignettes, is what the students express the teaching methodologies would focus on. Both students reported on how different cultural norms were occupying their chain of thought, and preferred if the teaching methodologies would adhere to their immediate needs to adapt to the culture at hand, instead of the curriculum adhering to the language learners' future academic needs. Thus, for these particular instances, a focus on the learners' ability to improve their communicative skills, according to their perspectives, would prove more beneficial to their needs to adapt to the target culture.

Among the challenges of adapting to a new culture is represented in facing new and unfamiliar cultural concepts, forcing the learners to both witness and experience a new language and its culture first hand. Language learners who chose reside abroad and engage in learning a second language within a new culture will often be faced with the reality of aspects of the target culture that may conflict with the learner's own culture. Parademtre (2000) claims that the ideas, perceptions and images perceived by stories and the media will then dissipate as the reality of the new culture sinks in and starts to affect the learner's

psychological well-being in both negative and positive ways. This phenomenon is referred to as culture shock, and is one of the psychological factors listed by Ellis' (1985) study that potentially may hinder language learners from achieving their goals and full potential, representing the challenge for the learners of the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The research question provided acted as a guide for the study by providing an insight into the experiences of the second language learners with regards to their respective cultural experiences and their placement in the stages of culture shock as listed by Xia (2009). While also delving into their experiences in their language class with respect to the teaching methodology provided by the teacher. Therefore, a focus of the questions would be to investigate the outcome of the methodologies in a second language classroom, among Saudi learners undergoing culture shock, from the perspectives of the students in order to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of the methodologies applied.

Because of the lack of any proper definition of the relationship between methodology of teaching and culture shock (Parademetre, 2000; Robisheaux, 1993), I sought to examine any existing themes and correlations that might exist between the two. Since concepts such as acculturation is also pivotal, Berry, et al (1987) explains that the language teacher and his/her specific methodology of teaching are what would potentially lead the learner to assimilate into the target culture, without proper guidance presented by the methods of teaching, the learner



is otherwise subjected to alienation from the target culture and practicing the language, surmising that while traditional instruction is crucial among these types of learners, culturally-sensitive instruction can be equally crucial.

Additionally, With the stages of culture shock presented by Xia (2009), the study needs to establish the best possible candidates by focusing on learners who are categorized by falling under one of the initial stages

### **Research Question**

. Therefore, the research question that will guide the dissertation study are as follows:

- What are the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods?

### **List of Definitions**

This section consists of terms and definitions that are relevant to the research at hand;

#### **- Acculturation**

Berry, et al (1987) defined the term acculturation, as a change that impacts an individual's values, beliefs, behaviors, and day to day way living, due to attempts to adapt to a new mainstream cultural norm and behavior.

- **Assimilation**

According to Stiles (2002), this concept focuses on the experiences that surface due to the psychotherapy process of loss of identity in the lives of immigrants, such as the loss of an immigrant's cultural roots and being replaced with a different culture. This can be represented in an individual's new ways of thinking and acting.

- **Methodology of Language Teaching**

Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe the method of teaching language that is unique to each teacher, and would consist of three intricate parts, including his/her own approach, design, and procedure.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of the chapter is to present a relevant literature review for the topics retaining to culture shock, and more commonly known teaching methodologies. The chapter begins with a brief description of the historical overview of the origins of culture shock, the two different types, as well as, the phases it undergoes. Additionally, the chapter provides two case studies of culture shock, examining the inclusion of culture in an academic setting. Moreover, a description is added of several known teaching methodologies in the field of second language teaching. The chapter ends with the inclusion of several studies that examine general language learners' perceptions towards English language teaching methods.

#### **Brief Historical Overview of the Origin of Culture Shock**

Since language learning has become such an internationally wide spread phenomenon, language instructors and researchers have constantly been attempting to pinpoint any and all obstacles (culture shock, anxiety, etc...) that may interfere with learners who are learning a second language. Oberg (1954) focused on the broad view of culture shock, primarily since Oberg was himself an immigrant and experienced it and noticed the phenomenon in others like him.

Oberg's view on culture shock lead him to believe that it was much like an illness that affects people who are suddenly put in a situation where they must now reside abroad in an unfamiliar country, and that, much like a disease, it might have its own symptoms and a cure to follow. Bochner and Furnham (1986) had other views on culture shock. They explained that culture shock is focused on the stress that an outsider experiences while attempting to assimilate a new culture. Bochner and Furnham also emphasized that cross cultural contact is what mainly triggers the shock.

The concern thereafter becomes with the possible negative impact that culture shock might have on the language learners. Mio (1999) lists the most notable symptoms that individuals who undergo culture shock may experience to include depression, levels of anxiety, and feeling helpless to accomplish trivial tasks that are considered norms within the target culture. Similarly, Eschback et al. (2001) express that culture shock could potentially lead to degrees of psychological, as well as a notable amount of emotional discomfort within the individual experiencing the phenomenon. The impact on students is then no less of an obstacle, not only are they expected to carry out their day to day activities within their personal lives, but their academics also demand that they complete certain tasks within a specific time frame.

Oberg (1960) suggests that culture shock is not a short phase event that can be overcome within mere days or weeks, the process can be long and requires

much attention. Language learners who face culture shock are encouraged to take the time to integrate themselves within the target culture and customs. The process of integrating into a new culture can often be difficult and will be met with several obstacles. Gradually, learners begin to see aspects of the C2 (referred to as the target culture) that both intrigue and interest them, such as traditions that might be considered forbidden in the C1 (referred to as the first culture) but considered very common in the foreign country where the language is taught. In addition, while participation in new activities in the classroom or outside of it might prove difficult at first, students should be advised to take the first steps by simply observing and learning from these observations. Doing so can create a safe environment for the learners as well as opening limitless possibilities in the future.

As a result, the phenomenon of culture shock can prove to have serious implications for second language learners of a target language. The journey of recovering from culture shock cannot be done alone. Language instructors also must realize that learners who endure such hardships are in need of guidance. They may feel weak and vulnerable at first. Thus, the teacher plays a crucial role in either enforcing the target culture entirely or welcoming students of different cultural backgrounds, constantly finding new ways to integrate the students' first culture into the lesson.

### **Types and phases of Culture Shock**

This session focusses on two phenomena; culture shock and reverse culture shock, also known as reverse culture shock reentry. When foreign language learners are immersed in a second culture for an extended period of time with the intention of returning to his/her C1, typically those learners will first experience culture shock and its phases. The learner is then reintroduced to these phases again upon returning to his culture. Several researchers have given different names and interpretations to the types and phases of culture shock.

Xia (2009) documents several phases of culture shock that occur over the course of exposure to the new culture and can be represented in a “U” curve shaped form (see Figure 1.0).

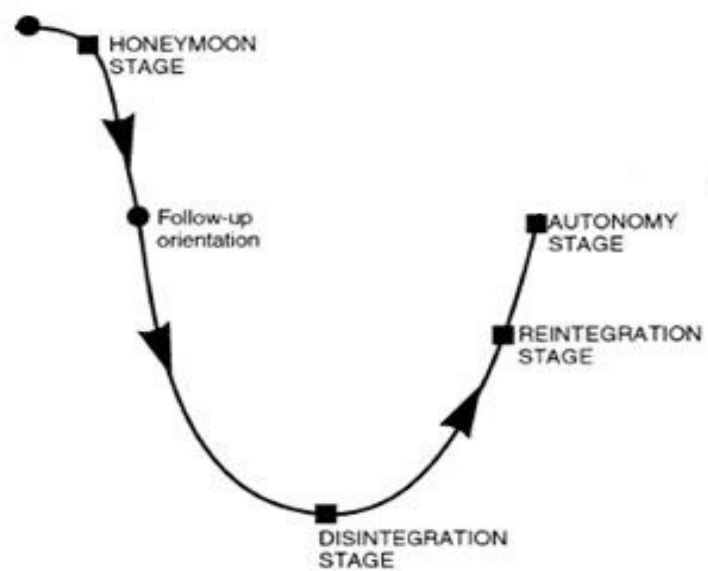


Figure 1.0

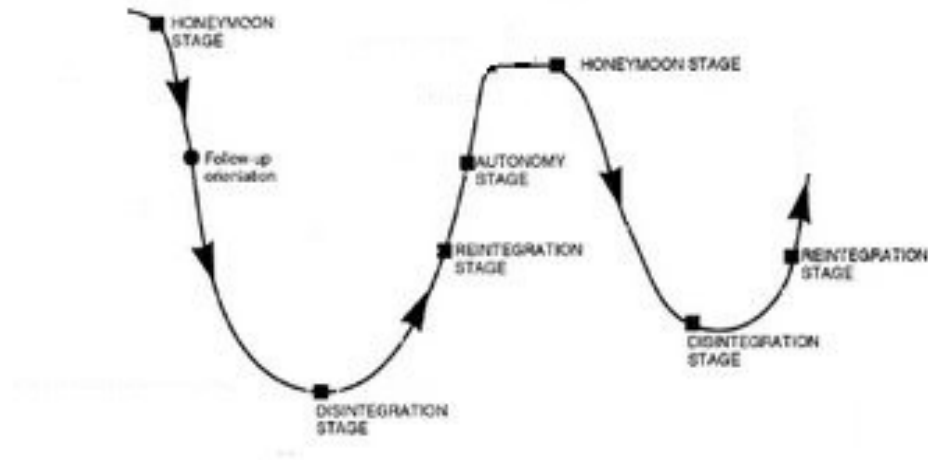


Figure 2.0

In addition, culture reentry is then represented in what is referred to as a “W” curve shaped form (see Figure 2.0), These phases are then repeated upon the learner’s return to the C1, during which culture shock is once more experienced as the learner must once more adjust to a culture that was once forgotten and replaced. Phases of culture shock are detailed as follows:



### **The Honeymoon Phase**

According to Xia (2009), with this representing the beginning stage, the learner enters the new culture with high expectations and visions that are represented through the media and/or stories that were told within the C1. An example of this can be shown in expectations of how a given culture dresses or reacts to specific social interactions.

### **The Follow-up Phase**

During this phase the learner starts to notice discrepancies and differences in the way C2 is in reality as opposed to the way it was perceived in the C1. For example, the way people in the C2 greet one another might differ from greetings used in the C2.

### **Disintegration Phase**

This phase represents the very bottom of the “U” form, in which the learner comes to terms with the fact that he/she will be facing difficulties in adapting to and coping with the new culture and its customs. The Disintegration phase is most likely the most critical one, during which, language learners would start to reflect and reevaluate on whether the journey to the C2 is still the best course of action.

### **Reintegration Phase**

During this phase, the learner would attempt to adjust his/her habits accordingly to coincide with the C2. The learner tries to learn the new customs, such as greetings and the appropriate social protocols.

### **Autonomy Phase**

Finally, the learner has adjusted to the target culture's parameters and managed to cope with the new customs appropriately.

In addition, culture reentry is then represented in what is referred to as a "W" curve shaped form (see Figure 2), These phases are then repeated upon the learner's return to the C1, during which culture shock is once more experienced as the learner must again adjust to a culture that was forgotten and replaced.

## **Case Studies of Culture Shock**

As the phenomenon of culture shock became more wide spread due to the exceeding number of language learners traveling abroad, researchers began to take notice and conduct close observations of subjects who were living in a foreign culture and were suspected of undergoing culture shock. These observations enabled researchers to further analyze the characteristics of culture shock and theorize about what triggers it and the possible ways of overcoming it.

### **Case Study 1**

Among these studies was the research conducted by Dutton (2011) in which he analyzes the culture shock of St. Patrick through the phases that are similar in some ways to what

language learners undergo, but also different in others. St. Patrick was said to be an ancient saint who was captured and taken away from his home in Great Britain at the early age of sixteen, then raised in Ireland. There, he was exposed to numerous cultural and religious aspects that seemed very unfamiliar and shocking to him. The study reports that St. Patrick underwent the phases of culture shock (mentioned in section 2.2) as he first had a preconceived image of what to expect in this place. The reality of the situation slowly, then, started to appear as the target culture, turned out to be drastically different from what was expected. St. Patrick slowly started to realize the differences in cultures as well as the absence of religion from his previous culture. After taking all these facts into account, he was eventually able to integrate himself into the new culture and turned to Christianity. However, the study then documents that St. Patrick undergoes a phase in which he rejects God and is tempted to return to his former ways, but manages to eventually accept his new found faith.

This case study can be compared in several ways to a learner of a second language who is undergoing culture shock in a foreign country. The age mentioned roughly correlates with that of a language learner who has just completed his high school degree and is on the verge of beginning his language learning journey abroad. While such issues of capture and forced travel might not seem likely, some language learners are faced with similar circumstances by other parties (parents, work obligations). In addition, another similar aspect can be drawn from the initial image and ideas St. Patrick held before interacting with the C2; that is, language learners often have an image of the target culture that does not necessarily match that of its reality. The culture represented in this study is the religious aspect and how it proved to be the dominant issue for the subject. Whether it is religion, social protocols or political views, language learners may also be faced with the task of accepting these views. The subject in the study was noted for

accepting the religious views at one instance, then rejecting them at another, L2 learners undergo the same difficulties in trying to accept views that conflict with the C1. This is again explained within the disintegration stage, as the subject is faced with conflicts and starts to question the views obtained earlier within the C1. This phase is described by Oberg (1960) as being the most difficult and likely the one phase that will determine whether an L2 learner will continue with the remaining phases or bring his/her journey to a halt and return to the home country. St. Patrick then showed signs of accepting the C2 and allowing the new views to replace the old. He then completely accepted Christianity. This stage represents the reintegration phase of culture shock in which the subject starts to learn and slowly accepts the new culture without questioning it. L2 learners who experience this phase are likely to begin reintegrating into the C2.

Finally, the subject managed to fully integrate himself into the new culture completely and become well-versed in Christianity. L2 learners who manage to move on to accomplish this stage may similarly achieve a sense of belonging to the new culture just as St. Patrick did. Similarly, they are likely to lead a successful academic career without facing any excessive stress.

## **Case Study 2**

Another study of relevance to culture shock is that documented by Greene and Kennedy (2012), in which they examine both the students and the educational institution's attribution to culture shock. The observation included numerous students with various cultural backgrounds who had enrolled into an elementary school in Great Britain. The research showed that the students despite their backgrounds had suffered academically, most notably within the first few weeks of their arrival at their new school. In addition, the school itself also posed a problem for

the students, the teachers and administration seemed to enforce the C2 onto the students without giving any regards to the students' own cultures respectively.

Within this study, several connections can be made between that of the mentioned students and second language learners. The students in the research started their academic year rejecting the new customs that were presented to them. They even started to reject working with other students who did not share their cultural backgrounds. Gass & Selinker (2001) explain these actions as being the result of social distance. When the language learner notices a severe difference between the cultures and decides to distance himself from the target culture and the language learning process alike. The result of such actions can ultimately diminish the amount of input the learner receives in the classroom. Another phenomenon Gass & Selinker (2001) mention is culture rejection. In such situations the learner refuses to learn the new ways of the target culture in hopes of maintaining the C1, this would also lead the learner to refuse to cooperate in any manner that is unfamiliar to him/her in favor of the C1's traditions.

### **Teaching English Methodologies**

Prator (1974) provides an overview of language learning prior to the twentieth century, and notes that language teaching methodology is carried between two distinct approaches; one that focused on enabling learners to use the language, while the other focused on getting learners to analyze the language's grammatical rules. Celce-Murcia, et al (2014) notes that the classical Greek and medieval Latin periods placed an immense emphasis on teaching people to use foreign languages, during which, language instructors used informal and less direct approaches in order to convey the meanings of the languages they were teaching, with a focus on aural-oral techniques without referring to any textbooks. In regards to the lessons that made use of hand written scripts, the responsibility for designing such scripts would always solely fall onto the

language instructor, without having any assistance from colleagues or administrators, the teacher had to design his/her tasks based on personal experience with the subject matter.. This historical period paved the way for three influential language teaching approaches:

### **Grammar Translation Approach**

Kelly (1969) mentions how this approach became solidified through the works of Karl Ploetz, a German scholar who greatly influenced language teaching for this era, and had in turn designed the key elements of the approach. Grammar Translation calls for the teacher to instruct the learners using the native language of the students, as the target language is rarely used for communication. This approach in particular places more focus on grammatical parsing, forms, and inflections. Any reading utilized within a language lesson would use texts of a difficult level that was above that of the language learners. Furthermore, the teacher was not required to even be proficient in the target language he/she was teaching. As a result of using this approach, Learners displayed an inability to use the language for communication purposes.

### **The Direct Method Approach**

Kelly (1969) noted that by the end of the nineteenth century, the direct method approach had begun to replace the grammar translation method as a viable alternative. The method called for the exclusive use of the target language within the classroom, use of the students' or the teacher's mother tongue was forbidden. Grammar was taught through repeated use and exposure to the target language, rather than by learning the various rules involved. It was also emphasized that teachers who applied the direct method must be native speakers of the target language, and be proficient in the target language culture.

## **The Reform Movement**

Howatt & Widdowson (2004) coincides the reform movement with the time the phonetic association was established, in 1886. In turn, the phonetic association developed the international phonetic alphabet, which was comprised of a transcription system that was designed to represent the sounds found in all languages, and ultimately became part of the reform movement throughout language teaching classrooms in the 1890s. The movement dictated that the spoken form of language is taught first, and that the phonetic findings should be applied to the teaching methods. The movement also demanded that teachers receive proper training in phonetics, while the learners should receive certain basic phonetic training that would allow them to establish some level of speaking habits. As a result, the movement focused on teaching pronunciation and oral skills, while ignoring grammatical rules and translation methods.

## **The Reading Approach**

Coleman (1929) reports that the Reading approach focused on teaching reading skills of the target language, and began to gain momentum in the early decades of the twentieth century. The approach was developed due, in part, to the learners' lack of proficient reading skills with regards to the target language, the reading materials that were utilized included works of philosophy and literature of the language. Additionally, only grammar rules that were deemed useful for reading skills were taught, as such, vocabulary that was only found to be used in large frequency would be used in the language classroom. Comprehension of reading was heavily emphasized within the approach, while the teacher's high oral proficiency level in the target language was not required. The learner's first language is only used as a means to present the reading material and check comprehension. The reading approach is also noted by West (1941), and was adapted in North America until the early 1940s.

### **The Audiolingual Approach**

Howatt (2004) believed that the reform movement approach greatly contributed to the audiolingual approach in the United States. During World War II, it became apparent that members of the US military needed to learn foreign languages, while also acknowledging the importance to learn how to communicate with native speakers of a given language. Fries (1945) states that the US government immediately hired linguists to develop language courses and teach oral communication skills and constructed what came to be known as the audiolingual approach. Deriving features from the reform movement and the direct method, it also added elements of structural linguistics and behavioral psychology. Skinner (1957) believed that in regard to behavioral psychology, learning verbal or non-verbal skills heavily depends on the use of repetitions, until the learners become well versed with the target skills. The approach involved using mimicking and memorizing, since accordingly, language is obtained based on repeated habit. Little attention is given to reading and writing skills, the same can also be regarded for vocabulary lessons. The audiolingual approach was considered the dominant learning strategy during the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

### **The Oral Situation Approach**

Howatt (2004) notes that the lack of emphasis on oral skills in previous teaching approaches is what led to the development of the oral situation approach. The newly developed oral situation added linguistic features to the new approach. The approach advocated the use of structures that focused on real life situations, that the learners might encounter in their day to day interactions with native speakers of a target language, allowing them to be well equipped for any probable communicative situations. Similar to some of the previous counterpart approaches, the oral situation also uses repetition, and is primarily focused on spoken language, all of the



language used within the lesson is practiced orally and takes precedence to the later addressed written skills of the language. Thus, the classroom would only consist of oral use of the target language, while also placing graded focus on oral grammatical structures.

### **The Cognitive Approach**

Belonging to the more recent views on language learning, Neisser (1967) notes that the approach is influenced by some of Chomsky's early linguistic theories, as well as cognitive psychology. It opposes the previous approaches in their focus on learning by habit, but rather gives more attention to acquisition patterns and rules that can be applied to problems or circumstances. In agreement, Chomsky (1957) views language acquisition as a system with extendable rules that are based on meaningful exposure. As a result, the approach calls for individualized instruction, where learners are held responsible for their own learning process. According to the cognitive approach, grammar rules can either be taught deductively, or inductively for the learners to learn on their own. Pronunciation is not emphasized, neither is perfecting the language skills to an unrealistic level. All the language skills are held in high priority (listening/speaking/reading/writing), while vocabulary is especially stressed for higher proficiency leveled learners. The approach excels over past ones, in its acceptance of errors and using them as a constructive learning process for corrections and feedback. The language instructor is also required to be proficient in the target language, and said to maintain an ability to successfully and continuously conduct analysis of a given language structure.

### **The Affective-Humanistic Approach**

Moskowitz (1978) mentions how this approach was developed as a result of the lack of considerations in both the audiolingual and cognitive approaches, as it focuses on social relations within the classroom, particularly that which exists between the student and the language

instructor. The argument it presents stems from the basis that language learning is a process that is personal and social in nature. The approach demands a mutual respect for the learners and their teacher, while giving priority to meaningful communication that is personal to the language learners. Language instructors who apply this approach are encouraged to implement paired or group work among the learners. The class atmosphere is considered essential, as is the implementation of peer reviews among the learner groups. The language instructor takes the role of a facilitator, instead of constantly directing instructions towards the groups, while he/she should be well proficient in both the target language, as well as the learner's native first language, this would help in assisting the learners through the initial stages while gradually allowing them to become self-dependent later with future lessons.

### **The Comprehension-based Approach**

The basic premise for this approach is the resemblance in methodologies of first language acquisition to second language learning, with an extended involvement of exposure and comprehension. Krashen & Terrell (1983) note a number of the characteristics of the approach to include an emphasis on listening comprehension skills that would lead to developed speaking, reading, and writing development over time. Learners are encouraged to begin with a period of exposure to meaningful listening speech that would allow them to respond in nonverbal methods before producing language. Additionally, learners are encouraged to engage in activities that utilize speaking skills until they feel they have acquired the necessary speaking skills to use the target language in real life situations. A delay in oral pronunciation can display better results, rather than rushed pronunciation. Krashen's  $i+1$  theory is implemented in this approach the most, as learners are exposed to language that is considered one level above their own. Error correction is not used, rather the main objective is for learners to comprehend the critical and overall

meanings conveyed. The language instructor must be a native speaker or of near native proficiency level, alternatively, the use of materials is required to help convey the meanings.

### **The Communicative Approach**

Based on the growing works linguists in the United States such as Hayes (1971), language learning came to be viewed as a meaning-based system that would be used for communication purposes. The overall goal of the approach is to establish a means for communication in the target language, therefore, the language course would include a number of social functions, while the content would utilize academic or job related materials. Students are encouraged to work in pairs or groups, to better make use of and build negotiation skills using the target language. Activities used within the approach can include roleplay, or any form of dramatization, as long as the activities make use of authentic tasks and projects that reflect pedagogical purposes. All the major language skills (listening/speaking/reading/writing) can be utilized for activities used within the approach. The teacher is meant to act as a facilitator in the approach, to assist in correcting any errors, while also maintaining use of the target language.

### **Teaching Methodology Effectiveness**

According to Maleki (2005), a notable decline in the direct method has lead mainstream language teaching focusing more on the communicative method, as well as the audio-lingual method. Al-Asmari (2015) conducted a study that aimed to investigate the challenges of having language teaching successfully implement the communicative method within a language based university classroom in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Several concerns of past research is raised, with regards to past similar studies (Inceciay & Inceciay 2009; Bax 2003), in which past research has emphasized the global use of traditional teaching methods, including some of the older models (direct method, grammar translation). As is the case in some institutions in the kingdom,

in which traditional methods of teaching are considered the norm, while introducing new methods would require additional teacher training, rather, research such as Hymes (1971), favored a transition to teaching methods that cater more towards the immediate needs of the learners, similar to that of the communicative method, in which negotiation skills are considered key for job related opportunities. The study utilized a questionnaire developed by Ozsevik (2010), in which the language teachers were asked to inquire about the most common difficulties and challenges, as well as the difficulties that the learners might also encounter. While the researcher places an emphasis on the teaching of communicative skills, through the applied method, there is little accountability for Krashen's proposed "natural order hypothesis". In which, learners must adhere to learning certain grammatical structures before others, whereas the research at hand seems to place more focus on the immediate learnability of communicative skills. The results found a number of challenges on the teachers' part, stemming from insufficient knowledge of the communicative method, while also having a lack of experience in applying the method. While the students' based questionnaire displayed the reasoning for low proficiency levels was due to an overall lack of interest in the subject matter.

### **Studies that Examined General Language Learner' Perceptions of English Language Teaching Methods**

A number of studies have explored general learners' perceptions of English language teaching methods, while highlighting crucial reasons why the perceptions should be taken into account when teaching a language class. The process of integrating learner perceptions into lesson planning and teaching in itself can be vigorous, Allwright (1984) states that teachers find it difficult to accept feedback, and therefore, tend to ignore what might be the more resourceful basis on which to decide the most useful teaching method for a particular group of learners.

Rudock (1991) refers to this process of ignoring learners' voices as a "blind spot" (p.30), in which language teachers would refrain from researching valuable input that can be asserted by their learners. Barkhuizen (1998) reported on a study that investigated language learners' perceptions of their teachers' teaching activities and overall teaching methods, when utilized, the perceptions that were collected surprised their teachers in regards to how much the input aided them in future planning, in terms of which teaching method would best benefit their learners.

Similarly, Alizadeh (2018) carried out a study to explore the effectiveness of English language teaching methods on learners, and found that the participants of the study expressed dissatisfaction and in the difficulty, as well as the fairness of the distribution of the teaching method among the various levels of proficiency students. The study concluded that there was a need to insert communicatively oriented teaching methods into the language program at hand. Thus, the presented studies present viable reasoning for tapping into learners' perceptions within a given language classroom.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented a relevant literature review for the topics pertaining for culture shock, and known methodologies of language teaching, it provided a brief historical overview of the origins of culture shock, then it described different types and phases of culture shock, followed by a description of two case studies of culture shock. Thereafter, several teaching methodologies are listed, the chapter ended with a cited studies that explore general learners' perceptions of their classroom English teaching methodologies.

In the next chapter, I provide a description of the entire research methodology. Including an explanation of the nature of the qualitative research, and how it fits with the need of this

particular study. Furthermore, a report on the participants and the process of the data collection, and its analysis is also provided.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter explains the methodology that was used to investigate the perceptions of second language learners of English experiencing culture shock, towards English language teaching methods. Specifically, this chapter identifies the research question that guides the study, explains the qualitative interpretive design, discusses the rationale for selecting the participants, and describes the language course involved in this study. Next, it identifies data sources, describes data collection and data analysis methods, and addresses issues of research ethics and trustworthiness. It ends by describing limitations of the study.

#### **Research Question**

The research question guiding this study is; What are the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods?

#### **The Research Design**

This research study will use a qualitative interpretive method design. Because the nature of the study involves exploring the perceptions the students towards English language teaching methods, a qualitative interpretive design is appropriate for investigating the research question. A qualitative design can specifically explore lived experiences as needed in order to gain a better understanding of the learners' perceptions. Merriam (2002) explains that one of the key component to understand qualitative research, lies within the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals and their unique interactions with the world around them.

Furthermore, the qualitative interpretive design here is interested in selected students and their interactions at particular points in time, as well as during their language classes with their teachers.

Dilthey (1985) suggests that the most basic form of lived experience would usually involve pre-reflective consciousness of life; or otherwise an awareness of one's self, the description entails that the experiences are usually unique to the participants and are best brought to light through their own self reflections. Similarly, Van Mannen (1990) notes that what makes lived experiences so unique, is that it grants the researcher the ability to reflect and talk about it, as it ultimately gives particular quality, in hopes that it might become part of a system of contextually related experiences, that stem from a process of reflection and meaning. The goal thereafter for this study, is to reflect on the experiences the language learners undergo and their perceptions of how well the teaching methods impact them throughout their culture shock, if at all.

A qualitative research design is suited for this study because it directly focuses directly on investigating the perceptions of students on English language teaching methods. Crotty (1998) described this research method as understanding constructed meanings that derive by human beings as they engage the world they live in, while also focusing on interpretations they lie within the context of a larger society. Merriam (2002) notes that researchers who chose to engage in basic qualitative interpretive studies tend to focus their interests on three basic elements; (1) the way people interpret their experiences, (2) how worlds they inherit are constructed, (3) and meanings they construct as a result of their experiences.



### **The Participants and the Rationale**

The participants in the study will consist of a purposeful sample of graduate and undergraduate English language learners who are experiencing culture shock, and studying at different proficiency levels at the Kent State language center. They will constitute a purposeful sample for several reasons. Participants will be learners who are enrolled in Kent State University's language program, specifically within the beginner level classes, based on a given language proficiency test, and with the intent of enrolling their respective colleges upon completion of the language program. Participants will also experience some degree of culture shock, and will most likely be within the beginning stages. Because of their proficiency level and recent arrival in the US, the learners have had minimal to little exposure to the target culture.

Patton (1990) argues that purposeful sampling should imply that the research make use of a relatively small group. Therefore, the number of participants for this study will not be large. Ideally, approximately about five students would be selected after having confirmed they have met the selection criteria, i.e. experienced symptoms of culture shock through the use of a test developed by Mumford (1998). In order to select candidates for the study, the culture shock test by Mumford (1998) will be distributed to a group of beginner proficiency language level. Those whose scores meet the requirements of the test will be invited to participate in the study. Language teachers will also be asked to participate in the study in order to best triangulate the data between the various sources.

### **The English Language Course**

The beginning level English language course is a requirement for learners to acquire the necessary language skills in order to advance to the higher levels, and ultimately enroll into the

faculty of their choosing. The students' day to day tasks within their language courses involve enhancing their language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). The syllabus (see appendix A) engages students in familiarizing themselves with language tasks that they might encounter in real life situations, such as, buying groceries or writing a letter. The situations in the tasks are commonly focused on themes that derive from the target culture, with rare attention given to other cultures. The learners are expected to participate in individual and group work, that may include presentations, homework assignments, and occasionally simple research projects. By the end of the semester course, the students are expected to have advanced their language skills, to a point that would allow them to advance to a higher beginner level. They can achieve this by achieving the necessary grade level throughout the teacher's ongoing assessments.

### **Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures**

Several data sources will be used in this study. These sources will include participants undergoing culture shock and enrolled in a English language learning course, English Language course instructor(s), and the researcher who will keep a researcher journal throughout the study. Rubin and Rubin (2012) describe the researchers' role of collecting data as being complex, in that they are expected to explore a series of complex situations and problems using a variety of techniques, and analysis. Merriam (2009) also notes that data techniques that drive from participants as valuable sources that provide a rich description of information towards the participants' thinking. Hence, two data collection methods will also be used in this study: classroom observations and informal interviews.

### **Informal Classroom Observations**

Wiersma and Jurs (2009) describe the act of research observations as “a procedure by which an observer records what is occurring in some situation or setting, such as a classroom” (p.370). In this study my observations will involve conducting 2 observations on 3 different teachers. Rubin and Rubin (2012) expand on what is involved in observations, noting that it has evolved to include formal watching of everyday activities. They propose that researchers may choose to take a back seat when observing activities that involve organizations or group activities, think about the learners’ actions later, and then reflect on them. I plan to be strictly an observer while only recording the applied teaching methods, as to make my own analysis of the types of the specific types of teaching methods used, and ultimately draw comparisons with the type of teaching methods the students believe are applied. As a result, 3 teachers will be observed, in 1 of their weekly classes for 2 weeks.

### **Participant Journaling**

An additional source of data to be collected for the study is journaling. Hatch (2002) describes it as an ideal and strategic method of data collection that can build into a researcher’s study, by requesting the participants to partake in maintaining written records of their experiences, as well as their reflections throughout the research period. Additionally, Johnstone (1994) elicits that writing presents a perfect opportunity for individuals to reflect upon and process their experiences in ways that cannot be presented through simple thoughts or discussions. Therefore, I plan to ask the participants of the study to partake in writing about their thoughts and reflections concerning the teaching methods through a series of questions, this will take place during a period of 2 weeks of their classes.

## **Informal Interviews**

I will also collect data through a series of informal interviews. Mishler (1986) explains that interviews are used by qualitative researchers as a type of conversations, and are used to explore the participants' experiences relating to a phenomenon, while also delving into their interpretations that would contribute to the study. Hatch (2002) states that informal interviews are primarily used by researchers to discover meaning structures that the participants' use to organize their chain of experiences, in order to help make sense of their unique worlds. As such, the research will conduct informal interviews in order to best investigate the students' perceptions of the English language teaching methods they experience. Hatch (2002) also suggests referring to informal interviews as a method to acquire more information on particular topics via a more planned way in that they also welcome follow up questions. In doing so, participants tend to feel genuinely flattered when someone shows interest in their topic.

Furthermore, Rubin & Rubin (2012) explain how qualitative interviewing is meant to aid researchers in their process of reconstructing events they have never experienced. As such, the participating language learners were asked a variety of questions regarding their own culture, how they see it clashing with the target culture, their learning experience in the target culture, and ultimately how these tie into their perceptions of the English language teaching methods. Follow up questions were also used, adding more depth to the perceptions, and experiences provided. Ruben & Ruben (2012) also suggest utilizing semi-structured interviews, in which main questions are presented first that highlight the theory that is being investigated, then follow-up questions that enable the researcher to obtain further details of certain subjects, and finally using probes by inserting comments and gestures to facilitate the conversation between the interviewer and the participant.

Group interviews will also be utilized among the participants as a means to collect data. Vaughn, Shumm & Sinagub (1996) note that the goal of group interviews is to allow the participants to explore a topic in deeper depth collectively in order to reflect among one another on each of the participants' unique perspectives are towards the teaching methods that were used in their class. As a result, I plan to interview the participants individually first, and then arrange for a group meeting in order to explore their reflections on the matter as a whole. A final utilization to interviewing will be to have informal interviews with the language teachers. The purpose of these interviews is to help further triangulation with the student collected data and classroom observations.

**Table 1**

*Research Question and Data Collected*

List the research question	Data Collected to Answer Question
What are the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual Participant Interviews (4); (2) per participating learners, (2) per participating teachers.</li> <li>- Group Participant Interviews (2 total).</li> <li>- Journaling (9) entries, 3 per week for 3 weeks (Mon/Wed/Fri).</li> <li>- Culture shock test (1).</li> <li>- Observations (9), 3 per week for 3 weeks (Mon/Wed/Fri).</li> <li>- Member checking</li> </ul>

	Instructor informal interview (2) per week for 2 weeks.
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**Table 2***Timeline of Data Collection*

<b>Weekly Timeline</b>	<b>Type(s) of data collection</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Week 1 Field entry, participant recruitment, and culture shock data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Field Entry</li> <li>- Culture shock test</li> </ul>	Students are asked to participant in the culture shock test in order to recruit participants for the study.
Week 2 Classroom observations and student journaling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 classroom observations (Mon/Wed/Fri)</li> <li>- Student journaling; round 1 (Mon/Wed/Fri)</li> </ul>	<p>Classroom observations of the instructors and the teaching methods applied within the classroom. Using an observational protocol.</p> <p>Students will also be asked to begin writing in their journals; a total of 3 entries, 1 per day (mon, Wed, Fri). Using a field tested protocol of questions.</p>
Week 3 Individual Student & Instructor Interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual student interviews; students; round 1.</li> <li>- Individual Instructor Interviews; round 1.</li> </ul>	<p>Collect additional data to explore the degree of culture shock, as well as perceptions of English teaching methods.</p> <p>For triangulation of the data and to establish trustworthiness.</p>

<p>Week 4 Classroom Observations &amp; Group Interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Class observations (Mon/Wed/Fri).</li> <li>- Group interviews; round 1.</li> <li>- Student Journaling; round 2 (Mon/Wed/Fri).</li> </ul>	<p>Classroom observations of the instructors and the teaching methods applied within the classroom. Using an observational protocol.</p> <p>Students are asked to come together for a group interview to discuss individual and collective perceptions.</p> <p>Students are asked to continue to write in their journals; a total of 3 journal entries, 1 per day (Mon, Wed, Fri). Using field tested protocol of questions</p>
<p>Week 5 Individual Interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual Interviews; round 2.</li> </ul>	<p>Collect additional data to explore the degree of culture shock, as well as perceptions of English teaching methods. Total of 3 student Interviews, 1 per student.</p>
<p>Week 6 Classroom Observations, Individual Interviews, Group Interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom Observations (Mon/Wed/Fri).</li> <li>- Student Journaling; round 3 (Mon/Wed/Fri).</li> </ul>	<p>Classroom observations of the instructors and the teaching methods applied within the classroom. Using an observational protocol.</p> <p>Students are asked to continue to write in their journals; a total of 5 journal entries, 1 per day (Mon, Wed, Fri). Using field tested protocol of questions</p> <p>For triangulation of the data and to establish</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual Interviews; Instructors; round 2.</li> <li>- Group Interviews; round 2.</li> </ul>	<p>trustworthiness.</p> <p>Students are asked to come together for a group interview to discuss individual and collective perceptions.</p>
<p>Week 7 Member checking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member Checking</li> </ul>	<p>Data collections and findings are reviewed with the participants while taking notes of their reactions.</p>

### Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure

Hatch (2002) describes data analysis as a complex process that is rarely fully explored in depth in explaining qualitative research. Those who conduct qualitative studies often struggle with finding connections and themes that would make sense of the data. Hatch (2002) states that “data analysis is portrayed as messy, cumbersome, inductive, creative, challenging, subjective, nonlinear, labor intensive, exhilarating, and time-consuming” (p.147). Depending on the type of study at hand and the goals that the study is set to accomplish, each individual researcher’s themes and connecting ideas, will differ from another.

Sanders (2003), lists several steps suggested by Colaizzi (1978) to approach a data analysis for a qualitative interpretive study.

Step 1: I will listen to the recordings of each interview several times in order gain a better grasp of the details and feelings expressed in each recording, I also read through the transcripts five or six times in order to better reflect on what was said during the interview process.



Step 2: I will call for a follow up on the reading of the transcripts, and added identifying key phrases and meaning brought about by the experiences of spirituality extracted from the stories conveyed by the participants.

Step3: I will use member checking as a means to review the data with the participants. Hatch (2002) encourages researchers to allow the participants of the study to provide their interpretations and reactions of the data and findings. Therefore, I will request a final individual meeting session for each participant in order to collaborate and gain their unique perspectives.

Step 4: I will generate general themes to align with the statements provided by the participants, in order to aid the researcher to formulate rich meanings. Additionally, Sanders (2003) suggests the use of bracketing to highlight the researcher's own unique ideologies and ideas retaining to the topic of the study, allowing further explorations and comparisons between the researcher and the participants. A further stage of this step included raising feasible questions regarding the materials mentioned within the transcript, this had me question actions and possible connections laid by the participants in identifying their motives and spirituality. The matter of spirituality could potentially prove extremely useful, the participants' culture and religious background (in this case) are deeply intertwined and presented a heavy influence on their perception of the world.

Step 5: I will accumulate of the gathered meanings generated from the transcripts, notes of observations, and arranging them into themes. Out of the interviews I will listen to and transcribed and notes taken throughout the observations, I can assume that the participants would have similar and perhaps several interconnected themes, such as false expectations, fears, anxiety, while few expressed concern for their families in their countries.

Step 6: I will make use of the ideas found within the transcription and observations, by relating them to the phenomenon and teaching methods applied. Better use of this step could cultivate the themes, as suggested by Sander (2003), in order to ensure connections with the phenomena. For instance, the theme of fear and anxiety would be contracted from exerts within the transcripts/noted observations and related to one of the symptoms of the phenomenon of culture shock.

Step 7: I will describe the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. A cultivation of sorts, the process hereafter offered an opportunity to review past steps in order to describe the process and meanings found throughout the research process. Sanders (2003) again encourages using Colaizzi's (1978) method of analysis in order to obtain a sense of outcome from the overall structure, and pave the way for more promising results. The final step suggested returning to the participants for validation on the data that was provided. Hence, a final follow up interviews at the end of the semester were necessary, in order to gain their own perspectives towards the collected data.

### **Trustworthiness**

The term trustworthiness is the means in which the research is done in a manner that best represents the participants and their rights within the research presented. Other aspect to be considered in trustworthiness are validity and reliability, Maxwell (2009) defines these as the information that could potentially support or challenge the ideas in the study. In similar terms, Gupa & Lincon (1989) offer their own thoughts on Validity and reliability, describing them as "assumptions and interpretations as socially constructed undertakings with significant implications for the ways in which we inevitably use those interpretations to continue to go with one another" (p.12) i.e offering our own understandings for the ways we understand one another

from our own individual perspectives. Adding to the tools of trustworthiness is reflexivity. Hardy & Alvesson (2004) defined the term as “giving thought to how one thinks about thinking” (p. B1), it is concerned with knowledge and the way in which researchers produce knowledge.

Referring to the previously mentioned tactics. I self-reviewed the research in an attempt to find and correct any problems that might have been documented. Common issues that occur in qualitative research are biases in opinions and assumptions in the interpretations. Having traveled to different countries and experienced culture shock, my concern would be to reflect any of my own fears during my experiences in place of the participants. Hatch (2002) also suggests the use of triangulation, as a means to verify and provide an extension to information provided from other sources, therefore, I plan to review the data provided by the participants with the language teachers.

### **Ethics**

While proceeding with this type of qualitative research, certain ethical procedures must be considered. Hatch (2002) notes that researchers must uphold ethical responsibilities towards their research in order to preserve the rights of their participants from any form of exploitations that might occur.

In light of these dangers, I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application that is specifically designed for researchers conducting studies at Kent State University. I then abided by the rules laid out by the IRB application, stating that I present letters of consent, with a signature of approval from all the participants who willingly agreed to be a part of the study. I explained to the participants the purpose of the study and the terms for use of the information (whether it may be on a private or public scale). All participants were free to agree to the terms

and conditions laid out in the letter of consent to share the information provided for the study.

Participants who did not agree to the terms upon reading the letter of consent were free to do so.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents findings of the qualitative study, which explored the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods. The chapter is organized as follows: I begin by identifying the research questions. Next, I briefly review the qualitative research, including participants, data collection, and data analysis. I conclude by presenting the findings based on data analysis.

#### **Research Question**

The research question that lead the qualitative study is as follows: What are the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods? Through the data collection methods, I was able to collect the necessary data that would allow the participants to address the research questions, with regards to their own respective views, perceptions, and in-class experiences.

#### **Methodology**

The methodology used in this study was of a basic interpretive design. Individual interviews were conducted to gain a grasp of the participants' culture shock, and classroom experiences. Group interviews were then carried out to allow the learners to reaffirm their views of their teachers' English language teaching methods. Classroom observations were held in order to have a source of comparison that would allow me to note first-hand the type of English teaching methods applied. Finally, member checks were carried out for the participants to

reconfirm and evaluate their previously expressed views and experiences. This was the final data collection method, which took place towards the end of the participants' academic semester.

### **Participants**

A total of seven students of beginning level English language learners with the same cultural background participated in this study. They consisted of four female and three male learners. The perceptions were brought to light through a series of inquiries, in which the participants shared their in and out of class learning experiences which included several teaching methods. All the participants share the same cultural background, that of Saudi Arabian culture, and have had varied exposure with different cultures from very little to none. They are all beginning level language proficiency, but of different classes. Three of the female participants and one male participant share a class together, while two male participants and one female participant share another classroom. They all undergo classes that focus on the four English language skills (listening & speaking, reading & writing).

### **Data Collection**

This study involved approval to contact the language learners by Kent State University's Language Center, thus, I have sent out an email request to several classrooms, of which seven learners responded and offered to participate in the study. For the informal interviews, I met with the participants in a small study room provided by the Kent State Library upon request. All the learners participated and provided insights into their culture shock experiences, as well as their perceptions of their teachers' English language teaching methods. I, then, proceeded to contact the participants' teachers for permission to observe their classes. Two teachers, who taught four

of the participants in the study, replied back and provided time slots to observe their classes; during which I was able to take notes of how the students' reacted to the various teaching methods they perceived. Unfortunately, I was not able to observe the remaining three participants due to time constraints and ongoing exams, as noted by their teachers. I was also not able to collect any participant data via journals as originally planned. The participants, as well as the director at the language center, argued that the last two weeks of the semester were filled with assignments and exams, thus making it impossible for participants to work on and eventually complete their journals for the study.

In respect to the participants' cultural and religious backgrounds, the head of the language center had preconditioned that the female and male participants take part in the group interviews at separate times. I had to comply with this request, and thus conducted two group interviews: one for the male participants, and the other for the female participants. These interviews were carried out in large study rooms provided at request by the Kent State Library. Further details are provided in table 1 which illustrates the raw data.





### **Short Biographies of Participants**

In this section, I present short biographies of all 7 participants. I present these to help provide some background information for each of the participants' past, in regard to their culture and familiarity with English teaching methods. All of the participants of the study share the same cultural background; they are second language learners of English from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They are all high school graduates, who have temporarily migrated to the U.S. with the goal of achieving the necessary language requirements in order to enroll in their respective undergraduate colleges at Kent State University or other U.S. based institutions that they might apply to. Their exposure to other cultures outside their own varies from very little to none, as only one of the participants has previously traveled outside her country before coming to the US. The other participants have had some level of exposure through the media and a variety of media outlets (songs, movies, news publications). Only three of the participants have accompanying family members to help them transition during their culture shock, Two of the female participants have accompanying family members to help them through their culture shock experience, as they happen to be sisters, another female participant is married and has had some help from her husband throughout her culture shock.

Due to time constraints of having a very limited window of opportunity to collect data, it was necessary for me not to administer the culture shock test. Instead, I followed the guidelines and criteria of the literature review to determine that all participants were indeed undergoing culture shock while studying English as a second language in a foreign culture. Oberg (1954) describes it as the difficulties of being put into a situation while in an unfamiliar environment, this description adheres to all of the participants, as they have all been confirmed to being unfamiliar with the target culture they were residing in.

Another criteria was the confirmation of stress among the participants, Bochner and Furnham (1986) explain that culture shock will subject an individual to levels of stress when attempting to assimilate into a new culture. All the participants in the study expressed that they underwent varying degrees of stress due to external factors such as concerns and pressures over being accepted into college, completing their degrees, coping with everyday life in a new environment, and concerns for their families that they left behind. This evidence attests to the participants undergoing stress and hardships while attempting to assimilate themselves into the new culture.

Further criteria are listed by the Mia (1999) as the notable symptoms of culture shock. These included experiencing depression, anxiety, and feeling unable to accomplish specific tasks within the target culture. Eschback et al. (2001) also notes similar symptoms, explaining that culture shock could potentially lead to degrees of psychological, as well as a notable amount of emotional discomfort within the individual experiencing the phenomenon. The students who participated in this study all displayed similar symptoms of culture shock. They expressed feeling depressed for numerous reasons relating to their personal affairs, as well as their academic advancements. The most common symptom among them was the feeling of inability to cope with the target culture and the different cultural norms they were facing on a daily basis.

All the participants received their education in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia via a very traditional teaching method. Participation is often kept to a minimal among the learners, and class time is mostly spent with the teacher talking to convey the English language lesson to his/her students. Before arriving in the US, none of the participants had taken part in a co-ed classroom as it is culturally inappropriate to mix the genders in common setting areas.

Salwa, while it was not her first time being exposed to a foreign culture, had done some traveling in the past to the United Kingdom, which in her opinion, represented a somewhat similar, but also at the same time, distant experience to that of now living in the US, and expressed an increased fear of racism from living in the United States. Through her interview, Salwa explained that she had traveled and experienced other cultures before, but never the American culture

“I lived in the United Kingdom for a short while, and over time I appreciated their customs and culture.”

this would agree with Xia’s (2009) phases of culture shock, in which Salwa displays a successful integration into the culture she resided in. Salwa also expressed a great deal of concern regarding her transition to the target culture, this seemed to stem from stereotypes generated by the media.

“I was afraid of racism, this was the most thing I was afraid of, that was the only thing that worried me.”

Ahmad, on the other hand, was not entirely sure what to expect when venturing and traveling abroad for the first time to a new culture. He anticipated having trouble adapting to his new home and came to realize totally distinctive teaching methods between the teachers he grew accustomed to up in Saudi Arabia, and the ones he was attending language classrooms with in the US. He elaborated on his previous experience in the Kingdom.

Rayan, is another male student who seemed less sociable than Ahmad, and he expressed little interest in interacting with others outside of his own culture. Rayan shares some concerns regarding cultural differences, and what to expect of life within the target culture, he explains this in his statement:

“What I have heard about the American culture is very corrupt, and that they love to party at night and drink. However, I believed that if I want these things, I will find it; but, if I don’t want it, it will not come to me. Thank God, I didn’t see any.”

Rayan opted to avoid social gatherings for safety and religious reasons, which also coincide with his culture. This meant he made the decision to avoid practicing the English language outside of the classroom setting because of the cultural incompatibility which he made clear when asked about his classroom experiences.

Lamya, is also a female undergraduate who came to the US for the first time and has expressed mixed emotions about her experience with the culture.

“I was a little bit afraid from coming here by myself; but, at the same time I was feeling enthusiastic and looked forward to an independent and new life where one can rediscover oneself and concentrate on the future without facing pressure from the society.”

Additionally, Lamya mentions how her initial impression of the culture was very different than what she came to find.

“I was shocked because I was expecting something great as in America. However, when we arrived at a small town, it looked depressing for me because there was nothing to do here and it was very boring. It looked like a village. It was not what I had expected. I expected something nice.”

Even basic communication situations became problematic for Lamya

“I found out that they don’t understand my English because of my accent. They don’t understand what I say although I feel I am very clear when I speak. They always ask me to

repeat several times what I said. This was a problem for me. The English Language that I knew when I came here was what I learned at school in Saudi Arabia, but that was not enough.”

Alya: explains that she has also come to the US for the very first time, as it is also her first time traveling and experiencing a new culture. She mentions that she had certain ideas of what to expect from life in the US, mostly stemming from the media, some turned out to be truer than others:

“I had a good impression, thank God, because I used to watch a lot of American movies and series. Thus, when I came here, I found everything somewhat the same as I had imagined and expected.” Certain conceptions gave Alya a sense of independence and self-reliance, as these were totally new concepts to her.

“I knew that people here are independent. Thus, I knew that when I came, I would learn to depend on myself.”

Abid, is a male undergraduate who expressed a great deal concern and enthusiasm towards his language studies, as well as his future academics. I inquired about his previous experience with English teaching methods in the Kingdom, to which he stated:

“I started learning English in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We used to take 2 hours per week as part of the curriculum. We took very basic things; but we went into more depth in high school, from which I learned a lot. I benefited from those high school years largely. When I came here, I took the exam that evaluates our standard and they put me in a good level.”

Here, Abid talks about his previous experience with English teaching methods, while establishing that his experience had initiated at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Typically, English is not taught in

public schools until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, whereas, private schools tend to start teaching English as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and usually make use of native English speakers.

When asked about how he found his new environment and culture, Abid replied with several statements:

“I had fears because the environment was unknown to me. It was fear of the unknown”

“It was difficult, of course, because it was my first trip ever outside Saudi Arabia. The first time I leave my country. I didn’t understand anything, especially that the society here is very tough. Even the teachers here are strict. When the teacher gave us an article to read and we discuss it in class, he imposes his own opinion on the ideas of the article, indirectly. Even the lessons we were taking were reflecting opinions and beliefs of the teachers only, we rarely had any kind of discussions with him.”

Abid establishes that teaching during his time as a student, and within his first culture was mostly dependent on the teacher and his lesson. He explains that the very concept of holding a discussion with his language teacher was very foreign to him. Hence, teaching methods such as offering feedback, and practicing the English language with the teacher were concepts he was not accustomed to.

Sireen is a female undergraduate and is Alya’s sister. The two were kind enough to participate in the study and have been helping in supporting each other through their transitional phase in their new environment. Interestingly, they both have similar academic goals, and hope to enroll together in nursing school. This is also Sireen’s first time in the US, therefore, I asked her about her initial impressions on the new culture, she replied with this statement:

“I know a lot about the Am. Culture before coming here because I watch a lot of movies and TV shows. Thus, it wasn’t something totally strange to me”

While Sireen seems to have grasped an understanding of the culture through media, this venue cannot always be counted as a reliable source for individuals undergoing culture shock, as movies and TV shows often depict fiction rather than reality. Thus, the impressions Sireen perceived might prove inaccurate over the course of her residence and interactions within the new culture. This led me to further inquire Sireen about her initial experiences upon moving to the US, she stated:

“there was a girl who gave me negative impressions about the people when I first came here; but I remember telling her that I don’t think this is true because I haven’t met any mean person so far. However, I can’t deny her what she said because she was talking out of her own experience; she said that she faced these things herself”

Sireen did not seem to have many experiences of her own to report on yet and was heavily relying on stories conveyed by her classmates and friends.

### **Findings**

In this section I present and describe the major findings in this study. These findings are presented as themes. In this study I define themes as a major category that is based on recurring patterns in responses to the data, or recurring patterns in participant responses and classroom observations across all or the majority of the participants. Here, findings include a total of five major themes: 1) Significant challenges or tensions in learning and practicing the English language. 2) Significant challenges or tensions with the dominance of instruction, that is placed on teaching speaking skills. 3) Significant challenges or tensions with the lack of instruction on teaching writing skills. 4) Significant challenges or tensions with the lack of culturally

appropriate instruction. 5) Significant challenges or tensions with the lack of focus on teaching academic vocabulary and writing styles for specific fields. In the following section each theme is identified and presented separately. It, also, includes a description of the meaning of the theme and evidentiary support across different data sources. For example, the phrase “significant challenge” is defined as an obstacle which students experienced and were hindered by, in some way or another.

### **Theme #1: Significant Challenges in Practicing the English Language**

In this theme students experienced a significant challenge in dealing with practicing the English language on a regular basis. By practicing the English language, students in individual and group interviews and member checks, referred to specific obstacles, both inside and outside the classroom, which hindered their ability to practice the language.

One example outside the classroom involved dealing with significant challenge or tension; specifically, the use of Uber drivers, in which a student preferred not to engage in conversation with her driver. Alya said she could not interact with her neighbors or her Uber drivers when they would start a conversation with her. In this particular instance, Alya prefers not to take part in conversations in instances where the native speaker’s gender might conflict with her culture by being a male. She stated:

“I didn’t mingle with male neighbors”.

She further stated:

“I think that is the worst thing about male Uber (drivers). I wish the drivers don’t talk or stop talking altogether. The drivers talk a lot with the customers which makes me uncomfortable. I don’t see this as positive thing. I wish they would just keep quiet”.



Alya also expressed much discomfort talking and interacting with native speakers. In large part, her discomfort was rooted in culture; namely, her cultural background does not permit her to regularly interact with and talk to people of the opposite sex. Therefore, her cultural background would ultimately hinder her ability to practice the English language, if presented an opportunity to do so outside of class with an individual of the opposite sex.

Another challenge of outside of classroom practice is expressed by Ahmad. He acknowledges his very sociable personality, and tried as much as possible to talk to native English speakers regularly, except when it came to female native speakers of the target language, which he expressed some difficulty in engaging in conversation with. Ahmad stated:

“I feel embarrassed and nervous to start a conversation with anyone .....

Ahmad added “.....and especially with girls”.

Like Alya, Ahmad’s comments indicate he, too, experienced a clash in culture. His first, Arabic culture, strongly demands the segregations of genders in everyday settings including school setting in classrooms. Settings in Saudi Arabia, his home country, like restaurant hosts, supermarket cashiers, were all occupied by male individuals. Females would not be permitted to occupy these positions. Classrooms in schools are still all segregated, and his teachers were all males growing up. Hence, he may not be accustomed to speaking to female individuals in his own culture, let alone in a new culture, and while practicing the English language.

In addition, Alya and Ahmad experienced challenges inside the classroom. These challenges related to practicing English with native speakers of English. They are also related to adjusting to demands of specific instructional strategies. For example, a student, during a group interview commented that one major challenge involved feedback by the instructor. This student

felt that the instructor's feedback, in class, was typically and regularly insufficient and unhelpful. Specifically, this student felt uncomfortable and unwilling to talk in class because of the lack of feedback. She felt that feedback would help improve her speaking skills, but without feedback she was reluctant to practice. She stated:

“Explaining rules in class only is not a good way. We would rather be given writing assignments to apply the rules and then, they correct and give us their feedback.”

Another challenge is related to the demands of specific instructional strategies. The strategies were very challenging to all students, especially female students. This strategy was related to grouping students within the classroom. Evidently, the female learners preferred to be seated with one another during classroom activities, as opposed to being grouped with male classmates. This is again due to the demands of the first culture. This type of grouping prevents the learners from practicing the English language, when their partners share the same first language. Sireen gave an example of this in her statement:

“We have two Chinese students, two Japanese and the rest of the students are all Saudis, except for one Jordanian who also speaks Arabic. When they divide the class into groups, they try to separate us so that we don't speak Arabic together. However, it is not working because we prefer to sit with the girls we know”

According to this statement, the female participants felt obligated to remain in their original groups which consisted of all female students and speak their first language.

In addition to interviewing the students, my own classroom observations indicated challenges with grouping, especially mixed gender grouping. In which I noticed three of the female participants seated themselves in close proximity to each other. This made it obvious that

they did not feel comfortable sitting next to male learners due to their cultural and religious protocols; and therefore, were mostly speaking to each other in their first language during assigned group activities. The only exception being when they were forced to use the target language to communicate with the teacher to participate in classroom discussions and occasionally ask questions.

During the final member check which occurred towards the end of the academic semester, the learners shared that some slight changes have occurred. Ahmad expressed that he felt more comfortable socializing with native speakers in spite of their being of the opposite gender. The female participants stated that they are more open now to working with male students, except for Lamyia who expressed that she has concerns about upsetting her husband.

## **Theme #2: Significant Challenges or Tensions with the Dominance of Instruction Placed on Teaching Speaking Skills**

All the participants of the study reported experiencing significant challenges or tensions with the dominance of instruction placed on teaching speaking skills. The dominance of Instruction mostly focused on teaching speaking skills at the expense of teaching reading, writing, and listening skills, according to the participants' experiences throughout their classes. This was particularly evidenced within the speaking assignments, and their frequency. Speaking assignments in the class focused mostly, if not solely, on speaking skills. Rayan, as well as others, noted that he felt these assignments may have been least beneficial to him. He believed that they were given more importance by the instructor than those that focused on other language skills. This issue of dominating teaching speaking skills has led to the feeling of tension, and challenge among the students, while some have expressed a lack of opportunity for them to practice speaking at all in the speaking class.

An example of this stemmed from an interview with Rayan, during which he discussed the frequency of speaking assignments, and what he felt may have been least beneficial to him; where he explained that practices of the speaking skills were not implemented as much as he would have preferred

“I don’t speak a lot. In the Listening and Speaking class we just listen to the teacher, but we don’t talk. We gave two presentations as an introduction, so far; but the major presentation is still to come next week. We didn’t benefit a lot from that class.”

Rayan lists the many assignments which focus on speaking, highlighting the activities and the emphasis the teacher places on this skill among the learners.

Another example of the dominance of instruction on speaking skills emerged during an interview with Lamya. Like Rayan, Lamya saw the dominance of speaking skills as a challenge or tension in the class, in which she disclosed how she noticed an abundance of speaking activities in her class.

Additionally, an example of the emphasis on teaching speaking was brought to light unexpectedly when I asked Salwa about the amount of participation, to which she replied by explaining that even during listening and speaking exercises, the focus tends to be on teaching speaking skills. She stated:

“I do get to participate, we learn how to take notes, the quiz then depends on the notes we took, I felt it really helped me develop my understanding of different topics, but they sometimes focus too much on speaking exercises.”

I asked all the participants the same question, with the same results, such as, Sireen who listed several activities done during the Reading class, one of which involved reading but would

ultimately have the students discuss the content among themselves and with the teacher the next day, as well as competitive team based games that also focused on speaking activities regarding the reading content.

“one teacher assigned a reading of a book which we discussed the following day in groups. Another teacher used games, creating two teams in class”.

This would signify placing importance on speaking activities among the beginning level learners, in order to aid them in their process of learning English. However, the learners seem to express that attention is not being distributed equally among all activities that focus on all the language skills collectively, with exclusivity, in their opinions, given to speaking skills.

The participants also reported on extra curriculum assignments and activities that are focused on speaking skills only. During the male group interview, Abdullah shared his experience regarding these activities as follows:

“The teachers and the Center have assigned lots of events that help us speak the language. For example, we have a coffee hour that is held once a week. Teachers and students get together for an hour to speak about anything. This is optional of course. Some teachers, like Mr. Smith (speaking class) has assigned 3 hours given throughout the week where we meet practicum students and speak about anything we want. The same idea as the coffee-hour. Also, there are other activities that are held on and off the campus in which we can participate and mingle with native speakers. For example, we attended the Valentine festival and a bowling Party, which lots of students from the Center attended.”

This indicates that the students are asked to participate in extra activities that focus on building their speaking skills. However, no such activities were given, that might help develop

their other language skills. A fact that provides further evidence that the teaching methods applied place a strong emphasis on speaking skills at the expense of reading, writing, and listening.

### **Theme #3: Significant Challenges or Tensions with the Lack of Instruction on Teaching Writing Skills**

All the participants of the study reported that they experienced significant challenges or tensions with the lack of instruction on teaching writing skills. The participants brought up the issue of the lack of instruction that focused on writing skills, and in some occasions, a lack of writing skills that would be specific to the research in their specific fields. Regarding the specific writing skills, the participants, also, expressed an interest in skills that might help them achieve the necessary TOEFL grade required in order for them to be admitted in their desired fields of interests.

An example of this is shown upon reflecting the participants' answers when asked about the language skills they wish they could improve at. They all emphasized the writing skills, and how this would, in their opinion, help improve their chances of writing good research papers upon enrolling in their respective colleges. When asked about the overall language skills he was looking to improve, Ahmad placed a high level of importance on the teaching of writing, and how much he believed it would help him throughout his academic career

“The only thing I needed help with is the methods or techniques of writing, as we didn't focus too much on what I wanted to improve, like how to write papers for research and things like that. I think we need to learn more about these things that will help us.”

Ahmad touches on academic writing skills that would aid him in his ability to write research papers. His claim is that the teaching methods excluded the specific writing skills he would have preferred to learn in his class, the skills that would eventually benefit him and his classmates upon enrolling into the university and conducting research.

Abid also talked about his desire to improve his writing skills, and how his previous classes within his own culture did not adequately prepared him for writing academic papers.

“I already covered everything; they taught us a lot in Saudi Arabia. The only thing I needed help with is the methods or techniques for writing.”

With these comments, Abdulziz also shares that some of his background in learning language skills included a wide variety, but still lacked a focus on the writing skills he had hoped to improve. The techniques of writings skills seem to be what matters most to him, and at the same time, those were what seem to be lacking in the teaching method used by his teacher in class.

While discussing skills that were not improved throughout the teaching methods, the participants commented about the frequency of the practice sessions that the teaching methods offered; mentioning that they had hoped that they practiced more often than what was applied in class, even asking for more focus on reading and writing skills. Rayan said the following:

“The same thing with the other skill classes like writing. They didn’t help us much. We felt that it is our job to improve ourselves”.

The other participants had similar opinions regarding tensions. The learners felt it was their obligation and responsibility to improve upon these skills that were not present in their

teachers' teaching methods. Presumably, Rayan would seek other means to improve his writing skills outside the classroom.

I also thought it was fitting to inquire on how much focus writing skills were given during the group interview, keeping in mind that at this point more than half the semester had passed. The female participants explained that there was little focus on writing, and that the teachers only recently began to assign writing homework and writing activities. During the female group interview, Lamya talked about how the teachers postponed teaching writing skills until later in the program

“The teachers also don't concentrate on writing skills until the last level. I took level 1 and didn't know how to write. It wasn't until recently when they started to concentrate on writing.”

Lamya here explains how the beginning level proficiency teaching methods have shown an occurrence to her, of not focusing on writing skills at that stage. The focus on writing seems to emerge at the later stages of the program, when the students have developed their writing somewhat. However, Lamya implies that there ought to be a focus at the initial stages of teaching language as well.”

During the female group interview, also, Alya elaborated on how the teachers skipped teaching certain basic writing skills, assuming that these beginning level learners had already accumulated the writing skills they needed before coming to the Center. This caused a great deal of tension among the students, particularly those who lacked the foundational writing skills needed to advance their levels.



“Some teachers teach us with the assumption that we already know everything about writing methods. I didn’t know some important things, like the APA style of writing, until the last level, although it is very important.”

Alya seems to have acknowledged that teachers are not always aware of each learner’s individual background proficiency level. Hence, the concept of writing styles may not have been taught to her yet. This seems to be a critical skill to her, as writing research papers depends heavily on the correct implementation of the writing styles.

Salwa also supported the need for further lessons in writing throughout the teaching method in her statement:

“I improved my speaking skill over here, but my writing skills still need some work.”

Similarly, Lamya noted specific plans on what might help improve the learners’ writing skills. She offered her own suggestion on what type of writing skills she hoped the teaching methods would focus on in her class. This is made evident in her statement:

“They should concentrate on Writing and taking notes. Through writing we can apply the grammatical rules that we take in class. It would be better if we listen to the passage and take notes. By writing and taking notes, they can identify our mistakes and correct it for us.”

These previous statements by the participants express the types of writing skills they had hoped to learn, which were not taught to them. This also caused tension, where the students were not given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Alya elaborated on this very notion of having constructive feedback applied to the teaching methods, pointing out that her class lacked any feedback, and that it might have proven beneficial to her learning process. Further tension is expressed in her statement:

“Explaining rules in class only is not a good way. We would rather be given writing assignments to apply the rules, and then they should have corrected them and given us their feedback.”

Feedback seems to be an important element to the learners, one that has not been present in their writing activities.

Alya and Sireen, respectively, touched on a crucial point, which represents the tools needed to help the students write research papers were never provided to them. Alya stated:

“Actually, we didn’t write a lot of research papers. They didn’t give us the methods of doing them. We were asked to read an article and write a research paper on it without explaining how to do it. They already assumed that we knew how to do it.”

Sireen added:

“we never took methods of research. We have never learned how to do it. We still need to know lots of things about writing a research paper although we have finished all the levels.”

These statements confirm the participants’ desire to practice writing research papers more regularly. They show that the students are aware that writing such research assignments require specific writing skills that were not taught to them in class, yet the desire to learn and practice those skills exist. The participants have also implied that the teachers have assigned research assignments while under the assumption that the learners have had preexisting knowledge of the necessary skills needed to write an academic research paper.

## **Theme #4: Significant Challenges or Tensions with the Lack of Culturally Appropriate**

### **Instruction**

Another aspect of the teaching method that the participants took notice of, was the lack of culturally appropriate instruction. In accordance with their cultural protocols, the learners all assigned themselves gendered specific seating positions, which would allow the female learners to be seated next to other female learners, while the teachers for the majority of the class time allowed this. There were instances where the learners were asked to change the seating arrangements, resulting in female and male learners sitting next to one another, which was intended to encourage speaking with new partners; however, it created an uncomfortable learning environment for the learners. Other participants, reportedly, were instructed to partake in and out of class activity called “coffee hour”, in which the learners engaged in speaking activities with invited native speakers of mixed genders, however, it was expressed that not enough native speakers attend these activities, and the majority of the attendees tend to be students of the same culture, leading them to revert to their first language. This is shown in the following statement by Ahmad:

“We, also, have the “coffee hour”, but it is not regular, probably every 3-4 weeks. Yesterday I attended it, but again most of the attendees were Arabs who speak Arabic. This is a problem. We don’t talk about other cultures or practice English. Don’t misunderstand me. I am an Arab myself, but I would like to meet people from other cultures”

Sireen also mentions the pressures that the teaching methods presented to her during her time as a language learner, as well as, the many pressures of trying to achieve the demanding grade levels:

“I feel we are constantly under pressure. They want us to get A+, but they don’t give us time to study. We attend classes and give final exams at the same time. They are not making it easy for us. We are given lots of exams and assignments at the same time of the final.”

Sireen here signifies a new cultural concept that may not have been familiar to her or her teachers. She signifies the stresses of studying in a new culture and always being subjected to achieve the highest grades in order to advance to the next level of her language learning. Sireen also discusses how the large amount of assignments make balancing her language learning a difficult task for her.

Similarly, during the interview with Salwa, she mentioned that the teaching method did not accommodate the fact that she was undergoing culture shock.

“I would say the feeling of being homesick, after just a short while I felt like I couldn’t bare being here, and that I had to go home during the next holiday, there was also some internal pressure, that was the thing that most impacted me, as in trying to live up to everyone’s expectations, so like the demanding tests are a lot and very hard for anyone to deal with, so I have to deal with the pressure of time, and the internal pressure, and constantly thinking about going home. I would say these are the most things that stand in the way of my studies.”

Another cultural concept that is brought up by Salwa and may not be familiar to her teachers, is the learners’ unfamiliarity with her surrounding culture, and how that very feeling can result in feelings of anxiety and hardship that would surely impact the language learning process.

One example stemmed from Abid, who brought up the issue of teaching culturally sensitive topics. In his example he mentions how he was unable to participate in class because of a

sensitive topic that was discussed, and how he was afraid that his answer might impact the conflict with the teacher's views. This is made evident in the following statement:

“There is this teacher who gives us passages about political or social issues and asks for our opinions. Since I don't have any bad intention, I gave my opinion, just once; but it seems my honest opinion might have upset him.”

### **Theme #5: Significant Challenges or Tensions with the Lack of Focus on Teaching**

#### **Academic Vocabulary and Writing Styles for Specific Fields**

Students experienced a significant challenge or tension with the lack of teaching academic vocabulary and writing styles for their specific fields. Much of this challenge and tension focused on what vocabulary was taught by the instructor as opposed to what vocabulary was expected to be learned by the students. Students reported that instructors most often taught vocabulary that could best be called “single situation specific;” a kind of vocabulary that describes a relative common situation in real life. The instructor rely on it when he uses a lesson published in a commercially produced language learning resource. For example, a common situation in a vocabulary lesson would be about a person buying groceries and exchanging conversation with a cashier. The lesson would include words and phrases such as “how much is this item?”, “can I return this item?”, “is there a discount today on this item?”. The lesson highlights specific vocabulary words from this situation and those words are the basis for vocabulary words taught by the instructor.

Students experienced much challenge and tension with this kind of vocabulary instruction. One challenge was that this kind of vocabulary instruction was not expected or valued by students. Rather, students expected to learn certain vocabulary that would assist them in developing their writing, for example, students expected instructors to teach vocabulary that

would help them learn how to write formal and informal letters and research papers. Another challenge was that students felt that this kind of vocabulary instruction did not help them in their ability to pass the TOEFL exam. For example, students expected instructors to teach more advanced vocabulary, the kinds of words that typically appear in a TOEFL exam. This was a major challenge in their view because unless and until they pass the exam, they would not ultimately be granted admission to the university and program of their choice. Finally, another challenge was that students reported that their vocabulary lessons often felt like they were meant to memorize a list of words.

Salwa indicated experiencing a challenge or tension with instructors wanting students to memorizing vocabulary. She believed that the instructors were teaching vocabulary like this for the sake of maintaining a certain grade level. Salwa provided an example of her experience with instructors teaching vocabulary in her class. She stated:

“We are forced to memorize the vocabulary for that lesson that we are tested on, otherwise your GPA will suffer, even if we don’t always get the meaning.”

Finally, researcher observations of writing classes indicated that instructors taught vocabulary by focusing student attention on single meanings of specific vocabulary words. Instructors focus the entire time on this kind of vocabulary instruction; this created challenges and tensions for students. However, instructors did use class time to invite students to use cell phones, laptop computers, and tablets to access meanings of individual words. Students organized themselves in small groups by same gender and began speaking in their first language instead of English in order to understand the vocabulary meanings for words they did not understand or value.

### **Relating Findings to the Perceived Teaching Method**

While the participants expressed having undergone classes that emphasized certain English language skills over others, the common skill that was asserted indicated a dominance of teaching English speaking skills among the participants. As such, the emphasis on speaking skills would imply a perception of reliance on the communicative approach, also referred to as the Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT).

However, as the participants of the study express a presence of dominance of CLT. This method certain hurdles for language learners, specifically those undergoing culture shock, while also adhering to their specific first cultural norms. Goto-Butler (2011) lists three challenges that emerged from applying CLT to a classrooms of different cultures: 1) students tend to have beliefs and misconceptions that conflict with local values of the target culture, this was evident in this study as the students on multiple occasions preferred to avoid practicing the target language because of beliefs and conflicts with the target culture; 2) constraints relating to how the classroom is run by the teacher, within the study the students an abundance of practices that focused specifically on speaking skills; 3) constraints relating to the types of exams given at a given institution, exams within the participants' of the study's first culture consisted mostly of written exams, therefore having exams that derived of communicative skills presented a challenge for the students.

Chick (1996) notes another concern for using CLT among different cultural and ethnic groups, claiming that certain groups may not be permitted to participate or take part in communicative activities. While this was not an issue for the participants within their target culture, their first culture demanded more attention be delegated towards the teacher, while the students simply listen to the instructions of the lesson. This might have might have had an impact

on the learners in their new environment, as I noticed through my observations that a number of the participants chose not to actively participate in class.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to present major findings of this qualitative study. These findings are based on the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards their teachers' English language teaching methods. Findings were based on data analysis, presented as themes. These themes included 1) significant challenges or tensions in learning and practicing the English language, 2) significant challenges or tensions with the dominance of instruction placed on teaching speaking skills, 3) significant challenges or tensions with the lack of instruction on teaching writing skills. 4) significant challenges or tensions with the lack of culturally appropriate instruction. 5) significant challenges or tensions with the lack of focus on teaching academic vocabulary and writing styles for specific fields. The purpose of Chapter 5 will be to discuss these major findings, describe implications, and discuss limitations of the study.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the major findings, describe future implications, and discuss the limitations of the study. The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceptions of second language learners undergoing culture shock towards English Language Teaching Methods. In order to achieve this, seven students were asked to participated in the study, in which their perceptions and experiences both inside and out of the classroom were collected through a series of interviews, classroom observations, group interviews, and member checks. After applying a qualitative analysis of the data (Colaizzi 1978, Hatch 2002, Sanders 2003), 5 major themes were found in accordance to the participants' perceptions of their teachers' English teaching methods.

The chapter is organized as follows, I begin by revisiting and discussing the major findings of the study. Next, I discuss how implications of these findings relate to major stakeholders who would also be impacted, such as;

- English language teachers in terms of reflecting on and modifying their teaching methods.
- English language learners who are undergoing culture shock in terms of their reflecting learning process.
- English teaching language centers in terms of their applied curriculum.

Moreover, I identified some of the limitations of the study or confined the initial plans and stages of the research. Finally, I provided a discussion of the future implications the study might

hold, particularly, how each of the discovered themes might benefit the mentioned stakeholders as a means to develop new teaching methods, while also providing further understanding of the language learners experiences as they undergo culture shock.

### **Major Findings**

After having collected and analyzed the data, 5 major themes were found. These themes are as follows: 1) Significant challenges or tensions in learning and practicing the English language. 2) Significant challenges or tensions with the dominance of instruction, that is placed on teaching speaking skills. 3) Significant challenges or tensions with the lack of instruction on teaching writing skills. 4) Significant challenges or tensions with the lack of culturally appropriate instruction. 5) Significant challenges or tensions with the lack of focus on teaching academic vocabulary and writing styles for specific fields. During the data analysis process, the these 5 themes to be the most common among the participants, and best represented their English language learning experiences as they while underwent the culture shock within the new culture.

#### **Theme 1**

This theme displayed certain difficulties and challenges among the participants who expressed their inability to regularly practice the English language. These challenges were represented in situations that manifested both in and outside the classroom, and mainly stemmed from cultural differences that the participants had trouble adapting to, while occupying them from practicing their language skills regularly as they attempted to cope with the changes. Similar results were found by researchers who studied language learners' ability to adapt to a foreign culture while undergoing their language studies. Delinger (2014), for instance, explicitly focused on language learners' ability to adapt to a foreign culture as they were taking beginner

level language classes. Her results displayed levels of stress among the learners, and an inability to regularly practice their assigned language lessons accordingly. The study, however, differs in that the study I conducted focused specifically on students whose culture originated from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Whereas the Delinger (2014) study used students from a variety of different cultures, that may have shared cultural aspects with American culture, with varying degrees of stress depending on the how similar or different the cultures are. Saudi and American cultures are vastly different, and share very little if any similarities in terms of cultural norms. For example, in the kingdom men and women are segregated in everyday settings (such as classrooms, and restaurants). Oberg (1954) states that having individuals adjust to new cultural norms that differs from his/her own can be stressful, and may lead to an occupancy of time that would have been best spent in achieving tasks that the individual had originally sought to complete in the new culture.

## **Theme 2**

The theme was generated by the participants' feeling challenged by the dominance of speaking instruction within their English language classroom. In other words, the majority of applied instructions and implementation of practice exercises consisted of those that focused on speaking skills, while the participants expressed their desire to have an equitable amount of instruction devoted to the other language skills (reading, listening, writing). Some research has also explored the importance and emphasis of speaking skills within language classrooms. In an attempt to discover the importance of speaking, Diep (2019) examined the impact of speaking skills to improve the learner's public speaking skills. The study found that a change in teaching skills that focused on teaching speaking helped keep the learners more active and engaged with the lesson at hand. Both the study at hand, as well as the Diep (2019), placed an emphasis on

speaking skills, showing how students feel that language programs place more focus on the learners' particular skill, this could generally aid students in their ability to communicate in everyday life situations, as well as help them with their oral based academic assignments. Having the teachers give less oral instruction, while allowing the participants to do most of the speaking for themselves, would ultimately allow them to become more self-reliant, and develop their communicative skills in more common everyday situations.

### **Theme 3**

Here, the participants expressed that there was very little attention given to teaching writing skills in their classrooms. The participants gave the impression that their writing skills would prove extremely beneficial in their academics towards passing their TOEFL exam and writing research papers once enrolled in their respective fields. However, Fields, Hatala, & Nauert (2014) explored a somewhat different approach, in which their research analyzed the importance of writing skills among the learners. While the study found that further research is needed, it also determined that language learners consider learning writing to be a secondary communicative skill to speaking. While Fidan (2019) sought to evaluate the effects of implementing writing lessons for language learners, the study found that the number of introduced terms and words represented a direct correlation to language learners' level of compliance. While both studies utilized university language learners, the study here found that the students faced more challenges in their ability to grasp terms or words, when they felt that writing skills were not as they would have preferred.

#### **Theme 4**

The participants relayed that much of the instructional teaching in their class consisted of content that they deemed culturally inappropriate, as it focused on concepts and norms that were foreign to them, while they expressed that more culturally familiar content would help their language learning. Other research has supported the use of culturally appropriate instruction and the lack of it in some language classroom settings. Rets (2016) examined teachers' perceptions on the presence and effectiveness of culturally appropriate instruction in language classrooms. Her study found that while such materials are indeed lacking, the classrooms that do implement such instruction noticed an increase in student motivation, as well as an improvement in their communicative and social competence skills. Similarly, Mathews (2013) also found a lack in use of culturally appropriate instruction, but the instruction that did implement cultural elements found that it was best utilized to teach grammar. Where-as the participants in my study felt that their teaching instruction lacked any culturally appropriate lessons, these might have helped them learn grammar in the same way, had they been able to relate the lessons to their own culture.

#### **Theme 5**

The final theme expressed the students' tensions and challenges that were brought to light by their feeling that there was a lack of teaching specific vocabulary and writing styles for their desired fields. Some research was found that explored the use and/or lack of academic vocabular in language classrooms. Çalışkan & Gönen (2018) set out to examine language teachers' perception regarding the use of academic vocabular in their classrooms. They found that increased use of academic vocabulary increased the learners' awareness towards specific vocabulary items. This supports the need for teaching academic vocabulary when possible in

language classroom, while also encouraging further study. The mentioned results for the Çalışkan & Gönen (2018) study would help benefit language learners, as the participants in the present study felt the need for a focus on vocabulary teaching in their classrooms, specifically, vocabulary that would be used in their own academic fields.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Out of a total of 265 articles published in journals between 2014 and 2020 that focused on culture shock with regards to teaching English, none specifically addressed or investigated the students' perceptions of their teachers' various teaching methods. The lack of any focus on the students' perceptions in research articles in recent years indicates that there is no emphasis placed on the learners who are undergoing culture shock, and their views regarding their teachers' English teaching methods. The articles seemed to mostly explore general narrative experiences of language learners, their most notable challenges and hindrances, while others tackled several issues the teachers of students undergoing culture shock may have faced.

The lack of attention on the students' perceptions would lend itself to a number of implications for future practices of teaching English to second language learners who are undergoing culture shock. In addressing the research question of the views of the participants undergoing culture shock towards their teacher's English teaching methods, the previously mentioned 5 themes were produced from the collection and analysis of the data. These themes represented challenges or tensions that adhered the participants' ability to practice the English lessons on a regular basis, while Ellis (1989) has stated that practicing a language regularly is considered a critical basis for language learning. Therefore, I propose a model of teaching that would address each of the individual themes and possible methods to remedy their impact of students undergoing culture shock.

### **Theme 1 Implications**

With regards to addressing the significant challenges or tensions in learning and practicing the English language, after establishing that practicing language regularly is a critical step in improving proficiency, I would encourage teachers to explore different methods of implementing practice while also mitigating the effect of culture shock. For instance, all of the participants expressed feeling some level of tension and discomfort while being grouped with classmates of the opposite gender. While these classes had a majority of students of the same culture, and grouping them with other students of the same culture would run the risk of them using their first language regularly instead of the target language, it is critical in their learning process to allow them to feel comfortable during their initial transition into the new culture. I would also recommend added supervision by the teacher when possible, to ensure usage of the English language in such situations. After the learners feel more comfortable in the classroom, experimenting with new groups of the opposite gender would at this stage be recommended.

### **Theme 2 Implications**

Regarding the significant challenges or tensions with the emphasis that is placed on teaching speaking skills. Culture shock plays a strong role in the participants' perception with this them, as education in the Kingdom does generally give more attention towards communication skills, whereas as they language learners are now at a point where they must depend heavily on writing skills (for assignments, research papers, etc...), thus a shift in which skills was taught vs. the skills that were expected to be taught has emerged among the learners.

The type of teaching methods described by the learners within this challenge bare a large resemblance to two previously mentioned methods of teaching speaking. The first is the oral

situation approach Howatt (2004), in which the participants described repeated instructions that focused on speaking skills that would prepare them for specific situations in everyday life. The second teaching approach it resembles is the communicative approach, Hayes (1971) states that the focus of this approach is to focus on teaching communicative skills through group and pair work, in which students would practice communicating skills in groups and pairs in order to achieve a level of proficiency that would enable them to use the necessary language skills to successfully communicate within regular everyday social functions. While Hayes (1971) encourages the use of activities such as roleplay as a method of teaching speaking among language learners for everyday situations, the culture of education within the Kingdom tends to focus more on speaking as a means to convey communication for professional and academic settings. Hence, language instructors can benefit from utilizing speaking exercises that focus on a variety of setting, but more so on professional and academic, if the learners' culture places more emphasis on it.

### **Theme 3 Implications**

When addressing the significant challenges or tensions with the lack of instruction on teaching writing skills, participants reported having little to no instruction on how to improve their English writing skills. Participants reported there was very little to no attention given to the type of writing the learners were interested in improving, such as how to write research papers, and they ultimately deemed the instructions they did receive as ineffective. The participants reported that the few lessons they did receive did not meet the level of proficiency they had already acquired, but rather were far below that level. Krashen & Terrell (1983) recommend a focus on comprehension skills, where the language instructor would rely on determining the learners' listening skills that would then help improve the development of their other language



skills, such as writing. In addition, Krashin's  $i+1$  theory could also come into play, as it focuses on exposing the learners explicitly to a level of language that is considered one level above their own. This would involve determining their writing level initially, then adding material and content that would improve upon their previously learned foundation. The program also does not necessarily accommodate learners of varying levels of speaking and writing skills, as learners could excel at certain skills but are then placed in lower levels to improve upon all their skills. Language programs can develop skills-specific classes to accommodate students who might be advanced in certain skills above others.

#### **Theme 4 Implications**

With regards to addressing the significant challenges or tensions with the lack of culturally appropriate instruction, the participants expressed that certain activities made use of group activities that entailed seating arrangements that did not correspond with the first culture's protocols, explicitly when seating the male and female learners together. Other participants reported teachers not taking into consideration the learner's culture shock and how this process might hinder their ability to practice the English language. Xia (2009) describes this particular phase of culture shock as the disintegration phase, in which the learners are faced with the difficulties of adapting and coping with the new culture. This is considered the most critical phase, during which individuals who undergo this typically need time to reflect and evaluate the best course of action for them to pursue. As a result, teachers are encouraged also allow time for the learners to assimilate themselves into the culture, before immersing them in activities that use cultural norms that are foreign to them.

## Theme 5 Implications

Moreover, with regards to the significant challenges or tensions with the lack of focus on teaching academic vocabulary and writing styles for specific fields, the participants expressed having to memorize a large amount of vocabulary, or a list of vocabulary that was required and not necessarily relevant to their TOEFL exams or respective fields of interest. Since the study of vocabulary primarily makes use of reading skills, I would suggest referring to the reading approach, which as Coleman (1929), that emphasizes on the teaching of reading skills, primarily to learners of low or beginning proficiency levels, as well as, placing a focus on the comprehension of vocabulary and reading materials throughout language learning lessons. As a result, the learners can allocate vocabulary to learn and be included in a lesson that would prove most beneficial to them during their language studies and beyond.

The application of different teaching methods can help serve the needs of language learners undergoing culture shock, as each student undergoing culture shock can be found to have similar perceptions as those laid out in the themes of this study. Teachers can also benefit from a level of awareness of the themes brought about by the students' perceptions of different culture, several teaching methods can be incorporated different vocabulary to help find what is best tailored for the students' needs. Finally, English language centers can also establish specialized curriculum for learners undergoing culture shock, while taking into account such themes of using academic vocabulary that would prove beneficial to their language learning process, this method of utilizing academic vocabulary can ultimately help English language learners adhere to special types of instruction in accordance to their undertaking of culture shock.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The process of planning this study, as is the case with most research studies, involved several procedures that included receiving official approval by the IRB, as well the Kent State's English Language Center, recruiting participants, and reaching out to teachers to allow observations of their classes. This left me with only the 3 weeks left in the semester to collect my data. While all the participants were deemed to be of beginning level proficiency based on the levels they were placed in after undergoing a language proficiency test, and only spent a limited amount of time within the target culture, Greene and Kennedy (2012) claim such characteristics would be enough to claim they were undergoing culture shock. However, I believe future research would benefit from the inclusion of a test that would be able to assess whether the learners are indeed undergoing culture shock, this would allow researchers to determine without a doubt whether the participants suffer from culture shock, as opposed to utilizing learners who might be more familiar with different cultures and less prone to being categorized as an individual who may not be suffering from the phenomenon.

Furthermore, when proposing group interviews to the head of the language center, I was requested to conduct gender segregated interviews. I was also told that this would be done out of respect to the participants' culture. This came as a bit of a shock to me since I shared the same first culture as the participants, but also because I had hoped to create a nonformal and relaxed setting for them, since the segregation of genders is no longer applied in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in non-formal settings (malls, restaurants, cafes, etc....). Additionally, while the participants may not have gone to school with learners of the opposite gender, during their time in the US they mostly likely became accustomed to participating and discussing topics alongside one another, as long as the activity did not involve socializing. Thus, future research might be

able to build upon these results by bringing the two groups come together to discuss their collective experience with each other, and how possibly the practice of the English language under their given culture shock experience might have been similar or different according to their gender, and in their own respective opinions.

All the participants were limited to students whose first culture is Saudi, due to my common background and familiarity that I share with them. As such, the results of the study may also show commonalities with other students from different regions of the middle east, due to how education is handled in a similar fashion. However, I do not believe these results can also apply to students whose first culture is vastly different, as education and English language teaching can differ and emphasize different language skills, depending on the immediate and societal needs of a given culture.

The participants' schedules were also problematic for the study, as the final 2 weeks of the semester were normally set aside for tests and final projects to be handed in. This made it particularly difficult to schedule interviews. Some of the participants were not able to follow up with me and attend the group interviews, while others could not make it to the scheduled member checks. An additional classroom observation for the remaining participants was also planned, but due to logistical constraints, it was not possible to carry out observations for all the participants. This limitation made it difficult to have a complete scope of the classroom experience of the participants who were not observed, to compare with the ones who were. Had I been able to observe all the participants collectively, it might have provided the data with a broader insight as to how all the participants' experiences were similar or different.

## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

## Appendix A

### Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study



**Study Title: “Second Language Learners of English: Perceptions of in and out of Classroom Experiences”**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. William Bintz    **Co-Investigator:** Jameel Bakhsh

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate student perceptions of English language learners experiences in both in and outside of their classrooms. Little research, however, has been conducted that would explore ESL learners’ experiences within these settings.

#### **Procedures**

Students who agree to participate in this study will be asked to participate in individual and group informal interviews. Specifically, you will be asked to participate in two individual informal interviews and two group informal interviews. Instructors who agree to participate will be asked to allow the researcher to conduct classroom observations. The purpose of these observations will be to observe the learners in the classroom.

#### **Audio and Video Recording and Photography**

Only audio recordings of individual and group informal interviews with students, as well as individual informal interviews with instructors will be collected in the study. All audio recordings will be transcribed and analyzed. In addition, all audio recordings and transcription will be permanently destroyed upon completion of the study.

#### **Benefits**

The study will potentially benefit ESL language learners who experience ESL classrooms, as well as language instructors in the future development of language teaching methods for second language learners.

Your participation in this study will help ESL language teachers better understand how ESL students experience language learning.

### **Risks and Discomforts**

There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. Some of the questions asked may be upsetting, or you may feel uncomfortable answering them. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go on to the next question.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All data collected for the study will be kept confidential. Names of students and instructors will be replaced with letter identifiers such as; A, B, C. Names will not be used in the study or the write up of the study. Names of students, teachers, or school information will not be used in any write-ups or presentation of this study. All testing administered to students will be kept by me and will not be shared with anyone except participant teachers and administration. Parents and children will not have access to testing data.

During the study, all data, including my observations and journaling, will be kept on my laptop which is password protected. After the write up of the study is complete, the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Information gathered during the individual and group interviews, and classroom observations, will remain confidential by the researcher; however, because of the group interview arrangement there is no guarantee of confidentiality by participants. With that in mind, all participants are asked to keep information shared in discussions confidential.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new and relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

### **Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact me at jbakhsh@kent.edu or Dr. William Bintz at wbintz@kent.edu. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.



**Consent Statement and Signature**

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

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**Participant Signature**

---

**Date**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH LAMYA**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Transcription of Interview with Lamya**

Q. What was your impression of America before coming?

A. I had a good impression, thank God, because I used to watch a lot of American movies and series. Thus, when I came here, I found everything somewhat the same as I had imagined and expected. I know a lot about the American Culture before coming here because I watched a lot of movies and TV shows. Thus, it wasn't something totally strange to me

Q. How did you imagine it?

A. Oh, I don't know. I didn't have a positive nor negative images. I imagined normal people like us. However, I found out that they are more open-minded. For example, here, males and females mingle together. But in Saudi Arabia, it is forbidden. there was a girl who gave me negative impressions about the people when I first came here; but I remember telling her that I don't think this is true because I haven't met any mean person so far. However, I can't deny her what she said because she was talking out of her own experience; she said that she faced these things herself.

Q. Was this one of your concerns before coming here?

A. Not at all. I expected to see this here. I knew that people here are independent. Thus, I knew that when I come I will learn to depend on myself.

Q. Did you have any concerns before coming here?

A. Not at all, but I was concerned about my studies. I was afraid that I would find it difficult to follow up.

Q. Are you concerned about the conflict between the Arabic and Islamic culture, on one hand, and the American culture, on the other hand?

A. No, I knew that are lots of Saudi students here and that the American are used to their Arabic and Islamic culture. I didn't have any concerns toward this issue.

Q. How do you see your experience after coming Was everything Ok with you? Concerning housing, transportation, mingling with neighbors ...etc.

A. It was very nice; but I didn't mingle with neighbors. I only communicate with students and teachers in the classroom. My classmates are males and females and it was ok working with both. I had no problem.

Q. Did you hear about previous experiences before coming here?

A. I was expecting to go through a lot of experiences that would help me improve personally; however, everything I met here was easy. Actually, easier than what I had expected.

Q. Do you have a chance to converse with other people in English?

A. Yes, because the Center offers a lot of activities to help us mingle with other cultures. But, I personally, do not attend such activities. It was enough for me to practice my English in the classroom. The Center, sometimes, brings native speakers to the classes and that was enough for me.

Q. What was your experience with those native speakers?

A. It was good. They were helpful.

Q. Did you have difficulty when you came here concerning paying your bills, transportation...etc.

A. Paying my bills was easy because it is done on-line. However, transportation was difficult because I am not used to the bus system and I can't drive. I considered this a challenge and I managed to succeed in moving around using the bus and "Uber". But I don't know how to drive until now. This was the one issue that I had difficulty with.

Q. When you used "Uber" did the driver encouraged you to talk in English?

A. Yes, but I think that is the worst thing about "Uber". I wish the drivers don't talk or stop talking. The drivers talk a lot with the customers which makes me uncomfortable. I don't see this a positive thing. I wish they would just keep quiet.

Q. How was your experience at the Center? Inside the classrooms?

A. Actually, we are supposed to mingle and communicate with other students from other cultures; however, I always accompany Saudi students only. This is one thing that did not improve in me.

Q. Was this your choice or the teacher's choice to put you in groups with Saudi students?

A. No, it was my choice. The teachers were trying their best to separate us.

Q. Do you think teachers, in the classrooms, are considerate to the different cultures of the students?

A. Yes, they are very considerate.

Q. Do you get a chance to talk to other Saudi students in English?

A. Yes, sometimes, during the break; but I am the one who didn't try to deepen my relationship with others although I had the chance.

Q. What are the methods that the teachers use to encourage you to speak English? Do they assign presentations, or hold discussions among groups?

A. They use both methods depending on the teacher; for example, one teacher assigned a reading of a book which we discussed the following day in groups. Another teacher used games, creating two teams in class.

Q. Do you have a preferred teacher (without mentioning names)? What are his/her methods of teaching that made him a preferred one?

A. Honestly, I had one teacher who cared a lot about students.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ABID**

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Transcription of Interview with Abid**

Q. How did you learn English before coming to the USA?

A. I started learning English in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We used to take 2 hrs per week as part of the curriculum. We took very basic things. But we went into more depth in high school, from which I learnt a lot. I benefited from those high school years largely. When I came here, I took the exam that evaluates our standard and they put me in a good level.

Q. Did you have interest in the American Culture before coming here, like movies or art?

A. Yes, but not very big interest. I used to like watching movies only.

Q. What was your impression about America and the American Culture before coming here?

A. I didn't know anything about America before coming here.

Q. Were you excited about coming here or did you have fears?

A. Sure, I had fears because the environment was unknown to me. It was fear of the unknown. But thanks to God, I had my brothers who were here before me and some friends who helped me a lot. I have one brother in Akron University and two others in Cleveland University.

Q. How was your experience when you the first came here?

A. It was difficult, of course, because it was my first trip ever outside Saudi Arabia. The first time I leave my country. I didn't understand anything, especially that the society here is very tough. Even the teachers here are strict. When the teacher gives us an article to read and we discuss it in class, he imposes his own opinion on the ideas of the article, indirectly. Even the



lessons we were taking were reflecting opinions and believes of the teachers only, we rarely had any kind of discussions with him”

Q. Did you face any difficulty when you first came here, especially that your brothers were not in the same city with you?

A. Yes, when I first came, I lived in Dorm with an American roommate who caused me a lot of troubles. Students in the Dorm used to drink and smoke drugs and stay up late shouting and drinking. This was a huge culture shock to me because these things are not known in our society. These were things I couldn't even imagine in my brain. Si I had to move out of the Dorm. It was a new experience for me but cause me culture shock at the same time.

Q. Were you eager to experience going to movie theaters, especially, that we have movie theaters now in Saudi Arabia?

A. Honestly, I haven't been to any movie theater yet. I don't have interest in anything but studying and finishing what I came here for.

Q. What do you want to major in?

A. Chemistry. I have ambition to attend Sandford University, but they have high requirements for admission. Thus, I thought of spending one year here to improve my language and prepare for the exams required for admission.

Q. Did you manage to adapt with the society here?

A. I couldn't adapt with the level they put in because I felt there are basic things, I didn't understand yet, like for example, Subject/Object.

Q. So, did you feel that the level they enrolled in, was harder or easier than your standard?

A. level 8 and 9 were both very easy. In level 10, I learned new vocabulary only. I had no problem with grammar or listening classes because I already covered everything they gave in Saudi Arabia. The only thing I needed help with is the methods or techniques of writing. as we didn't focus too much on what I wanted to improve, like how to write papers for research and things like that. I think we need to learn more about these things that will help us.

Q. What is your impression of the teaching methods in the Center? Were there teachers, without mentioning names who really helped and impressed you?

A. There was one class in which I took "B"; but honestly, it was the one class that I learned a lot from, and I felt that the teacher was the best of all. The very first time he entered the class, Mr. Adam started. by asking us to write an essay. I wrote very nice ideas, but only in paragraphs. He spent the whole semester teaching us how to write an essay. His method of teaching is very beautiful. He would present to us an example of a perfectly written essay using the head the head projector. Then he gives us his comments starting with the title going through the different parts of the essay. He also distributes notes explaining the rules and methods. After that he asks us to write an essay in class and submit a first draft. We did this every week. He corrects the essay and asks us to rewrite it with the correction.

Q. What is your impression of such a teaching method?

A. Very beautiful especially that he doesn't include the grades of the essays in the final exams. He used to say that these drafts are a way to improve our writing and thus do well on our final and get good grades. He used to give us motivation to improve because when he returns the corrected draft, I go home and follow all his comments to correct and re-write it. Of course, I get

a better grade each time I re-correct the draft. This way, I discovered my mistakes and learnt from this method. It's a beautiful method to teach us something and help us get better grades.

Q. Do you teachers at the Center show consideration for the Arabic or Islamic Culture?

A. Honestly, some teachers give comments that I don't like, and I respect their opinion because maybe their intention is good; like when one of the teachers says Arabs have a problem in their accent or pronunciation.

Other teachers, also, talk about their beliefs and faiths in class. They would include their beliefs in the passages they give us to read and then ask us to criticize the passage or give our opinions of what is in it. There is this teacher who gives us passages about political or social issues and asks for our opinions. Since I don't have any bad intention, I gave, once, my opinion which later upset him. Some of the teachers get really angry and start attacking back. One time, a teacher was talking about the issue of dating, and I gave her my opinion. She got very angry and insulted me by saying that I don't know anything about dating because we don't have such a thing in our culture. I thought it was very wrong to talk to such a person.

On the other hand, some teachers are very nice and accept our opinions with pleasure. There was this teacher who presented beliefs to us just to explain it. He was never upset for giving our opinions or asking questions. This way, we understood more about their culture without being harassed.

Q. What are your negative or positive impressions of the American Culture here?

A. I am a person who doesn't like to communicate with people. I have a great fear to mingle with people. I don't like to do or say anything that would be wrong to anybody, and, at the same time, don't accept anybody saying or doing something to me. I am not open to teaching, advising,

explaining or directing people in any way. I used to be a social person. Then one day I went to a thanksgiving dinner and there was a big gathering. I met a couple over there (An American guy married to a Chinese lady). She started asking me questions about political issues including our leaders in the Kingdom. It made me very uncomfortable, and I left immediately because I don't want to say something wrong. That's why my writing and reading skills are better than speaking. I can write a correct word, but I can't pronounce it.

Q. So, you feel it is wrong that you don't communicate with people in English more often?

A. Yes, I speak English only in class and this is not helpful especially that we get listening class once.

Q. Do you get the chance to speak in the "Listening class" whether with your classmates or teachers?

A. yes, most of the teachers give us chances to speak.

Q. I was told that there are big numbers of Saudi students in each class. Do you speak English or Arabic when the teacher puts you in groups?

A. Honestly, we speak Arabic. However, if there is a non-Arab student in the group, we speak English out of respect.

Q. Do you feel that the teachers try to put Arab students together or do they tend to mix Arabs and non-Arabs?

A. They try to put students who are comfortable with each other together. I like this way very much. I don't mind being in any group if all the members of the group are comfortable with each other.

Q. Do you have any positive or negative opinion of the methods of teaching in the Center?

A. I like some of their methods that rely on practicing because it's the only way to improve and earn higher marks. Mr. Adam forced us to practice good writing. He used to tell us if we want to improve our grades, we must repeat the assignment. He showed us different methods and techniques and gave us notes that teach us how to correct our mistakes. He taught me in level "8", and I am now in level 10" and still using his notes.

Some of the teachers at the Center don't care about what the students learn. They show little interest in teaching and their teaching methods are weak. They pass students giving them high grades without caring about their education or what they learned. With all due respect, those teachers do not benefit us or show us what we need to learn.

Q. I have noticed that they give you lots of exams. Is that the normal way at the Center?

A. Not every day, but most of the time. Most of the exams that we take throughout the semester do not count toward the final. It's only a way to practice for the finals. All teachers do this.

Q. Do you have in mind any incident that you want to tell me about your experience in the US?

A. Honestly, I don't know what I am doing. I will go to Saudi in the Sireen and I don't know what would happen with me after that. I have great ambition to finish my education here. I wasted a whole year here and still don't have an admission to a University. You know I believe education is education whether you are in Saudi or here. The only difference between here and Saudi is the environment. You are here to study only. You have to finish your readings before you go sleep at night. You dedicate all your time to studying. In Saudi, we have lots of distractions: family and social obligations. We can't concentrate on studying.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ALYA**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Transcription of Interview with Alya**

Q. Is this your first time ever in America?

A. Yes, this is my first time ever.

Q. What was your impression of America before coming?

A. I had a good impression, thank God, because I used to watch a lot of American movies and series. Thus, when I came here, I found everything the same as I had imagined and expected.

Q. How did you imagine it?

A. Oh, I don't know. I didn't have a positive nor negative images. I imagined normal people like us. However, I found out that they are more open-minded. For example, here, males and females mingle together. But in Saudi Arabia, it is forbidden.

Q. Was this one of your concerns before coming here?

A. Not at all. I expected to see this here. I knew that people here are independent. Thus, I knew that when I come I will learn to depend on myself.

Q. Did you have any concerns before coming here?

A. Not at all, but I was concerned about my studies. I was afraid that I would find it difficult to follow up.

Q. Are you concerned about the conflict between the Arabic and Islamic culture, on one hand, and the American culture, on the other hand?

A. No, I knew that are lots of Saudi students here and that the American are used to their Arabic and Islamic culture. I didn't have any concerns toward this issue.

Q. How do you see your experience after coming Was everything Ok with you? Concerning housing, transportation, mingling with neighbors ...etc.

A. It was very nice; but I didn't mingle with neighbors. I communicate with students and teachers in the classroom. My classmates are males and females and it was ok working with both. I had no problem.

Q. Did you hear about previous experiences before coming here?

A. I was expecting to go through a lot of experiences that would help me improve personally; however, everything I met here was easy. Actually, easier than what I had expected.

Q. Do you have a chance to converse with other people in English?

A. Yes, because the Center offers a lot of activities to help us mingle with other cultures. But, I personally, do not attend such activities. It was enough for me to practice my English in the classroom. The Center, sometimes, bring native speakers to the classes and that was enough for me.

Q. What was your experience with those native speakers?

A. It was good. They were helpful.

Q. Did you have difficulty when you came here concerning paying your bills, transportation...etc.



A. Paying my bills was easy because it is done on-line. However, transportation was difficult because I am not used to the bus system and I can't drive. I considered this a challenge and I managed to succeed in moving around using the bus and "Uber". But I don't know how to drive until now. This was the one issue that I had difficulty with.

Q. When you used "Uber" did the driver encouraged you to talk in English?

A. Yes, but I think that is the worst thing about "Uber". I wish the drivers don't talk or stop talking. The drivers talk a lot with the customers which makes me uncomfortable. I don't see this a positive thing. I wish they keep quiet.

Q. How was your experience at the Center? Inside the classrooms?

A. Actually, we are supposed to mingle and communicate with other students from other cultures; however, I always accompany Saudi students only. This is one thing that did not improve in me.

Q. Was this your choice or the teacher's choice to put you in groups with Saudi students?

A. No, it was my choice. The teachers were trying their best to separate us.

Q. Do you think teachers, in the classrooms, are considerate to the different cultures of the students?

A. Yes, they are very considerate.

Q. Do you get a chance to talk to other Saudi students n English?

A. Yes, sometimes, during the break; but I am the one who didn't try to deepen my relationship with others although I had the chance.

Q. What are the methods that the teachers use to encourage you to speak English? Do they assign presentations, or hold discussions among groups?

A. They use both methods depending on the teacher; for example, one teacher assigned a reading of a book which we discussed the following day in groups. Another teacher used games, creating two teams in class.

Q. Do you have a preferred teacher (without mentioning names)? What are his/her methods of teaching that made him a preferred one?

A. Honestly, I had one teacher who cared a lot about students.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH SIREEN**

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Transcription of Interview with Sireen**

Q. What was your impression of America before coming here?

A. I had an idea, in general, because everyone in Saudi Arabia knows about America. However,, I was a little bit afraid from coming here by myself; but, at the same time I was feeling enthusiastic and looked forward to an independent and new life where one can rediscover himself and concentrate on his future without facing pressure from the society.

Q. So you were looking forward to study in English?

A. Yes, I was enthusiastic because my I have graduated from an Arabic University where we studied only in Arabic. Thus, studying English was something I really needed.

Q. What was your impression when you first came here?

A. Honestly, at the beginning, I was shocked because I was expecting something great as “America”. But when we arrived at a small town, it looked depressing for me because there was nothing to do here and it was very boring. It looked like a village. It was not what I had expected. I expected something nice. However, what was nice about it is that it is very quiet. It is a good place to study and concentrate on our studies. There are no distractions. The best thing about this place, also, is the people. People here are very nice everywhere.

Q. Do you get chances to practice your English a lot?

A. I am forced here to speak English. When I first came here, I didn’t have the courage to communicate in English. However, as time passed by, I became independent, doing things on my own and I managed to communicate with people in English.

Q. What skills do you feel you haven't improved yet?

A. The teachers also don't concentrate on writing skills until the last level. I took level 1 and didn't know how to write. It wasn't until recently when they started to concentrate on writing

Q. Did you find any difficulty in communicating with people in English?

A. Honestly, I found out that they don't understand my English because of my accent. They don't understand what I say although I feel I am very clear when I speak. They always ask me to repeat several times what I said. This was a problem for me. The English Language that I knew when I came here was what I learned at school in Saudi Arabia, but that was not enough.

Q. Private schools in schools in Saudi Arabia tend to concentrate on English Language and give lots of notes to students. Did you benefit from this?

A. No, I studied in a public school. They gave us only the basic of the English Language; however, what really helped me are the English movies that I watched and the songs that I listened to.

Q. How was it transitioning to being on your own for a change as opposed to living with your family?

A. I used to rely on myself in knowing about the language, a sort of "self-learning" I used to follow up people who teach the English Language at school.

Q. How often do you use the dictionary?

A. Always, especially when I come across a word that attracts my attention.

Q. What are the obstacles that you faced when you came here?

A. Honestly, I didn't face any difficulty because I came with my husband who was already living here, and he is the one who takes care of everything. So everything was normal to me.

Q. What is your impression of the classes here at the English Language Center?

A. Honestly, when I first came here they gave me a test to evaluate my level, upon which they put me in level "8". Thus, I didn't have the chance to stud the basics. I started immediately with the advanced level although I needed to practice some basic stuff in grammar and structure.

At the beginning I was happy that they have enrolled me in level "8"; but as time passed by, I felt that I have missed a lot of important things in the previous levels. For example, they gave us the "passive voice" in level "8" which I didn't think that it was as important as the Verb Tenses which I needed help with. But, it wasn't covered in level "8". I came here to do my Master degree and the admission for such a degree requires a high level of English. I didn't feel that the Center qualifies us for an advanced level in English Language. Level "8" is supposedly a very advanced level in the center; and I don't feel it was advanced enough for me to help me get the required score for the MA admission in the University. I, also, went through level "9"and"10"; but, still, they were very easy and not advanced enough. I am not benefitting from it. I go to the center daily and return home without getting anything new. I felt like I don't need to study or do assignments or practice anything because it is usually very easy. I go to the tests and exams without studying or preparing. Actually, when I go back home, I forget the Center totally. They don't have the advanced level we are looking forward to. When I return home every day I study from the IELTS books. Honestly, this is what improved my language skills. I benefitted from those books more

than the Center. The Center is probably good for those applying for BA, but not for those applying for post graduate degrees.

Q. What are the language skills that you needed to take at the Center that would help you get the required score for the IELTS?

A. All language skills, but I don't know what they need to do to improve those courses. Speaking skill is what I need most. The problem with the teachers at the Center is that they don't correct me when I say something wrong. I want to be excellent in speaking the language. I don't want to only be understood. This is what I have noticed about the teachers at the Center. They are too kind, nice and easy going, which is good, but I don't feel we learn anything this way. They have to pull up the standards so that we learn something. Having everything that is easy will not help us.

Q. What are the language skills that they concentrate on at the Center?

A. There are 4 skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. I was weak in reading. I read very slowly. But I am better in writing, maybe because I like to write in Arabic. My speaking skill is not bad as well. The only problem I had was with reading. I don't like reading I don't enjoy it. Everybody tells me to read more often to train myself, but I can't. All the readings that we take at the Center are academics and difficult.

Q. What are your impressions of the teachers at the Center?

A. Honestly, they are kind but I felt they do not plan their curriculum ahead of time. I felt that they ask themselves every time they come to class what to do or teach. They are not organized. Probably, because it's the advanced level.

I, also, felt that they are very easy with the students. As for their attitude toward us, they are all respectable and they respect us a lot. Their teaching methods, though are weak. They try to be as easy as possible with the students especially when it comes to giving high grades to the students. Students who like having high grades enjoy this, but not me. . It doesn't benefit me to get high grades when I don't understand something. I get high grades in all my courses anyway without their help. I need to really improve, not just get high grades. Students at the Center like this kind of treatment, but because I am different, it doesn't suit me.

Q. What do you plan on studying at Kent?

A. I didn't find the field of study that I want here at Kent State University. They used to have it. Now, it is closed. I studied Finance as an undergraduate and I want to get post graduate degrees in Financial Engineering. At the time being, I am trying to apply to other Universities. With God's help, I will find something. I also found out that the GRE and GMAT are required for admission in all American Universities; but UK Universities do not require such exams. Thus, I am thinking of going there. It is closer to my country.

Q. Do you feel that the teachers at the Center force students to participate in different activities?

A. No, they don't force anyone to participate in class activities. Those who want to participate can do that and those who don't want to participate are left out. I, myself, when sometimes I feel like tired and sleepy and not being to concentrate, I don't participate in any activity or discussion and the teachers would not talk to me or even pay attention to me. Maybe, it's the teacher's methods here in the States: whoever wants to participate they will work with him but those who do not want to participate will be left on their own. Maybe that is the correct way of teaching, but sometimes a person wants someone to persuade him to participate in class.



Q. What are the activities that the teachers concentrate on most: creating groups, assignments, presentations, etc.....?

A. They concentrate on all these things, but it depends on the teacher. It differs from one teacher to another. Some give lots of homework, others give lots of writing assignments and exams. Most of them tend to use group discussion, which I don't mind. However, I noticed that they don't care about changing the group members. I work with the same group every class and, unfortunately, they are all Saudis. We just tend to group with the students sitting next to us because it is easier. I wished they separated us and forced us to change partners because we are all Saudis and, of course we speak in Arabic. I attended a class one time here students were of different nationalities. I felt that I really benefitted from that class. I was forced to communicate in English. I know that it's our problem that we, Arabs, use the Arabic Language in class, but the teachers must pay attention to this problem and try to find ways to prevent this from happening. Our recent class includes only Saudi students and one Spanish. So, we speak Arabic all the time, and we speak in a loud voice. The teacher hears us but doesn't interfere or mind at all. I don't feel that this is right.

Q. Do you think that the courses or the training you are getting at the Center satisfied your needs?

A. Not really, not as an MA student. I don't recommend anybody to come here. I, even told my brother, who wanted to find a place to study English, the same thing because this Center is not of a good standard.

Q. What are your recommendations for them at the Center?

A. They must be tougher with the students and concentrate on creating a good curriculum. They should make classes for seeking admission for post graduate degrees and classes for those who want to improve their language. Post graduate students need tougher and more advanced levels.

Q. Do you think the teachers have consideration for the students' nationalities and cultures like Saudis?

A. Yes, they do. I felt they have previous knowledge of our culture and traditions. For example, they try not to put females and males in the same group.

Q. What are the positive and negative things that you faced while living here?

A. Because I am not a student in the University yet, my relationship with people centers around very few Saudi females in the Center which did not allow me for a wider scope of social life. The positive thing that I found here is the nice treatment from everybody. People here are very nice and polite. I haven't met anyone who was rude or talked in any improper way. As for the negative thing, I felt that Americans are very strict in everything in their life; they look they are programmed. They insist on their opinion no matter what.

Q. The principle of the Center gave me very hard time in order to allow me to meet with students from the Center. She was afraid I would write something that would hurt their reputation.

A. Yes, they are always scared. They like to follow the rules in a very strict way. They are not flexible in any way. They are very rigid when it comes to rules and regulations.

Q. Did you have any difficulty in the Center?

Not really, as I said before, everything was easy. I even go to the final exams without opening a book

I felt this is the negative side of the Center. They underestimate our skills and knowledge.

Q. Do you think you have adapted well here?

A. Yes. At the beginning I spent a whole term not being to adapt and I was bored and didn't like anything; but now I feel like I don't want to leave, maybe because it is getting closer to leaving back

Home. I started to enjoy everything. Life here is different. In our country we are always busy with lots of social responsibilities; but here I can concentrate on my studies without any distraction.

There are no social distractions like what we have back home. I got used to the American way of life. I feel it is difficult to go back to the same life style I used to follow in my country.

**APPENDIX F**  
**TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH RAYAN**

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Transcription of Interview with Rayan**

Q. What do you think of the Saudi culture? What are the things or principles that you held to, that you held to, after coming to the US?

A. When I first came here, I had the belief that I have the Holy Qur'an in my right hand and the Flag of my country in the left hand. I always keep these two things in my mind. I believe that I am here to represent my culture and my religion. I am a person who like to know about other people's culture, and in return, I like to show other people our culture and traditions.

I had several presentations that I gave in my class about Saudi culture. Each one is about 2-3 minutes. I can send it to you by email if you wish to look at it. It might give you a clearer vision of what I am talking about.

Q. What are the major differences that you have noticed between the two cultures?

A. I have noticed huge differences especially that here we can talk to females freely; whereas, in Saudi Arabia, it is a little bit difficult to talk to nonrelatives females because of the traditions and culture. I think people here are more open-minded about this issue, but maybe that is not the case still in our classrooms.

Q. What are the things that you have heard about the American culture and expected to see but you didn't?

A. Racism is one thing, but thanks to God, I didn't face any racism so far. Probably, my choice of this city, in particular, is the reason because I was told if I have chosen any of the major cities, I would have definitely met with a lot of racists.

The other thing that I have heard about the American culture is that there are a lot of corruption, and that they love to party at night and drink. However, I believed that if I want these things, I will find it; but, if I don't want it, it will not come to me. Thanks to God, I didn't see any.

Q. Did you face any obstacles concerning the difference in the culture?

A. Up to now, I haven't faced any serious culture shock. However, at the very first month or two, I had the problem of starting a conversation with another person due to my weak English. In Saudi Arabia, it was easy because I am a friendly and easygoing person and my language is Arabic. But here I feel embarrassed and nervous to start a conversation with any one due my poor English Language. But as time passed by, I found out that people here would start a conversation with me and ask me questions to talk to me.. They are very friendly.

Q. Give examples of situations you have found obstacles.

A. The obstacles I faced are coming from my side, not from other people. For example, I am an expert in cars, especially, the "Mustang." I love this kind of cars. Thus, one day, I saw a man with a Mustang that he had decorated and fixed very well. I wanted to approach him and tell him how nice his car is, and give some advices concerning his car since I know a lot about this kind of cars. However, I felt embarrassed and didn't talk to him. However, this has changed since then. For example, I went to Duncan Donuts with a friend, and there was a lady who dyed her hair pink, and it looked nice. I told my friend that the lady's hair is beautiful; so he told me "go

tell her.” I refused and told him that I can’t because it’s inappropriate. I refused although my friend insisted and explained to me that it’s normal to do this in the States. Suddenly, my friend left me and approached the lady and told her “hey, by the way, I like your hair.” To my astonishment, she replied “Oh, thank you.” I believed then that it is normal to give a compliment to a person without facing trouble; on the contrary, it shows friendliness. Actually, there are other incidents also like today, for example, after the Spring Break, I went to Starbucks and met a lady working there. I started with her a conversation by saying “hey, how are you doing?” She replied “fine.” Since I was the last in the line, I took the chance to proceed with the conversation. Thus, I went on “how was your Spring Break?” She started chatting and making jokes and laughing with me. I felt good afterwards that I am improving and getting used to communicate with people.

Q. What do you think of the classes you are taking now?

A. I have been here 4 months only. I have finished level 6, and currently taking level 7. In general, the atmosphere in the classroom is nice, but a little bit boring because of the large number of students who speak Arabic. It is ok, but not acceptable to me. This is a problem because we don’t communicate in English.

Q. Don’t they divide you into groups of mixed Arabs and non-Arabs in the class?

A. We have 2 Chinese students, 2 Japanese and the rest of the students are all Saudis, except for one Jordanian who also speaks Arabic. When they divide the class, they try to separate us so that we don’t speak Arabic together. However, it is not working. Most of the time, I join the group that has the Chinese or Japanese students.

Q. What do you think of the teacher’s methods of teaching in this Language Center?

A. Most of them are super-friendly. Thank God, I have never had a problem with any of them. Actually there is one, in particular, that I respect and admire very much. This Mr. Ayham. He helped us a lot, especially, that he is an Arab himself. I made sure to take all my classes with him. He helps us whenever we have a problem or when there is something we don't understand. He gives his classes a happy atmosphere. He is a lovable person.

All the other teachers are also very friendly. I never had an obstacle or a problem with them. They always make sure that we understand everything. They also give tutoring classes to help the students.

Q. Do they give opportunity to all the students to participate in the class?

A. Yes, they make sure that all students participate, even though some of the students do like it.

Q. Do you think that the teachers consider the fact that you, Arab students, are coming from an Arabic culture or do they treat all the students the same.

A. I have noticed that they pay a lot of attention to this fact. They realize that the Arabic Culture is very different from other cultures. The Chinese, Japanese or European cultures share some things like they all come from a mixed a society- males and females share the same facilities; not like ours where we have males and females are separated. They consider our traditions and culture a lot. But sometimes, they try to mix females and males to encourage us to communicate.

Q. Do you think the curriculum concentrates on the American Culture only or does it include other cultures as well? And whether, this helps you to understand better?

A. I feel that the curriculum includes books that shows images and photos far below our age. I understand that some of the students who are here are of 18 years old, but there are others who



range up to 50 years old. I feel the curriculum fits students who are between 18-25 years old. However, although the curriculum is below our age, we do learn a lot of structure and vocabulary.

As for your question about including the American Culture in the curriculum, I would say No. However, every now and then, they would include a bit of information about the American Culture.

Q. Does this help you think about the American Culture when they bring it up?

A. Probably, a little bit; but we don't get enough of the details we need. It makes me imagine in my mind, for a little bit, the issue that they brought up but I don't linger on it..

Q. Ok, I want to go back to the teacher's methods of teaching. Do you think their methods satisfied your needs as a student of English Language?

A. I haven't noticed any default from any of the teachers so far. On the contrary, they are very considerate. They are aware that this is not our native language and they try, as much as possible, to help us participate in everything. They also offer help, and encourage us to ask questions.

Q. In general, are you enjoying your experience here with the American Culture, or are there things that are bothering you?

A. I am enjoying it very much. However, I have a little bit difficulty in mingling with people because most of the ESL classes include lots of Arab students which makes it hard to mingle with other cultures. However, I have what we call "conversation partner" whom I meet weekly.

I also try to attend any event in the University; but, this is personal efforts of course, not coming from the ESL. We, also, have the "coffee hour", but it is not regular, probably every 3-4 weeks.

Yesterday I attended it, but again most of the attendees were Arabs. This is a problem. We don't talk about other cultures. Don't misunderstand me. I am an Arab myself, but I would like to meet people from other cultures.

Q. Tell me about your experience outside the Center.

A. I hardly mingle with other people outside the Center because I don't know a lot of people. I live with two roommates; one is a relative and the other is a Saudi friend. They help me a lot. They have other friends of other cultures. We usually get together during the weekends. But, in general, I don't have a close friend to go out with.

Q. Is there anything that is bothering you or upsetting you concerning the American Culture, in or outside the Language Center?

A. Feeling lonely is the only thing that is truly bothering me. Since I don't have friends here, I try hard to find groups and activities that help me mingle with people.

I, also, think that we are given too much assignments, HomeWorks, and projects by the Center, this is very different than what I am used to (in Saudi). Teachers here (in the US) do not consider that we have several different classes. We get lots of assignments and quizzes for each class daily. This, of course, is putting a lot of stress on us.

## **APPENDIX G**

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH SALWA**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Transcription of Interview with Salwa**

- Is it your first time in the US?
- Yes it is, I was worried at first about coming because I heard more negative things than positive. But my impression completely changed once I arrived. At first I lived in the United Kingdom for a short while, and over time I appreciated their customs and culture, and I came to prefer the culture in the UK more than the US, upon arriving in the US, I discovered that it was very different, the people seemed to be more friendly than those in the UK, they were very helpful and cooperative, I was lucky enough to first settle into a big city like Boston when I arrived. Maybe fortunate because I started my life in the US in Boston, a place where the percentage of safety was considered very high at the time, also the people seemed accustomed to being around international students. These were my main concerns, but thank God, Im glad it worked out.
- What kind of negative things did you hear about?
- I was afraid of racism, this was the most thing I was afraid of, that was the only thing that worried me.
- How was your impression of the American culture?
- Maybe the culture in Boston was different than that of other places, the culture felt very European in terms of the building designs, the stores, the restaurants, it felt very identical to what I was accustomed to during my time in Europe. But at the same time the American culture is dominant here in Kent, So I enjoyed the variation, I felt as though every time I move from one place to the next, I feel like I'm moving into a completely different world, and every place has its own traits, it's somewhat wonderful.

- Well that's good to hear, has anything bothered you about the culture though?
- No, I don't believe so.
- How were your studies?
- They were good, no problems, except with testing, and the requirements for enrolling into college, it was very demanding.
- Did you have any difficulties in the culture than that of the one you were accustomed to?
- There was a huge difference of course, mainly because as a child I've never had to deal with having so many responsibilities. For one thing, transportation was a real issue, in Boston I was accustomed to using the trains and the subways, whereas there was none of that here (in Kent) everyone has to have a car, so coming to how things are here were problematic for me.
- Did you have any issues coping with the culture?
- No, not really, and I might owe that to my constant traveling and living abroad in the UK, it helped me adjust a little, but I would say the responsibilities grew over here, that was the most difficult thing I had to deal with.
- Was there anything that you might say affected your studies?
- Yes, I was say the feeling of being homesick, after just a short while I felt like I couldn't bare being here, and that I had to go home during the next holiday, there was also some internal pressure, that was the most thing that impacted me, as in trying to live up to everyone's expectations, so like the demands and tests are a lot and very hard for anyone to deal with, so deal with the pressure of time, and the internal pressure, and constantly thinking about going home, I would say these are the most things that stand in the way of my studies.
- What are your impressions of the way the teachers are teaching here at the language center?

- Honestly, I really loved their way of teaching, especially when comparing it to another language institute that I was enrolled in, I like the hours, because the class begins and ends while there's very little sense of boredom, so it's like 50 minutes then we begin a totally new topic that is different than the old one we were doing before, so my day can start and end and I wouldn't get the feeling like I was too bored of the topics, as opposed to the other institute I was in.
- Can you tell me about some of the activities you liked specifically in the class?
- Well its different in every class, but I particularly enjoy it when we have discussions with the teachers, more so than when they just explain things for a while, there's a lot of that in my level. Honestly there's not a whole lot of activities, most of the time we're just practicing, there's a lot of pop quizzes, we're asked to do research, these are most of what we do all the time. Its mostly educational more so than they are for fun.
- If I might ask you, is there a mixture of students from other cultures?
- Its mostly 50% Arabs and 50% Chinese. There's no dominant culture, its almost always an even mixture of the two, there are no other cultures. Sometimes the teachers we get are native speakers, and often times they are students at the university trying to earn extra credit, and sometimes we get teachers who are there to observe the classes. So I enjoyed the idea of having native speakers around to practice with, but I didn't find that difficult being with the Arabs because most of them don't even speak Arabic in class, so we use the English language more, I feel its more convenient.
- Whats it like in your class in terms of the cultural groups? Do you sit next to the Arab speaking groups? And if so do the teachers try to separate everyone?
- No they mostly try to separate us, so that we can all speak English together all the time, which I think is a good thing to do honestly.

- Do you think the teachers consider that all of you come from different cultural backgrounds in regards to the way they teach their classes?
- Yes, I noticed that the accent they use is different, some students have different pronunciations than others. So I might hear something and its different than what I thought it was, but the teachers do a good job of trying not to embarrass the students, and they try to consider that some sounds are different for each of us, I really enjoyed this way of teaching because it encouraged us to speak up more, as opposed to times when I was afraid to talk, I noticed a lot of language teachers don't really bother themselves with these small details that may cross a line by forcing students to practice their language skills.
- Is there a lot of group work in your class?
- Yes, most of the time, yes. We have to work in at least pairs of two.
- Do you also have large groups?
- Sometimes, mostly groups of two or three, sometimes for but we rarely do more than that, It might happen if we do a competition between two groups.
- In general do you face any type of difficulties with your classes?
- No, with me personally, my hardest class is the grammar class. Not so much the rest of the classes.
- Did you feel like the teachers' way of teaching met with your specific language needs?
- Yes, I really loved their way of teaching, there are times I feel like I'm in a university class rather than an institute, even the assignments and the level of seriousness was very high, everything in their way of teaching was very clear, you are forced to memorize the vocabulary, otherwise your GPA will suffer. Some of students might feel this represents a lot of pressure, I personally wish I had started in such an institute, I feel I might have benefit more from this type

of teaching. I tried being a student at other institutes and feel as though it was more fun than professional, it was nice but it didn't help me much the way the teachers here do.

- Was there anything you disliked about their teaching?
- Yes, in the reading classes in other institutes, we would be assigned some reading materials for us to read at home, say four chapters, then we would be asked to write about them, come back at the end of the week and discuss the chapters over our comments on black board, so I really liked this because reading in front of the entire class can be nerve wrecking, I mean I can read pretty well but I can't always understand it all. In regards to grammar, it doesn't take a whole lot of explaining, there might be some structures, and she might ask us what we already know about it, and it therefore might help recall grammar rules I already knew. In regards to writing, we haven't written much yet, but I like that there's an emphasis on arguments and debates.
- Did you feel like the articles you mentioned were culturally relevant or not?
- Most of the articles were not new or relevant to my background, some were things I might have heard about because they weren't new, I liked that the articles did not touch on anything sensitive, for example another institute I previously attended taught us using an article that sort of used Arabs in a negative way, especially when they use political issues, or ones that criticize our culture or traditions, that bothered myself and some of the other students, I prefer here (at Kent State University) where the topics are very general and talk about things like food and such that mostly likely won't hurt anyone's feelings.
- Did any of the topics at Kent bother you?
- No.

*In regards to the listening and speaking did you get to participate a lot?*



- At my level there is no speaking, but there is a listening class, and yes I do get to participate, we learn how to take notes, the quiz then depends on the notes we took, I felt it really helped me develop my understanding of different topics, but they sometimes focus too much on speaking exercises.
- Do you feel as though you all got to participate enough in these classes?
- Yes, we have certain students who participate a lot and the teachers tend to interrupt them. I do like that they give everyone an equal opportunity to participate.
- Did anything in regards to the culture here help or hinder your learning?
- Yes, I felt as though the people within the community encourage practicing language, and don't shy away when they see me as a foreigner with poor English speaking skills, they're very understanding and try to talk to me as much as possible, even though they don't fully understand everything I say, as oppose to before when I first arrived, I used to try to avoid speaking to anyone, but now I feel more opt, after meeting friendly native speakers, I've never been with an uber driver and not found him/her to want to talk to me, and I enjoyed those conversations.
- Did you have any difficulties in adapting to the culture?
- Honestly, not really, I feel as though the people highly respect my culture, there were a few minor clashes I had but the majority of people were fine with me, I found particularly when going to restaurants, the waiters would sometimes notice that I am Arab and tell me a few items on their menus that they knew I shouldn't order for religious reasons, and sometimes I get to learn things from them as well, They respect my own culture.
- Did anything bother you though about the clash of cultures?
- Well I just sort of never liked it when people tried to talk to me about political matters, I felt as though those were very sensitive issues.

## **APPENDIX H**

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH AHMAD**

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Transcription of Interview with Ahmad**

Q. What do you think of the Saudi culture? What are the things or principles that you held to, that you held to, after coming to the US?

A. When I first came here, I had the belief that I have the Holy Qur'an in my right hand and the Flag of my country in the left hand. I always keep these two things in my mind. I believe that I am here to represent my culture and my religion. I am a person who like to know about other people's culture, and in return, I like to show other people our culture and traditions.

I had several presentations that I gave in my class about Saudi culture. Each one is about 2-3 minutes. I can send it to you by email if you wish to look at it. It might give you a clearer vision of what I am talking about.

Q. What are the major differences that you have noticed between the two cultures?

A. I have noticed huge differences especially that here we can talk to females freely; whereas, in Saudi Arabia, it is a little bit difficult to talk to nonrelatives females because of the traditions and culture. I think people here are more open-minded about this issue, but maybe that is not the case still in our classrooms.

Q. What are the things that you have heard about the American culture and expected to see but you didn't?

A. Racism is one thing, but thanks to God, I didn't face any racism so far. Probably, my choice of this city, in particular, is the reason because I was told if I have chosen any of the major cities, I would have definitely met with a lot of racists.

The other thing that I have heard about the American culture is that there are a lot of corruption, and that they love to party at night and drink. However, I believed that if I want these things, I will find it; but, if I don't want it, it will not come to me. Thanks to God, I didn't see any.

Q. Did you face any obstacles concerning the difference in the culture?

A. Up to now, I haven't faced any serious culture shock. However, at the very first month or two, I had the problem of starting a conversation with another person due to my weak English. In Saudi Arabia, it was easy because I am a friendly and easygoing person and my language is Arabic. But here I feel embarrassed and nervous to start a conversation with any one due my poor English Language. But as time passed by, I found out that people here would start a conversation with me and ask me questions to talk to me. They are very friendly.

Q. Give examples of situations you have found obstacles.

A. The obstacles I faced are coming from my side, not from other people. For example, I am an expert in cars, especially, the "Mustang." I love this kind of cars. Thus, one day, I saw a man with a Mustang that he had decorated and fixed very well. I wanted to approach him and tell him how nice his car is, and give some advices concerning his car since I know a lot about this kind of cars. However, I felt embarrassed and didn't talk to him. However, this has changed since then. For example, I went to Duncan Donuts with a friend, and there was a lady who dyed her hair pink, and it looked nice. I told my friend that the lady's hair is beautiful; so he told me "go

tell her.” I refused and told him that I can’t because it’s inappropriate. I refused although my friend insisted and explained to me that it’s normal to do this in the States. Suddenly, my friend left me and approached the lady and told her “hey, by the way, I like your hair.” To my astonishment, she replied “Oh, thank you.” I believed then that it is normal to give a compliment to a person without facing trouble; on the contrary, it shows friendliness. Actually, there are other incidents also like today, for example, after the Spring Break, I went to Starbucks and met a lady working there. I started with her a conversation by saying “hey, how are you doing?” She replied “fine.” Since I was the last in the line, I took the chance to proceed with the conversation. Thus, I went on “how was your Spring Break?” She started chatting and making jokes and laughing with me. I felt good afterwards that I am improving and getting used to communicate with people.

Q. What do you think of the classes you are taking now?

A. I have been here 4 months only. I have finished level 6, and currently taking level 7. In general, the atmosphere in the classroom is nice, but a little bit boring because of the large number of students who speak Arabic. It is ok, but not acceptable to me. This is a problem because we don’t communicate in English.

Q. Don’t they divide you into groups of mixed Arabs and non-Arabs in the class?

A. We have 2 Chinese students, 2 Japanese and the rest of the students are all Saudis, except for one Jordanian who also speaks Arabic. When they divide the class, they try to separate us so that we don’t speak Arabic together. However, it is not working. Most of the time, I join the group that has the Chinese or Japanese students.

Q. What do you think of the teacher’s methods of teaching in this Language Center?

A. Most of them are super-friendly. Thank God, I have never had a problem with any of them. Actually, there is one, in particular, that I respect and admire very much. This Mr. Ayham. He helped us a lot, especially, that he is an Arab himself. I made sure to take all my classes with him. He helps us whenever we have a problem or when there is something we don't understand. He gives his classes a happy atmosphere. He is a lovable person.

All the other teachers are also very friendly. I never had an obstacle or a problem with them. They always make sure that we understand everything. They also give tutoring classes to help the students.

Q. Do they give opportunity to all the students to participate in the class?

A. Yes, they make sure that all students participate, even though some of the students do like it.

Q. Do you think that the teachers consider the fact that you, Arab students, are coming from an Arabic culture or do they treat all the students the same.

A. I have noticed that they pay a lot of attention to this fact. They realize that the Arabic Culture is very different from other cultures. The Chinese, Japanese or European cultures share some things like they all come from a mixed a society- males and females share the same facilities; not like ours where we have males and females are separated. They consider our traditions and culture a lot. But sometimes, they try to mix females and males to encourage us to communicate.

Q. Do you think the curriculum concentrates on the American Culture only or does it include other cultures as well? And whether, this helps you to understand better?

A. I feel that the curriculum includes books that shows images and photos far below our age. I understand that some of the students who are here are of 18 years old, but there are others who

range up to 50 years old. I felt the curriculum fits students who are between 18-25 years old. However,, although the curriculum is below our age, we do learn a lot of structure and vocabulary.

As for your question about including the American Culture in the curriculum, I would say No. However, every now and then, they would include a bit of information about the American Culture.

Q. Does this help you think about the American Culture when they bring it up?

A. Probably, a little bit; but we don't get enough of the details we need. It makes me imagine in my mind, for a little bit, the issue that they brought up but I don't linger on it..

Q. Ok, I want to go back to the teacher's methods of teaching. Do you think their methods satisfied your needs as a student of English Language?

A. I haven't noticed any default from any of the teachers so far. On the contrary, they are very considerate. They are aware that this is not our native language and they try, as much as possible, to help us participate in everything. They also offer help, and encourage us to ask questions.

Q. In general, are you enjoying your experience here with the American Culture, or are there things that are bothering you?

A. I am enjoying it very much. However, I have a little bit difficulty in mingling with people because most of the ESL classes include lots of Arab students which makes it hard to mingle with other cultures. However, I have what we call "conversation partner" whom I meet weekly. I also try to attend any event in the University; but this is personal efforts of course, not coming from the ESL. We, also, have the "coffee hour", but it is not regular, probably every 3-4 weeks.

Yesterday I attended it, but again most of the attendees were Arabs. This is a problem. We don't talk about other cultures. Don't misunderstand me. I am an Arab myself, but I would like to meet people from other cultures.

Q. Tell me about your experience outside the Center.

A. I hardly mingle with other people outside the Center because I don't know a lot of people. I live with two roommates; one is a relative and the other is a Saudi friend. They help me a lot. They have other friends of other cultures. We usually get together during the weekends. But, in general, I don't have a close friend to go out with.

Q. Is there anything that is bothering you or upsetting you concerning the American Culture, in or outside the Language Center?

A. Feeling lonely is the only thing that is truly bothering me. Since I don't have friends here, I try hard to find groups and activities that help me mingle with people.

I, also, think that we are given too much assignments, HomeWorks, and projects by the Center, this is very different than what I am used to (in Saudi). Teachers here (in the US) do not consider that we have several different classes. We get lots of assignments and quizzes for each class daily. This, of course, is putting a lot of stress on us.



## **APPENDIX I**

### **GROUP INTERVIEW WITH FEMALE PARTICIPANTS**

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Group Interview with Female Participants**

I have reviewed the meetings we did before with you all and the male students, and I took some of the themes that may or may not apply to you.

Q. Now that you have finished, do you feel you had enough time to practice speaking the English Language? Did the Center give you the time needed to practice?

A. (Alya) Yes, because we are not allowed to speak Arabic in class, although we do; but they don't allow us. So, we practice the English a lot.

(Lamya) They sometimes force us to have a partner in the group who doesn't speak Arabic to force us in English. We have lots of opportunities to use the language; but we must grasp these opportunities and use it.

Q. When I attended some of the classes, I have noticed that most of the classes do not include speaking

A. (Lamya) Yes, this is true. It depends on the teacher. Sometimes he/she doesn't allow participation in class.

Q. What about outside the Center, do you get a chance to speak and mingle with native speakers?

A- (Alya) No, actually, we always go out with people who speak our language because it's easier to communicate with them.

-(Lamya) me and my husband were like this at the beginning, but now we have a group that includes Japanese and Chinese. We go out with them. This helped us a lot lately.

Q- When you go to a restaurant, do you limit your conversation with the waitress or waiter to your order only or do you talk about other things too?

A- (Alya) It depends on the waiter. Some of them are friendly. They ask us about ourselves. I like talking to them.

Q- What are the difficulties that you faced in the Center?

A- (Alya) I feel we are constantly under pressure. They want us to get A+, but they don't give us time to study. We attend classes and give final exams at the same time. They are not making it easy for us. We are given lots of exams and assignments at the same time of the final.

B- (Lamya) They always do that in Level 8 because it's the level where a person can decide whether he has the ability to proceed to the University or not.

C- ( Student) My problem is with the GPA. I don't want to lower my GPA than A+, but they are not helping.

Q- What is more important to you: the GPA or the results of the IELTS?

A- (Lamya) If I got a high GPA, it will be easy to pass the IELTS with high marks.

Q- What are the difficulties you faced as you are attempting to adapt to living in the US?

A- (Student) I have a problem with being late to class always.

B- (Lamya) Yes, I was about to fail one subject because it starts very early and we all couldn't make to class on time. The teacher was counting the minutes in which we were late and when it reaches 60 minutes, he considered it one absent. I got full mark in

everything but my final grade was “C” because of the way the teacher calculates the minutes we were late.

Q- What are the difficulties you faced when first came here?

A- (Alya) Transportation. It was difficult to understand the schedules of the buses. In winter we used to go to the Center on foot.

Q- I heard from some of you that you were not satisfied with the level the Center put you in. Do you all have this feeling? Did you find the level you were put in easier or more difficult than what you have expected?

A- (Alya) I felt it was suitable.

(Lamya) I felt it was my standard but I didn't like the content of Level 8. The subjects given were not good enough.

(student) I felt it was suitable, but at the same time, I didn't feel that they have concentrated on the important things, like how to write research papers.

Q. In your opinion, what are the most important things you wanted the teachers at the Center to concentrate on?

A. (student) Honestly, I feel the content of the subjects is good. I have wasted my time studying at other Centers that were unworthy. The problem I had in this Center is with the practicum students who are being trained at the Center and who teach us as part of their graduation requirements. Most of them do not do a good job teaching.

(Lamya) Yes, those were a problem. I felt that I am lost with them. It is not fair to expose us to practicum students who don't know how to teach. If it is important for them, then the Center should put them at the beginning of semester not at the end when we are preparing for exams. They don't know how to explain things and we feel lost. The teachers, also don't

concentrate on writing skills until at the last level. I took level five, six and seven and didn't know how to write. I wasn't until recently when they started to concentrate on writing.

Q- Why do you think they are weak in teaching writing skills? Don't you get enough practicing?

A. (Alya) Some teachers teach us with the assumption that we already know everything about writing methods. I didn't know some important things, like the APA style of writing, until the last level, although it is very important.

(Sara) I think that this Center is better than the one I was at in Boston. I improved my speaking skill over here, but my writing skills still need some work. We started last week to take the argumentative essay.

(Alya) They usually give us a novel to read and write a commendatory essay on it.

Q. Lamya, did you have practicum students in level "8"?

A. (Lamya) Yes and they were giving us grammar which is the most difficult. I think they should use the practicum students in the Listening and Speaking classes, but not in the grammar classes.

(Student) We had practicum students, but they were in class to help us only and they were good.

(Alya) I, also, had practicum students and they were good in Reading and Writing. The only problem is with those who teach grammar. We had 7 or 8 teachers; each one gave us one part of the grammar book. I didn't like it and I felt completely lost. All of them were undergraduate students.

((Lamya) I wish the class teacher was the one who explained the lessons and the practicum students do the revision with us. We had a practicum student whose native language was not English. His pronunciation was bad. It was a shame because all of us knew pronunciation better than him. Those students should be directed to do revisions with us only, not give the actual lessons.

Q. What helped you the most in the Center concerning their methods of teaching? And which of the activities were more beneficial to you: presentations, assignments or research papers...etc.

A- (Lamya) to me, enriching my vocabulary was the best thing. Our teacher gave us new words and trained us to use those words and put it in sentences. I felt this helped me a lot.

( Aftrah) To me, I enjoyed the lectures that we were given to listen to at home and then write notes on it. It was a difficult assignment, but I benefited from it a lot.

(student) True, writing notes was very valuable task. It was boring and difficult but very good. I, also, enjoyed Listening and Writing. In general, I like the methods of teaching in the Center.

Q- What is the method of teaching that you think they should concentrate on?

A- (Lamya) They should concentrate on Writing and taking notes. Through writing we can apply the grammatical rules that we take in class. It would be better if we listen to the passage and take notes. By writing and taking notes, they can know our mistakes and correct it for us.

(Alya) Explaining rules in class only is not a good way. We would rather be given writing assignments to apply the rules and then they correct and give us their feedback.

(Lamya) Yes, the feedback is very important and beneficial for us. I used to insist on it because it's the only way I know my mistakes.

(Sireen) I agree with Lamya and Alya. However, the other skills didn't require feedback. In the Reading class, we were assigned reading few chapters from a book every bookend and give a presentation at the end of the term on that book. I felt it is a nice method. However, I think they should concentrate on Writing.

(Alya) the teachers themselves say that even native speakers are not good in grammar. Why do they waste our time giving us very small details of grammar? We are not going to be teachers of grammar. I want to know only the things that can get me through College.

Q- In your opinion, which of the assignments that you were taking will be more helpful to you in the University? Taking notes, giving presentations or writing research paper?

A- (Alya) Actually, we didn't write a lot of research papers. They didn't give us the methods of doing it. We were asked to read an article and write a research paper on it without explaining how to do it. They already assumed that we know how to do it.

(student) we started from level 5 all the way through until level 8, but we never took methods of research. We have never learned how to do it. We still need to know lots of things about writing a research paper although we have finished all the levels.

Q- You said they gave the APA style?

A- (Lamya) Yes, they did for a very short time and it was the last thing we took. We still do not know it very well.

Q- What is your impression of living in the city now since you all have finished and are about to leave?

Some of you had positive attitude last time I talked with you.

A- (Lamya) Yes, we feel it's a good city for studying. There are no distractions which is nice. We are here to study; we don't need distractions.

Q. Do you like to add anything else? My thesis is about Saudi student's experience in a different cultural environment.

A- (Lamya) We didn't have any problem in this environment. People were very nice. We didn't feel there is any discrimination against us. I think people here are used to International students. Probably, we had a little bit of a problem, at the beginning, finding a good apartment; but thank God, people here are very co-operative. They understood the system by which we are paid our allowance by the Saudi Education mission.



## **APPENDIX J**

### **GROUP INTERVIEW WITH MALE PARTICIPANTS**

## **APPENDIX J**

### **Group Interview with Male Participants**

Q. I have collected different themes from the interviews I made with all the students. I want to ask you about some the themes to see if it applies to all of you.

Some of you have said that they didn't have a chance to practice speak English whether in or outside the classroom. How far do you agree or disagree with that?

A. (Ahmad) I, personally found out that I have lots of opportunities to practice the English Language. Actually, just being in America, by itself, is a great opportunity because you are forced to speak English wherever you go with the teachers or outside the Center when you go buy something or order food ....etc. Also, the teachers and the Center have assigned lots of events that help us speak the language, for example, we have a coffee hour that is held once a week. Teachers and students get together for an hour to speak about anything. This is optional of course. Some teachers, also, like Mr. Ayam (speaking class) has assigned 3 hrs. given throughout the week where we meet practicum students and speak about anything we want. The same idea as the coffee-hour. Also, there are other activities that are held on and off the campus in which we can participate and mingle with native speakers. For example, we attended the Valentine festival and a bowling Party which lots of students from the Center attended. Thus there are lots of activities that help us practice the language; but the student has to go himself, not expect the activities go to his home.

Q. Does the University or the Center encourage students to attend such activities?

A. Yes, they do. Actually, the day before yesterday, the teacher of the Listening and Speaking class promised us a bonus if we attended the bowling party. They encourage us to go to such activities and have fun and speak up. But it depends on the student himself and whether he wants to learn something or not.

Q. Rayan, what do you think of what Ahmad said?

A. I agree with Ahmad. However, I spent most of my time working on other language skills. I don't speak a lot. In the "Listening and Speaking" class we just listen to the teacher, but we don't talk. We gave two 2 small presentations as an introduction, so far; but the major presentation is still to come next week. We didn't benefit a lot from that class because we don't practice speaking every day. The same thing with the other skills' classes like reading and writing. It didn't help us a lot. We felt that it is our job to improve ourselves.

Q. Do you feel comfortable going to social meetings and talking with native speakers?

A. (Ahmad) I, personally, do not have any problem. I can mingle with native speakers with no problem at all. I never felt uncomfortable talking to them. The only problem I have is with some of the terms that have to do with our culture that I can't translate into English when I speak, like the word "Eidea". People here are very nice. They accept us and respect us.

A. (Rayan) Yes true. Some people also speak in slower voice so that we understand what they are saying. Some people give us the chance to speak and listen to us even if we make mistakes; others stop us and correct us.

Q. Some of the students said during the interviews that the Language Center did not satisfy their needs? What do you think?

A. (Rayan) Honestly, it's not the Language Center I have expected. It's not up to the standard . I was in a Center much better than that.

Q. Do you think that this due to the teachers' qualifications or methods or what?

A. (Rayan) Yes, definitely.

(Ahmad) Yes, I saw this in level 6 in the Writing skill class. It used to be condensed and hard. But in this level, it is easy, and we took about 2-3 module throughout the whole level. Thus, it depends on the teacher more than the curriculum. It differs according to the methods of teaching of each teacher. The teacher is the one who helps you improve or not. I, also, believe that the Center is just a mean not a way. The best way to learn a language is to practice it yourself.

Q. Could you give me examples of things the teacher did to help? Like methods of teaching?

A. (Rayan) The teacher of the Writing Class used to correct our paragraphs a lot. She would underline every mistake whether in grammar or spelling.

A. (Ahmad) Yes, I agree with you. The teacher of the Writing Class always held interesting activities to help us understand or learn something. For example, she distributes pictures of different things (bag, alligator, ballons...etc) and asks us to put a picture in the center of the table and try to say or write something that link this picture to the other pictures in our hands. I thought that was nice. It helped us to be creative. For instance, we had to think what is the one thing that is shared by a bag and an alligator? Of course, it the leather. Miss Mary gave us lots of fun activities that mad her class interesting and fun.

Q. In general, What, in your opinion, is the most helpful method that the teachers followed and truly helped you? groupwork, practicing, presentations, games...etc?

A. (Ahmad) In the speaking Class, Mr. Ayam gives us examples outside the curriculum to explain to us that what goes out on the streets is different from what happens in the Center or the University; that the academic language is different from the street language. Also, during the presentations, he explains that the presentations here are different from the ones given in the Arab world. In the Arab World it is usually very formal. It relies on giving the information and leaving. Here it is usually informal and does not rely on information only. The presenter would talk about different things also. He usually gives different examples and shows us videos and pictures and asks questions about it. He gives us information about the different cultures of the different regions in the USA and show us the difference between these cultures and ours. He also points out the difference between the academic language and the street one; like our classic language and the slang one. There is a big difference. So, he helps us a lot. There are other teachers who also help us; but Mr. Ayam helps us more to understand the American Culture.

## **APPENDIX K**

### **MEMBER CHECK WITH ALYA**

## **APPENDIX K**

### **Member Check with Alya**

Q. You said previously that when you arrived in the US for the first time you had positive impression about the whole environment. Do you still feel that way now that you finished your studies at the Center?

A. Yes, I still think that everything is positive whether the people or the environment.

Q. You also said that you had difficulty speaking with people like the drivers of Uber Service. Did you improve since you came here? Do you feel comfortable now speaking English with people?

A. I did improve a lot. At the beginning it was difficult; but now I realized that it is very easy to talk to people including Uber drivers. I am bolder now. I talk with people in English without any shyness.

Q. You also said that you were afraid of studying here? Did you overcome this fear?

A. Yes, I think that studying English is no problem; but I have fear of studying in the University. I don't know how the classes are going to be like or how will I adapt to this kind of environment.

Q. You also said that your contact with people was limited to the classrooms. Since you feel more comfortable speaking with people now; did you enlarge your circle of contacts?

A. No, I still go out with my Saudi friends in class only.

Q. Is this your personal decision of the teacher's?

A. That's my personal decision. However, I started to talk a non-Arab classmate.

Q. How do you compare your experience in the Center or with the society from the time you first came here until now?

A. I feel that I have improved and still improving. Now things are becoming easy and I became familiar with everything.

Q. What is your future plan to improve your language skills?

A. I don't think I need to improve my speaking skill. However, I need to improve my writing skill.

Q. Did you finish all the levels in the Center?

A. Yes

Q. Do you intend to apply for a University here?

A. Yes, I have applied to West Virginia University and I am waiting for their response. My sister already has admission to Kent State University.



## **APPENDIX L**

### **MEMBER CHECK WITH AHMAD**

## **APPENDIX L**

### **Member Check with Ahmad**

Jameel: This is our last interview. You have offered me lots of information that are helpful and hopefully will help me a lot. This last interview is called .....setting where I review with you all the things we talked about in the previous interviews and you tell me if you still have the same thoughts about the things we discussed or you have changed your views about certain issues since you have finished your studies at the Center.

Q. You have talked previously, that you were holding to the cultural and moral principles that you were raised upon in Saudi Arabia. Do you still feel strongly about this?

A. Yes, I still feel strongly about my cultural and moral principles; maybe even stronger than when I first came here. I, actually talked about the Holy Mosque “Al-Haram” in Mecca in my last presentation.

Q. We also talked about communicating with people. You said that you are a sociable person, and that you don’t find difficulty talking with native speakers. Do you still communicate and mingle with them?

A. I am still working on it. I and Rayan went yesterday with two native speakers (practicum students) to a coffee shop. We actually enjoyed it very much and we had a nice time.

Q. How about mingling with females whether Saudis or other nationality? Do you feel more comfortable now talking to females?

A. Yes, I feel now that it is very normal and that there is no problem at all to talk to girls Arabs or not.

Q. I had a group interview with males and females separately. I wanted to get you all together in one interview, but the principle of the Center refused. She said that she prefers I hold group interviews with males and females separately. I was surprised because back in King Abid University the staff members hold mixed meetings where males and females sit together.

A. Yes, she wants to avoid problems and headaches.

Q. You also talked previously about presentations and projects you give in class. Do you think now that you have benefited from it?

A. In general, I didn't benefitted from the content that I have presented; but I benefitted from the different skills involved in preparing a presentation like how to research for the information needed and how to present it, including the body language.

Q. How was your experience from the time you arrived here until now?

A. I am better in lots of things like mingling with females. It is easier and more comfortable now to talk to a girl. My English has improved a lot. However, most of this improvement in my personality or language is due to the different social activities that I attend. I, also, became very good in the Writing skill where I learned how to use punctuations. And ofcourse, I learned a lot about the American Culture and how to deal with people here; I am still learning about this issue.

Q. Do you feel that you have totally adapted to the culture here?

A. May be, because I understood this culture before even coming here. I watched a lot of movies. I have a good background and information about this culture. Probably, at the very beginning,

like the first month, it was a little bit difficult. I had no confidence in myself. Now, I feel I am totally independent and can rely on myself. There is a great improvement in myself.

Q. Now that you have finished studying at the Center, what do think of the teaching methods. Is there a difference between now and when you first came?

A. When I first came it was new methods of teaching for me. In Saudi we got used to listen to the teacher and take information only; we don't participate in class. However, here our classes follow the concept of give and take. The teacher gives us the information and we respond by giving our opinions. But again, it depends on the teacher's method of teaching.

## **APPENDIX M**

### **MEMBER CHECK WITH LAMYA**

## **APPENDIX M**

### **Member Check with Lamya**

Q. You told me previously that when you first arrived you had fears, but your husband was here before, and he took care of everything for you. Do you feel now that you can take care of things?

A. Yes, now, I do things by myself and I go everywhere by myself. At the beginning I relied a lot on my husband.

Q. Did you get to know or mingle with native speakers?

A. Yes, we know some friends who are not Americans but international students like us - Koreans and Japanese. We go out with them every week.

Q. You said you were shocked when you first came here because the city is small in size. Do you still feel that way?

A. At the beginning I was bored because I was studying English only and had plenty of time on my hand. But I guess when I get enrolled in the University it will be different because I will have a lot to do. This city is a good place for studying because it is very quiet.

Q. You also said that you had a problem with your accent and that people did not understand you when you talked a problem. Did you overcome this problem? Do people understand you now? Did they notice an improvement in your accent?

A. My Language has improved a lot but Americans have a way of pronouncing words that is different from mine. If I pronounce a word different from theirs, they don't understand it. I think I need more time to improve in this area.

Q. You have to understand also that the accent here differ from one region to another, exactly like what we have in Saudi Arabia, where people have different accent depending on their region.

A. But we still understand each other even though we differ in the accent; but here if you don't pronounce the word as they do, they don't understand it.

Q. Do you have an example of a word you pronounced, and they didn't understand it?

A. I can't recall one now; but this misunderstanding happens a lot during phone calls. When I talk to people face to face, I can explain the word to them; but on the phone it is difficult. Sometimes it becomes hard to communicate with native speakers because I get stuck with a word.

Q. When I first met you, you said that you had and that interest in the American Culture and that you used to watch a lot of movies before coming here. Do you still feel that way?

A. No, I used to watch movies when I was a teenager. Since I came here, I didn't watch any movies. I watch Arabic movies here because I miss it. However, I listen to broadcasts in English which helped me a lot such as Tip-Talks. When I first came here, it was difficult for me to understand the passages in Tip-Talks; but now I find it easy to understand everything.

Q. Do you rely on the sub-titles to understand?

A. I use it while watching movies because they talk quickly; but not while I listen to recording or to Tip-Talks because, of course, there isn't sub-titles.

Q. You also said that you were not satisfied with the level that the center put you in because it was less than your standard and it was very easy for you.

A. Level 8 is supposed to be an advanced level, but I wasn't satisfied with the content. We started the level without getting any revisions of the previous levels. When I first came, I didn't know the format of writing although my writing skill was good. They assumed that we know all the rules and method of formatting, which we didn't, and they expected us to apply it when writing anything. We needed a general revision in level 8 before beginning to write.

Q. Now that you have finished your studies at the Center, do you see a difference in your language skills from the time you first came here until now?

A. No, I don't see any difference. The Center is concentrating on the undergraduate students and I don't blame them because they are the majority. However, they should have had a special class for post-graduate students. I suggested to some teachers to give research methods and have us write research papers. Some of them cooperated and directed us toward writing research papers. It was my suggestion, though, not theirs.

Q. What else, beside writing research papers, were you looking forward to improving, like Listening or Reading?

A. Listening classes were good. But we didn't take enough practice in Reading because students don't like reading, so they were forced to do it. Speaking is another weak area, although, the Center holds some activities where students can practice speaking English while mingling with native speakers. But I still think the Center is not doing their best in this area too because the skill of speaking requires more practicing; it is something that we need to practice daily, not once a month during activities.

Q. What is your impression of the Center since you have finished now? And what is your future plan?



A. As for my impression of the Center, I think that they are trying to satisfy our needs. When I first came here, I told them that I want to be ready for the IELTS exam. They ignored me until last level when they started to prepare us for this exam. Thus, I feel they are trying. I benefited from the last level because it helped me prepare for the IELTS. As for my plan, I want to apply for master's degree in London because America is very far away from our country, whereas London is close, and I will be close to my family. Also, the Universities here require GMAT and GRE exams which is not required in London Universities.

**APPENDIX N**  
**MEMBER CHECK WITH SALWA**

## **Appendix N**

### **Member Check Interview with Salwa**

Jameel: Today's interview is very simple. I have reviewed your answers to the questions I gave in the first interview. Today I want to ask you how did your academic and living experience change from the first time we met until today since you have finished the your studies at the Center.

Q. You told me before that you have learned a lot about the American Culture from watching movies before you came to the US. Do you still keep doing that or you tend to mingle now with the people to get firsthand experience?

A. Honestly, I didn't learn much from the Center. I learned from one class about the slang language. I learned about some expressions that you can't translate because in slang language it has a different meaning from what the word means. But the Center didn't help us to improve.

Q. You also told me that you had a positive impression about the American Culture when you first came here. Do you still have the same impression now since you spend some time here?

A. Yes, I still think strongly that people here are very nice.

Q. Did you get to mingle with the neighbors? Do you have any native speakers friends? I remember you said that you used to have trouble talking to Uber drivers.

A. I used to understand what they say but I prefer not to talk a lot with them. I also don't like mingling with neighbors.

Q. you also said that you were worried then about all the responsibilities you had here? Did you manage to adapt to living here with those responsibilities?

A. Yes, I did. At the beginning I thought it was difficult especially when it comes to paying bills.... etc., but now I found out it is very easy. All I needed is a plan to balance my budget.

Q. You also said that you had bad impression about the Center. Did this change?

A. No, it's the same. They don't concentrate on the skills that we need. In the Writing class today, we took how to analyze a sentence which I, personally, think will not help me improve in any way. We didn't need it.

Q. What would you do if it was in your hand to improve the teaching methods?

A. I think they should apply the grammatical rules that we already know through writing sentences and they correct it. Writing notes is also important.

Q. You said previously that you didn't like the methods of teaching of some teachers. Is this still going on or has it changes?

A. In the last level, my teachers were good, honestly. But previously, I had teachers who didn't care how much we learned. They give anything with no consideration to our needs.

Q. Were those teachers practicum students?

A. No, they were the original teachers of the Center.

Q. You also said, previously, that you don't feel your improving your skills in the Center. Do you still feel this way since you have finished now?

A. I feel that my writing skill has improved a lot. I can put words together now and connect it in sentences. I feel it's the only skill that I have improved at. As for the grammar, I am still having problems with.

Q. What is the skill that you feel you need to improve?

A. I need to improve my grammar. It's very important in writing and speaking. I, also have a problem with reading. I am very slow in reading and understanding a paragraph.

## **APPENDIX O**

### **OBSERVATION I NOTES**

## **APPENDIX O**

### **Observation I Notes**

#### **Sireen/Alya/Lamya**

- Class is utilizing a U-shaped outline for the desks.
- Working on reviewing homework.
- Teacher walks by to assist.
- All participants are sitting next to each other and interact with one another in Arabic.
- Participants spend initial time in class reading and reflecting on homework.
- Participants cooperate with one another on assigned work.
- Teacher occasionally asks participants if they are working or talking about non classroom activities.
- Alya asks questions regarding the given writing assignment.
- Teacher sits among the group of participants to assist with their writing.
- Alya and Samar are typing using computers, whereas Lamya is writing on paper and is less engaged with the assignment.
- Teacher attempts to help Alya with her paper layout and topic, Alya has no problem talking with her teacher openly as they sat with each other.
- Teacher offers some suggestions to students, Alya takes some notes of this.
- Teacher explains next assignment, the students take notes of the assignment.
- Teacher sits with Lamya after she asks for assistance, Lamya is asking for explanations of concepts (household) in relation to assignment. Teacher gives example of her own household and what it consists of.
- Samar and Alya continue to work on their assignments individually.

- After finishing their work, Samar and Alya engage talks in Arabic.
- Lamya asks for further help with her writing topic, the teacher gives Lamya more examples of concepts to help with her topic.
- Lamya asks the teacher about her grammar structure with her certain sentences in her paper.
- Teacher notices that Samar and Alya who are sisters, spend too much time speaking in Arabic, and suggests separating them if they continue to neglect their work.
- Teacher reviews homework assignment for next day as class ends and asks if anyone has any questions.



**APPENDIX P**

**OBSERVATION II NOTES**

## **APPENDIX P**

### **Observation II Notes**

#### **Abid/Lamya/Alya/Sireen**

- Teacher reviews lesson with students.
- Abid participates in revision.
- Asks for volunteers.
- Teacher asks students to define concepts within lesson and give examples.
- Teacher writes on board all examples elicited by the students.
- Teacher continues to ask for volunteers.
- Lamya and Alya are typing on their phones, maybe looking up definitions. Alya is writing as she looks at her phone screen.
- Abid seems engaged and is focused on content written on the board.
- Abid gives more examples for the teacher.
- Samar arrives late to class.
- The teacher informs the class that revision of vocabulary has concluded.
- Teacher pulls up video, and briefly talks about the topic, then asks what they believe the students should be looking for.
- Lamya participates.
- Abid participates.
- Lamya participates more.
- Lamya and Alya use their phones, might be to look up vocabulary words.
- Teacher gives instructions about listening to content in video.

- All participants are listening to the content. Alya is looking at her phone and typing, maybe looking up words.
- Teacher plays video again for learners to have a second listen.
- All participants are reading a sheet that highlights content in the video for students to look out for.
- Teachers uses overhead display to show some highlights of the content.
- Teachers asks students for their multiple-choice answers, Abid offers an answer.
- Teacher asks for definition of some vocabulary from video, Lamya offers definition of “obsolete”.
- Teacher ends class early and says that the next day will include another vocabulary review, and asks students to review at home, then compliments their works.

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