

Challenges Experienced by Saudi Female Students Transitioning Through Canadian Pre-academic ESL

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Abstract

This study explored the issues for female Saudi students studying English in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada that might have a negative impact on the development of proficiency in spoken English. A mixed methods approach was used. A 38 item questionnaire was completed by 61 participants. It asked about experiences within the classroom, opportunities to talk to others, level of comfort speaking, and the relative importance of speaking, reading, and writing. Structured interviews were conducted with four students, two teachers, and two support staff (receptionists) to enrich the knowledge gained from the questionnaire. Results indicated that Saudi female students had issues with self-confidence, shyness, and a fear of making mistakes. While it can be argued that all ESL students have similar issues, the sense was that the issues were more profound for Saudi females than for other females or for Saudi males. As well, Saudi female had additional cultural differences that had a major impact on performance. Firstly, Saudi women – even those with university education -- are unaccustomed to co-educational classes and male teachers. Secondly, Saudi women are expected to defer to males. As such, the presence of males in the classroom causes Saudi women to remain silent. Thirdly, Saudi women are not expected to interact outside the home, or with males. As such, Saudi women socialize only with Saudi women and do not have the opportunity to practice speaking. Finally, Saudi women are expected to have all business transactions conducted by a male relative (husband, father, brother) and as such, have little opportunity to practice speaking even for official reasons. Recommendations for Saudi women, the Saudi and Canadian governments, and ESL instructors are provided.

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Dedication

*I dedicate this work to my
soul mate Mother for her love,
support, prayer, and care.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is an exploratory study to examine verbal skills and verbal interactions of Saudi female students studying in English Language Institutes (ELI) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The number of Saudi female students is gradually increasing in ELI programs in Halifax (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013) and there is an absence of this group particularly in the literature about international students. Therefore, this research serves to explore and to highlight the experiences of female Saudi students in these programs. In particular, the focus is on the development of verbal skills.

In order to understand the factors that may have an impact on the development of verbal skills and interaction, it is important to understand the society from which they come. Saudi females share some personality characteristics that are related to the social values of their culture. These values influence their actions, as well as the reasons they chose to study English within Canadian English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

This study focuses on Saudi women because that group is unique: Saudi, and more generally Muslim, women face particular issues that are not experienced by other groups of women (e.g., Asian, African) or even, by Saudi (Muslim) men. In addition, there is currently no research in the literature about the experiences of Saudi women in learning English as second language (LESL) abroad. There are studies about the experiences of Saudi students “studying abroad” (e.g., Barnawi 2009; Shaw, 2010), but this literature is largely focused on males. The experiences of Saudi women must be studied separately from the experience of Saudi men because of the huge differential impact of culture and norms on female and male personalities and actions. In addition, the distinction between female and male experience is of growing

importance because the number of Saudi women studying abroad has been increasing steadily. According to the Higher Education Statistics Center (2013), the number of Saudi female students who studied in Canada from 2005 until 2013 increased from 423 students to 4404 students (see Figure 1).

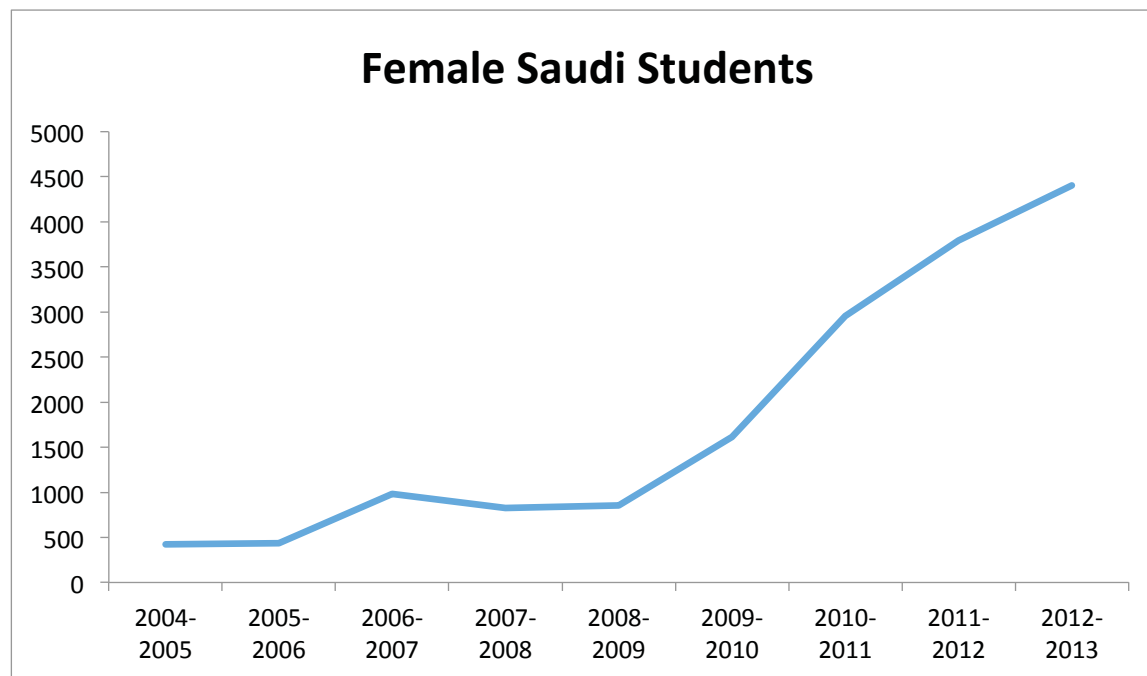


Figure 1. The increase in the number of Saudi women studying English in Canada.

This work is focused on the experiences of Saudi women. However, on a more practical level, this work does not include a sample of Saudi men because of the conservative nature of the Saudi society. It would be very difficult for me, as a female researcher, to interact with Saudi male students to gather data. That is, in the Saudi culture, the use of an interviewer of the opposite sex would be considered inappropriate (Ismail, 2012). The situation would be uncomfortable for both the interviewer and the informant. As such, any information gathered in an interview with a Saudi male would be of questionable accuracy.

The Status of Women in Saudi Arabia

In order to understand Saudi women, one must first understand the social structures and cultural norms (status and interactions) for Saudi women in Saudi Arabia. Saudi culture is primarily patriarchal. The father is the center of the family and he is the final arbiter on all matters. Typically the father is more associated with the public domain. He represents the family in all activities outside the home (shopping, finances, etc.). The mother, on the other hand, is associated with the private sphere (e.g., managing the house, looking after children, etc.). Men are financially responsible for the family, whereas women are not.

Sons and daughters have their own responsibilities towards family. Boys are usually responsible of protecting their sisters and helping their father. Daughters are expected to assist their mothers and respect the males of the household.

This notion of men being the guardian of women has its roots in the “namus of honor” where protection of women brings honor to the male. This is not law but rather is social convention. It is observed throughout Saudi society (Ismail, 2012; Ali Sallam & Hunter, 2013). Because of this structure, Saudi women grow up dependent on their male family members for all aspects of life that require interaction with the community.

In recent years, women have received more education and have entered the workforce to provide for family needs. Household chores are taken care of by maids and servants. Nonetheless, most activities outside of the home (e.g. official transactions) are done with the accompaniment of a male or by the male himself. For example, women rely on a male relative to deal with bills, shopping for groceries, reserving hotels, purchasing flight tickets; all the responsibilities that need someone to communicate outside of the home.

Until 2001, women also relied on their father for their identity. A Saudi woman was thought to be an extension of her father. She did not have her own identification (i.e., identity card). Her identity appeared on her father's identity card, and she had to rely on him to participate in life outside of her home. Anytime identification was required, her father had to show his card. After marriage, her name was then added to her husband's identity card. If she did not marry, her name would be added to her closest male relative's identity card (e.g., in the event of her father's death). It was only after 2001 that women were able to acquire their own identification card at the age of majority. This created much more opportunity for women to be able to work independently outside the home.

Another unique tradition on Saudi society is that Saudi women wear an "abaya" (black overcoat) when moving through mixed company. The abaya is meant to cover the woman's body when there are unrelated men around. When a Saudi woman is in the company of women, without the chance of being seen by men (i.e., at the women's university campus, at home, visiting with women friends, etc.), she is permitted to remove the abaya.

The role of the Saudi woman is often misunderstood by Western society in that it is largely believed that the status of women in Saudi Arabia is the direct result of Islamic teachings. In fact, the status of women in Saudi Arabia today is based on cultural norms rather than Islamic teachings. Many studies have argued that the social practices of Saudi Arabia are more rooted in custom, traditions, and law, than in the Islamic religion (Hamdan, 2005; Pharaon, 2004). For example, "Fatina Shaker, a female Saudi anthropologist and perhaps the first to obtain a PhD degree from an American university, believes that the denial of women's rights is rooted in the hegemony of social practices, dubbed by Fatina as customary laws or traditions, rather than rooted in Islamic essence" (Hamdan, 2005, p. 48). "Women's issues in Saudi society are often

mistakenly connected to Islamic teachings” (Hamdan, 2005, p. 45). It is clear that both religion and cultural norms shape social practices in Saudi Arabia. However, it is difficult to isolate one from the other since they work together to create the unique characteristics of Saudi society.

Hence, it is important to study Saudi women as a unique group. Having said that, it must be noted that a discussion of religion is beyond the scope of this research. That is, this thesis is focused on the behaviors (and motivations) of Saudi women, and not on how the behaviors arose or how those behaviors are re-enforced. Consideration of religion could lead to tangential discussions that are far removed from the focus of this research.

Although there are commonalities, Saudi society also differs from that of other Muslim societies. In fact, even within the one country of Saudi Arabia, there is great variation in the manner in which families and communities express their cultural beliefs and traditions. In communities that are predominantly tribal in nature, the more conservative traditions are adhered to. For example, there is a segregation of sexes intended to reduce temptations and to reduce threats to the female’s honor (Doumato, 1999), as well as to maintain “modesty, chastity and deference to men” (Hamdan, 2005, p. 55). In these communities, in particular, it is very important that females behave in an honorable manner so as not to bring shame to her family. Ali Sallam and Hunter (2013) report that many Saudi women accept and value the customs and traditions of segregation. In fact, 80% of Saudi women believe that women should not work in a mixed gender environment, that women should not hold political office as this would reflect Western culture, and that women already have a lot of independence (Ali Sallam & Hunter, 2013). However, not all Saudi people come from tribal families and adhere to such strictly conservative values. There are communities in Saudi Arabia that are largely composed of families that are not tribal but are more liberal. Hamdan (2005) notes that, “A high percentage of

people who have Saudi citizenship are descendants of migrant workers and religious pilgrims who decided to remain in the country (that is, people from Africa, India and other Arabic nations)” (p.55). She goes on to describe culture in the western province of Hijaz:

“Women of Hijaz [the western province of Saudi: Mecca Jeddah and Madinah] have a more heterogeneous character than that of other regions and provinces in the country... many of the residents are settlers who moved after hajj from different parts of the Islamic and/or Arabic world to become citizens of the holy land they may have no tribal backgrounds. Hijazi women are more apt to go outdoors and express themselves publicly, a phenomenon reserved for men in other provinces characterized by a tribal background.(Hamdan, 2005, p. 48)”

Le Renard (2008) and Ali Sallam and Hunter (2013) go on to note that central regions of Saudi Arabia are much stricter and more conservative about the enforcement of restrictions surrounding sex segregation than the Eastern Province. Hamdan (2005) and Ali Sallam and Hunter (2013) suggest that the role of women in Saudi Arabia is determined more by culture than by religion or than by the tradition of tribal families. For example, Kuwait and Bahrain are countries in the Gulf region that consist, largely, of tribal families, but culturally, they do not restrict the participation of women in public life in the same way as does Saudi Arabia. Hence, one can conclude that the status of women and the expected behavior of Saudi females is a result of the unique culture of this country.

Although Saudi Arabia continues to have a conservative culture and the social rules are often strictly enforced, in practice, there is some increasing leniency for many of those rules. For example, women are generally prohibited from driving in Saudi Arabia, but there are some rural areas where women drive if they need to. Similarly, in some areas, women often go out in groups

to socialize outside of the home at cafes or restaurants for “women only”, without the explicit permission of their male guardian (Le Renard, 2008; Ali Sallam & Hunter 2013).

In short, the role of women within Saudi culture is still quite constrained, but the situation is evolving. At this time, women are still expected to defer to males, and a male guardian for all public activities is almost mandatory. However, one must acknowledge that there is some diversity in the expression of female behavior and that Saudi society is evolving. The barriers separating male and female spaces are solidifying, but female spaces are becoming increasingly diversified, ranging beyond the private sphere. In addition, for the interpretation of the current work, it is important to realize that I have deliberately decided to avoid an in depth discussions of the reasons or the sources of these constraints (or changes). It is important to understand the cultural experience that shapes the values and behaviors of Saudi women, but not the causes and re-enforcers of that behavior.

Women’s Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia understands and emphasizes the importance of education as a means to development. The government puts a great deal of emphasis on education and has devoted time, effort and money to improving the educational outcomes of its citizens. Education for women in Saudi Arabia only started in the 1960s, but currently, Saudi women receive a lot of attention from the government in terms of education.

Education in Saudi Arabia is now compulsory for all children. However, throughout the country, the education system is segregated by gender where men and women are not allowed to interact with one another in the academic setting. As such, the academic world mirrors the social world. It is important to realize that female students are only taught by women and male students are only taught by men. This does not mean, however, that men and women receive different

education. Both receive, fundamentally, the same education: teachers in both schools follow the same curriculum.

This strict segregation continues at the university level, although that too is slowly changing. Women's universities are still enclosed by high walls, although women are able to move about freely when on campus. In fact, this arrangement is intended to allow female students to move freely while on campus. Without the walls, cultural norms would severely restrict their motion.

The first university for women opened in 1979 and since then, several other women's universities have been created. The educational choices available to women are still generally more limited than for men. For example, in their choice of studies, women can generally only select from more restricted choice of majors or professions (Hamdan, 2005). However, this too is changing. In 2008, King Abdullah opened the largest university in the world for women only, which is called the Princess Nora Bint Abdurrahman University. It offers diplomas, bachelor, and post-secondary degrees and educational facilities in all major academic disciplines.

Although women are becoming more educated in Saudi Arabia, there are not many employment opportunities for these women. Part of this is likely due to the typical recent graduate problem: They have the knowledge but not the necessary real world practical experience. However, there may be a component that is cultural. This has resulted in the country hiring foreign workers to fill those positions.

In recent years the number of Saudi women studying abroad has been steadily increasing. This is due, in part, to the desire to gain experience, proficiency in a foreign language, and higher education (i.e., Master's and Doctoral). It is also due, in part, to the active promotion of study abroad by the Saudi government.

The Saudi Arabian government recognizes the importance of exchanging knowledge, science, and cultural experience with countries around the world. From the beginnings as a nation in period between 1902 (or 1926) and 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has focused attention on international scholarship programs. The first scholarship students were sent, in 1926, to Egypt. In 1928, three employers were sent to London to train on wireless communication networks. In 1934, a group of ten students were sent to Italy to study aviation. After that increasing number of students were sent to Europe and US, especially after the discovery of oil in the Kingdom.

More or less simultaneously, in 1938, King Abdul-Aziz (the founder of Saudi Arabia) requested the establishment of a preparatory school for this program, to organize and assist this mission. Since then, the largest scholarship program in the history of Saudi Arabia was established in 2005. It has a large budget for education and higher education with a mandate to improve this sector and to ensure the continuation of the current plans and programs.

The “King Abdullah Scholarships Program” (KASP) is a cornerstone of this effort. This program has become popular among Saudi youth. Since this program started, the number of Saudi students enrolled in King Abdullah Scholarships Program has been increasing. In the beginning, Saudi females only received a small percentage of enrolment (see Figure 1) and most of that was simply to accompany their husbands when they moved to foreign countries for study. However, that is changing. In order to understand the number of Saudi students who flock to Canada and other countries to complete their education, it is necessary to look inside the KASP and understand the events that brought them there.

King Abdullah Scholarships Program

King Abdullah Scholarships Program (KASP) was officially launched on May 26th, 2005 as a result of an agreement between King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud (the king of Saudi Arabia) and President George Bush. It was intended, in part, to improve the relationship between the two countries after 9/11 (Bollang, 2006; Ministry of Higher Education, 2011; Shaw, 2010), and in part, to offer young Saudi students a good education. The King Abdullah Scholarships Program was initially designed for five years only. In each year, one group of students was admitted to the program. This group of students was known as a stage. Hence, when the program began it was meant to send five stages of students to study abroad. As a result of the initial success, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) realized the importance of this program and requested King Abdullah to extend KASP for a further five stages of students (MOHE, 2011). The first extension for a second five years occurred in 2010. The second extension for another five years occurred in 2013 (the current phase will therefore end in about 2020). These extensions were intended to equip both public and private sectors, in Saudi Arabia, with distinctive competencies and to enable more young Saudi men and women to pursue their ambitions. Thus, KASP has been running for fifteen years; nine stages have completed the admission phase and there are six stages that are left to be chosen.

In the beginning of the program, 7452 Saudi students were sent to study in the United States. Its scope was then broadened and several agreements were signed by King Abdullah to include other advanced countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and other Western European countries. The goal was to provide diversity of experience and optimal student education. Students were encouraged to conduct studies in a variety of degrees (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate, and Medicine) in order to increase the general educational level of

Saudi citizens and to eventually fill the majority of positions in the Saudi workforce with Saudi citizen, a process called Saudization (Hendrickson, 2007; Wenger, 2007). That is, the goal was, in part, to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on foreign industry, products, and workers, while building Saudi Arabia's technology and industry (Shaw, 2010). KASP includes the following programs: medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, applied medical sciences (nursing, radiology, health sciences, medical laboratories, and medical technology), engineering, computers, basic sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry), nano-technology, law, accounting, e-commerce, insurance, finance, and marketing (MOHE, 2011).

Noticeably, since the inception of the scholarship program, the number of female Saudi students involved has been gradually increasing. Many female Saudi students move to foreign countries with their parents, husbands, brothers, to either continue their own education, or to accompany their husbands while they are studying. While Saudi women are staying in these countries, they *must* be accompanied by a mahram (a legal guardian). A mahram is a woman's closest male relative and her guardian. It is usually her father or husband, or some male to whom the woman could *not* be legally married (Doumato & Posusney, 2003). A mahram is required for all Saudi women who are scholarship students under KASP until she finishes her degree. Women who are married and wish to study abroad are permitted to do so. In fact, the program will sponsor (support) her husband and children. In this case, the husband is her mahram. Single women must travel and stay with a father, brother, uncle or some other male family member who will act as her mahram.

While there are some constraints, this program has opened up many opportunities for female students to experience a new language, a new culture, and a new education in a country that is very far from their home. It may be the first time that many of these women have traveled

outside of Saudi Arabia. They may be away for an extended period of time without many of the support systems they are accustomed to. This may be a very difficult transition for many students. They will be immersed in a culture that is completely different from their own and in a language that is very different from their own. They may feel a loss of community and support.

Citizens of the host country (e.g., Canada, USA, and GB) may take the view that this is just an issue for those international students, but the situation is more complex than that. Firstly, the large influx of a large number of foreign national can be a disruption to the social fabric of the host country. If this is not handled with sensitivity, the result could be increased animosity, prejudice, or outright hostility. Not only would this be bad for the world as a whole, but it also runs counter to the goals of the KASP, and the general principles of a country like Canada. Furthermore, there is a pragmatic issue. Foreign students inject a large amount of money into the local economies. Those countries/communities that make the foreign students most welcome will, ultimately, attract the most students.

When the King Abdullah Scholarships Program started not many women were enrolled, and most who were enrolled did so because they were accompanying their husband who were studying abroad. However, more women are enrolling of their own volition. Such women need to become proficient in academic English to be able to successfully complete their university education. However, most language schools seem to have a greater focus on reading and writing than on the spoken language. In contrast, most students, when they first arrive, want to become proficient with the spoken language because that is necessary for day-to-day life, for communicating with locals, and to serve their academic needs.

Purpose and the Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the understanding of obstacles that prevent Saudi females from improving their spoken English while enrolled in language schools in a Canadian setting. My hope is that the outcomes of the study will assist language schools and ESL teachers of Saudi women to understand the issues so that some solutions may be devised. I anticipate that the King Abdullah Scholarships Program, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, as well as language schools in Canada and around the world will be able to benefit from the results of this work. Moreover, this study could provide fundamental information for further research into this topic, or closely related topics.

Hence, my thesis seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their comfort speaking with others?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their opportunities to talk with others?
3. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their classroom experience?
4. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to the importance of writing, reading, speaking?
5. What are the perceptions of teachers relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?
6. What are the perceptions of receptionists relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?
7. What if any psychosocial factors emerged that might be seen to influence Saudi female students in their preparatory ESL experience and in public?

Research Inspiration

I am a female Saudi student who came to Canada to complete my education. I went to language schools to improve my facility with English. While I was studying, I noticed that many female Saudi students seemed knowledgeable about the English language (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and structures). However, they would not express that ability through speaking in classes or by speaking in the general public. Often, I thought that this was motivated by a fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, or by poor self-confidence, but such fears would be shared by all female students (or, even, by all students, including male Saudi students). Hence, I concluded that there must be additional reasons that are particular to Saudi women.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning how to speak is viewed as a higher priority than learning how to write or read by second language learners (Jamshidnejed, 2011). Tan Kim, Mohd Nor, and Jaradat (2012) noted that foreign language learners view learning to speak effectively as an essential skill besides reading and writing skills. Jamshidnejed also stated that second language learners are working to transfer their identity through language since language is a part of that learner's identity. Historically, it is easy to argue that speaking is more central than reading or writing. For example, literacy rates in Europe hovered around 0% until the industrial revolution provided an impetus to change that (c. 1760 – 1880, depending on country). Even then, progress was slow.

Second language (L2) learners are often said to have a fear of losing face, to be insecure, and to lack confidence, all of which can potentially lead to lowered success in the L2 classroom (Al-Sibai, 2005). Such characteristics would likely prevent students from participating to their full ability in oral communication activities in the classroom (Al-Sibai, 2005). That, in turn, would likely reduce second language use (practice) outside the classroom, which in turn, could further inhibit classroom participation. The net result would be a spiral of diminishing participation and language acquisition.

Such issues would likely affect all second language (L2) learners. As such, they would not be a particular concern for Saudi women. Al-Sibai (2005) studied of Saudi female students in Saudi Arabia and found that many women in L2 classes were more afraid or nervous when answering a question orally (in conversational studies) than they were in their other language classes (i.e., reading or writing). Unfortunately, Saudi students are under-represented in terms of EFL learners who study abroad in the literature.

In this literature review I searched for aspects or themes related to the topic that I am going to investigate. These themes include:

- 1) Cross-cultural aspects of language learning and speaking;
- 2) The effects of self-confidence in speaking another language;
- 3) Risk taking behaviors pertaining to oral language expression;
- 4) Gender differences in language acquisition and expression.

For my thesis, I used Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (Bioecological Model) as a framework to conceptualize my research.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory

This theory focuses on sociocultural aspects of a person's environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested a series of nested/interconnected systems that have an effect on the development of the individual. These systems are mesosystem, microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and Chronosystem (listed from closest to farthest from the individual).

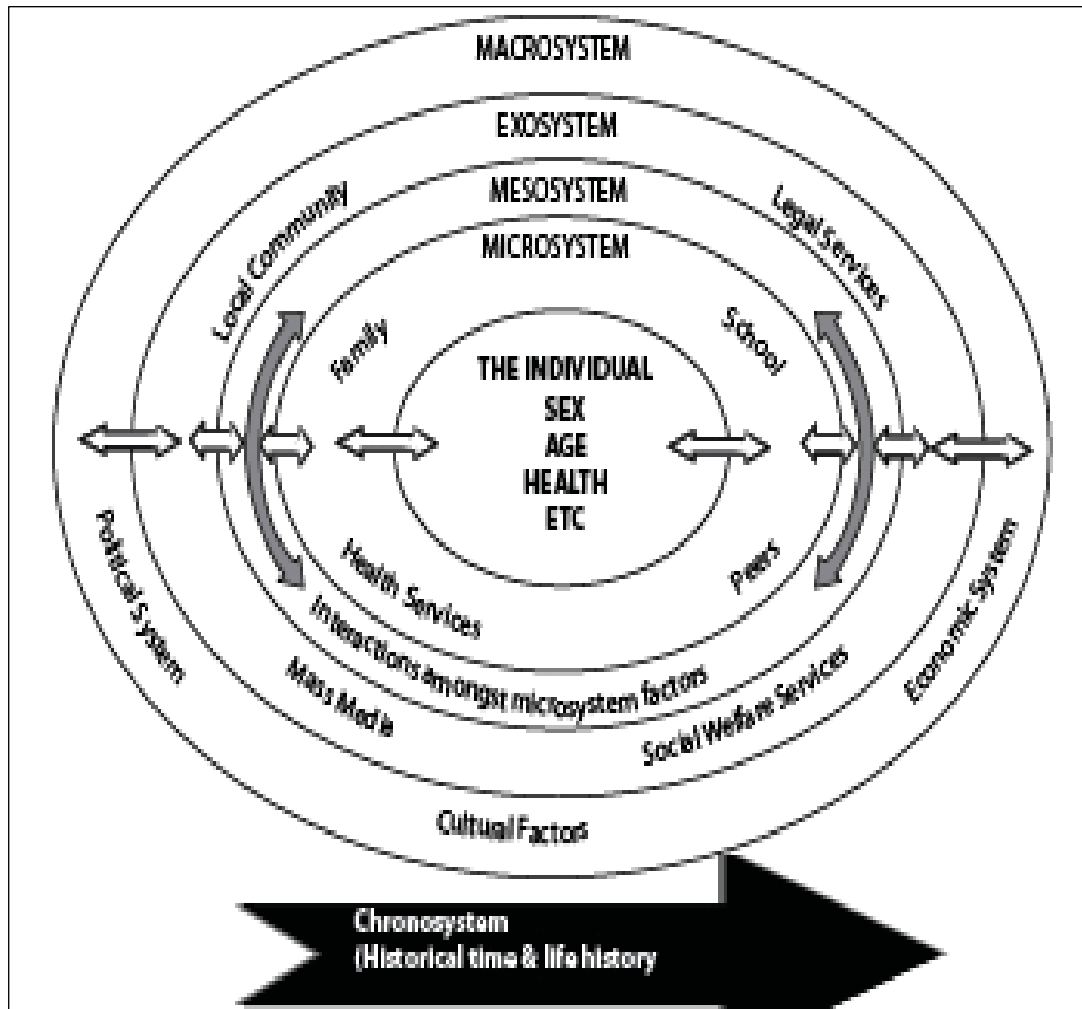


Figure 2. Diagrammatic representation of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner suggested that human development is a process where interactions between the individual and people, objects and symbols in his immediate external surroundings become more and more complex (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). That is, as a person develops, they interact within an ever increasing sphere of influence. The conceptualization is often depicted as a series of concentric rings (concentric spheres would be more accurate).

The inner most ring is the Microsystem. This is most applicable to child development. It consists of those individuals and institutions that have a direct and immediate impact on the

child. These individuals (family, extended family, friends, classmates, daycare providers, teachers, and possibly medical professionals or members of the clergy, mullah, or rabbis) and institutions (neighborhood, school, church) have direct contact with the child. The microsystem is the child's formative environment. It is that which creates the child's core personality through its initial social relations.

The Mesosystem is represented as the second sphere, but it really represents the interaction between all the elements of the microsystem. It is how the child interacts with the family and extended family, and how the family and extended family interacts with the school or medical system.

The Exosystem is a more complex layer. It is the links between the child's immediate environment and the external world. The child is not a part of that external world (it is the world of the parents), but may be affected by the structure and events of that world. For example, shift work can have an impact on development. The exosystem is meant to encompass the local community and the interactions of the parents (or other relevant individuals) within that community. It is primarily determined by the parent's occupational and social structures, but also includes things like community affluence, safety, resources and support, parental status within the community, local politics and economics.

The Macrosystem is the broader culture in which the child and family lives. This includes the cultural norms, traditions, the legal system, socioeconomic status, and the relative socioeconomic status (of the community). The macrosystem has a top-down effect on the exosystem through culture, legal structures, and degree of support. It may have a direct impact on the Microsystem through legal structures like child protection services or anti-poverty (e.g., public housing) measures. All levels are subject to change. Even the macrosystem evolves over

time. Finally, the Chronosystem is the “typical” pattern of child development over the course of life. This would include the usual developmental points such as going to pre-school, school, high school, university, plus the formative first friendships, relationships, marriage, children, et cetera.

The key points of the theory are contained in two principles. The first states that the development of a person is marked by increasingly complex shared interactions between the individual and their environment, particularly the other people in that environment. Such interactions must be repeated often over a long period of time. Through such interactions, the child learns its place in the world, relative to the place of others.

The second principle is that the type of interaction changes over time. Earlier relationships, for example, have a power differential in that the child is dependent on parents and other adults. Children are also subject to the authority of “all” adults. As the child ages, its relationships become more equitable, first through interaction with peers and then with a broader base of people. The content of the interaction also changes. For example, play is a primary form of behavior and interaction in the early years. Play behavior serves motor, social, and cognitive development and often models or mimics adult activities. However, other than its role in development, the consequences of age-appropriate play behavior are relatively benign. “Failure” does not cause death or starvation; “success” does not bring fame, power, or money. Such early behaviors and interactions must grow into adult behaviors. Adult behaviors are characterized by goals, mutual goals, and consequences for success and failure. Critically, it is the function of the microsystem and mesosystem to build the competencies that are necessary for interaction within the exosystem. One must also acknowledge that the training received in the various systems may be intentional (e.g., schooling) or incidental (e.g., transmission of cultural values).

The Bioecological Model serves to help identify key issues for Saudi women studying English abroad. Role power differ men. Firstly, at the level of the micosystem and mesosystem, one must acknowledge that the situation for Saudi women is very different from that of Canadian or Western European women. The training (or guiding, or molding) of Saudi women is geared towards the role of women within the domestic sphere. They are not expected to interact within the exosystem to the same degree as Western women or Saudi males. Throughout their lives, but particularly during the timeframe of the micosystem and mesosystem, Saudi women have limited exposure to males other than those of the family. For example, the educational system is segregated all the way to the level of post-secondary (university) education. This represents a lack of breadth and experience in social interactions. The males of one family may not be representative or typical of males within the broader culture, or the international world.

Finally, the power differential between men and women never ends. Adult Saudi women are taught to remain dependent on males for all matters pertaining to the exosystem (including domestic finances). As such, they are simply not prepared for Western style gender roles which expect equal competencies within the exosystem. Those raised in the Western world may lack the understanding of (and patience for) the need to verify every decision with a male. In the Western world, this could be construed as “childish”. A final issue is that the situation for Saudi women is variable. That is, not all women in Saudi Arabia follow the same developmental trajectory. That variability can, itself, be a problem if a Western individual should expect all Saudi women to conform to the standard established by the first contact (i.e., stereotyping).

There is an element of the Bioecological Model that is relevant but not explicitly stated within the model. Because Saudi women are not taught to embrace the exosystem in full, they are implicitly not taught to embrace variety and diversity. As such, they may lack the cognitive

schemas that are necessary for assimilating new cultures. They may, through no fault of their own, have a rather rigid view of social roles, and be less able to adapt.

A final consideration for the Bioecological model is the effect of sudden cultural change. If an individual moves to a complete new environment, it is the macrosystem and exosystem that would be most obviously affected. Such a transition is effectively the same as putting the individual back to the level of the child – a person with minimal knowledge of the exo- and meso-systems. However, that does not mean that the individual reverts to being a child. Rather, they lack knowledge of the exo- and meso-systems, but they have the experiences, expectations, schemas, and other knowledge associated with the original culture. In fact, some cultures (e.g., Canadian) explicitly teach about other cultures, thereby reducing the potential effect of cultural change.

A sudden complete change of culture is essentially “culture shock”. Culture shock has been described by Buchanan (1990) in a way that very closely resembles Bronfenbrenner’s theory; “culture shock, ... the sojourner feels frustration, anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and alienation due to the fact that familiar cues and supports have been removed” (Buchanan, 1990, p. 83). This definition of culture shock, originally given by Brown (1980) was part of the four stages of the progression of acculturation. The four steps were: arousal, culture shock, gradual recovery and full recovery (Brown, 1980). Note that arousal may be excitement or fear (trepidation).

The natural response to a sudden loss of support or familiarity, to protected ego and identity, would be a retreat to the shelter of a known microsystem – if that were to be available. For Saudi women studying abroad, such a retreat is always available because of the structure of the KASP. Each woman is required to be accompanied by a mahram. Of course, the degree of

retreat would be dependent on the training of the individual. If a person had been trained to embrace diversity and new experiences, the transition to a new culture could be an adventure. However, if the person had not been trained to embrace diversity and new experiences, that transition could be a nightmare. Unfortunately, the structure of Saudi culture does not train women to fully participate in their own exosystem, and as such, culture shock should be expected. Hence, it would not be surprising if Saudi women were to be reluctant to venture far from home (or far from whatever elements of a familiar microsystem that they can find).

Cross-Cultural Issues

Gassama (2012) points out that ESL students find adapting to a new culture to be very difficult. The difference in attitudes and values are one of the main sources of problems in foreign language learning. "...Culture shock, or lack of cultural adjustment, can prevent students from acquiring the target language" (Buchanan, 1990, p. 83). As an impact of carrying one's cultural beliefs into a different country, López Rúa (2006) reported that Asian men living in Great Britain are often more proficient in ESL than Asian women. The men go to work outside of their home every day where they are required to listen to and speak English. Asian women, however, are often homemakers and do not have the opportunity to interact with many people in English every day. Similarly, Saudi women in Saudi Arabia tend to stay at home in their free time (Al-Otaibi, 2004).

For Saudi women, there are other issues. Derderian-Aghajanian and Wang Cong (2012) and Mahrous and Ahmed (2010) showed the culture and education system has an effect on Middle Eastern students. In the Middle East, students are often given activities to complete as individuals, rather than activities to be completed as groups. However, in Western countries, it is common practice to have students work together in teams when completing assignments. Hence,

Middle Eastern students often experience difficulty associated with the basic change in procedure.

As noted previously (Chapter 1), Saudi students are separated by sex throughout the educational system, from elementary to high school and even at university (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, 1991; Shaw, 2010). The teachers leading the classes are also separated by sex: female teachers teach girls and male teachers teach boys (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission 1991; Shaw, 2010). As such, Shaw (2010) notes that when Saudi students study abroad, it is the first time they have been taught by a teacher of the opposite sex in a co-ed classroom.

Furthermore, in Saudi Arabia, the teacher is viewed as an authority figure that is the head of the class. That teacher does all of the speaking. Students are not encouraged to ask questions, or to comment on the material during the lecture (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Barnawi, 2009; Shaw, 2010). Since the classroom is not an interactive forum for conversation or discussion, the students simply memorize information provided by the teacher (Al-Otaibi, 2004). This method of learning is viewed as having great value by Saudi society, culture and the education system (Al-Otaibi, 2004). However, it is little use when students are suddenly faced with the task of learning how to speak a new language.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth, self-appraisal, and self-satisfaction are commonly used interchangeable terms in the literature (Al-Hebaish, 2012). All of these terms are used to describe the way a person feels about or judges his/her own value as a human being (Al-Hebaish, 2012). Dörnyei (2005) mentioned that self-esteem and self-confidence are closely related to one another, and both share a common emphasis on the individual's perception about one's abilities as a person.

The literature supports the importance of self-confidence when learning a new language. Al-Hebaish (2012) noted that, “a significant number of studies reported the positive correlation of self-confidence with grades in language courses” (p. 61). Basically, if a student lacks the confidence in their abilities and feel unable to do certain tasks, they will not be able to learn a second language (or first language) successfully (Al-Hattab, 2006; Al-Sibai, 2005; Jamshidnejed, 2011). Self-confidence is the most important element that determines learners’ willingness to participate in oral activities in language classrooms (Al-Hebaish, 2012; Al-Sibai, 2005). Moreover, self-confidence has a significant effect on spoken communication skills in addition to increasing that student’s desire to communicate orally and improve proficiency in the language he/she is learning (Al-Hebaish, 2012; Al-Sibai, 2005). The fear of speaking another language is related to a poor self-confidence, which caused lower performance (Al-Hebaish 2012; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Gregersen & Horwitz 2002; Molberg, 2010). López Rúa (2006) agrees that self-confidence is very important in general achievement and foreign language learning. A number of studies concluded that “self-esteem is strongly associated with oral communicative proficiency and low self-esteem students cannot express themselves with confidence” (Al-Hattab, 2006, p. 6). Mesri (2012) suggests that when measuring the success of students when learning to speak English, self-confidence and gender of the student are important factors in classroom performance. However, some studies show that there were no correlation found between self-confidence and academic achievement such as (Kimura, 2002; Yahaya & Ramli, 2009; Zahra, 2010).

Nonetheless, self-confidence is likely a major issue for Saudi students, particularly female Saudi students. The standard developmental path is not designed to teach the ability to handle novel situations.

Risk-Taking

Learning to communicate verbally in a second language involves taking risks because students are in the position to be judged, by their peers as well as by the teacher (Rubio, 2007; Tetzner, 2005). Dehbozorgi (2012) suggested that “risk-taking is directly related to not being afraid to make mistakes” (p. 42). She also says that taking risks is intrinsic to the EFL students’ learning (Dehbozorgi, 2012). Jamshidnejad (2011) noted that the idea of “face” continues to be very important to a large portion of many EFL students from different parts of the world including Eastern Asia and the Middle East. Jamshidnejad (2011) argues that “losing face” is a major factor in EFL students choosing not to take the risk of speaking aloud in class. He defines “saving face” as “not wanting to embarrass oneself by making mistakes” (p. 8) in speaking. Rubio (2007) asserts that the fear of looking stupid when the student does not have the adequate vocabulary or conversation ability to express him/herself will often result in the EFL student not taking the risk to speak out inside or outside of the classroom.

Unfortunately, Jamshidnejad (2011) explains that often when students choose not to speak for fear of being laughed at by their classmates, they are less likely to improve their ability to speak thereby increasing their fear of speaking in the future. Tetzner (2005) agrees that when students are not able to speak out in class, they often have fewer chances to practice their language skills. The same students tend to take a longer time to learn the language. Conversely, those students who take more risks when speaking in class have a tendency to learn more English more quickly.

Tetzner (2005) and Jamshidnejad (2011) also assert that there is a risk associated with speaking in class. A student may suffer a loss of identity. That is, the students who cannot express themselves adequately are in danger of miscommunication of being misunderstood. The

loss is then that the other party may develop the wrong impression of the student – may even think poorly of that student (Barnawi, 2009).

Nogueras and Rosa (1996) suggest a positive correlation between self-esteem and risk-taking. They report that students with high self-esteem are more often willing to risk giving a wrong answer in front of the class and not be bothered if the other students laugh at him/her (Nogueras & Rosa (1996). These students are interested in learning from their mistakes and in the process increase their language proficiency as well as progress in their speaking abilities.

Given prior comments, one can easily imagine that there might be a substantial difference in risk taking between Saudi men and women.

Gender

Many studies indicate that the capacity for learning languages is higher for girls than for boys. López Rúa (2006) noted that girls are generally superior in language achievement scores, including foreign languages, than boys. He goes on to argue that girls regularly surpass boys in verbal skills that involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening and are considered to be more confident in their ability to master languages (López Rúa, 2006). Many studies attribute this to the variety of strategies used by females (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989) as well as to the social orientation they show, which helps them to handle the second language more easily than males (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; López Rúa, 2006; Maccoby, Jacklin, Laws, Vernon, & Johnson, 1974).

In terms of neurological and cognitive factors, it has been suggested that “girls’ verbal intelligence enables them to reach higher levels of language learning mastery, which is in turn related to first language learning success” (López Rúa, 2006, p. 110). López Rúa (2006) also

argues that because girls are encouraged to interact socially, relate emotions and solve problems via conversation, and this could play a significant role in their ability to acquire language.

Girls are often interested in learning about the culture and the native speakers of the language they are studying, which may correlate with them being more willing to learn functional language skills (López Rúa, 2006). Moreover, studies have indicated that females are much more willing to communicate with native English speakers and to use social learning strategies to communicate outside of class (Al-Otaibi 2004; Bacon & Finneman, 1992; Politzer, 1983).

Relative to Saudi males (and, likely, other males), Saudi females should have an advantage in second language learning. Hence, other factors must overwhelm this advantage.

Concluding Comments

This section reviewed a collection of literature that is important to the study of Saudi females studying in Canada. I used Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory to provide a conceptual framework. It discusses the impact of environment on an individual's development, and provides some insights about what effect a change of environment (i.e., a change in culture) could have on the individual. This theory could help my study explain issues faced by female Saudi students who move into a new environment (culture). Of particular importance are the effects of the delineated role of Saudi women in Saudi culture, the complete sex-segregation of the educational system, and the non-interactive nature of the Saudi classroom.

Culture shock is a concept that is directly related to the Bioecological model. Culture shock is also related to issues of self-confidence and risk taking. Self-confidence is viewed as an umbrella for many psychological factors (e.g., anxiety is part of self-confidence, Dörnyei, 2005) that could affect learning a foreign language. Risk-taking is another factor that could be placed

within self-confidence. However, it is likely better as a separate concept. One can be confident and yet decide that benefits are not worth the risks. Risk taking is probably helpful for L2 learning. It enables one to disregard the negative consequences to focus on the positive. Finally, L2 learning should be easier for Saudi women than Saudi males, but it is not. Hence, there are other disadvantages faced by Saudi women that are stronger than the sex-effect for language learning.

In short this literature review supports the view that there are particular issues that are faced by Saudi women when learning a second language, particularly within a different culture. However, there are no empirical studies discussing these issues. Most of the previous studies have only considered non-Saudi students. Those studies that have addressed the issues faced by female Saudi students learning an L2 have been carried out in Saudi Arabia and cannot be applied to female Saudi students studying in a foreign country.

CHAPTER3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and procedures followed in the present study. It begins with an explanation of the purpose of the research. Also, it includes research questions, design of the study, instrumentation, and data analysis.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the understanding of the obstacles encountered by Saudi females who are trying to improve their English. Such understanding would be of benefit to the King Abdullah Scholarships Program, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, as well as language schools across Canada and around the world.

This research is focused on the particular obstacles faced by Saudi women that are due, in large part, to the unique culture of Saudi Arabia. This research is not focused on the standard obstacles that are faced by “all” students attempting to learn a second language, because there is already a large body of research and knowledge about the general obstacles. However, the interactions between the standard obstacles and the particular issues of Saudi women are considered.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their comfort speaking with others?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their opportunities to talk with

others?

3. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their classroom experience?
4. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to the importance of writing, reading, speaking?
5. What are the perceptions of teachers relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?
6. What are the perceptions of receptionists relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?
7. What if any psychosocial factors emerged that might be seen to influence Saudi female students in their preparatory ESL experience and in public?

Design

This study used a mixed methods approach with two phases: a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative interview. According to Shank and Brown (2007), each method, qualitative and quantitative, “look at the world in quite different ways” (p.174) and it is worth combining them to get a better set of findings. The final section provided an integration of the two sets of data.

Questionnaire

Current female Saudi students in the programs were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix A) about their experiences in the ESL programs. The questionnaire consisted of 38 items and was divided into five parts: general information (4 items), comfort speaking to others (8 items), opportunities to talk with others (6 items), and classroom experience (17 items). A final section (Items 36 – 38) asked about the relative performance with speaking, writing, and

reading. The questionnaire was created by the author, with input from other researchers in the area.

Interviews

Structured interviews were conducted with a number of students (25 content areas) (Appendix B), ESL teachers (8 content areas) (Appendix C) and support staff (5 content areas) (Appendix D) at the same TESL institutions. These three groups were selected for their ability to provide unique perspectives on the research questions. The students have a first-person perspective (often called an “emic” perspective (Pike, 1954). Only students can provide information about their personal view of the world, the “rules” for behavior that they follow (or believe that they must follow), the perceptions and meanings that they attach to events and objects in the world, and the manner in which they structure the world.

Teachers and support staff provide a third-person perspective (often called the “etic” perspective, Pike, 1954). The etic perspective is fundamentally based on observations of behavior, followed by inference as to the belief and cognitive structures that result in those behaviors (Pike, 1954). The teachers have the ability to observe students in the classroom setting. Support staffs have the ability to observe students outside the classroom. Together, teachers and support staff provide a more holistic view of Saudi student behavior.

Many people tend to believe that the etic and emic perspectives are in conflict – but in fact, they provide complementary information. However, there are times when there is the appearance of conflict. For example, a student may believe that they are working “as hard as possible”, whereas a teacher may observe that the student devotes only four hours a week to studies. The apparent conflict is resolved by the student’s assertion that there are only four hours of unallocated time per week, which leads to the further understanding that other activities are

ranked more highly than studies. The rankings of activities are the emic perspective of the student. The teacher, having an etic perspective, may not agree with the rankings but cannot, in principle, deny their existence. The interview format was chosen for this work because it allows one to explore such issues within this particular population. The interview questions were created by the author, again with input from other researchers in the area.

Integration

The final aspect of design is the integration and synthesis of the information collected in the questionnaire and the interviews. Common themes and issues were extracted.

Procedure

Questionnaire

Questionnaires were conducted with students in class, and students were provided with 1/2 hour for completion. Students were encouraged to ask questions as needed. Prior to the questionnaire, participants were provided with a brief overview of the research and informed consent was obtained (Appendix E, F, J, & K). Questionnaires were presented in Arabic or English, as suited the participants. The last question in the questionnaire permitted the participants to add comment in English or Arabic. If Arabic, the translation provided by the author.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and support staff individually. The interviews with students required about two hours to complete, while those with the teachers only required 15 to 30 minutes, and those with the support staff only required 15 minutes. At the

beginning of the interview, participants were provided with a brief overview of the research and informed consent was obtained (Appendix G, H, I, J, & K). Interviews were conducted in Arabic or English, as suited the participants but, most of the participants answered in Arabic and the translation provided by the author.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire

Participants completed a 38 item questionnaire (see Appendix A for the actual instrument). The questionnaire contained five sections. The first section, General Information consisted of four items that asked about months of study, months in Canada, current level of language proficiency as assessed by grade, a self-assessment of speaking ability, and the use of English at home. The responses to items 1a, 1b and 2 have been presented under the section Participants.

Note that within classroom experience section, there were two actually groups of items. The first group pertains to the classroom experience (Items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32) and the second group pertains to the relative importance of each type of error or action (Items 27, 33, 34, and 35). As such, the actual analysis (see Chapter 4) treated these as separate sections.

Responses to all of the items from 5 through 35 consisted of a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 = “Strongly Agree”, 2 = “Agree”, 3 = “Disagree” and 4 = “Strongly Disagree”. Note that some items are inverted relative to others. That is, some express confidence (e.g., Item 19) while other items express the lack of confidence (e.g., Item 20)

The fifth section consisted of Items 36, 37 and 38. These presented a relative ranking of speaking, reading and writing ability. In later analyses, these were combined with Items 27, 33, 34 and 35 from classroom experience section, so they are presented together. Note that Items 36, 37 and 38 require a different type of analysis.

An addition final “section” consisted of a single open-ended question that asked, “Please add any comments you feel would be helpful to this study in understanding your experiences learning English as a Saudi female student. (Comments, suggestions, concerns, etc.).”

Interviews

The interviews used were open-ended questions (i.e., a structured interview) to gather information, opinions, and insights from the participants (Shank & Brown, 2007, p. 63).

Interviews were conducted with four Saudi students using the following template (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Question List for the Structured Interview with Students

| # | Question |
|----|---|
| 1 | Tell me about your experience being in a foreign country (Is this first time you have ever visited a foreign country? If not, where were you before? Is it similar to your home country or not? Do you travel alone or with someone to accompany you)? Please explain. |
| 2 | How long have you been studying English and which level are you in now? |
| 3 | Tell me about your experience with learning to speak English as second language? |
| 4 | Tell me how comfortable you feel in speaking, reading, writing and listening. Are there any areas you want to improve? Please explain your reasons for wanting to improve? |
| 5 | How would you rate your speaking ability? Are you satisfied with your level of language? If not, what do you think inhibits your ability to improve your speaking? What do you think contributes to speaking fluently? Have these factors influenced you either positively or negatively? |
| 6 | Tell me about your experience in a different culture and how this affects your speaking ability. |
| 7 | Tell me about your willingness to risk speaking English to others in order to explain or answer questions with your level of vocabulary? |
| 8 | Tell me about talking with other people. Please describe situations when you tried to get involved in a conversation but were not able to express yourself due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary |
| 9 | What has been your experience in dealing with other people, who speak only English (i.e. when you are in a restaurant, shopping, in hospital, etc.)? |
| 10 | Do you speak on behalf of yourself or do you rely on others (i.e. your husband, brother, friend) so that you avoid embarrassment and save face? If so why, please explain and give examples |
| 11 | Being among people outside of your home helps you to improve your speaking ability and gives you the opportunity to speak and listen to native speakers. To what degree do you believe this is true? Give me an example of an experience you've had. |
| 12 | When you are at school or out in the community, are you usually on your own or do you always go with friends who speak Arabic? |
| 13 | Please give me your opinion about this (do you think being with a group of Saudi females at school or out in the community reduces your chances of interacting with others who speak English or who are learning to speak English?) |
| 14 | Would you be willing to participate in leisure activities or volunteering in your school or out in the community if the opportunity was presented to you? If there are obstacles that prevent you from doing so, please describe them in more detail. |
| 15 | Where do you feel you can practice your speaking and listening that could help you to improve your skills? |
| 16 | Tell me how you feel when speaking with each of the following groups: |

| | |
|----|--|
| | Classmates who are learning English as a second language. Classmates who speak Arabic. Teachers and/or speakers whose first language is English. |
| 17 | Please share your perceptions of having to work with someone else or in a group relative to your comfort with your expressive language and talking in a group. |
| 18 | Please share your perception of having to give an oral presentation in class. |
| 19 | Describe your experience when you speak to others who are not as proficient as you in English, do you speak freely and with more confidence? Please comment. |
| 20 | Describe how you feel when you are in a group of students who speak English better than you. |
| 21 | What have been the major obstacles that affect your speaking practice and ability? How have you dealt with them? |
| 22 | Do co-ed classes affect your speaking practices and ability? If so, please explain how. |
| 23 | Would you be willing to switch classes to avoid being in co-ed classes if that were an option? |
| 24 | How do you evaluate your own success and the success of others in learning English? |
| 25 | Are there any other comments you would like to offer or questions you might have regarding the study? |

Interviews were conducted with two ESL teachers. Table 3.2 provides the basic format.

Table 3.2

Question List for the Structured Interview with Teachers

| # | Question |
|---|--|
| 1 | In general, how would you describe the Saudi female students you have taught? |
| 2 | In your experience, are there factors that impact Saudi females in their oral communication in class? |
| 3 | Please comment on each of the following language skills and how you find female Saudi students perform in each area when learning ESL (writing, reading, listening, speaking)? |
| 4 | Do you see that boys and girls take the same opportunities to speak and participate in class? Please comment. |
| 5 | Have you noticed and/or what are your thoughts on females switching into classes that do not have men? If so, is this common? |
| 6 | Do females who are in a class of all women speak more freely than those girls in co-ed classes? Please elaborate. |
| 7 | What if any differences in speaking abilities do you notice between male and female Saudi students? |
| 8 | Are there other comments you would like to add? |

Finally, interviews were conducted with two receptionists at the language schools using the format of Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Question List for the Structured Interview with Support Staff

| # | Question |
|---|---|
| 1 | In general, please share your thoughts on female Saudi students and their oral communication skills |
| 2 | What if any differences have you noticed regarding confidence and fluency levels among Saudi males and females relative to each other and other beginning students in an ESL program? |
| 3 | What if any differences have you noticed between Saudi men and women as to who is more willing to speak and ask about their needs (i.e. documents to be sent to the Saudi bureau, directions to places in Halifax, help to fill out visa applications, etc.)? |
| 4 | Are Saudi female students willing to speak to you and ask their own questions or do you find that they rely on their husband/friend/brother, etc. to ask questions for them? |
| 5 | Based on your experience, how do you see Saudi girls interacting in school? |

Data Analysis

Questionnaire

Standard techniques for questionnaire analysis were used. Firstly, all “reverse-coded” items were inverted so that for all items a score of 1 indicated greater confidence, greater ability, or more generally, a positive outcome for second language acquisition (see Chapter 4 for details). The choice of the direction of the scaling (1 being more confident) is arbitrary, but most of the items in the original questionnaire were coded in this manner (see Appendix A). Hence, using 1 as more confident required fewer changes. Then, the descriptive statistics for each item were obtained and discussed. Note that the responses represent an ordinal scale (not nominal). Furthermore, it is a reasonably good ordinal scale because each score is associated with a defined

anchor, though the anchors themselves are not perfectly quantitative. Thus, the use of means, standard deviations and associated tests is reasonable. The analysis considered the mean, standard deviation, and the distribution of responses for each item. The correlations between items *within* each section are also discussed. Logically, once properly coded, all items should be related to each other within a section.

The items were then correlated *between* sections. This provided information about the relationships between classroom and non-classroom experience. Finally, all items were correlated with the demographic variables. One would expect, for example, that confidence would increase with years of experience.

Because the questionnaire is new, and because the research area is new, the analysis of the questionnaire was limited to the simple descriptive statistics cited above. A more detailed analysis of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix L: Questionnaire Reliabilities Analysis. This included an examination of the differences between the means for items and a reliabilities analysis. Note that a reliabilities analysis is, fundamentally, just an elaboration of the patterns in the correlations between items. Its inclusion in the main text does not add insights (it simply expresses the same insights in a different fashion). In addition, a reliabilities analysis is most often used when one wants to compute a total score for a questionnaire. This was not the intent at this point. Assistance with the statistical analysis was obtained from Dr. B. W. Frankland, PhD, Professional Statistician (Statistical Society of Canada).

Interviews

The interviews were analyzed using qualitative methods (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010; Madill & Gough, 2008). Firstly, within each response, comments relevant to the hypotheses were extracted and transferred to a spreadsheet. Then common themes were identified by coding those

comments by type. This analysis did not code for the question generated the response. It merely coded the response category (i.e., theme) regardless of question. Thereafter, the number of participants generating the same category of response was counted. That is, the commonly re-occurring themes were identified, coded, and counted across participants (Nolen & Talbert, 2011). In this count, the number of times any one participant generated the same response was not coded -- that is, if a participant said the same “thing” in response to five questions, it was simply coded as one theme (note that the number of times a participant repeated the same comment could be used as a measure of strength or importance).

These analyses were conducted within the set of four student interviews, the set of two teacher interviews and the set of two support staff interviews separately. Thus, for student comments, the same theme (category of response) could be articulated by one, two, three, or four students. In some sense, these would imply that 25, 50, 75 or 100% of the population would articulate the same concern. For the teachers, and for the support staff, the same theme could be articulated by one or two participants (implying 50 or 100% of the population).

Throughout the process, the researcher was careful to maintain an open mind without any preconceived notions or assumptions (Hallberg, 2008). In the final analysis, the common themes across all three sets of participants were determined. Finally, the discovered themes were compared to the literature to see where if the current results were similar to, or different from, previous findings (Nolen & Talbert, 2011).

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, the analyses for both the questionnaire and the interview data are presented. Note that the questionnaire is most relevant for consideration of the first four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their comfort speaking with others?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their opportunities to talk with others?
3. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their classroom experience?
4. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to the importance of writing, reading, speaking?

The interviews are most relevant to the last three research questions

1. What are the perceptions of teachers relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?
2. What are the perceptions of receptionists relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?
3. What if any psychosocial factors emerged that might be seen to influence Saudi female students in their preparatory ESL experience and in public?

Data analysis is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The quantitative data includes tabulating percentages for demographics and responses to items.

Participants

Questionnaire

A total of 61 female Saudi women were recruited from TESL schools in the Halifax region of Nova Scotia in Canada between the end of November 2013 and the beginning of January 2014. All the women were students, selected at random from all language levels. Most of the Saudi female students were receiving financial support from the KASP.

A number of demographic variables were collected. These included the number of months studying English (Months of Study), the number of months living in Canada (Months in Canada), the current language level (Language Level), the current speaking level (Speaking Level) and the use of English at Home (English at Home). The codinigs for Months of English and for Months in Canada are obvious. Language level was coded from 1 to 7 with an addition level of 8 to capture the qualifications of University Preparatory/Pathway (UP), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or Graduate Preparatory Program (GPP). Speaking Level was a self-report on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 "excellent" 2 "very good", 3 "good", 4 "fair", 5 "weak", 6 "very weak", 7 "extremely weak"). English at Home was a self-report on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 "Always", 2 "Somewhat", 3 "Rarely", 4 "Never").

Students ranged from 19 to 29 years of age. They had, on average, 11.1 (SD = 12.0) months of instruction in English ranging from 1 to 84 months. That is, the average amount of instruction was less than 1 year, but the range was as high as 7 years. Students had resided in Canada for an average of 12.9 (SD = 11.4) months, ranging from 1 to 42 months (3.5 years). There were 7 missing values. Finally, they had achieved an average level of English proficiency of 4.51 (SD: 2.17) with a range of 1 to 8. Hence, language proficiency ranged from very little to an English proficiency certification.

To simplify later analyses, the codes for Speaking Level and English at Home were inverted. The new codes for Speaking Level were 7 "excellent", 6 "very good", 5 "good", 4 "fair", 3 "weak", 2 "very weak" and 1 "extremely weak". The new codes for English at Home were 4 "Always", 3 "Somewhat", 2 "Rarely", 1 "Never". This change ensured that all of the demographic variables "pointed" in the same direction. That is, higher values for all variables (i.e., Months of Study, Month in Canada, Language Level, Speaking Level, and English at Home) implied higher competence, and lower values implied lower competence.

For the self-report measures of Speaking Level, the mean value was 3.20 (SD 1.04) with a range of 1 to 6. Note that this corresponds to the range between "weak" and "fair". Also note that none of the students self-reported "excellent". For the use of English at Home, the mean was 2.46 (SD = 0.70) implying a value between "rarely" and "somewhat", with a range from 1 to 4.

The correlations between the demographic variables are shown in Table 4.1. Note that all of the correlations are positive as would be expected given the scaling of the variables. However, not all correlations are significant. Language Level was significantly related to month of study, months in Canada and Speaking Level but not the use of English at Home. Interestingly, Speaking Level was related to Language Level and to the use of English at Home, but *not* to the Months of Study, or Years in Canada.

Table 4.1

Correlations between the Demographic Variables

| | Months of Study | Months in Canada | Language Level | Speaking Level | English at Home |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Months of Study | | | | | |
| Months in Canada | .25 | | | | |
| Language Level | .56 | .39 | | | |
| Speaking Level | .22 | .15 | .44 | | |
| English at Home | .15 | .17 | .21 | .40 | |

Note: For N = 53, $r > .271$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .353$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .384$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The data of Table 4.1 is based on a sample size of N = 53 because it is restricted to those participants who provided responses to all the demographic items. This ensures that the comparisons between the correlations are valid.

This thesis is focused on the factors associated with the English speaking ability of Saudi women. Hence, the strong association between Speaking Level and English at Home was explored in more detail. Table 4.2 presents a cross tabulation of these two variables, with the percentage of participants (for N = 53) who achieved each speaking level (right most column), the percentage of participants who spoke at home (bottom most row), and the percentage of participants at each combination (individual cells). Note that more than half the sample reported speaking Speaking Level 5 (“Good”) and more than half of the sample reported Speaking English at Home “somewhat” (level 3). Most of the participant are located on the diagonal – hence the correlation. That is, as speaking at home increases, so does English proficiency.

Table 4.2

The Association Between Speaking at Home and Speaking Level

| | | English at Home | | | | % for Speaking Level |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|------|------|-------------|----------------------|
| | | 1 Never | 2 | 3 | 4 Always | |
| Speaking Level | 2 Very Weak | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| | 3 | 1.9 | 3.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.7 |
| | 4 | 0.0 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 1.9 | 20.8 |
| | 5 | 1.9 | 20.8 | 28.3 | 1.9 | 52.3 |
| | 6 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 11.3 | 1.9 | 17.0 |
| | 7 Excellent | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| % for English at Home | | 5.7 | 37.7 | 50.9 | 5.7 | 100.0 |

Note: For N = 53

Table 4.1 presents some additional interesting results. There is no correlation between Months of Study and Speaking Level. One must ask “why?” That is, one would assume that longer study leads to higher proficiency. This is even more interesting because Language Level is strongly associated with Month of Study. To assess this, Months of Study was (temporarily) recoded such that 1-3 months was coded as 1, 4-6 months was coded as 2, 7 to 12 months was coded as 3, and more than 12 months was coded as 4. This resulted in four groups with approximately equal sample sizes and meaningful study periods. The resulting cross tabulation is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

The Association Between Months of Study and Speaking Level

| | | Months of Study | | | | % for Speaking Level |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------|--------|------|----------------------|
| | | 1 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 12 | >12 | |
| Speaking Level | 2 Very Weak | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| | 3 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 5.7 |
| | 4 | 11.3 | 5.7 | 3.8 | 0.0 | 20.8 |
| | 5 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 18.9 | 15.1 | 52.3 |
| | 6 | 3.8 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 9.4 | 17.0 |
| | 7 Excellent | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| % for Months of Study | | 30.2 | 17.0 | 28.3 | 24.5 | 100.0 |

Note: For N = 53

The issue seems to be that most participants self-report their English proficiency as a 4, 5 or 6 regardless of the amount of study. In addition, those with only 1 to 3 months of study seem to have embraced the full range of proficiencies. It could be that individuals with very little training may have little ability for self assessment. They do not really know how good or how bad they sound.

Similarly there is no association between Months in Canada and Speaking Level. Again, one would expect that those with more exposure to Canada would have higher levels of English proficiency. Table 4.4 presents the cross tabulation between Months in Canada and Speaking Level. As with Months of Study, Months in Canada was (temporarily) recoded such that 1-3 months was coded as 1, 4-6 months was coded as 2, 7 to 12 months was coded as 3, and more than 12 months was coded as 4. This resulted in four groups with approximately equal sample sizes and meaningful study periods.

Table 4.4

The Association Between Months in Canada and Speaking Level

| | | Months in Canada | | | | % for Speaking Level |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------|-------|--------|------|----------------------|
| | | 1 – 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 12 | >12 | |
| Speaking Level | 2 Very Weak | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| | 3 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 5.7 |
| | 4 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 3.8 | 5.7 | 20.8 |
| | 5 | 9.4 | 7.5 | 20.8 | 15.1 | 52.3 |
| | 6 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 11.3 | 17.0 |
| | 7 Excellent | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| % for Months in Canada | | 22.6 | 17.0 | 26.4 | 34.0 | 100.0 |

Note: For N = 53

Again the issue seems to be that most participants self-report their English proficiency as a 4, 5 or 6 regardless of the amount of study.

Interview

The teachers and staff were recruited from the same TESL institutions between December 2013 and January 2014 (four Saudi female students, two ESL teachers and two receptionists). Student participants in the interview had previously completed the questionnaire. All participants were more than 19 years of age.

Quantitative Analysis of Questionnaire

The first analysis considered each defined section of the questionnaire separately. There were three main sections (Comfort Speaking with Others, Opportunities to Talk with Others, and Classroom Experience) with differing numbers of items per section (8, 6, and 17). For each item (Question) of each section, the means, SD, and distribution of responses are reported. In some sections, items that were reverse coded were inverted before the analysis.

All analysis also briefly considered the correlations between items. Correlations provide information about how the various items relate to each other. Items that tap the same basic idea or construct should have a positive correlation. If Items A and B assess the same construct, participants who score high on Item A should also score high on Item B, and participants who score low on Item A should also score low on Item B. This logic extends to all items that contribute to one section of a questionnaire. Hence, an examination of the correlations between items can help to determine whether or not all the items do, in fact, assess the same construct.

Correlations are used in place of cross tabulations between items because there are too many items. That is, there are 38 items (including the demographics), which would require 703 different tables to explore all the possible relationships. Hence, correlations are used to identify those that are sufficiently interesting to warrant further exploration.

A more detailed analysis of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix J: Detailed Analysis of the Questionnaire.

Comfort Speaking with Others

The items in the first section are listed in Table 4.5, along with the distribution of responses per item. For all of these items, a score of 1 implied (strong) agreement while a score of 4 implied (strong) disagreement. The midpoint of the scale is 2.5. The distribution is the *percentage* of respondents that provided each response category. Note that Item 12 is a bit different in content from the rest.

Table 4.5

Percentage of Participants Agreeing with Statements on the Survey Dealing with Comfort Speaking with Others

| Item # | Statement | Distribution (%) ^a | | | | Descriptives | |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Mean | SD |
| 5 | others do not know English as well as I | 49.2 | 40.7 | 10.2 | 0.0 | 1.61 | 0.67 |
| 6 | the opposite sex is present (same culture) | 3.4 | 25.4 | 47.5 | 23.7 | 2.92 | 0.79 |
| 7 | same sex present (same culture) | 39.0 | 52.5 | 6.8 | 1.7 | 1.71 | 0.67 |
| 8 | speak to others learning ESL | 40.7 | 44.1 | 11.9 | 3.4 | 1.78 | 0.79 |
| 9 | speak English to classmate who speak Arabic | 25.4 | 49.2 | 25.4 | 0.0 | 2.00 | 0.72 |
| 10 | speak English to classmate who speak another language | 33.9 | 50.8 | 11.9 | 3.4 | 1.85 | 0.76 |
| 11 | speaking English to my teacher or a native speaker | 35.6 | 42.4 | 22.0 | 0.0 | 1.86 | 0.75 |
| 12 | I understand English better than I speak it | 64.4 | 30.5 | 5.1 | 0.0 | 1.41 | 0.59 |

Notes: ^a1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree.

N = 59

Note that the distributions were essentially unimodal (i.e., approximately normal -- peaking “in the middle”) or uniform (i.e., flat). That is, the distributions were *not* bimodal, which could indicate two distinct groups of participants. Item 12 had a distribution that was the opposite of the rest. In addition, note that the means are generally below the midpoint of 2.5, indicating general agreement with these items. The only exception is Item 6. Note that the sample size is only 59 because this analysis only considered those participants who have complete data for all of these items. This allows for better comparisons between items (because all data is based on the same participants).

From Item 6, note that over 71% of Saudi female participants (47.5% who disagreed plus 23.7% who strongly disagreed) stated that they were not comfortable speaking in front of Saudi males. On the other hand, from Item 7, over 91% (39.0% who strongly agreed and 52.5% who

agreed) of the same participants stated that they were comfortable speaking in front of Saudi females. That is, there is a very large discrepancy between speaking in front of Saudi males and in front of Saudi females.

As shown in Item 11, most of the Saudi female participants (78%) were comfortable speaking to teachers of native English speakers. Note that this would be the group that is most capable of passing judgment on the English level of the student. Yet, these Saudi female participants are quite comfortable in that situation.

However, note that, as shown in Item 5, 90% of Saudi female participants are more comfortable speaking in front of those with *less* knowledge of English. Hence, comparing Items 5 and 11 indicates that these participants still have a slight preference for situations in which their English cannot be judged. Finally, Item 8 supports this observation in that these participants more comfortable in front of other ESL students (84%). Item 10 also supports this observation in that they are comfortable in front of non-English and non-Arabic students (85%). Further support is found in Item 9. Fewer participants (only 75%) are comfortable in front of students who speak Arabic. Note that other students who speak Arabic would include Arabic males and Arabic females, so the interpretation of Item 9 is complicated by the previous observations for Items 6 and 7. That is, the distribution for Item 9 should fall somewhere between the distributions for Items 6 and 7.

The correlations are presented in Table 4.6. Note that they are generally positive, even though they are not “large” (close to 1 or -1). Those that are significant are bolded.

Table 4.6

Correlations for the Items of Comfort Speaking with Others

| Item # | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----|-----|----|
| 5 | -- | | | | | | | |
| 6 | .16 | -- | | | | | | |
| 7 | .09 | .37 | -- | | | | | |
| 8 | .32 | .30 | .30 | -- | | | | |
| 9 | .00 | .15 | .11 | .06 | -- | | | |
| 10 | .22 | .24 | .12 | .46 | .13 | -- | | |
| 11 | -.04 | -.22 | -.05 | -.08 | -.26 | .08 | -- | |
| 12 | .15 | .37 | -.09 | .12 | -.12 | .10 | .05 | -- |

Note: For N = 59, $r > .256$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .334$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .364$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

To interpret the pattern of correlations, note that the correlations between Items 5 (Comfortable with ESL students at a lower level), 6 (Comfortable in front of Saudi males), 7 (Comfortable in front of Saudi females), 8 (Comfortable with other ESL students), and 10 (Comfortable the non-English and non-Arabic ESL students) are all positive, and most are significant. This implies that those who are the least comfortable speaking in one context (to other students, to females of the same culture, to males of the same culture) are the least comfortable speaking in another context. That is, they are simply anxious in all situations.

The correlation between Items 6 and 7 is fairly high. Those who are the least comfortable speaking with Saudi males are also the least comfortable speaking with Saudi females. This is important because it implies that there are *not* two subgroups of participants (one that prefers speaking to males and one that prefers speaking to females). This is highlighted in Table 4.7, which presents the cross tabulations of Items 6 and 7. Note that 39% of Saudi female participants were comfortable speaking in front of Saudi females (responded “1” on Item 7). This replicates the data in Table 4.5. However, just more than half of that 39% were not comfortable in front of Saudi men. That is, 20.3% (16.9% plus 3.4%) of the 39.0% were not happy in front of Saudi

men. The pattern shifts when one examines the Saudi females who responded with a “2” on Item 7. More than 80% of the 52.5% (23.7% plus 18.6%) were not comfortable in front of Saudi men. For the 6.8% of Saudi females who responded with a “3” on Item 7, all of them were not comfortable in front of Saudi men. This why there is a significant correlation in Table 4.6.

Table 4.7

The Association Between Items 6 (Comfort with Saudi Males) and 7 Comfort with Saudi Females)

| | | Item 7 | | | | % for Item 6 |
|--------------|---|--------|------|-----|-----|--------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Item 6 | 1 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.3 |
| | 2 | 15.3 | 10.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 25.4 |
| | 3 | 16.9 | 23.7 | 6.8 | 0.0 | 47.5 |
| | 4 | 3.4 | 18.6 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 23.7 |
| % for Item 7 | | 39.0 | 52.5 | 6.8 | 1.7 | 100 |

Note: For N = 59

Another interesting association is between Item 5 (Comfortable with less proficient ESL Speakers) and Item 11 (Comfortable with teachers and native speakers). It is surprising that these are not related in an inverse manner. That is, one would suppose that those who prefer the security of speaking to less proficient individuals (Item 5) would fear the authority of teachers and native speakers (Item 11). However, this is not the case. As can be seen in Table 4.8, there is no particular pattern.

Table 4.8

The Association Between Items 5 (Comfort with Less Proficient ESL Speakers) and 11 (Comfort with Teachers and Native Speakers)

| | | Item 11 | | | | % for Item 5 |
|---------------|---|---------|------|------|-----|--------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Item 5 | 1 | 20.3 | 15.3 | 13.6 | 0.0 | 49.2 |
| | 2 | 11.9 | 20.3 | 8.5 | 0.0 | 40.7 |
| | 3 | 3.5 | 6.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 10.2 |
| | 4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| % for Item 11 | | 35.6 | 42.4 | 22.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |

Note: For N = 59

Generally, the summary is that female Saudi students are most anxious about the presence of Saudi males and least anxious about feedback from the teacher. Furthermore, it seems that some Saudi female students are simply more anxious in all speaking situations.

Opportunities to Talk with Others

For the second section, the six items are shown in Table 4.4. For all of these items, a score of 1 implied agreement while a score of 4 implied disagreement. The midpoint of the scale is 2.5. Note that Item 15 is clearly opposite to the remaining items. That is, a high score for Items 13, 14, 16, 17 and 18 implies confidence or a willingness to learn, while a high score for Item 15 implies a lack of confidence. Hence, based on the wording, the scoring of Item 15 was inverted so that all items would imply higher confidence for higher scores. This simplifies the interpretation and discussion. That inverted item was used in all subsequent analyses. An “R” is attached to the label to remind that the scoring is reversed, and the phrasing of the item has been altered to include a ***do not*** (bolded and italicized “do not”). The distribution of responses and the mean and SD per item are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Descriptive Statistics for the Items of Opportunities to Talk with Others

| Item # | Statement | Distribution (%) ^a | | | | Descriptives | |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Mean | SD |
| 13 | Being among people who are speaking English outside of my home helps me to improve. | 69.5 | 27.1 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 1.34 | 0.55 |
| 14 | I try to speak even if I am risking embarrassment (have background, not vocabulary). | 30.5 | 57.6 | 11.9 | 0.0 | 1.81 | 0.63 |
| 15R | I do not rely on other people (friends, husband, brothers) at restaurants, cafes, hospitals, information centers, etc. | 8.5 | 28.8 | 45.8 | 16.9 | 2.71 | 0.85 |
| 16 | I go out in order to get the opportunity to speak and listen to native speakers. | 35.6 | 42.4 | 20.3 | 1.7 | 1.88 | 0.79 |
| 17 | I volunteer in order to improve my speaking skills. | 18.6 | 42.4 | 32.2 | 6.8 | 2.27 | 0.85 |
| 18 | I participate in leisure activities in school or after school in order to practice. | 15.3 | 62.7 | 15.3 | 6.8 | 2.14 | 0.75 |

Notes: ^a1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree.

N = 59

Note that the sample size is (again) only 59 for this data because this analysis only considers those participants who have complete data (for valid comparisons between items).

It is important to note that the distributions were essentially unimodal (i.e., approximately normal) or uniform (i.e., flat). The distributions were *not* bimodal which could indicate two distinct groups of participants. Item 13 was a bit different, being concentrated under “Strongly Agree”. The means are generally below the midpoint of the scale (2.5) indicating general agreement with these items. The only exception is Item 15R. Item 17 is actually close to the midpoint.

Almost every participant (97%) agrees with the statement in Item 13 that it the learning of English is improved when one associates with those who speak English. In fact, 70% *strongly agree* with this statement.

Almost every participant (88%) believes that it is good to risk embarrassment in order to improve English. However, note that even though the level of agreement for Item 14 is almost the same as that of Item 13, the pattern is somewhat different. Most participants (58%) merely *agree* with risking embarrassment. Note also that Item 13 expresses a belief, a desire, or an acknowledgement of what would be a good idea. However, Item 14 expresses a behavior. That is, in Item 14 participants reported on what they do, while in Item 13, participants reported on what they *should* do.

Item 16 also reports on a behavior. In this case, 78% of participants actually go out to speak with native English speakers. This number is even lower than that of Item 14. Item 17 and 18 also report on actual behaviors: volunteering and leisure activities. For these, 78% do participate in leisure activities with the intent of learning English, but only 61% volunteer to help with English. It should be added that during the test, many participants commented that they would like to volunteer or participate, but did not have the time.

Finally, Item 15R is interesting. Recall that it is reversed. Hence, it is saying that 63% of participants admit to relying on “friends, husband, brothers) at restaurants, cafes, hospitals, information centers, etc.” That is, they disagree with *not* relying on friends, husbands, or brothers. This must be interpreted carefully because of the Saudi culture. In mixed company, women are expected to defer all interactions with the external world (the exosystem of Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to the males of her family. Furthermore, Saudi women are not permitted (expected) to be in the presence of other males without a husband or brother. Hence, the inclusion of “husbands, brother” in the statement may reflect a cultural value more than a willingness to speak.

The correlations between all the items are generally positive (see Table 4.10) although most are not significant. The highest correlations are between Items 17 and 18 and between 15R and 17.

Table 4.10

Correlations for the Items of Opportunities to Talk with Others

| Item # | 13 | 14 | 15R | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|--------|-----|-----|------------|-----|------------|----|
| 13 | -- | | | | | |
| 14 | .24 | -- | | | | |
| 15R | .10 | .03 | -- | | | |
| 16 | .18 | .16 | .05 | -- | | |
| 17 | .02 | .10 | .30 | .23 | -- | |
| 18 | .05 | .05 | .20 | .06 | .35 | -- |

Note: For N = 59, $r > .256$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .334$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .364$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The correlation between Items 17 (Participate in Volunteering) and 18 (Participate in Leisure Activities) implies that it is the same participants who are more likely to participate in leisure activities and willing to volunteer. That is, there is *not* one group that believes in volunteering and a second group that believes in leisure activities. The correlation between Items 15R and 17 implies that volunteering is incompatible with relying on others. More generally, the fact that all the correlations are positive implies that those participants who practice their English in one situation (e.g., in restaurants) are more likely to practice their English in other situations (e.g., leisure activities).

Generally, in summary, participants do believe that one must take advantage of the opportunities to speak English outside the home. Those who have a stronger belief in the value of one of those activities also tend to have a stronger belief in the other activities.

Classroom Experience

For the final section there were more items (17), as can be seen in Table 4.6. For all of these items, a score of 1 implied agreement while a score of 4 implied disagreement. The midpoint of the scale is 2.5. Note that some of the items express confidence, while other express the lack of confidence. Hence, to simplify interpretation, all items were coded so that they expressed confidence (this is also more compatible with the previous sections). Hence, the scoring of Items 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, and 32 were inverted. An R has been added to the item number, and the phrasing of the items have been altered to include a ***do not*** or ***not*** (bolded and italicized “do not” or “not”) as appropriate. Hence, for all items, higher scores represented higher confidence.

The mean and SD per question are presented in Table 4.11, along with the distribution of responses.

Table 4.11

Descriptive Statistics for the Items of Opportunities to Talk with Others

| Item # | Statement | Distribution (%) ^a | | | | Descriptives | |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Mean | SD |
| 19 | Studying in co-ed classes has an effect on my speaking ability positively. | 15.7 | 25.5 | 47.1 | 11.8 | 2.55 | 0.90 |
| 20R | Co-ed classroom settings are not a hindrance/obstacle to improving my speaking ability. | 9.8 | 35.3 | 41.2 | 13.7 | 2.59 | 0.85 |
| 21 | I get the same opportunity that boys get when practicing speaking and participating in class. | 29.4 | 39.2 | 21.6 | 9.8 | 2.12 | 0.95 |
| 22 | I judge a student's success on their speaking ability more so than on their academic achievement. | 21.6 | 41.2 | 33.3 | 3.9 | 2.20 | 0.83 |
| 23R | I do not avoid speaking and participating in class when I feel there are students from my home country who know English much better than me. | 33.3 | 19.6 | 23.5 | 23.5 | 2.37 | 1.18 |
| 24R | I would not like to change my classes to avoid being with opposite sex in the same class. | 13.7 | 31.4 | 29.4 | 25.5 | 2.67 | 1.01 |
| 25R | I am not afraid when I speak English that other students will laugh at me. | 37.3 | 35.3 | 17.6 | 9.8 | 2.00 | 0.98 |
| 26R | I am not afraid of making mistakes, (e.g. mispronouncing words) more than the lack of vocabulary. | 27.5 | 19.6 | 33.3 | 19.6 | 2.45 | 1.10 |
| 28 | I like working in pairs/groups when I participate in class. | 15.7 | 64.7 | 13.7 | 5.9 | 2.10 | 0.73 |
| 29 | I like giving oral presentations in class. | 25.5 | 41.2 | 21.6 | 11.8 | 2.20 | 0.96 |
| 30R | I do not avoid losing face by not speaking. | 23.5 | 51.0 | 25.5 | 0.0 | 2.02 | 0.71 |
| 31R | I do not feel embarrassed if the teacher corrects me when I am speaking. | 39.2 | 47.1 | 11.8 | 2.0 | 1.76 | 0.74 |
| 32R | I do not avoid speaking English to save myself from being evaluated on my linguistic ability by other people. | 29.4 | 43.1 | 15.7 | 11.8 | 2.10 | 0.96 |

Notes: ^a1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree.

N = 51

Note that the sample size is only 51 for this data because this analysis only considers those participants who have complete data (for better comparisons between items).

A first observation about this section is that most of the items have mean near 2.5 which is the midpoint of the scale. As such, one can conclude that there is no strong consensus about these items. The distributions were essentially unimodal or uniform. That is, the distributions were *not* bimodal, which could indicate two distinct groups of participants.

Items 19, 20R, 21, and 24R all relate to the co-educational classroom experience. Note that the means are all near 2.5 implying that some think that the experience is positive while others think it is negative. This could be an important issue for further investigations.

Only 41% believe that co-educational classes provide a positive experience (Item 19). Only 45% believe that co-educational classes are *not* a hindrance to performance (Item 20R). Fully 55% of participants would change to a single sex class if it were available (Item 24R). What is odd is that 69% of the participants believe that they obtain the same opportunities as males (Item 21). The combination of Items 19, 20R, 21, and 24R is interesting because it is saying that the women believe that they have equal opportunities as males, but they do not want to be in a class with males. Hence, one must conclude that their preference for a same sex class is *not* an issue of perceived discrimination (or sexism), but a reflection of cultural values. Note that Saudi women (and men) grow up in a culture that is limited to same-sex education.

Items 23R, 25R, 29, 30R and 32R are all about public speaking (in front of classmates) and the associated anxiety (embarrassment, ridicule). These means are closer to 2.0 than 2.5 implying a general degree of agreement. That is, given the reverse coding, participants generally like to speak in class, and do *not* have a strong anxiety about speaking. The most negative response was that of Item 23R which referred to speaking in front of other Saudi speakers.

Generally, Saudi female participants do not avoid speaking to save face (Item 30R: 74%), to avoid ridicule (Item 25R: 73%), or to avoid being judged (Item 32R: 73%). Furthermore, fully 67% actually report that they enjoy oral presentations (Item 29). The picture that emerges is that participants are generally comfortable in the classroom learning environment. The only negative is the presence of other members of their own culture (Arabic speakers) who have a *better* grasp of English (Item 23R). Only 53% are comfortable speaking in this situation (47% avoid speaking in this context). Note that the presence of other Arabic speakers would include Saudi males.

Finally, Items 22 (judging others success), 26R (pronunciation vs vocabulary), 28 (enjoy groups) and 31R (do not fear teacher corrections) refer to other aspects of the classroom. As shown in Table 4.11, in Item 31R, 86% of participants are *not* embarrassed when corrected by the teacher. Furthermore, 80% like working in pairs or groups (Item 28). This is interesting because the Saudi educational system tends to emphasize individual – not group – work. Hence, this is an aspect of Saudi culture that is not carried over.

Female Saudi students are split on the relative importance of pronunciation versus vocabulary (Item 26): 47% are *not* more afraid of a mispronunciation than a lapse in vocabulary. Slightly more than half (63%) of the Saudi female participants have a tendency to judge others on the basis of speaking rather than academics (Item 22).

The correlations are presented in Table 4.12. After inverting the scoring as noted above, the correlations between all the items are generally positive, implying that they do assess the same concept. That is, in some sense, the inverting of responses was successful. There are some negative values but they are generally scattered throughout the table.

Table 4.12

Correlations for the Items of Classroom Experience

| Item # | 19 | 20R | 21 | 22 | 23R | 24R | 25R | 26R | 28 | 29 | 30R | 31R | 32R |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------|------------|-----|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----|
| 19 | -- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20R | .40 | -- | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | .18 | .33 | -- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | -.07 | -.17 | .23 | -- | | | | | | | | | |
| 23R | -.01 | .27 | .35 | -.06 | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 24R | .45 | .69 | .23 | -.04 | .16 | -- | | | | | | | |
| 25R | -.05 | .41 | .34 | -.05 | .57 | .24 | -- | | | | | | |
| 26R | .11 | .35 | .31 | -.14 | .51 | .14 | .72 | -- | | | | | |
| 28 | .04 | .20 | .21 | .17 | .10 | .21 | .11 | .22 | -- | | | | |
| 29 | .15 | .30 | .46 | .15 | .27 | .13 | .34 | .39 | .34 | -- | | | |
| 30R | .08 | .35 | .26 | -.08 | .54 | .18 | .64 | .68 | .31 | .35 | -- | | |
| 31R | -.07 | .19 | .15 | .21 | .19 | .13 | .42 | .36 | .19 | .21 | .35 | -- | |
| 32R | .01 | .32 | .34 | -.05 | .49 | .14 | .55 | .39 | .24 | .26 | .56 | .43 | -- |

Note: For N = 51, $r > .277$, $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .356$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .391$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The four items about co-ed classes (Items 19, 20R, 21, and 24R) are generally related. Items 19, 20R and 24R are all significantly correlated. Across questions, participants respond consistently to the issue of co-educational classes: Some like them, but most do not.

Note that Items 19, 20R and 24R are *not* significantly related to Item 21, although there is a positive association. That is, the feeling of equity is not strongly associated with the issue of co-educational classes. However, it is important to note that the correlations are positive, even if not significant. Hence, those with higher feelings of equity do tend to have higher respect for the co-educational experience, in general. Table 4.13 provides some further analysis of this relationship. Note that those who agree with Item 20R (co-educational classes are *not* a hindrance) tend to agree with Item 21 (equity) and those who disagree with Item 20R tend to disagree with Item 21. As can be seen in Table 4.13, 56.9% of participants respond to Items 21

and 20R with a 1 or 2 (agree with both), or with a 3 or 4 (disagree with both). However, there is an interesting group of participants (the 17.6% and 11.8% of Table 4.13) who agree with Item 21 (there is equity) but disagree with Item 20R (co-ed class are a hindrance),

Table 4.13

The Association Between Items 20R (Co-Educational Class are not a Hindrance) and 21 (Equal Opportunities as Males)

| | | Item 21 | | | | % for Item 20R |
|---------------|---|---------|------|------|-----|----------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Item 20R | 1 | 5.9 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 9.8 |
| | 2 | 5.9 | 21.6 | 7.8 | 0.0 | 35.3 |
| | 3 | 17.6 | 11.8 | 7.8 | 3.9 | 41.2 |
| | 4 | 0.0 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 5.9 | 13.7 |
| % for Item 21 | | 29.4 | 39.2 | 21.6 | 9.8 | 100.0 |

Note: For N = 51

Items 23R (**do not** avoid speaking in front of Arabic speakers), 25R (**do not** fear of ridicule), 29 (enjoy talks) 30R (**do not** fear losing face) and 32R (**do not** fear judgment) are all related. These all express a confidence in public speaking and public evaluation. This group of items is also related to Item 31R (**do not** fear teacher assessments). That is, those who have more confidence speaking also have less fear of teacher evaluations and corrections.

Item 28 (enjoy working in groups) is related to Items 29 (enjoy talks) and to Item 30R (do not fear losing face). That is, those who have more confidence speaking derive more enjoyment working in groups.

Note that Item 23R (**do not** avoid speaking in front of Arabic speakers) is also correlated with Item 21 (equity) and to a lesser extent, 20R (co-ed classes are **not** a hindrance) and 24R (would **not** switch). Those who are willing to speak in front of Arabic speakers tend to believe that there is equity, that co-educational classes are good, and would not switch if given the

chance. All of this implies or supports the previous observations that the presence of other *male* Saudi speakers is an issue.

Items 25R (*do not* fear ridicule), 29 (enjoy talks), 30R (*do not* fear losing face) and 32R (*do not* fear judgment) are also related to Items 20R (co-educational classes are *not* a hindrance) and 21 (equity). Hence, confidence speaking is generally related to the appreciation of the co-educational classroom experience.

Item 26R (pronunciation vs. vocabulary) is related to most of the other items including the issue of co-educational classes. That is, those who do *not* worry about pronunciation more than vocabulary are also generally more confident and are more accepting of a co-educational classroom.

Conversely, Item 22 is not strongly related to any other item. This is likely because Item 22 is about the participant's judgments of others, while all other items refer to the participant's fear of being judged, or the co-ed classroom setting.

Generally, in summary, there are two groups of items: one about co-educational classes and another about public speaking. The two sets are somewhat related, and both are related to the notion of confidence. Item 22 is off by itself.

Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading

The final section dealt with the relative importance of Speaking, Reading, and Writing. As noted in the Methods (Chapter 3), this included four items that were actually presented within the previous section (Classroom Experience) as well as Items 36, 37, and 38. These are presented together in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Item List for Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading

| Item # | Item Content |
|--------|---|
| 27 | I feel oral communication is more important than writing and reading skills. |
| 33 | I feel more embarrassed, nervous, and afraid of giving a wrong answer or making a mistake in speaking than I am of making a mistake in writing and reading. |
| 34 | I focus more on improving my speaking than on improving other skills such as writing and reading |
| 35 | I focus more on learning how to speak fluently than on using perfect grammar. |
| 36 | Which of the following gives you more confidence when using English as second language? Writing. Speaking. Reading. |
| 37 | Which of the following do you want to increase mastery of or improve most? Writing. Speaking. Reading. |
| 38 | If you had the option to choose, which classes would you want to focus more on? Writing. Speaking. Reading. |

For Items 36, 37, and 38, participants were asked to rank the possible responses (Writing, Speaking, or Reading) using a 1, 2, 3 scale. As such a response of 1 indicated the most important category of communication for that item. Each of items 36, 37, and 38 was coded as three separate variables -- one coding for the rank of Writing, one coding for the rank of Speaking and one coding for the rank of Reading. Hence, nine variables were required to represent Items 36, 37 and 38 (Items 36_Writing, 36_Speaking and 36_Reading; Items 37_Writing, 37_Speaking and 37_Reading; Items 38_Writing, 38_Speaking and 38_Reading). Each variable was the selected rank for that component. Ties were coded at the mid-point of the adjacent categories. For example, if a participant ranked the selections as 1, 1, and 2, the responses were coded as 1.5, 1.5 and 3. If a participant did not rank a particular component, it was considered to be the lowest rank. For example, if a participant ranked the selections as 1, -, and 2, the responses were

coded as 1, 3, and 2. If a participant ranked the selections as 1, -, and -, the responses were coded as 1, 2.5, and 2.5. The actual variables for analysis are indicated in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

The Revised Items for Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading

| Item # | Item Content |
|--------------|---|
| 36_ Writing | The ranking for confidence in Writing (lower is more confident). |
| 36_ Speaking | The ranking for confidence in Speaking. |
| 36_ Reading | The ranking for confidence in Reading. |
| 37_ Writing | The ranking for the need to improve Writing (lower is more improvement) |
| 37_ Speaking | The ranking for the need to improve Speaking. |
| 37_ Reading | The ranking for the need to improve Reading. |
| 38_ Writing | The ranking for the need to focus on Writing (lower is more focus) |
| 38_ Speaking | The ranking for the need to focus on Speaking. |
| 38_ Reading | The ranking for the need to focus on Reading. |

The means for Items 36, 37 and 38 are presented in Table 4.16. Note that these items have a different structure from the previous data. For the distributions, Table 4.16 presents the percentage of times each item was coded as 1 (most important), 2 (second most important) or 3 (least important). This analysis only considered those responses that were identically 1, 2 or 3. . Generally, across all the items, speaking was rated first by about 60% of the participants.

To include consideration of tied ranks, in the second line per item, Table 4.16 presents codes of 1.5 and 2.5 indicating the number of times there was a tied rank. Note that tied ranks can be seen as a measure of ambiguity in rank. Note that there are very few tied ranks for first and second place. However, participants were more ambiguous when attempting to rank the second and least important elements of language. Hence, participants were generally certain that Speaking was first.

Table 4.16

Descriptive Statistics for the Items of the Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading, Items 36 – 38

| Item # | Distributions (%) | | | | | Descriptives | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----|------|------|------|--------------|------|
| | 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | Mean | SD |
| 36_Writing | 17.6 | | 43.1 | | 39.2 | 2.25 | 0.70 |
| | 15.8 | 0.0 | 38.6 | 10.5 | 35.1 | | |
| 36_Speaking | 61.1 | | 14.8 | | 24.1 | 1.68 | 0.85 |
| | 57.9 | 0.0 | 14.0 | 5.3 | 22.8 | | |
| 36_Reading | 30.0 | | 36.0 | | 34.0 | 2.10 | 0.77 |
| | 26.3 | 0.0 | 31.6 | 12.3 | 29.8 | | |
| 37_Writing | 42.6 | | 37.0 | | 20.4 | 1.80 | 0.76 |
| | 40.4 | 1.8 | 35.1 | 3.5 | 19.3 | | |
| 37_Speaking | 59.6 | | 21.2 | | 19.2 | 1.66 | 0.80 |
| | 54.4 | 1.8 | 19.3 | 7.0 | 17.5 | | |
| 37_Reading | 3.9 | | 37.3 | | 58.8 | 2.54 | 0.55 |
| | 3.5 | 0.0 | 33.3 | 10.5 | 52.6 | | |
| 38_Writing | 42.3 | | 40.4 | | 17.3 | 1.80 | 0.73 |
| | 38.6 | 1.8 | 36.8 | 7.0 | 15.8 | | |
| 38_Speaking | 58.5 | | 22.6 | | 18.9 | 1.67 | 0.80 |
| | 54.4 | 0.0 | 21.1 | 7.0 | 17.5 | | |
| 38_Reading | 10.4 | | 29.2 | | 60.4 | 2.48 | 0.64 |
| | 8.8 | 1.8 | 24.6 | 14.0 | 50.9 | | |

Notes: N = 57

The distributions and means for Items 27, 33, 34 and 35 are presented in Table 4.12. Note that these items have the same structure as all of the previous items (Items 5 through 26, 28 – 32) presented in Tables 4.5, 4.9 and 4.11. That is, there are four options for the distributions of each item. Items 27, 33, 34 and 35 used the standard coding from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree), with a neutral midpoint of 2.5.

Table 4.17

Descriptive Statistics for the Items of the Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading, Items 27 and 33 – 35

| Item # | Statement | Distribution (%) ^a | | | | Descriptives | |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Mean | SD |
| 27 | I feel oral communication is more important than writing and reading skills. | 36.8 | 36.8 | 21.1 | 5.3 | 1.95 | 0.90 |
| 33 | I feel more embarrassed, nervous, and afraid of giving a wrong answer or making a mistake in speaking than I am of making a mistake in writing and reading. | 15.8 | 24.6 | 38.6 | 21.1 | 2.65 | 0.99 |
| 34 | I focus more on improving my speaking than on improving other skills such as writing and reading | 21.1 | 40.4 | 33.3 | 5.3 | 2.23 | 0.85 |
| 35 | I focus more on learning how to speak fluently than on using perfect grammar. | 24.6 | 42.1 | 26.3 | 7.0 | 2.16 | 0.88 |

Notes: ^a1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree.
N = 57

Participants generally agreed with the sentiment expressed in Item 27: Oral communication is more important than reading and writing. Note that 74% agreed with Item 27, 61% agreed with Item 34, and 67% agreed with Item 35. However, only 40% agreed with Item 34. Participants are equally embarrassed by all errors.

The rankings for Items 37 and 38 are consistent with Items 27, 34 and 35, in that participants are more concerned with improving their speaking than reading or writing. It is therefore somewhat contradictory that they feel more confident about speaking than reading or writing (Item 36).

As a check, the items within Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading should be logically related. Those who believe that speaking is more important (Item 27) should also be more concerned with errors associated with speaking (Items 33) and should focus more on speaking (Items 34 and 35). These relationships are shown in Table 4.18. Note that all are positive and significant except two that involve Item 33.

Table 4.18

Correlations for Items 27 (Speaking is more important), 33 (Relative errors), 34 (Focus on speaking) and 35 (Focus on speaking, not grammar)

| Item # | 27 | 33 | 34 | 35 |
|--------|------------|------|------------|----|
| 27 | -- | | | |
| 33 | .30 | -- | | |
| 34 | .35 | .03 | -- | |
| 35 | .37 | -.04 | .31 | -- |

Note: For N = 57, $r > .261$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .340$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .370$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

Within Confidence (Item 36), there should be negative correlations because those who most confident with speaking are, by necessity, less confident with writing and reading. The same is true within the Desire to Improve (Item 37) and the Desire to Focus (Item 38). Table 4.19 presents the correlations between the items of this section. These correlations did not include the tied ranks. However, in fact, the correlations were the same values when including tied ranks (when cited to the 2 decimal places presented in Table 4.19)

Table 4.19

Correlations for Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading

| | 36: Confidence | | | 37: Improve | | | 38: Focus | | |
|-----|----------------|-------------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| | W | S | R | W | S | R | W | S | R |
| 36W | | | | | | | | | |
| 36S | -.47 | | | | | | | | |
| 36R | -.35 | -.65 | | | | | | | |
| 37W | -.17 | .24 | -.14 | | | | | | |
| 37S | .13 | -.27 | .19 | -.76 | | | | | |
| 37R | .04 | .06 | -.09 | -.29 | -.41 | | | | |
| 38W | .14 | -.10 | -.04 | .52 | -.47 | -.05 | | | |
| 38S | -.09 | -.01 | .10 | -.39 | .58 | -.30 | -.65 | | |
| 38R | -.14 | .10 | .04 | -.03 | -.22 | .36 | -.24 | -.43 | |

Note: For N = 57, $r > .261$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .340$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .370$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The relationships between Items 36, 37 and 38 and Items 27, 33, 34 and 35 were more difficult to predict. On the one hand, it is possible that those who are most anxious about speaking might desire to improve it. On the other hand, those who are focused on speaking might recognized that the “need” to put more time into reading or writing. These are presented in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20

Correlations for Relative Importance of Writing, Speaking, and Reading

| Item # | 27 | 33 | 34 | 35 |
|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| 36W | -.04 | -.31 | .06 | .05 |
| 36S | .19 | .32 | -.08 | -.05 |
| 36R | -.12 | -.04 | .06 | .03 |
| 37W | -.21 | .15 | -.30 | .01 |
| 37S | .28 | -.04 | .49 | .04 |
| 37R | -.11 | -.15 | -.29 | -.07 |
| 38W | -.29 | .09 | -.49 | -.09 |
| 38S | .30 | -.06 | .42 | -.00 |
| 38R | -.14 | -.05 | -.04 | .02 |

Note: For N = 57, $r > .261$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .340$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .370$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

As it turns out, those who agree with Item 27 (speaking is more important than reading or writing) also feel the need to improve speaking and to focus more on speaking (i.e., a response of 1 for Item 27 is associated with a rank of 1 for Item 37_Speaking). They do not feel the need to improve writing or reading (i.e., a response of 1 for Item 27 is associated with a rank of 3 for Item 37_Reading or 37_Writing). The same is true for Item 34 (focus on speaking), but not Items 33 or 35.

The relationship between Item 33 (more embarrassed by speaking than writing errors) and Item 36 (relative confidence) is somewhat counterintuitive. Those who are most embarrassed

are also those who rank themselves as most confident speaking. However, this is not impossible. They may be *more* confident about speaking than reading or writing and yet, more worried about errors. That is, they are relatively more confident but not confident in the absolute sense.

Note that the diagonals of Items 37 and 38 are strongly related. The ranking of the desire to improve speaking is related to the ranking of the desire to focus on speaking, the ranking of the desire to improve writing is related to the ranking of the desire to focus on writing, and the ranking of the desire to improve reading is related to the ranking of the desire to focus on reading.

Relationships Between Demographics and Responses

The demographics were compared to the responses to the previously analyzed items. For consistency, the same sections (Comfort Speaking, Opportunities to Speak, and Classroom Experience) are used for this presentation. This presentation is necessarily based on the correlations because there are many variable to relate. As such, cross tabulations becomes unwieldy.

The first compares the demographic variables to the Comfort Speaking with Other variables (Table 4.21). Again, the demographics were coded such that higher competence is higher values while the Comfort variables were coded such that higher values represent lower confidence. As such, one would expect negative correlations. Note that this analysis is based on $N = 51$.

Table 4.21

Correlations between the Demographic Variables and the Comfort Variables

| Item | Months of Study | Months In Canada | Language Level | Speaking Level | English at Home |
|---|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 5: Speak Freely to Lesser Students | .09 | .13 | .04 | -.17 | .09 |
| 6: Opposite Sex only if Same Culture | -.25 | -.45 | -.40 | -.31 | -.16 |
| 7: Same Sex only if Same Culture | -.06 | -.33 | -.13 | -.28 | -.17 |
| 8: Speak Freely to not native Eng | -.01 | .04 | -.04 | -.08 | .08 |
| 9: Speak Freely to native Arab | -.17 | .00 | -.11 | .18 | -.10 |
| 10: Speak Freely to non native Arab/Eng | -.18 | .17 | -.06 | -.25 | .09 |
| 11: Speak Freely to Teachers | .15 | .14 | .26 | .06 | -.01 |
| 12: Better at Listening than Speaking | -.05 | -.34 | -.15 | -.15 | .12 |

Note: For N = 51, $r > .277$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .356$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .391$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

Somewhat surprisingly, there were not many significant relationships. As expected, most of the values are negative (26 of 40), but most hover around $r = 0$, implying that there is not a relationship. Months of study was not related to confidence or comfort. For female Saudi students, Months in Canada was inversely correlated with comfort speaking to the Saudi males. That is, those with less comfort speaking to males (scoring 3 or 4 on Item 6) tended to have lower number of months in Canada, a lower language level, and lower speaking level. They also had fewer months of study, though this was not significant. The same was true for Saudi students speaking with Saudi females, but to a lesser extent. That is, less experienced students are less comfortable speaking English to both males and females, but the relationships are stronger for speaking to males.

The second compares the demographic variables to the Opportunities to Speak variables (Table 4.22). Again, the demographics were coded such that higher competence is higher values while the Opportunity variables were coded such that higher values represent lower confidence. As such, one would expect negative correlations. Note that this analysis is based on N = 51.

Table 4.22

Correlations between the Demographic Variables and the Opportunity Variables

| Item | Months of Study | Months In Canada | Language Level | Speaking Level | English at Home |
|---|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 13: Speaking outside helps | .01 | -.01 | -.02 | .13 | .09 |
| 14: Speak despite embarrassment | -.07 | .19 | -.08 | -.05 | -.29 |
| 15R: Do <i>not</i> rely on friends/family | -.05 | -.05 | -.43 | -.26 | -.29 |
| 16: Go out to speak | -.05 | .17 | .03 | -.13 | -.30 |
| 17: Volunteer to speak | .07 | -.08 | -.04 | -.24 | -.13 |
| 18: Participate to speak | .16 | -.07 | .04 | -.24 | -.31 |

Note: For N = 51, $r > .277$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .356$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .391$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

Again the correlations are weak, though generally negative (21 of 30 are negative). Those with a higher Language Level do not rely on family or friends. Those who speak more English at Home tend to speak English outside the home as well.

The third set of analyses compares the demographic variables to the Classroom Experience variables (Table 4.23). Again, the demographics were coded such that higher competence is higher values while the Classroom variables were coded such that higher values represent lower confidence. As such, one would expect negative correlations. Note that this analysis is based on N = 45.

Table 4.23

Correlations between the Demographic Variables and the Classroom Variables

| Item | Months of Study | Months In Canada | Language Level | Speaking Level | English at Home |
|--|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 19: Co-ed has positive effect | -.35 | -.20 | -.42 | -.39 | -.42 |
| 20R Co-ed is <i>not</i> a hindrance | -.25 | -.20 | -.50 | -.37 | -.20 |
| 21: Same opportunity as males | -.09 | -.14 | -.14 | -.47 | -.30 |
| 22: Judge others on language | .22 | .25 | .27 | -.14 | .06 |
| 23R: <i>Not</i> avoid speaking: countrymen | .19 | -.04 | -.13 | .04 | -.25 |
| 24R: <i>Not</i> change to avoid co-ed | -.29 | -.21 | -.54 | -.34 | -.18 |
| 25R: <i>Not</i> afraid of ridicule | .09 | -.04 | -.15 | -.21 | -.33 |
| 26R: <i>Not</i> more afraid of speaking | .08 | -.08 | -.11 | -.05 | -.28 |
| 28: Like groups | .06 | -.06 | -.01 | -.01 | .00 |
| 29: Like oral presentations | -.11 | -.21 | -.18 | -.39 | -.27 |
| 30R: <i>Not</i> avoid speaking: face | .15 | .01 | -.12 | -.10 | -.30 |
| 31R: <i>Not</i> embarrassed by teacher | .32 | .05 | .02 | -.07 | .09 |
| 32R: <i>Not</i> avoid speaking: neg eval | .38 | .18 | -.12 | -.13 | -.29 |

Note: For N = 45, $r > .294$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .382$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .415$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

Again there are few significant correlations. The issue of co-educational instruction shows the most relationships. Items 19, 20R, 21, and 24R tend to have the most significant correlations (with Language Level, Speaking Level, use of English at Home, and Months of Study). These relationships are strong and in the expected direction. There are smaller correlations that also seem reasonable.

The final set of analyses compares the demographic variables to the Relative Importance variables (Table 4.24). Again, the demographics were coded such that higher competence is higher values. The relative importance variables compared speaking to reading/writing (Item 27, 33, 34, and 35) and assessed the rank of confidence in each component, the rank of the need to improve each component, and the rank of the need to focus on each component. Note that this analysis is based on N = 49.

Table 4.24

Correlations between the Demographic Variables and the Relative Importance Variables

| Item | Months of Study | Months In Canada | Language Level | Speaking Level | English at Home |
|--|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 27: Speaking is important than reading/writing | .21 | -.02 | .17 | .15 | .02 |
| 33: More anxious about errors in speaking than reading/writing | .09 | -.24 | .02 | .04 | -.22 |
| 35: Focused on speaking, not reading/writing | .21 | -.13 | .00 | .21 | .27 |
| 35: Focused on speaking, not grammar. | .11 | -.14 | .16 | .20 | .11 |
| 36_W: Confidence in Writing | -.01 | -.29 | -.19 | -.17 | .18 |
| 36_S: Confidence in Speaking. | .18 | .20 | .27 | .33 | .12 |
| 36_R: Confidence in Reading. | -.20 | .01 | -.16 | -.17 | -.26 |
| 37_W: Need to improve Writing | -.11 | -.07 | -.07 | -.13 | -.04 |
| 37_S: Need to improve Speaking | .07 | -.05 | .11 | .20 | .16 |
| 37_R: Need to improve Reading | .05 | .16 | -.06 | -.11 | -.17 |
| 38_W: Need to focus on Writing | -.24 | -.15 | -.21 | -.42 | -.11 |
| 38_S: Need to focus on Speaking | .02 | .21 | .13 | .29 | .13 |
| 38_R: Need to focus on Reading | -.32 | .00 | -.11 | .09 | -.10 |

Note: For N = 49, $r > .281$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .363$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .399$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

There are few significant correlations. The months of study is negatively related to the rank of the need to focus on reading -- that is, those who have spent more time learning English feel that there is *more* need to focus on reading (the same is true of writing, but it is not significant). This likely represents the logical procession -- one learns to speak first and then learns to read and write. Note that there is the expected positive relationship between the months of study and the rank of confidence speaking but it is not significant. More months in Canada is related to the rank of confidence speaking. Self-reported speaking level is related to the *lack* of a need to focus on speaking (higher ability is associated with a *lower* rank for need to focus on speaking). Conversely, self-reported speaking level is related to the need to focus on writing again, this likely reflects the logical progression for language acquisition.

It can also be noted that Items 27, 33, 34 and 35 are *not* related to demographics (though Items 35 and English at Home is very close to significant). In some sense, this is reasonable. Generally, the belief that speaking is more important than reading/writing is not likely to be affected by experience.

Summary of Questionnaire

In the analysis of the questionnaire, there are several major findings. Firstly, in the Comfort Speaking section, it is clear that there is a range of comfort speaking. Furthermore, those who are the most comfortable in one situation are also the most comfortable in other situations. That is, some women are simply more anxious. However, for Saudi women, there is a common issue with the presence of Saudi men. Saudi women are not comfortable speaking in front of Saudi men.

Secondly, in the analysis of Opportunities to Speak, it is clear that most women understand the need to practice outside the classroom but again there is a range of performance. Furthermore, those who practice more in one situation tend to practice more in other situations.

Thirdly, in the Classroom Experience section, there are two main observations. There is the issue of co-educational classes. This might be a divisive issue in that some women seem to appreciate such classes, whereas others do not. These sentiments were echoed in the comments. There is also the issue of confidence to speak, or the willingness to accept public scrutiny. Again, some women have accepted the potential for embarrassment or error this and act accordingly across all situations whereas other women have not.

A fourth observation would be that the three sections of the questionnaire are relatively independent. A major theme that emerges across sections is the issue of the presence of Saudi males (i.e., co-educational classrooms).

There were also few links between the demographic variables and the three sections. However, comfort with the presence of males was somewhat related to the number of years in Canada and language level.

Lastly, it is clear that participants regard speaking as more important than reading or writing, even though reading and writing are core to any academic pursuits.

The Interview

Interview Analysis

The interview data were considered to be supportive of the questionnaire data. The interviews were intended to allow for an in-depth exploration of particular issues that might be central to the thinking of individuals.

There were two major themes that emerged from this study. The first theme is *psychological factors*. It includes shyness, self-confidence, embarrassment, and fear of making mistakes, and the fear of being misunderstood. Each Saudi female student expressed more than one of these responses, and further stated that these feelings inhibited her from participating and improving her speaking skills.

The second theme that emerged from this study is *social-cultural factors* that shape the behavior of Saudi female students and limit their interactions both within and outside the classroom. This also includes aspect of the school curriculum.

Psychological Factors

Participants gave a variety of responses that cited different factors that inhibited their speaking skills and limited their interactions with others. One of the main factors was self-

confidence. All of the participants acknowledged that they were not confident in their speaking or shy about speaking. This is a common characteristic of those learning a second language. However, what is noticeable throughout the interviews is that participants do show some confidence in their classroom, but that confidence does not extend to speaking in public. For example, Student 1 expressed her thoughts as follows:

“On the bus, sometimes people would approach my friends and me, and would say something about the weather but I would end the conversation quickly. I am not confident with my speaking ability because when I do speak, people don't understand me. I have the fear of making a mistake while speaking. I don't give myself the chance to speak in public.”

She continues with the theme that she is afraid of making mistakes in public.

“It depends on where I am at. In public, I'm afraid of making mistakes. In school I have a higher level of English. I like to talk a lot. I'll take a risk and tell a story in class. In class, I know I'm at the same level as the students, but in public I know I'm in a lower level than everyone. My vocabulary, accent and grammar are not as good. I have more confidence in myself in school but not in public.”

Student 2 echoed the same thoughts when she said that:

“In school I will try to find the word for me to continue my conversation. Even if my speaking is not good, I would not have that fear. But if I was outside in public I try not to speak to get in certain situations.”

Student 3 added regarding to the same point that

“In public I start by telling them that I do not know that much English before I start. There are times I want to speak fast and not waste their time explaining a conversation to them but I find some of the people are nice and they have patience for to finish. In Montreal, the people did not have patience for me to finish, and I think if I stayed there to study, I would not get better or have confidence in myself... self-confidant is the most important thing, I believe if I have 10 % of it. I can do better.”

Student 4 insists that she needs to speak clearly without an accent in order to feel socially accepted, and to raise her self-confidence. She associated her mastery of speaking skills with her self-confidence.

“I really want to have the proper English accents. It is important because the people would feel comfortable with you and I would get self-confined. It does affect me because I really want to have the proper accent for the person to understand me.”

In addition, throughout most of the interviews, participants associated self-confidence (shyness) with fear of making mistakes or being misunderstood, or being embarrassed. Student 1 stated,

“I also feel shy to speak English when I go out at cafe, restaurants and malls, I just can't.”

Student 2 said the same thing.

“When I am outside, especially on the bus, I get shy talking to people because I do not know how to speak proper English. That's my problem... I have the fear of people not understanding me and of being embarrassed as well... When I am out with Saudi friends, I do not want to make mistakes in front of

them. I cannot ask one of the girls to order for me. If I am in a situation when I know I am going to make a mistake I try my best not to do it in front of them but I will still order.”

Student 3 echoed:

“I am shy and making mistakes would hold me back but not all the time... in the public, people wouldn’t be as patience to listen to you or correcting your mistake and you wouldn’t like to be embarrassed by making mistakes or mispronouncing words.”

Student 4 sought perfect grammar and had a self-imposed standard of excellence. She said:

“Some people I know speak and they do not care how they sound. I have to pronounce the words precisely ... I am very very scared of making grammar mistake or mispronunciation of words.... I do not like making mistakes and that reduces my ability to speak.”

She continued saying that the way she learned to speak in school was different than what was required or expected of real life. Hence, she felt incapable of interacting with native speakers.

“We are being taught academic words and they are not pronouncing the way people pronounce it they say academically way. When I hear the people say it I would know how to pronounce it with the proper accent... One time, I went to lunch with a teacher and the way she spoke was different and she is my teacher.”

Moreover, participants stated that there are limited places where they can go and interact outside with more comfortable manner: Student 2 also explained that she becomes shy when she is in a group of Saudi women that she doesn't know.

“When I am out with Saudi friends I do not want to make mistakes in front of them. I cannot ask one of the girls to order for me. If I am in a situation when I know I am going to make a mistake I try my best not to do it in front of them but I will still order.”

Student 4 echoed:

*I do not speak as much in a group of people that have perfect pronunciation, their **accent** and vocabulary and if I do it would be words I know and I would think of what I am going to say first. It does affect my ability to practice my speaking... I feel more comfortable if it was my friends because I know them and they know me. I feel if I made a mistake I don't think they would make fun of me as much as the people that I do not know them... If I know someone that has better English than me I would feel more comfortable instead of someone I do not know.*

All of the support staff acknowledged that Saudi women are shy and reserved. They tended to socialize with themselves. Receptionists also noticed that students who are at a higher level of English proficiency, and/or had attended the school for a longer time, tended to show more confidence, and interacted more in school. Confidence and interaction were associated with higher level and familiarity with school. Other support staff noted that Saudi females tended to come to front desk during the most inactive time. The other individual noted that Saudi female students try to ask basic

questions, and try to avoid long conversations. This was a direct contrast to that of male Saudi students who engaged in long conversations and even exchanged jokes.

“I find with the female students they even if their English level is high enough to communicate, they’re more shy and I don’t think they necessarily have difficulty communicating but they’re just more shy to do... because some times it’s pretty busy just out of the disk ... they’ll wait until there aren’t students around or come in of the more quite time to talk to me in more privet environment or they tent to hang back until the students have gone” [R1]

“The male students tent to be much more upfront and willing to try to communicate with me even if their English level is low where as female students they tent to a lot of the times they mere shy or they will get somebody to help them.” [R2]

All of the teachers also note that the Saudi female students tend to be more demure and quieter. In addition, the teachers acknowledged that shyness is a characteristic of all lower level students, but that it is more pronounced with Saudi female students. All participants expressed an appreciation of the ability to speak to teachers and other native speakers. They acknowledged that this would improve their speaking. Most enjoyed speaking with other ESL learners, but acknowledged that one could be learning incorrectly. However, the majority of the participants showed unwillingness to work and speak with Arabic students because there was a tendency to speak Arabic.

Related to the issue of shyness or lack of confidence is the general sentiment that Saudi women tend to associate only with other Saudi women. The students themselves are aware of this tendency. For example, they said:

“I always go with my friends that speak Arabic and they are Saudi as well. If I leave my Arabic friends because I feel they will think that I am better than them or I'm too full of myself. There is a Saudi friend at school that does not communicate with any Saudi girl and always hangout with a Mexican and Chinese girls... if the girls have an idea for something in school, they do not include her in it because they get a feeling that she doesn't want to get involved with them. Many of the Saudi girls in school don't participate in activities and volunteering and if do, we go as a group of Saudi girls. We don't go individually.” [S1]

“For us we are too shy to get to know people for us it is better if we go out with Saudi girls it is easier. If we get to meet native speakers our speaking would get better. At first I thought about going out with friends that are not Saudi's but then I never did I do not know why. There are times I do not want to speak English at all and I just want to speak Arabic and I also want someone that understands me. I do not want go through trouble to explain something I just want to go with people I feel comfortable with.” [S2]

“I wish I have a native English speaker friend and I do not know if she is educated with our culture and how if I go over to her house I cannot be around males and if she comes over to my house she cannot have her boyfriend over. I cannot go to the parties or clubs and I do not understand that. You don't have much time to participate in the leisure activities or go out to interact with native speaker and I'm not the only one who have this problem most of married Saudi girls find it difficult without their family support.” [S3]

“I want to make international friends and I want to meet English girls but some of them always want to hang out with their boyfriends. I want to be with English girls but

without affecting my religion and my values. I feel if I searched hard enough I will find the right English girls.” [S4]

The tendency for Saudi women to stick together was also noted by the Support Staff.

“They definitely stick together so most of the time one sees Saudi women interacting with other Saudi women, and they kind of travel in like group together.” [R1]

“The female students tend to go one of the classrooms to have their ... Sometimes they will communicate with students from other countries but I will say rarely -- mostly with other Saudi women. They tend to stick to other Saudi girls. They’ll socialize with other Saudi girls.” [R2]

Of course, this behavior is not particular to Saudi women. In fact, most major cities that have an immigrant population have select sections of the city devoted to a particular immigrant group. However, Saudi women tend to cluster with other Saudi women, and, as noted above express a preference to be with other non-Saudi women. Associations with men are not on the agenda.

Finally, on the same general theme of psychological factor to the new environment, participants were asked by their involvement in leisure activities, particularly those associated with English classes. Participants provided different reasons for not participating. Most participants agreed that the content of the activities was not to their tastes. They perceived many activities as being contradictory to their culture values. Another concern focused on the time and place of the planned activity (e.g., a school trip to another city). One participant, in particular, added that she has a child and that it is hard to find child care for the duration of such activities. This likely represents, to some degree, the loss of support that would come with an extended family.

Social-Cultural Factors

All students stated that they tend to rely on their male relatives. Student 1, for example, stated:

“When my husband and I go out to cafés and restaurants I rely on him to do all the talking. I got used to him doing so even Saudi Arabia. I got used to him speaking and ordering for us and for ordering we decide on what we want then he'll order.”

Student 3 and 4 had similar comments.

“I do not like relying on others but I do on my sister and husband.”

Student 4 echoed:

“At first I would rely on my brother because he is in a higher level than me.”

This tendency to rely on males was noted by the support staff as well. All individuals will turn to supportive relatives in various situations, but the notable theme is that Saudi women do it more than others, and particularly with males. Support Staff 1 commented:

“... They rely on male to come in even we know they are capable of asking themselves.”

“The higher they get the more confidence they have which is the same with any students, but it is more pronounced with the female students. I have assume who is in just like level six which is highest level with their brother who studying is here and her level very high and she is very good student and all of that but her brother study is here so she will off and come with her brother even thought she is capable.”

Support Staff 2 stated that:

“we know level 3 level 4 -- they are highly capable of saying ... you know ...I need approval of enrolment, or I need help with this Saudi Bureau, or I need financial guarantee, or whatever it is they need, but sometimes they will get their brothers or

husbands to ask for rather than themselves. Most of the time, they rely on male to come in even we know they are capable of asking themselves.”

Another significant element identified within the interviews was the issue of co-education and the presence of males. All participants in this study articulated that the influence of the male presence on oral communication and interactions both inside and outside the classroom. Student 1 elaborated:

“In some groups, especially when they are all males and I am the only women, I don't feel comfortable at all. I barely just participate with them and they are too loud. We didn't do a good job on the presentation because I didn't feel comfortable with him. I had a problem communicating with him because his level of English was low and because he is a male.”

Even when the feeling was not as strong, it was still present. For example, Students 2 and 4 stated:

“I do not mind being in a mixed class even if I had the option to change but I will prefer the class that all the students are females because I will be in a comfortable environment. I will still participate in coed class.” [S2]

“I am not used to having a male classmate and I have to stand up in front of the class and speak, it is different. I do not mind it, I like taking risks. I got used having male classmates now. Girls do make fun of other students as well, but the guys make fun of the way I talk and my tone of voice, and in a more embarrassing way.” [S4]

However, what was more informative was the fact that it was the presence of Saudi males in particular, that was distracting. Students 2 and 3 stated:

“If I talk to another male not Saudi and ask any question they are not going to think anything of it but if I ask the same question to a Saudi they are going to think something bad about me. If I started conversation with them they might think I am a bad girl but it is not in our culture that a girl just talks to a guy. For native males students it is in their culture to talk to other women. It does affect my ability to practice speaking English if there were Saudi males in my class. Sometimes they travel for the activities and they go to PEI even though we want to go we would rather not because there are Saudi men there.” [S2]

“If it was a male there are limits and I cannot talk about everything with him. It does affect my speaking ability. When I am put in a group with guys I cannot participate at all, especially if there Saudi male students. I am shy being around the Saudi male students because I do not want to say something they would misunderstand or be embarrassed in front of them.” [S3]

“I do not mind being with other guys from different countries but it do not like being with Saudi guys.” [S4]

Such comments were echoed by the teachers:

“I do find that sometimes that Saudi men are not nearly as open to talk about things as men from other culture. Or that the men from another country, they’re much more curious. They want the Saudi women to talk. They want to know what their opinions are, whereas, with the Saudi men, maybe not so much. It can sometimes feel a little tense.” [T1]

“If you in the classroom and you know other men from your country you might not feel completely in new environment. But if you are in classroom with other men who are

part of society that would silence women, you would not hear their voices. That kind of dynamic defiantly influences how comfortable women are learning in that environment, or expressing themselves, or saying their opinions, especially when it comes to their future education goals...that [women having educational goals] may not expressed as an opinion [in Saudi culture]. That feeling of just “can you say what you want?”, but if you say what you want, what will happen? Those kinds of concerns affect their oral communication.” [T2]

In addition, the specific issue of male teachers was raised by Student 1.

“... it's even worse if the teacher is a male. And now most of our teachers are males in level four hundred. It does affect me a lot when I want to ask questions. To them, it's normal for the teachers to get close to the student and understand them, but I don't like that at all so I stay away. I want to feel more comfortable with everything I do, the way I sit and have more confidants. I feel more comfortable with the girls. Doing something like this would make the girls participate more in class with the teachers and that would not be an excuse for them to say we do not participate.”

Another final theme that occurred repeatedly was that of the topics of discussion. Both students and teachers acknowledge the effects of the select topics on willing to participate in classes. It is also interesting to note that the comfort zone for topics depends on the presence of males. The students said things like:

“Sometimes the topics that is uncomfortable to talk about them in front of the Saudi males that would be my problem.” [S2]

“If it is a new topic and something new for me I would not participate in class. The topics would be relationships and dating I would not participate at all. It does not mean that I do not know anything about it, it's just respect I do not speak about it.” [S3]

“If I had the option to be with class of girls, I would because I feel more comfortable in the way we talk and laugh. I can talk about certain topics that it cannot mention in front of the guys.” [S4]

The teachers said very similar things, but from their perspective.

“Our material is based on western culture. We talk about everything... In Saudi culture you don't have a boyfriend or girlfriend so if we are talking about a boyfriend or girlfriend then there are nothing for them to discuss well because they don't have that or if we talk about clothing.

Clothing is different like we're talking about wearing a short skirt or wearing something that you won't wearing out in public if you are Saudi women though.” [T1]

“ESL teaching conflict is always biased towards unilingual English Christian culture, and the curriculum that we often teach with as well in Canada. That curriculum has a lot of catching up to do. I think it would benefit a lot from having Saudi women as curriculum developers.” [T2]

Interview Summary

All of the Saudi female students expressed a lack of confidence (or a fear of making mistakes or being misunderstood). They all have a degree of shyness. They are very sensitive to who they are talking to. There are specific problems dealing with men, and, in particular, with Saudi men. There are more fearful of the reactions of Saudi men than other men because the Saudi culture places such strong restrictions on women's behavior. To be rejected by Saudi men

would be rejection from their own culture – a form of banishment. In a related fashion, Saudi women almost always deferred to the opinions of their husbands or male relatives. Saudi women expressed more shyness in the public world than in the classroom.

As a consequence, 75% of the participants confessed to speaking Arabic most of the time, and to not practicing English as often as possible (or necessary). Furthermore, they tended to consort in groups with other Saudi female students. They do not consort with male Saudi students, but they expressed an interest in consorting with other non-Saudi females, but only if those females could understand the particular limitations imposed on their behavior.

All of the participants showed concerns about co-ed class, curriculum topics, and cultural differences in schools' activities. However, half of the participants also valued the Canadian education system which allowed for an interaction between the teacher and students. Oral presentations and group work both contributed to their speaking skills.

The comments of the support staff tended to confirm the above. They noted that Saudi women are shy, reserved, rely on their male relatives, and socialize with themselves. Support staff also noticed that students who are at a higher level of English proficiency and have been in the school for longer time, tend to show more confidence and be more interactive in the school.

Comments by teachers also confirmed those of the students. All of the teachers acknowledge that the topic of conversation in class is one of the main concerns. They argued that the curriculum needs to be adjusted to acknowledge cultural differences. Moreover, all of the teachers noticed that influence of males on the dynamic of the class. Saudi women would become silent, less comfortable, and the men would take over.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter is organized according to the research questions posed in the study.

1. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their comfort speaking with others?

Most participants stated that they speak freely with high self-confidence when they are speaking with someone who has lower English speaking skills. In fact, this finding is not surprising because the speaker knows that their mistakes are not as noticeable. This would decrease anxiety, which might help to increase confidence. Alhebaish (2012) and others (e.g., Al-Sibai, 2005; Brown, 1994; Gregersen & Horwitz 2002; Molberg, 2010) have asserted that self-confidence is a supportive factor in the achievement of foreign language. Jamshidnejad (2007) stated that “The fear of ‘losing face’ in front of others is one of the sources of problems in ESL oral communication. ‘Saving face’ -- not wanting to embarrass oneself by making mistakes -- prevents many students from speaking” (p. 8).

Saudi female are generally more confident when speaking to non-Arabic speakers. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, when speaking to an Arabic speaker, there is a tendency to switch to Arabic when the frustration of mistakes starts to build. This means that they miss the point of practicing English and making an effort to improve their speaking skills. This likely happens when the content of the conversation becomes more important than the practicing of English. If the speakers want to “finish” the conversation and move on to another, switching to Arabic is faster and less effortful. Secondly, Arabic listeners are not encouraging the Arabic speaker to continue speaking in English.

An important and unique aspect of comfort for Saudi women is the issue of men. Saudi women are simply unaccustomed to the presence of men. Hence, men in any situation may cause Saudi women to be quiet and reserved. The presence of Saudi men seems to add another layer of complexity. Saudi women seem to be even more uncomfortable in the presence of Saudi men because such men are in a position to pass judgment. The honor and reputation of a Saudi female is a sensitive issue that defines the role and behavior of Saudi women in Saudi society. The nature of the Saudi society is to judge families (therefore males) by focusing on the females' behavior. Del Castillo (2003) pointed out the following:

The behavior of women determines the honor of the entire family. Therefore if women "misbehave", it affects the whole status of the family. One of the problems with honor is that it ties the whole social structure of the tribe together so that if a man or a family loses its honor in a tribal setting, they lose everything (p. 1)

Saudi females grow up being concerned about anything that could compromise her reputation. Hence, in any setting (including the classroom), Saudi women are particularly sensitive to the presence of Saudi men. Such will lead women to remain silent.

There are still other cultural differences that affect comfort. Firstly, some topics of conversation are outside the "comfort zone", particularly when men are involved in the conversation. Secondly, because of their cultural background, some topics of conversation are simply irrelevant because Saudi females have no experience with the material. Any behavior that is restricted to the exosystem of Bronfenbrenner (1999) is questionable.

Finally, there is an issue of physical proximity and physical contact. Saudi women do not have much contact with men outside their immediate families. As such, they are unaccustomed

to men standing close, and they are unaccustomed to actual contact (e.g., shaking hands). Such issues can create a degree of anxiety or trepidation when trying to interact.

2. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their opportunities to talk with others?

The most significant appears from this study is that the vast majority of Saudi female student limit themselves to only Saudi girls or Arabic native speakers. Saudi female students are surrounded with friends from their home country, and they speak Arabic all the time. As such, they have few opportunities to practice English. They explained that they find it very difficult to make friends with native speakers, or get into the social activities that occur outside school. This is due to culture. As explained by one student, it is simple thing that limit their exposure: they are not allowed to visit another woman if there are other men in the house; other women may not visit them if they want to bring a boyfriend. Many not borne to the Saudi culture would be unwilling to accept such restrictions.

Many studies showed that social factors have a positive impact in terms of success in ESL for female learners. Francis suggested that “increased ambition, coupled with a feeling that opportunities in the workplace are skewed against them, is what has provide girls with a new motivation for achievement at school” (Francis, 2000, p. 88). Sex-stereotyping is another motivator that might encourage girls to develop a liking for languages, and to seek to improve their proficiencies when learning ESL (López Rúa, 2006). He argued that girls are encouraged to interact socially, to relate to emotions, and to solve problems via conversation, and that this could play a significant role in their ability and desire to acquire language. Although, Saudi female students could benefit from these advantages, there seem to be other disadvantages that are stronger. The Saudi female must carry her restrictive culture when she wants to participate in

society, when she wants make relationships with local people. She was taught and is expected to rely on her male relatives for all such interactions. Male relatives essentially control her access to the exosystem of Bronfrenbrenner (1979). That is, Saudi women are accustomed to have male relations (husband, father, brothers) speak on their behalf for all interactions that involve the exosystem. Furthermore, those male relations expect to take on that role. As such, Saudi women rarely find themselves in a situation where they have to speak on their own behalf. Consider an Asian or South American woman who does not have such a structure. She would have to speak often enough to meet her needs. This was also notified by López Rúa (2006), when she studied social factors that affect the acquisition of ESL. In her study, she concluded that “It must be added that other social variables (for example, class or ethnicity) may interact with sex when determining foreign language proficiency and therefore alter the expected results.” (López Rúa, 2006, p. 107).

In addition, Saudi females showed lower self-confidence when speaking outside school. They feel they are not very well prepared to speak in real life. In public, people speak very fast and use less formal structures than they are in school. Teachers and staff make an effort to speak slowly and clearly to enhance understanding. As such, even if they attempt conversation outside the classroom, students doubt themselves and start making mistakes, which leads to further embarrassment. Students quickly learn that it is safer to remain quiet. When combined with a cultural background that encourages women to remain quiet (in public), the result is that Saudi women simply say nothing. This in turn, affects their ability to develop some proficiency in English. Derwing, Thomson, and Munro (2006) examined the relationship between English learners’ exposure to native English-speakers outside the classroom and the enhancement of their accent and fluency. They found that out-of-class communication with native speakers improved

the learning of English, and in fact, simplified the teaching of English. They recommended the use of different methods and learning strategies to maximize learning.

3. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to their classroom experience?

Participants were generally comfortable speaking in English to all types of classmates (who are learning English as a second language, who speak Arabic, and who neither speak Arabic nor English) and to the teachers. However, Saudi female were not comfortable speaking to the opposite sex classmates who are from the same culture. This could be due to culture aspects that students carry on from their home to the new environment. This finding is very clear and both of the studies showed the same results. According to Flaitz (2003), the major difficulty that Saudi student should overcome when studying abroad is having a teacher and students of the opposite sex.

Many students suggested that there be separated classrooms for Saudi women, particularly at beginner's level. The reasons for this finding are self-explanatory. Saudi females grow up in segregated schools. They have never had to talk to, or work on a group project, with males. Hence, Saudi females, particularly at the beginner's levels, were uncomfortable when interacting with males in general.

Throughout this entire process, the majority of the Saudi female students appreciated the Canadian educational system in terms of oral presentations, group work, a student-centered pedagogy (in contrast to a teacher-centered pedagogy), and the dialogue between teachers and students. Most of the participants like doing presentations. It was viewed as an opportunity to practice their speaking skills. Group work, on the other hand, was more ambiguous. Most

participants liked group work, but they all agreed that working in a group of females would be better than working in a group with men

Participants did express some displeasure with the curriculum content. They felt that some of the material discussed in class interfered with their cultural values (e.g. dating, love, and clothing). In Saudi culture, speaking about these subjects is viewed as inappropriate. It is also inappropriate for a woman to express her feelings or opinions in front of males, especially in front of males who come from the same social values. Saudi females do not like to expose their privacy in front of strange men. Hence, Saudi females felt awkward when discussing or having a conversation about these subjects, or when talking about their personal lives. Furthermore, some of the topics that teachers brought to the class had not been experienced by Saudi women. Thus, they had nothing to say about them.

4. What are the perceptions of Saudi female students relative to the importance of writing, reading, speaking?

The purpose of this question was to relate the speaking relative to reading and writing. In some sense, speaking has primacy for second language learning. However, one would like to know if a lack of proficiency in speaking is due to a focus on other skills. Generally, all Saudi female students from all different level of language were most comfortable and felt most competent when listening rather than when speaking. That may indicate that there are other obstacles that inhibit their active (speaking) participation.

Participants who had spent more time learning English felt that they now needed to focus more time on reading and writing. This is, of course, reasonable given that the point of their travel to Canada is academic studies, which requires a lot of reading and writing.

Another factor that could play a role in speaking skill level is the lack of practice outside the school. Participants reported that most schools are less focused on speaking and more on reading/writing. Hence, most of the students had difficulty engaging in activities in public, which resulted in a lower level for development in speaking skills. Moreover, some participants admitted that the responsibility to practice speaking lies with the student. The students must willfully engage in dialogue to improve, whereas reading and writing come through studying. As one participant commented, “Teachers can give me writing and reading homework’s but they cannot give me a speaking assignment.”

5. What are the perceptions of teachers relative to Saudi female students’ oral communication skills and interaction in school?

Throughout the entire study teachers had not noticed any specific weaknesses regarding the abilities of Saudi females to learn English (speaking, reading, or writing). The only problem that teachers faced when teaching Saudi female students was shyness, which affected class participation. Several reasons for this have already been discussed. The teachers explicitly commented on the fact that a male presence changes the dynamic of the class. Men will take over and Saudi women tend to be more intense and less engaged in discussions. However, teachers did notice that not all Saudi female students are silent and non-participatory in a class. There are some Saudi females who were vocal, strong minded, and do not mind being in the co-ed class.

Schmitt (2009) stated that:

The traditional views of gender division are common in Muslim societies. Men and women are often seen as having differing roles and in some cultures genders are separated, intersecting at the family and rarely outside. Because of this, some

Muslims may feel uncomfortable around members of the opposite sex. Most students can quickly adjust to coeducational settings, but—as with most cultural changes—a gentle, supportive introduction can be far more effective than a sudden shock. Starting students off in larger mixed-gender groups in the classroom rather than in pairs can be one way to gently introduce the idea of working with others (p. 3).

It is informative that the teachers also commented on the material used in class. English school curriculum is based on western culture, and the topics reflect Western culture. They noted that Saudi female students remain silent and non-participatory in some discussions that seem to interfere with their values. Teachers also noted that Saudi female student do not voice their opinions when it comes to discussion and debate. They commented that Saudi females need to learn that all opinions are valid.

6. What are the perceptions of receptionist relative to Saudi female students' oral communication skills and interaction in school?

The Support Staff agreed that the Saudi female students were shy, reserved, and socialized with themselves. They also confirmed that they rely on their male relatives to ask questions or to complete paper work. When they ask questions, they only ask basic questions, and avoided long conversations. The Support Staff also noticed that the Saudi female students avoided coming to front desk during a busy time (break time) or when there were a lot of students in front desk. If they did arrive at such times, they stood back from the desk and waited until the desk was free. Usually the quiet ones would come during the inactive times. This is due to the shyness that is characteristic of Saudi women, particularly when speaking in front of other Arabic learners. This is consistent with the result in the questionnaire analysis that showed that

Saudi women judge the success of students on their speaking ability more than on their academic achievement. As such, Saudi female students were worried about the judgments that they might receive on their speaking ability.

7. What, if any, psychosocial factors emerged that might be seen to influence Saudi female students in their preparatory ESL experience?

Throughout this entire process, all the Saudi women in this study showed the same psychological issues that other ESL learners would have (e.g. self-confidence, embarrassment, fear of making mistakes). However, that issue of self-confidence is of particular importance given the other issues that Saudi female students face when speaking outside school (in public).

In fact, Saudi female students probably have fewer issues in the classroom. This is likely due to the teacher-centered pedagogy experienced in Saudi Arabia. Participants were not embarrassed or afraid of having their mistakes noted by and fixed by the teachers. They are taught to accept the absolute authority of the teacher. The logic seems to have extended to native speakers. That is, native English speakers have authority. However, participants admitted that they felt less confident when they were in a class that other ESL students who had a higher level of English proficiency. In this situation, they committed to silence, because they may be judged. Finally, the experience of Saudi women with education seems to enable them to be reasonably comfortable in a class of equals (in terms of English proficiency). In such a situation, all students are at the same level of the hierarchy: they know they are all learners.

Previously, it was noted that Saudi females tend to associate with other Saudi females. This was viewed as a negative factor for learning English. However, it does have a positive component. Saudi women face a huge amount of culture shock – probably more than any other group of women. They must move from a culture that essentially excludes them from the

exosystem and contact with men to one that forces them to fully involved in the exosystem surrounded by men. The presence of a large cohort of other Saudi women is likely a useful buffer. It provides some degree of stability, or familiarity, in the midst of chaos.

In a similar manner, the requirement for a mahram (a male relative) to accompany every female Saudi student might be seen as restrictive. It does enable Saudi females to avoid dealing with the world. However, again, such a structure does serve as a buffer for culture shock. Such a structure gives Saudi females the “freedom” to enter the exosystem of Canada at a pace that is more to their liking.

Another prosocial factor must be KASP. The existence of the program must send a message to all Saudi women (who participate) that they have an important role in changing Saudi society. They must realize that they represent the (women) leaders of the next generation of students.

All of these factors together (cohort of Saudi females, the mahram, the KASP) allow Saudi women to enter the exosystem of a foreign culture at a pace that they themselves determine. This may, in turn, enable a higher completion rate. That is, without such supports, many women would simply give up and flee back to the home culture.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I give a quick overview of the study, recommendations, limitations, implication, and recommendation for future work.

Summary

This was an exploratory initial study to help understand the issues that might prevent Saudi female students who are studying English in Canada from developing proficient English Speaking skills. The number of female Saudi students taking ESL classes in foreign countries is increasing, and will likely continue to increase (i.e., the KASP will continue). There is an absence of information in the literature about their experiences. Hence, this study fills an important gap in the literature. There were two major themes that emerged from this study.

The first theme is *psychological factors*. It includes shyness, self-confidence, embarrassment, a fear of making mistakes, and a fear of being misunderstood. Other Second language learners shear these factors, however, some aspects of these were enhanced by another factor, which is social factor.

The second theme that emerged from this study is *social-cultural factors* that shape the behavior of Saudi female students and limit their interactions both within and outside the classroom. This includes the deference to male opinion, the cultural restraints on socializing (i.e., the need to avoid unrelated males), the need to have mahram to manage all business interactions, the sudden exposure to co-educational classes and the sudden exposure to male teachers. This also includes aspects of the school curriculum. That is, some topics of discussion in class were either “off-limits” or not relevant (lack of experience).

Finally, one could also understand that the existence of mahram and the tendency for Saudi female students to socialize together might provide protective functions that help to minimize the potential culture shock.

This study answered some questions but also identified a need for further explorations with this group. The information obtained through this study will benefit ESL schools in Canada and around the world, and ESL teachers. It also provides some useful information for the King Abdullah Scholarships program, and the Saudi ministry of higher education.

Recommendations

The results of this study provide several recommendations for teaching Saudi female students. One recommendation of this study is that schools should acknowledge culture differences in their curriculums and activities. The selection of topics should be devoid of things that might seriously interfere with values and beliefs of students. Topics that discuss the culture of the students would likely be more interesting. However, such would need to be conducted with a great deal of respect and sensitivity. For example, Chinese students could talk about their culture, and its norms and traditions. The same could be done with Korean, Brazilian, Saudi students and so on. Try to avoid topics that could make students uncomfortable to speak about (e.g., dating, love, etc.) especially for Saudi females.

For Saudi women particularly, activities that preclude men might be helpful. This would increase their chances to know other women, while avoiding some cultural issues.

ESL teachers and administrators should acknowledge the possible protective functions of the mahram and the tendency to associate within their own cultures. Instead of trying to prevent such activities, ESL teachers could work within the system. Encourage mahrams to accompany the woman, but ask the mahram to encourage the student to speak for herself. Encourage groups

of Saudi women to speak English. Provide them with texts to read as a group. It would not likely be perfect English, but it would likely be better than no English at all.

For beginner classes, it might be beneficial to have classes for women only. This would help to minimize the degree of culture shock. Such classes should be taught by women. As the students gain more familiarity with English and Western culture, they can move to co-educational classes.

There are obvious recommendations to create awareness among teachers about Saudi cultures and values. One recommendation would be that the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education as well as King Abdullah Scholarship Program provides workshops for Saudi females. These would be designed to raise awareness among Saudi females about the differences that they may encounter, and provide some solutions for dealing with those differences. Such workshops would be best presented before the women leave Saudi Arabia. The workshops could also prepare them for specific cultural issues such as shaking hand, or being too close, and being out of their comfort zone. Students could be provided with proper phrases to memorize for use in such situations. It is similar to a phrase book that provides statements like “Where is the bathroom?”, but tailored to the particular issues faced by Saudi women. Such things would enable Saudi females to go outside with more confidence about their ability to help themselves without need to someone or rely on their male relatives.

In public, Saudi female students are more likely to stand out because of the way they dress. That may make them hesitant to interact socially with the local people. The local people may not understand her culture, or she may feel that the local people do not understand her culture. In either case, she might fear that she would find herself in a situation where she cannot explain her culture and identity due to the lack of language ability. For example, she might fear

the situation where an unfamiliar male tries to begin a conversation with her. Fearing this, Saudi females may choose to limit their chances to go outside, which in turn limits their opportunities to interact and to improve their speaking ability. Ultimately, this lowers their social competence (within the foreign culture). That is, it is possible that, because their culture is so obviously unique, Saudi females avoid going out to minimize discomfort.

Saudi female students do respect the instructions of teachers, ESL teachers could help by giving Saudi female students a speaking homework. Teachers could ask students to do a short weekly presentation about public interactions that the student had experienced in the prior week or weekend. This would force Saudi female students to go outside to interact with native speakers, to practice their speaking, and to reduce their shyness. This would also help to ensure the equality of all students in class (particularly male female equality) because all would have to present.

ESL schools (and universities) could help Saudi female students by finding a conversational partner or group for each Saudi female that consists of non-Saudi females (e.g., one Saudi with one Korean, one Chinese, and one Brazilian). These groups could then practice speaking. The mix of cultures (backgrounds) would also insure that they all speak only English. This would benefit all of the individuals. It would also encourage an exchange of cultural knowledge and values. In fact, as shown in this work, culture has impact on ESL learners. ESL teachers cannot separate culture and language learning when teaching ESL students. As noted by Gassama, “It is worth knowing that the learning of language and culture are so intertwined that one cannot exist without the other (2012, p 3). To teach ESL, one must know and be sensitive to the cultural issues that students may have to deal with.

For ESL learners at university level (GPP, UP), who typically engage in academic studies (at least part time) in the university, the university should attend to the students as “culture and language learners” (accommodating their culture, values, beliefs, etc.) and not as simple “subject learners” (Spurling, 2007, p 114). Canadian universities have become popular among foreign students. According to Canadian Bureau for International Education (n.d.), “Canada ranks as the world’s 7th most popular destination for international students” (para. 1). The university should create a training program for faculty and provide additional language support program for international students. The academic environment assumes a degree of homogeneity among students such as similar subject matter knowledge (i.e., prior education) and similar cultural backgrounds. Such homogeneity makes teaching more efficient, and faculty often rely on the assumption of similar cultural backgrounds when creating examples for class, assignments and tests. However, some of those assumed structures (e.g., individual vs group work; standard gender roles; standard family structures; standard life paths; the legal system) are not universal and faculty need to be aware of differences. For example, universities could offer workshops, or informative pamphlets, to provide to faculty with increased awareness about culture differences that might affect teaching. The language support program could offer language exchanges, club activities, and volunteering to provide chance for students to associate with more people in the community. Gassama (2012) asserted “teacher training programs should start making their trainees think on a global level. Teacher training programs must help teachers change their worldly perspectives, thus empowering them to work successfully with the immigrant populations they serve” (p. 3).

Limitations

Questionnaire

Because the questionnaire is new, and because the research area is new, the accuracy of the questionnaire has some limits. This was discovered while participants were completing the questionnaire, and during data analysis. There were questions that were unclear for the participants. A number of items could be reworded. For example:

- Item 17 “I volunteer in order to improve my speaking skills” and Item 18 “I participate in leisure activities in schools or after schools in order to practice my speaking and listening skills” were unclear to participants. Participants who did not currently volunteer found them hard to answer. However, most participants would like to volunteer and would agree with the sentiments in Items 17 and 18. Many students were prevented from volunteering for external reasons. Thus, participants were encouraged to answer as if they volunteered
- Those items that referred to comfort speaking with other cultures (Items 6 to 12) were a bit confusing. Some of this structure was a result of the ethical review process.
 - I speak comfortably when the opposite sex is present only if they are from the same culture
 - I speak comfortably when the same sex is present only if they are from the same culture
 - I speak more confidently to others who are learning English as a second language.
 - I feel I am free to speak in English to my Classmates who speaks Arabic.
 - I feel I am free to speak in English to my Classmates who speaks a language other than Arabic or English.

The use of the questionnaire suffers from a lack of comparison groups. It would be better if the questionnaire were to be given to Saudi males and to non-Saudi males and females to be sure if the issues that the study discovered are truly unique to females from Saudi culture. It is

always better to use the same questionnaire across all the relevant groups to truly see what is going on. However, as noted previously, it would not be feasible for a female to interview Saudi males.

A common issue with questionnaires is that the results are based on self-reported measures of language learning experiences by the students. Consequently, the results depend on the ability of participants to respond accurately and honestly. This, in turn, assumes a degree of personal insight (i.e., that participants do know themselves) and that they want to help. The use of follow-up interviews helps to ensure that the data in the questionnaire is representative.

A small issue with the questionnaire is that it was presented in either Arabic or English, as suited the student. The translation was provided by the author. However, translations are rarely perfectly equivalent, and the equivalence of the translation has not been established.

Interviews

The interviews also had some methodological limitations. Firstly, there is the issue of sample size. It is difficult to trust inferences based on just four students. On the one hand, there was nothing to lead me to suspect that these four students were not representative of the general population. I was lucky enough to have different points of view: two participants were married, and one participant had a child. This provided some insight into the issues that a mother could face. The other Saudi females were single, which implied less responsibility in terms of housekeeping, and seemed somewhat less traditional (e.g., they participated in more activities). However, this range of participants does not mean they are representative of all Saudi female students in Halifax or the world.

Implications

The results of this study provide several implications for teaching Saudi female students. Firstly, one must be aware of the effect of culture on performance. It would seem that the majority of the performance limitations of Saudi female students are due to cultural issues, and not to personal issues (which they share with all ESL students). Secondly, ESL teachers should attempt to understand the functions of, and reasons for, particular social structures (e.g., co-ed classes, the mahram). ESL teachers should try to work within that structure rather than trying to break it or force students too far outside their comfort zone. That would make the learning context less stressful for all parties (female Saudi students, teachers, and other students).

One must realize that the number of female Saudi students in ESL classes is only likely to grow. As such, finding successful ways to integrate such students would be more rewarding in the long run. It would also likely be more financially beneficial (if altruism is not sufficient motivation).

Recommendation for Future Research

I have several recommendations for future research. First, studies can be conducted with both Saudi female and male students to examine the differences between them and to find the best way to facilitate their needs to meet their goals. Second, a study similar to this study can be done with other groups of Saudi students' experience studying in different ESL schools across the country so that the finding can be generalized. Third, throughout this research kind of two groups emerged; one group who were traditional and more conservative and one who were less traditional and more Westernized. Differences between these two groups could be explored more fully. Do these groups have fundamentally different needs? If so, how would individuals for each be identified and what resources would each group need?

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APPENDIX A - Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to understand your perceptions of your experience in learning English in a Canadian language school. All the questions pertain to your experience in learning to speak English as a Second Language (ESL). There are 4 parts to the questionnaire: General Information; Comfort Speaking with Others; Opportunities to Talk with Others; and, Classroom Experience. There are no right or wrong answers as we are only interested in your opinion about your experiences and preferences. All information will be strictly confidential and there is no way to identify you or your comments nor will any report of an individual nature be shared with anyone. Only group data will be gathered to help in recommending enhancements to the programs. Thank you very much for your kind help in this research.

❖ **Please answer the following question below:**

➤ General Information:

1. a. How long have you been studying English? _____ Months
 b. How long have you been in Canada? _____
2. Which level are you in now? Level _____
3. How would you rate your speaking ability using a scale of 1 – 7 with
 (1 being excellent, 2 being very good, 3 being good, 4 being fair, 5 being weak, 6 being
 very weak, and 7 being extremely weak). _____
4. Do you speak English in your house?
 ____ Always ____ Somewhat ____ Rarely ____ Never

❖ **Please put a check mark in a box on each line to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.**

A. Comfort Speaking with Others:

| Items | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 5. I speak freely when I feel others do not know English as well as I do. | | | | |
| 6. I speak comfortably when the opposite sex is present “only if they are from the same culture”. | | | | |
| 7. I speak comfortably when the same sex is present “only if they are from the same culture”. | | | | |
| 8. I speak more confidently to others who are learning English as a second language. | | | | |
| 9. I feel I am free to speak in English to my Classmate who speaks Arabic. | | | | |
| 10. I feel I am free to speak in English to my Classmate who speaks another language (except Arabic & English). | | | | |
| 11. I feel I am free to speak in English to my teachers or native speakers. | | | | |
| 12. I feel I understand spoken English better than I speak English. | | | | |

B. Opportunities to Talk with Others:

| Items | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 13. Being among people who are speaking English outside of my home helps me to improve my speaking ability. | | | | |
| 14. I try to speak even if I am risking embarrassment. (e.g. I involve myself in discussions when I have background information on the topic even when I don't have the right vocabulary to express what I want to say). | | | | |
| 15. I rely on other people such as friends, husband, brothers who speaks better than me to order or ask questions for me at restaurants, café, hospitals, information centers, etc. | | | | |
| 16. I go out in order to get the opportunity to speak and listen to native speakers. | | | | |
| 17. I volunteer in order to improve my speaking skills. | | | | |
| 18. I participate in leisure activities in school or after school in order to practice my speaking and listening skills. | | | | |

C. Classroom Experience:

| Items | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 19. ¹ Studying in co-ed classes has an effect on my speaking ability positively. | | | | |
| 20. Co-ed classroom settings are a hindrance/obstacle to improving my speaking ability. | | | | |
| 21. I get the same opportunity that boys get when practicing speaking and participating in class. | | | | |
| 22. I judge a student's success on their speaking ability more so than on their academic achievement. | | | | |
| 23. I avoid speaking and participating in class when I feel there are students from my home country who know English much better than me. | | | | |
| 24. I would like to change my classes to avoid being with opposite sex in the same class. | | | | |
| 25. I am afraid when I speak English that other students will laugh at me. | | | | |
| 26. I am afraid of making mistakes, (e.g. mispronouncing words) more than the lack of vocabulary. | | | | |
| 27. I feel oral communication is more important than writing and reading skills. | | | | |
| 28. I like working in pairs/groups when I participate in class. | | | | |

¹ Co-ed class means males and females studying together in the same place.

| Items | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-------------------|-------|----------|----------------------|
| 29. I like giving oral presentations in class. | | | | |
| 30. I avoid losing face by not speaking. | | | | |
| 31. I feel embarrassed if the teacher corrects me when I am speaking. | | | | |
| 32. I avoid speaking English to save myself from being evaluated on my linguistic ability by other people. | | | | |
| 33. I feel more embarrassed, nervous, and afraid of giving a wrong answer or making a mistake in speaking than I am of making a mistake in writing and reading. | | | | |
| 34. I focus more on improving my speaking than on improving other skills such as writing and reading | | | | |
| 35. I focus more on learning how to speak fluently than on using perfect grammar. | | | | |

❖ **Please rank the following in order of importance to you**

36. Which of the following gives you more confidence when using English as second language?

_____ Writing.

_____ Speaking.

_____ Reading.

37. Which of the following do you want to increase mastery of or improve most?

_____ Writing.

_____ Speaking.

_____ Reading.

38. If you had the option to choose, which classes would you want to focus more on?

_____ Writing.

_____ Speaking.

_____ Reading.

Please add any comments you feel would be helpful to this study in understanding your experiences learning English as a Saudi female student. (Comments, suggestions, concerns, etc)

Thank you for your cooperation. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Fred French at (902) 457-6186 or frederick.french@msvu.ca who is the thesis supervisor or myself Arwa Mohammed Altamimi at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca

APPENDIX B – Students (Interview Questions)

1. Tell me about your experience being in a foreign country (Is this first time you have ever visited a foreign country? If not, where were you before? Is it similar to your home country or not? Do you travel alone or with someone to accompany you)? Please explain.
2. How long have you been studying English and which level are you in now?
3. Tell me about your experience with learning to speak English as second language?
4. Tell me how comfortable you feel in speaking, reading, writing and listening. Are there any areas you want to improve? Please explain your reasons for wanting to improve?
5. How would you rate your speaking ability? Are you satisfied with your level of language? If not, what do you think inhibits your ability to improve your speaking? What do you think contributes to speaking fluently? Have these factors influenced you either positively or negatively?
6. Tell me about your experience in a different culture and how this affects your speaking ability.
7. Tell me about your willingness to risk speaking English to others in order to explain or answer questions with your level of vocabulary?
8. Tell me about talking with other people. Please describe situations when you tried to get involved in a conversation but were not able to express yourself due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary.
9. What has been your experience in dealing with other people, who speak only English (i.e. when you are in a restaurant, shopping, in hospital, etc.)?
10. Do you speak on behalf of yourself or do you rely on others (i.e. your husband, brother, friend) so that you avoid embarrassment and save face? If so why, please explain and

give examples.

11. Being among people outside of your home helps you to improve your speaking ability and gives you the opportunity to speak and listen to native speakers. To what degree do you believe this is true? Give me an example of an experience you've had.
12. When you are at school or out in the community, are you usually on your own or do you always go with friends who speak Arabic?
13. Please give me your opinion about this (do you think being with a group of Saudi females at school or out in the community reduces your chances of interacting with others who speak English or who are learning to speak English?)
14. Would you be willing to participate in leisure activities or volunteering in your school or out in the community if the opportunity was presented to you? If there are obstacles that prevent you from doing so, please describe them in more detail.
15. Where do you feel you can practice your speaking and listening that could help you to improve your skills?
16. Tell me how you feel when speaking with each of the following groups:
 - Classmates who are learning English as a second language.
 - Classmates who speak Arabic.
 - Teachers and/or speakers whose first language is English.
17. Please share your perceptions of having to work with someone else or in a group relative to your comfort with your expressive language and talking in a group.
18. Please share your perception of having to give an oral presentation in class.
19. Describe your experience when you speak to others who are not as proficient as you in

English, do you speak freely and with more confidence? Please comment.

20. Describe how you feel when you are in a group of students who speak English better than you.
21. What have been the major obstacles that affect your speaking practice and ability? How have you dealt with them?
22. Do co-ed classes affect your speaking practices and ability? If so, please explain how.
23. Would you be willing to switch classes to avoid being in co-ed classes if that were an option?
24. How do you evaluate your own success and the success of others in learning English?
25. Are there any other comments you would like to offer or questions you might have regarding the study?

APPENDIX C – Teachers (Interview Questions)

1. In general, how would you describe the Saudi female students you have taught?
2. In your experience, are there factors that impact Saudi females in their oral communication in class?
3. Please comment on each of the following language skills and how you find female Saudi students perform in each area when learning ESL (writing, reading, listening, speaking)?
4. Do you see that boys and girls take the same opportunities to speak and participate in class? Please comment.
5. Have you noticed and/or what are your thoughts on females switching into classes that do not have men? If so, is this common?
6. Do females who are in a class of all women speak more freely than those girls in co-ed classes? Please elaborate.
7. What if any differences in speaking abilities do you notice between male and female Saudi students?
8. Are there other comments you would like to add?

APPENDIX D - Receptionists (Interview Questions)

1. In general, please share your thoughts on female Saudi students and their oral communication skills.
2. What if any differences have you noticed regarding confidence and fluency levels among Saudi males and females relative to each other and other beginning students in an ESL program?
3. What if any differences have you noticed between Saudi men and women as to who is more willing to speak and ask about their needs (i.e. documents to be sent to the Saudi bureau, directions to places in Halifax, help to fill out visa applications, etc.)?
4. Are Saudi female students willing to speak to you and ask their own questions or do you find that they rely on their husband/friend/brother, etc. to ask questions for them?
5. Based on your experience, how do you see Saudi girls interacting in school?

APPENDIX E - In-Class Completion

Dear Student,

My name is Arwa Mohammed Altamimi, and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Educational Psychology) program at MSVU. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on the perceptions of students, faculty and staff regarding the experiences of Saudi female students in Canadian pre-academic English as Second Language settings (ESL). All participants will be 19 years of age or older. The goal of this research is to expand current knowledge regarding the experiences of Saudi female students as second language learners in a foreign country particularly with regard to oral communication skills.

I am requesting that you complete the questionnaire. All measures require you to respond using either a 4 point Likert scale, short answer, or check box format. Estimated time for completion is 10 - 15 minutes.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions on these measures that cause you discomfort. All information will be confidential and no identifying information will be required on any measure. The focus is on group results. All measures will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the research supervisor's office until the information is coded and entered on a **password protected computer**. Hard copies of the measures will be shredded **once the thesis is completed**. To allow time for dissemination of the information through conference presentations and published articles, electronic data files will be kept for five years following the thesis defense and then deleted from the computer.

If you choose to participate in this research, please complete the questionnaire. Should you need any clarification regarding any of the questions please ask me as I will remain in the room until everyone is finished. Place your completed measures in the envelope provided and then in the box at the front of the room. If you choose not to participate, just place your research envelope in the box. The process should take approximately 10 - 15 minutes. If you would like a summary of the research findings, please keep this letter and contact me at the e-mail address noted below.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, Arwa Mohammed Altamimi at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Fred French, at frederick.french@msvu.ca. If you have any questions regarding how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Thank you for participating in my research project. It is my hope that this research will result in recommendations to enhance ESL Programs for female Saudi students.

Sincerely,
Arwa Altamimi
Graduate Student, MSVU

APPENDIX F - Student Completes and returns Envelope the Next Class

Dear Student,

My name is Arwa Mohammed Altamimi, and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Educational Psychology) program at MSVU. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on the perceptions of students, faculty and staff regarding the experiences of Saudi female students in Canadian pre-academic English as Second Language settings (ESL). All participants will be 19 years of age or older. The goal of this research is to expand current knowledge regarding the experiences of Saudi female students as second language learners in a foreign country particularly with regard to oral communication skills.

I am requesting that you complete the questionnaire. All measures require you to respond using either a 4 point Likert scale, short answer, or check box format. Estimated time for completion is 10 - 15 minutes.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions on these measures that cause you discomfort. All information will be confidential and no identifying information will be required on any measure. The focus is on group results. All measures will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the research supervisor's office until the information is coded and entered on a **password protected computer**. Hard copies of the measures will be shredded once the **thesis is completed**. To allow time for dissemination of the information through conference presentations and published articles, electronic data files will be kept for five years following the thesis defense and then deleted from the computer.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and place it in the envelope. I will pick up your research envelope at the **end** of your next class in this course. The process should take approximately 10 - 15 minutes. If you would like a summary of the research findings, keep this letter and contact me at the e-mail address noted below.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, Arwa Mohammed Altamimi at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Fred French, at frederick.french@msvu.ca. If you have any questions regarding how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Thank you for participating in my research project. It is my hope that this research will result in recommendations to enhance ESL Programs for female Saudi students.

Sincerely,
Arwa Altamimi
Graduate Student, MSVU

APPENDIX G - Letter of Information (Semi-Structured Interview)

Dear _____,

My name is Arwa Mohammed Altamimi, and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Educational Psychology) program at MSVU. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on the perceptions of students, faculty and staff regarding the experiences of Saudi female students in Canadian pre-academic English as Second Language settings (ESL). All participants will be 19 years of age or older. The goal of this research is to expand current knowledge regarding the experiences of Saudi female students as second language learners in a foreign country particularly with regard to oral communication skills.

You are invited to be a part of this study. You will be interviewed alone at your school. The interview period will be no longer than two hours. All the questions are in regard to your experience in learning (to speak) English as second language. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and notes will be taken by the researcher during the interview. The recorded and written notes will be transcribed and kept under lock and key at Mount Saint Vincent University until the research is completed at which time it will be destroyed. The transcribed notes will be recorded verbatim and your name will be replaced with a number or a pseudonym. The only individuals who will access the information are the researcher, transcriber and my two thesis committee members. The purpose of doing the interview is to get in-depth insight of Saudi female students' experience with speaking English in Canada. This information will assist in learning what type of recommendations can be made to support students.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions on these measures that cause you discomfort. All information will be confidential and no identifying information will be required on any measure. The focus is on group results. All measures will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the research supervisor's office until the information is coded and entered on a **password protected computer**. Hard copies of the measures will be shredded **once the thesis is completed**. To allow time for dissemination of the information through conference presentations and published articles, electronic data files will be kept for five years following the thesis defense and then deleted from the computer.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, Arwa Mohammed Altamimi at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Fred French, at frederick.french@msvu.ca. If you have any questions regarding how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Thank you for participating in my research project. It is my hope that this research will result in recommendations to enhance ESL Programs for female Saudi students.

Sincerely,
Arwa Altamimi
Graduate Student, MSVU

APPENDIX H - Informed Consent Form (Semi-Structured Interview)

I have read and understood the letter of information for this study, and I understand that I am invited to take part in this study entitled “Potential Challenges Encountered by Saudi Female Students in Canadian Pre-academic English for Second Language (ESL) Setting”. The purpose of the study has been explained to me and I understand the purpose and procedures of this study. I understand that this interview will take approximately two hours to complete.

I have been informed that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time without any penalty. If I chose to withdraw, any information that had been collected on me will be shredded and my tape destroyed. I understand that participating in this study or not, will not affect my future with the school. I understand that all my responses will remain anonymous, confidential, and securely stored in MSVU database. I have been notified that all my responses will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

I have been notified that I am welcome to contact the researcher if I have any questions or concerns regarding this study via the researcher’s e-mail arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or the thesis supervisor Dr. Fred French by email at frederick.french@msvu.ca or by phone at (902) 457-6186.

Name of participant: _____. Signature: _____.
Date: _____.

If you would like to receive a copy of the research finding, please write down your e-mail address: _____.

APPENDIX I - Letter of Information (Semi-Structured Interview)

Dear _____,

My name is Arwa Mohammed Altamimi, and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Educational Psychology) program at MSVU. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on the perceptions of students, faculty and staff regarding the experiences of Saudi female students in Canadian pre-academic English as Second Language settings (ESL). All participants will be 19 years of age or older. The goal of this research is to expand current knowledge regarding the experiences of Saudi female students as second language learners in a foreign country particularly with regard to oral communication skills.

You are invited to be a part of this study. You will be interviewed alone at your school. The interview period will be no longer than two hours. All the questions are in regard to your experience in working at ESL school. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and notes will be taken by the researcher during the interview. The recorded and written notes will be transcribed and kept under lock and key at Mount Saint Vincent University until the research is completed at which time it will be destroyed. The transcribed notes will be recorded verbatim and your name will be replaced with a number or a pseudonym. The only individuals who will access the information are the researcher, transcriber and my two thesis committee members. The purpose of doing the interview is to get in-depth insight of Saudi female students' experience with speaking English in Canada. This information will assist in learning what type of recommendations can be made to support students.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions on these measures that cause you discomfort. All information will be confidential and no identifying information will be required on any measure. The focus is on group results. All measures will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the research supervisor's office until the information is coded and entered on a **password protected computer**. Hard copies of the measures will be shredded **once the thesis is completed**. To allow time for dissemination of the information through conference presentations and published articles, electronic data files will be kept for five years following the thesis defense and then deleted from the computer.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, Arwa Mohammed Altamimi at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Fred French, at frederick.french@msvu.ca. If you have any questions regarding how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Thank you for participating in my research project. It is my hope that this research will result in recommendations to enhance ESL Programs for female Saudi students.

Sincerely,

Arwa Altamimi

Graduate Student, MSVU

***APPENDIX J - Information Letter re: Interviews and Questionnaire (to the
Director of the English Language School)***

Dear Director,

My name is Arwa Mohammed Altamimi, and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts (Educational Psychology) program at MSVU. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research on the perceptions of students, faculty and staff regarding the experiences of Saudi female students in Canadian pre-academic English as Second Language settings (ESL). All participants will be 19 years of age or older. The goal of this research is to expand current knowledge regarding the experiences of Saudi female students as second language learners in a foreign country particularly with regard to oral communication skills.

With your permission, I would like to conduct interviews with some of your teachers, the receptionist, and some of your Saudi female students in your school. I would also like to distribute a questionnaire for only Saudi female students. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. If possible, I would like to have all the Saudi female students complete the questionnaire during one of the overtime classes that the Saudi Culture Bureau requires for their students.

Your help would be greatly appreciated in this undertaking. It is my intent that the information will contribute to the development of a series of recommendations that will hopefully support the students in positive ways.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and they may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time. All the responses will remain anonymous, confidential, and securely stored in an MSVU database. Only the researcher, two thesis committee members and the transcriber will have access to the database. The information gathered at your school will be shared at conferences, and in journal articles. There will be no information in written or oral reports that will identify your school, teachers, receptionist or students.

Thank you so much for considering this request. If you have any questions, please contact me at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Fred French at frederick.french@msvu.ca or at 457-6186. If you have any questions regarding how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca. If you are interested in the study results and wish to have a copy of this study, please provide your information contact by e-mailing me at arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or the thesis supervisor Dr. Frederick French by email at frederick.french@msvu.ca or by phone at (902) 457-6186.

Sincerely,
Arwa Altamimi
Graduate Student, MSVU

APEENDIX K - Informed Consent Form re: Interviews and Questionnaire (to the Director of the English Language School)

I have read and understood the letter of information for this study, and I understand that I am invited to take part in this study entitled “Potential Challenges Encountered by Saudi Female Students in Canadian Pre-academic English for Second Language (ESL) Setting”. The purpose of the study has been explained to me and I understand the purpose and procedures of this study. I understand that this interview will take approximately than two hours to complete and completion of the questionnaire will take approximately 10 – 15 minutes.

I have been informed that my school’s participation in this study is completely voluntary and I may withdraw my school from the study for any reason, at any time without any penalty. If I chose to withdraw, any information that had been collected on me will be shredded and my tape destroyed. I understand that all information gathered at my school will remain anonymous, confidential, and securely stored in an MSVU database. I have been notified that all responses given by students, teachers and receptionists at my school will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher and research assistant.

I have been notified that I am welcome to contact the researcher if I have any questions or concerns regarding this study via the researcher’s e-mail arwa.altamimi@msvu.ca or the thesis supervisor Dr. Fred French by email at frederick.french@msvu.ca or by phone at (902) 457-6186. As well, I understand that if I have any questions regarding how this study is being conducted, I may contact the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International office at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Name of School Director: _____. Signature: _____. Date: _____.

If you would like to receive a copy of the research finding, please write down your e-mail address: _____.

Appendix L - Questionnaire Reliability Analysis

In this section, a more detailed analysis of the questionnaire is presented. For each section, this includes an analysis of the mean differences between items and a reliabilities analysis. Because the sections had very different goals, the reliability analysis for the entire questionnaire was not computed. For all sections, items that were reverse coded were inverted before the analysis. The analysis of the differences between means helps to establish the validity of each section of the questionnaire. The items should demonstrate logical structured differences between means. A lack of differences implies that participants do not attend to the questions while responding (e.g., participants simply select the same [middle] response; participants respond “randomly”). Comparisons of means were conducted using within-subjects ANOVA to establish the overall difference, followed by series of paired t-tests to compare individual items.

All analysis also considered the correlations between items. Correlations provide information about how the various items relate to each other. Items that tap the same basic idea or construct should have a positive correlation. If Items A and B assess the same construct, participants who score high on Item A should also score high on Item B, and participants who score low on Item A should also score low on Item B. This logic extends to all items that contribute to one section of a questionnaire. Hence, an examination of the correlations between items can help to determine whether or not all the items do, in fact, assess the same construct.

It should be acknowledged that there are a lot of correlations. As such, there are some concerns about Type I Error rate. That is, it is possible that some correlations are “significant” just by chance. To avoid over-interpreting such accidental (or spurious) correlations, it is important to consider the pattern of correlations -- not the correlations in isolation. It is also important to work from theory as much as possible. For that reason, each section is analyzed separately first and then the sections are compared. Within a section, the correlations should be “high” (relatively) and sensible. Between sections, it is more difficult to predict.

The significances for the correlations are reported for $p < .05$, $p < .01$ and $p < .005$. One could focus attention on only those correlations that are above a meaningful threshold. One standard threshold is $r = .316$ because this implies that the two items share 10% of their variance (10% of their information). In fact, this is the standard used in most factor analyses. Other criteria could be $r = .500$ (explaining 25%) or even $r = .707$ (explaining 50%). For the analyses reported herein, correlations above about $r = .30$ were significant ($p < .05$), so that served as a

useful criterion. Note that sample sizes vary for the different analysis, so a single exact p-value for all analyses is not possible.

A reliabilities analysis is primarily used to assess the reliability of a questionnaire (or subscale of a questionnaire). A reliabilities analysis is typically used when the intent is to add up all the items to create a single total (or average) score per section. That was not the case for the current work, but the analysis is still useful because it focuses attention on how the individual items work together to capture the breadth of the concept being tested. Reliabilities analysis is fundamentally based on the correlations between items. In fact, reliabilities analysis is really about the *average* (or *mean*) correlation between all the items that make up one section of the questionnaire.

Reliability analysis is a little more complex than implied above. A reliable questionnaire is one in which all the correlations between items are positive, and typically in the $r = .3$ to $r = .5$ range. There is no absolute cutoff. However, negative correlations are “bad” because negative correlations imply that Item A is the opposite of Item B (assess the “opposite construct”). Correlations near 0 are “undesirable” because they imply that Items A and B are not related to each other at all (the items assess “different” constructs). However, correlations above .8 or so are also “undesirable” but for a different reason. If the correlation is too high, it means that Items A and B are too similar (too much overlap). As such, one could be replaced with another *different* item to capture more breadth. Questionnaire design is always a compromise. One must cover the breadth of the intended concept (i.e., all aspects of the construct being measured), and yet, one must try to minimize the number of items to avoid boring or exhausting the respondent. If a questionnaire is too long, the respondents will not provide accurate careful responses. Hence, one wants to ensure that each item is useful. Correlations that are above .8 or so imply that one of the two items is not useful.

The most common measure of reliability is the *Chronbach's alpha* (α). *Chronbach's alpha* is, *essentially*, the average correlation -- but it is transformed to consider the number of items that go into the average. *Chronbach's alpha* ranges from $\alpha = 0$ to $\alpha = 1$, with 0 being “bad” and 1 being “good”. Most sources would cite the minimum acceptable value as $\alpha = .7$ (though there is not absolute cutoff, or universally agreed upon standard). One would typically get an $\alpha > .7$ if the individual correlation were to be in the range of $r = .3$ to $.5$.

The *Cronbach's α if Item Deleted* is another useful tool for interpretation. It is the change in the overall α if that particular item were to be removed from the questionnaire. Ideally deleting an item should make the questionnaire worse -- the α should go *down*. However, if the α were to increase, then one can conclude that the item does not belong, or is at least questionable.

For each item the R^2 is another tool. The R^2 is the correlation between the item and the best combination of all the remaining items. If an item “belongs” with the rest, then the R^2 should be relatively high. Values above .2 or .3 are considered acceptable (though, again, there is no absolute cutoff or universally agreed upon standard). Technically, the R^2 is computed by selecting one item from the set. That item is then considered to be a dependent variable (DV; a.k.a. a criterion variable). Then all the remaining items are used as independent variables (IV: a.k.a., predictor variables, or “vectors”) in a multiple regression to predict that one DV. Hence, the R^2 is the degree to which that one item overlaps with all the rest. Note that the simple correlations (discussed in the main text) are the degree to which the one item overlaps with *each* of the rest *individually*.

The analysis of mean differences and the reliability analysis was applied to each section of the questionnaire separately.

Comfort Speaking with Others

A within-subjects ANOVA (WS-ANOVA; a.k.a. repeated measures ANOVA, correlated samples ANOVA) was used to compare the mean ratings per item. The WS-ANOVA tests the hypothesis that the means are all equal to each other. If the WS-ANOVA is “not-significant” ($p > .05$), then *all* means are not different from each other (i.e., the mean ratings per question are the same). Conversely, if the WS-ANOVA is “significant” ($p < .05$), then *some* means are different from each other (i.e., *at least one* mean is different from the rest). Unfortunately, the WS-ANOVA does not actually say which mean is different. One must look at the means or use a follow-up (i.e., planned or post-hoc) test.

For the eight items of this section the WS-ANOVA was significant with $F(7,406) = 25.91$ ($p < .005$) indicating that at least one mean was different. The effect size of $\eta^2 = .309$ was reasonable. That is, about 31% of the differences between scores is due to the question being asked (the other 69% is “noise” or randomly different responding by participants). Effect sizes range from $\eta^2 = 0$, which indicates that the questions have *no* effect on scores, to $\eta^2 = 1.00$, which implies that the questions are the sole cause of differences between the scores.

As noted above, the significant WS-ANOVA does not indicate which means are different. Hence, the WS-ANOVA was followed with an analysis that compared each pair of means using the Fisher LSD procedure (i.e., a simple within-subjects t-test for each pair of means). The results are presented in Table J.1. Table AJ.1 presents the mean for each item (replicating Table 4.5) and the mean difference between each pair of items (i.e., the mean for Question 5 was 1.61 and the mean for Question 6 was 2.92, so the differences was $1.61 - 2.92 = -1.31$). Those differences that were significant are bolded.

Table J.1.

Differences Between Means for Items of Comfort Speaking with Others

| Item # | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------|
| means | 1.61 | 2.92 | 1.71 | 1.78 | 2.00 | 1.85 | 1.86 | 1.41 |
| 5 | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | -1.31 | | | | | | | |
| 7 | -0.10 | 1.20 | | | | | | |
| 8 | -0.17 | 1.14 | -0.07 | | | | | |
| 9 | -0.39 | 0.92 | -0.29 | -0.22 | | | | |
| 10 | -0.24 | 1.07 | -0.14 | -0.07 | 0.15 | | | |
| 11 | -0.25 | 1.05 | -0.15 | -0.09 | 0.14 | -0.02 | | |
| 12 | 0.20 | 1.51 | 0.31 | 0.37 | 0.59 | 0.44 | -0.46 | |

Note: Bolded is significantly different with $p < .05$.

Firstly, the mean for Item 6 is different from all the rest. Hence, female Saudi students are much less comfortable speaking in front of male Saudi students.

Secondly, the mean for Item 12 is different from all the others except Item 6. This is not surprising because Item 12 assesses a somewhat different construct than the rest. Finally, the rest of the items show only minimal differences. That is, Item 5 is different from Items 9 and 10: Participants are more comfortable speaking with someone who is less proficient than with someone who speaks Arabic (Item 9), or to a generic ESL individual (Item 10). Some might not that the mean difference of 0.24 between Items 5 and 10 is “significant” while the very similar – but larger -- difference of 0.25. This is because the paired t-test is affected by the standard deviations and the correlations between the items (not just the size of the mean difference). Item 7 is also different from Item 9 such that female Saudi students are more content to speak with other female Saudi students than they are to speak with other Arabic students (which would

include males). Note that Item 8, 9, 10, and 11 do not show any differences. Participants are equally comfortable speaking to others who are learning English, to classmates who speaks Arabic, to classmates who speak languages other than Arabic or English, and to teachers.

The correlations between all the items are presented in Table J.2. The correlation is used to assess whether or not participants respond to the same way to different items. It used to see if two items “go together”. It is a measure of the “relationship” between items or the “overlap” between items. If the correlation is near 1, participants respond in the same way to the two items. If the correlation is near -1, participants respond in *opposite* ways to the two items. If the correlation is near 0, then there is no relationship between the responses for the two items. In this analysis, one would expect to see generally positive correlations because all of the items were coded such that lower values (values near 1) implied more confidence (or less anxiety). That is, a pattern in which all the correlations are positive would imply that some participants are more anxious in *all* situations, while others are more comfortable in *all* situations. On the other hand, a pattern in which the correlations are a mix of negative and positive values would imply that some participants are comfortable in Situation A and anxious in Situation B, while other participants are anxious in Situation A and comfortable in Situation B.

Note that, in Table J.2, the correlations are generally positive, even though they are not “large” (close to 1 or -1). Those that are significant are bolded. Significance simply means that one can “trust” the assessment of the relationship between the two items. If the correlation is not significant, then it is likely that there is no relationship, or that the relationship is weak.

Table J.2.

Correlations for the Items of Comfort Speaking with Others.

| Item # | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----|-----|----|
| 5 | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | .16 | | | | | | | |
| 7 | .09 | .37 | | | | | | |
| 8 | .32 | .30 | .30 | | | | | |
| 9 | .00 | .15 | .11 | .06 | | | | |
| 10 | .22 | .24 | .12 | .46 | .13 | | | |
| 11 | -.04 | -.22 | -.05 | -.08 | -.26 | .08 | | |
| 12 | .15 | .37 | -.09 | .12 | -.12 | .10 | .05 | |

Note: For N = 59, $r > .256$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .334$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .364$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The highest correlation is between Items 8 and 10 ($r = .46$). This implies that, *in general*, those who gave a low response to Item 8 (i.e., a score near 1) tended to also give a low response to Item 10, and those who gave a high response to Item 8 (i.e., a score near 4) tended to also give a high score to Item 10. The other high correlations were between Items 5 and 8, 6 and 8, 7 and 8, as well as 6 and 7.

The lowest correlation is between Items 9 and 11 ($r = -.26$). This implies that, *in general*, those who gave a low response to Item 9 (i.e., a score near 1) tended to give a high response to Item 11 (i.e., as score near 4), and those who gave a high response to Item 6 (i.e., a score near 4) tended to give a low score to Item 11 (i.e., a score near 1). That is, the scores are opposite.

The remaining correlations were near to zero (not significantly different from zero), implying that there was no relationship or a weak relationship. For example, the correlation between Items 5 and 10 is $r = .00$. This implies that some people provided high scores on both 5 and 9, some provided low scores on both 5 and 9, some were high on 5 and low on 9 and some were low on 5 and high on 9.

To interpret the pattern of correlations, note that the correlations between Items 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 are all positive, and most are significant. This implies that those who are the least comfortable speaking in one context (to other students, to females of the same culture, to males of the same culture) are the least comfortable speaking in another context. That is, they are simply anxious in all situations. The correlation between Items 6 and 7 is fairly high. Those who are the least comfortable speaking with Saudi males are also the least comfortable speaking with Saudi females. This is important because it implies that there are *not* two subgroups of participants (one that prefers speaking to males and one that prefers speaking to females). The mean for Item 6 was high, while the mean for Item 7 was low. Hence, female Saudi students are uncomfortable speaking in front of Saudi males, but those who are the least comfortable in front of males are also the least comfortable in front of females. Items 9 and 10 also have positive correlations with Items 6 and 7, but they are not large (i.e., not significant). The fact that they are all positive implies that some participants are simply more anxious in all conversational situations. Note that Items 9 and 10 implicitly ask about speaking to either males or females while Items 6 and 7 separate the sexes.

Items 5, 8 and 10 also have high correlations and low means. However, Item 9 is *not* correlated with Items 5, 8, or 10, and Item 9 has a higher mean. Altogether, this implies that the shared experience as ESL students helps to reduce anxiety, but that this reduction is better when the other person does not speak Saudi.

Item 11 is generally not correlated with the rest. Given the relatively low mean, it implies that all participants are equally confident when speaking to teachers. That is, those who are anxious speaking in front of other students are as comfortable speaking to teachers as those who are comfortable speaking in front of other students. The only exception is that those who are most comfortable speaking to teachers (Item 11) are the most *anxious* speaking in front of Saudi speakers (Item 9).

Finally, Item 12 is generally not related to the rest. This is not surprising given that it expresses a different content area. However, it is intriguing that the female Saudi students who do *not* feel that understand English better than they speak it, are the same people who prefer to speak to Saudi males.

For these eight items, *Cronbach's alpha* is only $\alpha = .502$. If the intent were to treat this section as a single one-dimensional questionnaire, then overall, the reliability is lower than desirable. Table J.3 presents the other useful information. The *Cronbach's α if Item Deleted* is the most useful. Note that, in this case, deleting either Items 9 or 11 would create a better questionnaire. If one were delete Item 9, the α would increase from $\alpha = .502$ to .541. If one were to delete Item 11, the α would increase from $\alpha = .502$ to .603. These are fairly substantial improvements. Hence, one would be advised to redesign these items (or to place these in a different section of the questionnaire).

For each item, Table J.3 provides the R^2 . For example, in the first line, the $R^2 = .124$ for Item 5. Technically, this means that if Item 5 were to be used as a DV and Items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are used as IVs in a multiple regression, the R^2 would be .124. As noted, one would like these to be above .2. Hence, the R^2 's for Items 5, 9 and 11 are not as high as one would like.

Together, the *Cronbach's α if Item Deleted* and the R^2 imply that Items 9 and 11 tap a different construct than Items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12. This may reflect the fact that Item 9 combines discussion of female and male Arabic speakers (hence confuses the issue of male/female distinctions). For Item 11, it may mean that teachers are conceptualized in a manner that is different from other ESL students.

Table J.3.

Reliabilities for the Items of Comfort Speaking with Others.

| Item # | R ² | α if Item Deleted | Change from Initial Value |
|--------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 5 | .124 | .454 | -.048 |
| 6 | .391 | .390 | -.112 |
| 7 | .253 | .453 | -.049 |
| 8 | .337 | .361 | -.141 |
| 9 | .119 | .541 | .039 |
| 10 | .268 | .384 | -.118 |
| 11 | .152 | .603 | .101 |
| 12 | .247 | .486 | -.016 |

Opportunities to Talk with Others

The same WS-ANOVA was used to compare the mean ratings between the 6 items in the second section. The ANOVA indicated that the means were different with $F(5,290) = 26.85$, $p < .005$, with a reasonable effect size of $\eta^2 = .315$ (for η^2 , 0 is no effect and 1.00 is a huge effect).

The differences between means are presented in Table J.4.

Table J.4.

Differences Between Means for the Items of Opportunities to Talk with Others

| Item # | 13 | 14 | 15R | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------|------|
| means | 1.34 | 1.81 | 2.71 | 1.88 | 2.27 | 2.14 |
| 13 | | | | | | |
| 14 | -0.48 | | | | | |
| 15R | -1.37 | -0.90 | | | | |
| 16 | -0.54 | -0.07 | 0.83 | | | |
| 17 | -0.93 | -0.46 | 0.44 | -0.39 | | |
| 18 | -0.80 | -0.32 | 0.58 | -0.25 | 0.14 | |

Note: Bolded is significantly different with $p < .05$.

Note that most of the means are different. The ranking of support is Item 13, 14, 16, 18, 17 and then 15R. However, Item 14 is not different from Item 16, and Item 16 is not different from Item 18, and Item 18 is not different from Item 17. More participants support the general notion that

one should practice English with English speaking individuals. (Item 13) than the specific ideals of risking embarrassment to learn English (Item 14), than actively seeking contact with native speakers (Item 16), than engaging in leisure activities to practice English (Item 19), than volunteering to practice English (Item 17). All agree that one should not rely on others (Item 15R).

The correlations between all the items are generally positive (see Table J.5) although most are not significant. The highest correlations are between Items 17 and 18 and between 15R and 17.

Table J.5.

Correlations for the Items of Opportunities to Talk with Others

| Item # | 13 | 14 | 15R | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|--------|-----|-----|------------|-----|------------|----|
| 13 | | | | | | |
| 14 | .24 | | | | | |
| 15R | .10 | .03 | | | | |
| 16 | .18 | .16 | .05 | | | |
| 17 | .02 | .10 | .30 | .23 | | |
| 18 | .05 | .05 | .20 | .06 | .35 | |

Note: For N = 59, $r > .256$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .334$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .364$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The correlation between Items 17 and 18 implies the willingness to volunteer is related to participation in leisure activities outside the home. The correlation between Items 15R and 17 implies that volunteering is incompatible with relying on others. More generally, the fact that all the correlations are positive implies that those participants who practice their English in one situations (e.g., in restaurants) are more likely to practice their English in other situations (e.g., leisure activities).

For this section, the *Cronbach's alpha* was $\alpha = .502$ (that is the same as Section 1, but it is not an error) If the intent were to treat this section as a uni-dimensional questionnaire, then overall, this reliability was lower than desirable.

Table J.6 presents the *Cronbach's α if Item Deleted* and the R^2 for each item. Note that the deletion of any item would lower the α . In some sense, all are necessary. Note that the R^2 's are a bit low. In some sense, they individual items are not strongly related to each other, which is

why they are all necessary. That is, the individual items capture breadth, but the collection may be missing some depth.

Table J.6.

Reliabilities Analysis for the Items of Opportunities to Talk with Others

| Item # | R ² | α if Item Deleted | Change from Initial Value |
|--------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 13 | .089 | .484 | -.018 |
| 14 | .077 | .489 | -.013 |
| 15R | .110 | .459 | -.043 |
| 16 | .094 | .471 | -.031 |
| 17 | .223 | .367 | -.135 |
| 18 | .132 | .446 | -.056 |

Classroom Experience

The final section officially consisted of 13 items. The same WS-ANOVA was used to compare the mean ratings per item. That ANOVA indicated that the means were different with $F(12,600) = 5.64$, $p < .005$ with a small effect size of $\eta^2 = .101$ (for η^2 , 0 is no effect and 1.00 is a huge effect). The differences between means are presented in Table J.7.

Table J.7.

Differences Between Means of Items for Classroom Experience

| Item # | 19 | 20R | 21 | 22 | 23R | 24R | 25R | 26R | 28 | 29 | 30R | 31R | 32R |
|--------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------|
| means | 2.55 | 2.59 | 2.12 | 2.20 | 2.37 | 2.67 | 2.00 | 2.45 | 2.10 | 2.20 | 2.02 | 1.76 | 2.10 |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20R | -0.04 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 0.43 | 0.47 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 0.35 | 0.39 | -0.08 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23R | 0.18 | 0.22 | -0.26 | -0.18 | | | | | | | | | |
| 24R | -0.12 | -0.08 | -0.55 | -0.47 | -0.29 | | | | | | | | |
| 25R | 0.55 | 0.59 | 0.12 | 0.20 | 0.37 | 0.67 | | | | | | | |
| 26R | 0.10 | 0.14 | -0.33 | -0.26 | -0.08 | 0.22 | -0.45 | | | | | | |
| 28 | 0.45 | 0.49 | 0.02 | 0.10 | 0.28 | 0.57 | -0.10 | 0.35 | | | | | |
| 29 | 0.35 | 0.39 | -0.08 | 0.00 | 0.18 | 0.47 | -0.20 | 0.26 | -0.10 | | | | |
| 30R | 0.53 | 0.57 | 0.10 | 0.18 | 0.35 | 0.65 | -0.02 | 0.43 | 0.08 | 0.18 | | | |
| 31R | 0.78 | 0.82 | 0.35 | 0.43 | 0.61 | 0.90 | 0.24 | 0.69 | 0.33 | 0.43 | 0.26 | | |
| 32R | 0.45 | 0.49 | 0.02 | 0.10 | 0.28 | 0.57 | -0.10 | 0.35 | 0.00 | 0.10 | -0.08 | -0.33 | |

Note: Bolded is significantly different with $p < .05$.

Items 19 (co-ed classes have a positive effect), 20R (co-ed classes are *not* a hindrance), 21 (equal opportunities as males), and 24R (*not* change classes to avoid co-ed) address the issue of co-educational classes. Note that these items all have means near 2.5 (the neutral point) although Item 24R shows the most agreement. Items 19, 20R and 24R have the same amount of agreement (the means do not differ). However, the mean for Item 21 is different from that of 19, 20R and 24R. Hence, even though participants believe that co-educational classes are only slightly beneficial (on average), most believe that they have equal opportunities as males.

Items 23R, 25R, 29, 30R and 32R are all about public speaking (in front of classmates) and the associated anxiety (embarrassment, ridicule). Item 23R (do *not* avoid speaking in front of countrymen) has a higher mean than Items 25R (do *not* fear ridicule from students), 29 (enjoy oral presentations), 30R (do *not* avoid speaking to save face) and 32R (do *not* avoid speaking to avoid embarrassment). However, items 25R, 29, 30R and 32R have means that are equivalent. That is, participants are more anxious in front of countrymen.

Items 22 (judging others), 26R (fear of pronunciation errors is *not* greater than fear of a lack of vocabulary), 28 (enjoy working in groups), and 31R (do *not* fear corrections from teacher) refer to other aspects of the classroom. Students do not fear corrections from the teacher and this mean is lower than all the rest (except 25R). One could conclude that students simply expect to be corrected by the teacher. Means for Items 22 and 26R are equivalent, and both have less endorsement than Item 28. Participants do enjoy working in groups more than they fear correction.

Items 19, 20R and 24R have higher means than the remaining items. Hence, participants are less happy with the co-educational classes than they are with the other aspects of the classroom.

The correlations are presented in Table J.8. After inverting the scoring as noted above, the correlations between all the items are generally positive, implying that they do “go together”. That is, in some sense, the inverting of responses was successful. There are some negative values but they are generally scattered throughout the table.

Table J.8.

Correlations for the Items of Classroom Experience

| Item # | 19 | 20R | 21 | 22 | 23R | 24R | 25R | 26R | 28 | 29 | 30R | 31R | 32R |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------|------------|-----|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----|
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20R | .40 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | .18 | .33 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | -.07 | -.17 | .23 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23R | -.01 | .27 | .35 | -.06 | | | | | | | | | |
| 24R | .45 | .69 | .23 | -.04 | .16 | | | | | | | | |
| 25R | -.05 | .41 | .34 | -.05 | .57 | .24 | | | | | | | |
| 26R | .11 | .35 | .31 | -.14 | .51 | .14 | .72 | | | | | | |
| 28 | .04 | .20 | .21 | .17 | .10 | .21 | .11 | .22 | | | | | |
| 29 | .15 | .30 | .46 | .15 | .27 | .13 | .34 | .39 | .34 | | | | |
| 30R | .08 | .35 | .26 | -.08 | .54 | .18 | .64 | .68 | .31 | .35 | | | |
| 31R | -.07 | .19 | .15 | .21 | .19 | .13 | .42 | .36 | .19 | .21 | .35 | | |
| 32R | .01 | .32 | .34 | -.05 | .49 | .14 | .55 | .39 | .24 | .26 | .56 | .43 | |

Note: For N = 51, $r > .277$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .356$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .391$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The four items about co-ed classes (Items 19, 20R, 21, and 24R) are generally related. Item 19 is correlated with Items 20R and 24R, one can conclude that those who think co-ed classes have an effect tend to think that co-ed classes have a beneficial effect (not a hindrance).

Items 23R, 25R, 29, 30R and 32R are all related. These all express a confidence in (or fear of) public speaking and public evaluation. This group of items is also related to Item 31R (teacher assessments). That is, those who have more confidence speaking also have less fear of teacher evaluations and corrections. Item 28 (working in groups) is related to Items 29 (oral presentations) and to Item 30R (saving face). That is, those who have more confidence speaking derive more enjoyment working in groups.

Note that Item 23R is also correlated with Items 21 and to a lesser extent, 20R and 24R, implying that one issue with the co-educational classroom is the presence of other *male* Saudi speakers.

Items 25R, 29, 30R and 32R are also related to Items 20R and 21. Hence, confidence speaking is generally related to the appreciation of the co-educational classroom experience.

Item 26R (pronunciation vs. vocabulary) is related to most of the other items including the issue of co-educational classes. That is, those who do *not* worry about pronunciation more

than vocabulary are also generally more confident and are more accepting of a co-educational classroom.

Item 22 is not strongly related to any other item. This is likely because Item 22 is about the participant's judgments of others, while all other items refer to the participant's fear of being judged, or the co-ed classroom setting.

Overall, the reliability of this section was acceptable with a *Cronbach's alpha* of $\alpha = .814$. Table J.9 presents the *Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted* and the R^2 . Note that the deletion of any item except 19 and 22 would lower the α . In some sense, all are necessary. Item 22 is the least related to the rest. Item 19 is a bit odd because it does not express a good or bad effect. Note that, in comparison to the previous Tables J.3 and J.6, all of the R^2 are all relatively high. This is the difference between a "good" and "poor" questionnaire.

Table J.9.

Reliabilities Analysis for the Items of Classroom Experience

| Item # | R^2 | α if Item Deleted | Change from Initial Value |
|--------|-------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 19 | .348 | .822 | .008 |
| 0R | .614 | .793 | -.021 |
| 21 | .376 | .796 | -.018 |
| 22 | .281 | .832 | .018 |
| 23R | .450 | .796 | -.018 |
| 24R | .577 | .808 | -.006 |
| 25R | .700 | .782 | -.032 |
| 26R | .684 | .786 | -.028 |
| 28 | .285 | .810 | -.004 |
| 29 | .354 | .798 | -.016 |
| 30R | .604 | .789 | -.025 |
| 31R | .344 | .805 | -.009 |
| 32R | .514 | .793 | -.021 |

Generally, the reliability analysis indicates that all of the items are tapping the same one construct of classroom experience. They imply that some individual have a generally more positive experience of the classroom than other individuals. That is, there are not distinct groups of students. That is, one *could* have had a situation in which one group students enjoys the co-educational teaching but not public speaking, and a different group of students enjoys the public speaking, but not the co-educational aspects.

Relationships Between Sections

The three previous sections -- Comfort, Opportunity and Classroom -- were then related to each other using simple correlations. Note that all items were essentially coded such that lower values corresponding to higher confidence or comfort with English.

The correlations between the Comfort and the Opportunities variables are shown in Table J.10

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Table J.10.

Correlations between the Comfort Variables and the Opportunities Variables

| Item # | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------|------|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 13 | .07 | -.27 | -.07 | .19 | -.15 | -.01 | .18 | -.17 |
| 14 | .01 | -.10 | -.20 | .17 | .15 | .13 | .15 | -.19 |
| 15R | .02 | .16 | .04 | .15 | .08 | .14 | -.13 | .15 |
| 16 | .02 | -.13 | .05 | -.12 | -.04 | -.16 | .06 | -.05 |
| 17 | -.08 | .14 | .10 | .07 | -.02 | .20 | -.07 | -.04 |
| 18 | .02 | .28 | .21 | .20 | .14 | .25 | -.20 | .05 |

Note: For N = 57, $r > .261$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .340$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .370$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

The first observation is that most of the values are not significant. That is, the variables that code for Comfort Speaking are not generally related to the variables that code for Opportunities to Speak. That is, the lack of comfort is not related to refusing to avail oneself of opportunities.

Item 6 (*I speak comfortably when the opposite sex is present only if they are from the same culture*) is slightly negatively related to Item 13 (*Being among people who are speaking English outside of my home helps me to improve.*). Those female Saudi students who are more comfortable speaking with male Saudi students are less comfortable outside their cultural group. However, Item 6 was also slightly positively related to Item 18 (*I participate in leisure activities in school or after school in order to practice.*). Recall that Items 13 and 18 had a correlation of just $r = .05$, so this implies that there are some who do not mind speaking to males and who participate in leisure activities. This is likely those individuals who are more acculturated.

More generally, this pattern of results implies that the Comfort Speaking items are capturing something that is unique to the Opportunities to Speak items.

The correlations between the Comfort and the Classroom variables are shown in Table J.11.

Table J.11.

Correlations between the Comfort Variables and the Classroom Variables.

| Item # | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------|------------|------------|------|
| 19 | -.08 | .31 | .04 | .11 | .14 | .17 | -.08 | .09 |
| 20 | -.09 | .39 | .20 | .07 | .08 | -.02 | -.04 | .02 |
| 21R | .01 | .39 | .38 | .33 | .05 | .29 | .05 | .03 |
| 22 | .37 | .17 | .23 | .41 | -.09 | .39 | -.03 | .02 |
| 23R | -.21 | .14 | .11 | .04 | -.01 | .00 | .30 | -.19 |
| 24R | .08 | .43 | .08 | .26 | -.06 | .07 | -.13 | .20 |
| 25R | -.26 | .11 | .04 | -.15 | .03 | -.10 | .17 | .02 |
| 26R | -.16 | .06 | .06 | -.10 | .10 | -.09 | .24 | .06 |
| 28 | .00 | .04 | .05 | .32 | .03 | .06 | -.16 | -.04 |
| 29 | -.24 | -.02 | .24 | .18 | -.02 | .26 | .26 | -.08 |
| 30R | -.19 | -.07 | -.15 | -.21 | -.13 | -.18 | .26 | -.11 |
| 31R | -.06 | -.22 | -.04 | -.13 | -.01 | -.23 | .02 | -.02 |
| 32R | -.24 | -.08 | -.20 | -.15 | .18 | -.12 | -.09 | -.14 |

Note: For N = 50, $r > .279$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .363$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .395$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

As with the previous, there are only a few significant relationships. Most of the correlations hover around zero implying weak or non-existent relationships. This general implies that the two sections of the questionnaire are largely independent. That is, they provide different pieces of information.

However, Item 6 (*I speak comfortably when the opposite sex is present only if they are from the same culture*) is again related to a number of variables (Items 19, 20, 21R, and 24). These are all about the use of co-educational teaching so it is not surprising that these are related. That is, those Saudi women who are more comfortable speaking in front of Saudi males are more comfortable in co-educational classrooms. More generally, it is the items about the co-educational classroom (Items 19, 20, 21R and 24R) are the most related to the Comfort variables (particularly Items 6, 8, and 10).

In addition, Item 22 (*I judge a student's success on their speaking ability more so than on their academic achievement.*), which was *not* related to other items of the Opportunities variables

(see Table 4.7) was related to Items 5 (*I speak freely when I feel others do not know English as well as I do*), 8 (*I speak more confidently to others who are learning English as a second language.*) and 10 (*I feel I am free to speak in English to my Classmates who speaks a language other than Arabic or English.*) of the Comfort variables. Participants who judge others on language are more comfortable with those who cannot judge their own abilities.

The correlations between the Opportunities and the Classroom variables are shown in Table J.12.

Table J.12.

Correlations between the Opportunities Variables and the Classroom Variables

| Item | 13 | 14 | 15R | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|------|------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 19 | -.23 | .05 | .18 | .08 | .05 | .08 |
| 20 | -.19 | -.04 | .28 | .00 | -.04 | .07 |
| 21R | -.12 | .11 | .25 | .04 | .41 | .56 |
| 22 | .00 | -.15 | -.07 | -.09 | .22 | .21 |
| 23R | .22 | .28 | .28 | .00 | .10 | .05 |
| 24R | -.17 | -.10 | .46 | -.17 | .08 | .07 |
| 25R | -.03 | .22 | .20 | .13 | .03 | .14 |
| 26R | .02 | .30 | .12 | .26 | -.02 | .11 |
| 28 | .12 | .01 | .20 | .09 | .19 | .26 |
| 29 | .07 | .17 | .03 | -.02 | .26 | .12 |
| 30R | -.02 | .32 | .15 | .33 | .13 | .07 |
| 31R | .07 | -.04 | .00 | .10 | .00 | .13 |
| 32R | .09 | .23 | .35 | .20 | .19 | .36 |

Note: For N = 50, $r > .279$ $p < .05$ (bolded); $r > .363$, $p < .01$ (bold-italics); $r > .395$, $p < .005$ (bold-italics)

Items 14 (*I try to speak even if I am risking embarrassment.*), 23R (*I avoid speaking and participating in class when I feel there are students from my home country who know English much better than me.*), 26R (*I am afraid of making mistakes (pronunciation) words) more than the lack of vocabulary*), and 30R (*I avoid losing face by not speaking.*) are related because they all deal with the potential for embarrassment of public speaking.

The same is true for Items 15 (*I rely on other people at restaurants, cafes, hospitals, information centers, etc.*), 24 (*I would like to change my classes to avoid being with opposite sex in the same class.*) and 32 (*I avoid speaking English to save myself from being evaluated on my*

linguistic ability by other people.), but in a different sense (note that Item 15 is also correlated with 23R and to a lesser extent 26R and 30R, while Item 14 is correlated Item 32. The fact that Items 17, 18 and 21 are related may be due to fact that some women are more assertive. Those who “get” (expect, demand) the same benefits as males are the same women who actively put themselves in the world.