

*Exploring Foreign Language Anxiety in Saudi Arabia:  
A Study of Female English as Foreign Language  
College Students*

*A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy*

*By*

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## **Declaration and Word Length**

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, entirely my own, except as acknowledged in the text. The word length of this thesis (inclusive of tables and figures, but exclusive of references and appendixes) is 89,599.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband Fouad Kaaki for his support and understanding throughout our marriage with this long journey of seeking knowledge, which has spanned from my undergraduate years to the present day. Fouad, I am deeply grateful for all of your encouragement and patience in helping me follow my enquiring mind and satisfy my curiosity for knowledge.

The unconditional love I have from my three lovely boys, Rayan, Kenan, and Aban, kept me going so that I could set a good example for them. The journey of knowledge never ends, even for a mother who supposedly knows everything.

I praise my father, Commodore Mohammed Al-Saraj, who instilled in me and my three siblings, Effat, Hattan, and Haitham, the value of education. I praise my mother, Huda Moumenah (a high school principal), who modelled valuing education for my siblings and for me by continuing her education even after she married at a very young age.

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## **Abstract**

The goal of the research presented in this thesis is to increase understanding of the experiences (e.g., affective experience, challenges) of female Saudi Arabian students learning a foreign language. To better understand why some language learners have more difficulty acquiring a target language, there has been an increase in research into relationships between foreign language acquisition and affective variables (see Gardner, 1997). However, the vast majority of previous research has been conducted in the West, leaving a gap in understanding other perspectives. The present research uses a case study design, drawing on multiple sources of information to inform an understanding of female students' experience in a private college's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program. A combination of factors – the importance of learning English, changes in the educational system, and conservative culture – create a unique environment for researching anxiety related to studying EFL. To gain insight into the learners' perspectives, questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and informal classroom observations were used.

Ten participants, five from the beginning level (Level 1) and five from a more advanced level (Level 3) of the college English program, were examined. Each participant's experiences are discussed individually, then compared and analysed in the context of existing research literature. All case study participants indicated that they experienced anxiety through responses to a questionnaire, discussion in interviews, and observed behaviours (e.g., avoiding in-class participation).

Although some factors, such as teacher-student interactions and teacher behaviour, appeared nearly universally anxiety-provoking among all participants, others factors varied between participants in Levels 1 and 3. These differences and similarities are examined. Finally, implications and limitations, along with suggested recommendations for EFL teachers and policy makers in Saudi Arabia, are discussed.

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## *Chapter I*

### *Saudi Arabia and the Context*

#### **1.1 A Teacher's Experience**

I begin this thesis with the story of one particular Saturday morning class that I taught to a group of female students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). My observations of a struggling, disruptive student challenged my thinking about the student experience of studying a foreign language. Saturday morning is the beginning of the week in Saudi Arabia. On this particular Saturday, my morning was filled with teaching Level 2 classes in EFL for female students. In class, I did not feel that I was giving the students my full attention because there was one student whose outbursts during class sessions I could not manage. She constantly disrupted the class, did not pay attention to what I said, and always ignored my instruction to speak only in English while in class. Instead, this student told stories that did not pertain to or have any relevance to the lesson, speaking in Arabic and disregarding my requests that she speak in English if she were going to continue her stories. It was on this Saturday morning that I started to really think about EFL students' experiences and learning.

As the semester continued, I began to believe that this student was hindering the learning experience for the rest of the class. With a total of only four students in the class, it was hard to ignore disruptions. I asked other teachers about this particular student, and they all indicated that she acted the same way in their classes; her disruptive behaviour was not limited to my class. I speculated about what problems the girl might be having and why she would be acting out in this way, but I was not able to make any progress in finding a solution.

The student's disruptive behaviour and constant interruptions in class started to take a toll on the other students and on me. Other students started to ask questions in Arabic instead of trying to use English. They were not taking the class seriously, as evidenced by their starting to hand in assignments late and constantly chatting in Arabic during lessons. I started to become extremely concerned that I was losing the other three students in the class.

The classroom situation escalated until, one day, I had to stop the class in order to prevent the student's disruptions from ruining the learning experience for the other students. I asked her to come to see me in my office after class. During our conversation in my office, the student told me the English classes were a problem for her; she was an "A" student in Arabic, but she was not doing as well in English. The student also said that she experienced feelings of anxiousness when she came into the English classroom and said that she was afraid she might fail her classes. I tried comforting her, and I tried to bolster her confidence in herself and her ability, emphasising that she needed to work a bit harder and concentrate more in class.

Later, I reflected on the student's disclosure. Why was she becoming anxious when she entered the English class? Could anxiety be the only reason for her behaviour in class, or were there other things going on? Why did she compare her performance across her Arabic and English language classes? Was this student unique in feeling this way, or were there others in the class who felt the same?

At the time, I was unaware that disruptive behaviour and exaggerated laughing and joking could be manifestations of anxiety. Later, I read Madeline Ehrman's (1996) book, *Understanding second language learning difficulties*, in which she stated that when a student is disappointed in her performance in a language class, anxiety can follow, and that anxiety,

gets in the way of learning. Anxiety is often linked to fear that one will fail in some way: on an assignment, speaking in class, on a test, in the final grade, in competition, maintaining one's position in a community, in interactions with native speakers, or on the job. (p. 148)

Ehrman went on to discuss various manifestations of anxiety that one might see within the foreign language classroom. Students who have difficulty learning would also show more debilitating anxiety, which interferes with their learning. According to Ehrman, people protect their emotions and self-esteem in a variety of ways, using *defence mechanisms* throughout the course of normal, daily life. Without these defence mechanisms, people would be emotionally exposed and potentially vulnerable. This perspective was very interesting because of its relationship to what I had observed within my classroom, but I was most intrigued by why people might have defence mechanisms. According to Ehrman (1996), defence mechanisms are essential for softening failures,

protecting oneself from overwhelming anxiety, and maintaining each individual's sense of personal worth.

The most striking examples of defence mechanisms that Ehrman (1996) discussed were those that corresponded to the behaviours I observed in my own classroom, such as acting out disruptively and laughing or joking excessively. In Ehrman's discussion, acting out is an action to avoid awareness of the feelings associated with an underlying wish or an impulse. Acting out can involve fidgeting and other motor activity, displays of temper, impulsive acts and statements, or chronically giving in to impulses (e.g., blurting out whatever is on one's mind in class) to avoid build-up of tension. Excessive humour (including games, excessive laughter) in the classroom might also serve as a protective or defence mechanism for the student.

Nearly 10 years later, Oxford (2005) argued for the existence of foreign language anxiety (FLA) in the classroom and continued the discussion of the specific behaviours anxious students might exhibit in the classroom. Specifically, Oxford discussed general avoidance behaviours; physical action or movements; physical symptoms or ailments; and multiple other, potentially culture-related signs and behaviours related to anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Avoidance behaviours include missing class, arriving late to class, coming to class unprepared, not volunteering to participate, rarely speaking, showing carelessness, and appearing to be unable to answer even simple questions. The physical movements or actions Oxford described include many behaviours that might appear related to nervousness or anxiety, including squirming, fidgeting, playing with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, stuttering or stammering when speaking, appearing jittery, and being unable to reproduce the sounds or intonation of the target language even after repeated practise. According to Oxford, students might also show physical symptoms or ailments, such as headache, tight muscles, and unexplained pain or tension in any part of their bodies. Oxford also highlighted that signs reflecting anxiety are culture-specific in that different cultures have different ideas of normal versus anxious behaviour. Behaviours that could reflect anxiety include excessive studying, perfectionism, social avoidance, withdrawal from conversation, lack of eye contact or avoiding eye contact, hostility, giving only monosyllabic or noncommittal responses during conversation, attempting to project a certain image or using behaviours to mask anxiety (e.g., exaggerated smiling, laughing, nodding, joking), failing to interrupt

conversation to speak when it would be natural to do so, excessive competitiveness, excessive effacement of one's self, and excessive criticism of one's self.

Although I had extensive classroom experience, both as a student and later as a teacher, I had not yet considered disruption of class, unwarranted joking and humour, and blurting out stories in Arabic as techniques for avoiding classroom learning exercises or reducing anxiety. In fact, these techniques seemed especially surprising in the Saudi Arabian context in which traditional ideas of education remain strong, learning is valued, and teachers are held in high esteem. The disruptive students' behaviours, including excessive joking and laughing, making sarcastic comments in Arabic, and cutting class, came as something of a shock to me. Viewed through the lens of research, and in light of Oxford's (2005) work in particular, these behaviours may well have been signs or manifestations of anxiety in the foreign language classroom. According to Ortega (2009), anxious students are likely to be slow at learning the target language and processing the target language. They are also likely to underestimate their competence in the target language and to avoid engaging in behaviours that might be seen as risky, such as speaking in class or communicating complex ideas (see also MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre, Noels, & Clement, 1997; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986).

Individuals have defining moments in their lives, moments in which they must choose to follow one path or another and they know that the choice will impact their futures. I will not frame this discussion in such dramatic terms, but I will say that my experience with this student, as well as other experiences with other students manifesting some of the behaviours discussed by Oxford (2005), led me to an interest in foreign language anxiety (FLA). I was interested in how FLA might help me to understand what was going on in my classes and to become a better teacher. As I embarked on the intellectual journey towards understanding FLA, a journey to explore the construct in the English language classrooms that composed my professional environment, I began to ask myself questions. First, what is actually meant by FLA? Furthermore, what is known about FLA from the existing research? What gaps are there in existing, research-based body of knowledge regarding FLA? Specifically, I was interested in finding out if there was any research on how foreign language anxiety is experienced in the classroom in Saudi Arabia.

## **1.2 Saudi Arabia's history and socioeconomic development**

I started out trying to answer these questions, and others, in Saudi Arabia, a country that has gone through remarkable development in the relatively short period of time between the 1970s and the current day. Language researchers are beginning to emphasise the broader, social contexts in which people learn foreign or second languages, and also to pay attention to the history of second language acquisition. Acquisition of a new language is impacted not only by each individual and his or her cognitive processes, but also by the social and cultural setting in which the language is studied (e.g., Block, 2003). From this perspective, the larger socioeconomic situation in Saudi Arabia, and particularly the recent changes in Saudi Arabian culture that are related to these economic changes, are important to consider because they shape the current social climate in Saudi Arabia. In a single generation, Saudis have gone from being Bedouins to being well-educated players on the global scene. This change resulted from a fusion of oil investment money into the West, the oil crisis of the 1970s, and the introduction of western companies into Saudi Arabia to develop the infrastructure and maintain the oil supply. According to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Economy and Planning (n.d.), today Saudi Arabia holds a quarter of the total Arab GDP and is the 25<sup>th</sup> largest importer/exporter in the world. This economic development has occurred against the backdrop of an extremely rigid, conservative, and traditional Islamic political system.

The remainder of this introduction will provide the reader with the specific background and context for the work presented in this thesis. First, I discuss the country of Saudi Arabia and outline of the social factors that influence and characterise the Saudi education system, including the teaching of English and the increasing incorporation of women into all levels of education. Specifically, I describe the development of private, English medium colleges, institutions of higher education that usually offer education at an undergraduate degree level. These colleges are not financed nor highly regulated by the Saudi Arabian government, but they nonetheless have to maintain certain standards in order to be accredited by the government. Within the context of English-language learning in Saudi Arabia and in English medium colleges, I consider the challenge that anxiety may pose to individuals striving to study a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. This chapter outlines the research questions that frame this thesis and makes a case as to why foreign language anxiety is so salient in Saudi Arabia. Finally, I will also position

myself as a researcher, because I believe that it is important for the reader to know about my past so as to understand how I have come to do the research that I have done.

### **1.2.1 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Commonly referred to as Saudi Arabia, the country was founded in 1932 and its official name is the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”. It occupies four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula and the capital city is Riyadh. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East and shares borders with Iraq, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Yemen. In 2007, the total population of Saudi Arabia was estimated at 23.98 million with a yearly increase of 2.3% (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). Saudi Arabia has a large population of non-nationals, or individuals who come from outside Saudi Arabia. Individuals from Saudi Arabia composed 72.9% of the total population in 2007. Slightly more than two-thirds (67.1%) of the population were under age 30, and more than one third of the total population (37.2%) were under age 15.

Islam is the official, national religion and the tenets of Islam are enshrined as law. Islam is also at the heart of the Saudi education system and all aspects of life in the kingdom. The Ministry of Education’s (1974) vision states,

The fundamental purpose of education is to let students have an understanding of Islam through including the Islamic tenets, providing them with good manners, developing in them knowledge and skills, promoting the growth of good behaviour, developing the cultural, social and economic aspects of the society and preparing a person to be a good citizen in building his society. (p. 12)

### **1.2.2 Religion**

Saudi Arabia, the location of two holy mosques and to which Muslims from around the world travel for pilgrimage each year, is considered to be the most religious site for Muslims all over the world. For those who follow the Islamic faith, Saudi Arabia has the two holiest cities on earth: Makkah, the birthplace of Islam, and Madinah, the location of the Prophet Mohammed Mosque and the burial place of the prophet Mohammed. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic nation in which state and religion are inseparable and are closely intertwined with everyday life.

### **1.2.3 Government**

The political system of Saudi Arabia is based on traditional monarchy headed by the king who presides as the prime minister (Al-Farsy, 1978). As described by Al-Farsy (1978), this monarchy is governed by the *Shariah* law, which is founded on Islamic policy. The *Quran*, the holy book of Islam, serves as the basis of the constitution for the Kingdom.

### **1.2.4 Economy**

The Saudi economy was traditionally simple and dependent on pearl fishing, date trading, camel exporting, and pilgrimage dues. However, due to the discovery of the first oil field in 1938, Saudi Arabia has gained tremendous wealth in recent years. The country is now considered to be the largest exporter of oil and natural gas, and the business of these exports has affected all sectors in the country (Ramady, 2010).

The Eighth National Development Plan for Saudi Arabia, according to Al-Gosaibi (2009; [www.mep.gov.sa](http://www.mep.gov.sa)), identifies, “the development of the science and technology system and informatics, support and promotion of scientific research, along with the drive for a knowledge-based economy as key factors for increased output and productivity, and for widening the Kingdom's investment prospects.” According to the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), the goals of Saudi Arabia's Eight National Development Plan (spanning from 2005 to 2009) and the new, Ninth National Development Plan (for years 2010 to 2015), focus on increasing the welfare of the population (e.g., reducing poverty, increasing standards of living and quality of life for all), enhancing the role of women and youth in the country's development, managing energy and the natural environment, strengthening research and development in science and technology, and optimizing the country's benefit from globalization and the global economy by improving Saudi Arabian economic productivity, among others (Ministry of Economy and Planning, n.d.). Overall, the government's intention appears to be to rapidly develop a knowledge- and science-based economy. The education sector will have to be expanded and developed in order to maintain the momentum of the development that the country is experiencing in other areas.

With these economic changes came the influx of expatriates from countries such as the United States, Britain, and Egypt. In 2006, the total labour force working in Saudi Arabia was 8.7 million, 4.0 million (46.1%) of whom were Saudis, and the remaining 4.7 million of whom were expatriates (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). The expatriates came with modern, innovative ideas that were new to Saudi Arabia, a country previously characterised by an insular society. In the absence of a skilled national labour force, these expatriates were essential for the development of the country. During the last 18 years, there have been many changes. Saudi Arabia has gone from having only two government TV channels and prohibiting TV satellites, to having over 300 different satellite channels broadcasting uncensored programs from all over the world.

### **1.2.5 Educational Needs**

One of Saudi Arabia's most ambitious strategic plans that has developed alongside increased oil revenues is the plan to send Saudi Arabian youth abroad to the West so that they can complete their higher education and gain the necessary experience and knowledge to participate in the development of the country and to improve international relations (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). In order to bring about the desired changes, in the 1970s the Saudi government began providing scholarships for students to study abroad, and wealthier Saudi families also sent their children abroad to further their education. The process of sending students abroad, be it on government-funded scholarships or private funding, has continued and grown through the years. The numbers of students obtaining their educations abroad in 2006 and in 2008/2009 are presented side-by-side in Table 1.1 to indicate both the importance of education from the perspective of the Saudi Arabian government and individual Saudi Arabian families and the dramatic increase in the number of students (male and female) between these time periods. Male students composed 80.26% of students in 2006 and 79.28% in 2008/2009; female students composed 19.74% of students in 2006 and 20.72% in 2008/2009. The percentage of male and female students thus remained the same across time. However, the number of men and women attending school through government-funded scholarships more than doubled.

**Table 1.1** Saudi Arabian students travelling abroad for education

<b>Funding</b>	Students in 2006				Students in 2008/2009			
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Government	13,689	3,763	17,452	68.60%	38,221	10,738	48,959	83.39%
Private	6,729	1,260	7,989	31.40%	8,323	1,428	9,751	16.61%
<b>Total</b>	20,418	5,023	<b>25,441</b>	100%	46,544	12,166	<b>58,710</b>	100%
<b>%</b>	80.26%	19.74%	100%		79.28%	20.72%	100%	

**Note.** Statistics for 2006 are from the Ministry of Higher Education (2006, p.140). Statistics for 2008/2009 are from the Deputy Ministry for Planning and Information Affairs (retrieved from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/ar/Ministry/Deputy-Ministry-for-Planning-and-Information-affairs/HESC/HESC-b/HESC1429/Pages/default.aspx>)

The educated social classes in Saudi Arabia view the ability to speak English as necessary for participating in Saudi Arabian society and keeping ahead of all of the changes that are occurring. It is, for example, a necessity to speak English in order to operate new technologies, for international banking, for business, and for media (Crystal, 2003). The process of going abroad to study also appears to perpetuate change. For example, Saudi Arabian students who visit the West usually returned home with the desire to improve and change their own society's political, social, technological, and educational standards and systems. This complex situation has lead to conflict between adapting to the changes the young Saudi men and women bring back with them after completing their studies abroad, and preserving traditional Saudi Arabian culture. One arena in which this conflict can be observed is the educational system, particularly in the increase of English education. As explained by the Minister of Higher Education, Al-Angari, in a recent book on higher education in Saudi Arabia, the Ministry developed partnerships with universities all over the world to establish local campuses and research centres based on and affiliated with overseas institutions to achieve synchronicity between higher education and the labour sectors (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). The following section describes the major characteristics of the Saudi public and private primary to secondary educational system in order to provide a context for understanding how the need for English medium private colleges came about.

## **1.3 Education in Saudi Arabia**

### **1.3.1 History of Education**

Early schools in Saudi Arabia (“semi-schools” in English) reflected the centrality of religion in the culture. These semi-schools, called *katateeb*, a name derived from the Arabic root *to write*, taught only Islamic laws and basic literacy skills. Basic education in the 1930s was only accessible through limited, individualised instruction at religious schools that were contained within mosques; this education was mainly available for boys. At that time, education was regarded as a family matter; the state was not involved with the education of youth in Saudi Arabia. During this period, in 1925, the Department of Education (Mouderiat Al Ma’aref) was founded in Hegaz, the western part of Saudi Arabia that includes the cities of Makkah, Jeddah, and Madinah (Morsi, 1990). The Department of Education was later expanded to include what is the present role of the Ministry of Education (Morsi, 1990).

Today, there are three authorities responsible for education policy and its implementation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: the Ministry of Education, the Organization for Technical and Vocational Education, and the Ministry for Higher Education. The Ministry of Education, which was established in 1953 and stemmed from the previous Department of Education, administers education for boys and girls, including elementary school (grades 1-6, children aged 6-12), intermediate education (grades 7-9, students aged 12-15), and secondary school (grades 10-12, students up to 18 years old) (Morsi, 1990). This national educational system provides free tuition and books to students at all levels. As is accepted practice for a conservative Islamic society, the Saudi education system has always been segregated such that there are separate schools for boys and girls. There is no compulsory law requiring youth to be enrolled in or attend schools. Instead, it is up to families to educate their children. However, education throughout the Arab world and Saudi Arabia in particular has a history of being highly valued; teachers command a high level of respect.

The Organisation for Technical and Vocational Education manages industrial, commercial, and agricultural education; technical foremanship training; and all levels of vocational training. The Ministry of Higher Education, which was not established until 1975, consists of various bodies that coordinate the development of higher education in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Higher Education has jurisdiction over the eight public

universities that serve the approximately 20 million people in Saudi Arabia (Al-Farsy, 2001). The few private educational institutions that exist are also supervised by government agencies, and these agencies impose requirements relating to curriculum and other educational matters (Al-Farsy, 2001).

Saudi Arabia and its neighbouring Gulf States, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, all share similar educational and teaching philosophies. Al-Misnad (1985) describes the neighbouring states' philosophies as one in which the teachers are given lesson plans and material that they must simply present in the classrooms, and the students are required to memorise information without thinking deeply about it. Specifically, he says that teachers walk their students through the textbooks, page by page. Lesson plans and information is presented through the textbook and lectures, but students are relatively passive in the classroom. The system relies very heavily on examinations, which are the only measurement of student and teacher success. However, the examinations primarily assess the students' ability to commit to memory and recall information from the textbooks. According to Al-Misnad (1985), this method of teaching is used at all levels in the educational system, including higher education and universities.

Drawing from Al-Misnad's (1985) description and examining the characteristics of the current, Saudi Arabian educational system within its social and cultural climate, there are at least three specific features that stand out as potential problems and apparent limitations of the educational system. The first prominent feature is the textbooks used in the school system. The schools' textbooks are developed, written, and published by the Ministry and issued to students for the students to keep. The books are outdated because they are merely republished annually without being updated to include new information, knowledge, or theories. Foreign language books and other educational materials (newspapers, magazines, internet access) are censored. As a result, the students are not given the opportunity to explore a broad range of reading materials for the subjects they study and the educational materials are not customised; the students' resulting knowledge and views are relatively narrow and outdated, based on old textbooks and old sources of information. The very standardised and rigid system is often criticised by teachers for paralysing creative and independent thinking and not having the flexibility to be customised to particular students' needs and abilities.

The second prominent feature of the Saudi educational system is that the curriculum is controlled by the government. The learning objectives, assessment, and evaluation are all

developed by the government. The process of curriculum development is conducted according to a committee set up by the Ministry. In this process, teachers are not allowed to add or provide any input into the curriculum, and teachers do not have the time to devote to teaching anything other than the set curriculum. The teachers have the role of teaching the syllabus without having any involvement in its development (Al-Sadan, 2000). Without involvement or input from qualified individuals who work with students, see the students' everyday needs, and are involved in local communities, this system for developing the curricula for the education of Saudi students has a serious weakness. The curricula are not able to be adapted or to evolve to the changing needs of the Saudi community and may become quickly outdated.

The third prominent feature of the Saudi educational system is its tradition of relying heavily on the pedagogical approach of using the Rote method for students' learning, which puts an emphasis on memorising the content of the textbooks. Moreover, traditionally students have been expected to simply memorise information without questioning the information. The Rote method of teaching may have short-term, clear benefits in that students are able to provide correct answers quickly and relatively easily, but for information and lexical items to be truly internalised, extensive repetition over a long time period is required (Richard-Amato, 2010; Gu, 2003). When students sit for exams, the students simply reproduce the information they have memorised. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with students' developing the skills necessary to complete these tasks, and although some students may be quite skilled in Rote memorisation, this approach will not develop learners' ability to engage in learning new things, develop analytical skills, or to solve complex problems (e.g., Ranta, 2002; Richard-Amato, 2010). In particular, when a language is learned through memorisation instead of a deeper understanding of the language, students may be unable to generate novel sentence structures or to truly engage with the language, instead relying on example phrases or sentences they have previously seen and memorised. Instead, the student is trained to become like a cassette player, recording everything that is taught and repeating it when asked, as if at a push of a button, during exams. Furthermore, the students' assessment is very limited to the use of written language. With restricted assessments, there is little to no encouragement for students to develop projects or work with peers. The structure of this sort of pedagogical system does not support or encourage students seeking out information and knowledge independently. However,

autonomy in language learning has been noted as characteristic primarily of Western and higher level educational settings (e.g., Lamb, 2004a). In the classroom and educational setting, students primarily develop their ability to learn relatively passively (i.e., to recall the information they were told) and independently. The students do not spend much time or effort critically evaluating or questioning new information, nor do they develop the skills necessary to work with others through exchanging ideas and cooperating. With the absence of cooperative learning opportunities, this method of teaching and learning fosters the students' development of a high degree of competitiveness, which might impact the overall classroom dynamic and even the individuals' learning in the classroom if the competitiveness becomes a focus or a cause of stress for the students.

According to Al-Sulayti (1999), education in the Gulf countries is under pressure to improve.

There are increasing pressures on GCC education and training systems to improve their quality. Some of the criticisms have been directed at the role of education as a supplier of relevant skills to the economy in countries which still rely heavily on an expatriate labor force. Education in GCC countries is also criticized for its emphasis on routine learning and memorization, for its high attrition and for repeaters' rate which have reached 31 percent in some secondary schools. Schools are accused of graduating more and more low achievers who are functionally illiterate and lack the minimum threshold of competence. (p. 272-273)

Very recently, educational reform in the Arab Gulf States and, slowly, in Saudi Arabia has begun a modification of educational curricula and pedagogy; this reform includes a decrease in the focus on Rote learning (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). According to Donn and Al Manthri (2010), Saudi Arabia has been the slowest of the Arab Gulf States to adopt this educational reform, and the changes implemented in Saudi Arabia have been less comprehensive than those in other countries that have more fully adopted the reform. The momentum pushing educational reform in Saudi Arabia is up against complex social and cultural challenges. The current social and cultural climate in Saudi Arabia is one that has gone through large-scale and dramatic changes in recent years due to economic development from oil business and an influx of technology to the country through business, and the return of students who have obtained higher education abroad. The Saudi Arabian society values education, holds teachers in high regard, and shows a value for learning through basic actions like funding education for all citizens at all levels. However, the educational system remains rigid – in the physical materials it uses,

in the content it teaches, and in the methodology used in the classroom – and appears to have only a limited freedom to adapt to students' evolving needs. Donn and Al Manthri (2010) argue that “teachers are poorly trained, sometimes unqualified and their performance is very rarely evaluated” (p. 39), which poses a challenge to revising the educational system and providing high quality education. Pressures from inside and outside the country are pushing for changes, nonetheless, including the development of substantial English-language programs, an aspect of education reform that has been recognised as particularly difficult within Saudi Arabia (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). In the long run, lack of flexibility may interfere with the educational system's capacity to prepare students to speak English fluently enough to function at work and to develop critical thinking skills needed to compete on a global market. In 1987, Michael Scriven and Richard Paul offer the following, now widely cited definition of critical thinking:

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by: observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. ([www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org))

Alongside revision of educational pedagogy comes an increase in attention to the education of women, who continue to be segregated from men as per Islamic tradition. With the segregated education and the education of women being such a relatively new development, whether education of men and women is equivalent is a question to be addressed. The development of education of women in Saudi Arabia will be addressed in the next section.

### **1.3.2 Women's Education**

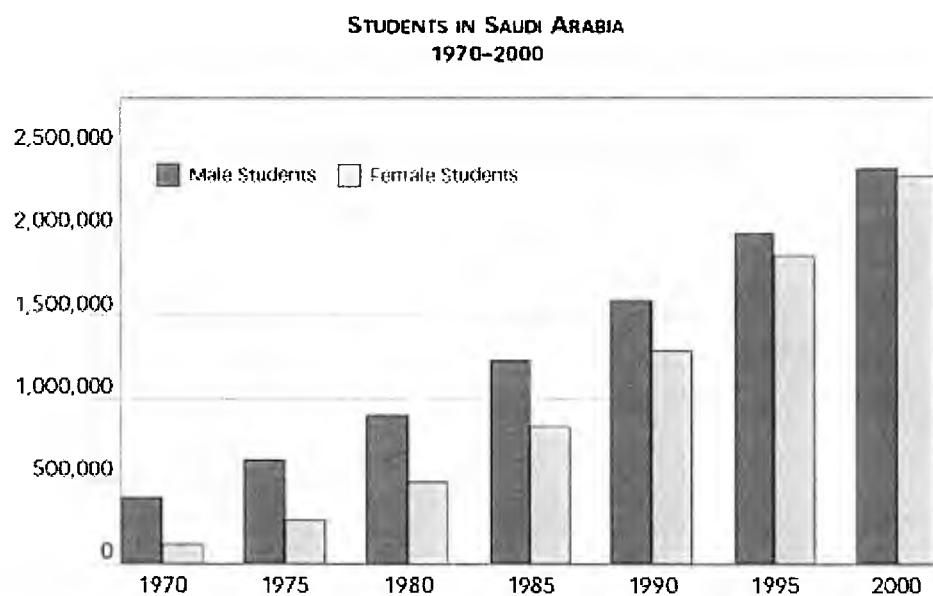
Women's education has gone through significant changes over the last 50 years. Before establishing the Presidency of Girls Education in 1960, there were no formal education opportunities available to women in Saudi Arabia, and women were not encouraged to pursue education (Morsi, 1990). The idea of women going to school was not favoured by the conservative Saudi men who dominated the public sphere. From the traditional perspective, often held by men both historically and currently a minority, women's role was to stay home and look after their family. Little by little, general attitudes have

changed so that women now have the opportunity to attend school. Thus, in 1964 the first government school for girls was opened (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, n.d., paragraph 4). By 2000, there were schools for girls across all of Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education reported that in the 2003-2004 school year, approximately half of the students enrolled in schools were female. At the government level and by much of society, women's education is now regarded positively in that it is seen as enabling women to do their part to fulfil the social and economic requirements of the country (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, n.d.). The latest published figures, presented below in Table 1.2, illustrate the closing of the gap between the education of male and female students between 1970 and 2000. Nonetheless, as indicated by the case study participants discussed later in this thesis, some individual women still encounter pressure not to pursue higher education. Some of the women who participated in these case studies stated that their fathers and families did not want to permit them to continue education beyond high school.

In balancing the traditions of yesterday and the changing patterns of today, the Saudi government has maintained segregation of male and female students at all levels of education. In practical terms, this has meant duplicating all different facilities, schools, and campuses (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, n.d.). The systems for male and female students even have separate administration structures. Furthermore, no male teachers are allowed in the female students' schools or universities and vice versa. If the need were to arise for a specific male lecturer to teach female students on a certain subject at the university level, the teaching would be conducted through closed-circuit television.

At the college or university level, or at institutes that offer graduate and post-graduate degrees, women still do not have the opportunity to study the same fields of study that men can (e.g., El-Sanabary, 1994; Al-Gosaibi, 2009). For example, women are not offered engineering or mass communication media, both of which are considered inappropriate areas for women's education or employment. The areas of study are either considered unsuitable for the women's nature or there is a fear of the intermingling of men and women and its potentially corrupting influence (El-Sanabary, 1994). This segregation and restriction has made it difficult for Saudi woman to enter the careers of their choice and also limits the number of jobs that Saudi women can actually occupy.

**Table 1.2** Students in Saudi Arabia



From King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, Achievements in Education  
([www.kingfahdbinabdulaziz.com](http://www.kingfahdbinabdulaziz.com))

Historically, women have been limited primarily to jobs in education and medicine, though restrictions have decreased in other areas as well. Historical restrictions on which jobs women were allowed to occupy were based on social traditions and customs that have been operating for centuries and have become the social norm in Saudi Arabia. Despite popular stereotypes or views of Islam, Islam itself does not restrict the opportunities women may be given or roles they may play in the development of the country.

The education of women in Saudi Arabia has brought about innovative changes in a variety of sectors of Saudi Arabian society, including the recent appointment of the first female Deputy Minister of Education in February of 2009; this is the most senior role ever held by a woman in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These changes promise to offer greater participation for women in education and employment as well as allowing women greater participation and rights in the public sphere. This movement towards more rights and opportunities for women is evident in the Eight National Development Plan of the Ministry of Economy and Planning, which states:

The Plan places particular stress on the increased participation of women in the economy and greater opportunities for employment of women; on strengthening the family role in society, through upgrading of the capabilities of Saudi women, and the removal of obstacles that constrain their increased participation in economic and development activities (Al-Gosaibi, 2009; [www.mep.gov.sa](http://www.mep.gov.sa)).

### **1.3.3 English Language Education**

In 1933, King Abdul Aziz extended oil concessions to an American firm called Standard Oil Company of California, granting a 60-year concession that broke the British monopoly of concessions in the Gulf region at the time (Al-Farsy, 1986). Standard Oil Company of California, later re-named the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), was mainly operating in the Eastern part of the country (Dhahran). ARAMCO eventually partnered with other American, French, and Japanese firms (Al-Farsy, 1986). By the 1950s, the large oil export business in Saudi Arabia and the prevalence of international firms working in Saudi Arabia prompted the Saudis to realise the importance of the English language.

According to Donn and Al Manthri (2010), the Arab Gulf States (including Saudi Arabia) have acquired “Western higher education institutions, they adapted English-language curricula, they have accepted the demands of internationally driven definitions of “quality,” “standards,” “benchmarks,” and “appraisal” but, nevertheless, they have little control, other than as purchaser and consumer, over the language or artefacts of that language” (p. 23-24). That is, for the Arab Gulf States, English is a means of communication and a tool, but it is not woven into the culture of the region. Some Saudis have feared that teaching a foreign language might result in students’ adopting the culture and values associated with that language, a process that has been called cultural replacement (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). However, Donn and Al Manthri (2010) argue that the educational system in Arab Gulf States, although adopting the ideology connected to globalisation of higher education, has not been associated with the Arab Gulf States adopting all practices. For example, the segregation of male and female students continues.

Saudi Arabia has recognised the ability to use English as a key to the advancement of the country. However, this acceptance of English is not an inevitable result of globalisation and does not necessitate the dilution of traditional Saudi Arabian culture and practice

(Silova, 2004). Indeed, Lamb (2004b) has argued that the association between the English language and Anglophone cultures is weakening as English becomes identified instead, or more strongly, with globalisation. In Saudi Arabia and other countries, the government may use English in global rhetoric for national purposes alone without sacrifice of the Saudi national identity or culture.

In Saudi Arabia today, it is generally assumed without question that English is the international language and that in order for Saudi Arabia to achieve its international and societal goals, English must be introduced in the public schools at the intermediate stage and then taught until the end of secondary education. In 2006, new regulations were introduced that mandated that English was to be taught starting in grade 6 rather than grade 7, based on the reasoning that introducing English to younger students would facilitate learning. More recently, in 2011, the Cabinet approved the teaching of English to both boys and girls starting earlier, in grade 4 (Saudi Gazette, 2011). Throughout both intermediate and secondary education, in both public and private schools, for boys and girls, the teaching of English is centralised and controlled by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education gives teachers specific syllabi and mandates that the teachers strictly follow those syllabi without any variation to ensure similar instruction to all students. The Ministry also prescribes the textbooks and distributes them throughout the country.

In contrast, English instruction begins much earlier in private schools in Saudi Arabia, starting from Kindergarten or reception all the way to high school, but is considered as extra-curricular. These private schools are run and funded by private parties, although monitored and supervised by the Ministry of Education. The private schools have to conform to the Saudi curricula at all times, but can add to it as long as there is no conflict. Starting at grade 6 in the private schools, the schools must teach basic English as outlined by the Ministry of Education and mandated in the public schools; the private schools may teach more advanced English alongside this basic English curriculum, but the advanced English program is not credited by the Ministry. The greater attention to English language education is a reason that most parents who can afford to pay for private school do prefer to send their children to these private schools. It is assumed by the parents that beginning to learn English at a younger age will be better for their children's English language learning.

As stated earlier in this chapter, English is now required for many jobs, including those in the oil industry on which the Saudi Arabian economy relies, in mass communication, and in working with foreign banks and companies. The development and effective work of the Saudi Arabian people in these fields is considered necessary for the prosperity of the country. However, students seldom attain the level of English fluency necessary, despite the fact that students study English for at least six years at school, for an average of four hours a week (Al-Ghamdi, 2005). According to Al-Ghamdi, by the end of secondary school, most students are only able to produce correct English sentences if memorised. The grammar-translation method of teaching English that is dominant in Saudi Arabia has played a major role in this outcome. The grammar-translation method, described by Brown (2007) and also recently discussed by Richard-Amato (2010), relies on:

- Memorisation of vocabulary in the form of lists of isolated words;
- Reading difficult, classical texts that are introduced far too early;
- Little or no attention to pronunciation such that fluency is rarely considered while teaching;
- Learning phonological units of English (phonemes), grammatical units (clauses, phrases, sentences), grammatical processes (transforming elements, adding, changing), and lexical items (function and content words) as the main focus in all the activities; and
- Memorisation of these units along with drill exercises as a requirement.

Although this method may be useful for improving memory and recall skills, these skills are not the overarching goal of foreign language education (Brown, 2007), i.e., to be able to communicate in the target language. This system of teaching has lead to a very traditional style of classroom instruction in which the teacher dominates the classroom and functions as the source of information while the student functions as a passive learner; there is little or no interaction among the students themselves or between the students and the teacher, and the students do not take initiative in their own education. In describing teaching in another Arab country, Oman, Wyatt (2011) described this style of teaching as bottom-up rather than interactive. Lesson plans focus, according to Wyatt, on phonics, oral reproduction, and accuracy without emphasis on the meaningful, communicative use of language. Furthermore, classroom materials were boring, using

black and white line-drawings instead of colourful photos or images that might help engage the students. Recognizing weaknesses in this teaching method, Oman has recently moved away from this bottom-up style of teaching.

In practical terms, in the Saudi Arabian classroom, teaching in this way is teacher centred rather than student centred. As described by Al-Misnad (1985) and discussed above, in the traditional teaching system typically used in Saudi Arabia, the teacher generally stands in front of the class and provides information or words in the target language (e.g., English), doing nothing to engage the students in learning. As a result, this method of teaching does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language that is being studied because there is little or no communicative practice involved. This is a problem because students who have neither been involved in nor consulted about their own learning cannot be expected to be proactive or actively engaged in this learning process or to find it relevant to their own lives. Furthermore, English is taught to the students only in form such that they learn the rules of grammar and there is no practical use of the English language for communication. In Saudi Arabia, this method of teaching has contributed to the creation of a significant gap between the English proficiency of the secondary school graduates and the English proficiency that students are required to have in order to study at institutions of higher education.

#### **1.3.4 Private Colleges**

To balance the changes that have come with the modernization and also maintain traditions from the past, a new trend in Saudi education has become more pronounced in recent years. The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education has legalised the emergence of privately owned post-secondary institutions, run for profit or as non-profit organisations and established by dominant Saudi businessmen or princes. In 1999, Effat College (which was expanded to a full university in 2009) and Dar Al-Hekma College, colleges for women in Jeddah, and Prince Sultan College, a college with separate campuses for men and women in Riyadh, were among the first of this type of post-secondary institution to receive the Ministry of Higher Education's permission to open their doors. Since then, more private colleges and universities have opened across Saudi Arabia. Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University (PMU) in Al-Khobar, Eastern Province of Saudi

Arabia, opened in September 2006. Al Faisal University opened in September 2008, and the new King Abdullah University of Science and Technology opened recently, in September 2009. Table 1.3, below, shows the huge expansion of higher education in Saudi Arabia in the private and public sector between the years 2002 to 2006.

**Table 1.3** Institutions of higher education in Saudi Arabia (2002-2006)

	Number in 2002	Number in 2006	Percentage increase from 2002 to 2006
Public universities	8	21	150
Public colleges	79	191	142
University hospitals	3	12	300
Private universities	1	4	300
Private colleges	4	17	325
Newly enrolled college students	67,855	110,103	62
All newly enrolled students in postsecondary education	136,723	214,572	57

(Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Krieger, 2007)

According to the latest statistics published by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (Krieger, 2007), there has been an increase in the number of private colleges in Saudi Arabia from 17 colleges in 2006 (see Table 1.3) to 19 colleges in 2009. Table 1.3 shows the total numbers of students enrolled in universities in Saudi Arabia between the years of 2002-2006 at all the different educational institutions in Saudi Arabia and Table 1.4 shows the number of female students enrolled in private universities and colleges of higher education.

These new private colleges for women can be described as implementing American models of academic programs and administrative organization, but also appear to be creating Western-influenced social contexts. The course content, course structure, manner of instruction, learning materials, and learning objectives used in some of these colleges (including one founded after the collection of statistics presented in Table 1.4 and the one at which I conducted my case studies) were developed by the Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC; *TIEC Gazette*, 2001) in the United States (US). The environments within the walls of these schools appear to be largely based on Arab perceptions of American colleges and social environments (i.e., as portrayed in American media). For examples, social activities in these colleges have a bias towards American college activities with college basketball teams, debate teams, and student

governments. In colleges exclusively for women, the women dress in fashionable western styles, following the latest American trends in both clothing and make-up.

**Table 1.4** Female students enrolled in private universities and colleges in Saudi Arabia in 2006

Women's college or university	Number of women newly registered as students	Number of women as existing students	Total number of women students
Prince Sultan Private University in Riyadh	408	886	1,294
Dar Al Hekma Private College in Jeddah	238	626	864
Effat College in Jeddah	84	218	302
Albaha Private College for Sciences	5	11	16
Al Riyadh private College for Dentistry and Pharmaceutical	133	278	411
Fakih private college for Nursing and Medical Science in Jeddah	37	130	167
College of Business Administration in Jeddah	100	200	300
Ibn Sina private college for medical sciences in Jeddah	109	115	224
Al Manea private College for medical science in Al Khoubar	37	80	117
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>2,544</b>	<b>3,695</b>

(from Ministry of Higher Education, 2006, p. 64 and p. 82)

English is the medium of instruction in all of these colleges. Most of the students speak English with an American accent because they study the language with instructors who are from America. However, it should be noted that the adoption of this Western, specifically American, environment does not imply the adoption of the Western values or beliefs. On the contrary, when the students leave the Western environment created within the walls of the school, they return to wearing their traditional *abbaya*, a body covering that is worn in public and which is considered a Saudi tradition as well as a part of the Muslim religion.

Private, English medium colleges have several aims. First, the colleges provide an international standard of education to Saudi women whose families oppose their travelling alone to study abroad. Second, the private colleges provide courses and majors that were not previously available to women because they are not offered to women in the public government colleges, including graphic design, interior design, engineering, and finance. Third, the private colleges aim to boost the country's capacity to educate and to develop a highly skilled domestic workforce by alleviating some of the pressure from the overburdened, government-owned, public university system. According to the Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI, n.d.), in 2001

the Saudi Arabian labour force, including individuals aged 15 and higher, included 48.35% of the total population. Over the last two decades, the educational enrolments have quadrupled; the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary level education in 2004 increased approximately 22% over previous years. With a growing population and approximately half of the current population under 30 years of age, demand for tertiary education is set to expand dramatically over the next decade. Fourth, the private colleges are attempting to change the methods used in education, moving away from memorisation to a more analytical approach. The traditional system of memorising information from a textbook in order to respond to questions on exams is being phased out and replaced by a more active approach to learning in which students are encouraged to ask questions and to engage in projects that afford them the opportunity to gather information other than that which is presented in the textbook. A final aim of these private colleges is to foster the development of Saudi individuals who become professionals in fields that have previously been dominated by expatriates from countries such as America, Britain, Egypt, and Syria. With qualified Saudis in these positions, Saudi Arabia would have a more self-reliant society and the work force would be able to meet the demands of the country's emerging economic system. The programs aim to achieve this goal by offering state-of-the-art innovative academic programs of the highest quality within Saudi Arabia. The academic curriculum was designed to meet growing needs of the Saudi business community and to satisfy international accreditation requirements.

Acceptance into the women's English medium private colleges varies from one college to another, but the colleges generally require a minimum of 480 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or successfully pass from the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program in that college. These EFL programs provide instruction so that students who successfully fulfil the requirements of the program are academically qualified to enter the college. Students in every program learn a standard of English beyond that which is taught as a part of the secondary school curriculum in Saudi Arabia. Although all the EFL programs in these private colleges have the same goal, equipping students with a high enough level of skill in English so that they can integrate into the mainstream college courses, each of the EFL programs is unique. Every EFL program uses different placement tests to determine the students' level of proficiency, different textbooks, and different teaching materials. Although the programs vary, the classrooms use a variety of educational methods and extensive interaction with both teachers and peers, thus engaging students in educational methods that are not common in earlier

stages of education (e.g., secondary school) in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, these EFL programs are positioned as centres that foster creative thinking, not as programs to simply provide students with information. They promote active learning over passive learning, academic readiness, and group work for college level study. A good example of the philosophy behind this approach is the mission statement of College X's college preparatory program:

It is designed to address academic deficiencies and to bridge gaps in basic English...that might exist between the students' high school preparation and the entrance requirement for the college. It provides instruction that enables students who successfully fulfil the requirements of the programme to become academically qualified to enter the college. It fosters creative thinking, active learning and academic readiness for college level work.

#### **1.4 Perspective: Student, Teacher, and Researcher**

In the previous sections, I discussed the emergence of private colleges and their structure and purpose. I also discussed the historical overview on the provision of female education and the progress that has been made in Saudi Arabia. I am the lens through which the research presented in this thesis is viewed, and I come to this research with my own background, experiences, and perspective. As a researcher, I strive to be objective and derive my ideas from patterns in the data I collect, but I am undoubtedly affected by my background. My own experiences have led me to carry out this research, and my experience shapes the questions I ask. Therefore, it is also important that I discuss myself, a Western-educated, Saudi Arabian woman whose life has been almost equally divided between living in the West (primarily the US) and Saudi Arabia.

I was born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, but have completed more formal education in the US than in Saudi Arabia. My father was a diplomat, and so we lived all over the world during my formative years, including six years in the US, one year in France, and about a year in Pakistan. I first began my schooling in the US at the age of seven in a mainstream classroom. I was never placed in a classroom for instruction of English as a Second Language (ESL), even though I did not speak English. With time, the language became easier and I began to understand and communicate much more easily.

I returned to study in Saudi Arabia when I was 15 years old. In school in Saudi Arabia, I found myself confined to a chair all day except for lunch breaks. The only voices I heard

in each of my classes were those of the teachers, except on those rare occasions when a student would raise her hand to ask a question, wait to be called upon to stand up, and then allowed to ask the intended question. The classes were boring to me and did not call for student interaction. However, I quickly adapted to my new environment. The hardest part for me to endure was the Saudi educational practices. My early experiences were in line with what I have since read regarding the standard teaching practices in Saudi Arabia, which I discussed earlier in this chapter. I experienced the teachers' emphasis on the importance of memorising the information in the textbooks that were developed by the Saudi government. No student-initiated activities were encouraged or allowed in school. I was being trained to become a passive learner who memorised the material from the textbooks in order to achieve success. I resisted this way of teaching and I made it clear to my teachers by expressing myself bluntly. Indeed, I was always questioning things, which was very surprising for my teachers. Living abroad worked to my advantage as the teachers were lenient with me. After graduating from high school with honours, I returned to the US as a married woman to start a Bachelor in Fine Arts degree. I continued my education in the US, gaining a Master's degree in TEFL.

When I moved back to live in Saudi Arabia after graduate school, I was ecstatic about the changes that the country was going through. New rules and regulations were being implemented to make way for change in the country. It had come to the attention of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education that the public universities were becoming overly crowded and that some of the more progressive or open Saudi families were willing to send their daughters abroad so they could receive high quality education. The Ministry granted permission to the private sector to open new English medium colleges that would provide the same level of education or even better education to these Saudi young women, but would not require the women to leave their families and the country. In late 1999, the first women's private, English medium colleges were granted permission to open their doors (see discussion above). The new colleges must abide by the Ministry's strict rules and regulations.

Once the English medium colleges opened, they offered different majors that were new to the country and had never before available in the public colleges or universities. New jobs were available for women, but there were not enough qualified Saudi women to fill them. For all of these reasons, the English medium colleges played an important role in supplying the country with qualified women who were proficient in English to adapt to

the changes that Saudi Arabia was going through. Not only did these private English medium colleges help with educating female students in Saudi Arabia, but they also helped in improving the learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia and in making the educational experience a more student-centred one.

Through my previous position as an EFL lecturer in one of these private English medium colleges, I was able to interact with the students, to get to know them, and to observe their frustrations as they tried to learn English. I also interacted with students as they transitioned from the Saudi Arabian high school system in which they were only provided with English lessons three or four times per week to the English medium program that was taught solely in English. Observing the students' struggles, interacting with the students as I attempted to support and instruct them, and working through students' intense feelings that would sometimes be expressed through classroom disruptions, led me to wonder about the process of the students English language learning. Unfortunately, my investigations at the time did not lead me to any information or resources that would help my students. I decided to further investigate the students' struggles and experiences, focusing on the female student population in Saudi Arabia.

## **1.5 Introduction to the Present Research**

My research utilizes a case study design to investigate the experiences of female college students who are learning English in a private college's EFL program in Saudi Arabia. The goal of this research is to explore one particular Individual Difference (ID) that appears to be a factor when learning a foreign language and may interfere with some students' acquisition of the language, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). The exploratory case study methodology used in the present research contrasts sharply with the more structured and rigid nature of most previous research on FLA, which has tended to be experimental in nature. Researchers conducting case studies begin with broad questions, but they refine, refocus, and finally amend the questions in the field and through the course of conducting the research (Johnson, 1992). Alternatively, researchers conducting experimental studies specify their research questions and hypotheses in advance and strive to answer them through the collection of data in the study. My research started with a general inquiry and the broad, primary aim of understanding how FLA operates

among female students in Saudi Arabia. To address this issue, I set out to conduct classroom observations in actual classroom settings, supplemented by interviews of individual students and interview of students in a group setting. During this fieldwork, many questions developed, but a few, specific questions guided my attempt to more fully understand how anxiety might play a role in foreign language learning in Saudi Arabia.

In addition to my personal experience with, knowledge of, and connections to the country, there were several reasons to conduct this research in Saudi Arabia. The study of English, as discussed in this chapter, is of increasing importance and thus increasing prevalence in Saudi Arabia. Private English medium colleges are being established very rapidly. The colleges are bringing with them adapted, Western-based educational systems that are changing the typical Saudi classroom structure and teaching methods. It seems unlikely that the newly adopted, Western teaching methodology would be the sole cause of anxiety in Saudi Arabian students learning a foreign language. However, the combination of factors – the importance of learning English, the changes in the educational system, and Saudi Arabian culture – create a unique and intriguing environment for studying anxiety related to studying EFL. In particular, Saudi Arabia is still seen as a very conservative society and any foreign domination of its culture will be opposed in a fear their culture and its values will be adopted (Teitelbaum, 2002). So, it may be the case that bringing in unfamiliar, Western teaching methods is seen as problematic. The conservative society and culture also create a context in which it might be difficult for someone who is not intimately and personally familiar with the culture and the Saudi Arabian educational system to conduct a thorough and culturally sensitive study. In this context, I have the advantage of having studied in the US, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom, and having taught in Saudi Arabia, which has given me various perspectives on education.

An EFL program at a female English medium college was selected as the particular research site for collecting my case study data. This college site was chosen because the relatively progressive and modern teaching methods used in the colleges conflict with the general Saudi educational system. I have previously taught in this EFL program, and so I have had the opportunity to personally observe the students' frustration while learning English in this context. I have seen the students suffer anxiety in response to studying English in the early stages of the program and both personally coped with and witnessed the teachers' dilemma of how to respond to and help these anxious students.

Moreover, anxiety appeared to continue beyond the initial steps of learning English. Some of the more advanced students in the program appeared to be constantly concerned about when they would finish the EFL program so that they could begin mainstream college classes and eventually graduate from college.

The primary questions driving the research in this study are as follows:

1. What is the nature of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), from the students' perspectives, in female-only EFL classrooms in this English medium college in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the students' perceptions of how FLA affects their behaviour in this setting? And what are the consequences?
3. How can knowledge gleaned from this research inform understandings of FLA more generally?

This study is important for at least two reasons. First, the research could provide insight into how FLA operates and what barriers EFL students face. Research might lead to an understanding of why EFL students become anxious in the classroom. Investigation into the causes of anxiety in the foreign language classroom could provide a basis of knowledge that could also be valuable for educators and even policy-makers who work to develop principles and practical strategies for education. Second, the study could uncover valuable information about how teachers and students in Saudi Arabia react to FLA in their EFL classroom. Most of FLA research to date has focused on Western countries and especially North American countries. Little to no research attention has been devoted to consideration of FLA in Saudi Arabia, and particularly FLA in Saudi Arabia as a factor that influences the teaching or studying of English. To gain insight into the learner's perspective of how FLA operates in the EFL classroom and to create a model of EFL learning that is consistent with the students' experiences, I am adopting a qualitative approach that includes interviewing and observing the students themselves. This research may also make unique contributions to the field of FLA research because its methodology – thorough case studies – is unique.

In order to address these questions, they first need to be understood and couched in current knowledge about foreign language learning. To this end, in Chapter II, I will review the existing literature regarding how FLA is described and defined, and what is known about FLA in different language learning contexts around the world.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The current chapter has provided a description of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a country, the country's educational system overall, and the teaching of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, it has provided an overview of the rationale, goals, and design of the research to be presented in later chapters. Chapter II examines FLA and reviews the existing literature in order to gain an understanding of what research from around the world has found so that past research can inform the definition and understanding of FLA set forth in this thesis. The literature review will allow me to explore the major theoretical bases for this research. Next, the research methodology, details of the study design, and the processes used in the empirical investigation are described in Chapter III. Chapter III also presents a general description of the specific location where the fieldwork in the main study took place, and my criteria for choosing my participants in the two different levels that were included in the two case studies. I discuss how I developed my printed questionnaire to serve as an instrument for the sole purpose of using it as an assisting tool for the EFL teacher to find out who is anxious in their language class. The chapter also aims to examine the role that context maybe a contributor to foreign language anxiety by giving a description of the two levels involved in my two case studies. Chapters IV and V present in-depth examinations and analyses of the two case studies (one case study for Level 1 EFL students and one case study for Level 3 EFL students) included in my research in an attempt to answer the research questions supported with data analysis. The literature will be revisited in these chapters as a means of support to my analysis. In the next chapter, Chapter VI, the case studies of Levels 1 and 3 will be discussed and analysed together to construct a more complete picture of English language learning experiences. In Chapter VI, I also discuss the potential impact of this research on the teaching methodology practiced in English medium colleges in Saudi Arabia. I will end this chapter by summarising the findings from this research and discuss the implications, limitations, along with suggesting recommendations for EFL teachers and policy makers in Saudi Arabia.

## *Chapter II*

### *Foreign Language Anxiety in Review*

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The affective domain is the emotional side of human behaviour and involves a variety of personality and individual difference variables, including motivation, anxiety, attitude, empathy, self-esteem, inhibition, risk taking, and extraversion (Brown, 2007). The affective domain is important to consider in the context of language learning because affect, or emotions, influences how people respond to information (e.g., the world around them) and how well they can absorb and process information in learning. A primary goal in using language is communicating one's ideas to others. Language use and language learning take place in a social environment and engage various social processes. Participation in learning a new language can be extremely demanding and extremely intimidating, putting learners in the position of representing themselves and their ideas in a new language with little knowledge of whether they are being understood as they intend. For some, this may provoke high levels of anxiety. In a metaphor employed long ago by Krashen (1982) to discuss foreign language acquisition, affective factors are described as influencing the language-learning process by acting as a filter that controls whether language signals are allowed to flow into the language-learning systems of the brain. As discussed by other researchers (e.g., Ehrman, 1996; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Ortega, 2009; Oxford, 2005; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; discussed in Chapter I), affect and behaviours designed to protect one's self can interfere with learning. According to Krashen (1982), language information and input can only reach the systems of the brain that process the information so that an individual can learn the language if the filter does not obstruct the information's path. A raised filter impedes language learning because the language input does not get through the filter to enter the brain's processing system. As a consequence, anxiety inhibits the learner's ability to process incoming language and short-circuits the process of acquisition (Krashen 1985a, 1985b). On the other hand, a student whose filter is lowered instead of raised is likely to learn more both because the student is able to take in

information (i.e., from the teacher), and because the student might seek out new opportunities to learn by volunteering in class (Krashen, 1981).

In an attempt to better understand why some language learners have more difficulty acquiring the target language than other learners do, there has been an increase in research into potential relationships between foreign language acquisition and affective variables. Some affective factors have gained more recognition and attention than others in EFL research. To determine how extensively the affective factors correlated with second language proficiency have been researched, Gardner (1997) surveyed the literature published between 1985 and 1997 by searching three databases, *ERIC*, *Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts*, and *Psyclit*. Gardner found 1,247 articles that reported on eight frequently examined topics. Based on the number of unique articles addressing each factor, attitude was the most frequently examined topic, appearing in 509 articles. Other topics included language learning strategies (276 articles), motivation (227), language aptitude (107), intelligence (49), anxiety (47), field independence (17), and self-confidence (15). Intelligence, anxiety, field independence, and self-confidence had received relatively little attention in second language learning research. Anxiety specifically had been examined in only 47 (less than 4%) of the 1,247 articles in Gardner's review.

More than a decade has passed since Gardner's (1997) survey, and in that time there has been an increase in research on anxiety as an important factor in foreign language acquisition, though the topic still receives relatively little attention. In a relatively recent work by Peter Robinson (2002), *Individual Differences and Instructed Language Learning*, the majority of discussion is devoted to the traditional topics of individual differences in aptitude and cognition, and surprisingly little attention is devoted to individual differences on affective factors. Indeed, only two pages are dedicated to language anxiety. Similarly, Dörnyei's (2005) book, *The Psychology of the Language Learner*, devotes only two and a half pages to FLA.

More recently, Ellis (2008) noted that anxiety has received more attention than other affective factors that may impact SLA. In discussing the attention garnered by the topic of anxiety, Ellis gives examples of books from the 1990s that were devoted specifically to the topic of anxiety (e.g., Arnold, 1999; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Young, 1999). However, Ellis does not look at the amount of attention given to anxiety relative to motivation and other variables. Furthermore, in contrast to Ellis's argument that anxiety

is gaining the most attention out of all affective factors, more recent publications have not focused on anxiety. On the contrary, according to Dewaele (2011), Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), and Ushioda and Chen (2011), the factor receiving the most research attention in the area of SLA is motivation.

Why is there such a lack of attention to, discussion of, and research into FLA? Surely, the topic is of sufficient importance. According to Clément, Major, Gardner, and Smythe's (1977) work, anxiety in language learning is more directly implicated to formal language learning than to naturalistic language learning. In 1999, MacIntyre argued that FLA impacts all students, because even high achieving and capable students can experience the debilitating effects of FLA when they must perform (e.g., speak, write) in a foreign language.

Despite the apparent importance of FLA and its impact on learning, and regardless of the increase in attention received by FLA over the last decade, the research does not fully elucidate the processes underlying FLA. The amount of attention that FLA has received in the Western world is also much greater than the amount it has received in the Arab world and in Saudi Arabia specifically.

In this literature review, I attempted to illustrate that early research into anxiety in the context of foreign language learning lead to the birth of FLA as a distinct branch of affective variables from 1986 onwards. The current chapter presents a review of early research leading up to the birth of FLA, reviewing articles that were selected based on their contributions to a greater understanding of the challenges and problems that students face in foreign language classrooms. Each study is discussed in terms of the study's contribution to the overarching goal of understanding how FLA affects language learners. After the recognition of FLA as a unique subject area, the topic of FLA will be analysed and discussed in terms of themes that aid in understanding FLA and different perspectives on anxiety. Finally, more recent developments, including the introduction of FLA research in different cultures, will be addressed. The chronological organization of this literature review facilitates the understanding of how each stage of research into FLA and related issues has progressed and researchers' understanding of FLA has developed. The research presented in this thesis strives to build upon the most current understanding of FLA and to give attention to issues not yet addressed, such as the experiences of students from and in non-Western cultures.

The information garnered from studies conducted in North America, together with more recent studies from around the world, will serve as the background and basis for the analysis of the case studies examined in future chapters of this thesis and inform the construction of questions about the nature of FLA in the Saudi EFL context. Taken together, the research review and subsequent case studies conducted in this thesis may shed light on the complexity and importance of FLA and why it should be regarded as a priority in EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia.

## **2.2 Early Perspectives on Anxiety in Language Learning**

### **2.2.1 Curran's (1961) Counselling-Learning Model**

Scholars have written about anxiety, language learning, and language teaching since the 1960s. A pivotal figure who discussed early approaches to anxiety in foreign language learning and teaching was Charles Curran (1961). Curran was a clinical psychologist who observed that many people, when attempting to learn a second language, experience anxiety and feel threatened. Drawing on his observations and clinical background, Curran developed the “Counselling-Learning” model of language education. In this model, the student is labelled as the “learner” or “client” and the teacher is labelled as a “knower” or “counsellor”. The role of the counsellor (or knower) is to aid the learner linguistically while facilitating a learning environment in which the learner feels supported. The counsellor supports the learner by being empathetic and understanding and by listening to the learner without being critical so that his or her presence is not perceived as a threat. This learning environment is expected to allow learners to lower their defences and have interpersonal interactions with the counsellor, which is expected to prompt a lower level of anxiety than typical of the educational context. According to Curran’s Counselling-Learning model, the learner will slowly develop his or her language skills until able to communicate independently in the target language.

In Curran’s model, the language learning process occurs in five stages, but there is no pre-assigned, detailed syllabus. Small groups of students first interact and establish relationships in their native language, then sit in circles facing each other to learn the new, target language (e.g., English). The counsellor remains outside of the circle and acts as an aid. In the first stage, the learner speaks to the counsellor in a language he or she knows (i.e., his or her native language). The counsellor translates what was said, then

presents it to the group in a voice intended to communicate empathy and acceptance (i.e., without evaluation or judgment). After hearing the translation of his or her words, the learner repeats the statement as accurately as possible in the target language. In the second stage, the learner expresses his or her idea to the counsellor and then, with no help from the counsellor, the learner addresses the group and repeats what he or she said in the target language. During this stage, the counsellor intervenes if and when help is needed. In the third stage, the learner states what he or she wants to say directly and only in the target language. No translation (i.e., to the native language) is provided unless requested by a member of the group. In stage four, the learner gains confidence and can accept correction from the counsellor while speaking to the group. In the fifth and final stage, the learner is more independent and the counsellor's role becomes suggesting more elegant phrasing.

Curran's observations led him to conclude that the learners' reactions to interacting with their teacher and the process of becoming more and more independent in speaking in the target language were very similar to the reactions and processes experienced by people when they begin counselling and try to describe their personal problems. Although Curran's original work was conducted in the context of the general field of anxiety research, it did assimilate counselling skills with teaching a foreign language, a pairing that was new at the time. Curran's counselling model highlights the role and the potential effect of the counsellor (or teacher) in helping learners to experience less anxiety while learning a foreign language. Furthermore, Curran's "Counselling-Learning" model fuelled the notion that successful second language learning requires the lowering of inhibition. Curran's model of education was later extended and built upon, forming a system that is now called Community Language Learning (CLL).

### **2.2.2 Chastain's (1975) Investigation of Affect and Ability**

Curran's (1961) initial thinking was followed by research specifically investigating anxiety in language learning. Among these studies was Chastain's (1975) investigation of the relationship of students' affective characteristics and students' ability levels to their course grades in elementary language courses in the university. Specifically, Chastain looked at the correlation between language test scores and affective characteristics in randomly selected first-year university students learning introductory

French, German, or Spanish. Chastain was particularly interested in three affective characteristics and their relationship with students' success or failure in second-language classes. In particular, Chastain examined anxiety, reserved versus outgoing personalities, and creativity in being able to express oneself in the foreign language. The students completed three self-report questionnaires to assess each of these characteristics. Anxiety was assessed using a combination of items from Sarason's Test Anxiety Scale and Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale. The Test Anxiety Scale had originally been designed for use with college students and the selection of items included on the scale was guided by Freud's three criteria of an anxious reaction: that it is unpleasant, accompanied by physiological symptoms, and a conscious experience (Sarason, Davidson, Lightfall, & Waite, 1958). Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale was developed as a part of research participant selection in Taylor's 1951 study of conditioned eyelid response. It consists of items drawn from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) that clinicians identified as indicative of chronic anxiety reactions (Taylor, 1951, 1953). Reserved versus outgoing personality types were assessed using the Marlowe-Crown Scale (Crown & Marlowe, 1964). Finally, creativity was assessed using a creativity self-report scale from Feldhusen, Denny, and Condon (1965). The students' scores on the SAT (a standardised test previously called the Scholastic Aptitude Test), including verbal and quantitative scores, as well as high school class rank were used as measures of the students' abilities. Each factor was scored and the relationship between the factor (e.g., anxiety, creativity) and the students' final grades in their language classes was determined. Chastain found relationships between affective factors (e.g., anxiety) and course grades as well as correlations between ability factors (e.g., SAT verbal scores) and course grades. Chastain found three general patterns related to affective factors. First, when examining anxiety, he found that some concern about a test is associated with better performance, but too much anxiety is associated with more negative results (poorer performance) on the test. Second, outgoing students tended to score higher on tests. Finally, some types of creativity were observed to be associated with improved learning, but other types of creativity were associated with poorer learning.

Chastain's research is important because he identified and addressed affective factors, including anxiety, in addition to looking at ability. Chastain identified test anxiety and having an outgoing (as opposed to reserved) personality as particularly related to final grades for students in Spanish and German classes, but also pointed out that test anxiety

did not have a consistent relationship with final grades. He questioned whether having some anxiety about tests might be facilitating, but having a lot of anxiety about tests might lead to poor performance. Chastain noted that the study results implied that affective characteristics, and particularly anxiety, are as strongly related to course grades as ability factors are. He then called for further work investigating the relationship between affect and learning.

### **2.2.3 Clément, Major, Gardner, and Smythe's (1977) Study of Youth and Environment**

At roughly the same time, Clément, Major, Gardner, and Smythe (1977) conducted a study with a younger sample: 130 students (76 in eighth grade, 54 in seventh grade) who spoke French natively and were studying English in an elementary school in Ontario, Canada. All of the students had already studied English for at least six years prior to the beginning of the study. One of the aims of this work was to investigate the relationship of second language acquisition context (e.g., at home, at school, with friends) to language achievement and attitudes. The main topics of interest were self-confidence and anxiety.

As a part of the evaluation of students' performance using English, the teachers were asked to rate their students' English writing and speaking abilities as well as the students' enthusiasm in using the English language on a seven-point scale ranging from excellent to weak. The student participants were given a questionnaire developed by Clément et al. (1977), which consists of multiple different types of questions and scales (e.g., Likert, semantic differential, and multiple-choice, and self-rating scales). The students were given an hour to complete this test battery while the teacher was in the classroom. Student participants were asked to select the context in which they primarily learned English: at school, at home, or with friends. Eighty-seven participants indicated they learned English primarily at school, eighteen indicated home, 10 indicated with friends, and five did not respond to the question.

Based on factor analyses of the students' questionnaire responses and their teachers' ratings of their performance in English, Clément et al. (1977) found that students who have a positive attitude towards English and value community integration (i.e., of English- and French-speaking Canadians) tend to be motivated to learn English, see their

course as easier, and see their parents as a source of encouragement to learn. The factor that captures these variables together is labelled based on the students' valuing of integration and is called "Integrative Motive" (p. 10). Another group of students perceive themselves as competent in English, report frequent use of English outside of school, and report that they are not anxious when using English. Teachers indicate these students are verbally skilled and enthusiastic in using English, but that the same students are not as skilled in using written English. Clément et al. (1977) called this factor "Self-confidence with English" (p. 11). Finally, a third group of students is characterised by high levels of achievement, based on their own and their teachers' ratings of their performance; the factor characterising these students is labelled as the "English achievement dimension" (p. 11).

Students were also compared based on where they thought they learned English – at home, in school, or with friends. Students who indicated they learned English at home and with friends did not differ significantly from each other on any variable. Students who indicated they learned English at home and at school differed only in terms of level of anxiety surrounding their English class. In contrast, students who indicated they learned English primarily with friends rated their anxiety level in class and in real life situations as lower, and reported using English outside of class more, relative to students who learn English at school.

Interesting though it was, Clément et al.'s (1977) study was not without flaws. Although the questionnaire used in their study showed acceptable psychometric properties when used with an older (grade 10) population in previous research (for discussion, see Clément et al., 1977), the questionnaire did not show satisfactory levels of internal consistency in the study of seventh and eighth grade students. The authors suggested that the questionnaire should be re-evaluated with another young sample to determine whether it was consistently problematic for use with younger students. The existing questionnaire might be problematic for use with young students because the vocabulary included in the questionnaire items was too advanced for them; the authors indicate that the test battery vocabulary should be simplified for young students for the sake of clarity and comprehension. However, the authors do not address the potential issues associated with the setting in which the test battery was administered to students. The students had one hour to complete the test battery and completed it with the teacher in the classroom,

and both the time limit and having the teacher supervise could have induced anxiety in the students.

Despite its flaws, this study yielded several informative results. First, it appeared that students who feel that they primarily learn their target language in a relatively formal environment (i.e., school) experience more language-related anxiety. Second, the language acquisition contexts are associated with variation in many aspects of self-confidence with the second language, and the school learning environment in particular appears to be related to low self-confidence (see also MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a). Furthermore, this study demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between actual proficiency and perceived proficiency but a negative relationship between proficiency and FLA. In future studies and other cultures, particularly the Saudi Arabian culture in which formal classroom settings are typically very structured, it would be informative to examine whether Clement et al.'s (1977) observation that the more formal, classroom environment was associated with more negative outcomes in terms of self-confidence and proficiency.

#### **2.2.4 Kleinmann's (1977) Examination of Anxiety and Avoidance**

In the same year, Kleinmann (1977) published a study examining syntactic avoidance, a strategy learners adopted in an attempt to conceal their linguistic inadequacy, in native Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) students. He hypothesised that the English syntactical structures that contrasted most strongly with structures in a student's native language would be avoided most frequently. The study included 39 students who were divided into two groups. Group one consisted of 24 native speakers of Arabic, with 17 students from Saudi Arabia, five from United Arab Emirates, one from Libya, and one from Sudan. The second group consisted of 15 students of whom 13 were native speakers of Spanish and the remaining two were native speakers of Portuguese. Kleinmann administered four tests to both groups. The first test was a multiple-choice test of comprehension of syntactic structures, including direct object pronoun, infinitive complement, present progressive, and passive sentence structures. This test was used to ensure that students comprehended the structures; non-use of the structures could not then be contributed to lack of understanding or lack of knowledge, but more likely to avoidance. The second test was an indirect preference

assessment task in which the students were presented with seven pictures: four pictures to elicit a passive sentence and three to elicit a present progressive sentence. All seven pictures were presented to a control group of native speakers of English, to confirm their appropriateness. The third test was to assess anxiety. Kleinmann used an adapted version of the Achievement Anxiety Test designed to measure the facilitating and debilitating effects of anxiety on academic performance. According to Kleinmann, the test was translated from its original, English form and administered to both groups, though the details of the translation and the target language(s) for the translations were not discussed. The final test was a translated version of the Success-Failure Inventory, which measures the strength of an individual's motivation to attain success and avoid failure, and was used in order to examine the students' success-achievement and failure-avoidance orientations.

Kleinmann's results showed the members in the Arab group produced significantly fewer passive and more present progressive sentence structures than the Spanish-Portuguese group, even though the present progressive is non-existent in Arabic. He concluded that students who scored highly on measures of facilitating anxiety tended to use the syntactic structures that were usually avoided by other students because of the syntactic structure divergence from their own native language, but subjects with high debilitating anxiety avoided the divergent structures altogether (Kleinmann, 1977). These findings were consistent with the findings of multiple other researchers (e.g., Bailey, 1983; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991a; Scovel, 1978). Kleinmann also concluded that confidence is associated with an individual's choice to avoid or not to avoid use of a given sentence structure. Accordingly, confidence does not necessarily reflect the learner's knowledge of a particular structure; rather, it reflects the learner's perception of what he knows. So, whether or not a structure that was divergent from one's native language was produced or not might depend on the speaker's affective state, including confidence, anxiety, and motivation.

In addition to addressing and assessing anxiety specifically, this study mentioned two different types of anxiety, facilitating and debilitating anxiety, and examined the relationship between these two types of anxiety and second language learning behaviour. Unfortunately, Kleinmann did not clearly and formally define facilitating and debilitating anxiety. Nonetheless, this study is pertinent in the current review because it is one of the first studies to focus on Arabic speakers and their affective states.

## 2.2.5 Conflicting Evidence Regarding Anxiety: Scovel's (1978) Research

In 1978, Scovel published a survey article in which he examined a variety of affective factors and each factor's relationship with language learning proficiency, drawing on a many previous studies. He recognised that there were a wide range of variables collected together under the title "affect," all of which are intrinsic to the learner, and he tried to classify the variables. However, Scovel came across conflicting evidence surrounding one important affective variable: anxiety.

Scovel (1978) drew on a definition of anxiety from applied psychology in describing anxiety as a "state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (p. 34). He went on to say that the most important intervening variables that have been studied when looking at anxiety and academic performance are (1) the subject studied or tested at school, (2) the student's level of intelligence, (3) the difficulty of the skill or information the student is attempting to master, and (4) the degree of familiarity the student has with the learning task.

According to Scovel, anxiety is associated with the formal process of language learning undertaken by adults, not the informal, unconscious language acquisition process that characterizes how children appear to learn a language. However, the research has not uncovered such a simple relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning. In Scovel's review of the literature, he found that the research into this relationship yielded mixed and confusing results. Some studies Scovel reviewed found consistent relationships between anxiety and academic performance within the classroom; other studies indicated contradictory correlations. Indeed, Scovel stated that, "[i]t is perplexing to find anxiety implicated with one skill at one level, but never with other skills at different levels" (1978, p. 132). Scovel suggested that, since all the studies he reviewed used different anxiety measures, it is natural that they found different relationships between anxiety and language achievement. This led him to conclude that language researchers should stick to a specific type of anxiety they want to measure and that anxiety could have both facilitating and debilitating effects on second language learning. Scovel distinguished between facilitating and debilitating anxiety, discussing them each in terms of the fight-or-flight response, approach-avoidance motivation, and recruiting the emotional resources to cope with a learning challenge. Scovel described facilitating anxiety as stimulating the learner to take on or "fight" the learning task or challenge. That is, facilitating anxiety enables the learner to deal with the emotional

aspect of the learning challenge, readying the learner to approach the task. In contrast, debilitating anxiety pushes the learner to “flee” a new learning challenge or situation. That is, debilitating anxiety pushes the learner to avoid the situation.

In his review, Scovel (1978) also found that a higher state of anxiety facilitates learning for highly intelligent individuals, but debilitates learning for less intelligent individuals. Furthermore, he states that increased anxiety at the early stages of learning activities debilitates academic performance, but increased anxiety at later stages of learning is likely to improve performance. Scovel’s article proved to be very enlightening at the time as he attempted to clarify how anxiety functions and affects performance within the experience of language learning.

In detailing the distinction between facilitating and debilitating anxiety, Scovel (1978) linked anxiety with motivation and said the learning of any task is affected by both positive motivation (facilitating anxiety) and negative motivation (debilitating anxiety). For example, to perform well in music, sports, or language learning, an individual must be adequately physiologically aroused such that he or she can operate at an optimal level. Some anxiety will push the neuromuscular system to this ideal level of arousal so that the individual is alert and attentive. However, if the individual experiences too much anxiety, the person may begin feeling distracted and his or her work will be disrupted. In Scovel’s original words, he says,

facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to ‘fight’ the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally to approach behaviour. Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, motivates the learner to ‘flee’ the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behaviour. (p. 139)

He recommended that anxiety studies should take note of the different types of anxiety that had been identified. Furthermore, the distinction between different types of anxiety provides an explanation of how debilitating anxiety can bring about avoidance behaviour. Kleinmann (1977) addressed this issue indirectly, but did not discuss the processes by which it may occur.

### **2.2.6 Diverse Methodology: Bailey's 1979 Diary Studies**

By the early 1980s, research on affective factors had further developed and begun to diversify. An example of the emerging diversity among research studies is a combination of survey and diary methods used in a study carried out by Bailey in the late 1970s (see Seliger & Long, 1983). Bailey's often-cited analysis of diary studies was influenced, in part, by diaries kept by Francine and John Schumann in 1977 while they were learning Arabic in Tunisia and Persian in Iran and California. Bailey examined language diaries as a research tool and also kept her own diary when she was learning French as a foreign language in a college reading and grammar course. Bailey attended the course as part of her doctoral requirements in Applied Linguistics, and she was more interested in passing her translation exam than in learning how to speak French. She had taken her first level of French a couple years earlier. Bailey mentions that she and four of the other students in her French class had taken the prerequisite course together, so they were familiar with one another.

In her diary, Bailey kept a record of her experiences of language learning and noticed herself being very competitive with other students in the class. She defined competitiveness as the desire to excel in comparison to others and to be seen as performing particularly well. Bailey's competitiveness could be observed when she tried to identify which other students were the greatest and the smallest threats to her in the class. For example, Bailey compared herself and other students in terms of specific skills and tried to rank herself or her abilities with other students in the class. Bailey also pointed out that she was experiencing what Gardner, Smythe, and Brunet (1977) called French Classroom Anxiety.

In her diaries, Bailey also found evidence of the effect competitiveness had on her efforts to learn French. She identified herself as having the desire to out-do the other students in class and to gain the teacher's approval, and paid a great deal of attention to tests and grades. Bailey's constant comparing of herself to other students led her to seek allies and to react negatively to some students. In some cases, she described herself as so tense that she could not participate in class and withdrew from the painful situation by skipping

classes, a sign of debilitating anxiety. She also described her feelings as motivating her to study harder, characteristic of facilitating anxiety. Throughout her diary study, Bailey admitted that competitiveness and anxiety coincided such that it was difficult to determine if one was causing the other. Bailey concluded that her diary contained seven characteristics involving competitiveness:

1. Overt self-comparison of the language learner,
2. Emotive responses to the comparisons,
3. A desire to out-do other language learners,
4. Emphasis on or concern with tests and grades,
5. A desire to gain the teacher's approval,
6. Anxiety experienced during the language lesson, and
7. Withdrawal from the language-learning experience.

Bailey asked whether her findings about her own experience would generalise to a larger population of language learners. To try to answer her question, Bailey examined 10 other diaries that were completed in language learning situations by other diarists, most of whom were teachers-turned-learners. When looking at the 10 diaries, she found more or less the same competitive characteristics she had noticed in her own diary. Bailey suggested the hypothesis that language classroom anxiety can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness, and suggested that diary entries that reveal competitiveness often reveal anxiety as well. She also suggested that Gardner et al.'s (1977) term French Classroom Anxiety should be broadened to a more general term, Language Classroom Anxiety. In addition, Bailey suggested that there is a relationship between anxiety and negative competitiveness in which the learner perceives herself as falling behind or lacking relative to other students and this view carries emotional meaning for the learner.

Bailey's diary study briefly mentions that four students in the class had been together before and were familiar with one another, the textbooks, and the teaching style. However, she does not elaborate on these students' familiarity with each other as a factor that might increase their sense of solidarity and friendship, reducing anxiety. On the contrary, Bailey admitted that at times her own anxiety increased because she thought of herself as an outsider and was less familiar with the lessons than others were. Finally, Bailey's recommendation to use a general term such as "Language Classroom Anxiety",

recognizing that the phenomenon is unlikely to be restricted to French language classrooms, is important. The suggested term resurfaced three years later in the work of Horwitz et al. (1986), discussed later in this chapter.

The factors that Bailey identified and discussed in her own diary studies, including her language level, competitiveness, familiarity with her peers, familiarity with teaching methods, and familiarity with textbooks, are important because these factors might affect any language learners. These factors are, therefore, potentially important factors to investigate in studies of language learners. In my own studies presented later in this thesis, I will investigate whether the degrees of familiarity that participants have with their classmates, their learning tasks, and their language level can be related to their language anxiety.

Bailey's diary studies also drew attention to the shortcomings of using a diary as the sole research tool in a study. Bailey mentions that the use of diary study as a tool for research falls into the category of ethnographic fieldwork and is mainly hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-testing. Furthermore, most of the eleven diaries that Bailey looked at, including her own diary, were written by experienced practitioners in the field of second language teaching and learning. They knew what should be included in their diaries and they were consistent in writing their entries, but their perspectives on their language learning experiences were probably influenced by their backgrounds. Diary entries require background information, information on the language learning or teaching context, and information about the learner's environment. If using diaries as a source of information, the researcher must understand what the diarist is describing, reporting on, and even what is omitted from entries in order to accurately interpret the information in the journals and draw appropriate conclusions. If used alone, diary entries as a source of information about a classroom allow us only a partial view of the classroom and learning experience. As a means of collecting data and trying to capture the full dynamic of the classroom, diaries should be combined with other data-gathering methods.

### **2.2.7 Summary**

A brief summary of the early (1960s-1980s) studies that investigated anxiety or anxiety-related factors in the context of language learning that were discussed in this chapter is

presented below in Table 2.1. As shown in the findings and implications column of the table, the relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning appears varied. As early as Chastain's 1975 work, it was suggested that a small amount of anxiety might be motivating or facilitate performance, but a high level of anxiety might be associated with poor performance. In 1978, Scovel formally defined facilitating and debilitating anxiety. Kleinmann (1977), however, investigated what he termed "facilitating anxiety" and found it to be related to an increased use of language structures that are dissimilar to those in the students' native language, as if the students who experience more facilitating anxiety branch out more in their language use and learning. By the 1980s, additional and novel methodology (e.g., Bailey's diary studies) was introduced for studying language-learning anxiety, but the investigation of anxiety in foreign language learning was still quite young. Indeed, the majority of these studies were not focused on anxiety as primary factor to be studied, but were focused more broadly on affect and the overall language-learning experience.

**Table 2.1** Summary of anxiety-related findings and implications of early studies

Study	Country	Pertinent Findings and Implications
Curran (1961)	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Likened language teaching to counselling, suggesting that this model would allow the learner to slowly reach an independent language adequacy</li> <li>▪ Suggested that successful second language learning requires the lowering of inhibition</li> </ul>
Chastain (1975)	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Suggested mild anxiety may be correlated with better second language performance, but high anxiety, or too much anxiety, may be correlated with poorer second language performance</li> </ul>
Clément et al. (1977)	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observed second language acquisition contexts to be related to language achievement attitudes, anxiety, and self-confidence</li> <li>▪ Results indicated formal language learning to be associated with greater anxiety</li> </ul>
Kleinmann (1977)	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Negative affective variables were associated with avoidance of specific English language structures that differed from structures in the speakers' native language</li> <li>▪ Students with high levels of facilitating anxiety were more likely to use syntactic structures that contrast with their native language</li> </ul>
Scovel (1978)	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defined debilitating and facilitating anxiety</li> <li>▪ Literature review linking anxiety with motivation</li> <li>▪ Reiterated Kleinmann's idea of avoidance behaviour in language learners</li> <li>▪ Found that anxiety facilitates learning at advanced levels of study but debilitates learning at beginning levels</li> </ul>
Bailey (1983)	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Used diaries as a research tool</li> <li>▪ Hypothesised that language classroom anxiety can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness</li> </ul>

### **2.3 The Birth of FLA**

The studies reviewed in the previous section were all conducted in the relatively broad topic area of affect and language learning. In the years that followed, research began to look specifically at anxiety and how it affects foreign language learning. However, foreign language anxiety, or FLA, was not identified as a separate, unique, and distinct topic particular to second language learning until Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed this perspective. They argued that FLA is responsible for the students' uncomfortable experiences in language classes, and also offered a scale specifically designed to measure this type of anxiety. In their 1986 work, Horwitz et al. defined FLA as, "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 31).

Learning a new language has been described as psychologically unsettling (Guiora, 1983) because, as also discussed by Horwitz et al. (1986), it challenges the learners' self-views. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), speaking and communicating in a foreign language can be fear-inducing and challenge adults' views of themselves as intelligent and skilful communicators. In one's native language, it is generally not very difficult for the typical adult to express ideas and understand other individuals. However, when learning a new, unfamiliar language, these otherwise regular, daily tasks become challenges, noticeably different from communicating in one's native language (Aveni, 2005). Aveni (2005) says, "The process of language study is like no other. To learn another language is to redefine yourself publicly, socially, and personally. No other topic of education so deeply affects the individual's own self-presentation in society." (p.7) Adults, who normally see themselves as reasonably intelligent and socially adept, may find that they do not know how their communicative attempts in the target language are evaluated, interpreted, or perceived. They do not know how they are seen by others. The act of expressing a simple thought, which feels nearly automatic in the native language, is suddenly strenuous and may be seen as risky. The individual might feel as if he or she cannot communicate ideas or who he or she is; the individual's self may be lost in the challenging task of translation to the new language. The individual may no longer see himself or herself as competent, but might instead feel self-conscious, fearful, and even panic when faced with the need to communicate in the new language. Horwitz et al. discuss these experiences (e.g., self-consciousness, fear) and suggest that they stem from the lack of authenticity associated with attempting to communicate in a second

language in which one is not fluent, and in which the ability to communicate in a nuanced and accurate way has not been developed. Speakers feel anxiety when they are unable to convey their thoughts.

There are problems defining and measuring anxiety, which Horwitz et al. (1986) pointed to as potentially leading to a weak theoretical foundation for the literature focused directly on FLA. These problems can be minimized if there is a clear distinction drawn between general anxiety and FLA. This distinction came about when Horwitz et al. identified FLA as a “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the (foreign) language learning process” (p. 128). Horwitz et al. concluded that FLA is unique and distinct from other forms of anxiety on the basis of previous research literature and observation of student learning. First, they reviewed the literature on anxiety and second language achievement. At that time, the anxiety measures used were not specific to foreign language learning, and few achievement studies had looked at the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning. The second source of information that informed Horwitz et al.’s conclusion was a study they conducted with foreign language students in university classes at the Learning Skill Centre (LSC) at the University of Texas. Participants in this study were 78 beginning language class students, each of whom was in a support group for Foreign Language Learning. In their support groups, the students discussed their concerns and the difficulties that they faced in their foreign language classes. The experiences that students disclosed in these support groups contributed to the development of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a paper-and-pencil questionnaire designed to elicit students’ self-reported ratings of their own anxiety. The FLCAS, presented below in Table 2.2, is a 33-item scale that uses a five-point Likert response scale to assess students’ communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom.

Horwitz and colleagues proposed that students have mature thoughts and ideas, but an immature second language vocabulary through which to express their ideas. This mismatch of ideas and language skills is related to communication apprehension and leads to frustration and apprehension. Test anxiety, which is also assessed in the FLCAS, is mainly for academic purposes; schools or teachers require students to complete tests while the students are striving towards proficiency in their new language. The third area

that is assessed by the FLCAS, fear of negative evaluation, reflects language students' state of being unsure of how to express themselves in their second language and unsure of how they appear to others when speaking that second language, which may lead students to feel concerned about the image they project to their peers.

In their initial studies using the instrument, Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that FLA was experienced by many students in at least some aspects of foreign language learning. The FLCAS was administered to students in their language classes during the third week of the semester.

Horwitz et al. (1986) demonstrated the FLCAS had adequate reliability and validity, and reported a significant negative correlation between anxiety and foreign language grades. In the study, they found that students with debilitating anxiety, which hinders the students' language learning process in the foreign language classroom setting, can be identified and that these students share a number of characteristics. For example, students with high levels of FLA both expected and received lower grades than their less anxious counterparts. Furthermore, students who had high scores of test anxiety as reported on the FLCAS also reported that they were afraid to speak in the foreign language. Moreover, the study revealed that students who report high levels of overall anxiety also feel extremely self-conscious when asked to speak their foreign language in the presence of other people (e.g., other students), perhaps because of fear of negative evaluation or risk revealing themselves.

In their research, Horwitz et al. (1986) found that anxiety in foreign language learning manifests itself primarily in listening and speaking in the foreign language. This conclusion was based on the finding that most of the students at the LSC at the University of Texas were concerned about extemporaneous speaking in their foreign language classes. The students were relatively comfortable answering drill questions or delivering rehearsed speeches, but they reported that they tended to freeze in a role-play situation. This is consistent with other research that identified speaking in the foreign language as the most anxiety provoking activity (Daly, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1990).

**Table 2.2** FLCAS items

Likert scale response options				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.				
2. I <i>don't</i> worry about making mistakes in language class.				
3. I tremble when I know I'm going to be called on in language class.				
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.				
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.				
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.				
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.				
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.				
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.				
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.				
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.				
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.				
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.				
14. I would <i>not</i> be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.				
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.				
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.				
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.				
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.				
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.				
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.				
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.				
22. I <i>don't</i> feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.				
23. I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do.				
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.				
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.				
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.				
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.				
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.				
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.				
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.				
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.				
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.				
33. I <del>get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.</del>				

from Horwitz and Young (1991; p. 32-33)

Language learners who were more anxious complained of not being able to discriminate between the sounds and structures of what Horwitz et al. call *the target language message*. For example, one student reported hearing only a loud, buzzing sound whenever his teacher spoke the target language. Horwitz et al. reported that many of the students complained they did not understand what the teacher said when the teacher spoke at length in the target language. The authors concluded that research should focus on the more specific processes by which anxiety might impair performance in foreign-language contexts.

In their innovative study, Horwitz et al. (1986) improved on previous studies in that they explicitly identified FLA as a distinct topic. Moreover, they took into consideration Gardner's (1985) suggestion that scales directly concerned with FLA are more appropriate for studying language anxiety than are general anxiety scales. Indeed, Horwitz et al. (1986) provided a detailed report of the methodology they used in producing the FLCAS specifically for classroom FLA. Understanding the methodology behind the construction of the FLCAS can help inform researchers about whether the FLCAS is an appropriate tool for use in other contexts (i.e., is it culturally dependent?) or whether it needs to be adapted for use with other students, and it informed my decisions regarding use of the FLCAS in Saudi Arabia. Horwitz et al.'s (1986) work also guided my planning of a tool to select research participants for the current thesis, as elaborated in Chapter III.

## **2.4 Perspectives on Anxiety Research**

Although FLA had been established as a distinct topic area and an issue special to foreign language learning, understanding of FLA can be informed by a greater understanding of knowledge about anxiety more generally. By the late 1980s, multiple perspectives regarding anxiety and research on anxiety had arisen and anxiety was being discussed in terms of different types or domains. In the current section, I shift from the chronological literature review of specific studies of anxiety to a thematic review focused on the identification of these three different perspectives on anxiety and their characteristics.

When studying anxiety, it is necessary to distinguish between a general trait of anxiety that can be seen within specific individuals across a number of situations, and anxiety that is situation-specific (e.g., specific to language learning situations; Gardner, 1985). In an exploratory study designed to investigate the relationship between language anxiety and other anxieties, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) attempted to evaluate the theoretical framework set forth by Horwitz et al. (1986) by drawing from 11 existing anxiety scales to compile a single scale for use with students, and then examining the relationships among the items drawn from the 11 original scales. MacIntyre and Gardner used a three-phase study with 104 (52 males, 52 females) native English speakers.

In the first phase, they administered a three-part questionnaire containing elements of numerous anxiety scales. Part 1 of the questionnaire included items from the French Class Anxiety, English Class Anxiety, and Mathematics Class Anxiety scales, which participants responded to using a six-point scale. Part 2 of the questionnaire contained a subset of items from the French Use Anxiety, Trait Anxiety, and Computer Anxiety scales, which were also answered using a six-point Likert scale. Part 3 of the questionnaire included the Test Anxiety and Audience Anxiety scales, which required True/False responses.

In the second phase of the study, the students were given four computer trials to learn 38 English-French vocabulary word pairs; the students' ability to recall each word was tested before each new trial. The State Anxiety scale was administered after three of these tests. In the final phase of the study, the students were tasked with producing vocabulary in French and with free recall of paired words.

In analysing the data, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) found two statistically independent factors. The first factor was composed of the scales of Trait, State, and Test Anxiety, among others, and was labelled General Anxiety. The second factor included French Class, French Use, English Class, and Audience Anxieties, and was labelled as Communicative Anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) concluded that the first factor, dimension of General Anxiety and those scales that comprise it, are not related to language behaviour in a reliable manner. There were no differences between groups of participants who had high versus low general anxiety. In contrast, the dimension labelled as Communicative Anxiety was significantly and negatively related to the learning of French vocabulary. Students with high scores on Communicative Anxiety learned and recalled fewer vocabulary items than did students low in Communicative Anxiety.

These findings support Horwitz et al.'s (1986) argument that FLA is unique and distinct from general anxiety and their development of the FLCAS to assess anxiety in the language-learning context. However, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) differ with Horwitz et al. (1986) regarding whether Test Anxiety should be included as a facet or component of foreign language classroom anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) found that Test Anxiety was not an important factor in foreign language learning or specific to language learning, but rather a general issue.

Based on the above, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) concluded that anxiety leads to deficits in learning and performance. Furthermore, they found that anxiety related to language learning is different from other types of anxiety in that other types of anxiety do not show consistent relationships with performance, but language anxiety does. A shortcoming of MacIntyre and Gardner's (1989) study is that the scales associated with the Communicative Anxiety factor included apprehension with regard to speaking in both English (e.g., items from the English Class Anxiety and Audience Anxiety scales) and French (e.g., items from the French Class Anxiety and French Use Anxiety scale), despite the fact that the students were all native English speakers. As MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) point out themselves in their later work, this may or may not have altered their interpretation of the study's results.

The authors raised concerns about the production measures used in their 1989 study because the production measures were conducted only in French; these concerns lead them to conduct a follow-up study, published in 1991. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) used a more extensive factor analysis, which yielded a more informative factor structure showing that language anxiety can be discriminated reliably from other types of anxiety, as had been suggested by Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1989).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) went on to identify three different characterizations of anxiety investigated in a number of different areas: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Each of these different perspectives on anxiety will be elaborated below.

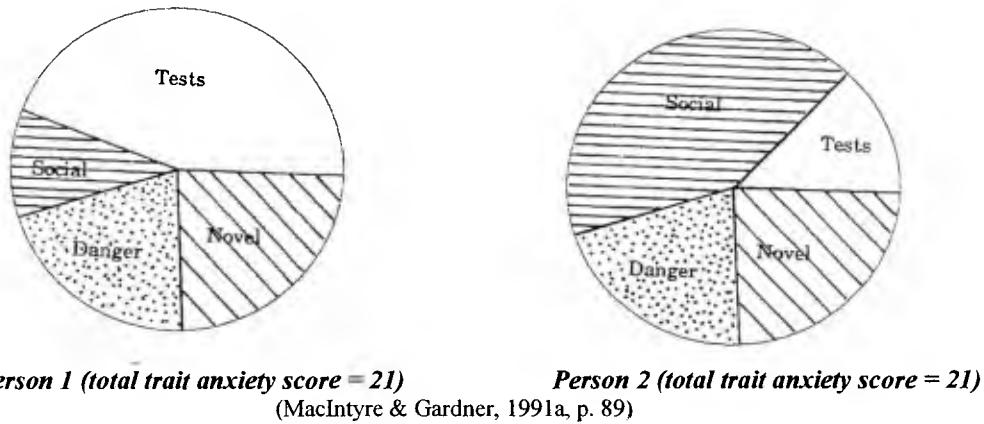
#### **2.4.1 Trait Anxiety**

According to Spielberger and Vagg (1995), trait anxiety refers to stable differences in propensity to experience anxiety across situations and time. A person who is high in trait of anxiety is likely to feel anxious in a variety of situations. Spielberger (1972; also see Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001) defines trait anxiety as individuals' intrinsic tendency to become anxious in any situation. Similarly, Scovel (1978, see Ellis, 2008 for discussion) draws on psychology research in defining trait anxiety as a relatively permanent predisposition of tendency to become anxious. MacIntyre and Gardner support Eysenck's (1979; cited in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a) conclusion that a person high in

trait anxiety would likely become apprehensive in a number of different situations. They added that this condition will impair the individual's cognitive functioning, disrupt memory, lead to avoidance behaviours, and have other effects. These conclusions are suggestive of the widespread influence that anxiety can have on cognitive, affective, and behavioural functioning.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) argue that the situations provoking anxiety will differ, even across individuals who show similar trait anxiety scores; and even among individuals high in trait anxiety. In addition, not every situation will provoke anxiety. To illustrate this idea, the authors gave an example in which two individuals scored 21 points on a fictitious trait anxiety scale. This trait anxiety scale had four subscales: anxiety experienced in social situations, anxiety experienced during written tests, anxiety experienced in unfamiliar situations, and anxiety experienced in dangerous circumstances. The situational elements comprising the score of 21 differed dramatically for both individuals: person 1 felt very anxious in social situations but enjoyed written exams. On the other hand, person 2 experienced test anxiety but enjoyed socializing. For a visual representation, see Figure 2.3, below. Both of the individuals had similar levels of anxiety in unfamiliar and dangerous situations. So, if these two individuals were enrolled in a foreign language course, person 1 might do well if the course does not require classroom participation or presentations due to the anxiety from the social interaction element. On the other hand, person 2 might achieve higher marks on participation and oral exams than the written ones due to his/her enjoyment of the social elements. From a trait perspective, the distinction between these different elements is lost, because both individuals are assigned the same score for the trait of anxiety without consideration of the source of the anxiety. This issue might be rectified if an assessment assigned a global anxiety level score but also broke the overall trait of anxiety into subsets or facets and assigned scores to each.

A complete and comprehensive understanding of anxiety must focus on the situations that provoke anxiety in addition to individual differences in the tendency to become anxious. Researchers must carefully avoid overlooking details by collapsing across different types of anxiety-provoking situations, the issue that arises when data are simplified by creating a single anxiety score on a questionnaire.



**Figure 2.3** Difference in distribution of the total trait anxiety score for person 1 and person 2

Trait anxiety research has not proven to be informative in predicting achievement in a second language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, 1991b). However, the findings in this area of inquiry are still helpful because they provide insight into the likelihood that a particular individual will become anxious. A particularly useful question to address might be whether the individual become anxious in all situations, or just in foreign language class.

#### 2.4.2 State Anxiety

Brown (2007) argues that there is a distinction between trait and state anxiety, defining state anxiety as “a relatively temporary feeling of worry experienced in relation to some particular event or act” (p. 390). Other researchers define state anxiety as apprehension that is experienced at a specific moment and as a response to a particular situation, suggesting that state anxiety is a combination of trait anxiety, or the propensity to experience anxiety, as discussed above, and situation-specific anxiety, which will be discussed further below (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Spielberger, 1983). This is consistent with Spielberger and Vagg (1995), who describe state anxiety as experiences of anxiety within a specific situation. In their definition, state anxiety is not fixed, but differs from one situation to another. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) conceptualize state anxiety as a blend of trait and situational approaches such that each individual has a propensity towards experiencing anxiety (at the trait level), but anxiety is provoked or not provoked by the situations each person endures. In all of these views, state anxiety is apprehension experienced at a particular moment in time; it is a temporary condition or arousal that

fades once the source of threat disappears. It is not static or inherent to a person, but differs from one situation to another. For example, state anxiety could occur prior to taking a test or during a test, and then disappear once the test (the threat) is completed. In their description of state anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) also noted that there is a strong correlation between state and trait anxiety, indicating that increased levels of trait anxiety are associated with higher levels of state anxiety.

State anxiety affects emotions, cognition, behaviour, and physiology. A heightened level of state anxiety affects emotions by causing an increase in arousal and a more sensitive nervous system. When experiencing heightened levels of state anxiety, people are more sensitive to what other people are thinking of them, which may impact their cognitive capacities. Regarding behaviour, people experiencing high levels of state anxiety often evaluate their behaviour, constantly imagining failure, and may try to plan ways to escape from the situation at hand. Furthermore, state anxiety can lead to physiological signs, including sweaty palms and an increased, or racing, heartbeat (Young, 1999).

Individuals might experience state anxiety in response to the language learning situation, particularly during the early phases of learning. An example of this can be seen in MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991a) review of Gardner, Smythe, and Brunet's (1977) study examining 62 native English speakers learning French in an intensive summer school. The students who took part in the original study were categorized into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, and each student completed scales of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) before and after completing the summer course. The results indicated that as the students became more experienced and proficient in the foreign language, their anxiety levels declined. In line with this finding, the results of numerous studies have indicated that FLA can have a negative impact on the language learning process (e.g., MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a; Young, 1991; and Phillips, 1992).

It may be the case that too much anxiety has an inhibiting effect and impedes or hinders the process of successful language learning, but a certain degree of concern and anticipation (arguably related to anxiety), in addition to curiosity, facilitates learning and may even be necessary for high levels of achievement. In particular, in Bailey (1983) noted that some concern or anxiety has a positive impact on learning. In her diary studies, Bailey (1983) found that using tasks that do not challenge students to some degree can undermine the learners' interest. This was also true when students had difficulty on assignments and did not receive adequate help and support to complete the

assignment; the student may then experience lack of interest and lack of motivation to try to continue to learn.

With regard to methodology, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) critique the scales used to assess state anxiety for failing to attempt to determine the source of the respondents' anxiety. For example, a questionnaire assessing state anxiety might ask, "Are you nervous now?" They argue that in order to identify the causes and other details of anxiety, the question that should be asked instead is, "Were you nervous during the exam?" or "Were you nervous when you were asked a question in class?"

Currently, the most widely used scale for measuring both state and trait anxiety is the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983 in Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001). There are other measures available (e.g., the Manifest Anxiety Scale [MAS]), but the STAI is both briefer and has better psychometric properties, leading the STAI to be used most extensively (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a).

#### **2.4.3 Situation-Specific Anxiety**

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) also discuss a third perspective from which anxiety can be conceptualized and described; in this perspective, anxiety is discussed as situation-specific. Situation-specific anxiety is anxiety that is aroused or prompted by a specific set of conditions or stimuli, such as public speaking, completing examinations, or participating in class (Ellis, 2008). This type of anxiety is the focus of my research, and the specific situation of interest is the foreign language learning context.

Situation-specific anxiety is considered more diverse than trait and state anxiety, but it can also be characterised as a measurement of trait anxiety limited to a given context (e.g., classrooms). According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a), the situation-specific approach affords numerous advantages. First, it leaves the description of the particular situation in question up to the subject, avoiding making any assumptions about the circumstances provoking anxiety. Second, using a situation-specific approach allows researchers to identify and assess statistically independent anxiety. For example, MacIntyre and Gardner (1988) found a correlation of zero between anxiety in two academic contexts using a measure of French Class Anxiety and Math Class Anxiety. Third, the situation-specific approach may facilitate a better understanding of the specific prompts and causes of anxiety because the subject is asked to report on various aspects

of the potentially anxiety-provoking situation. An example study in which situation-specific anxiety scales were used is Horwitz et al. (1986) in which language students were asked about their anxiety related to exams in their language courses, speaking in the language class, and other students' perceptions of them (see previous discussion in this chapter). Finally, researchers have concluded that studies conducted using a situation-specific scale to assess anxiety have shown promising results and are more informative and consistent in their conclusions than other studies using the state or trait types of measures (see MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a).

A major difference between situation-specific anxiety and both state and trait anxiety is that assessments of situation-specific anxiety require subjects to attribute their anxiety to particular sources (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) argue that anxiety that is present at the very start of a class, or during the first few experiences with the foreign language, are not likely to be specific to the situation of learning a foreign language or being in foreign language classes; this anxiety is not actually FLA. Students enter the classroom with their own individual differences in propensity towards anxiety (trait anxiety), are likely to have experience with tests in other courses and might have test-related anxiety, and might have experiences that lead to their experiencing anxiety in response to other, more general classroom-related or social settings. So, the anxiety that might be experienced at the beginning of the learning process is likely due to trait anxiety, test anxiety, communication apprehension, or another anxiety that is not specific to the foreign language context. Indeed, the authors assert that anxiety resulting from early language experience is best called state anxiety. But, according to their argument, students do not experience FLA early on because the students do not yet have the necessary experience and associations with the specific situation of the foreign language context. However, if their early experiences and emotions are negative, FLA might begin to develop. According to MacIntyre and Gardner, "FLA is based on negative expectations that lead to worry and emotionality" (1991a, p. 110). In practical terms, this means that students might start to anticipate being nervous and performing poorly in class.

As MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) explain, the approach of viewing and assessing anxiety as situation-specific has been criticized. According to its critics, a fundamental challenge in conceptualizing anxiety as situation-specific lies in defining the term "situation". Situations can be very broadly defined to include even internal experiences

or individual differences (e.g., shyness), relatively narrowly defined (e.g., communication apprehension), or rather specifically defined (e.g., stage fright, public speaking). It is up to the researcher to define the situation that will ultimately be meaningful for purpose of the study being undertaken or the issue at hand. However, if research knowledge is to be cumulative and findings from one study are to be related to findings of another, researchers must be mindful of the definitions they use; a more general definition of “situation” might allow for greater generalisation across research.

The work presented by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) and Horwitz (2001) supports, and I agree with, the conclusion of Horwitz et al. (1986) that, “when anxiety is limited to the language learning situation, it falls into the category of specific anxiety reactions” (p. 125). In addition, studies using situation-specific constructs afford the advantage that participants’ anxiety levels surrounding well-defined situations can be examined and assessed; this is an advantage in that it has the potential to yield findings and conclusions that are more appropriate for specific tasks involved in language learning. Research has indicated that anxiety associated with language learning should be classified as situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner 1991a). Based on this classification, and because the situation-specific approach has a wide range of advantages associated with it, I have adopted this approach for the current research.

## **2.5 Further Development of Research into FLA**

With the perspective that FLA is a situation-specific form of anxiety, it is worthwhile to examine how FLA research has developed since FLA emerged as a unique topic, or since the late 1980s. In a pivotal study, Young (1991) found that FLA arises from personal and interpersonal anxieties, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures, and language testing. She argued that low self-esteem and competitiveness were the two significant sources of learner anxiety under her rubric and cited diary entries from Bailey’s (1983) to provide further examples. Furthermore, Young (1991) pointed out the largest challenge in the domain of FLA research is that the relationship among anxiety, language learning, and performance cannot be considered without taking into account an assortment of other variables, such as language setting, anxiety definitions, anxiety measures, age of subjects, language skill, and research design. In the following selective

discussion of research that has been conducted since Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study, I consider various factors and variables, their associated outcomes and their significance in the context of my own research and its design.

### **2.5.1 Price (1991): A qualitative, interview-based approach**

In a qualitative, interview-based study that brings further methodological diversity to the field of FLA, Mary Lou Price (1991) examined students' experiences of anxiety and situations they believed caused them anxiety. Specifically, Price found students most frequently reported speaking in the target language in front of their peers as a source of anxiety. The students with whom Price worked with went on to say that they were afraid that they would be laughed at by others in the class or make fools of themselves when speaking the target language in public. Price (1991) also reported that all students in her study indicated the experience of transitioning from high school (where language courses were relatively easy) to the fast-paced and demanding college courses was stressful.

Although speculation, Price suggested that the students' anxiety associated with language learning might have stemmed from several possible sources. As students progress through language programs, the course demands become greater. When students achieve poor results in their foreign language classes compared to other classes, they become anxious about the foreign language class. Price also believed that the particularly anxious students in her study had poorer language skills than their classmates, and she identified the instructor as playing a significant role in increasing or decreasing the amount of anxiety that students felt in their language classes.

### **2.5.2 Sparks and Ganschow (1996): New Research into Anxiety and Performance**

Sparks and Ganschow (1996) examined the relationships among anxiety level, native language skill, foreign language aptitude, and foreign language grades in 154 female high school students in foreign language classes. The students were in their first year of foreign language classes at a private, all-girl high school in the US. The students were divided into three groups based on their overall performance on Horwitz et al.'s FLCAS: high anxiety, average anxiety, and low anxiety. The researchers gathered the students' end-of-year foreign language grades as well as the students' grades in English, their

native language. They found that low-anxiety students performed better than high-anxiety students on measures of native language skills (phonology/orthography), on a measure of foreign language aptitude (using MLAT), and had higher final grades in their foreign language class. Furthermore, they found that more anxious students had weaker native language skills, less foreign language aptitude, and lower end-of-year grades. In contrast to Price's (1991) suggestion that students who experience higher anxiety also have weaker language skills, Sparks and Ganschow (1996) also found that the relationship between anxiety and language skills is not clear-cut because small subgroups of highly anxious students found the study of foreign language easy but were still highly anxious, and another subgroup was found to have low anxiety but found foreign language learning quite difficult. In general, the highly anxious students observed in this study did not have particular difficulties with language. Rather, the students who had low anxiety also had specific language strengths that may have made foreign language learning easier and less anxiety-provoking for them.

Sparks and Ganschow (1996) presented two major criticisms of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study. Their first criticism was that Horwitz et al. failed to use a comparison group in their research. The second point was that Horwitz et al. did not assess the students' native language skills in order to determine if highly anxious students had overt or subtle native language learning problems. Sparks and Ganschow speculated that failure to control for first and second language skills in studies involving affective variables makes it impossible to be certain of accurately interpreting the results of those studies. Are students with weak language skills suffering from high anxiety or low motivation?

However, Sparks and Ganschow (1996) agreed with Horwitz et al. (1986) that the FLCAS was a useful and quick measure for early identification of those students who may have relative difficulty with learning a foreign language. They stated that, "performance on the FLCAS (and perhaps, other affective measures) may reflect students' levels of native language skill and foreign language aptitude" (Sparks & Ganschow, 1996, p. 208). This argument is consistent with Sparks and Ganschow's Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (LCDH), which proposes that skills in one's native language, be those skills related to the phonological/orthographic, syntactic, or semantic codes, provide the basic foundation for foreign language learning. In other words, the LCDH suggests that language variables differentiate individuals who are more or less adept at learning a language; good foreign language learners have strong

native oral and written language skills and foreign language aptitude. The issue suggested by this hypothesis is that, as stated by Sparks and Ganschow, “one’s level of native language skill and aptitude for learning a foreign language should be considered when examining the role of anxiety in foreign language learning” (1996, p. 201). The authors concur with Au’s (1988) suggestion that failure to control for language proficiency in research studies investigating second language learning is a significant methodological weakness.

Sparks and Ganschow’s (1996) research was pertinent to my own, in part, because of the context in which it was conducted; their study was conducted with females in an all-girl high school in the US. They also used Horwitz et al.’s (1986) FLCAS as one of many methods to identify anxious students. Although Sparks and Ganschow acknowledged that the FLCAS served as a quick tool for early identification of those students who have difficulties learning a foreign language, they implied that it should not be the only tool used to measure and assess anxiety. Rather, it should be accompanied by other methods and forms of data gathering in order to be able to reach more accurate interpretations of findings. Sparks and Ganschow’s argument indicates that the best research design would employ more than one method or tool for collecting data, and that no single tool, regardless of how widely used, is sufficient for gathering enough data to construct a full and complete understanding of students’ experiences.

In their study, Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001) investigated and compared levels of anxiety in students in their first semester (group 1; N = 114) and students in their second semester (group 2; N = 169) of college-level Spanish classes at Northern Arizona University, measuring anxiety with the FLCAS. The researchers’ goal was to compare students’ perceptions of their own anxiety. Students completed the FLCAS during the third week of their first-semester Spanish class, and then the same students completed the questionnaire again during the last three weeks of their second semester Spanish class. The researchers found that students beginning their studies of a foreign language – in this case, Spanish – experience anxiety related to studying the foreign language. They also found that FLA experienced in beginning classes does not necessarily decline or diminish as the students progress from the first to the second semester. That is, students may continue to experience anxiety throughout their studies.

Casado and Dereshiwsky’s (2001) finding that students in their second semester of foreign language study may have actually been experiencing, or at least perceiving

themselves as experiencing more anxiety than students in their first semester of study indicates that the students' anxiety cannot be accounted for by the novelty of studying the foreign language. One might predict that students' familiarity with the course, the books, the teacher, and the location would all reduce stress as they progressed from one semester to another, but this does not appear to be the case. Instead, as students transition from their first to their second semester of study, it may be the case that they move away from simpler and more introductory concepts to learning more complex vocabulary and grammatical structures and also towards an increased use of the target language by the instructor.

### **2.5.3 FLA and Culture**

Culture is related to language and FLA in at least two ways. As discussed below, every language learner has a culture related to the individual's family, community, and country. Furthermore, each language is also tied to a culture (i.e., the history of the country in which the language is primarily spoken) and might reflect that culture through vocabulary. In this section, the relationships of culture, language, and FLA are explored.

The majority of research on FLA, including all of the studies reviewed thus far, has been carried out in North America, but a handful of studies have been conducted in other regions of the world. The educational systems across countries and cultures may differ, and thus whether results from studies conducted in North America generalise to suitably describe language learners in other countries must be carefully examined. Based on her review of existing research studies, Horwitz (2001) concluded that levels of foreign language anxiety may vary in different cultural groups. How important might context be when determining how or if students experience FLA? Can data collection tools, such as the FLCAS, simply be translated from one language to another for use in different countries? What is the role of culture?

According to Brown (2007), a culture is "ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time" (p. 380). Individuals within a culture tend to share perspectives or views. When people see themselves as members of a social group, their interactions with other members of the same social group, whether in family, school, work, religious, or other contexts, lead to and reinforce shared views (Kramsch, 2001). According to Kramsch (2001), language use, including

the topics that groups choose to discuss or to avoid discussing, are tied to and indicative of shared perspectives.

Horwitz (2008) expands this description, discussing the sociological and psychological characteristics of a group. She distinguishes between what she calls “big ‘C’” culture and “small ‘c’” culture, with the former defined in terms of a group’s great accomplishments (e.g., literary or philosophical works) and historical events and figures (e.g., wars). Culture with a small “c”, as Horwitz views it, is more relevant to the topic of language acquisition. It is tied to Kramsch’s view of language use as reinforcing shared views. Culture with small “c” refers to groups’ shared ways of life, views of the world, and the “things that people do and know because they are members of a particular group” (Horwitz, 2008, p. 213). That is, individuals’ cultures not only shape the form of education they have had in the past, but also their views.

“Human culture always includes language, and human language cannot be conceived without culture. Linguistic practice is always embedded in some cultural context or another” (p. 4, Risager, 2006). As reflected in her description of language as integral to human culture, Karen Risager (2006) believes that languages should be studied from a perspective that couches languages within their perspective societies, and also that language must be considered as part of a culture and society. This suggests that language and culture are inseparable, as each must be considered with respect to the other. From Risager’s perspective, language is actually culture in linguistic form.

In line with Risager’s perspective that languages and cultures cannot be fully separated, recent studies such as Byram (1989, 1994a, 1994b, 1997a, 1997b) and Kramsch (1988, 1993, 2001) have focused on the seamless relationship between foreign language instruction and target culture teaching. It has become important for language teachers to understand the intertwined relation between culture and language. According to Jin and Cortazzi (1993), mutual awareness of culture and cultural differences might enable people to have more accurate expectations about each other’s behaviour. However, in the context of EFL in an increasingly global world, where English is beginning to be viewed as a global language (e.g., Lamb, 2004b), these issues and questions may need to be reconsidered. What does it mean for a language and that language’s ties to its original culture or cultures when the language begins to be spoken around the world and, as with English, is possibly tied to a variety of specific topics (e.g., international trade, business)?

Other researchers, including Holliday, Kullman, and Hyde (2004), argue for a small culture paradigm in which culture can refer to the “composite of cohesive behaviour within any social grouping” (p. 64). Under this definition, the shared ideas and behaviour within a country and a community can constitute a culture. However, very small groups – such as the students within a single classroom or a single work group – can also develop their own, distinct cultures. The behaviour of students in the current studies are examined with an eye to how they behave as a group within the English medium college and as separate groups within each level of the CPP.

In 2006, Woodrow published results from a research study exploring how second language speaking anxiety was conceptualized, the relationship between anxiety and performance in the target language, and causes of second language anxiety. Participants were 47 students who were at an advanced level studying English for academic purposes (EAP) at the University of Sydney. Woodrow wanted to evaluate the major causes of second language anxiety and the relationship between anxiety and second language performance. In Woodrow’s research, she conceptualized second language anxiety as a two-dimensional construct, including communication within the classroom and outside the classroom in everyday communicative situations. Prior to entering Australian universities, the international Asian students are required to have a certain level of English proficiency. If the students lack this proficiency, they must study English. The participants of this study were all in their final months of studying English just before beginning university courses. The students were selected based on class groupings, ethnicity, gender, and perception of anxiety. The students participated in semi-structured interviews about their experiences of second language speaking anxiety. The interviews were used to elicit data so the researchers could gain deeper insight into the students’ perceived stressors when speaking English in a second language environment. Students were asked about whether they experienced second language speaking anxiety, in what situations they felt anxious, and how they felt. These interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed.

Woodrow’s (2006) study was significant for many reasons. First, it developed the Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS, presented in Figure 2.4), which provided evidence for a conceptualization of anxiety that distinguished oral communications within and outside of the language learning classroom. According to Woodrow, the tools that existed for assessing anxiety in individuals learning a second

language were not appropriate because the tools did not suit the second language environment in which the sample she studied were learning, and so the SLSAS was constructed. Unfortunately, Woodrow did not elaborate on the reasons why the existing scales were not appropriate for use in the context of her study.

Woodrow's analysis of her data indicated that second language speaking anxiety was a significant predictor of oral achievement, or the ability to speak and interact using the spoken form of the target language. She found that interacting with native speakers and performing in front of the class were the most frequently reported sources of anxiety. Giving oral presentations was rated as the most stressful of the potential stressors, and taking part in group discussions was rated as the least stressful.

The study results also suggested that English language learners from China, Korea, and Japan were more anxious language learners than individuals from other ethnic groups or cultures (e.g., Europe). Woodrow goes on to say, "Most previous research into anxiety is situated in a Western setting, however, there are many examples of differences between Confucian heritage learners and Western learners in academic contexts" (2006, p. 322). It could be stipulated that this point was the reason Woodrow did not consider existing scales to be appropriate for use in her study.

Woodrow's concern that no existing scale was suitable for her study, together with her discussion of the predominance of Western perspectives in anxiety research, alerted me to the fact that merely adapting a scale without due consideration to the context in which the scale would be used might not be appropriate because it might lead to missing key elements of individuals' anxiety experiences. The previously existing scale, the FLCAS, took neither context nor students' experience with previous teaching methods into account, though researchers (e.g., Brantmeier, 2005) have suggested that different teaching methods may prompt or alleviate students' anxiety (e.g., Stevick, 1980). Given the diversity of educational systems and cultures around the world, there may be a genuine need for FLA scales to be developed with the specific aim of their being sensitive to culture and context. For the current research, my goal was to keep the Saudi Arabian context in mind when designing the research tools to be used; the original form of the FLCAS should be carefully considered before it is used.

### Instrument Used in Main Study

In the column *Anxiety* fill in the circles according to how anxious you feel when you *speak English* in the following situations.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all anxious	Slightly anxious	Moderately anxious	Very anxious	Extremely anxious

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
1. The teacher asks me a question in English in class.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
2. Speaking informally to my English teacher out of class.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
3. Taking part in a group discussion in class.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
4. Taking part in a role-play or dialogue in front of my class.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
5. Giving an oral presentation to the rest of the class.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
6. When asked to contribute to a formal discussion in class.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
7. Talking to administrative staff of my language school in English.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
8. Taking part in a conversation out of class with more than one <i>native speaker</i> of English.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
9. Starting a conversation out of class with a friend or colleague who is a <i>native speaker</i> of English.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
10. A lecturer/supervisor in my intended university faculty of study asks me a question in English.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
11. Asking for advice in English from a lecturer/supervisor in my intended university faculty of study.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5
12. A <i>native speaker</i> I do not know asks me questions.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 1 2 3 4 5

**Figure 2.4** Woodrow's (2006) Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS)

Batumlu and Erden (2007) examined language learning in 150 students studying English in Yıldız Technical University in Turkey. Participants in the study were selected such that students at each level and of both sexes were represented in the sample according to their proportion in the general population. The Turkish version of the FLCAS was used as to assess students' anxiety levels associated with learning a foreign language. Students' achievement was assessed using an average of their first and second midterm grades. Consistent with findings from Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a), Batumlu and Erden (2007) found that learners at all academic levels showed a significant negative relationship between FLA and English achievement such that students with higher levels of anxiety showed lower achievement, and students with

lower levels of anxiety showed greater achievement. The authors also found that, in early English language learning, anxiety did not predict achievement, and men and women did not differ in level of anxiety. However, later on in the program (i.e., at more advanced class levels), students whose grades were lower in the course had higher levels of anxiety associated with studying English.

This study has multiple weaknesses. First, the authors describe having used a “Turkish version” (p. 3) of the FLCAS, but they do not discuss how the Turkish form of the FLCAS was created, nor do they discuss if or how the new form’s psychometric properties were examined. Was the FLCAS directly translated from English to Turkish? How was the translation conducted? Was it adapted to be sensitive to cultural and/or contextual characteristics of the Turkish classroom in which it was to be used? Or did the researchers simply use the FLCAS without any contextual adaptation to make room for the different non-Western teaching pedagogy in Turkey? This is an important issue because if the scale were only translated, it might be missing important information regarding Turkish students’ experiences, what provokes their anxiety, and might even be subject to items being misinterpreted. It is impossible to determine whether the translation methods or the instrument itself might be factors in why Batumlu and Erden’s (2007) findings were inconsistent with some of the previous research conducted in other countries but were consistent with other research in Turkey. In addition, although the authors state that their findings are consistent with those of other studies conducted in Turkey, they did not identify the other studies or findings, nor do they specify how the results are consistent.

Nonetheless, Batumlu and Erden’s (2007) work was significant because it provoked the question of whether there may be substantial problems with using the FLCAS without adapting it to suit the context in which it will be used. The lack of adaptation may ultimately impact the validity of any research results. This may suggest that FLA operates differently in different geographical contexts, and we as researchers need to be aware of that.

Even more recently, Yan and Horwitz (2008) conducted a study in Shanghai, China, looking at 532 university students who were majoring in Business but studying EFL. The authors assessed the students’ anxiety levels using the FLCAS in order to identify the students who were either extremely high or extremely low in anxiety. Those students were removed to obtain a sample that was more representative of typical students in

terms of anxiety level. This reduced their sample to a total of 21 students distributed over all different stages in the university. All the students had a minimum of six years learning English in school.

Yan and Horwitz (2008) carried out a series of semi-structured interviews with the participants in Mandarin. Twelve major thematic variables related to anxiety that were identified in the interviews. One major theme the authors identified was regional differences in and around China. This came as a surprise to Yan and Horwitz, who noted that students' regions of origin or geographic backgrounds had never been discussed as a source of anxiety. In their own study, however, they noted that cultural differences between regions of China appeared to impact their findings, and they highlighted parental influence and students' feelings of superiority or inferiority based on the province or region from which they came.

The results of this study supported the results of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) previous study in that anxiety emerged as a variable in listening and speaking, and anxiety regarding listening and speaking appeared to affect all students regardless of their overall level of anxiety in the class. Teacher characteristics and cultural differences were also identified as themes that commonly came up in students' discussions. The issue of culture is important to consider when attempting to understand the relationship between FLA and other factors, such as classroom practice or teaching methods (Horwitz, 2001). For example, it may be the case that some practices perceived by learners in one culture as normal or comfortable may provoke stress and anxiety for learners in another cultural group. The authors gave the examples that foreign teachers sometimes shocked the Chinese students by deviating from the formal student-teacher relationship that the students expected, and that some teachers acted in ways that were inappropriate and used teaching methods that were inconsistent with the Chinese students' culture.

Yan and Horwitz (2008) recommend that researchers examine the impact of personal and sociocultural factors, which might include background, social norms, and traditions, when studying language learning. She first discussed FLA in 1986, but it was not until the 2008 collaboration with Yan that Horwitz identified the potential impact of context on FLA, by mentioning geographic background (and the cultural differences tied to geographic regions) as a factor related to anxiety for language students. The personal and sociocultural factors related to region of origin or geographic background might be factors influencing the experience of anxiety by students in my study in Saudi Arabia.

Students at the English medium college in Saudi Arabia generally transition from the Saudi high school system to the college, and the two systems are quite different (see Chapter I for a discussion of the Saudi educational system); this alone might be a cause of anxiety for the students. Furthermore, Yan and Horwitz's (2008) study raised the issues of the teacher's characteristics and change in teaching methods as sources of anxiety.

In the case of my research, the formal student-teacher relationship in the Saudi high school system contrasts starkly with the more Westernised method of teaching in the private English medium college. As I noted in Chapter I, the Rote method from high school is replaced with a more analytical approach in college. Identifying these types of changes is important, as these changes serve as concrete and identifiable ways that the learning context changes and also point to the influence of teachers and their teaching methods on the students' learning. Although I did not predict it when I began conducting my research, the small culture paradigm (Holliday et al., 2004) and the group dynamics that became salient within each of the levels were also very important for understanding the students' experiences. That is, the way each group of students functioned clearly had a strong impact on the students' experiences, as will be discussed. These topics will be taken into consideration during the analysis of data collected in the field in Saudi Arabia.

## **2.6 Defining FLA**

The research studies and discussions of anxiety in general, anxiety during language learning, and of FLA specifically that have been reviewed in this chapter informed the development of a specific definition of FLA to be used in the present research. From this diverse and eclectic body of research, I have derived that FLA is distinct from general anxiety; it is a situation-specific anxiety experienced by language learners. FLA arises specifically from learning a second or foreign language. It may include specific feelings or behaviour towards the language learning process that facilitate learning by positively assisting the learner in being successful or debilitate learning by negatively affecting the learner and preventing, hindering, or impeding success in the process of learning the new language. The causes for FLA are not yet completely understood, and the emotional experience itself may be complicated. FLA can be provoked by many situations,

whether it be not knowing the meaning of a word or words, speaking the non-native language in front of peers, or any number of other language-related tasks. Behaviours motivated by FLA may serve as a defence mechanisms (as discussed by Ehrman, 1996; see Chapter I) to protect oneself during fear-inducing situations (i.e., by leading the student to take fewer chances or retreat from the situation). Researchers have yet to resolve how FLA impedes language learning, but it seems apparent that high anxiety and poor performance in the language classroom are related.

To move towards a fuller understanding of where FLA comes from, a relatively new topic to be addressed is the sociocultural background of the learners, because various cultural factors (e.g., teaching methods, cultural attitudes towards language learning), situational factors (e.g., teacher, teaching methods), and personal factors (e.g., motivation, self-concept, beliefs) may be important. According to Ortega (2009), the two researchers who have been most central in advancing our knowledge of language-related anxiety are Elaine Horwitz (in the US) and Peter MacIntyre (in Canada). Horwitz et al. (1991) argue that, “probably no other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degree that language study does” (p. 31). Horwitz and her colleagues focused on the classroom context and class-related anxiety experienced by foreign language students who might not have the opportunity to practice their target language outside of the classroom (discussed by Ortega, 2009). Their situation may have been comparable to my case study participants’ learning situation and challenges.

Horwitz et al. (1986) argued that the symptoms and consequences of foreign language anxiety should be readily identifiable to those involved with language teaching as well as language learning. If language teachers had the ability to identify signs of anxiety, teachers would be more able to address problems arising in class overall and to identify specific students who might need assistance. Anxiety can profoundly impact foreign language learning, and so it is essential to be able to identify students who experience anxiety in their foreign language classes (Horwitz et al., 1991).

One issue motivating the research in this thesis is how to unite research and classroom practice. How can knowledge and information drawn from the literature inform FLA more generally and aid language learners? Language teachers need to be aware of the negative impact of FLA and the symptoms students who experience anxiety might show so that the teachers can begin to help students to overcome FLA. Increasing teachers’ awareness of FLA is particularly important in Saudi Arabia because FLA is a relatively

new field and language teachers are still not aware of FLA and its symptoms. Once aware of anxiety, teachers might ease their students' language learning using a variety of different methods and techniques that will be discussed in the final chapters of this thesis.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I first reviewed select studies chronologically in order to illustrate the development of research on the topic of anxiety as well as the processes and methodology used in studies that advanced the field of FLA research. Next, I explored the different types of anxiety – state, trait, and situation-specific anxiety – and the role of each with a specific focus on the categorization of FLA as situation-specific anxiety. From there, I went on to review the more recent literature, chronically the recent emergence and development of FLA research and recognition of FLA as a distinct and specific form of anxiety. A review of FLA research from various cultures around the world provided a more rounded view of how FLA might function in different contexts, but this culturally diverse perspective also brought to light some questions regarding how FLA is examined. Ultimately, this review of the literature also informed the working definition of FLA that is adopted for the present thesis.

Existing studies of FLA do not examine FLA in Saudi Arabia or in the broader Arab world. In terms of geography and cultural similarity, the most similar context for research was Turkey (Batumlu & Erden, 2007). Woodrow's (2006) research examined Asian students studying in the West (Australia). Yan and Horwitz's (2008) research also provided a glimpse into the experiences of students in Asia. The examples of research conducted outside of Western cultures and with non-Western students are few. The richness and depth of researchers' understanding of FLA would be improved by information about the differences and similarities in how FLA is experienced and displayed across cultures. The degree to which culture impacts FLA might be further understood, and the degree to which FLA is universal could also be further elucidated in identifying how FLA is similar across contexts.

Related to these cultural concerns, the existing research and the existing instruments used in that research must be carefully examined and compared so that the research can be learned from and built upon in future works, such as the research in the current thesis.

The fact that an assessment or tool is widely used or common in FLA research does not mean that it is suited to all tasks, that it is the only tool to be used, or that that tool alone should be relied upon. The FLCAS, though very commonly used, has been observed to have various potential weaknesses. Multiple sources of information will yield a fuller and more comprehensive picture.

It is apparent from the existing literature that researchers have had some difficulties determining and demonstrating the role of anxiety in second language learning. This may be, at least in part, due to the tools researchers have used. Since the development of the FLCAS, most FLA researchers have chosen to use the FLCAS in some way or another in their studies (e.g., Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Sparks & Ganschow, 1996; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). However, some researchers have found that the FLCAS does not take into account the different backgrounds, situations, and experiences of the research participants, all of which may be key in the participants' experiences of anxiety; this lack of assessment of various factors may also relate to researchers' having found some unexpected results. Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001) also used the FLCAS, but then realised that there were a lot more variables that needed to be examined than just those measured in the FLCAS. Woodrow (2006) discovered that the FLCAS was inappropriate for use in her research context and ultimately designed a new scale, the SLSAS. Batumlu and Erden (2007) used a Turkish version of the FLCAS, though they did not clearly report how the scale was adapted. However, they obtained results that were inconsistent with research using the FLCAS in other countries but consistent with results from other studies conducted in Turkey. The question remains whether Turkey is different from other countries and this difference led to the study results, or whether the adaptation of the questionnaire for the Turkish context was insufficient.

Yan and Horwitz (2008) also used the FLCAS, originally designed by Horwitz in her previous work, but they realised that the scale was missing certain variables relating to geographical background. Inattention to these issues might have yielded a scale that was appropriate for use in North America but inappropriate or ill-suited for use in other cultures around the world. As stated above, the authors recommended that future studies of language anxiety attend to personal and sociocultural factors that might be associated with language learning. The majority of previous research, including that in this literature review, has been conducted in Western society. None of the existing research has focused on an Arab society. The lack of a perspective from an Arab society limits

understanding of how anxiety affects foreign language learning in the Arab world and specifically in Saudi Arabia. This lack of a comprehensive, cross-cultural base of knowledge regarding FLA and language learning also hinders researchers from developing a truly rich and complete understanding of what causes FLA and how it impacts people. Thus, conducting an exploration on FLA in Saudi Arabia will provide a wider perspective and a deeper sense of understanding of how anxiety affects foreign language learning.

Another noteworthy pattern in the literature is that many studies have examined FLA among adults (i.e., college-aged and older), which may be due to the expectation that older language learners have more difficulty acquiring a new language. The current study was conducted among female college students, aged 18-19 years, and so it does not add to the diversity of the research literature in terms of age of participants. However, using a sample of comparable age to the samples examined in other studies (college students) affords the advantage that the students examined in this study in Saudi Arabia can be more readily compared with students examined in studies carried out in other cultures.

The research presented in this thesis was designed based on previous research with the goal of overcoming some of the weaknesses that have been challenges for other studies. The research presented in this thesis will use multiple forms of data collection, not only questionnaires, in order to minimize dependence on any one form of data collection. Every form of data collection comes with inherent strengths and flaws, and the present research is strengthened by the combining of methodologies and the seeking of points of overlap (e.g., ideas supported by multiple data sources). In addition, the present research aims to begin to fill in gaps in research knowledge by examining FLA in a new culture and without the potential confounding variable of the mixed-sex classroom.

## *Chapter III*

### *Research Methodology and Design*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?” (Kvale, 1996, p. 1).

Steinar Kvale’s challenge is disarmingly simple and straightforward. Asking students who are studying a foreign language to discuss the language-related tasks and situations they find anxiety-provoking seems to be a basic and an obvious strategy. However, as discussed in Chapter II, researchers have rarely used qualitative methods to investigate FLA. Indeed, it was not strongly argued in the research literature that students’ own voices should be a source of information about foreign language anxiety until Yan and Horwitz’s work published in 2008, 22 years after the original FLCAS and the birth of FLA in 1986, (see Chapter II for discussion). Although Yan and Horwitz’s (2008) article was published too late to impact the design of my own research (the data for this research were collected in 2006-2007), my own philosophical perspective is in line with that expressed by Yan and Horwitz. Indeed, I began the current research taking a purely qualitative approach. However, very early in my pilot study I found that students in Saudi Arabia discussed anxiety-provoking situations that were not addressed in the most commonly used quantitative assessment, the FLCAS. Recognition of the fact that students in Saudi Arabia’s experiences were not represented in such a commonly used scale prompted me to develop a new, culturally appropriate quantitative assessment, which was then incorporated into my research as a way of identifying students high in language-related anxiety. The lack of qualitative techniques and more specifically interviews in FLA research may be related to how researchers have conceptualized anxiety in the learning context, often focusing on specific situations or stimuli and studying those situations or stimuli instead of focussing on the human experiences of anxiety and learning. Ultimately, I incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methodology to explore and better understand students’ experiences when learning a foreign language by drawing on the strengths of both methods. In the remaining chapters

I present and analyse a set of qualitative case studies that, taken together, are used to address the major research questions put forth in this thesis:

1. What is the nature of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), from the students' perspectives, in female-only EFL classrooms in this English medium college in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the students' perceptions of how FLA affects their behaviour in this setting? And what are the consequences?
3. How can knowledge gleaned from this research inform understandings of FLA more generally?

As discussed above, in the quantitative portion of my research I developed a new questionnaire, and that questionnaire was used to identify students whose experiences became the focus of the qualitative portion of the study. In the qualitative portion, I opted for a case study design using group and individual interviews as well as classroom observations with field notes to collect data. Each of these methods, along with their advantages and challenges, will be discussed later in this chapter. With the goal of answering the above research questions, findings from each data collection method were drawn together to identify common themes among participants' responses and illustrated in their behaviours. According to Dörnyei (2007), a benefit of using mixed methods is that the combination of diverse methodologies can offset the weaknesses any single method may have, thereby increasing the strength of the research. Utilizing mixed methods allows for multi-level analyses and affords the opportunity to develop a deep understanding of issues mentioned by the participants. In other words, the participants' own words can fill in gaps in understanding and add meaning to the numbers derived through quantitative methods, and the numbers derived through quantitative methods can add precision to the descriptions and words derived through qualitative methods. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2007) points out that mixed methods improve validity by bringing together converging evidence and corroborating findings from different sources.

### **3.2 Pilot study**

I sought to learn about students' perspectives and anxiety-related experiences in their own words and their own voices, and so I began my research with a simple question

asking students to discuss their experiences. The single-item, open-ended question (in Arabic) created for this purpose prompted students to list and describe the anxiety-provoking situations and anxiety-related experiences that they faced in their foreign language classes. The question was distributed to students who spoke Arabic natively but were studying English as a foreign language at a private, English medium college in Saudi Arabia. The goal of using the open-ended format was to allow students the opportunity to freely respond and discuss their issues, worries, concerns, and anxiety more or less as students had in the support group discussions that Horwitz et al. (1986) used in developing the original FLCAS (see section 2.3 for further discussion). The original questionnaire, in Arabic so that students could read and respond to it in their native language, is included in Appendix B. The main text of the questionnaire states, “Some people feel anxious or nervous from time to time when learning a foreign language. When do you feel anxious (or nervous) in the English language classroom? (Try to think of as many examples as you can.)”

Originally, the open-ended questionnaire was sent by email to the head of the department at the women’s English middle college so that she could distribute it via email to the 100 students registered in the EFL program. However, no questionnaires were returned when the questionnaire was distributed in this way. A variety of factors are likely to have figured into the students’ lack of response, including lack of technology (i.e., no access to internet, computers) in the students’ homes such that some students could only access the internet and the survey while at the college. The students did not wish or may not have had the time to spend time after classes staying on-campus to complete the questionnaire.

This obstacle was overcome when the head of the EFL program and I opted to print hard copies of the questionnaire and distribute those printed copies to the students, who then completed the questionnaire during class. Ultimately, 48 of the 100 students registered in EFL responded to and returned the questionnaire. Students who were absent from class that day did not complete the questionnaire, and students whose teachers did not distribute the questionnaire in class did not complete the questionnaire.

Ultimately, responses to this simple, open-ended questionnaire served as a starting point for understanding female Saudi Arabian students’ experiences in EFL. Responses to this open-ended questionnaire helped to determine whether the most commonly used tool for assessing FLA, the FLCAS, would be an appropriate instrument to use in Saudi Arabia.

The goal was to evaluate whether the FLCAS addresses the issues that might be important in provoking anxiety in Arab students learning a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Were the issues addressed in the original FLCAS so similar to those experienced by Saudi Arabian students that the original FLCAS could simply be translated and used in the current research? To answer this question, I systematically identified issues raised by the Saudi Arabian student sample, then compared these issues to the issues raised by the students who informed the initial development of the FLCAS (see Horwitz et al., 1986). As discussed below, ultimately the development of a novel questionnaire for use in Saudi Arabia was informed by students' responses.

### **3.3 Development of a questionnaire to assess FLA in Saudi Arabia**

As stated at the end of the previous chapter, the phenomenon of FLA has not yet been examined in an Arabian context or in Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, there is a lack of information about FLA itself, and also about the use of even the most commonly used FLA assessment tools (e.g., the FLCAS) with the Saudi Arabian population. Despite the fact that the FLCAS was designed for use with foreign language learners and has been in use for more than two decades, it has not been used extensively in Saudi Arabia. Some researchers (e.g., Woodrow, 2006) have questioned whether the FLCAS, developed in the West, is actually appropriate for use in Eastern cultures. Reviewing Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS and Woodrow's (2006) SLSAS, it was clear to me that neither of these scales were certain to be appropriate for use in my research because they do not address the Arabic and more specifically the Saudi context. Issues that students discussed in my pilot study and in my interpersonal interaction with the students were not addressed on these questionnaires. The scales were developed in the West where the educational context and the teaching methods employed differ from those in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter I for discussion).

Woodrow's (2006) questionnaire, the SLSAS, was designed primarily for use with Asian students learning English as a second language in Australia. In that English-speaking country, the EFL students had the opportunity to practice speaking their target language outside of the classroom. In contrast, in the current study participants were learning English as a foreign language; the students lived and studied in a non-English-speaking country. Their opportunities to practice speaking English outside of the classroom were

very limited. Overall, the context and the culture for which the SLSAS was designed and in which I conducted research were dissimilar in potentially meaningful ways that might be expected to impact anxiety and the students' experiences.

The FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) was designed mainly for English-speaking students in the US who were learning a foreign language (Spanish) as a college requirement. The students were not living within a country or culture that predominantly spoke the target language they were attempting to acquire. They may not have had opportunity to use or be exposed to the language outside of the classroom, and they did not need to use the language outside of the classroom. In these ways, the students and the learning context were analogous to my own study. Despite the potentially limited context for which the FLCAS was developed, the FLCAS has been and still continues to be the most widely used scale for assessing anxiety related to foreign language learning. Nonetheless, it is important to question whether the context in which a questionnaire was designed and the students for whom it was designed are likely to have impacted the content of the questionnaire. Whether a questionnaire developed in Texas in the US can generalise for use in Saudi Arabia must be considered, as the cultures are very different. Keeping these issues in mind, because the FLCAS is extremely commonly used, I chose to empirically examine whether the FLCAS could simply be translated and administered to students learning English in Saudi Arabia without any changes or modification to the questionnaire; this was the focus of the pilot study. Others (e.g., Brown, 2007) claim that the FLCAS has been well validated across cultures. Despite the questionnaire having been shown to have usefulness and validity, Brown (2007) also noted that the FLCAS has multiple shortcomings and suggested that observational research, interviews, indirect assessment methods, and using multiple methods to assess anxiety are preferable and more accurate than using the single questionnaire alone.

Scovel (1978) supported the use of self-report questionnaires to measure anxiety, stating,

paper and pencil tests of behaviour and self-reports are not as easily quantifiable as the physiological tests, but they do have an advantage in that they are much more precise in focussing in on a specific affective construct, say anxiety, than the physical measures which can only assume to be related to affective involvement (p.135).

However, in order to develop a questionnaire suitable for research, various issues must be taken into consideration. For example, according to Brown (2007), one issue that

must be considered is the cultural appropriateness of the questionnaire. Specifically, Brown raises concerns about tests of extroversion, anxiety, and motivation, because these tests may include content or items that are difficult to accurately construe in different cultures or that may draw on norms that differ cross-culturally; the items may not be able to be simply be translated from one language to another. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) also stressed the need to pilot questionnaires to refine their content, wording, and length so that the questionnaires are appropriate for the target sample.

In my own research, I had the task of identifying potential research participants, which required identifying individuals who were high versus low in anxiety in the foreign language learning context. I also wanted to gain insight into the factors leading students to experience anxiety. The newly developed questionnaire, which I later named the Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ), was used as a tool to identify students likely to experience moderate to high levels of FLA. For purpose of the current study, identifying students with these levels of FLA was important because those students were sought out as potential study participants.

### **3.3.1 Methods**

I used the Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ) to examine anxiety levels associated with studying English. Prior to beginning this research, I made contact with and received a very gracious welcome from the English medium college in Saudi Arabia, where this research was conducted.

Later, participants were selected based on AFLAQ scores. The research participants became the focus of the extensive, multi-method case studies that are the focus of this work. Through these case studies, I examined the experiences of individual, female students in two different levels of English studies (EFL Level 1 and EFL Level 3) at the English medium college. The data collected and analysed in these case studies come from a variety of modalities in order to build a more complete picture of the students' experiences. Analysis of the case studies will involve triangulation of information from all available sources with an eye for recurring themes as suggested by Denzin (1970a) and Cohen et al. (2007). Specifically, questionnaires, field notes taken during classroom observations, and audio-recordings of individual and group interviews were used. In the

current chapter, I describe the rationale behind using case studies, how participants who were involved with the case studies were selected, and the methods used in the case studies. I then introduce the English medium college in greater detail, as a social context and a setting for the current research.

### **3.3.2 Analysis**

Once all of the students' responses had been returned, the content of the responses was reviewed and analysed in its original language, Arabic. The goal was to identify every unique concern or potential cause of anxiety that the students mentioned. To do this, I grouped the students' responses by general topics or themes, preserving unique points as separate and eliminating duplicated or repeated responses. This process resulted in a list of 36 unique topics or themes that students had raised in response to the open-ended questionnaire. The topics were then translated from Arabic to English. Each of these topics (translated to English) is listed in Table 3.1, below, along with the number of students who mentioned the topic or theme, and the percentage of the total student responses that included mention of this topic. As can be seen in Table 3.1, giving a presentation in front of the class was the most frequently discussed situation associated with nervousness or anxiety in the students. Of the 48 students who completed and returned the questionnaire, 20 (41.67%) discussed this situation as anxiety-provoking. Additional, frequently discussed topics included taking exams (mentioned by 10 students, or 20.83% of the sample), having a hard time writing or expressing ideas in the foreign language (mentioned by 10 students, or 20.83% of the sample), and wanting to volunteer to speak in class but being unable to find the proper words (mentioned by 7 students, or 14.58% of the sample).

After close examination of the 36 themes presented in Table 3.1, three were eliminated because they addressed issues that were not considered to be central to the topic at hand. Theme number 36 in the original questionnaire, which was raised by only one of 48 students who completed the open-ended questionnaire, states, "I felt anxious in the first class of my foreign language course." This item was removed because it may or may not be specific to foreign language class; this statement can be applied to the first day of any class, on any subject. Based on the argument that FLA is situation specific, and the foreign language context or situation may not be fully developed until after the student

has been within the classroom, the theme was not retained for inclusion in a future questionnaire. In addition, this did not appear to address any substantial information to help depict foreign language anxiety provoking situations, and, furthermore, it was deemed too general to be included in the final questionnaire.

The second theme that was omitted was theme 31, “I get nervous when the language teacher asks me to write on the board,” which was also raised by only one of the 48 students who completed the open-ended questionnaire. Although writing on the board may occur in any level of foreign language class, writing on the board in a foreign language class is a practice mainly used in primary or secondary school settings in Saudi Arabia. The specific situation was not considered for inclusion in the new questionnaire, because it is not a common practice in college-level foreign language instruction.

Finally, theme 29, “I get upset when the foreign language students in one class are not at the same level,” also mentioned by only a single student in the 48-student sample, was dropped. It can be argued that this issue is not likely to be appropriate for the current study because, in the context of the EFL program, the language abilities of each student are tested and each student is placed in the appropriate class level depending on these test scores. As a consequence, the students in each class should be on the same level, and asking the students may not have a basis for answering the question.

**Table 3.1** Themes identified in female Saudi Arabian EFL students' responses to open-ended questionnaire

Theme	N	Proportion
1. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	20	41.67%
2. I feel nervous at exam time.	10	20.83%
3. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	10	20.83%
4. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	7	14.58%
5. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	5	10.42%
6. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	5	10.42%
7. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	4	8.33%
8. I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language.	4	8.33%
9. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	4	8.33%
10. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	4	8.33%
11. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	3	6.25%
12. I fear speaking or asking the teacher questions in my foreign language class.	3	6.25%
13. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.	2	4.17%
14. I fear failing my foreign language class.	2	4.17%
15. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.	2	4.17%
16. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.	2	4.17%
17. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	2	4.17%
18. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	2	4.17%
19. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in very little time.	2	4.17%
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.	2	4.17%
21. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	2	4.17%
22. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	1	2.08%
23. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	1	2.08%
24. I am <i>not</i> nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.	1	2.08%
25. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	1	2.08%
26. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	1	2.08%
27. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.	1	2.08%
28. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class.	1	2.08%
29. I get upset when the foreign language students in one class are not at the same level.	1	2.08%
30. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.	1	2.08%
31. I get nervous when the language teacher asks me to write on the board.	1	2.08%
32. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class.	1	2.08%
33. I feel anxious when I see classmates do something better than I do in my foreign language class.	1	2.08%
34. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class.	1	2.08%
35. I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher.	1	2.08%
36. I felt anxious in the first class of my foreign language course.	1	2.08%

### **3.3.3 Development of the new questionnaire**

The remaining 33 themes were adopted as items in a newly formulated questionnaire for use with students in this study. The questionnaire, named the Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ), uses a Likert scale with responses ranging from one (“strongly disagree”) to five (“strongly agree”). The final questionnaire includes 33 items, and so the lowest score possible is 33 (if respondents score one point on each item) and the highest score possible is 165 (if respondents score a five on every item). The Arabic form of this questionnaire is included in Appendix F; the English translation of each item is presented in Table 3.2, below.

When the 33 items from the new questionnaire are compared to the 33 items in Horwitz et al.’s (1986) FLCAS (presented in Chapter II, Table 2.2), it is apparent that some of the topics addressed are the same or very similar. One of my overall goals was determining the appropriateness of the FLCAS for use in Saudi Arabia, and so part of my analysis of the results from this questionnaire included consideration of using direct translation of the original FLCAS from English to Arabic. In some cases, the original FLCAS items were consistent with themes raised by the EFL students in Saudi Arabia, suggesting that the original items from the FLCAS could be used with the Saudi Arabian student population if the original items were translated with careful attention to meaning. Although it must be remembered that the questionnaire that was administered to the students in Saudi Arabia was in Arabic, eleven of the questions from the original FLCAS were retained with minimal modification. Four of the items (FLCAS items 27, 6, 3, and 12, which correspond to the new questionnaire items 17, 18, 19, and 29) were carefully translated but otherwise not modified. Seven of the items (FLCAS items 33, 18, 30, 10, 24, 4, and 8 which correspond to the new questionnaire items 2, 8(R), 22, 24, 25, 30, 32) were changed or adapted in very minor ways only to make them more readily interpretable by the Arab students.

In the final form of the questionnaire, three items (8, 12, and 28) were reverse coded. That is, the items were worded such that a response of “strongly agree” was expected to indicate low anxiety, and “strongly disagree” was expected to indicate high anxiety. Items that were reverse coded were rekeyed (so that a response of “1” was considered a response of “5”, for example) prior to calculating mean scores on the questionnaire. Reverse coded items are noted by a “(R)” following the item numbers through-out discussion of the AFLAQ.

Reverse coding was used to check whether the participants were responding meaningfully (i.e., paying attention to the questions) or simply ticking off responses. For the current study, additional information was collected from each participant through group and individual interviews as well as classroom observations, and questionnaire responses were compared with the other information to see if the self-reports and observations were consistent.

Due to intricacies of language and the connotations that some words might carry if directly translated from English to Arabic, the wording of some of the original FLCAS items needed to be modified so that their meaning could be conveyed in Arabic. For example, item 9 on the FLCAS states, “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class,” which is very similar to item 2 on the new questionnaire, “I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.” Both of these statements address anxiety that arises when a student is in the situation of needing to speak in class but not feeling as if she is adequately equipped. However, there is a difference in wording between the two statements. The FLCAS uses the word “panic,” but the responses of the EFL students to the open-ended questionnaire are more appropriately translated as discussing being “anxious”. If the English word “panic” is directly translated to Arabic, the corresponding word is *Raawb*, a word very rarely used in Arabic and on that is associated with being in the state of approaching the end of time or the end of humanity. Back-translation of *Raawb* to English might yield “horror,” not “panic”. It is likely the case that using *Raawb* in this translation would lead individuals’ responding to a directly translated version of the original FLCAS item 9 to think that the item describes very severe and extreme circumstances such that the respondents might misunderstand the item and would be unlikely to endorse it strongly. Results would then be skewed relative to typical participant responses. In creating a questionnaire for use with the Saudi Arabian students, the topic addressed in item 9 of the original FLCAS required careful wording. A similar issue arose with FLCAS item 4, which states, “It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.” When item 4 was reworded to avoid connotations associated with the Arabic word for “frightened,” the resulting item was very similar to the general theme summarized as theme 5 in Table 3.1., and included as item 30 in the new questionnaire (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2** Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ): English translation

<b>Likert scale response options</b>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.	5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	8. I am <i>not</i> nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.	9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.	10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	12. I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher.	13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class	14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class	15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.	24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	28. I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language	29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	32. I feel nervous at English exam time.	33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.		

Four additional questions on the new questionnaire (items 1, 3, 11, and 31) correspond to questions on the original FLCAS (items 1, 29, 7 and 23, and 13, with new questionnaire item 11 corresponding to FLCAS items 7 and 23), but were more extensively modified than the eleven items discussed above. For example, the new questionnaire item 3 states,

when translated to English, “I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson,” whereas the original FLCAS item 29 states “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the language teacher says.” Both items address the issue of understanding what the teacher says, but the new questionnaire item focuses more broadly on understanding instead of asking about whether being unable to understand every specific word provokes anxiety. The intention with the revised questionnaire item is to ask about a more general circumstance, and also one that the students raised when completing the open-ended questionnaire. New questionnaire item 32 is a modification of FLCAS item 8 to change the valence of the item; the original item states “I am usually at ease during tests in my language class,” and the new item, “I feel nervous at English exam time,” addresses feeling nervous and specifies English class in order to avoid any potential confusion, i.e., with other classes. Item 1 on the new questionnaire states, “I feel nervous when I can’t write or express myself in the foreign language,” which corresponds to FLCAS item 1, “I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.” The new questionnaire item was modified to address writing and other forms of expression specifically, but further items on the new questionnaire address speaking alone, because past research and the open-ended questionnaire (pilot study) responses indicated that speaking in class is a common cause of discomfort and anxiety for students.

The female EFL students not only mentioned some new and unique issues, discussing experiences they have that are not addressed in the FLCAS, but generally failed to mention competitiveness-related issues that are addressed in the FLCAS. Indeed, only one of the students in Saudi Arabia raised the issue of competition or comparison with other students when responding to the open-ended questionnaire, and so the number of FLCAS questions addressing competition was reduced to make room in the questionnaire for other issues without creating a very long questionnaire (which might fatigue the respondents). Specifically, the new questionnaire includes item 11, “I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class,” as a proxy for the FLCAS items 7 (“I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am”) and 23 (“I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do”).

Fourteen themes, the majority of the themes identified in students’ responses to the open-ended questionnaire used in the pilot study, addressed various aspects of speaking,

giving presentations, and expressing one's self in the language that is being studied (see themes 1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, and 28 in Table 3.1). Based on the prevalence of speaking and communicating as anxiety-provoking, along with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) argument that speaking and communicating in a target language can be anxiety- and fear-inducing, multiple items addressing the various aspects of speaking were included in the new questionnaire. This issue was not given as much attention in the original FLCAS, but appears extremely important in the context of FLA in general (see Horwitz et al., 1986, and the literature review presented in Chapter II) and in this Arabic student population. Specifically, the new questionnaire items addresses issues of feeling comfortable or being anxious speaking with the foreign language teacher (questionnaire item 12), expressing one's self in front of the class (item 15), pronouncing words correctly (item 20), speaking in front of other students (item 26), and standing up to talk or give presentations in front of the class (item 33).

Issues of comprehension and listening were also added to the questionnaire, as they are important to communication and were addressed by students in their responses to the open-ended questionnaire (themes 9, 15, 18 listed in Table 3.1). These issues are addressed in new questionnaire item 5, "I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class," which addresses students' the listening/speaking class specifically, and item 6, "I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class," which addresses the challenge of listening and comprehension more broadly.

The women's responses to the open-ended questionnaire included a large number of unique themes that might all be considered to fall under the broader issue of concern over negative evaluation, self-image, or lack of self-confidence both inside of and outside of the language class (see themes 1, 10, 11, 13, 20, 21, 24, and 25 in Table 3.1). All of these issues are related to concern about how others might perceive the individual, whether in conversation in class, during an in-class presentation, or in another context. It is also noteworthy that the participants might not have much past experience with in-class presentations and speaking in class, because those are not typical teaching practices in Saudi Arabian public education, and so those situations in the college EFL setting may be particularly anxiety provoking. Overall, these topics when taken together indicate that evaluation by peers is an important issue for the women who took part in this study.

The themes are included in the new questionnaire are items 33, 27, 26, 25, 20, 7, 8(R), and 17, respectively.

A number of other items, e.g., items 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 21, and 28(R) in Table 3.2, were added to the new version of the questionnaire because students in the pilot study mentioned their themes as anxiety-provoking challenges. These items were included in order to determine whether they were also identified as anxiety-provoking situations by the broader sample of students in later studies and in the case studies.

In particular, item 16 was included in addition to item 24 as a measure of students' anxiety related to grades and performance. As discussed above, the majority of research in FLA is quantitative. The majority of quantitative research on FLA is correlational, examining the relationship between, for example, scores on the FLCAS and achievement. In correlational research, it is impossible to determine whether one of the variables causes or impacts the other, or whether a third, unmeasured variable is involved. Horwitz (2001) suggests that, in the case of classroom anxiety, it may be the case the students who perform poorly might become more anxious about their performance, which might then lead to poorer performance. Because concern about grades may be a factor in students' experience of FLA, multiple questions addressing concern about grades are included in the new questionnaire for administration to students in Saudi Arabia.

Some of the items included in the original FLCAS were omitted from the newly developed version for use in Saudi Arabia either because the items from the original questionnaire addressed issues that were similar or related to newly added items, or because the original items covered topics that did not appear to be relevant in Saudi Arabia. For example, item 2 of the original FLCAS, "I don't worry about making mistakes in language class," was not translated for inclusion in the new questionnaire because it addresses themes closely related to the newly added items 23 ("I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class") and 26 ("I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students"). Item 26 from the original FLCAS, "I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes," was omitted because it was not relevant to the English medium college. For the CPP, all classes are taught in English and are for purpose of studying English, so the comparison of English classes to other classes is meaningless. Once the students reach the English medium college, all classes are taught in English.

### **3.3.4 Discussion of the newly developed questionnaire**

The open-ended questionnaire used in the pilot study allowed a brief glimpse into the Saudi EFL context. However, the questionnaire is too brief and non-specific to be used to gather data, and the FLCAS does not address issues important to the Arab students. This prompted two general conclusions. First, the FLCAS could not simply be applied in Saudi Arabia and must be adapted. Second, the approach in which questionnaires are distributed to a relatively large sample of individuals and only relatively broad conclusions can be drawn does not dig deeply into the issue of FLA and does not allow for development of a full understanding of the situations that provoke FLA in students' daily classroom experiences. My goal became to develop a new questionnaire, drawing on the FLCAS, to use as a screening tool to identify potential participants for a detailed case study of EFL students. The resulting questionnaire was named the Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ).

From examination of the differences and similarities between the themes identified in responses to the open-ended questionnaire used in this pilot study and the FLCAS, it is apparent that translating the questionnaire from one language to another without taking into consideration contextual differences (e.g., culture, background of respondents) is potentially problematic. This approach fails to account for potentially impactful variables. Socio-cultural and personal factors should be considered in developing a detailed and comprehensive view of how FLA might function in any given language-learning community (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). It may be, for example, that competitiveness in language learning in Saudi Arabia is not a significant factor because of the Saudi Arabian students' culture and background, which contrasts with the cultures in which Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study and Bailey and Ochsner's (1980) diary study took place.

If students in Saudi Arabia were assessed using the original form of the FLCAS, valuable information would have been missed because some topics are not addressed in the FLCAS. For example, the FLCAS addresses speaking in class, but did not have respondents' rate their experience of giving classroom presentations as an anxiety-provoking activity. Giving classroom presentations was the most frequently discussed anxiety-provoking situation according to the open-ended questionnaire used in this pilot study. Public speaking and speaking in one's target language are both frequently

discussed as causes of anxiety in the classroom context (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986). In this way, the women who responded to the open-ended questionnaire were not unlike participants in past research. However, their situation in particular may be unique because they come from an educational background that might lead to their experiencing a heightened level of anxiety in response to public speaking and presentations. As discussed in Chapter I, the teaching methods typically used in Saudi Arabian school focus on listening, repeating, and memorising information to perform well on exams. As a result, students graduating from Saudi high schools are hardly ever exposed to or required to give in-class presentations. For them, it is a new experience, a new method of learning in addition to being an activity done in a new language which is, at the same time, being studied.

After reviewing and analysing CPP students' responses to the pilot study and developing the AFLAQ, I decided to use the AFLAQ in my case studies. The AFLAQ was determined to be an appropriate screening tool for identifying students that were anxious in their language class because it asked the Arab students about the situations that pilot study participants had discussed as anxiety-provoking. Next, I initiated contact with the college to begin the next steps of investigating FLA in the CPP.

### **3.4 Contacting the College**

The initial contact that is made when working to conduct research in settings such as the college in which I worked has been recognized as very important (e.g., Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The researcher's initial communications provide an opportunity, according to Cohen et al., 2007, for the researcher to present his or her credentials, indicate seriousness about the research and issues to be explored, and establish an ethical position regarding the research and treatment of participants in the research. The researcher must make an adequate case for the proposed study in order to be provided with the facilities and support necessary.

Prior to beginning this research for the current study, I sent a letter to the dean of the college as well as to the director of the EFL program where I wanted to conduct my fieldwork. In the letter, I described the topic and purpose of the research, how many participants I would need, and the procedures I would use (e.g., interviews, classroom

observations, questionnaires). I also explained that the students were free to volunteer or refuse to participate in the research and I indicated that students' information would be kept confidential through use of pseudonyms to refer to each student. In the letter to the dean, I also requested an office in which I could conduct interviews with the student participants to ensure that the interview were private and uninterrupted. The office would also serve as a place where participants can find me to express concerns or discuss anything else. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix A.

Initial contact was made with the college in April of 2006 with the goal of starting fieldwork in early September of 2006. The first day of the semester was September 16, 2006, but late TOEFL scores were announced September 20, 2006, after which some students were assigned to the appropriate class levels (i.e., Level 2 versus Level 1). As a result, administration of the questionnaire assessing class-related anxiety, discussed in the next section and used for participant selection, was delayed from October 1 until October 7, 2006.

### **3.5 Participants**

#### **3.5.1 Participant Selection and AFLAQ Administration**

In order to conduct detailed, in-depth case studies, an appropriate sample of students from the EFL program had to be identified. As stated in the letter to the dean (see Appendix A), I originally intended to conduct case studies with five students from Level 1 and five students from Level 4 in the EFL program. My goal was to work with one group of students just leaving the Saudi Arabian high school system who had no experience with the teaching methodology used in the English medium college and whose English skills were relatively weak, and with one group of students who were continuing their studies in college EFL and whose English skills were comparably greater.

Upon talking with the interim director of the EFL program, I learned that the group of students entering Level 4 (highest level in CPP) of the program was particularly small – only four students. I was seeking a sample of at least five students per class level, and so Level 4 was not ideal. Level 3 had a relatively large number of students, enough to fill three sections of the class. There were numerous students in Level 3 who fit the criteria

for inclusion in the study, and many of them were in section 1 of Level 3. All of the students in Level 1, which had only one section, were new to the program and qualified for the current case studies based on that criterion. As a result, students from Level 1 and Level 3 were considered for inclusion in the current study.

In order to determine which students were best suited for participation in this study, I gathered information about the students' levels of anxiety surrounding their study of English. Students in Level 1 and in Level 3 of their EFL studies were invited to complete the AFLAQ, which was designed to assess their anxiety level surrounding their English language studies (see earlier discussion in this chapter for details of the development of this questionnaire). My goal was to identify students who were experiencing moderate to relatively high levels of anxiety.

Questionnaire-based methodology was employed for several reasons. Participants' responses to questionnaires can provide explanations of the phenomena being studied and reveal patterns of results. According to various researchers (e.g., McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Robson, 2002; and Wallace, 1998), a questionnaire can be used to tap into participants' knowledge, opinions, ideas, and experiences. Furthermore, questionnaires provide a simple method for gathering information about attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives. Of particular importance to the current study, questionnaires are very easy to administer to large groups of individuals in a short period of time because questionnaires can simply be handed out to participants who then complete the questionnaires individually and return them. The results can then be relatively easily coded and analysed.

In addition to multiple advantages, questionnaires have some disadvantages and weaknesses. For example, the quality and depth of information collected using a questionnaire may be limited by the questions included on the instrument. In the context of using self-reports to assess anxiety, Williams (1991) argues that the validity of the data depend on the degree to which the individual completing the questionnaire has consciously, accurately identified and accepted his or her experience of anxiety during a specific situation (i.e., a situation asked about on a questionnaire). To minimize the impact of these challenges, I created a new questionnaire specifically for use with the target population, using a small, female Arab student sample's responses to an open-

ended survey to inform the questionnaire (see earlier discussion in this chapter on the development of the new questionnaire, the AFLAQ).

The head of the EFL department granted me use of a large room with capacity for 100 people so that all the registered Level 1 and Level 3 students could be grouped together to complete the questionnaire. Instructors of Level 1 (which had only one section) and Level 3 (which had three sections) brought their students to the lecture hall after class. The students conveyed their excitement about completing the questionnaire and no one complained or asked to leave. Before administering the AFLAQ, I spoke about the project briefly, in Arabic, to all Level 1 and Level 3 students. In this briefing, I explained to the students the possible benefits of my research, and I explained their rights to participate or to refuse to take part in this research. I told them that they were not required to participate and, if they opted not to, they were free to sit with the rest of the students or to leave the room. No students opted to leave during the administration of the questionnaire, and some expressed excitement at being asked about their experiences. The AFLAQ was administered to all Level 1 and Level 3 students who were present that day, for a total of 75 completed questionnaires.

Some teachers also attended this briefing. With the teachers present, I used the opportunity to explain to the students as well as the teachers that the primary focus of the research would be the students and not the teachers. This way, both the students and the teachers were assured that the teachers would not be included in the research, knowledge that I hoped might reduce the stress of both teachers and students.

The goal in using the newly developed questionnaire was to identify students who were experiencing moderate to high levels of anxiety; those students would form the pool of potential participants to be asked to participate in the case studies. Once the questionnaires were administered and collected, they were scored to create an average score for each student. To organize and score each student's responses to the questionnaire, a spreadsheet was created in Excel. In the spreadsheet, each student's responses were entered, reverse-coded items were recoded, a total anxiety level was calculated, and then an average score (ranging from 1 to 5) was calculated. The average score was used as an index of level of anxiety. Possible scores on the questionnaire were divided into five groups with four equally sized groups (spanning .7 points, i.e., from 1 to 1.7) and one larger group (2.6 to 3.4, the middle group). The categories were "very

“un-anxious” (mean score of 1-1.7), “un-anxious” (1.8-2.5), “moderate” (2.6-3.4), “anxious” (3.5-4.2), and “very anxious” (4.3-5). The questionnaire, with example responses and scoring, appears below in Table 3.3. Under the “Response” column are each of the possible response options students chose from, and under each appears the number of points that this example student’s responses contributed to the student’s total anxiety score. The number of points awarded for each response ranged from five (“strongly agree”) to one (“strongly disagree”). Item responses marked with an asterisk (items 8, 12, 28) are negatively worded (e.g., “I am *not* nervous...”) and were reverse-coded on the Likert scale such that a response of “strongly disagree” was awarded five point (not one), “disagree” was awarded four points (not two), and so on. The total score, or “Grand Total Points”, was then divided by 33, the total number of items, to yield the average anxiety score. In this example, the student’s final, average score on the questionnaire is 3.88, which falls between 3.5 and 4.2 in the “anxious” category on the scoring key.

Of the 75 students Level 1 and Level 3 students who filled out the questionnaire, 22 were in Level 1 and 53 were in Level 3. A total of 24 of the 75 students left at least one item on the questionnaire blank (16 left 1 item blank; 6 left 2 items blank; 2 left 3 items blank). The mean AFLAQ scores for these students were calculated out of the number of items the students had answered such that a student who answered 32 of the 33 items had her score calculated as the sum of her responses divided by 32 (this method of calculation produces the same result as replacing the missing scores with each student’s mean score on the other items in the questionnaire).

It was predicted that students in Level 1 would experience a higher level of anxiety and, consequently, have higher AFLAQ scores because the English medium college was new for students in Level 1. A t-test (2-tailed;  $p = .05$ ) was used to test whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores on the AFLAQ for students in Level 1 versus students in Level 3. Levene’s test of equality of variance was not significant ( $F = .456$ ;  $p = .502$ ), and so equal variance was assumed for the distribution of AFLAQ scores in the two levels. Contrary to my hypothesis, there was not a statistically significant difference ( $t = 0.625$ ;  $df = 73$ ;  $p = .534$ ) between the mean AFLAQ scores for the two groups of students. The similarity of the distribution of scores for the two levels was further supported by the similarity of the mean and median within each level. Mean scores of the 22 students from Level 1 ranged from 2.45 (“un-anxious”) to 4.30 (“very anxious”).

The mean across all 22 students was 3.33 ( $SD = .49$ ) and the median was 3.22, both of which fall in the “moderate” range as would be expected in a relatively normal distribution. Mean scores of the 53 students from Level 3 ranged from 1.80 (“un-anxious”) to 4.27 (which rounds up to “anxious”). The mean across all 53 students was 3.25 ( $SD = .55$ ) and the median was 3.35, both of which also fall within the “moderate” range.

Completed questionnaires were divided into two groups, one for students in Level 1 and one for students in Level 3 of the EFL program, and potential participants from each level were identified based first on their scores on the AFLAQ. Potential participants were those who were categorised as “moderate,” “anxious,” or “very anxious” based on their scores on the questionnaire. For each of the two program levels, additional criteria were used to select students, with the goal of ending up with five students per level, bringing the total to 10 students.

Level 1 had only one section. For students in Level 1, the criterion was that all participants had to be in their first semester in the college’s EFL program. This criterion was set to increase the likelihood that students in the sample would be coming directly from the Saudi high school system; the English medium college environment would be new to them and include different methods of teaching than those familiar to the students from their experiences in the high school system. All of the students in Level 1 were new to the EFL program and, interestingly, all of them had high enough anxiety levels surrounding their study of English (according to their responses on the questionnaire) to qualify for my case study. I randomly chose five candidates from Level 1.

For Level 3, the criterion required that students have at least one semester or more in the college EFL program. The goal was to select students who contrasted with the students in Level 1 in that they were familiar with the college EFL environment and system, as well as with the method of teaching. As was the case with Level 1, the five participants from Level 3 had to be in one section so that all of them (and their interactions) could be observed in a single class. Because I needed Level 3 students who were all in a single section and who were in at least their second semester in the program, I randomly selected potential study participants whose questionnaire responses indicated they were “moderate,” “anxious,” or “very anxious” and who were in section 1 of Level 3.

Participation in the study was voluntary, so multiple potential candidates were identified and invited to participate in the semester-long case study. The full study would include the already completed questionnaire in addition to weekly classroom observations and regular individual and group interviews. Observations and interviews are discussed in the following sections of the current chapter.

The week after students completed the questionnaire regarding their anxiety levels was the Ramadan holiday (October 11-28, 2006). During that week, the college was not in session. On October 30, 2006, I met with the potential participants for the study. I described the study, invited the candidates to take part, and provided them with an informed consent form to read and, if they agreed to participate, to sign (see Appendix D for an Arabic form of the informed consent form and Appendix E for the English translation). The consent form included a brief description of my research along with an explanation that, to ensure the students' confidentiality and protect their identities, pseudonyms would be used in place of the students' real names in the final, published thesis and any other works drawing from this research. The consent form also restated and stressed that the research was student-centred and did not involve teachers. This statement was important so that the students could trust that they could speak frankly with me during interviews and that I would not then reveal to their teachers what they had disclosed to me. The consent form also explained to the students that audio recording would be used to record the interviews for sole use in research.

**Table 3.3 AFLAQ (English translation): Example student response and results**

Item	Response				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	5				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	5				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	5				
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.	4				
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.	4				
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	4				
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	4				
*8. I am <i>not</i> nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.	*2				
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.	4				
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.		3			
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	4				
*12. I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher.			*4		
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class.	4				
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class.	4				
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class.	5				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.		3			
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.		3			
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	5				
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.		3			
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.		4			
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	5				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	5				
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.		3			
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	5				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.		3			
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.			2		
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.		4			
*28. I <i>don't</i> feel anxious when learning a foreign language.			*3		
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	5				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.		4			
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.		4			
32. I feel nervous at exam time.			3		
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.		3			
Number of responses	9	13	9	2	0
Total points for each response	45	50	27	6	0
<b>GRAND TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>128</b>				
Number of responses	33				
Number of questions	33				
<b>Maximum points should be</b>	<b>165</b>				
<b>Minimum points should be</b>	<b>33</b>				
<i>These scores should be the same for all students provided that they filled in all of the items in the scale</i>					
AVERAGE SCORE	3.88				
The student is	ANXIOUS				

All but one of the students who were invited to participate agreed and signed the consent form. One invited student was hesitant to sign the consent form before talking with her husband about it. I gave this student a copy of the consent form to take home so that she and her husband could discuss it and she could tell me of her decision later. The student came to my office the next day and explained that her husband did not agree to her being included in the study. I asked the student if she felt comfortable sharing their reasons for the refusal so that we could work around the potential problems, but she simply said that her husband did not want her to participate. One possibility is that her husband was not comfortable with the use of audio taping during interviews, but this is speculative and unconfirmed. I identified another student who would meet the criteria for participation (based on anxiety level and class section) and invited the other student to participate; the newly invited student consented.

Ultimately, five students enrolled in a single section of Level 1 and five students enrolled in a single session of Level 3, all with moderate to high anxiety according to the questionnaire they completed, took part in the case study portion of this study. Their scores on the questionnaire itself will be reviewed in the following chapters. Each student was assigned a pseudonym, randomly selected from names that are currently popular names for women in Saudi Arabia, to protect her identity. The five participants in Level 1 shall be referred to as Sabah, Samaher, Maha, Zakia, and Hind for purpose of this work, and the five participants from Level 3 shall be referred to as Sara, Farida, Noura, Youssra, and Tamara.

### **3.6 Case Studies**

Broadly, a case study may be defined as a method that examines one particular setting, a single subject, or one specific event in depth and in detail (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), though case studies may also examine a series of linked cases or events (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). The goal of a case study is to provide a detailed description of that which is examined (Richards, 2003) and to identify the story that underlies the social behaviour or events observed such that factors impacting behaviour are explored (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). According to Richards' (2003) discussion of case studies, some people limit case studies to qualitative research, but others include some quantitative research.

Researchers have subdivided the area of case studies into different types, grouped in terms of the studies' purposes or the types of questions they answer (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009). Recently, Yin (2009) described three styles of case studies, labeled descriptively as exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. An exploratory case study has the goal of developing relevant hypotheses, planning further inquiry, or determining the feasibility of using various procedures in future research. A descriptive case study presents a detailed description of a phenomenon within its context. An explanatory case study presents data pertinent to the causal relationships between variables in an attempt to address how and why various effects occur. Questions addressed in explanatory studies typically look at patterns over time rather than frequency or incidence.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identified three main types of case studies, intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. This case study taxonomy can be used to understand researchers' goals in conducting case studies, but it should be noted that the three types of case studies are not mutually exclusive. The first type, the intrinsic case study, is a case study that is undertaken due to the researcher's intrinsic interest in the subject, event, or situation being examined; the researcher has the goal of gaining a better understanding the case in question. In these studies, the researcher is not working to understand an abstract construct or generic phenomenon, nor to build a theory, although some researchers do develop theories in the process of conducting intrinsic case studies. In Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) case study taxonomy, the intrinsic case study is arguably most similar to the descriptive case study category discussed by Yin (2009). The second type of case study in Denzin and Lincoln's taxonomy is the instrumental case study in which researchers examine a particular case in order to gain insight into an issue or further develop a theory, ultimately drawing generalisations from the case study. The instrumental case study is similar to Yin's (2003, 2009) exploratory case study in that both types of case studies are used to build a basis for future research and extending ideas beyond the case study itself. When a researcher conducts an instrumental case study, the case study itself is of secondary interest, though the case is still examined in depth and in detail in order to facilitate the researcher's broader knowledge and theory development. Of course, the authors recognize that researchers have several goals and interests at once, including interest in the particular details of specific situations as in intrinsic case studies and in generalities, or how each specific case may relate to other cases (as in the instrumental case study). Indeed, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe a

third category of case studies, labeled as collective case studies, which consist of multiple or a series of instrumental case studies. In collective case studies, groups of individual case studies are examined together in order to build a fuller understanding than might be possible from examining only a single case.

Using case studies has many advantages. Some researchers believe that case studies give researchers the opportunity to develop a very deep understanding of situations. In case studies, researchers penetrate situations, using systematic data-gathering, so that the researchers can develop an in-depth view of the matter under investigation in a way that would not be possible through numerical analysis (e.g., Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008). The flexibility that is inherent to case study methodology might contribute to their allowing researchers to develop rich understandings of the issues studied. Case studies can be used in a range of settings and can draw on both qualitative data (e.g., interviews, observations, diaries, field notes) and quantitative data (e.g., questionnaires, surveys). A case study can also be adapted and evolve during the course of data collection, as new information is uncovered, to accommodate any new findings or new understandings that may come to be in the course of the research.

The focus on individuals (instead of on aggregates of people or on data) that characterizes many case studies also affords its own advantages. In a case study, the researcher may focus on an individual or a set of individuals in a way that is rarely possible in group research. Case studies conducted with more than one individual allow for comparing and contrasting their behaviours within their particular context. Indeed, it is perhaps the largest strength of case studies is that they provide examples of real people, such as students studying English, in real situations, such as classes or events taking place at school; the people and situations exist and operate, for the most part, independent of the research process and so researchers are able to observe real-life processes.

The focus of case studies on looking at individuals when examining human behaviour also comes with the advantage that reading case studies, commonly written as detailed stories, descriptions, or portraits of individuals, is relatively easy. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that case studies are more easily understood by readers, who may find the detailed descriptions typical of case studies more accessible than the more abstract ideas and theories presented in experimental and more purely quantitative work. This accessibility may be particularly important when researchers are interested in disseminating their

results outside academia and to larger audiences, including people in government and public education.

There are also drawbacks, or disadvantages, to conducting research through case studies. First, the utility of findings from case studies may be limited. Findings that accurately characterize one individual or one specific situation may not be true of other individuals or even of superficially similar situations. As Mackey and Gass (2005) point out, researchers must be very cautious about the generalisations drawn from case studies. Yin (2009) offers an analogy that a case study is like a single experiment. Scientific facts are rarely based on single experiments; rather, they are corroborated through multiple experiments that replicate the same and related phenomena under different conditions. Yin (2009) suggests that the goal of conducting case studies should be to gain conceptual or analytic knowledge and expand or generalise theories, not to estimate or attempt to enumerate frequencies or probabilities (statistical generalisation). So, although case studies may provide valuable insights into certain aspects of the topic being examined, results from single case studies do not necessarily or easily generalise to different individuals or to groups.

As discussed above, case studies typically include a large amount of data in order to examine issues in depth and in detail. This data takes a long time to collect, and the information collected may not all end up being read, analysed, or used (Yin, 2009). Yin's argument may be seen as a downside, but spending a large amount of time collecting and analysing data may also have its benefits. Researchers might develop clearer views of the matter that is being investigated because of the length of time spent examining the topic and amount of data collected. The true emphasis in case studies is not the quantity, but rather the quality, of the data that are collected.

In the current thesis, I present multiple case studies of students in two separate levels of EFL classes to explore what is happening in the EFL classroom setting, to be able to compare class levels, and to understand how FLA is present among Arab female college students in Saudi Arabia. According to Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) taxonomy, my research would be categorized as a collective case study because I will be examining, comparing, and contrasting multiple case studies of individual students. According to Yin's (2009) taxonomy of types of case studies, I will be conducting exploratory case studies. This approach will allow me to collect data for use in answering the research questions set forth in this thesis, and will allow me to explore FLA in a context in which

it has never before been explored. I seek to gain general insight into the experiences female college students have in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia.

The case study methodology adopted for this thesis will allow for collection of information regarding what is happening in EFL classes from the participants' perspectives. Through interviews, students have the opportunity to voice their own concerns and provide basis for insight into their specific EFL higher education program in Saudi Arabia. What factors do students think are hindering their learning and achievement in the classroom? What factors are depreciating their EFL experience? What are the students' suggestions for improvement? Moreover, conducting multiple case studies of individuals and grouping these individual case studies by the students EFL levels enables us to examine similarities and differences across both individuals and language levels.

Being more informed about their students' emotional and personal experiences during the learning process and in the classroom may be beneficial to language teachers in Saudi Arabia. The EFL teachers might gain insight into how the students might react to certain activities and assignments, and what indicators of behaviours teachers might watch for to recognize increases in anxiety in the classroom and to identify particularly anxious individual students. Eventually, the teachers might be able to develop techniques and teaching styles to ease their students' anxiety and promote learning.

Generalisations from observations of an individual or small group to the larger population must be made tentatively and with extreme caution. Findings from the current study may not readily generalise to other EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, let alone other second language learners around the world. In conducting two collective case studies in one of the first EFL preparatory female college program in Saudi Arabia, a clearer picture can be drawn on what is happening in this specific program and what the students in this specific program are experiencing. This understanding may help to generate ideas of what needs to be done in order to help these students learn the language easier and break any barriers that may hinder the EFL students' progress. Future research might continue this line of research, looking at different programs around Saudi Arabia. From that point, we might be able to develop a greater understanding of what is happening in these EFL programs across Saudi Arabia that might enable us to solve classroom problems and facilitate students' learning.

### **3.6.1 Observations**

A fundamental component of conducting case studies is observing behavior. For the current study, observations were used to construct a broad understanding of what is happening in the EFL classroom and also a reference point to inform discussion topics for interview. Being present in the classroom allowed me to understand what my participants discussed in interviews. Observations also allowed me to ask questions relevant to each observed class.

Although observations were of central importance to this study and seem simple, observation in the scientific context is not necessarily as simple and straightforward as it may seem. Richards (2003) argued that, “Observation is more than a mechanical process to be gone through; it is a commitment to apply the full range of our perceptual and analytical skills as intensely and extensively as we are able, in the pursuit of understanding” (p. 106). Drawing from Richards’ (2003) discussion, my goal was to develop a strategy for how best to use observation in the present research.

There are numerous styles of observation. Prior to conducting observation-based research, it is beneficial if the researcher has a clear idea of which style of observation he or she intends to use. The style of observation will inform strategic choices regarding the study, such as the degree to which the researcher interacts with study participants. Multiple researchers have offered descriptions of the different types of observational studies, including Bryman (1988) and, more recently, Creswell (2003).

Bryman (1988) suggests that researchers collecting observational data can take on one of three roles, that of a *total researcher*, *total participant*, or *researcher participant*. A *total researcher* has minimal or no participation in any of the events or activities taking place and being observed. A researcher taking on this role is mainly focused on gathering data by observing subjects. In contrast, a researcher in the role of *total participant* acts as one of the participants would in all activities and gatherings and then later analyses the activities in which he or she participated. Finally, a *research participant* is a researcher who can participate with the subjects in many activities or social gathering, but still maintains the role of a researcher rather than taking on the role of participant.

By establishing two different ways through which a researcher can function as a participant and an observer at the same time, Creswell (2003) suggests there are four

roles a researcher can take on when conducting observational studies. These four roles are that of *complete observer*, *complete participant*, *participant as observer*, and *observer as participant*. The researcher becomes a *complete observer* when he or she only observes and does not participate or interact with the participants at all. Creswell's (2003) category of *complete observer* is analogous to Bryman's (1988) category of *total researcher*. According to Creswell (2003), the complete observer model has the advantage of allowing researchers to explore topics that participants might not be comfortable discussing (e.g., in an interview). However, working with some participants, such as children, might be difficult, and building a rapport with such participants so that they are comfortable disclosing their experiences might be a challenge.

If the researcher takes part fully in the activities and events he or she is also observing, and the researcher does not inform the subjects of the researcher's dual role but rather tried to blend in with them to gather as much data as possible, the researcher has taken on the role of *complete participant* (Creswell, 2003) or *total participant* (Bryman, 1988). According to Creswell (2003), this approach affords the advantage of researchers' having firsthand experience in the matter they are studying, but may pose challenges if others see them as intrusive.

When researcher takes on the role of *participant as observer*, with the researcher's main role is participation in the everyday life and activities of the individuals who are being studied, and second to that is comes the role of observation. According to Creswell (2003), this approach puts the researcher in the position of potentially noticing aspects of the situation or experience that might not otherwise be noticed, but the researcher might be challenged by the necessity of attending to and observing details of the situation he or she is in.

In contrast, when the researcher takes on the role of *observer as participant*, the researcher participates in activities but the individuals under observation are aware of the researcher's role. Although the names differ slightly, this is parallel to Bryman's (1988) *researcher participant* category. According to Creswell (2003), taking this approach enables the researcher to note information as it is uncovered. However, it also puts the researcher in the situation of possibly observing private information that would not be ethical or appropriate for the researcher to report.

Whether labeled as *observer as participant* (as labeled in Creswell, 2003) or *researcher participant* (as labeled in Bryman, 1988), this approach to conducting observational research has many advantages. When a researcher takes on not only the role of researcher, but the role of participant, the researcher is drawn in and more intimately experiences the complexity of the matter being studied such that the researcher can really witness cause and effect, connections, and correlations that surround the phenomenon being examined (Adler & Adler, 1994).

Observational research more generally also affords meaningful advantages. According to Robson (2002), one of the major advantages stems simply from the observational nature of the research. Instead of asking people to report on their experiences (e.g., views, feelings, attitudes, perspectives), an observational researcher watches what people do and listens to what people say. Observational research is a very direct way of gathering data. According to Whyte (1984), observing participants through observational research even affords the advantage of answering questions that the researcher may not have known to ask. In Whyte's (1984) word, observational research,

...opens up possibilities for encountering the completely unexpected phenomenon that may be more significant than anything the field worker could have foreseen, suggesting important hypotheses worthy of further study. (p. 27)

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2008) describe observational incidents as “less predictable” (p. 397) than other data collection formats (e.g., questionnaires) might be, saying that this lack of predictability allows the data to have a certain freshness. These researchers purport that observation enables the researcher to understand the context of programs to see things that might be otherwise missed, and also allows the researcher to discover things that the respondent might not want to reveal or that the respondent might not be capable or accurately reporting (i.e., due to lack of self-awareness). According to Nunan (1996), “In order to understand classroom behavior, we need to study that behavior in the context in which it occurs” (p. 46). In the present study, direct observation of the classroom was necessary to understand students’ classroom experiences and their discussion of their experiences.

One potential drawback to conducting observational studies is that little of value occurs during the very early stages of observation (Cohen et al., 2007). This may be because the researcher is not able to make sense of or interpret the participants’ actions in the

early stages, and so those actions seem meaningless, random, or entirely predictable to the novel observer. However, as the observer becomes more experienced, the researcher becomes more adept at noting and quickly analysing details of the observed situation. Eventually, the research might develop a perspective on the behavior he or she observes and be able to predict participants' behavior.

A challenge to conducting observational research is the necessity of maintaining focused attention on the scene that is being observed. As time passes during the course of an observation session, the researcher might find his or her mind is drifting to non-relevant matters. This potential challenge could be minimized by the researcher's actively taking notes during observation in order to keep focused.

A major criticism of observational research has been that it is impacted by observer biases. Indeed, Williams' (1991) criticized observational methodology in studying anxiety by saying that these observations, are particularly vulnerable to biases on the part of the observer. Williams (1991) also raised the concern that behaviors might be readily misinterpreted; behaviors that are actually attributable to fatigue or lack of interest might appear identical to behaviors that are due to the participants' experiencing heightened anxiety.

Hammersley (1992) argued that researchers should not rely on what people say about their own beliefs and behaviors, because in doing so the researchers are likely to neglecting the complex relationship between people's attitudes and behavior. On the other hand, Hammersley (1992) also argued that relying only on observations without getting an individual's perspective from that individual puts the researchers at risk of misinterpreting the individual's behavior. For these reasons, among others, it is useful to use multiple sources of information when conducting a case study.

Using Bryman's (1988) and Creswell's (2003) terminology to describe the different roles a researcher can take, I started my case studies with the intention of taking on the role of a *total* or *complete researcher*. However, it became apparently very quickly that I was actually taking on a different role; my research subjects sometimes invited me to come to their in-college gatherings or celebrations (e.g., birthdays, end-of-term celebrations) and I felt that I could not refuse. Attending these gatherings offered an important opportunity for additional observations for research purposes, but helped me in gaining the participants' confidence so that they felt more comfortable speaking with me later in the

interviews. I did not want the students to view me as an outsider who was merely using them for sake of research. However, in an effort to maintain an objective perspective for my research, I tried very hard to maintain my role as a researcher and not fully interact with the students unless it was necessary. As a consequence, I was never regarded by my participants as their peer; rather, by becoming involved with the student participants in their social events but maintaining social distance as a researcher, I took on the role that Bryman (1988) called *researcher participant* and Creswell (2003) called *observer as participant*.

During the first semester of the academic year 2006-2007, I observed my participants mainly in their EFL classrooms. Across multiple studies, students have reported being most anxious about speaking (e.g., Brantmeier, 2005). Consistent with this finding, according to Yan and Horwitz (2008), listening and speaking classes tend to be more anxiety-provoking than any other language class. In addition, most of the results of the pilot study using the open-ended questionnaire (see Chapter III) indicated that there is a high level of anxiety in listening and speaking classes. For this reason, the observational portion of the current research that was conducted in classrooms was conducted in the listening and speaking classes.

Each of the listening and speaking lessons that I observed lasted approximately three hours, including a twenty-minute break. From these extended observations, I was able to construct a detailed description and analysis of the educational setting and students' interactions within the class. These observations were integral to the current research, serving to help clarify the links between FLA and the context in which the student was studying. The goal was to understand the factors in the language learning environment that may or may not trigger FLA.

However, as I mentioned previously, I sometimes had a chance to observe the students' interactions in the cafeteria, in the hallways, and in gatherings within the college. My aim was to acquire a general picture of what female Arab students go through when learning EFL, and to determine whether they experience FLA. If FLA was found to exist, I wanted to identify factors that might contribute to FLA. How might FLA affect the students' interactions with each other in the new EFL environment, an environment that they were experiencing over the course of their EFL education at the college?

As discussed in this section, there are limitations to the use of observational methods, and particularly to using only observational methods. In order to depict a clearer picture of what is occurring in the Saudi EFL classrooms, to better understand the students' actions and reactions in class, I also included individual and group interviews as means of data collection. This combination of data-collection methods allows for getting the direct input of the students and possibly clarification or elaboration of the motivations or emotions underlying students' in-class, observed behaviors.

### **3.6.2 Field Notes**

The most important task of taking field notes is to create a thorough and accurate record of what happens in the context or situation that is observed (e.g., Lynch, 1996). Using field notes allowed me to keep careful records of classroom observations and related thoughts or questions. I wrote down notes and ideas so that I could come back to those thoughts and ask students to clarify or discuss their experiences. I also wrote down notes on students' specific behaviours, such as to whom they spoke in class and whether they were wearing traditional or Western attire. Field notes such as these must be written promptly following an incident or observation. Failure to make notes quickly following an observed incident, then later attempting to recall the incident, might lead to inaccurate characterization due to simple failure to remember accurately, thus jeopardizing the fidelity and usefulness of the field notes. Cohen et al. (2007) provides a concise and pointed summary of this issue, stating that

there is nothing to be gained merely by your presence as an observer. Until your observations and impressions from one visit are a matter of record, there is little point in returning to the classroom or school and reducing the impact of one set of events by superimposing another and more recent set. (p. 261)

I kept field notes, written in both English and Arabic as appropriate for the classroom, in a diary throughout the study. I strove to record all behavior I observed during data collection. Taking field notes was vital to my research not only because it created a record of my observations, but also because the field notes served as a starting point for my interviews. The questions that I asked during interviews were based on my observations and field notes. In addition, I used the field notes to record any problems or concerns encountered in the field (the classrooms). As an additional source of record, I

used a tape recorder to record as many situations and events that I observed or shared with the students as possible.

On the first day of classroom observations for Level 3, students were giving presentations to the class. In my diary, I recorded the following, noting issues to ask questions about during interviews:

*I was very happy about that the first day was a presentation since it is the most anxiety provoking activity... Youssra's group was first in the presentations... Ask later: What were you feeling during the presentation (on the computer)? What did you think of the feedback? There was a lot of music in the presentation, why?... not so much talking... The rest of the other groups are worrying about their presentation and working on their laptops... no attention to the presenters. (November 5, 2006)*

Other field notes were descriptions of what was occurring in the classroom, such as the following passage regarding in-class activities:

*'The Group' is sticking together and doesn't want to be split-up... when one of my participants asked one of the members of 'The Group' to join them in their team, the member of 'The Group' refused impolitely and turned to join her usual 'Group' team. (November 14, 2006)*

In this note, "The Group" is used to refer to a specific group of students in the class who tended to form a social clique throughout the semester. These sorts of details are further analysed in the next chapter, where the field notes serve as a basis for understanding what is happening in the classroom.

### 3.6.3 Interviews

Talking to people – conducting interviews of varying types – is a straightforward yet effective means of collecting information and is used by many qualitative researchers and in many case studies. In an interview, a researcher can ask questions of the participants in order to clarify issues and gain more accurate information. I used interviews to ask students to help me understand what I observed in class and to get the students' perspectives on what they experienced in class. Interviewing students also allowed me to hear them discuss their internal (e.g., emotional) experiences in studying EFL. The process of conducting an interview and of being interviewed can be viewed as

very familiar to most people. People have questions or need clarification on an issue, and so they ask questions of other people. As stated by Richards (2003), "Interviews are becoming part of our daily lives and the research interview is just one among many types" (p. 49).

Indeed, Cohen et al. (2007) describe the interview as more than just a process concerned with collecting data about life and behavior. Rather, in their view the process of conducting and taking part in interviews is a part of everyday life. In an interview, both the individual conducting the interview and the individual being interviewed have the opportunity to discuss how they see the world, how they interpret the world, and to generally express their perspectives. Richards (2003) agreed with Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) that interviews are effective when used in addition to observations and that the two forms of data collection (participant observation and interviews) are similar in that they both take into account the broader context and the fact that rapport with research participants must be developed and maintained.

Interviews can take many forms. A researcher could interview an individual or a group, and can conduct interviews with varying degrees of structure and formality. In both individual and group interviews, the researcher's goal is gaining information about the individuals' thoughts, feelings, and knowledge pertaining to a specific topic (e.g., Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Individual and group interview methods share strengths. For example, participants are provided with the opportunity to talk, and the interaction style of asking and answering questions is familiar to most participants because it is commonplace and natural in conversation. An individual interview is a one-on-one conversation, and a group interview is "a group conversation with a purpose" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 104). Individual interviews also offer the advantage of providing participants with privacy to interact with the interviewer/researcher without concern for other participants' perspectives or judgment. Individual interviews may be the most familiar as they involve just the researcher and the participant who is being interviewed. For a group interview, a researcher gathers a relatively small number of individuals (e.g., 6-8) in order to talk with them and observe them talking to each other about a topic of interest to the researcher (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The group context may provide information to supplement that gathered using other methods, including observational research and individual interviews, because the group context creates a setting in which

participants can discuss their experiences, build on, or contradict each other's views (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Three different types of interviews, the structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, have been identified (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Structured interviews are also called "standardized" interviews in that researchers use an identical (or standard) set of questions during every respondent's interview (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173), which allows the researcher the potentially useful opportunity to compare respondents' answers to each question. These interviews are essentially questionnaires that are administered orally.

As the name entails, semi-structured interviews are less pre-arranged than structured interviews, but semi-structured interviews are still conducted following an outline. During a semi-structured interview, the researcher uses a written list of questions as a guide, but the researcher may deviate from the questions in the list (i.e., to gain more information about a particularly interesting point made during an interview) or probe for more information (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Unstructured interviews are the least structured of the interview types. As described by Mackey and Gass (2005), these interviews, being unscripted, are the most similar to the majority of natural conversations. In unstructured interviews, the interviewer does not have a strict set of question, but is free to modify the interview as it progresses, identifying when key issues are raised and asking questions to follow up on, elaborate on, or otherwise gain information about that key issue (Cohen et al., 2007). Interviewers strive to help respondents to open up and express themselves in their own words and at their own pace. As a consequence, the information that is uncovered during an unstructured interview is not limited by the researcher's preconceived ideas about the topic being studied or by leading questions from the researcher.

During the study, I conducted interviews of participants individually and in groups. The goal of the interviews was to provide a setting and context in which the students would discuss their experiences. Their descriptions of their experiences could then be used to address the questions that provide the framework for this research. I chose to conduct both individual and group interviews so that I could take advantage of the strengths of each, and to use a combination of unstructured and semi-structured interview formats.

Initially, the group interviews played the role of an ice-breaker, but they quickly transitioned into an arena for the participants to exchange ideas, suggestions, criticisms, and confessions. In the group setting, the participants had the opportunity to listen to each other's opinions and views. Listening to each other provided participants with opportunities to note points of disagreement, contradiction, and concern in a relaxed environment. Another benefit of the group interview methodology was that it helped the participants to remember issues they had forgotten and helped students to develop their ideas more clearly as they talked with each other, explained their perspectives, and attempted to make the ideas clear. In the group interviews, some information that had been previously discounted re-emerged. Ultimately, the group interviews provided an environment in which a broad range of experiences and opinions, perhaps depicting a complete and revealing picture of the issue, were discussed.

I encouraged all students to participate during interviews and attempted to include all students in the interviews. Using group interviews was an efficient means of eliciting data from students who were extremely shy. However, during the group interviews some of the participants were very out-spoken and much more eager to talk than others. Indeed, some students were so eager to talk and describe their frustration that they occasionally dominated the group interview sessions. This may be a drawback to conducting group interviews. In order to balance participation in the group interviews and have all of the students' voices be heard in the group interview, I sometimes asked silent participants if they agreed with what had been stated. If she agreed (or disagreed), why did she think she had that view? Individual interviews also provided a venue for shyer students to communicate with me without their peers around.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with both individuals and groups throughout the course of this study, but the interviews started out more flexible and became slightly more structured, including more probing questions, as the semester went on. In the initial interviews, I chose to use a relatively more flexible interview style so that the interviews would be rather similar to natural conversation because I wanted to get to know my participants and create an environment that would maximize their comfort level in speaking with me. In both individual and group interviews, I began interviews with questions to prompt conversation, but then followed the flow of conversation and ideas to elaborate on key issues as they arose in conversation.

In initial interviews, a prompt such as, “What do you like about your ‘Listening and Speaking’ class?” was used to start conversation. Later questions would be, for example, “What are the things you don’t like about your Listening and Speaking class? And why?” This pattern of questioning allowed the participants to ease in to speaking to me and to express their views without being restricted or limited by a tightly structured style of questioning.

As the study and data collection progressed, I focused interviews on particular issues that I noticed during observation periods. I also looked to the existing research for topics that might be pertinent to what I observed. The purpose of this type of interview was to get a general understanding of the topic. Over the course of each interview, whether of an individual or in a group, I listened to the participants’ responses to questions and built on their statements in formulating new questions. Did the student bring up a new and potentially highly informative issue? Was it necessary to probe for additional information? I used probing questions and cues to elicit more detailed responses from the students. My goal was to support the students in expressing their opinions about and experiences in learning English. Asking probing questions and providing brief restatements of what the students had said during the interview provided them with an opportunity to either concur or correct the statements, reducing the odds that I would misunderstand what they had said.

I set out to conduct interviews on a weekly basis, conducting individual interviews some weeks and group interviews other weeks. The interview schedule is provided in Table 3.4. The interviews were usually conducted immediately after a classroom observation period, while what had occurred in the classroom was still fresh in my mind and in the minds of the participants. It was very important to conduct the interviews after each class observed in order to make sense of things and to account for factors that might not have been observable. During the interviews, I asked participants about situations I had observed (i.e., in the classroom) to prompt them to clarify what I had observed or elaborate on it. I also asked students questions based on their responses to the AFLAQ, such as asking them to discuss issues they had flagged as particularly anxiety-provoking. At times, I also asked the student participants direct questions so that I could compare their responses to what I had observed in their classes. The individual interviews varied from 10 to 20 minutes, and the group interviews varied from 30 to 45 minutes in length. In total, I conducted four group interviews for Level 1, seven group interviews for Level

3, 14 individual interviews with participants in Level 3, and 15 individual interviews with participants in Level 1. I observed nine sessions of Level 1 and nine sessions of Level 3. Each observation session last approximately 160 minutes, for a total of approximately 48 hours of observation time.

As shown in Table 3.4, the first two scheduled interviews for each level were group interviews following classroom observations. Group interviews were scheduled first with the goal of creating a more relaxed, less stressful setting for the participants. The participants were able to go through, as a group, the process they would each go through again in individual interviews.

**Table 3.3** Schedule of observations followed by group or individual interviews

	LEVEL 1			LEVEL 3		
	Classroom Observation	Group Interview	Individual Interviews	Classroom Observation	Group Interview	Individual Interviews
<b>Week 1</b>	Nov. 7 <sup>th</sup>	X		Nov. 5 <sup>th</sup>	X	
<b>Week 2</b>	Nov. 14 <sup>th</sup>	X		Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup>	X	
<b>Week 3</b>	Nov. 21 <sup>st</sup>		X	Nov. 19 <sup>th</sup>		X
<b>Week 4</b>	Nov. 28 <sup>th</sup>	X		No class	X ( Nov. 26 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>Week 5</b>	Dec. 5 <sup>th</sup>	X		Dec. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	X	
<b>Week 6</b>	Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup>		X	Dec. 10 <sup>th</sup>		X
<b>Week 7</b>	Religious holiday			Religious holiday		
<b>Week 8</b>	Religious holiday			Religious holiday		
<b>Week 9</b>	Religious holiday			Religious holiday		
<b>Week 10</b>	Jan. 9 <sup>th</sup>		No show	Jan. 7 <sup>th</sup>	X	
<b>Week 11</b>	Jan. 16 <sup>th</sup>		X	Jan. 14 <sup>th</sup>	X	
<b>Week 12</b>	Jan. 23 <sup>rd</sup>		X	Jan. 21 <sup>st</sup>		X
<b>Week 13</b>	No classes			Jan. 27 <sup>th</sup>	X	

I was given access to a room, formerly the office of a lecturer in the program, to use as an office and for interviews. Initially, the room had a computer but no chairs; chairs were provided later in the semester. In the beginning, the group interviews that took place in this room were conducted with us all sitting in a circle on the floor, with the tape recorder in the middle of the circle. First, I asked the students for their permission to lock the door so there would be no disturbances or interruptions from other students or teachers. The closed, locked door also helped the interview setting to feel intimate and

private because no one could come in, listen in, interrupt, or overhear the group interviews.

The individual interviews, which started later in the study, were conducted in the same location. As with the group interviews, for the individual interviews each student and I sat on the floor of the room with the door locked to ensure privacy.

One issue that required special attention and that was particularly important for the students' comfort was the use of the students' native language, Arabic, to conduct the interviews and to collect other data. The native language and the language abilities of individuals involved in interviews must be taken into account so that the questions asked and information exchanged is understandable and the participants are comfortable communicating. The speakers' native language should be used when possible, but other language issues must also be considered. For example, Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that ideas couched in a researcher's academic phrasing or jargon should be rephrased to more colloquial wording that might be more commonplace in daily conversation. For the current study, it was assumed that the students would feel more comfortable using their native language to communicate. Written instruments, such as self-reports, were presented in Arabic to minimize the potential problem of students being challenged to understand and respond to the original English forms of the instruments; if the instruments were presented to non-native English speakers of varying levels of English proficiency, they could be misconstrued as measures of language proficiency, reading skills, verbal skills, expressive language skills, or receptive language. Conducting the interviews themselves in colloquial Arabic increased the likelihood that the students would be able to express their thoughts and feelings accurately and fully; they would not be limited by their proficiency in English, the language they were at the college to study. Furthermore, if the students experience anxiety when faced with using English to communicate, pushing them to use English during the interview process or on written questionnaires might actually lead them to experience heightened levels of anxiety and prompt them to have more difficulty in expressing their ideas.

Although some researchers choose to videotape interviews, which affords obvious advantages in that the videotapes can be reviewed at a later date and details such as body language can be carefully analysed, videotaping of interviews and observation periods during this study was not considered appropriate based on religion and cultural

traditions. Women in Saudi Arabia are obligated to cover up according to traditional religious values, and exposing female students' appearances is considered taboo.

In order to minimize distractions and to enable us to have more naturally flowing conversations, I did not take notes during interviews. Taking copious notes or trying to transcribe the students' speech would have made it very difficult for me to stay engaged in the interview and to provide non-verbal feedback, encouragement, and prompts (e.g., eye contact, head nodding). With participants' permission and signed consent, interviews were tape recorded to create an audio record of the exchanges. The tape recorder may have inhibited the students' openly expressing themselves early on in the interview process, but it soon faded into the background. The tape recordings of the interview were particularly important as they were the primary record of the interviews. However, I occasionally made notes during the interviews, including noting the participants' facial expressions, so I could provide a fuller description of the interview itself by elaborating on a point or observation that could not be captured by the tape recorder.

During the early stages of the interviews, most of the participants were uncomfortable. The students who took part in this study were not used to being interviewed or asked about their opinions. Surprisingly, I observed the students adapt quickly to taking part in the interviews as they started to speak with me in a way that seemed very frank and open. As stated above, I had the goal of creating an interview environment in which the students felt comfortable, but I did not expect them to be at ease. As discussed in Chapter I, the students were accustomed to Rote method of learning in the classroom. They were not accustomed to being asked about their opinions or views about their education by anyone, except perhaps their friends.

After two, weekly sessions of group interviews for both Level 1 and Level 3, individual interviews began. During the individual interviews, students were relaxed, cheerful, and talkative. The students were very forthright appeared sincere in their responses, and some students even felt comfortable enough to disclose personal information. For example, some of the individual interviews extended for 20 minutes and took time from the students' lunch breaks, but they expressed that they did not mind missing the break time. The students appeared eager to talk about and describe not only the things that happened in the classes I observed, but also to talk about their experiences of other

classes as well. Students stated that the interview was the first instance that they were asked for their views and opinions. Some students even thanked me for asking about their views.

Over the course of the semester when interviews were conducted, I considered it important to occasionally share personal information with the student participants in order to minimize the power hierarchy between us and allow them to feel more comfortable with me. For example, the participants asked me personal questions about where I had studied English and why I have an American accent although I am working towards my doctorate in the United Kingdom. I embraced these questions, and I answered them to get conversations going and build a stronger relationship with the participants. Sharing information with the participants, being open to interacting with them, and conducting the interviews in their native language were all techniques I used to enable the students to express their thoughts more freely and with less restriction. Interacting with the students on a personal level may also have allowed them to view themselves as more than merely sources of data in a research study.

Given that the focus of the current research was the EFL students' point of view and experience, I chose not to include teachers' voices in interviews. Excluding teachers from interviews may also have helped the students to feel more comfortable with the interview process. The students might not have felt as comfortable with me, trusting of me, or shared their perspectives as openly if their teachers were included or if they were concerned that what they said would be reported to their teachers. On several occasions, individual teachers approached me and asked questions, trying to get a sense of what was happening in my research or interviews. Some teachers dropped hints, trying to find out if the students had made negative or critical comments about them in particular. I assured the teachers that my research focused on the EFL students, and that I was, at that stage, gathering but not analysing data. I strictly maintained the confidentiality of the information that the students shared with me during the interviews.

As discussed, I conducted the original interviews in Hijazi, a colloquial form of Arabic common to the students and the region. Hijazi is the colloquial form of Arabic spoken in Jeddah, Makkah, and Madina; the college was located in the city of Jeddah, and most of the students were from the surrounding area. Most of the students attending the college

speak Hijazi as their everyday, native language in relaxed and informal settings, and so it was a useful medium for communication during interviews.

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the audio-taped interviews using classical Arabic, which was necessary because the Hijazi dialect does not have a written form. After I had transcribed the interviews, I sent them to an Egyptian professional translator who translated the text of the interviews from Arabic to English. Finally, after the translation was completed, I reviewed the English text to ensure that the translations accurately reflected the content of the original, audio-taped interviews. This was done to enable readers of English to follow the content analyses included in Chapters V and VI.

Once written, the English transcripts of the interviews were analysed to identify common themes that arose in multiple interviews. The goal during translation was to convey the students' original meaning, preserving their meaning instead of using literal translation from Arabic to English when necessary. According to previous researchers, "Getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important, it is what they mean that is important" (Stake, 1995, p. 66).

### **3.7 Description of the English medium college**

An understanding of the case studies described in Chapters IV and V will be facilitated by readers' having a broader idea of the social context in which the individual students were studying English. In order to paint a picture of the social settings in which the women who were studying English interacted and to contextualise to these specific case studies, the case studies are each preceded by subjective descriptions of my personal observations of students in Level 1 (presented in Chapter IV) and in Level 3 (presented in Chapter V). Particular attention is given to differences and similarities between students and social groups in the two class levels.

All of the English language students who participated in these studies were attending the private, all-female, English medium college in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The students included in these case studies were young (either 18 or 19 years of age at the time of study), Muslim women, and eight of the 10 were from Saudi Arabia. The 10 students had attended nine different high schools in Saudi Arabia before attending the college; two of the 10 students had attended the same high school.

The all-female English medium college is headed by a female dean who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the college. The dean holds a seat on the board of trustees, which is predominantly male. The board of trustees make most of the major decisions concerning the college, though issues may also be referred to the Ministry of Higher Education. The public domain in Saudi Arabia is segregated and male-dominated, and so having a predominantly male panel as the board of trustees facilitates communication because the male members of the school board are able to communicate with others (e.g., the Ministry of Higher Education).

The program's curriculum was developed with the Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC), an American education consortium based in Austin, Texas, that draws on the expertise and experience of 32 public universities in the state of Texas to provide educational consulting and program design to institutions around the world. In addition to drawing on curriculum designed in the West, the English medium college can be described as having a Western attitude. The college is like American colleges in that it has a student government (something that does not exist in public universities in Saudi Arabia) and activities that are common in American colleges (e.g., sports clubs, debate teams).

When this research was conducted, the college required students to achieve a minimum cumulative score of 480 on the paper form of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in order to be admitted. If a student scored above 320 (the minimum score of required for admittance to the college) but below 480, she was required to take a placement test and would be placed in one of four levels in the English College Preparatory Programme (CPP) in which students study English as a foreign language (EFL). Each level (e.g., Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4) is one semester long. Level 4 is considered a bridging semester. When students are in Level 4, their CPP English language studies focus on academic writing, and they also take courses of their own selection from the broader English medium college (i.e., outside the CPP).

Due to the high cost of tuition, the university maintains a fund for scholarships or grants for students who need financial aid. The fund is continuously replenished by contributions from private donors, Saudi business men, Saudi corporations, members of the Saudi Royal Family, and (as a recent addition) the Saudi government. In order to qualify for a scholarship, a student must go through the admissions process and fulfil

certain criteria. If the student qualifies for a scholarship but is placed into the CPP, her tuition fees are paid for a maximum of one year, or three semesters, of the English preparatory program. In contrast, students who pay their own fees can stay in the CPP as long as they choose and repeat each level as many times as needed in order to pass (with a grade of at least a “D”), move to the next level, and ultimately complete the preparatory program.

All students, upon request, are permitted to take a placement test for re-evaluation at the end of any semester of study in the English CPP. Achieving a very high score on the re-evaluation is taken as an indication that the student qualifies to skip a level, thus progressing more quickly through the preparatory program. In some cases, a student who earns high grades and demonstrates an exceptionally high level of achievement is nominated to skip a level with the consent of all of her teachers.

The English medium college was welcoming and supportive in the completion of this research. As stated earlier in this chapter, I contacted the director of the program for students studying EFL and the dean of the college in April of 2006 and they promptly granted approval for me to conduct research at their college the following academic year. In September of 2006, I contacted the EFL program again to prepare for the start of the study. To my surprise, I learned that the program director had taken a semester off due to a family emergency and had returned to the US. Another lecturer in the program was taking over for the semester as interim director, but the director had apprised the interim director of my study. A week before the first day of classes, I went to the college to discuss the EFL program and my research study with the interim director. The interim director was supportive, even giving me access to her previous office so that I could conduct interviews and meet with students there.

### **3.8 Modifications to research plans**

The research presented in this thesis is what Robson (2002) would call “real-world” research (p. 4). According to Robson, real-world research is uncontrollable and,

...often not feasible, even if it were ethically justifiable. Hence, one of the challenges inherent in carrying out investigations in the ‘real world’ lies in

seeking to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally ‘messy’ situation. (p. 4)

The situations and interviews that contributed to this work were not controlled, laboratory studies. The real-world nature of this research affords the advantage that I could study real-world behaviour, along with the challenge that not all details were under my control. Given the real-world nature of the research, the collection of data required flexibility and modification of the original plans.

In the course of conducting the data collection for the case studies described in the next two chapters, a number of specific challenges and unanticipated changes (such as the change in the program’s director, discussed above) arose and I adapted my research plans as needed. For example, at the outset of the study I intended to examine Level 1 and Level 4, because the students in Level 4 were the furthest through the program, most fluent in English, and exiting the CPP. However, when I began conducting my field work, there were only two students in Level 4 who fit the criteria of having had one or more previous semesters in the CPP. I opted to work with students in Level 3, where a larger number qualified for the current study, though their English skills were weaker than those of students in Level 4.

In addition, the schedule for participant interviews was different from my original plan. I had intended to conduct group interviews every two weeks, but had to change the schedule based on students’ availability. At times, specific students were short on time, and so I opted to include them in group interviews because I was then able to interview multiple students at once so that no one had to wait for an individual interview.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I first presented the general approach utilized in this research (case studies). The research conducted in this thesis was exploratory and descriptive, using interviews, observations, and questionnaires to gain a multi-faceted understanding of issues students discussed. Next, I discussed the specific methods that were employed for gathering data for the current research (questionnaires, observations, field notes, interviews). Particular attention was paid to issues that were raised or noted in multiple formats (e.g., interviews and observations). Finally, I described the social and

educational context in which these studies took place. In the next two chapters, I present further description and data regarding the five case studies of students in Level 1 (Chapter IV) and then the five case studies of students in Level 3 (Chapter V). Discussion of the two levels and the case studies are presented in parallel, with the chapters organized similarly to facilitate comparison of the two levels. The case studies will be analysed in further detail and findings will be discussed and compared in the context of the existing literature in Chapter VI.

## ***Chapter IV***

### ***Level 1 students***

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The perspectives and performance of each student learning English in Level 1 of the CPP cannot be fully understood without taking her broader context into account. The English medium college's structure and operations, and the English program, were presented in Chapter III. In the current chapter, the student cohort in Level 1 is first described using a brief, impressionistic description. Then, the formal observations and information gathered about and from each individual participant from Level 1 are described in detail and discussed on a case-by-case basis.

The goal of these case studies is to identify factors that might interfere with, inhibit, or otherwise affect second language acquisition (SLA), particularly among students who are identified as having moderate to high levels of anxiety associated with their second language studies. Special attention and respect are paid to the students' experiences as told from their own perspectives, and so individual and group interviews are of particular importance. Four sources of data are utilized: (1) students' self-report responses on a questionnaire to assess their level of FLA, (2) observation of and field notes regarding class periods, (3) individual and group interviews, and (4) the students' final grades in their English language classes.

#### **4.2 Level 1 Overview**

The case study participants in Level 1 (which had only one section) were five students in a class of 23. Of the 23 students, one student received a "DN" at the end of the semester, having been denied the opportunity to take exams and administratively dropped from the program for failure to attend classes; one student (a case study participant identified as "Maha") received no grade; and three students failed. The remaining 18 students passed Level 1 and moved to Level 2. Of the five Level 1 students who participated in the case

studies discussed below, four passed Level 1 and moved to Level 2, and one (Maha) stopped attending class.

There were 23 registered students in Level 1, all of whom were in the observed section of Level 1. Early in the semester, one student (Maha, discussed below in the case studies) stopped attending classes without officially withdrawing from the program, and another student (who did not take part in the case studies) was administratively dropped from the program for failure to attend class. Most of the 23 students in Level 1 had studied in the Saudi Arabian public or private school system. The majority of private schools prepare students with English education such that their English skills are above those of students placed in Level 1 of the CPP, and so students rarely enter Level 1 from private schools unless the private school had a relatively weak English education program.

Most of the students in Level 1 are self-funded, or pay tuition. Students in Level 1 are rarely funded by scholarships because (as discussed) the college's scholarship rules allow only one year, or three semesters (i.e., one semester each of Level 2, Level 3, Level 4), to progress through the courses and attain adequate proficiency in English to enter the college. With each semester as one EFL level, four semesters (one year and one additional a semester) are required to progress through the EFL program if started from Level 1. However, students occasionally receive funding or scholarships from outside sources that are not affiliated with the English medium college.

I observed the students in Level 1 to be shy and hesitant to speak, typically talking quietly and only to each other. The students moved as a group but with no obvious leader. They stayed together, typically sitting together in the cafeteria and in the hallways. The behaviour and relationships of students in Level 1, as a group, were discussed during a group interview with Level 1 case study participants on November 7, 2006. A case study participant identified as Hind stated that:

We have cooperation and care for each other in class. Even in our break time in the cafeteria we all sit together on one table, all 20 of us except four or five girls. They have other friends as well.

When asked if the four or five girls Hind mentioned spent their time together (i.e., as a group but separate from the rest of the students in Level 1), Hind and Sabah said no, that

the other girls simply had friends who were in the college. I asked if there was any jealousy among the students, and Hind said:

No, even though we only knew each other only this semester and we did not know each other from before. And even when we go outside of the college, we all go out together or we send mobile text messages to each other. We always have some kind of communication.

She emphasized the closeness of the group, and that they depend on each other. When asked if this might be because all of the students are in the same situation in their Level 1 English class, the Hind and Maha both said that they think they and their classmates are close because everyone in the class is nice. Hind added that, “a student from Level 2 pointed out to me that her class is cooperating and sticking together in the same way as our class.”

In addition to forming a close group, the students in Level 1 stood apart because of their style of dress. They dressed rather conservatively in plain colours, loose clothing, and long skirts, only occasionally wearing slacks. In fact, most of the students in Level 1 wore their *abaya* (the black body covering worn by females in Saudi Arabia when they go out into public places where men are present) inside the college and the classrooms even though the body covering is not strictly necessary in the college context because it is an all-female environment. The Level 1 students’ wearing of their *abaya* set them apart from other students. The students who were familiar with the Western environment of the college (or further along in the program) tended to take off their *abaya* and the headscarf at the door, wearing more Western dress until they left the college premises. The Level 1 students’ wardrobe choice may indicate that they are shy, reserved, or truly conservative, or it may indicate that they are maintaining their cultural traditions, having only just been exposed to the college setting and the Western influences within the college.

Generally, the Level 1 students seemed keen to learn English. They appeared to be hard-working, supportive of one another, and concerned for each other's welfare. They hardly ever complained or spoke negatively of their classmates. In addition, they appeared to respect or even revere their teachers. They very rarely questioned anything a teacher said. As discussed in Chapter I, it is a traditional, Saudi Arabian norm to respect teachers. The Level 1 students’ not questioning or challenging their teachers might be due to the English language barrier between the students and the teachers. However, my

subjective interpretation of the students' behaviour was that they did not criticize or question the teacher because they had just come from traditional Saudi schooling to the novel, American-influenced college environment. In addition, the students were new to the environment and may have not yet felt comfortable in it.

The Level 1 students who took part in case studies were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity; the pseudonyms adopted for these students are Samaher, Sabah, Maha, Zakia, and Hind. Each pseudonym appears alongside the student's age, information about the student's high school education, questionnaire outcomes (e.g., anxiety levels), and class outcomes (e.g., grades) in Table 4.1. Within the table, the students are ordered by increasing anxiety as assessed by the questionnaire that was administered to the whole student group and used to select potential case study participants. Of the five case studies from Level 1, the average AFLAQ score was 3.87 ( $SD = .92$ ) on the scale that ranged from one to five, indicating the average of the case study scores would be categorized as "anxious". Samaher had the lowest score (3.15, or "moderate") and Hind had the highest score (4.30, or "very anxious").

**Table 4.1** Level 1 participant information

Pseudonym	Age	Previous education	Past CPP semesters	Self-reported FLA		Final grade	Notes
				Mean	Category		
Samaher	19	Private	0	3.15	Moderate	B+	
Sabah	18	Public	0	3.82	Anxious	B	
Maha	18	Public	0	3.94	Anxious	Withdrew	Maha stopped attending classes.
Zakia	18	Private	0	4.16*	Anxious	C+	Completed only 32 of the 33 questionnaire items.
Hind	18	Public	0	4.30	Very Anxious	C+	Received the highest score on the AFLAQ.

**Note:** All schools are unique public or private high schools.

\*Zakia's score is averaged across 32 items; she did not provide a response to item 6 of the questionnaire

Each individual's score will be discussed in conjunction with other information about the student's experience in learning English in the individual case studies. However, it might be of interest to consider which average scores stand out among Level 1 case study participants. The items associated with the five highest and five lowest mean scores, indicating highest and lowest levels of anxiety (respectively) are presented below. In cases in which the mean scores are the same, all items with that mean score are presented; they are ordered by mean, then by the standard deviation associated with that

mean. The standard deviation is included to provide information about the variability in participants' responses, with higher standard deviations indicating more variability or less consensus.

**Table 4.2** AFLAQ items associated with highest anxiety scores for Level 1

Item	Mean	SD
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	5.00	.00
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	4.80	.45
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	4.80	.45
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	4.80	.45
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	4.60	.55
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	4.60	.55
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	4.60	.55
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	4.60	.55
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	4.60	.89

As indicated by the mean score of five ( $SD = 0$ ) on item 24, all five students participating in the Level 1 case study indicated strong agreement with the statement that they fear failing their language class. The students completed this questionnaire at the beginning of the semester, prior to experiencing much of their class and prior to receiving substantial teacher feedback on their English language performance. The students' responses to item 24 suggest that, at that stage, they were all concerned about their performance in the class.

In response to items 11, 15, and 27, four of five students in Level 1 indicated strong agreement (and thus high levels of anxiety or nervousness). For each of these items, a single student (a different student for each item) responded with "agree" instead of "strongly agree". These items address comparison of the students' classroom performance to the performance of their classmates (item 11) or other English speakers (item 27), and speaking in front of others (item 15).

**Table 4.3** AFLAQ items associated with lowest anxiety scores for Level 1

Item		Mean	SD
28.(R)	I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language.	1.20	.45
8.(R)	I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.	2.20	.84
5.	I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.	2.20	1.64
12.(R)	I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher.	2.40	.55
13.	I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class.	2.80	1.79

**Note.** Items marked with a “(R)” are reverse-coded; the mean scores associated with each item and presented in this table are after reverse-coding. These scores should be considered to suggest anxiety level, not level of agreement with the item as stated.

Of note is the fact that all three of the negatively worded items are among the five items with the lowest mean scores (after reverse coding) for students in Level 1. The questionnaire was presented in Arabic, the students' native language. However, the students probably have not completed many questionnaires, particularly questionnaires using reverse-coded items. The negative wording combined with the Likert response scale may have been difficult for the students to use, but this idea cannot be confirmed using the current data. Of note, however, is the fact that Maha is the only student who did not strongly agree with reverse-coded item 28(R), and she selected “agree”. Item 28(R) is very general, stating, “I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language.” Given the average moderate to very anxious scores these five students had on the AFLAQ, it is unlikely that they are generally not anxious in learning English (as indicated by their responses to item 28(R)). On the other hand, it may be the case that the students did not yet, at this stage, consider themselves to have a high general level of anxiety associated with learning English; they completed the questionnaire very early in the semester (during the second week) and had not yet attended the class routinely or developed feelings of anxiety associated with the learning of English in general.

On average, the students had a generally low score ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ) on item 5, “I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class”, but the responses were relatively variable as indicated by the standard deviation of the mean. These students were in Level 1, in only the second week of their classes. They did not have separate Listening and Speaking classes in high school, and so their ratings of their anxiety in their Listening and Speaking classes may be based on very little experience (the first two weeks of the English medium college class). The students may not yet have known what would be expected of them in their Listening and Speaking class, which

may contribute to the students not yet being anxious about the class. On the other hand, it may be the case that some students have adjusted to the new situation and expectations, but other students are still in the process of adapting and are experiencing relatively high anxiety as they cope with the new situation and expectations.

### **4.3 Level 1 Case Studies**

#### **4.3.1 Samaher**

When these case studies were conducted, Samaher was 19 years old and studying English in Level 1 of the CPP program. She earned a cumulative grade of a “B+” for the semester, the highest grade earned by any of the individuals in the cohort. As has been mentioned, Samaher reported having only a moderate level of anxiety, based on her questionnaire responses, related to studying English.

Samaher is Muslim, as are almost all students in the program, and grew up in Saudi Arabia. Samaher’s father is a businessman, owning restaurants in Jeddah, where the college is located. At the time of the case study, Samaher’s mother was attending college part-time and had about a year remaining until she would complete her degree in religious studies from a public university in Saudi Arabia. Samaher’s mother had studied history when she was younger, but she dropped out of her course of study at the time when she found out that she was pregnant with twins (Samaher, and Samaher’s twin brother). Samaher and her twin brother are the two oldest of six children (three girls and three boys, including Samaher and her brother).

I asked Samaher about her travel and other experience that might have allowed her opportunity to speak English. She indicated that her family had only travelled a few times in their lives – to Malaysia, Jordan, and parts of Saudi Arabia. When in Malaysia, Samaher did not speak English, but rather relied on her twin brother, who is in medical school and, according to Samaher, speaks English extremely well. Samaher was rarely or never in the position of going out on her own, because her father is very strict about having someone accompany and chaperone her especially during family travels. Samaher is always accompanied by her brother or her mother.

Prior to attending the English medium college, Samaher attended a private high school for three years. She then went on to complete college-level continuing education courses

at a different English medium college. Samaher's familiarity with the college atmosphere might be part of why her self-reported anxiety level was only moderate; being familiar with the environment might have allowed her to feel more comfortable at the college.

Samaher's responses to the questionnaire (see Appendix G) show a couple of patterns that might be useful in understanding her experiences. First, her responses to items 8(R) ("I am *not* nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates") and 26 ("I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students") are inconsistent. These two items address the same issue but differ in terms of whether the person is "not nervous" or is "anxious". Samaher indicated that she strongly agreed with the first statement (she is *not* nervous), and that she agreed with the second statement (she *is* anxious). Given other students' responses and given Samaher's responses to other items in the questionnaire, which generally suggest she experienced some anxiety in her English language studies, it is possible that Samaher did not respond to the reverse-coded item (item 8(R)) in a way that reflects her experience of nervousness and anxiety in speaking in front of classmates.

To further explore the possibility that Samaher may have responded accurately to the reverse-coded items, the other two reverse-coded items (items 12(R) and 28(R)) can be examined. Samaher indicated that she agreed with item 12(R) ("I feel *comfortable* in speaking with my foreign language teacher"), and that she strongly agreed with item 28(R) ("I *don't* feel anxious when learning a foreign language"). Samaher's responses to these items show a lack of anxiety or nervousness, as do her responses to items 4 and 8(R). Item 4 states, "I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class". Samaher's discussion of feeling low self-confidence when asking questions of her teacher, being afraid to talk, and asking questions in her Arabic class but not in her English class indicate that she does, indeed, fear speaking and asking questions of her teacher in her foreign language class. Her response to item 4 does not reflect this. In contrast, Samaher indicated she experiences nervousness, fear, and anxiety when speaking English through her responses to items 1, 2, 15, 17, 20, and 25 of the questionnaire.

Students with low anxiety have been observed to perform better and to earn higher final grades in their foreign language classes than students with high anxiety (Sparks & Ganschow, 1996). Samaher's performance (earning a "B+") and AFLAQ score

(moderate) are consistent with this pattern. Despite her earning a relatively good grade at the end of the semester, Samaher also expressed anxiety about grades, strongly agreeing with item 16 (“I get nervous when looking at my grades”) and item 24 (“I fear failing my foreign language class”). She ultimately performed relatively well in her Level 1 English classes and earned a “B+”. However, Samaher’s concern about grade-related evaluations is also evident in statements she made during group interviews (see Level 1/Excerpt 1, below). During the interview, other students mentioned speaking English and speaking into microphones making them anxious, but Samaher identifies her teacher as provoking anxiety. The teacher is not only an audience member who watches the students as they give presentations or speak in class, but she has power in the class. The teacher’s evaluation of each student’s performance matters, because their grades are based on her evaluation. Grades are a concern for Samaher, as indicated by her responses to item 16 of the AFLAQ, which addresses becoming nervous when looking at grades, and item 24, which addresses fear of failing the class.

**Group Interview  
Level 1/Excerpt 1**

**November 14, 2006**

1. **Hind:** For me, just seeing a microphone and hearing my voice out loud makes me anxious.
2. **Researcher:** What about you? [referring to the other students in the interview]
3. **Sabah:** We feel anxious in class activities because we are not used to speaking English out loud.
4. **Researcher:** But all of the students who are listening to your presentations are your classmates, and you all know each other...?
5. **Sabah:** Yes.
6. **Researcher:** Even though you have been friends for some time now...
7. **Hind:** For me, no.
8. **Samaher:** I get anxious because of the teacher.
9. **Researcher:** The teacher?
10. **Samaher:** Yes, she [the teacher] makes me anxious more than the other students in class.
11. **Researcher:** Why?
12. **Samaher:** Because she is in control of everything, for example, our grades.

Through the course of the semester, Samaher made progress in learning English and in taking part in class. When asked to describe herself during an interview at the end of the

semester (January 16, 2007), Samaher said, “I am normal. <pause> I like to depend on others a lot. <pause> This is what I see.” The college environment does not allow students to depend fully on others while simultaneously learning and thriving. In English class, for example, the students themselves must learn to speak and express their own thoughts. Samaher describes herself in a way that suggests she is in the process of adapting to these demands. She has begun to ask questions during class instead of relying on other students to ask the questions and get the information or clarification she needs. “Now, I am dependent on myself,” she states. However, her independence is still limited. When I asked her to further discuss the changes that she has gone through in becoming more independent and the reason or basis for those changes, Samaher said that, it

...could be because I became stronger in the English language. Before, in English classes I used to not ask the teacher questions, but in Arabic classes I ask questions myself...But now, I have more self confidence to format a question correctly in English...before I used to stutter when I spoke in English.

Samaher describes herself as stuttering when she spoke in English because she was afraid, even going on to say that it was as if she did not know how to talk (in English). Samaher’s description is similar to the behavioural symptoms of anxiety identified by a variety of researchers (e.g., Ehrman, 1996; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Ortega, 2009; Oxford, 2005; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; see Chapter I for discussion). According to the authors, these behaviours, if continued, may interfere with the language learning process. However, in Samaher’s case, her language learning appeared to improve throughout the course of the semester, and the behaviours that appeared anxiety-related decreased. For example, in comparing herself in the context of her English class and her Arabic class, Samaher suggested that she has become more confident in her ability to formulate questions in English and to ask the teacher questions. In the past, her anxiety and discomfort came out in her stuttering when she tried to speak in her English class. However, as time went on and she gained more experience with English, she became more confident and no longer stuttered when speaking in English. This change and language proficiency that Samaher went through throughout the semester not only gained her confidence to ask questions in class, but also she decreased her anxiety level by gaining control with her stuttering as well. Samaher’s response suggests that her self-confidence is related to the English language skills she gained through the course of the semester.

In an individual interview at the end of the semester (Level 1/Excerpt 2: Samaher, below), I asked Samaher how she thought she would handle transitioning to a different language context or learning environment. Her responses indicated that she thought she might become very quiet again, avoiding speaking in favour of listening.

**Individual Interview: Samaher**

**Level 1/Excerpt 2**

**January 16, 2007**

1. **Samaher:** I will go back to before.
2. **Researcher:** What do you mean?
3. **Samaher:** I stay silent until I get used to the students and the place... and then I start asking questions.
4. **Researcher:** Is this [tendency to be quiet in new situations and with new students] only in English learning or even in Arabic classes?
5. **Samaher:** No, in English only.
6. **Researcher:** In your opinion, what is the main cause of problems for you in EFL classes?
7. **Samaher:** Not good teachers.

Samaher did not elaborate any further on the topic of the teacher, instead returning to talk about a previous issue. The teacher may play an important role in Samaher's experience of class, but she never went on to elaborate what she meant when she said that some teachers were "not good teachers". She may not have been comfortable elaborating because she would have needed to be critical of teachers, who are generally respected in Saudi Arabian society.

In turn 3 of the above excerpt, Samaher refers to her tendency to stay quiet and hold back until she becomes familiar with new settings. After she becomes comfortable with the situation, she says that she will ask questions and participate. As shown in the interview passages discussed above, Samaher was able to identify clear areas of progress in her language learning over the course of the semester. In the past, she had avoided speaking, including having her brother communicate for her when using English in public. In general, she felt she lacked language skills, and English language skills in particular. However, over the course of the semester, Samaher felt she had gained the ability to formulate questions in class, though she still prefers that other students ask questions for her. In general, Samaher identified speaking in front of others, including both students and teachers, as another cause of anxiety.

Prior to enrolling in the English medium college's CPP, Samaher had studied English in a continuing education program at the English medium college. Samaher explained that she had been in the continuing education English program, which is not for credit and is not part of the CPP, when I asked her to talk about herself during an individual interview at the end of the semester. She did not specify how long she had studied in the continuing education program. She had not disclosed this on the initial anxiety questionnaire, which only asked about previous experience in the English medium college's CPP. As a result of taking part in the continuing education program, Samaher probably gained experience with the teaching methods used in the English medium college's CPP. This familiarity with the teaching methods and the English medium college itself may have helped Samaher (whose anxiety level assessed by the AFLAQ was moderate) to feel less anxiety in the CPP. Early on in the semester, Samaher displayed behaviours consistent with the symptoms of anxiety discussed by previous researchers (e.g., Ehrman, 1996; Oxford, 2005). Specifically, she stuttered when speaking and thus opted to stay quiet in class until she had, from her description, "more self confidence to format a question correctly in English." As the semester went on, Samaher's English language skills improved. She became more independent. She also became more accustomed to the learning environment and teaching methods used in this specific CPP. As noted above in Samaher's background experience, Samaher studied English in a continuing education program at a different English medium college. She then enrolled in the CPP in which I observed here, but she was placed in Level 1 despite her past experience. Based on the idea that students are more comfortable with teaching methods and situations that are familiar (e.g., Sparks & Ganschow, 1996; Young, 1991), Samaher's familiarity with the teaching methods used in the CPP (which may resemble the continuing education programs methods) might explain her AFLAQ score having been relatively low, in the "moderate" range. The AFLAQ was administered during the first few weeks of the semester, so students were not yet very familiar with the CPP itself, but Samaher might not have needed a lot of time to adjust, because she did not come directly from the traditional high school system to the CPP.

During interviews, Samaher also discussed the role teachers play in provoking anxiety in the classroom. Samaher's summary was similar to Young's (1991) work in which Young pointed out that instructor-learner interactions and classroom procedures have the potential to provoke anxiety for students. Similarly, Price (1991) also concluded that the instructor played a pivotal role in increasing or decreasing students' anxiety (see Chapter

II for discussion). Although Samaher's anxiety level was only moderate on the AFLAQ, she clearly identified her teachers as causing her anxiety in the classroom. For Samaher in particular, the interview methodology employed in this study was informative because it allowed Samaher to communicate information and concerns that would not have come up in the AFLAQ alone.

#### **4.3.2 Sabah**

When these case studies were conducted, Sabah was 18 years old and was also studying English in Level 1 of the CPP. Sabah was a self-pay, or tuition-paying, student, as are most students in Level 1. Relative to other Level 1 case study participants, Sabah had the second lowest anxiety score and the second highest grade (averaged across all classes for the semester, she received cumulative grade of a "B").

Both of Sabah's parents graduated from universities. Her father works in social science, and her mother is in a teacher preparation program. Sabah is one of six children; she is the fifth child and has only one younger sibling. Two of Sabah's older siblings graduated from public universities in Saudi Arabia. One now attends a Masters program in the US, and the other is currently in medical school in Saudi Arabia, where only English is used in instruction. Sabah attended a public high school before going to the English medium college's CPP. She had never had any English education outside of the public school system.

In responding to the questionnaire, Sabah indicated (see Appendix G) that she agreed with 15 of the 33 statements. Overall, her responses indicate that she is nervous or anxious about speaking in English. She indicates that she is not particularly nervous about reading/grammar class (see item 13) or about listening (item 5). This might indicate that Sabah is more comfortable with passive and listening-based tasks than active, production-based tasks, or that she is more comfortable with tasks that do not involve an audience or evaluation. During interviews, Sabah indicated that she does not try to speak English with her brother, with whom it would be possible for her to practice her English, but she does watch television in English. These are both consistent with her being uncomfortable speaking English (which she may avoid or simply not practice), but being more comfortable with listening (which she may practice by watching television). For the reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 18, which may, as I have explained, have been

problematic for other students), Sabah indicated her response as “Neither agree nor disagree”.

I interviewed Sabah with the other students from Level 1 and individually throughout the semester, then again at the end of the semester. During a group interview in the middle of the semester, Sabah indicated that she believed students experience anxiety for a combination of reasons, including both the subject matter itself and the teacher. Compared to the other students in her group interview, however, she talks more about frustration than anxiety.

**Group Interview  
Level 1/ Excerpt 3**

**November 7, 2006**

1. **Hind:** I feel that the teacher plays a leading role in making the students feel anxious or not anxious. For example, I get anxious quickly... Another example is that in the Listening and Speaking class, I don't get anxious; but in my Reading and Writing class, I feel very anxious. Therefore, I think anxiousness depends on each student's interaction with the teacher and the teacher's interaction with the student. This may increase or decrease the student's anxiety.
2. **Researcher:** And what do you all think?
3. **Maha:** I agree. The teacher plays a role in students' feeling anxiety or not.
4. **Researcher:** And what do you think about the subject? Doesn't the subject have an effect on the students?
5. **Maha:** The subject itself does not affect the students' feeling anxiety as much as the teacher herself.
6. **Sabah:** I feel that both of them together have an effect on the student.
7. **Researcher:** What do you mean by that?
8. **Maha:** The subject being studied could be easy; but if the teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson to the students, students begin to feel the anxiety... which will then lead the students' to lose their concentration in the lesson and the subject.
9. **Researcher:** Even though the subject is easy?
10. **Maha:** Yes.
11. **Researcher:** The way a subject is explained has an effect?
12. **Maha:** Probably.
13. **Hind:** The students get anxious when the teacher gets upset with them.
14. **Sabah:** There are some teachers who don't care a lot about the students. She [the teacher] just does her job by explaining the lessons only. But a lot of students get frustrated from this way of teaching.

At the end of the Level 1/Excerpt 3 interview segment, Sabah highlights the role of the teacher. Some teachers, she says, do not care a lot about the students. Those teachers deliver lessons. According to Sabah, this approach to teaching English is frustrating for many students. Overall, the topics of the teacher and teaching methodology are discussed more in this passage than the topics of the English language (the topic to be studied) or anxiety about speaking in front of audiences. However, in an interview one week later (see turn 3 of Level 1/Excerpt 1, presented in section 4.3.1 on Samaher), Sabah states – speaking in terms of “we” to suggest that she believes her statement is true for all of the students.

During our conversation at the end of the semester, Sabah explained that, from her perspective, her English skills are the same as when she entered the CPP. When I asked her what, if anything, she learned in Level 1, she said that she did not gain anything from the level. To follow-up on this issue, I asked Sabah if she thought that the teachers in the English program have anything to do with her not gaining benefit or learning through the classes. She did not answer my question directly, but started to say that she was not very good at English. She seemed to avoid talking about the teachers directly, but gave an example of a teaching method and said that she is not able to keep up with the memorisation tasks she is given in her classes. Sabah’s discussion of these teaching practices indicated two things. First, the teachers appear to be using traditional and memorisation-based teaching practices (discussed in Chapter I), despite being at the English medium college. Second, Sabah may be continuing the tradition of not criticizing her teacher, as is commonplace in Saudi Arabia; this tends to be less common in later levels of the CPP. During an interview (Level 1/Excerpt 4, below), Sabah discussed a fear of falling behind because she does not feel she is able to memorise the amount of vocabulary she is given, a concept that Garrett and Young (2009) have referred to as “overstuffing”. According to Garrett and Young (2009), this overstuffing can actually interfere with communication.

Sabah also mentioned in an interview that her teachers focus on writing, and that her English writing skills have improved over the course of the semester, contradicting her earlier statement that she did not gain anything in the semester. Sabah’s statement that she did not learn anything through the course of the semester may have been based on her feeling that her English pronunciation and comprehension, about which she was worried and which she felt she had no real opportunity to practice, had not improved.

**Individual Interview: Sabah**  
**Level 1/ Excerpt 4**

**January 24, 2007 (end of the semester)**

1. **Researcher:** In your opinion, is Level 1 where you should have been placed when you started the CPP, or do you feel that you should have been at a higher level than that?
2. **Sabah:** No. There are some things I felt I knew in this level, and other area in which I felt that I already knew more than what is being taught in this level.
3. **Researcher:** Do you mean there are things your [skill] level was above?
4. **Sabah:** Yes.
5. **Researcher:** But in general, what do you feel? Was this level your level or not?
6. **Sabah:** Honestly, this year I did not gain anything.
7. **Researcher:** Why do you say that?
8. **Sabah:** Because I feel that the language is not just reading and writing only... I feel there should be language practice, but there aren't any ways to practice...
9. **Researcher:** Do you mean outside of class?
10. **Sabah:** Yes.
11. **Researcher:** But isn't practising outside of class considered your responsibility?
12. **Sabah:** Even inside the class. There are 20 students, and the teacher has to explain the lesson...maximum a student can say two words in the class. For example, if there were an excellent student in class, then she may be able to memorise two words in a day as a maximum. I don't feel I gained anything.
13. **Researcher:** Do you mean that the class is big now, but if there were fewer students in it, you might learn more?
14. **Sabah:** Yes...could be...also...I don't know...I feel I didn't gain totally.
15. **Researcher:** Simply because the number of students is big?
16. **Sabah:** No, not only that. There are other negative things. For example, the teacher gives us two pages full of vocabulary, and in each page there are 24 words. I am supposed to memorise them, and learn their meanings in one day. This is very hard. And then the next day the teacher will give me another page of vocabulary. So, if I don't memorise the first one, I am done for.
17. **Researcher:** You mean that you may not be able to catch up?
18. **Sabah:** Yes.
19. **Researcher:** Ok... in your general opinion...you said that in class you are not gaining a lot, but does that only pertain to the Listening and Speaking class, or is it for all the other subjects?
20. **Sabah:** In all subjects.

...

21. **Researcher:** You said before that you did not gain a lot in all the subjects. Do the teachers have a role in this, or is it the subject matter wasn't challenging enough for you?
22. **Sabah:** No, the problem is not in the subject matter. Rather, my English skills are weak.
23. **Researcher:** Why? What is your role?
24. **Sabah:** I don't practice the language, either in class or outside of class.
25. **Researcher:** You mentioned that you have an older brother in medical school. You don't practice speaking English with him?
26. **Sabah:** No.
27. **Researcher:** At home, don't you watch some English movies that might help you practice?
28. **Sabah:** I have not gained anything since my high school days.
29. **Researcher:** So you watch some things in English?
30. **Sabah:** Yes.
31. **Researcher:** And this helps your abilities?
32. **Sabah:** Yes, but I find pronunciation difficult. This is the opposite of understanding. I might understand, but I find difficulties in pronunciation.
33. **Researcher:** What do you expect to get as a final grade for this semester: "A," "B," "C," or what?
34. **Sabah:** In the end of the semester?
35. **Researcher:** Yes.
36. **Sabah:** I may get a "B" because I see that an "A" is impossible to get.

Sabah has the opportunity to practice her English outside of the college by speaking with her brother, who attends a medical school taught entirely in English. When I asked Sabah if she practices speaking English with her brother, though, she said that no, she does not. Sabah does, however, watch television in English. So, she does not feel that she is learning anything in Level 1, but she also does not appear to be attempting to practice speaking English outside of the program (e.g., by talking to her brother).

As she predicted at the end of her interview, Sabah did manage to earn a "B" in Level 1. Her earning of such a high grade may be due to her using memorisation skills, necessary in most public school settings, in the English CPP. As Sabah stated, she viewed the class as requiring a lot of memorisation. My classroom observation of Level 1 was consistent with Sabah's view in that students in Level 1 were not required to interact as

actively. There were not many activities or in-class presentations, particularly compared to Level 3. Presentations became more common in Level 1 near the end of the semester.

Generally, Sabah indicates that she is anxious about speaking in English, and it appears that she also avoids practicing speaking in English. Sabah cites pronunciation as a challenge, indicates that she does not have the time or opportunity to practice speaking English inside or outside of class (even though she could practice with her brother), and has a history of depending on her brother to communicate on her behalf. Sabah may be avoiding speaking in English because she feels anxious and self-conscious about her pronunciation and her ability to communicate clearly in English. In contrast, Sabah indicates (through her responses to the AFLAQ) that she is relatively comfortable with more passive language tasks, such as listening tasks, and she also watches television in English. When asked about the source of her anxiety, Sabah indicated that she believed her anxiety was related to both individual teachers and the material covered in a class. Sabah's pointing to individual teachers and materials covered in class as anxiety-related is consistent with findings from Young (1991) and Price (1991), which indicated that the instructor plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for the class and making students feel anxious, and that changes of context, materials, and difficulty levels in a language class can provoke a great deal of anxiety.

In an interview, Sabah indicated that she believed she did not learn very much over the course of the semester. Although she indicated at the beginning of the semester (on the AFLAQ) that she feared failing the class, in an interview she accurately predicted that she would earn a "B" in the class, indicating an "A" would be unattainable. However, Sabah claimed that she knew a lot of the material and that her skill level was above her class level. Her primary concern or complaint was about pronunciation, which she could not practice in class, although she did not attempt to practice outside of class.

#### **4.3.3 Maha**

Extensive information about Maha's background, family, and previous educational experiences was not obtained because she dropped out of the program. Maha attended the classes at the beginning of the semester and also attended a couple of group interviews. After she had stopped attending classes, I conducted individual phone calls

with her, talked with her friends, and had the opportunity to talk with her private English tutor to learn more about her experiences in attempting to begin the English CPP.

Early in the program (in week 2), Maha completed the questionnaire (with the other students) to assess her anxiety level surrounding her English language studies. Maha's questionnaire score averaged 3.94, in the "anxious" category that ranged from 3.5 to 4.2, and so she was considered "anxious" and selected to participate in this study.

The majority of Maha's responses to items on the questionnaire are "strongly agree" and "agree" (see Appendix G). Items that stand out as different include item 5, which pertains to listening to spoken English as opposed to speaking; item 14, which addresses whether students are upset about the method of testing used in class; and item 20, which asks about the students' comfort in speaking English with unfamiliar people. Maha's responses indicate a relatively low level of anxiety associated with these situations, but they are exceptions and contrast with most of her other responses. Maha's responses to two other items (7 and 13) were neutral.

Maha's responses may have been based on a limited amount of experience with English and the CPP. The questionnaire was administered early on in the semester, and Maha stopped attending class about a month into the semester. Specifically, Maha's responses indicating a low level of anxiety when using English outside of class or with others might have been related to her very rarely being in the situation of using English outside of the classroom. In addition, because Maha dropped out of the program early in the semester, she never completed any formal language testing in the CPP.

Maha stands out from other students in Level 1 most strongly because she stopped attending class. However, before she stopped attending class, she took part in group interviews. In the first group interview, which took place on November 7, 2006, Maha says that she, too, is ill-prepared for studying English in the CPP. Maha goes on to criticise her high school English program, stating that it depended on memorisation instead of comprehension and also taught only a limited amount of information, which left students without an understanding of English.

**Group Interview  
Level 1/ Excerpt 5  
November 7, 2006**

1. **Hind:** I see that Maha is stronger than I am in English, and this is definitely because I used to study in Quran Recital school. And they used to not pay attention to English; they focused on other subjects. And when I was in year 12, our English curriculum was equivalent to level 9 English, which means that I am behind them by 3 levels.
2. **Maha:** Me too...because, when I was in high school, they [high school teachers] used to give us three sheets of paper to study. These papers have the information for the questions of the test. And sure enough, the exams come from the information on these papers. The students all the way from seventh grade to twelfth grade used to only memorise what's in these papers without understanding what these words mean. Therefore, all the students could not grasp the English language, for they were dependent on memorising and not understanding.

During the same group interview (see Level 1/Excerpt 3, presented in section 4.4.2. on Sabah), Maha went on to say that she believes that the teacher plays a large role in students' experiencing anxiety during English language classes. In Maha's view, the content and subject being studied does not provoke as much anxiety as the teacher herself does. To paraphrase Maha (turn 8, Level 1/Excerpt 3), she believes that anxiety begins when students do not understand a teacher's explanation of a concept or subject and the students begin to feel lost and confused. As stated above, Maha never attended an individual interview. She and I did not have time to sit together and discuss her situation, other than during the first and second group interviews.

One week after the group interview discussed above, on November 14, 2006, the Level 1 teacher came and sat next to me, talking softly to me about Maha. In my field notes for that conversation, I wrote that the teacher expressed concern about Maha and her performance in class. Specifically, in my field notes, I wrote:

*While the students prepared for the activity, the teacher talked to me about 2 students. The teacher talked about Maha and how weak she is in English. The teacher mentioned that every time there is a quiz she is absent or asks to be excused from class. The teacher has now become aware and said to me that she may be trying to prolong her evaluation so she can get better with her private tutor at home. The teacher asked Maha to drop the class and go to continuing education and take a semester of non-credit English there to get better and then come to the CPP, but she refused. Her excuse was that she wants to stay with the rest of her friends in the same class... The second student the teacher talked to me about was Zakia. The teacher said that Zakia was very shy, but she is getting*

*better now but still needs work. The teacher continued to say that these students are fresh out of high school and that they are not used to taking choices nor were they used to any of these activities that they are doing in class now. The teacher further elaborated that these students were used to being told what to do without any questions asked. The teacher ended the side conversation with me by mentioning an important observation which I noticed all along but was waiting for more time to observe if it continues throughout the semester. The teacher said to me look at the students and how they are dressed. According to her and what I observed, most of the students in the class were wearing their abayas (the black veil covering when going out in public places or on the street to cover from men) in the class and the college at all times. When the teacher asked them about why they wear the abaya inside the class or college when there are no men around, they say that they are cold. The teacher says that by the students' second semester in the college they become more confident and wear the abaya less frequently.*

One week later, on November 21, 2006, Maha looked as though she was not paying attention in class, and yet she had a very worried expression on her face. In my field notes, I wrote,

*I noticed that Maha didn't volunteer to participate at all during the listening to the tape activity. I should ask her:*

- *Did you understand the activity and what the people were saying on the tape?*
- *You looked nervous in class today. Does it have to do with the listening to the tape activity?*

For the entire class period that day, Maha never volunteered to answer any of the teacher's questions. Shortly thereafter, Maha stopped attending class. This caused concern, and one of Maha's teachers called her home to check on her. I asked Maha's friends from the course why she was no longer attending. They gave me her phone number, and I was able to contact and talk to her by phone. I suggested to Maha that she come to the college and to my office to talk, not to go to class, but she said that she could not, because she could not even enter the college. Maha's experiences (e.g., her heart pounding and racing when she came near the college, feeling she should not come into the college) and behaviours (e.g., failing to attend class) would likely be considered clear signs of anxiety based on previous research (e.g., Ehrman, 1996; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Ortega, 2009; Oxford, 2005; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986).

One of Maha's friends had stated that Maha believed her circumstance was what would literally translate from Arabic to English as a "bad eye." The concept might not translate

well, particularly across cultures. When an individual has a “bad eye,” it means that something negative is occurring for this person. In Maha’s situation, she believed that it might be the case that she was having negative experiences because other people were very envious of her attending a relatively prestigious, private English medium college. Maha’s friends or other people in her surroundings may have given her this “bad eye” or jinxed the college for her. Maha explained that she had met with an Islamic religious figure to read parts of the *Quran* with her in an attempt to remove the jinx. From the Islamic religious perspective, the *Quran* is a way of life and reading from the scriptures in the *Quran* can cure or remedy circumstances. (Even the prophet Mohammed is said to have had a “bad eye,” at some point, but it was later removed and then his life returned to normal.)

Maha stated that she had this jinx and so she could not attend classes and could not come to my office to talk about her circumstances. “No, you don’t understand,” she said (translated from Arabic), “I cannot step into this college.” When I asked her why, she described her experience of attempting to come to the college as follows:

The minute the driver [women do not drive in Saudi Arabia] pulls up to the college, I feel my chest is, my heart is pumping up so hard as if my heart was coming out of my chest. I start to panic. I can’t enter. I tell the driver to go around again, and then I tell him to take me back home.

Maha’s description of her severe, acute experience closely matches the description of the physiological experience of anxiety or fear (Oxford, 2005; Ehrman, 1996), as described in Chapter I. The description talks about having sweaty palms, a buzzing sound in one’s ears, and a racing heart. Maha has discussed these experiences, and they are so strong for her that they are prompted by coming near the college so that she will not even step inside the college. Maha insisted during our phone call that she wanted to continue in the CPP, but she could not.

Maha had good grades in high school, but she is not performing well in the college. According to Sparks and Ganschow’s (1996) Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (LCDH), skills in one’s native language provide the basic foundation for foreign language learning and are expected to predict performance in the foreign language. That was not the case for Maha. According to Maha, she performed well in high school, but she was not performing well in the English medium college. It may be that Maha was able to do well when asked to memorise text and learn through the Rote method, which

is common in high school, but that she had not adapted to the demands of the new college environment. Researchers (e.g., Price, 1991; Young, 1991) have also found that anxiety is provoked in language classes when simple, introductory topics are completed and more complex vocabulary and grammatical structures are introduced, often at a quickening pace. The CPP class was likely to have been introducing material faster and introducing more complex material than Maha encountered in high school, and the class may have become more difficult even in the first month of the semester that Maha attended. The new and challenging environment may have been anxiety-provoking for Maha, prompting her to drop out of the program.

According to her responses to the questionnaire, she fears failing her English class (item 24) and is anxious about looking at grades (item 16). Perhaps she wants to feel better prepared to study in the college, then return. Perhaps her fear of failure is too strong. These ideas, however, are simply conjecture. I offered to meet with Maha outside of the college, and she agreed to talk with me again, but Maha stopped answering her phone and I never saw her again and she did not, during the course of this research, return to the college.

Although I did not talk again with Maha herself, I did learn that she was working with a private English tutor at home. The head of the CPP department called me to her office so that I could talk with the tutor, who had come to the college to talk about Maha's situation. The tutor wanted to figure out a way to help Maha to return to the college and pursue her education. This meeting was spontaneous, and I did not request permission to take notes, so I only listened. According to the tutor, Maha is an intelligent student and wanted to continue in the program. The tutor indicated that Maha had excellent grades in Arabic high school, and referred to Maha's fear of coming to the college as strange and as a "phobia". According to Sparks and Ganschow's (1996) LCDH, native language skills provide the basic foundation for foreign language learning, which indicates that individuals with strong native language skills are likely to have those skills convey to their target language and facilitate their learning of a new language. Maha herself and Maha's tutor reported that she was a good student and earned good grades in her Arabic high school. Based on the LCDH, Maha would have been expected to perform better than she did in her foreign language learning. However, Maha appeared to have instead been overwhelmed by the language-learning experience (e.g., novel teaching methods,

challenging content), had very low confidence in her own abilities and experienced a very high level of anxiety such that she was unable to learn or to perform well.

During the course of the semester, Maha also mentioned that she might need to take a non-credit English course to improve her English skills before trying to re-register in Level 1 of the CPP. Although she did not say so, one potential reason to enrol in a non-credit-earning course would be to avoid failure in the actual English CPP, where grades and credit are assigned. Maha may have feared the possibility of failure and avoided taking part in the English CPP to avoid the possibility of performing poorly or failing. Anxiety has been discussed as associated with fear of failure by Ehrman (1996), who also suggested that being disappointed in one's performance in learning a new language can cause or provoke anxiety (see Chapter I for discussion).

In summary of Maha's language learning experience in the English medium college program, Maha indicated that she believed teachers cause language-related anxiety, but she also described herself as very behind and ill-prepared for the Level 1 coursework. Maha's description of her experience (e.g., her racing heart) is in line with the physiological symptoms of anxiety. Her response is acute and so strong as to be overwhelming for Maha. If Maha's experience were considered from the perspective of Oxford (2005), Maha would be said to be suffering language anxiety. Maha is also showing clear avoidance behaviour; she does not even want to enter the college environment. Furthermore, she is also suffering from fear of negative evaluation. Maha does not want to make mistakes in front of her classmates, nor in front of her teacher. She prefers to drop the entire class than perform poorly in class and feel foolish in front of her teacher and classmates, who she believes are more skilled than she in English which is a sign of competitiveness according to Bailey's diary studies (see Chapter II).

#### **4.3.4 Zakia**

Zakia was an 18-year-old student who had come to the English CPP from a private high school. She earned a cumulative grade of a "C+" for the semester. According to her self-report responses on the questionnaire completed at the beginning of the semester, she experienced higher anxiety than most of her classmates.

Zakia never clearly specified her father's level of education, but the implication was that he had attended college. He manages a youth centre, a job that typically requires a college education. Zakia's mother graduated from university and is currently a teacher of religious studies, teaching at a secondary school in Makkah.

Zakia has two half-brothers, both older than she is and from her father's previous marriage. She describes her relationship with them as not being very close. She also has one younger brother who is her full brother. Zakia's younger brother, at the time of the case study, was in the ninth grade at a private high school. When I asked Zakia if she practices speaking English with her younger brother, she explained that her brother makes fun of her for studying only in English.

In order to attend the college, Zakia was staying with her uncle (who lived in Jeddah), while her parents and younger brother live in Makkah, although it should be noted that she travelled back to Makkah every weekend to see her mother and father. Zakia felt lonely living away from her parents and misses them, but claimed that she does not let this feeling impact her studies. She planned to continue to study at the college, not to be hindered by the commute or other challenges, which suggested that she was dedicated and motivated to study in the program.

Zakia's responses to the questionnaire were primarily "strongly agree" and "agree" (see Appendix G). She responded "Neither agree nor disagree" to six of the 33 items, two of which were reverse-coded items 8(R) and 12(R). Zakia disagreed with only one item, number 5, indicating that she did not feel very anxious during listening tasks. She did not respond to item 6. Her average score on the 32 items to which she did respond is 4.16 (on a scale of 1 to 5), which was categorized as "anxious". Of note is Zakia's response to the reverse-coded item 28(R) ("I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language.), to which she responded "strongly agree". After reverse-scoring the item, Zakia scored only a one on that item. Item 28(R) was the only item on which she scored less than a "3". It may be the case that Zakia, like other students in Level 1, may have responded to the questionnaire items in a way that does not seem to reflect her actual experiences of anxiety and nervousness.

From Zakia's responses to the initial questionnaire, it was apparent that she experienced anxiety in a variety of situations, particularly when she needed to speak in front of the class or other audiences. During an in-class observation period on November 7, 2006, I

noticed that Zakia had difficulty responding when it came to be her turn and when the teacher asked her a question. Specifically, in my notes I wrote,

*I noticed that Zakia is super shy and everything she says in class is of agreement...I also recalled from the previous interview she was in agreement with the other participants and didn't add anything to the discussion... Zakia seems to be more of a listener than a speaker.*

- *Is this true in Arabic as well, or is it only when in English classes?*
- *I should ask her about her feelings when her turn came to answer in the class activity...*

After class, during our interview, I prompted Zakia to discuss issues I had observed in class. Zakia discussed her experience of attempting to participate (see Level 1/Excerpt 6, below).

**Group Interview  
Level 1/Excerpt 6**

**November 7, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** Zakia, when your turn came to answer the question in the class, what did you feel?
2. **Zakia:** I don't know. I felt that I knew what to say, but I forgot how to read.
3. **Researcher:** Even though it was in front of you, and you were the one that wrote it?
4. **Zakia:** Yes...but I forgot.

In Zakia's response, she indicates that she was overwhelmed with anxiety to the point that she forgets how to read the words in front of her – words written by her own hand not long ago. Oxford (2005) categorised not volunteering to participate in class and rarely speaking in class as avoidance behaviours stemming from FLA. However, Zakia said that she is quiet and rarely speaks in any of her classes – this behaviour is not limited to her English class. Her failure to participate may not be due to anxiety related to FLA, but to anxiety more generally (e.g., personal and interpersonal anxiety, Young, 1991). Dewaele (2007) has noted that individuals (such as Zakia) who are highly anxious when speaking in their first language tend to also be anxious when speaking in any additional (second, third, fourth) languages. These individuals exhibit stable trait anxiety (e.g., Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Spielberger, 1972; Spielberger & Vagg, 1995), at least in the specific context of speaking or public speaking, which may be in addition to anxiety prompted by the foreign language learning context.

During that interview, I asked Zakia if she is always calm and quiet, or if she is subdued in her English class, perhaps because it is her first semester in the program. Zakia answered,

No, this is me normally...especially when I talk...or when someone is listening to what I say...for I don't know how to talk.

It cannot be forgotten that, in addition to being foreign language learners, each student is an individual person who brings her own personality and individual differences to the classroom and the learning process. A week later (November 14, 2006), I observed the Level 1 course again. During the same conversation in which the teacher expressed concern about Maha (discussed in section 4.3.3), the teacher mentioned concern about Zakia. She described Zakia as being very shy. Zakia had recently begun to contribute more in the class, but she still needed to work harder.

The following week, I observed Zakia in class again and I noted that she did not voluntarily participate. In my field notes, I wrote

*I noticed that Zakia did not volunteer to answer any of the question, but the teacher called on her suddenly. I should ask her:*

*How did you feel when the teacher all of a sudden called on you to answer the question?*

In Excerpt 6 (above) from November 7, 2006, Zakia's responded to this question, indicating that she knew what to say but she forgot how to read. According to previous research (e.g., Ehrman, 1996; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Ortega, 2009; Oxford, 2005; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986), this could be manifestation of FLA.

Looking back at her questionnaire, it appears that being put on the spot and required to speak provokes anxiety for Zakia. Specifically, Zakia indicated that she feels anxious when the teacher asks her questions she is not prepared to answer (item 2, strongly agree) and even trembles when she might be called on in class (item 19), fears speaking to her teacher in class (item 4, strongly agree), is anxious about speaking in front of other students outside of her class (item 15, strongly agree; item 26, strongly agree), gets nervous and confused speaking in class (item 17, strongly agree) and even forgets things that she knows (item 29, agree).

At the end of the semester (on January 16, 2007), I talked with Zakia about her experiences over the course of the semester and how they had affected her. I asked her if she felt that she (e.g., her personality) was any different than when she started college, or if she felt she was the same as before she had attended the college. Zakia said that she was normal, but that she did feel as though she were different from when she started at the college. She could not say precisely how she was different. On the first day of college, she said, she was scared. But, through the course of the semester she got used to the other students and her fear faded. Zakia may be more comfortable with her classes and the CPP because, as Horwitz (2001) indicated, novel situations and methods prompt anxiety more than familiar situations. By the end of the semester, the CPP was familiar for Zakia and thus less anxiety-provoking.

**Individual Interview: Zakia**  
**Level 1/ Excerpt 7**

**January 16, 2007 (end of the semester)**

1. **Researcher:** Do you now feel more comfortable in class?
2. **Zakia:** Yes.
3. **Researcher:** Are you more outgoing now compared to the beginning of the semester where you say you were shy and anxious?
4. **Zakia:** Yes, but I am still anxious, but... I don't speak straight away. I listen at first until I know all my classmates and their style. Then I can deal with each student according to her own way: what makes her at ease or upset, and her way of talking.

In her discussion of her hesitance to speak before she is familiar with the other students in her class, Zakia indicated that she makes the effort to stay on her classmates' good side, to please them and to not upset them (turn 4 of Level1/Excerpt 7, above). Zakia keeps quiet until she knows other people in a group, a sign of being reserved.

#### **4.3.5 Hind**

Hind was an 18-year-old student from a fairly well-educated and middle class family in Saudi Arabia. Prior to coming to the college, Hind attended a public high school. Based on the self-report questionnaire assessment of anxiety, Hind was the most anxious student to take part in the case studies. Hind earned a cumulative grade of a "C+" for the semester.

Hind's father works as a civil engineer and had his own company. To run the company, he generally works two shifts. He works in the morning, comes home for lunch with the family, and then returns to work in the evening. Hind's mother graduated college and begun working towards a Ph.D., but did not complete the degree. She works as a lecturer at a university. With both parents' careers, they are busy and Hind and her siblings have been raised to be rather independent.

The family includes six children, all of whom are girls. Hind is the third child. All of the daughters are relatively independent and are helpful and supportive of their mother. One of Hind's two older sisters has graduated from the public university at which their mother teaches; she is now married and has a daughter of her own. Hind's other older sister is currently completing her last year at a public university. Hind is the only daughter in the family to attend a private English medium college. The other three siblings are all younger and are in elementary and secondary school.

One of Hind's younger sisters had attended a public high school with Hind. However, their mother transferred Hind's sister to a private school. According to Hind, in the public school she had English lessons two to three times per week, and in the private school her sister has English lessons once or twice every day. When asked to compare her and her younger sisters' English skills, Hind said that she was not sure how they compare because her younger sisters are now in private schools and Hind was not with them. She might not have felt familiar with their language skills. Hind indicated that her older sisters are very skilled in English, but both had attended public universities. She emphasized that their English language skills were far superior to her own. She believed that her older sisters were skilled in English because they had a love for the language.

There is a general conception in Saudi Arabia that students who attend private universities did not earn high enough grades (in high school) to gain entry to the public universities. Hind clarified that she earned good grades in high school and had been accepted to the public university. She had chosen to study at the private English medium college because she wanted to study interior design, which is not offered at the public universities. Hind also has a cousin who is attending the private college, though the cousin is in a very different field of study than Hind plans to pursue.

All of the children in Hind's family are girls, which is unusual. Traditionally, male children are preferred because they carry on the family name. Having at least one boy in

the family is generally expected and is considered normal. I asked Hind if her parents tried to have a boy and what the family's attitude was about having only daughters. Hind explained that her mother had asked Hind if she would prefer to have a brother in the family. Did Hind want a brother? Hind reported that she did not think about it, and that she is comfortable with her family as it is. She even expressed concern that if she had an older brother, the older brother might be authoritative or controlling of Hind and her sisters.

Hind emphasized that she and her sisters were raised to be independent, and that her father encouraged them to be independent. For example, if Hind wanted to go to Makkah for Umrah (i.e., for religious practice), she could go by herself. Hind was allowed and encouraged to choose her own hotel, make phone calls and reservations on her own, and so on. This is unusual, because in many traditions in Saudi Arabia women are discouraged from speaking with men outside their families, but more progressive families (such as Hind's) do not discourage such interaction. The daughters in Hind's family, however, are not restrained from talking to people on the phone or from talking to strangers in person. As a second example, Hind indicated that if she or her sisters need to go to a clinic (e.g., to receive mandatory vaccinations), they are encouraged to do so on their own. The family does not require that their mother or a male family member accompanies the sisters. In Hind's words, translated from Arabic, "I don't need a boy to accompany me; I feel relaxed." Throughout her description of her family, the concept of her feeling relaxed comes up; being independent is normal for Hind and her sisters. Hind indicates that she likes being self-reliant and that she feels self-confident because she can do things for herself.

Some individuals gain English experience through travelling and studying abroad, and so I inquired as to Hind's travels. She said that she and her family have only travelled within Arabic-speaking countries (e.g., Egypt, Jordan) and that they have not travelled recently because Hind's grandfather has been ill, requiring the family to stay in Saudi Arabia to take care of him.

At the time of the interview, Hind was planning to travel abroad so that she could practice her English in an English-speaking country. One of Hind's female cousins had been given a scholarship to study her medical specialization in Canada. The cousin had invited Hind to come to visit in Canada so that Hind could work on her English. Hind was planning to go to Canada in summer of 2007.

Hind's average score on the questionnaire was 4.30. To receive this score, she indicated that she strongly agreed or agreed with most of the items on the questionnaire (see Appendix G). As exceptions, she indicated that she strongly disagreed with that statement that using English outside of the college provoked anxiety (item 7) and that she disagreed with the statement that having a large number of students in the class caused her anxiety (item 10).

Like some of the other Level 1 students who took part in case studies, Hind's responses to the reverse-coded items also stood out. Hind indicated that she agreed with reverse-coded items 8(R) ("I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates") and 12(R) ("I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher") and that she strongly agreed with reverse-coded item 28(R) ("I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language"). When these reverse-coded items and Hind's responses are interpreted, they indicate that Hind says she is not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of her classmates, she is not nervous speaking with her EFL teacher, and she is not anxious learning the foreign language in general. However, these responses contradict Hind's overall pattern of responses in the questionnaire and directly contradict specific responses. For example, Hind's agreement to item 8(R) (her endorsement of the statement that she is not nervous speaking English in front of her classmates), contradicts her response to item 26 ("I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students"), to which Hind strongly agreed. That is, in item 8(R) Hind indicated that she was not nervous speaking in front of her classmates, and in item 26 she indicated that she is anxious speaking in front of other students. Hind may have had difficulty interpreting and using the Likert response scale to respond to the negatively worded items, and so her responses to the reverse-coded items may not accurately reflect her experience of anxiety in the classroom or in learning English.

Hind spoke frequently, communicating her perspectives on her English studies during group interviews. As might be expected based on Hind's having attended a public high school and spent relatively little time studying English (i.e., compared to her younger sister who is now in a private high school), Hind felt that she was not adequately prepared for the English CPP and that she was behind. Specifically, Hind said,

I see that Maha is stronger than I am in English, and this is definitely because I used to study in Quran Recital school. And they used to not pay attention to English; they focused on other subjects. And when I was in year 12, our English

curriculum was equivalent to level 9 English, which means that I am behind them by 3 levels.

As can be seen in the exchange between Hind and Maha (Level 1/Excerpt 5, presented in section 4.3.3 on Maha), Hind is not alone in feeling that she is behind in her English studies. In her 1979 diary studies (see discussion of Seliger & Long, 1983, in Chapter II), Bailey might have identified Hind's statement as an indicator for competitiveness, because Hind is comparing her performance to that of other students, and Young (1991) might have suggested that the competitiveness is a source of anxiety for Hind. Hind, however, continued to attend the program through the entire semester and completed Level 1 with a grade of "C+", but Maha (as discussed above) appeared to be overwhelmed with the situation and stopped attending. Although there are no data to speak specifically to this issue, it appeared to me that Hind was highly motivated to succeed in Level 1. Hind may have been motivated to succeed because of parental influence or by a desire to live up to her parents' expectations for her – her parents are high achievers and very active. In a study of Chinese participants, Yan and Horwitz (2008) identified concern over meeting parents' expectations as a cause of anxiety for students. Also, the fees required to attend the English medium college must be taken into consideration. As discussed above, Maha had mentioned that she might need to take non-credit English courses to improve her English skills. From a financial perspective, Hind could not afford to repeat Level 1, which may have pushed her to work even harder. In addition, as already explained, Hind has a very strong and assertive personality. She was one of many children but had no brothers, and had a history – along with her sisters – of being independent, taking charge of her own needs and life, and of being successful in doing so. Hind may have had the past experience of overcoming challenges and adversity on her own, from dealing with day to day challenges, to meet the challenges of the English CPP.

In the same group interview on November 7, 2006, Hind readily discussed feeling anxious associated with class. From her perspective, the teacher was a large determining factor for how anxious students felt in each class. For example, Hind claimed that students become anxious when their teachers become upset with them. Despite the fact that speaking tends to be the most anxiety-provoking task (as also indicated by responses to the questionnaire used in these case studies), Hind claimed to feel anxious only in her reading and writing class, saying,

I feel that the teacher plays a leading role in making the students feel anxious or not anxious. For example, I feel anxious quickly. For example, in the listening and speaking class I do not feel anxious; but in my reading and writing, I feel very anxious. Therefore, I see that it depends on each student's interaction with the teacher and the teacher's interaction with the student which may increase or decrease the anxiety.

When exploring the way she feels in each of her classes and comparing what is expected of her in the classes, Hind discussed student involvement and expectations. She stated that in her Listening and Speaking class, she is “energetic because the class depends on activities and movement instead of sitting down in one place, which makes me feel sleepy, depressed, and discouraged.” Hind likes the Listening and Speaking classes because they are different from other classes she has taken and they break up the routine to which she is accustomed; the more traditional and physically sedentary classes are less engaging for Hind. Students with higher levels of anxiety (such as Hind) have been found to show lower levels of achievement, and students with lower levels of anxiety have been found to show greater achievement (e.g., Batumlu & Erden, 2007). However, Batumlu and Erden (2007) also found that language learning anxiety early on in a class did not predict later achievement.

Based on her self-report responses to the AFLAQ, Hind appears to be an anxious language learner. Interviews and observations also reveal her to be extremely highly motivated and independent. Indeed, Hind earned the highest anxiety score of all participants from Level 1. However, based on her description of herself in an interview, Hind feels independent and confident; her confidence is fostered by her parents' tendency to encourage all of their children – six girls – to go out into society and do things for themselves. Although the college environment was new for Hind, who was in her first semester, the experience of going into a new situation on her own may not have been new. She may have begun the semester feeling out of place, as suggested in her discussion of comparing her own language skills to Maha's and to other students' (a potential sign of competitiveness and cause of anxiety), but she worked to adapt to the new situation, and she was ultimately successful. Hind forced herself to catch up with her classmates, showing a level of motivation and perseverance that may be predictive of success. Ultimately, Hind was successful in passing Level 1, earning a cumulative grade of a “C+”.

Unlike some students, who have attributed students' anxiety to teachers alone, Hind suggested that anxiety stems from student-teacher interactions and dynamics within the classroom setting. In stating that students play a role in the student-teacher dynamic and in describing herself as many levels behind the Level 1 English course in which she was enrolled, Hind takes partial responsibility for her own experiences in the class. She also claims, however, that her previous school did not prepare her to study English at the level expected in Level 1 of the CPP. Consistent with Hind's being independent and motivated, although she claims to have little past experience with English and little travel experience, Hind was planning to travel to Canada the summer following this study so that she could stay with her cousin and practice her English. Knowing that she would be travelling to Canada might serve as an additional motivator to push Hind in her English language studies.

#### **4.4 Discussion of Level 1**

In this chapter, each student's anxiety score on the AFLAQ, formal classroom observations, field notes, individual interviews, and group interviews were brought together to gain a better understanding of each of the five Level 1 participants individually. Drawing on all five participants, a variety of anxiety-provoking situations and factors were discussed and experienced through the course of the semester at the English medium college. Samaher identified speaking in front of the teacher and students in the class, being unfamiliar with the different methods used in class, instructor-learner interaction, and concern over grades as sources of anxiety. Sabah stated that the primary anxiety-provoking issues she faced were related to the teacher, the topic being studied, and speaking in English. For Maha, anxiety was provoked by teachers, challenging topics and content, poor preparation from high school, different teaching methods, and competitiveness. Zakia complained about being called upon to answer questions, the teacher, and being familiar with the students in class. Hind's responses and behaviour indicated that her anxiety stemmed from the teacher-student interactions, the teacher's style, competitiveness, and specific topics (e.g., Reading and Writing class).

Students often identified the teacher as a source or cause of anxiety. With the exception of Hind, who compared herself to Maha, the students did not often discuss comparisons of their performance with that of other students (i.e., competitiveness). Furthermore,

none of the participants mentioned being concerned or anxious about speaking with native language speakers.

Cultural differences between teachers and students have been identified alongside teaching methods as sources of anxiety for students in a previous study of Chinese students working with teachers from the West (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). In Yan and Horwitz's study and in the current study, some teachers were from the students' country and some were from the West, but all of the teachers used teaching methods developed in and imported from the West. The students in Yan and Horwitz's study were described as being shocked by the new teaching methods and the style of interaction within the classroom. Similarly, students in the case studies I have reported here indicated that the student-teacher interactions were different from what they expected within the classroom context. Although some of the teachers in the CPP are from America and others are from Arab countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Lebanon), all utilize Western teaching methods (e.g., group projects instead of only individual work, in-class presentations) that are very dissimilar from those used in Saudi high schools. Unfortunately, the reason that the interactions were in contrast to students' expectations in the current study cannot be determined. Students could have had unrealistic expectations, teachers may have simply used teaching methods that were unfamiliar, or teachers' might have behaved in ways that were atypical within the Saudi Arabian culture. Based on the current study and Yan and Horwitz's (2008) research, the potential impact of having teachers from unfamiliar cultures and the potential discomfort caused by having social norms violated within the classroom warrants further research.

In this chapter, I examined the nature of FLA in case study participants from Level 1 of the CPP. I gathered information about students' experiences from individual and group interviews, self-reports on the AFLAQ, and through field notes on classroom observations to better understand the participants and the difficulties they experienced as they attempted to learn the foreign language. Some of these anxiety-provoking situations were severe. In the case of Maha, the foreign language experience was so stressful and negative that she eventually dropped out of the program. Other students showed avoidance behaviours (e.g., skipping class on test days). The participants talked about the negative consequences of their actions, but appeared unable to stop engaging in avoidance behaviours and other behaviours that interfered with their learning. For example, Zakia knew that she needed to participate in class and interact with the students

in order to get better grades, but still failed to participate in class at the beginning of the semester. Later on in the semester, once Zakia was familiar with her classmates, she began to participate more.

The findings and summaries of students' candid discussions about their language learning experiences can be used to educate both novice and experienced language teachers in Saudi Arabia by making them aware of the problems that their students face in modern classrooms.

In Chapter V, the five Level 3 participants who took part in the Level 3 case study will be examined. The structure and procedures used in Chapter V are identical to those in the current chapter. In Chapter VI, the Level 1 case study and the Level 3 case study will be brought together, compared, and discussed in the context of the existing research literature.

## *Chapter V*

### *Level 3 students*

#### **5.1 Introduction**

As with students in Level 1, the perspectives and performance of each student learning English in Level 3 of the CPP cannot be fully understood without taking the broader context into account. How do the Level 3 courses differ from the Level 1 courses? The English medium college’s structure and operations, and the English program, were presented in Chapter IV. In the current chapter, the student cohort in section 1 of Level 3 is first described using a brief, impressionistic description. The chapter is structured to be parallel to Chapter IV, thus easing comparison of students in the two levels. In the current chapter, an informal description of Level 3 is presented, followed by case study information gathered from questionnaires, observations, and interviews with students in Level 3 and organized by individual student. The current chapter concludes with a comparison of students in Level 1 and students in Level 3.

#### **5.2 Level 3 Overview**

The case studies in Level 3 focused on five students in a single section (section 1) of Level 3, a class of 17 registered students with 16 attending students. Of the 17 students in section 1 of Level 3, one student received an “incomplete”; two students were administratively dropped for failure to attend class (“DN”); and one student received no grade, indicating that she failed to attend class but did not officially drop the class. A total of three students, all of whom were participants in the case studies discussed below, failed Level 3. Ten students passed Level 3 to move on to Level 4 and/or received a grade of 480 or higher on the TOEFL; those students who received a TOEFL score of 480 or higher were permitted to enrol in the English medium college’s main program for the next semester and were not required to progress through Level 4 of the CPP.

Typically, students in Level 3 pay tuition, but some of the students have full or partial scholarships. Students are rarely placed directly into Level 3 from high school unless

they come from a very high calibre high schools that concentrate on English more than the government schools do.

Some of the students in Level 3 were persuaded or pressured to attend college by their parents; these students were typically somewhat proficient in English because they were familiar with an English-speaking environment, either from travelling, communicating with English-speaking nannies, or via contact with English language media. The socio-economic status of most of the students was upper middle class; their parents were relatively wealthy, well-educated, liberal-minded, and well-travelled. Furthermore, their parents had a strong expectation that their daughters would be like them. However, typically students whose parents pushed them to attend the program had picked up on English casually, not studied it. The students' informal English acquisition was evident because they were able to speak English but did not have the ability to express their thoughts in writing, a skill typically studied in the academic setting.

I chose participants randomly from the group of Level 3 students who received relatively moderate to high scores on the AFLAQ, but I found that the students were familiar with one another because they had been in previous levels of the CPP together. Six students from section 1 of Level 3 qualified to participate in the study, and five were selected. In the classroom and around the university, I saw all six of these students together. It appeared that they acted as a support group for each other. They were together outside of class, in class, and they worked on collaborative projects together. The students were very friendly with each other, and it sometimes felt as though they treated me as part of their alliance. They were friendly towards me and invited me to join them socially on occasion as well (see field note, below).

*The students came to me in my office and asked if they can do the individual interviews because their teacher had to cancel class and they wanted to go outside the college for a bite to eat and then come back for the afternoon class. They even asked me to come with them and have a bite! They were very talkative and wanted to talk about their classes...*

Overall, based on my observations in and out of the classroom and from interviews, students in Level 3 seemed to be more confident than students in Level 1. They seemed to think of themselves as almost into the college rather than in the English CPP, and they felt as though they could socialise and chat with the students who were in the English medium college (not only in the CPP). The students in Level 3 appeared to be trying to

blend in with the mainstream college students. This was apparent from their manner of dress, their social interactions, and how they mixed freely with the college-level students who had already completed or did not need to go through the CPP. The women in Level 3 generally wore Western clothes within the college and always appeared relaxed and confident in their Western attire and hairstyles.

The women in section 1 of Level 3 were unofficially further divided into two social subgroups. One group appeared to be a higher status in-crowd. These students had been placed directly into Level 3 upon entering the college. They were marked by their wearing fashionable designer clothes and their skill level with spoken English was superior to that of other students in Level 3. Although their skills in speaking English were apparent, their grades were lower than might be expected. Their grades may have been negatively impacted by lower proficiency in written English, and difficulty with written English may be the reason they were placed in Level 3 instead of a higher level. This in-group consisted of girls who were self-confident almost to the point of being arrogant. Furthermore, the group had an obvious leader, who, in turn, had a sidekick. This group constantly disrupted the class and interfered with the other students' learning experiences. Many of their teachers felt intimidated by the women in the in-group, except for the listening and speaking teacher who frequently utilised class time to socialise with members of this group rather than to teach subject matter to the class.

For example, during a classroom observation period, I witnessed the teacher asking the students to meet her at the college forecourt, where they could talk and socialise with other students. The teacher used class time for this, explaining that it was a less formal way for students to learn. The students could practice speaking English and the teacher could support the students in developing their language skills by facilitating their use of language outside the classroom. Using English outside the classroom affords the advantage of making English language skills relevant to the real world. The first time the teacher suggested the class go to the courtyard to practice their language and socialise, I went with them so as to continue my observation period. In the courtyard, the teacher and students played the game "Truth or Dare". The students attempted to speak only in English, but did not use English at all times.

On the day of my second planned classroom observation for Level 3, I went to the classroom but found that no one was there. I ran into Sara, a student participating in the

case studies, in the hallway. I asked Sara why the classroom was empty and what the plans for the class period were. She said that the class had been cancelled, but that no one had notified her in advance, so she had come to the college. Other students (a subset of the students in the class, primarily those identified below as “The Group”) had received a text message from the teacher, informing them that the class was cancelled, and so they had not come to campus. Later, the Level 3 teacher explained to the CPP director that the students were working on a class project (although no project had been assigned) and that the students needed time (which they gained when the class was cancelled) to finish the project. Although I was not aware of any projects the Level 3 students were working on at the time, I did not contest the teacher’s report to the CPP director; I was an outside observer and did not want to interfere with their learning or impact the teacher’s behaviour.

Not all of the students in Level 3 were open to the Westernised culture within the college or assertive within the English language classroom. The out-group included six girls who were more modest in dress and behaviour. These students appeared shy and did not socialize with other students except those in their own level. In this quieter group, some of these students were familiar with each other and had studied together in Level 2. Although not certain, it is likely that these more conservative students came from more traditional families, perhaps families that were not upper middle class, were not as wealthy and influential as the families of other students in the college. Their families may not have been as well-travelled and were almost certainly not as liberal as the families of other students. These students did not interact as well as others in class because they were shy and appeared fearful of being negatively evaluated. All of these factors might explain the behaviour of this shyer group, but resistance to or rejection of the Western values might also have been present.

The women in the out-group were not as confident in their spoken English as the women in the in-crowd. They were, however, genuinely concerned about their education. Women belonging to the out-group constantly complained about the in-crowd disrupting lessons by having conversations amongst themselves and unrelated to the class topic, and even occasionally singing in class. During individual and group interviews, the out-group discussed complaints that they were not being taught enough during their listening and speaking class due to interruptions from their classmates.

During classroom observations, some of the interactions between students in the in-group and the out-group drew attention to the groups. For example, during classroom observation I saw students from the in-group chatting about topics not related to the class, thus excluding the other students. In my field notes, I also included the following brief description of a social interaction that took place in class on November 14, 2006. In these notes, the term “The Group” refers to the in-group, a specific group of students in the class who tended to form a social clique throughout the semester.

*‘The Group’ is sticking together and doesn’t want to be split-up... when one of my participants asked one of the members of ‘The Group’ to join them in their team, the member of ‘The Group’ refused impolitely and turned to join her usual ‘Group’ team.*

It may be that the out-group student, one of my case study participants, wanted to be part of “The Group”. A desire to join with the group might have motivated the student’s asking one of the in-group or popular students to be her partner for the project, or she may have had other reasons. The case study participant was not forced or under any pressure to suggest anyone to work with her on the project; the teacher allowed the students to choose their groups for the class project.

In addition to the differences in social cohesion among students in Level 1 (who were close and operated as one large group) and Level 3 (who were socially subdivided into two groups), the levels had other differences. Level 3 students’ attitudes towards class, the teacher, and learning were very different from Level 1 students’ attitudes. In Level 3, it was very rare for a student to be a passive learner and not actively participate in class, with the exception of the students forced by their parents to attend college. Level 3 students were very assertive in class. During English classes, Level 3 students seemed more certain of what they wanted, and they gave suggestions about how they want it to be delivered. For example, one student (Youssra) conveyed to me that she wanted the teacher to give the students printed copies of the questions that the teacher would ask following listening tasks. Specifically, the class would listen to a taped conversation, and then the teacher would ask questions about what had been said in the conversation. Youssra wanted copies of the questions ahead of time so that she could figure out what topics or parts of the conversation to focus on. Furthermore, Level 3 students regularly appeared to be bargaining with their teacher to get the teacher to give in to their requests. For example, these students would plead with the teacher to reschedule deadlines and

give them more time for the preparation of presentations. The students would also argue with the teacher to prove a point. This pattern of interaction was never observed in Level 1 students.

The students I observed were in section 1 of Level 3, which consisted primarily of students who had come from private high schools or transferred from another English medium college. Three of the students who participated in case studies for Level 3 were Saudi Arabian; one student (Noura) was from Yemen, and the father of one student (Tamara) was Turkish and lived in Turkey, though her mother (with whom she lived and with whom she identified) was Saudi Arabian.

Like the Level 1 students, the subset of students from Level 3 who took part in case studies were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity; the pseudonyms adopted for these students are Noura, Sara, Tamara, Youssra, and Farida. The basic information about these case study participants is presented in Table 5.1, each pseudonym appears alongside the student's age, whether she attended a public or private high school, questionnaire outcomes (e.g., anxiety levels), and class outcomes (e.g., grades). Of the five case studies from Level 3, the average questionnaire score was 3.61 ( $SD = .83$ ) on a scale ranging from one to five (slightly lower than the average for case study participants from Level 1, though still in the "anxious" category). Of the Level 3 case studies, Noura had the lowest questionnaire score (3.15, or "moderate anxiety" or "moderately anxious") and Farida had the highest (3.88, or "anxious"). The lowest average score for Level 1 was the same as that for Level 3 (3.15), but the highest score for Level 1 (4.30) was higher than for Level 3 (3.88).

All of the individuals involved in case studies in Level 3 had attended private high schools before attending the English medium college; two of these students (Noura and Youssra) had attended the same private high school. It is noteworthy, however, that Noura and Youssra did not go through the CPP together. Youssra began the program one semester before Noura and Youssra had been in the program for one semester longer than Noura at the time of the current study. In Table 5.1, below, these schools are listed as "public" or "private" high schools; to protect the anonymity of the students who took part in the study, the specific names of the schools are not disclosed. All of the Level 3 students who were in my case studies had also participated in Level 2 of the CPP program, thus meeting the case study requirement of being familiar with the CPP by having gone through at least one previous semester of the CPP.

**Table 5.1** Level 3 participant information

Pseudonym	Age	Previous education	Past CPP semesters	Mean	Category	Final grade	Notes
Noura	19	<u>Private</u>	1	3.15	Moderate	Failed	Attended same private high school as Youssra.
Tamara	19	Private	2	3.58	Anxious	C	
Sara	19	Private	1	3.61	Anxious	B	
Youssra	19	<u>Private</u>	2	3.85	Anxious	Failed	Attended same private high school as Noura.
Farida	18	Private	2	3.88	Anxious	Failed	

**Note:** All schools are unique private high schools, as indicated, except those that are underlined; the underlined listings refer to a single private school that had been attended by two students.

Each individual's questionnaire score is discussed in conjunction with other information about the student's experience in learning English in the individual case studies, below. First, however, the average scores for items that stand out are examined. Which questionnaire scores for case study participants in Level 3 stand out? The items associated with the highest and lowest mean scores are presented below.

**Table 5.2** AFLAQ items associated with highest anxiety scores for Level 3

Item	Mean	SD
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	5.00	.00
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	4.80	.45
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	4.80	.45
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	4.60	.55
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	4.40	.89
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	4.40	.89
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	4.40	.89

All five students taking part in the Level 3 case study indicated that they strongly agreed with item 21, “I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.” The responses of students in Level 3 may be related to the fact that all of them had at least one semester prior to the current semester in the CPP, and so they were likely basing their responses on previous experience in the CPP. The students may consider the high expectations and the demands in their classes and find these anxiety-provoking.

In response to both items 1 and 24, four of the five students in Level 3 said “agree”, and one said “strongly agree”. Item 1 addresses expressing ideas in the target language, and item 24 (the most strongly endorsed item for students in the Level 1 case study) addresses the issue of failing the course. These questions address the primary challenges that all of the students face. They must learn to express themselves in the foreign language and demonstrate adequate skills to move to the next level in and graduate from the CPP so that they can move on to the mainstream college.

Of note when looking at the items associated with the lowest average scores for students in the Level 3 case study is that many of these items (see Table 5.3) have a mean of 2.40 (items 9 and 20) or 2.80 (items 7, 17, 23, 25, 26, and 28(R)). On the Likert response scale that ranged from one to five, a middle (neutral) score would be three. Six of the items presented in Table 5.3, those with a mean of 2.80, have means close to neutral. The lowest average score was 2.20 ( $SD = .45$ ) on a reverse-coded item, “I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates”. The mean score of 2.20 on item 8(R) (and 2.80 on item 28(R)) is based on participant responses that have already been reverse-scored, and so these mean scores can be considered as anxiety levels (i.e., low anxiety). The students completed the questionnaire early in the semester, prior to becoming familiar with their current level in the CPP, but students in Level 3 had past experience in the program, which likely influenced their responses (and may have made them relatively comfortable talking with peers and participating in courses).

**Table 5.3** AFLAQ items associated with lowest anxiety scores for Level 3

Item	Mean	SD
8. (R) I am <i>not</i> nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.	2.20	.45
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	2.00	1.00
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.	2.40	1.34
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.	2.40	1.52
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.	2.80	.45
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.80	.84
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	2.80	.84
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.	2.80	1.10
28. (R) I <i>don't</i> feel anxious when learning a foreign language	2.80	1.10
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	2.80	1.64

**Note.** Items marked with a “(R)” are reverse-coded; the mean scores associated with each item and presented in this table are after reverse-coding. These scores should be considered to suggest anxiety level, not level of agreement with the item as stated.

### 5.3 Level 3: Case Studies

#### 5.3.1 Noura

Noura was in her second semester in the CPP program and in section 1 of Level 3. She was 19 years old and had attended a private high school prior to coming to the English medium college. She and Youssra, also in Level 3, had attended the same private high school. At the end of the semester during which this research study was conducted, Noura failed Level 3. Both Noura's mother and father are college graduates and both are employed outside the home. Noura's mother is a teacher, and her father is a businessman. He had come from Yemen, in the South of the Arab Peninsula and had graduated from a university in Addan, Yemen.

Noura is the oldest of three children, two girls (including Noura) and one boy. Most of the family on both her mother's and her father's side have attended college, but Noura is the first person to go to a private college. Noura indicated that her sister also wanted to come to the private English medium college. When asked about how her family views Noura's attending the private college, she disclosed that her family thinks she did not get good enough grades to attend the public university. As discussed above, students must achieve relatively good grades and high scores on standardized tests in order to be admitted to public universities, which are very crowded. However, Noura is at the private college by choice. She had a score of 88% on the high school standardized exam,

and so she qualified to attend a public university. However, because the public universities are so crowded, Noura would have had to attend only part-time to begin and could have later begun to attend full-time when more spaces were available in the public universities. Noura was also accepted to an American university located in Dubai, and her father did not have a problem with her going outside Saudi Arabia to study. However, Noura chose to stay in Saudi Arabia because she did not want to go to Dubai alone and she chose to attend the private English medium college so she could attend full-time (instead of attending a public university part-time).

Noura had been engaged when she decided to attend the English medium college and she married just two weeks before the semester started. Possibly because she had just gotten married or due to other circumstances in her life, Noura did not appear to be a very serious student. She frequently missed class. When she was asked about presentations to be given in class, she would say that she would complete the assignment, but she would prepare for the presentation only at the very last minute. In the semester during which this research study was conducted, her second semester at the English medium college, Noura ended up failing Level 3.

Noura's self-report questionnaire responses indicated that she had only a moderate level of anxiety surrounding her study of English (see Appendix H). Many of her responses to the questionnaire were neutral (neither agree nor disagree), as can be seen in her questionnaire. The situations that Noura indicated were most anxiety-provoking related to both speaking and comprehension, as indicated by her responses to items 1, 4, 15, 17, 25, 26, and 31. Interestingly, although Noura's questionnaire responses were often "Neither agree nor disagree," she did express thoughts and opinions on other issues during interviews.

Noura was the only Level 3 case study participant who had a moderate score on the AFLAQ. According to Sparks and Ganschow (1996), students with lower anxiety perform better and receive higher grades in their classes. This finding contradicts observations of Noura, who failed the semester. Noura's performance in class also contradicts Batumlu and Erden's (2007) findings, which reiterated that students with lower anxiety levels achieved higher grades in their language classes.

During a group interview, Noura discussed her experience of giving presentations to the class. Her discussion (included below in her own words, translated from Arabic), Noura

talked about becoming anxious during class presentations because other students are looking at her and says that she become so anxious she loses her place in her presentation, or becomes confused.

**Group Interview**  
**Level 3/ Excerpt 1**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** And the rest of you girls [aside from Sara], did you all choose the same method of using a pre-recorded presentation instead of live presentation?
2. **Youssra:** The subject of the presentation is not suitable for live presentation. We also thought that tape recording is the best way to go.
3. **Researcher:** Is it because it was the best way or was there another reason?
4. **Youssra:** Standing in front of the class is a reason as well.
5. **Tamara:** Speaking for myself, I am the kind of person who gets anxious very quickly and forgets the script, and I can't concentrate on what I am saying if I look at the students while presenting. Instead, I concentrate on the teacher. Also, I forget the script and start to stutter and get nervous and sometimes repeat the same sentence many times.
6. **Youssra:** Especially when all of them look at you...I start to forget everything I memorised or prepared beforehand.
7. **Noura:** Also the presentation should not be read. Rather, the presentation should be prepared beforehand and understood and not memorised. I should make eye contact with all the students and this makes me anxious because one feels that all the other students are focusing on you and what you are saying and what is happening. Also if someone interrupts me, I find myself lost, I lose my concentration and control of the situation.

In this passage, Noura highlights the stress associated with having to prepare and fully understand class presentations rather than memorising the text of a presentation. This discussion emphasises the difference between typical Saudi Arabian high school education in English, which utilizes the Rote method of learning, and the English medium college, which focuses more on language use and comprehension. Understanding and using language are much more challenging than memorising and reciting a passage.

When Noura spoke about feeling anxious when giving classroom presentations (turn 7, Level 3/Excerpt 1, above), her word choice changed from first person (i.e., "me" and "I") to more distancing language and general words (i.e., "one feels" and "you and what you

are saying"). The change in how she describes the experience might signal Noura's feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed to admit that she feels anxious when talking in front of her classmates. However, near the end of the description, Noura shifts back to discussing herself and her own experiences.

The apparent contradiction between Noura's moderate AFLAQ score and failure during the semester, which goes against research findings, may have multiple explanations. For example, Noura might not have wanted to admit feeling anxious in class because she feared or was embarrassed about being judged by the researcher. That is, she may not have wanted to admit being anxious. A pattern of desirable responding (providing responses seen as socially preferable) is consistent with Noura's discussion of her own in-class experiences during interviews. Noura did not talk openly about her feelings in class, instead changing the voice of her speech to say that "one feels" (see turn 7, Level 3/Excerpt 1, above).

At the end of the semester, I asked Noura to reflect on her experiences in Level 3. She said that she did not learn much. She felt she had learned a little in some of her classes, but very little in her listening and speaking course. I asked her to consider why, what interfered with her learning. Was interruptions in class, or people talking, or not understanding the material, or something else? Noura said that the methods of teaching were a problem for her. Final exams were shortly after that interview, and Noura said that she planned to study as best she could and try to do well, and that she was going to take the TOEFL; she might end up failing Level 3, she thought, but if she were able to get a high enough score on the TOEFL, she could progress. If she earned a score of 480 or higher, she would be exempt from the remainder of the CPP and be allowed to go straight into the college for college-level courses taught in English.

In both her questionnaire responses and during interviews, Noura identified speaking in class and in front of others as an anxiety-provoking situation and, perhaps because speaking in class was anxiety-provoking, she rarely participated in class. She also complained extensively about the teacher not motivating the students. However, overall Noura did not seem like a very serious student; she avoids preparing presentations ahead of time, was often absent from class, and, ultimately, she failed Level 3. Noura had only recently been married, and she might have still been figuring out how to balance her new, married life with her education.

### **5.3.2 Tamara**

At the time of this study, Tamara was 19 years old, in her third semester of the CPP, and in section 1 of Level 3. She had attended a private high school before entering college. Tamara entered the college at Level 1 and has progressed to Level 3. At the end of the semester, she had earned a cumulative grade (across all of her Level 3 classes) of a “C”.

Tamara’s father was from Turkey and her mother was from Saudi Arabia, and she had grown up in Saudi Arabia. Tamara’s father is a college graduate who lives and works in Turkey, where he is married to another wife (in addition to Tamara’s mother) and has two children with that wife. (In Islam, a man may marry up to four wives.) Tamara’s only siblings are her father’s other children, a half-brother and half-sister who live in Turkey. Her father comes to visit Tamara in Saudi Arabia, and she visits him in Turkey as her mother has no other children.

Tamara’s mother has not finished secondary school and has not attended college. This may be due to her mother’s ongoing health problems. Indeed, Tamara and her mother live with Tamara’s maternal grandmother because of these health problems. As is traditional in Saudi Arabian culture, Tamara’s grandmother, as the elder, is in control of the household. Every summer, Tamara travels from Saudi Arabia to Turkey to spend time with her father and her family there. Perhaps of these experiences and this independent travel, Tamara is a very self-confident and very independent individual.

Tamara’s father ascribes to traditional Turkish beliefs. He does not believe that girls or women need a high level of education and thinks that secondary school is more than adequate. Indeed, when Tamara’s father saw her in her secondary school uniform and learned that she was attending and planning to graduate from secondary school, he became upset. The family argued about whether or not Tamara would attend secondary school. During the course of the argument, Tamara missed a week of school. Ultimately, her grandmother was able to win the argument, convincing Tamara’s father that Tamara’s attending secondary school would be beneficial for Tamara’s family once she was married. Despite these constraints, according to Tamara she is an excellent student and has had excellent grades.

After high school, Tamara was accepted to the large, Arabic-speaking public university in Jeddah to study physiotherapy. Her father would not permit her to study physiotherapy because she would be in contact with men in the field. Tamara obtained a

scholarship from a private donor to attend the English medium college, which removes any financial burden from her father but also means that she is not subject to the restrictions placed on students who have scholarships through the college (e.g., spending no more than 3 semesters in the CPP). Tamara convinced her father to allow her to study at the English medium college by arguing that she could study a topic that would not put her in contact with men. He would prefer that Tamara not attend college but, for now, he is allowing her to attend. However, Tamara's father will permit her to study only a limited number of subject areas. She convinced him to let her study graphic design or interior design, but she wants to go into nursing. Tamara's father has told her that, once she finishes college she must go to Turkey and work for him as an interpreter speaking English, Turkish, and Arabic. The restrictions her father places on Tamara appear to hang over her.

Tamara's responses to the questionnaire indicate that she is somewhat anxious, but not extremely anxious, with an average score of 3.58 on a range of one to five (see Appendix H). Her responses are distributed across all five response options, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Most of her responses, however, are "agree" and not "strongly agree," which is reflected by her average score on the questionnaire.

Unlike many other students (and perhaps because she is generally independent), Tamara indicates on her questionnaire (item 7) that she is comfortable using English outside of the college setting. In contrast, Tamara indicates that she is somewhat uncomfortable and anxious talking to her English teacher or asking the teacher a question (item 4). During interviews, Tamara highlights her concern about receiving positive feedback and encouragement from her teachers.

Interestingly, Tamara indicates that she strongly disagrees with the statement "I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class" in item 19, but that she agrees with the statement (made in item 2) "I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for." Although the reasons for her responses cannot be clearly determined, it may be the case that Tamara means to communicate that she is not anxious speaking in class when she is able to prepare, but experiences anxiety when she must speak spontaneously.

Based on demeanour during interviews and other observations that I made during the study, I would say that Tamara is a very strong and independent young woman. She

often spoke energetically, and she came across as motivated to do something in college and with her life. During class, when she attempted to speak in English, Tamara put a lot of effort into her language use.

During early group interviews, Tamara highlighted specific situations that she finds anxiety provoking and uncomfortable: (1) giving presentations in front of unfamiliar students, (2) having teachers pay more attention to and show favouritism to other students, and (3) not receiving praise or encouragement from teachers. Tamara's discussion of wanting to gain the teacher's approval is consistent with Bailey's diary study findings from the late 1970s (see Seliger & Long, 1983). When Tamara was unable to get the attention she was seeking from her teacher, she was discouraged from the language learning process.

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 2**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** The rest of the students with you in the class...were they with you previously in Level 1 or 2?
2. **Youssra:** No. Most of them were new, and we only know a few of them.
3. **Researcher:** In other words, if most of these students were with you in previous levels of the program, then would the presentation be easier?
4. **Tamara:** Of course, because in front of the new students I felt a little anxious, unlike when I give a presentation in front of old classmates. Psychologically you feel comfortable especially when you are used to them [familiar students] from before...and this reduces the fear you have when presenting. You also don't know the new students' responses to you, especially when they anticipate that we have more experience in the program and so we must be better [than they are] at gathering information and giving presentations.
5. **Youssra:** Also I am afraid of the new students' reactions to us if one mispronounces difficult words. This is different from my friends from last semester who got used to us and the mistakes we make. And we got used to them. Because if all of the class gets used to each other, the situation becomes relaxed.

In the passage above, Tamara discusses speaking in front of the class as a primary cause of anxiety, which is consistent with Woodrow (2006), who reported that oral presentations are often reported as major causes of anxiety. Tamara also explains that speaking in front of students she knows from previous classes is relatively comfortable. She feels she knows how those familiar students will respond to her. Speaking in front

of new classmates, those who were not in her previous classes, provokes anxiety for her because she does not know how they will respond to her. If students do not know her yet, then they might judge her (and think less of her) based on her language use (e.g., pronunciation) in oral presentations.

Other segments of the group interview focused on the role that teachers and teacher-student dynamics play in the students' experience of class. For example, Tamara explains that the teachers sometimes clearly prefer students who talk a lot with the teacher during class. Later in the same group interview (November 5, 2006), Tamara emphasized that she and the other students in this interview are not the only students who feel that the teachers show preference for the talkative students.

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 3**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Tamara:** There are teachers who prefer students who are noticeable in class and who intentionally show off and engage in conversations with the teacher. [These students are] opposite of some students, who are quiet. They know the answers, but they do not like to show off.  
...  
2. **Youssra:** Yes. Plus she only concentrates on them.
3. **Sara:** Yes. She targets the conversation during the explanation of the lesson to them only.
4. **Researcher:** And how do you feel about that?
5. **Youssra:** This depresses us to a degree that we do not want to go in to our English class.
6. **Noura:** This does not lift our spirit.
7. **Youssra:** I began to feel burdened to enter the English class.
8. **Farida:** I started hating my English class.
9. **Researcher:** Just because you guys feel that this may be happening, even though you are not totally sure?
10. **Tamara:** No, this is not only a feeling. This feeling is not only restricted to us four [referring to the students in the interview]; rather we asked the rest of the students in our class and they confirmed the same feeling. For example, me, Youssra, Farida, and Noura are mostly in the same class and when we speak to the other girls [in our class], we ask them, "Don't you sense that this thing happens?" [referring to teachers showing favouritism]. And we find out that the other girls feel the same thing.

Tamara goes on to explain, and it seemed important to her to explain, that teacher really did appear to favour the talkative student. According to Tamara, other students in the Level 3 class, not just the students included in this case study also feel that the teacher prefers the talkative students. The students who are not talkative receive less attention and praise from the teacher.

During the same group interview on November 5, 2006, Tamara discussed the consequences of not receiving praise and encouragement from her teacher, stating the following:

To the extent that the teacher's reaction during the presentation is different. In our presentation at the start we had music and dancing clips. All the students laughed and smiled but the teacher did not show any remarks or encouragement and this shows that there is an atmosphere of anxiety; opposite of what happened with the teacher's favourite students' presentation. She smiled and offered to help them although half of their presentation they were reading from a paper.

Tamara explained that the students favoured by the teacher receive more help and support during in-class presentations; in-class presentations are, generally, particularly challenging and stressful for the students.

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 4**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** So what you are saying is that the teacher favours some students and is forgiving of their mistakes, but may not be so forgiving with all of you because you are not her favourites, and that is why she picks on you for everything you do?
2. **Sara:** In the next class when she [the teacher] gives out the grades [for the presentation the students gave today], she will talk to the other students about their grades and listen to them. She doesn't even try to correct our mistakes for we see that this benefits us a lot in terms of guidance. It may be hard for us in the beginning, but it will help us and that is what we want.
3. **Tamara:** And what increases our anxiety during presentation is that she [the teacher] does not encourage any students with praise, which would encourage the student to continue the presentation and relax the student. Feedback and encouragement might lift up our spirit and makes us feel internally relaxed and make us feel that our efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Two weeks later, during another group interview with the students in Level 3, Tamara discussed the issue of attention that is granted to students who talk readily and frequently in contrast with students who are quiet. Tamara suggested that the teacher should not focus only on the students who are actively speaking in the class, but should divide her attention among all students so as to try to involve the quieter students as well. In Tamara's own words (translated from Arabic), she said:

Supposedly, if the student participates with the teacher in class, that means she has a great deal of vocabulary and that the student is relatively good. This doesn't mean that the teacher gives this student all her attention. The teacher should divide her attention to all the other students as well and try to involve them in the class.

Tamara goes on to discuss how she thinks that the teacher should interact with and instruct the students in order to get all students (including the quieter students) to participate in class. Tamara says:

When the teacher talks politely with the students or when she corrects their mistakes in a nice way, then the students become encouraged to participate in class. Even if the student makes a mistake, the student doesn't necessarily feel that she is mistaken because the teacher is treating her well. This is opposite of when the teacher constantly corrects the student in front of her classmates repeatedly. The student may let it go once or twice, but then her reaction may change if this continues in front of her classmates. The student may feel that the teacher is picking on her or that the teacher is very strict with her, which effects the student as she refuses to interact in class or do her homework, even if the homework may only take a couple of minutes to do. The student may then become stubborn just because the teacher embarrassed her in front of her classmates.

In her discussion, Tamara emphasises the importance of teachers' giving corrections nicely and politely in order to help students to feel encouraged and successful. She also suggests that frequent criticism, particularly in front of peers, may prompt embarrassment and discomfort, which lead to avoidance behaviours (e.g., not participating in class, not completing work).

Taken together, Tamara's discussion of her experiences in class are interesting in part because she focuses on the differential treatment that students receive and the sometimes harsh or negative feedback that teachers give. She specifically identifies the two groups of students in the class – the group with whom she identifies, and the other students who are talkative and who receive favouritism, attention, and praise from the teacher. Tamara

made it clear during interviews that she looks to her teachers for approval and for signs of encouragement, which is consistent with reports from various researchers who have emphasized the importance of the teacher in providing support within the classroom (e.g., Price, 1991; Seliger & Long, 1983; Young, 1991). In her Listening and Speaking course in particular, she has sought out her teacher's attention and feedback, but has not received the support she wants. Tamara asked her teacher what she should do in order to earn a higher grade in the Listening and Speaking class, but in response, the teacher laughed, as if Tamara were joking. Tamara had been genuine when she asked the teacher for help, but the teacher's laughter had embarrassed Tamara. As a consequence, Tamara stopped trying to get help from the teacher. Lack of feedback, encouragement, and support appears to have undermined Tamara's motivation to work. Although Tamara began the semester highly motivated to learn English, she was not motivated and did not feel supported by her teachers.

One sign that Tamara was a highly motivated student, in addition to her argument with her family to be able to attend the college, is that she obtained a scholarship independently so that she could study. Tamara also put a lot of effort into her in-class participation and speech. However, she tended to procrastinate when it came to completing work for which she had a deadline. Tamara completed all of her work (e.g., assignments, presentations) at the last minute. During interviews, she would laugh, saying that she did not complete assignments until immediately before they were due even though she knew she should complete the work earlier. She would indicate that she had been gathering information in order to complete the assignment, but still leave the assignment itself until the last possible moment. For example, she repeatedly indicated she had completed work for an in-class presentation the night before the presentation was to be given. When working together with a group of classmates on a project, Tamara would say that she would complete various tasks for the project. However, she never did complete the tasks. Instead, she left the work for others to complete.

Tamara is aware that she should complete her work ahead of time and that it would be better for her education if she did complete the work ahead of time. She knows that she must complete her work in order to pass Level 3, but she is barely earning high enough grades to pass. However, she still avoids completing the work. As discussed by Oxford (2005), this type of avoidance behaviour is often associated with and considered a sign of anxiety. Tamara might have been attempting to avoid dealing with the issues and

challenges associated with learning English (including her anxiety) by avoiding doing the work, or procrastinating.

At the end of the semester, Tamara indicated that she was hoping to pass the TOEFL and advance to the college so that she would no longer be in the CPP. However, based on her performance in Level 3 and her English language skills, that did not seem likely. (At the end of the semester, when this study concluded, TOEFL scores were not yet known, and so I do not know what score Tamara achieved.)

Overall, it appeared that Tamara was motivated to learn but anxious about studying English. She admitted that she is an anxious person and that she pays a great deal of attention to teachers, mainly looking for support and encouragement to ease her anxiety and to reassure her that she is on the right track. Tamara described a classroom situation in which she did not receive encouragement or attention; the teacher primarily paid attention to the talkative students. For Tamara, this lack of encouragement leads to anxiety. She believed that encouragement might have reduced her experience of anxiety. As the semester went on, Tamara sought support and feedback and did not receive it, Tamara started the pattern of procrastinating and avoiding work and deadlines.

In addition to the general scenario of studying English, Tamara indicated that she experiences even more anxiety when giving a presentation in front of new students with whom she is unfamiliar. As discussed in the November 5, 2006, group interview, Tamara is concerned with how the other students may evaluate her and she fears negative evaluation from others. Tamara is thus concerned both with how the teacher views her performance in class, seeking feedback and encouragement, and concerned about how her peers (the other students) see her. Tamara's overall experience is consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who reported fear of negative evaluation as a major cause of anxiety among students learning a second language (see Chapter II for discussion).

### **5.3.3 Sara**

At the time of this study, Sara was 19 years old, in Level 3, and in her second semester at the English medium college. Sara earned a cumulative grade of a B in Level 3.

Sara's family came from Yemen. Her father had a business diploma in addition to having completed high school, and her mother had completed high school. Sara is the second oldest of five children. She has one older sister, one younger sister, and two younger brothers. Sara and her older sister, in addition to one of their cousins, attended the same private English medium college. They attend the private English medium college in part because they are from Yemen and therefore not allowed to attend the public universities in Saudi Arabia. Prior to college, Sara had high grades; she had a merit-based scholarship to attend the private English medium college.

At the time of this study, Sara had not yet decided on a major but was devoting a lot of thought to the issue. Sara wants to study graphic design, but her family has objected to the major. Most of her family thinks that Sara should study business, like her sister who studies banking and finance, but Sara reported that her father was beginning to accept Sara's wish to study graphic design. Sara believes that her father accepts her choice of majors because he is beginning to see that Sara's life is hers to do as she chooses. Sara's mother, however, still does not accept her studying graphic design and Sara has yet to persuade her otherwise.

Sara was planning to take the TOEFL again at the end of the semester. As discussed above, if the students perform well enough on the exam, they can go to the mainstream college and skip the CPP. Sara stated that all of the students in the CPP are hoping to perform well on the TOEFL. Near the end of the semester, Sara was particularly concerned about the exam; she had failed during the previous semester. Sara is a scholarship student and must complete the program in no more than three semesters if her fees are to be paid through the scholarship. If she does not perform well on the TOEFL, she does not know what she will do, because she does not have additional funding for a fourth semester in the English CPP. If she does not pass the TOEFL, she has to successfully complete Level 3 (her current level) and Level 4 in the English CPP. The logistics of paying for and scheduling the completion of the CPP program place a lot of pressure on Sara to either pass her current courses or pass the TOEFL.

Unlike most of the students who took part in case studies, Sara's responses to the questionnaire (see Appendix H) indicate that she is most anxious listening and attempting to comprehend English (see items 3, 5, 6, and 30). Sara also agrees with most statements indicating she experiences anxiety when giving presentations or speaking; however, she strongly disagrees with item 14 (becoming upset over the method of

testing), item 25 (speaking in front of class), and item 29 (becoming so anxious she forgets things in class). Overall, she responded “Strongly disagree” to only three items and “Disagree” to only two items. Her responses to all three reverse-coded items were “Neither agree nor disagree”. Sara’s average score on the questionnaire is 3.61 (“anxious”).

During a group interview, Sara states that she is anxious when giving presentations in front of the class, but goes on to say that she is made anxious very easily and describes herself as a generally anxious person.

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 5**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** Don’t you think the presentation would have been better if done live?
2. **Sara:** For sure! But what was being said was long. Plus, it would have been hard to incorporate songs in to the Power Point presentation. Also, it made us feel content.
3. **Researcher:** You said “feel content.” Was speaking in front of the class a burden?
4. **Sara:** Indeed, because of the standing in front of the class and giving the presentation. This is different from holding a paper and reading from it. Communicating with students through eye contact and coping with the situation [giving a presentation] was hard for me in a way.
5. **Researcher:** Then was the recording method for you easier because all you had to do is record and see what was happening?
6. **Sara:** Yes, but even then I was still a little anxious because my voice was not clear [in the audio-taped presentation].
7. **Researcher:** You were still a little anxious?
8. **Sara:** Not little, rather a lot.
9. **Researcher:** Even though you did not give a live presentation, and no one looked at you directly, you were still anxious?
10. **Sara:** This is my nature... <laughing>
11. **Researcher:** In other words...were classroom presentations the biggest cause of anxiety for you?
12. **Sara:** Yes...because talking in front of people or in the presence of more than one person who is listening and concentrating on what I am saying somehow makes me really anxious and nervous.

In particular, Sara might have experienced anxiety when she spoke in front of audiences because she feared being negatively evaluated by other students. Fear of negative evaluation is a common issue and was considered by Horwitz et al. (1986) when they developed the FLCAS. Horwitz et al. (1986) also found that students who had high levels of anxiety were more self-conscious about speaking in front of others. Sara did not want her classmates to view her negatively or think her speaking skills were poor, as she discussed in the above excerpt. However, later recent research has suggested that the fear of negative evaluation is shaped by cultural norms and expectations. Yan and Horwitz (2008) found that Chinese students avoided participating in class not because they feared negative evaluation, but because they were concerned that their classmates would see them as showing off if they participated, even if they made mistakes when speaking in class. Unlike Yan and Horwitz's (2008) Chinese study participants, Sara and her classmates (e.g., Youssra, as shown in turn 4, Level 3/Excerpt 2) were clearly focused on being seen as unskilled or being laughed at by their classmates.

Sara also said that she dislikes doing presentations, an issue that was also discussed by Woodrow (2006) in her study of Asian students (Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) studying English in Australia. Woodrow's results also suggested that these Asian language learners were more anxious language learners than other ethnic groups or cultures (see Chapter II for discussion), perhaps because of the importance of abiding by specific social norms in their collectivist cultures. Woodrow's participants came from a different learning style and methods may have been the cause of their anxiety among other things. Encountering novel situations and classroom demands may be anxiety-provoking for any students, but particularly anxiety-provoking if the students are from backgrounds that do not emphasise the skills needed for the new tasks (such as my students) or from cultures that emphasise social behaviour inconsistent with the tasks required in class (such as for Woodrow's 2006 study).

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 6**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** You said, Sara, that during the presentation – even though it was tape recorded – you felt some fear, anxiety, worry, and nervousness. Can I ask you why? Is it because you were afraid of mispronouncing the words?
2. **Sara:** No, that was not the main reason. It was fear of the other students in the class and what their opinions would be. If they would like the

presentation or not. Also, there could be problems with not understanding some words if they are spoken too fast, or they [other students] might not understand the script. Also the fear of misusing one word in place of another.

3. **Researcher:** So you were thinking about what the other students were going to say and what they were thinking...?
4. **Sara:** Yes. I was afraid that they would see the presentation as not good or they would humour us.

In her response to my questions, Sara disagreed with my suggestion that she might be afraid of mispronouncing words. Instead, Sara expressed concern about whether the other students in her class would like her presentations, and whether the other students would be able to understand her pronunciation of the words she had memorised (in the “script” of her presentation, mentioned above in Sara’s turn 2, Level 3/Excerpt 6). She also feared misusing words in front of the other students. Sara did not want to be looked down upon or laughed at by the other students, or to have the other students think poorly of her presentation.

In another passage, Sara expressed conflicting perspectives. In one moment, she explained that she is very upset by being corrected by her teacher; it would be “the end of the world”. However, in a separate passage, Sara says that she believes she and her peers would benefit from corrections, specifically stating (see turn 2, Level 3/Excerpt 4 in section 5.3.2 on Tamara),

She doesn’t even try to correct our mistakes for we see that this benefits us a lot in terms of guidance. It may be hard for us in the beginning, but it will help us and that is what we want.

This comment from Sara indicates that she is aware of the benefits of teacher’s correction, but she is still concerned about how other students and the teacher see her.

The talkative students, the “in-group”, receive attention and corrections. Sara indicates she and the other students who receive relatively little attention from their teacher would benefit from corrections, stating,

Another point, for example, starts when a student pronounces a word incorrectly or stutters and she can’t pronounce the letters or the words correctly. If I were in her position, I would have not continued the reading. This is what happened with our friend X [a student who was not included in the case studies] when the teacher started to correct her mistakes... If I had been in her shoes, I would not

have continued reading because I must practice reading the section until I can read it well... I see it as the end of the world for the teacher to correct me if I read incorrectly...opposite of some who might see it a normal thing to read with the teacher correcting them. As for me, I can't do that. (November 5, 2006)

During a group interview on November 12, 2006, the topic of teacher approval during in-class presentations came up again. Sara explained how she felt to receive even brief, positive feedback after she and her in-class group gave a presentation. The teacher said to them, "Great." Sara and the other members of her group were extremely happy to receive the feedback, even though they criticised themselves for forgetting some of the presentation.

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 7**

**November 12, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** Just because of the teacher reassuring you that it was good, you felt happy?
2. **Sara:** Yes.
3. **Researcher:** Is it important to get reassurance from the teacher?
4. **Sara:** I felt satisfied mid-way through the presentation when I looked at the teacher and found her smiling and looking like she was genuinely interested in listening to our presentation.

In an individual interview, Sara suggests other teaching strategies or techniques, in addition to positive and supportive feedback, she believes might be helpful for her and her classmates.

**Individual Interview: Sara  
Level 3/Excerpt 8**

**November 19, 2006**

1. **Sara:** When the teacher asks me a question, I would like to take my time...not a very long time, but long enough for me to organise my thoughts. But I see the other students answering very quickly, and I do not get the time I need to organise my thoughts and what I want to say to the teacher.
2. **Researcher:** Do you mean to say that they [the other students] are faster than you in answering questions?
3. **Sara:** I feel this makes me feel lost. For example, when I want to give my opinion or try to explain an idea, I don't get enough time for the

teacher to listen to me. The students finish off my idea and start talking about the next point.

4. **Researcher:** Is this the biggest thing that frustrates you in class?
5. **Sara:** No, I also lose my concentration when I am trying to participate in class...

In this excerpt, Sara is saying that she needs more time to organise her thoughts before she speaks, but that she does not get that time and then she ends up not participating; the other students speak more quickly than she does, or interrupt her, or finish her sentences. Sara would also like if the teacher would have other students keep from interrupting others so that each student had a chance to try to talk and fully express her own thoughts.

Overall, Sara is very enthusiastic and puts a lot of effort into learning. Throughout the course of the semester, Sara tried very hard to learn as much as she could, but her anxiety may interfere. She described herself, in an interview, as being anxiety-prone (i.e., “It’s my nature”). Drawing on the different sources of information about Sara’s experience learning English in the CPP, Sara experiences anxiety during listening tasks (based on her questionnaire responses) and during classroom presentations when she has the group’s focus of attention, whether the presentation is live or audio recorded (based on her disclosure during interviews). Generally, Sara (like many students) fears being negatively evaluated by other students, and she is also concerned about being corrected by the language teacher. However, she wants correction from the teacher so that she can receive guidance and feedback. She says that the teachers do not correct many of the students (the ones who are not talkative), and that this means that the quieter students (herself included) do not learn as much. Sara, like Tamara, is seeking feedback and guidance from the teacher but is not receiving that support from the teacher.

#### **5.3.4 Youssra**

Youssra was 19 years old and in her third semester in the CPP at the time of this study. She came from the same high school as Noura, a private high school that is not very well-known or popular. Youssra had begun the program in Level 1. At the end of the semester when the case study took place, Youssra had failed Level 3.

Both of Youssra’s parents are well-educated. Youssra’s father is a businessman in Saudi Arabia and has many businesses shared with his brothers, including an electricity

business. They are also considering opening a school. Youssra's mother graduated from college with a degree in history, but she was not employed at the time of this study. Youssra's father would not permit Youssra's mother to work. He is not against women working, but is somewhat restrictive. He is also planning ahead. He is considering opening a new branch for his company, a branch that would employ only women. Youssra's mother, who could then work and help out with the business, is hoping that they will open the women-only branch.

Youssra is the second oldest of seven children. Every other child is a boy, starting with Youssra's older brother studied in Dubai for three years and is now in Jordan. The other six siblings are not close to the oldest brother. Youssra also has a number of female cousins, daughters of the uncles who work with her father. Her cousins attend the English medium college and study banking and interior design. Youssra is studying graphic design. Youssra reported that her family expected Youssra and her cousins to all work for their fathers' company once they complete college.

Youssra's average score on the questionnaire used to assess anxiety and nervousness regarding English language studies is a 3.79 ("anxious"). Many of her responses were "strongly agree" (see Appendix H). Looking at Youssra's original questionnaire form, it is noticeable that she emphasized her response to item 33 ("I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class."). Youssra drew in three check marks to indicate her response of "strongly agree" to item 33. This response suggests that speaking in front of the class is not only anxiety-provoking for Youssra, but is a particularly provocative challenge.

For item 12, which addresses whether or not she feels comfortable talking with the teacher, Youssra's response of "disagree" indicates that she generally feels at least somewhat uncomfortable. However, she wrote in "it depends on the teacher" after the text of this item. This addition indicates that the teacher is a focus and plays a role in Youssra's comfort in the classroom and in speaking.

Examining Youssra's other questionnaire responses, it is apparent that Youssra most strongly agrees that speaking is anxiety-provoking, though speaking outside of class and with unfamiliar people may be less anxiety provoking (see items 7 and 20). Youssra may fear that familiar people will think badly of her for making mistakes when she speaks in English, a fear of negative evaluation that was a common finding in Horwitz et

al.'s (1986) research on causes of anxiety. Based on her responses, listening activities are not as negative for her. Youssra also disagreed with the general, reverse-coded item 28(R), indicating that she is, indeed, generally anxious learning a foreign language. This response was consistent with Youssra's discussion of her language learning experience during interviews, as discussed in the next section.

Interestingly, some of Youssra's questionnaire responses contradict statements that she made during interviews. For example, in Youssra's response to questionnaire item 20, she indicates that she strongly disagrees with the statement, "I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met." However, in an interview early in the semester (Level 3/Excerpt 2, presented in section 5.3.2 on Tamara), Youssra says (see turn 5) that she becomes uncomfortable when classes change and there are new class members. Specifically, Youssra explains that she is concerned about the new students' "reactions towards you when you say or pronounce difficult words" and that she and her previous classmates became used to each other so that each others' errors were normal.

In the same group interview, Youssra indicates that she, like Tamara and Sara, feels she does not get support and feedback that she seeks from this particular teacher (see Level 3/Excerpt 2, turn 5 above). For Youssra, feeling a lack of support, feeling that the teacher shows favouritism towards other students and pays more attention to other students (specifically, to students in the in-group that was described in the overview of Level 3), has lead to feeling that simply going to class is a burden and something she does not want to do. Youssra's challenge in getting herself to go to class and her negative feelings about going to class are consistent with Oxford's (2005) discussion of signs and symptoms of FLA, including physical symptoms and avoidance behaviours (such as missing class or not participating in class). As discussed by Young (1991), Price (1991), and other case study participants, teacher-student interactions are important. Youssra wanted attention, approval, and positive feedback from her teacher, but she did not experience the sort of teacher-student interactions that might have supported her learning experiences. Specifically, Youssra feels she and her classmates are depressed by the lack of attention and feedback so much so that they do not want to attend English class (see turn 5 of Level 3/Excerpt 3, presented in section 5.3.2 on Tamara).

Consistent with her questionnaire responses, Youssra identified standing in front of the class for a presentation ("standing in front of the class," in turn 4, Level 3/Excerpt 1, presented in section 5.3.1 on Noura) and having people look at her ("especially when all

of them look at you," in turn 6, Level 3/Excerpt 1) while she gave a presentation as situations that provoke anxiety in her. Specifically, she indicates that she becomes so overwhelmed with anxiety when she is standing in front of other students to give a presentation that she forgets what she had memorised for the presentation, which is in line with what Oxford (2005) recognized as a symptom of anxiety.

Fear of comparison to other students and fear of evaluation may be at the heart of Youssra's anxiety when being watched by other students and the teacher. Below, Youssra explains that she fear comparison to other students, criticism from teachers, and having her grade lowered or points taken away for poor performance. She would even prefer to lose points by failing to complete an assignment over losing points for completing the assignment but doing so poorly. In previous research, Bailey (see Seliger & Long, 1983) focused in particular on competitiveness and comparison of one's own performance to the performance of others in a class. A similar pattern of comparison, attempting to do well in front of others, and concern over grades may have lead to Youssra's deciding to procrastinate or avoid doing her work and may have resulted in debilitating anxiety.

**Group Interview  
Level 3/Excerpt 9**

**November 5, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** And for the rest of the group, were the sense of fear and the feelings the same?
2. **Youssra:** To be honest, I was extremely anxious. When we saw the other students' presentation before us, I felt it was better than ours and was afraid that the teacher was going to criticise us. This was in addition to the anxiety that we already had. As for us, when we started the presentation, I was scared that we would get points deducted [from our grades]. I was insisting on not doing our presentation. I prefer to get points deducted for not doing the presentation, rather than doing it and going through all of that trouble and effort and then still get points deducted.

During an observation period on November 19, 2006, I noted that the class had an activity for which they listened to a recorded conversation between two people, and later they were required to answer questions about the conversation. In a subsequent interview with Youssra, she discussed the activity and her perspective on what would have been needed for the activity to be useful and educational for her.

**Individual Interview: Youssra**

**Level 3/Excerpt 10**

**November 19, 2006**

1. **Youssra:** It [the listening activity] was good, but I needed to concentrate more so I can answer faster.
2. **Researcher:** And what is preventing you from concentrating?
3. **Youssra:** Oh...the speaker speaks fast, and there are some words that I understand, but half of them I could not understand. I must answer the questions while he is speaking. It is important to answer the questions, but I don't understand everything he says. He is [talking] so fast...
4. **Researcher:** So in the end, did you manage to understand and answer all the questions or did you choose random answers?
5. **Youssra:** Yes, random answers.
6. **Researcher:** You did not understand him?
7. **Youssra:** No, I did understand him. But I tried to choose the answer with the meaning closest to what he meant.
8. **Researcher:** And why did you not understand the language that was used?
9. **Youssra:** Maybe because he was a little fast, or because I couldn't read the questions that we are supposed to answer. Maybe if I could have read the questions first and then listened to the tape, then I could have answered better.
10. **Researcher:** Meaning that you wanted to get a general idea about the topic before listening to the tape?
11. **Youssra:** Yes.

Specifically, Youssra states that she would have been able to answer the questions more easily if she had been able to read the questions ahead of time. When Youssra was in the position of having to decipher the questions, listen to the taped conversation, and choose appropriate answers to the questions, she felt that she was not able to complete the task well. The speaker was too fast for her, and she had difficulty, perhaps not even trying very hard on the task because she was overwhelmed.

Overall, Youssra was not an extremely motivated student, but she did show motivation at times. During interviews, she repeatedly stated that there were things she did not like about the class and the teacher, though she did not specify which of the Level 3 teachers she was discussing. Youssra explained she wished the students could have gotten more clarification on class assignments and could have gotten more support and feedback from

the teachers. She wanted information about assignments ahead of time and believed that might have improved her performance. Generally, Youssra was confused and wanted clarification, attention, and support in her learning. By the end of the semester, Youssra had failed Level 3.

### **5.3.5 Farida**

At the beginning of the semester, Farida was 18 years old, in Level 3, and beginning her third semester in the CPP. Farida came from a relatively well-known family from the western portion of Saudi Arabia and had attended a private high school before beginning college. In completing the questionnaire-based assessment of her anxiety surrounding her English studies, Farida was identified as “anxious” with an average score of 3.88. At the end of the semester, Farida had failed Level 3, receiving a cumulative grade of D for the semester (a grade of C or greater is required to pass). Given that Farida is on a full scholarship, she has the option of repeating levels of the CPP as needed to gain English skills and pass. Farida never disclosed whether she had failed and repeated previous levels, or if she had started in Level 1 and proceeded up to Level 3 (the current semester).

Although more talkative than Zakia (from Level 1), Farida was also a notably shy and quiet student who did not speak often or disclose a lot of information about her experiences during group or individual interviews. Farida also failed to attend some interview sessions and did not respond to attempts to contact her and reschedule individual interviews in order to gain information about Farida’s family, background, and general experience. As a consequence, most of what is known about Farida was gained through group interviews, the self-report questionnaire, and general classroom observations.

During class, interviews, and even in some of her questionnaire responses, Farida did not often express strong opinions. Although the majority (21 items after reverse coding) of Farida’s questionnaire responses were either “strongly agree” or “agree,” she indicated a neutral response to nine, or 27%, of the 33 items (see Appendix H). In her response to item 24, Farida indicated that she feared failing her class. However, based on these neutral responses, it appears that Farida does not experience anxiety related to her grades (item 16) or tests (item 32) or related to speaking in class (items 17, 19, 23, 25, and 33).

Farida also indicated that she is not nervous speaking in front of her classmates on the reverse-coded item 8(R), and she indicated that she disagreed with the item 26, which states, “I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.” Overall, it appears that Farida’s responses indicate she feels comfortable conversing with and talking in front of her classmates. Farida’s response to item 33, “I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class,” contrasts with responses given by other students. The majority of students surveyed, and all nine of the other students who took part in case studies, indicated they agreed (3 students) or strongly agreed (6 students) that they were nervous in this typically anxiety-provoking situation.

Examining the situations in which Farida reported experiencing nervousness or anxiety and the situations in which she does not, one pattern that emerges is that Farida appears to be relatively comfortable (not anxious) when talking in front of her familiar classmates. It may be that Farida is anxious in front of unfamiliar students (e.g., as mentioned in items 7, 15, 20, and 27 to which Farida responded “strongly agree” and “agree”) and in front of her teacher (e.g., items 2 and 4), but she is comfortable with speaking English in front the peer group with whom she is studying English (e.g., items 17, 19, 23, 25, and 33).

Farida did not contribute very much to the group interviews. However, she did very clearly state (in turn 8 of Level 3/Excerpt 3, presented above in section 5.3.2 on Tamara) that she “started hating” her English class because the teacher pays attention to the talkative students in class, but not to Farida and the other students in the Level 3 case study.

In an individual interview, Farida raises the related issue of not receiving encouragement from her teacher. Farida specifically claims that in previous classes and a previous semester, she participated in class; in the previous semester, her teacher encouraged and supported her participation. Farida’s discussion focuses heavily on the role of the teacher in “making” students like or hate their English classes. A boring teacher, who does not explain subjects in detail and who fails to speak energetically and with vocal variation can, according to Farida, make classes more difficult and spoken English more challenging to understand.

**Individual Interview: Farida**  
**Level 3/Excerpt 11**

**November 19, 2006**

1. **Researcher:** Do you want to comment on the previous lessons since we are one-on-one today? Is there anything that stood out for you?
2. **Farida:** Maybe the teacher does not encourage us.
3. **Researcher:** Is this your major problem?
4. **Farida:** Yes, last term I was encouraged by the teacher, and I used to participate.
5. **Researcher:** The teacher has a large influence? Is there any influence from the subject?
6. **Farida:** Of course.
7. **Researcher:** What affects you more? The teacher or the subject?
8. **Farida:** The teacher is the main factor... she [the teacher] makes you like or hate the subject.
9. **Researcher:** So you mean, the teacher has the biggest impact?
10. **Farida:** Yes. If the teacher isn't good, for example, if her teaching is different from what I am used to, I feel I will fail in the subject... like what happened with the reading and writing subject when the teacher asked us to write an essay for the first time. The teacher taught us about that for two days. She taught us how to write the first paragraph with three sentences. The second paragraph is made up of five sentences and so on. We should be practicing together. That is what I am used to. Until the girls learn how to write, she should teach us. I don't know how to write an essay. I don't understand unless I see the steps in front of me. I don't understand from an explanation alone.
11. **Researcher:** You are talking about Level 3?
12. **Farida:** Yes, even now, I can't do it well.
13. **Researcher:** Does this mean the teacher is at fault?
14. **Farida:** Yes.
15. **Researcher:** Does this affect whether you participate or not?
16. **Farida:** Yes.
17. **Researcher:** Do you not know that not participating in-class affects your overall grades?
18. **Farida:** Yes, I know, but what am I supposed to do? I don't understand her.
19. **Researcher:** What about the Listening and Speaking class? Do you understand the teacher?
20. **Farida:** Not everything, but the problem is that I feel absent-minded a lot. I feel some times she speaks continuously. She doesn't stop or laugh with us or talk to us about other topics.

21. **Researcher:** This cause you to not concentrate and to be absent-minded?
22. **Farida:** Yes. Sometimes I feel she talks about things that are not necessary. She speaks in a monotone. She doesn't raise her voice when talking about important things and lower it for not-so-important things. She doesn't walk back and forth...like that...this [the teacher's behaviour] makes me focus and not drift off.
23. **Researcher:** You mean that the teacher's intonation is very important...?
24. **Farida:** Also her way of explaining things...
25. **Researcher:** This is in the Listening and Speaking class?
26. **Farida:** And also in the Reading and Writing class, the teacher talks constantly and does not encourage the girls.
27. **Researcher:** You mean that the teacher is an important factor...?
28. **Farida:** Yes. Even when the subject is difficult and we can't stand it, a teacher has the ability to make the girls like it.

Farida's summary of her personal experience in class is consistent with Price's (1991) report that "Instructors had played a significant role in the amount of anxiety each student had experienced in particular classes" (p. 106). Farida pointed out that she thinks that the teacher is the major source of problems for her. When elaborating, she went on to blame the teacher and say that, in the end, it is the teacher's fault that students struggle and dislike their classes. Farida does not appear to take any of the blame (or responsibility). Farida's perspective is the same for the reading and writing class and for the listening and speaking class. Although she gave different reasons and problems associated with each of the two teachers, the end result was the same. In Farida's view, the teacher causes the students to love or hate the subject of study, regardless of how easy or difficult the subject is. More recently in a different part of the world (China), Yan and Horwitz (2008) also found that the language teacher, teaching methods, and the teacher-student relationship are at the center of the students' in-class experience.

Farida also reports that she feels "absent-minded a lot...and this makes me not focus and drift off." One can assume from this excerpt that Farida is also experiencing anxiety and is showing avoidance behaviours by drifting off in class and by being absent-minded. FLA and negative emotions interfering with learning is consistent with Oxford (2005; see Chapter I for discussion). Oxford (2005) discussed avoidance behaviour, including not attending class, as a way of managing anxiety. Furthermore, Ehrman (1996) discussed the used of defence mechanisms to manage anxiety. Farida's avoiding class and avoiding participating in class may be (likely unintentional) methods that she uses in

order to manage her own feelings and reduce her anxiety, but these defence mechanisms directly interfere with her ability to learn in class.

Farida also says that she feels that the teacher speaks in a monotonous manner, which could be more indicative of how she hears the teacher than of how the teacher actually speaks. Horwitz et al. (1986) found that “Anxious language learners also complain of difficulties discriminating the sounds and structures of a target language message. One male student claims to hear only a loud buzz whenever his teacher speaks the foreign language” (p. 29). Moreover, Young (1991) noted that foreign language anxiety can manifest itself via a “distortion of sounds, inability to produce the intonation and rhythm of the language or simply refusing to speak and remaining silent” (see Bailey, Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2003, p. 430). The perceived monotonous voice may be a sign of the anxiety experienced by the students.

#### **5.4 Discussion of Level 3**

In this chapter, each of the Level 3 case study participant’s anxiety score on the AFLAQ, formal classroom observations, field notes, individual interviews, and group interviews were brought together to gain a better understanding of each of the five Level 3 participants individually and as a group. A few common trends came out among the five Level 3 participants. The participants frequently indicated that the teacher was largely responsible for student anxiety, and many of the students (e.g., Sara, Youssra) discussed seeking and not receiving feedback, correction, and support from the teacher. In addition, many of the students avoided completing (or procrastinated before completing) their work.

Kleinmann (1977) talked about syntactic avoidance and topic avoidance behaviour, and other researchers (e.g., Oxford, 2005) have talked about avoidance behaviour more generally. Students in Level 3 showed avoidance behaviour and even patterns of repeated avoidance when they chose not to complete their assignments on time, did not prepare oral presentations, and otherwise avoided doing live presentations (e.g., audio taped themselves reading the presentation from a script and played the tape in class). Students explained that they preferred taping oral presentations so that they would not make mistakes and suffer through having teachers and other students look at and possibly negatively judge them while they stood in front of the class to give the

presentation. Based on Horwitz et al. (1986), this avoidance of oral presentations might be due to the students' desire to avoid negative evaluation from their teachers and classmates. Horwitz et al. (1986) also addressed fear of negative evaluation in their FLCAS. The students might also protect their own feelings and self-views by avoiding oral presentations (e.g., Ehrman, 1996).

As discussed above, Yan and Horwitz (2008) also concluded that teacher characteristics, cultural differences between student and teacher, and teaching methods are important factors that may have profound effects on the language learner. Their results are consistent with the statements and reported experiences of students in Level 3 case studies. As discussed above, Price (1991) also found that the instructor plays a pivotal role in the language learning process. Furthermore, all five Level 3 participants elaborated that in-class oral presentations provoked substantial anxiety for them. Similarly, Price (1991) found that her study participants reported speaking in the target language in front of their peers as a source of anxiety. The importance of the teacher and the teacher-student relationship have been emphasised by the majority of case study participants in both Level 1 and Level 3, in addition to Price (1991), Young (1991), and even earlier models advising on language instruction (e.g., the Counselling-Learning model from Curran, 1961, and discussed in Chapter II). In Curran's model, the teacher plays a pivotal role by acting as a facilitator and has the specific role of reducing anxiety in students and lowering their inhibition levels so they can speak openly. The participants in my case studies did not believe they had the support or help of their teachers, which appeared to lead to some of them (e.g., Farida) hating their language classes.

Although previous research (e.g., Price, 1991) had noted that the difficulty of subject matter covered in class is important in shaping students' anxiety, the students in my case studies did not discuss this issue. The participants agreed that the subject is important, but identified the teacher as more important. Farida even stated that a teacher has the ability to make students feel challenged by easy material, or find very difficult material easy to learn (see Level 3/Excerpt 11 dated November 19, 2006).

The issues case study participants identified as anxiety-provoking can be interpreted as suggesting ways in which teachers might change their classroom behaviour in order to reduce the students' anxiety levels. For example, in Level 3/Excerpt 7, Sara (see turn 4) says that just having the teacher reassure her while she is giving an in-class presentation

helps her feel satisfied. In Level 3/Excerpt 8, Sara (see turn 1) stated that she needed the teacher to allow more time for her to formulate her answers to questions. These points as well as others throughout interviews from participants in Level 1 and in Level 3 indicate specific challenges that students have and specific ways that teachers might help the students (e.g., by making sure students have a moment to formulate their statements and that the students are not interrupted by their classmates).

Some of the participants also identified specific issues in class that provoked anxiety and discussed the ways that they wished class were conducted so that they might be less anxious. Participants in Level 3 appear more aware of their surroundings both inside of and outside of the classroom and they are thinking more critically than participants in Level 1. Participants in Level 3 discussed specific examples (during interviews) of things that the teacher could do that would make the class better for them, make them feel more supported, and reduce their anxiety. Sara said that she wanted the teacher to allow more time for the students to complete listening tasks and that she needed more feedback around her in-class performance. Tamara, Farida, Noura, and Youssra all concurred with Sara; they, too, believed that they would benefit from receiving more constructive (not overly critical or negative) feedback from their teachers, and they also wanted more encouragement and less favouritism within the classroom.

## **5.5 Comparison of Level 1 and Level 3**

In comparing and contrasting the group of students in Level 1 to the group of students in Level 3, specific patterns can be identified. Students in the Level 1 cohort describe themselves as socially cohesive as a single group, whereas students in the Level 3 cohort spend a fairly large amount of interview time discussing what is apparent during classroom observations: there is a social division of Level 3 into two main groups. Below, these similarities and differences are expounded, and the students' experiences of anxiety are further discussed in relation to existing research.

### **5.5.1 Social dynamics**

Students in Level 1 claimed to feel as though all students in their class were socially close and supportive of each other (see Section 5.2). Some of the students, they say,

have friends in the mainstream college and inter-mingle with those friends, but that does not interfere with their supporting each other. All the students in Level 1 were in constant contact (i.e., by mobile phone). For example, Hind stated, "...even when we go outside of the college, we all go out together or we send mobile text messages to each other. We always have some kind of communication." The students in Level 1 said that they believe they are all close because all the students in their class are nice. However, it might be the case that the students feel close because they have been brought together by and are mutually coping with the stress of beginning in the CPP. In Level 1, the students are being introduced to the new system that differs greatly from their high school experience. They maybe all overwhelmed by the program and be acting as a support group for each other. Although this CPP program is set within Saudi Arabia, the teaching methods and the school itself form a culture that is new for the recent high school graduates in Level 1; the program has new rules and regulations that they must now learn how to function within.

In contrast, discussion and description of Level 3, whether based on my classroom observations or the case study participants' own discussion of their struggles in the class, highlight the social division of the class. The talkative girls, the "in-group", receive attention from the teacher and appear to dominate the class. Students who took part in case studies for the current research expressed frustration with these students and the teacher's favouritism towards them. The issue of favouritism towards the talkative students and how that favouritism makes others feel was a topic of discussion in the November 5, 2006, group interview (see Level 3/Excerpt 3), among other interviews. In Level 3/Excerpt 3, all five participants (Tamara, Youssra, Farida, Sara, and Noura) discuss feeling discouraged and uninvolved in the class because of the lack of attention and feedback they receive.

In Level 3, the "in-group," as reported by my participants, made it very difficult for students within the class, particularly those who were not in the in-group, to take part in and learn effectively in class due to teacher favouritism, select students' dominating class with off-topic discussions (sometimes in Arabic), and, eventually, feelings of dread and dismay about attending class. This sort of divided group dynamic has been discussed in the specific context of education and classrooms. According to Dörnyei and Murphrey (2003), "[a] group has greater resources than any single member alone...group dynamics is also relevant to educational context because the class group can have a significant

impact on the effectiveness of the learning” (p. 3). Furthermore, Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) explain that if a conflict, rebellious attitudes, or unwillingness to cooperate on the students’ parts emerges in the classroom, the language class becomes a nightmare. In this context, even the most motivated student will lose motivation and commitment. In Level 3, this is apparent in the statements made by many students who indicate that they hate their classes (Farida, see Turn 8, Level 3/Excerpt 3), they do not feel they get anything from class (Sara, see Turn 3, Level 3/Excerpt 4), and they are depressed or discouraged regarding class (Youssra, see Turn 5, Level 3/Excerpt 3).

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) argue that the social climate of the language classroom is largely determined by the students, or learners, within the classroom. The dynamic is impacted by the group’s characteristics and by the development of the groups’ interactions over time. However, this is not to say that the teacher lacks a role. In Dörnyei and Murphey’s (2003) description, the teacher is actually a core component of the group. The group

is a powerful social unit, which is in many ways bigger than the sum of its parts. If group development goes astray, it can become a serious obstacle to learning and can ‘punish’ its members by making group life miserable. However, when positive group development processes are attended to, they can reward the group’s members and can provide the necessary driving force to pursue group learning goals beyond our expectations (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003, p. 4).

One aspect of the authors’ characterisation of a group is that the group develops its own silent internal structure, which includes regulation of entry and departure into/from the group. Also, groups have stable interpersonal relationship patterns as well as establish status hierarchy. These structures are apparent in the Level 3 case studies, who discussed the “in-group” as having a leader, and the students in that social group always sticking together even for classroom assignments (e.g., presentations). Indeed, when a student who was not in the in-group suggested working together on a group project, she was rejected. Based on Dörnyei and Murphey’s (2003) research, one plausible explanation for why the different classroom dynamics developed for the Level 1 and Level 3 cohorts is that the individuals within each group – both the students and the teacher – combined to form a cohesive group in Level 1 and a divided group in Level 3. For example, the students’ interactions may have begun these patterns of group dynamics, and the teachers’ leadership encouraged or supported the dynamics.

### **5.5.2 Experience of anxiety**

Based on the descriptions of participants in Level 1 and Level 3, FLA can be seen to play a major role in the all-female, English medium college. The differences between the levels lie in the causes of this anxiety. The experiences and performance of students in both Level 1 and Level 3 are consistent with findings from previous research (e.g., Batumlu & Erden, 2007; Horwitz et al., 1996; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a). Batumlu and Erden (2007) found that learners at all academic levels of a program in Turkey showed a significant negative relationship between FLA and English language achievement. They found that learners with a higher level of anxiety showed lower achievement, but that anxiety during the very early stages of English language learning did not predict later achievement. Students might adjust to or overcome initial anxiety as they become accustomed to a class, but later anxiety may interfere with learning. Batumlu and Erden (2007) also concluded that students at higher level of language learning, whose grades were lower, also had higher levels of anxiety associated with studying English. This pattern of findings and suggested explanation might account for patterns observed in the Saudi Arabian case study participants. Students in Level 1 who completed the AFLAQ at the start of their first semester in the program reported anxiety at that time, but four of five students were able to continue their studies and pass the course. One student, Maha, appeared overwhelmed with anxiety and left the program. Students in Level 3, in contrast, had more experience with the program and the anxiety that they reported may not have faded through the course of the semester. In studying advanced language learners, Marcos-Llinas and Garau (2009), found that advanced learners may have high levels of anxiety but still perform well. The findings from the current research appear to differ from Marcos-Llinas and Garau's (2009) work. Level 3 students' continued anxiety may have negatively impacted their performance; three of the five case study participants from Level 3 failed the semester.

Based on the AFLAQ scores for students in the Level 1 and Level 3 case studies, the case study participants in Level 1 were slightly more anxious with an average AFLAQ score of 3.87 ( $SD = .92$ ), as opposed to case study participants in Level 3 who had an average AFLAQ score of 3.62 ( $SD = .83$ ). Interviews and classroom observations revealed that case study participants in both levels experienced anxiety and stress in a variety of classroom and social situations related to their English studies. Overall, whether participants from Level 1 or from Level 3 were more anxious is unclear, but it

must be noted that the case study participants were selected based on their having relatively moderate to high levels of anxiety according to their self-report responses on the AFLAQ. In the CPP, the students' reports that they were anxious were corroborated by their exhibiting behaviour consistent with identified symptoms of language-related anxiety discussed by Ehrman (1996), Oxford (2005), Horwitz et al. (1986), and others. The experiences and situations that were anxiety-provoking for each student are briefly reviewed below.

Level 1 case study participants were understandably anxious. They were in a new environment and exposed to novel teaching methods and demands, and being anxious in this circumstance is consistent with previous research (e.g., MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a) showing that language learners early in their studies tend to be more anxious. For Level 3 case study participants, anxiety stemmed from the language teacher, classmates, group dynamics, and the giving of presentations in the classroom context. All of these factors – the social setting and demands placed on the students to speak and present in that setting – were linked. In Level 3, the case study participants' anxiety was not so much from the task of learning the foreign language, but from the social context of the language learning classroom.

The finding that anxiety stems not from subject matter, but from social settings, is consistent with research from Price (1991) and exemplifies Block's (2003) argument that the social setting in which learning occurs plays a significant role in the language learning process. In Price's (1991) work, Woodrow's (2006) work, and observed in the case studies presented in this thesis, students frequently identified the situation of being required to speak in front of peers as anxiety provoking. In the current study, Level 3 case study participants identified giving presentations as a primary stressor. However, participants from Level 1 did not. This difference is likely due to the fact that in-class presentations were common for Level 3, but participants in Level 1 were not required to give an in-class presentation until the end of the semester, and then they gave only one.

Price's (1991) students discussed the stress of transitioning from high school, where language courses were easier, to college. As discussed in Chapter I, the difference between English language courses in high school and the CPP classes is very dramatic and may have resulted in culture shock (as defined by Horwitz, 2008) for these students. In the context of the current research, both Hind and Maha discussed feeling ill-prepared for college because they had learned only very basic English skills in high school. In the

same conversation (Level 1/Excerpt 5), Hind described seeing herself as less skilled than other students in Level 1 of the CPP. Specifically, Hind states that she is less skilled in English – three levels behind where she believes she should be – because she is coming from a *Quran* reciting school, which does not focus on teaching English. Addressing the issue of relative skill and ability across students within a class, Price (1991) suggested that students who experience high anxiety actually do have weaker language skills than their classmates. Hind, who had received the highest score of all the case study participants on the AFLAQ (4.30, very anxious), worked very hard in her classes and achieved an average grade of a “C+” at the end of the semester. However, the course work was quite difficult for her and she may have been accurate in seeing her own language skills as weaker than those of her peers.

The majority of the students in both Level 1 (particularly Sabah, Maha, and Hind) and Level 3 (particularly Tamara, Youssra, Sara, and Farida) describe their teachers as at least contributing to the level of anxiety experienced by students in the classrooms. Some of the students discuss specific issues, such as teachers’ explaining a subject in a way that does not make sense (Maha), teachers over-correcting students when they speak (Sara), and teachers showing favouritism (Farida). Consistent with these students’ claims that the teachers are partially responsible for their students’ anxiety, Price (1991) argued that the teacher plays a significant role in increasing or decreasing student anxiety in the foreign language classroom. The students need for the teacher to offer encouragement, support, and attention to their efforts without being excessively critical of the students’ errors.

Overall, from classroom observations to individual and group interviews, participants in Level 1 and Level 3 all experienced anxiety, though their anxiety was prompted by different situations or pressures. These findings are consistent with previous researchers (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 2001) who have found that different individual learners find different specific situations anxiety-provoking. The variation in how individual learners view a situation can be extreme. As summarizing her work, Horwitz (2001) said, “in almost all cases, any task that was judged ‘comfortable’ by some learners was also judged ‘stressful’ by others” (p. 118).

**Table 5.4** Summary of anxiety-provoking situations for Level 1

Student	Anxiety-provoking issue or situation
Samaher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speaking in front of students or teacher</li><li>• Teacher/power/grades</li><li>• Teaching methods</li><li>• Instructor/learner interactions</li></ul>
Sabah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher</li><li>• Topic studied</li><li>• Speaking out loud</li></ul>
Maha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher</li><li>• Harder content</li><li>• Competitiveness</li><li>• Teaching methods</li></ul>
Zakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answering questions</li><li>• Student familiarity</li><li>• Naturally immune to anxiety</li></ul>
Hind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructor/ learner interactions</li><li>• Competitiveness</li><li>• Specific topics</li></ul>

As summarised below in Table 5.5, Level 3 participants were much more focussed on specific teacher-student social interactions and teacher behaviours (e.g., favouritism) and the specific demands place on them in their classes (e.g., presentations).

The majority of Level 1 and Level 3 participants point out the teacher's characteristics and student-teacher interactions as major causes of anxiety, which is consistent with Yan and Horwitz's (2008) findings (discussed in Chapter II).

**Table 5.5** Summary of anxiety-provoking situations for Level 3

Student	Anxiety-provoking issue or situation
Noura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speaking in class</li><li>• Teaching methods</li><li>• Classroom presentations</li></ul>
Tamara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answering questions</li><li>• Fear of negative evaluation</li><li>• Teacher: favouritism, not receiving feedback from teacher, no encouragement</li><li>• Speaking out loud/ in front of new students/classroom presentations</li></ul>
Sara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher</li><li>• Fear of negative evaluation</li><li>• Listening/ need more time to gather thoughts</li><li>• Need feedback from teacher</li><li>• Classroom presentations</li></ul>
Youssra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speaking in front of new students in class/ familiarity/presentations</li><li>• Teacher: favouritism, not receiving feedback from teacher, clarification, support, lack of encouragement</li><li>• Competitiveness: grades, comparison</li></ul>
Farida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speaking in front of new students in class and teacher/familiarity/presentations</li><li>• Teacher: lack of attention, lack of encouragement, manner (monotonous), no clear instructions</li><li>• Different teaching methods used</li></ul>

Participants also expressed significant discomfort and concern with giving in-class presentations, which has been discussed in a variety of studies (e.g., Koch & Terrell, 1991; Young, 1990; Woodrow, 2006, discussed in Chapter II). Dewaele (2007, 2008) has found that public speaking is an extremely anxiety-provoking activity, especially if it is done in a foreign language. The university students who took part in Koch and Terrell's (1991) study reported three separate types of in-class presentations – oral presentations, skits, and role playing – as the most anxiety-provoking situations they faced in their language classes. Although Horwitz et al. (1986) examined speaking in class as anxiety-provoking, they did not specifically examine giving in-class presentations. Students in Level 3 appeared to be strongly affected by their anxiety about giving presentations. Indeed, case study participants in Level 3 attempted to avoid giving live presentations, opting instead to pre-record their presentations, despite the fact that practice speaking is necessary in learning a new language. Only Sara (Level 3) actually gave a live, in-class presentation as her final presentation of the semester. She did say that she was anxious,

but she gave the presentation nonetheless. Sara had confidence in her speaking in English towards the end of the semester and tried her best to do the live presentation. Sara's low level of anxiety may have been enough to motivate her to practice and to perform well (i.e., functioned as facilitating anxiety).

The knowledge gained from this research can inform future research questions. The interviews and perspectives of students in this research might also be valuable to teachers because they might prompt teachers to consider the experiences of their students, particularly the experiences of their more anxious students. Teachers' understanding of the classroom situation might be bolstered by their seeing the classroom as a social setting, as discussed by Curran (1961). In the current study, students reported seeing the teacher as superior or as having a role of authority in the class and students also look to the teacher for feedback and encouragement. Although in-class presentations are important for gaining experience speaking in front of others and, hopefully, gaining confidence in one's language skills, the anxiety associated with in-class presentations can be reduced if the presentations are conducted following certain guidelines. Sara emphasized the usefulness of teacher feedback when she said (Level 3/Excerpt 7, turn 4),

I felt satisfied mid-way through the presentation when I looked at the teacher and found her smiling and looking like she was genuinely interested in listening to our presentation.

This example serves as a simple suggestion of something a teacher can do to encourage students and to decrease their anxiety. According to the case study participants, the teacher should not interrupt the students while they give presentations, but should give each student or group personalised feedback (possibly in private so that the students are not criticised in front of classmates) in order for the students to maximally benefit.

Excess anxiety can interfere with students' learning, and so teachers might be able to improve students' learning and in-class performance by helping the students to have lower levels of anxiety. In Krashen's (1982) metaphor of how anxiety interferes with language learning, anxiety leads to a barrier or a dense filter that will not allow information to pass through so that it can be absorbed by the student. To use this metaphor, if the teacher is to truly communicate information to the students, to engage the students in the learning process, then the teacher must ensure that the students are receptive. The students' filters must be lowered. A small level of anxiety may help to

motivate the students to work and to achieve (i.e., to avoid performing badly), but if the anxiety level becomes too high, it may become debilitating (Scovel, 1978) or cause the raising of such a filter.

In early stages of language learning, students may be going through major life changes (i.e., from high school to college, with the accompanying changes in teaching methodology, expectations, and environment). The students may be under significant stress and identify the teacher as a cause of their anxiety when, indeed, multiple factors are involved. In the English CPP, the students might focus on the teachers' role in class. The students point to the teachers as causing their anxiety, because the teacher is at the centre of the classroom and is making demands on the student. In high school, as discussed in Chapter I, students in Saudi Arabia may become accustomed to having rather little interaction with their teachers. The teacher supplies information, which the students attempt to absorb. However, high school teachers are less likely to push the students to talk in class and to participate by giving in-class presentations. In the CPP, the teachers tell the students that they must participate in these anxiety-provoking situations. The students might enter the college unprepared to ask questions of the teacher, and especially unprepared to speak in English in beginning English classes. Teachers might ease their students' anxiety by allowing the students to speak in their native language at the beginning of the class, helping the students to rephrase and repeat their ideas in the target language (as suggested by Curran, 1961).

## 5.5 Conclusion

In the current chapter, I have presented and discussed the experiences of case study participants from Level 3 of the CPP. I have brought together multiple sources of information, including both quantitative and qualitative data, to triangulate their reported causes of anxiety and to determine the most frequently identified causes of anxiety. This information was brought together in an attempt to explore and better understand the nature of FLA in the Level 3 case study participants and to identify the possible impact that anxiety may have for these students. In the end of this chapter, the patterns of language learning behaviour and experiences were compared between the five Level 1 participants and the five Level 3 participants to gain a better understanding of the anxiety provoking situations for both levels, their similarities and their differences. Specific

patterns were identified. In the next chapter, the knowledge gained through the current research will be discussed in the context of the existing field of research and recommendations for language education will be made.

## *Chapter VI*

### ***Discussion and Recommendations***

#### **6.1 Introduction**

At the beginning of this thesis, I provided a description of the sociocultural setting in which this research took place so that readers can consider the participants' experiences in a broader context. Saudi Arabian culture in general and recent social and economic changes in particular are of vital importance for readers to understand if they are also to understand the current Saudi Arabian norms pertaining to EFL education. English education is of increasing importance in Saudi Arabia and programs are being developed quickly. Simultaneously, women in Saudi Arabia continue to develop new, evolving, and more active roles in Saudi Arabia's professional and economic world.

Next, I discussed the research history that lead to the birth of FLA as a unique topic. Different studies from around the world, when available, were discussed in order to provide a varied and global perspective on FLA. These studies informed the formulation of my research questions and shaped my study design itself. For example, review of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) work with student groups in at the Learning Skill Center (LSC) at the University of Texas prompted me to consider whether students in Saudi Arabia would identify the same classroom stressors when asked about foreign language difficulties. In Chapter III of the thesis, I presented a pilot study used to explore differences between American students' experiences and perspectives on anxiety in language learning (which informed the FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986) and Saudi Arabian students' experiences and perspectives on the same issue. This pilot study served as a basis for the later development of the AFLAQ, the newly developed questionnaire used to assess anxiety in Arab foreign language students. I developed the methodology used in the current research to develop a greater understanding of how FLA is experienced and what behaviours may result from FLA in the all-female English medium college. In the latter half of Chapter III, I presented the reasons for incorporating multiple methods of data collection, including self-report questionnaire responses, qualitative individual and group interviews, and classroom observations.

In examining case study participants in Level 1 and Level 3 in Chapters IV and V, respectively, I triangulated the students' responses to the AFLAQ with my in-class observations and participants' interviews to examine the nature of FLA in this specific context: the female-only EFL classrooms in an English medium college in Saudi Arabia. I explored the effect FLA has on the students' behaviour as well as the consequences of FLA and related behaviours (i.e., the impact on learning). Throughout both chapters, I connected case study participants' responses and experiences with existing research to gain a wider understanding of the universality of FLA and its impact.

In the current chapter, I will briefly revisit each of the research questions that motivated this thesis, summarise findings related to each question, and then go on to discuss the limitations that must be kept in mind when interpreting results of this research. Next, I will review the knowledge and information that can be gleaned from these case studies to inform both researchers' and practitioners' understanding of FLA and to improve foreign language instruction, particularly within Saudi Arabia. Finally, specific recommendations for future research and teaching practices within Saudi Arabia will be discussed to conclude the thesis.

## **6.2 Research Questions Revisited**

Three primary questions drove the research in this thesis. In this section, each question is presented and then the information and answers found through this thesis are discussed.

1. What is the nature of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), from the students' perspectives, in female-only EFL classrooms in this English medium college in Saudi Arabia?

Analysis of students' reports and interviews revealed that students in Level 1 and students in Level 3 of the CPP experienced anxiety they believed to be related to a variety of characteristics of the classroom environment and of the teacher, in addition to feeling anxious about how they appeared to their peers and their teacher and how they would be graded in the class. Specifically, students in Level 1 often identified the teacher, teaching methods, interactions between students and teacher, and grades as provoking anxiety. Students in Level 3 more often discussed teacher favouritism as a

specific aspect of teacher-student interaction that prompted them to feel anxious. In addition, multiple students in Level 3 indicated that speaking in class and giving in-class presentations (which were not common for students in Level 1) sources of anxiety.

One student in particular, Maha, stood out as suffering dramatically from her experience of anxiety when she attempted to attend the CPP in order to learn English. Maha's description of her anxiety and the cause of her anxiety were culture-specific, emphasising the importance of examining students' perspectives and taking culture into account when studying any individuals' experiences. Maha believed that she had suffered a "bad eye" or somehow been jinxed so that she could not attend the CPP. She described her experiences of coming near the college in terms very consistent with a severe stress-response -- her heart would race and pound, her palms would sweat, and she felt as if she could not cope with the situation. Ultimately, the impact of Maha's overwhelming experiences was that she dropped out of the CPP, and it appears that severe anxiety at attending the CPP was the cause. Maha indicated in a telephone conversation with me that she planned to improve her English and then return to the CPP again, which suggested that the problem was not the "bad eye" that she had claimed, but rather it could have been that she was afraid of failing or of negative evaluation from her peers or teacher.

2. What are the students' perceptions of how FLA affects their behaviour in this setting? And what are the consequences?

Although Maha did not specifically describe herself as having left the program due to high levels of anxiety, that does seem to be the case. Furthermore, Maha's avoidance of the CPP classroom was consistent with the feelings expressed by other students. Students in Level 3 indicated hating their class (Farida, see Turn 8, Level 3/Excerpt 3) and being depressed and discouraged regarding class (Youssra, see Turn 5, Level 3/Excerpt 3). Students in Level 1 also identified very specific experiences of anxiety. For example, Hind (Level 1/Excerpt 1) indicated that even seeing a microphone makes her feel anxious, and other students in Level 1 agreed that hearing their own voices makes them feel anxious. The students' classroom anxiety has an impact on their performance and their ability to learn, as another student from Level 1 discussed. Zakia

explained that her in-class anxiety can be debilitating, even to the extent that she feels as though she has forgotten how to read when called upon (Level 1/Excerpt 6).

### 3. How can knowledge gleaned from this research inform understandings of FLA more generally?

The knowledge gained in the current thesis extends researchers' understanding of FLA to a new educational setting and culture by exploring the experiences of female students in Saudi Arabia, from their own perspectives, in an all-female English medium college. Given the increasing prevalence of English in Saudi Arabia, this new information may be of great utility in improving English education within Saudi Arabia, but also in other Arab countries with similar cultures. This research also brought attention to how individuals from different cultures may have different ways of making sense of or interpreting their experiences of anxiety (e.g., Maha's being jinxed).

Practically, a result of the current research is the development of the AFLAQ for use in quantitative assessment of anxiety in Arabic cultures. The newly developed AFLAQ may be useful for teachers to help them identify foreign language students experiencing anxiety in Saudi Arabia and other, surrounding Gulf States (which have similar cultures and educational systems). Armed with new information about FLA and how to identify students experiencing FLA, the teachers may take a proactive approach to try to solve this problem by modifying their teaching methods, reaching out to, and including the more anxious students. Administration of the AFLAQ through-out the semester might also be useful in assessing whether changes in teaching methods and classroom practices have helped to reduce students' anxiety.

## 6.3 Limitations

### 6.3.1 AFLAQ

The introduction of the newly constructed questionnaire that was used in the current research, the AFLAQ, bring with it limitations and potential weaknesses inherent to the development and use of any novel instrument. The AFLAQ simply has not yet been

used frequently enough or in large or diverse enough samples to be confident in its robustness. One recommendation is thus to further use and explore the questionnaire as a tool for assessing FLA. However, there are other, more specific limitations and recommendations regarding the AFLAQ.

First, it appears the students in the current study may have had difficulty interpreting and responding to the negatively worded items in the questionnaire. As an example, Maha reported having experienced many symptoms of anxiety (e.g., a racing heart) and her responses to most of the items on the AFLAQ were consistent with her experiencing high anxiety. However, her responses to the reverse-coded items (8(R), 12(R), and 28(R)) all indicated relatively low anxiety. Some inconsistency between ALFAQ scores and general observations may be due to the fact that the AFLAQ was administered very early in the semester, before students fully understood the expectations of the program or their new classes. They may have experienced either an increase or a decrease in anxiety as the context became more familiar. To further understand why students' responses to negatively worded items stand out from their other responses, it is recommended that the use of negatively worded items within this population and this questionnaire are investigated in future studies. Two potential methods are suggested. First, the AFLAQ could be administered to a large sample, and the statistical relationship (e.g., correlations) between positively and negatively worded items in the questionnaire could be examined. If the negatively worded items stand out (i.e., participants with generally high levels of anxiety appear to have low levels of anxiety if those three items are examined alone), participants may not be responding to them appropriately. Second, as a part of the assessment of the validity of the instrument overall, researchers could examine whether inclusion of the negatively worded items (some of which arguably assess the same underlying concept as positively worded items – general anxiety in the language learning context) is associated with weaker convergent validity or predictive validity. To assess the measure's convergent validity, researchers could administer another measure that would be expected to be related to the AFLAQ, then look at how strongly results on the two measures are correlated. To assess the measure's predictive validity, researchers could use results on the AFLAQ to predict performance on a task that is expected to be related (such as fluency during an oral presentation). If the positively worded items on the AFLAQ stand out as much more strongly related to either the other measure or the outcome variable than the negatively worded items do, there may indeed be an issue with the negatively worded items. Such a pattern of results

would support the hypothesis that the negatively worded items are not accurately assessing the same underlying construct (e.g., FLA) as the positively worded items, perhaps because participants have difficulty reading, interpreting, and responding to the negatively worded items.

A second potential limitation of the use of the new AFLAQ is that its psychometric properties (e.g., test-retest reliability, predictive validity) are not yet known. In the current context, using the questionnaire to identify individuals for a case study, this is not an obstacle because each participant is carefully observed using interviews, classroom observation, and other assessment methods. However, studies seeking to use the AFLAQ alone need to first examine its psychometric properties (e.g., inter-rater reliability, test-retest reliability). To examine the AFLAQ's inter-rater reliability, or how strongly different people agree on the same student's anxiety level, researchers could have multiple people (e.g., teacher, classmate, student) rate the same student and then compare the ratings. To examine the validity of the questionnaire researchers could look at how strongly students' self-ratings on the AFLAQ relate to other assessments of anxiety (such as teachers' subjective ratings of students in-class anxiety). Finally, to examine test-retest reliability, researchers could have students complete the AFLAQ multiple times during the semester or even annually in a multi-year language program and then compare each student's self-ratings. Specifically, using the AFLAQ to predict grades in a class might be a starting point for examining the AFLAQ's predictive validity. In the current study, particularly examining case study participants in Level 3, students with high anxiety scores on the AFLAQ appear to be at risk for failing their courses.

Third, the AFLAQ itself needs to be modified to avoid a problem observed in the current study. The version of the AFLAQ used in this study requests that students provide information about their previous language learning experience in the specific program that was the context for the current research. However, even within the current research, this oversight was associated with a failure to collect information about one student's previous experience in a different program. Therefore, the AFLAQ should be modified to ask students' about their past language learning experience in any program.

### **6.3.2 Interviews**

The individual and group interviews used in this research also had weaknesses and challenges that must be taken into consideration when transcripts and results are considered.

First, the topics discussed in interviews were strongly influenced by what occurred in class, because classroom observations often shaped and prompted research questions. This is a strength in that it meant that interviews asked participants about their actual, in-class experiences. However, it is a weakness in that the topics discussed may be limited or narrow because depending on what happened in class that day, and also because all classroom observations were conducted in listening and speaking classes.

Second, interview information is limited to that which students volunteered. If an individual student was shy or quiet, or if an individual student opted not to actively participate in interviews for any other reason, her perspective was less represented in the data. If there were a particular topic that did not come up in interviews or that the students did not feel comfortable discussing, that topic would not be represented in the interview data. On the other hand, if a topic did come up in an interview, then it was possible to discuss that topic at length and to ask free-form, probing questions were used in order to learn more about the topic. Questions were not restricted to those generated ahead of time.

Third, all information in the interviews as determine not only by what the individuals in the interviews said, but also by the fact that only a small number of students were selected to be included in the case studies. Following only a few case study participants allowed for learning more about each student's experiences, but also limited the number of different perspectives and experiences examined in the research.

### **6.3.3 Individual differences**

A more general limitation of the current research design is a lack of formal or quantitative examination of individual differences, despite the focus on individuals as case studies. Language learning does not occur in isolation. Learning and using a new language is a social task that requires individuals to convey information about themselves and their ideas using a new system of communication, including new words

and syntactic (Block, 2003). Students will almost definitely be unable to precisely communicate their ideas when they start learning. This may prompt anxiety. The students might feel foolish being unable to express themselves fluidly and clearly, and their views of themselves may be threatened (Ellis, 2010). However, how students learn, how they cope with the new language learning situation, and how they communicate are all influenced by factors they bring to the situation – including their individual personalities. A number of personality factors may impact on whether and how individuals experience foreign language anxiety. For example, are individuals who are generally emotionally reactive more likely to be anxious in the foreign language situation, as well as in other situations? Although the hypotheses that individuals higher in general anxiety may also be high in FLA are plausible and testable, FLA has been identified as a specific and unique type of anxiety (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986; see Chapter II for a review of this issue). In the current study, no separate assessment of general anxiety or social anxiety (such as anxiety related to public speaking) was used. However, although not standardized or comparable across participants, plentiful information regarding the specific and unique nature of anxiety in the specific context of trying to learn a new language is available from the case study interviews. For example, Zakia talks about herself as generally being anxious when it comes to speaking, saying, “No, this is me normally...especially when I talk...or when someone is listening to what I say...for I don’t know how to talk.” In contrast, Hind talked about being energized and engaged by the Listening and Speaking class, which used different teaching methods than other courses and required active participation; for Hind individually, this was a benefit of the class, though it was a stressor for other students.

Based on previous research (e.g., Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008), the individual difference emotional intelligence (or EI) is predictive of foreign language students’ scores on an assessment of FLA. EI is a stable, individual difference in emotion-related perception and self-views (Dewaele et al., 2008). In the current study, EI was not evaluated and so this finding cannot be examined. However, of note in the current study was the participants’ concern regarding how others – including the teacher and their classmates – perceived them and whether they were able to communicate their ideas. Based on students’ high level of concern with the emotional experience of learning a foreign language, from receiving feedback from the teacher to worry about how they were being viewed and evaluated, the variable of EI may be a useful variable to assess within the Saudi Arabian EFL context.

Another potential variable of interest is individual differences in perfectionism. Perfectionists have been found to have higher levels of FLA than individuals who are not perfectionists (e.g., Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). What is the relationship between perfectionism, FLA, and actual class performance? In the current research, two students (Samaher and Noura) both scored only a moderate level of anxiety on the AFLAQ. However, in the end, Samaher (a Level 1 student) earned an overall grade of a “B+” – the highest grade of any student who took part in the case studies – and Noura (a Level 3 student) failed the course. Was Samaher a perfectionist, and Noura not attentive to her class because she was newly married? Future studies might be able to predict classroom performance by also examining perfectionism in conjunction with FLA.

#### **6.3.4 Sample**

The current study is also limited in that it examines only a sample of female students in an all-female college in Saudi Arabia. To explore the possibility that results of the current study generalise to other samples, it would be important to use the AFLAQ and conduct similar research examining the foreign language learning experiences of men in all-male colleges in Saudi Arabia, examining individuals in mixed-sex learning environments, and looking at both men and women in other Gulf countries. Examining men in all-male colleges in Saudi Arabia would facilitate the comparison of men to the women studied in the research presented in this thesis. With additional samples of both men and women, the role of sex in shaping classroom dynamics in single-gender classrooms in Saudi Arabia could be elucidated. The students in the research presented here, and the students attending almost all educational institutions, from grade school through university, in Saudi Arabia are segregated by sex. Examination of individuals in similar cultures (i.e., other Gulf countries) who attend educational institutes that are not segregated based on gender might allow for a greater understanding of how the classroom dynamics (which can interfere with learning) develop. Examination of FLA in students in other Gulf countries would be of interest because, although the countries share similar cultures, they differ in whether men and women are segregated at college levels education. Most Gulf countries do not segregate men and women in higher education except if chosen by the individual language learners. In some countries, there are mixed English medium colleges as well as segregated English medium colleges. The learner can choose where to study.

By conducting research with more and diverse samples of foreign language students, information can be gained regarding the situations these students find anxiety-provoking. Those situations can be compared to the situations described on the AFLAQ to see if it is appropriate for each setting, or if the questionnaire needs to be modified to be more generally applicable to other populations.

### **6.3.5 Field notes and in-class observations**

Although not a limitation *per se*, the execution of the field note collection and observation of class periods did bring with it challenges and problems that could be avoided in future research. Specifically, the class periods that I observed were quite long (160 minutes, or 2 hours and 45 minutes, per day). I found it very difficult to sustain focused attention for such a long period; it was difficult to focus on the students and the class without becoming bored. Looking back at my field notes, I found that I sometimes scribbled in the margins of the notes, a sign that I had lost focus.

In addition, I allowed many days of field notes (as well as interview transcripts) to accumulate before reviewing the notes and having them translated. The work would have been conducted more efficiently had I translated the notes and transcribed the interviews as the semester progressed. Ethnographer Wolcott (1973) recommended never resuming observations until notes from the previous observation were complete. Had I followed this advice, both completing my own notes and having them translated, my work may have been more efficient. Transcribing and then translating as the semester progressed would have allowed the analysis and triangulation of data to occur earlier on (i.e., during or soon after the data collection) and to possibly feed back to and further inform the interview questions.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

### **6.4.1 Recommendations for foreign language education**

Students can provide valuable information to the language instructor, not only about anxiety but also about other aspects of the language classroom. As we design courses and plan classroom activities, it is important that we keep our

students in mind and use their insights and impressions to help us in the decision-making process (Price, 1991, p. 108).

Twenty years later, it remains important to listen to and incorporate the voices of students as teachers, educational institutions, and governments make decisions regarding how to teach. The students, after all, are the learners. The goal of this section is to translate some of the finding of the current case studies, taken together with existing research, to create culturally appropriate, practical, and feasible recommendations for teachers, institutions, and the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education.

#### **6.4.2 Recommendations for foreign language instruction**

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education requires that teachers deliver specific information from textbooks to students so that the students are able to pass exams. The government does not require any specific teaching methodology, nor do they require formal teacher training or certification for teachers. Foreign language instruction needs to be addressed at multiple levels. At the classroom level, teacher education and support needs to be improved. At the institutional level, the English medium college's curriculum and teaching methods must be addressed. At the national level, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education can improve foreign language education through policy. Below, I make recommendations for how teachers, colleges, and government agencies can each improve EFL in Saudi Arabia. These recommendations stem primarily from classroom observations and student input during group and individual interviews. As such, these recommendations help to give voice to the experiences and concerns of the students who may typically go unheard in the larger educational systems.

#### **6.4.3 Classroom- and teacher-level recommendations**

In 1999, Arnold argued that teachers could improve their students' learning within the classroom by reducing the challenges that stem from students' negative emotions (e.g., language anxiety, or the emotional experience prompted by the language-learning context; MacIntyre, 2007; Horwitz et al., 1986) and by helping the students experience more positive emotions and have more positive experiences within the second language

learning context. Horwitz (2000, 2001) addressed the importance of anxiety specifically as a factor in students' performance. An overall recommendation, which has also been discussed by previous researchers (e.g., Dewaele, 2011; Gregersen, 2007; Horwitz, 1986), is that language teachers could improve their classroom and their support of students experiencing anxiety if they were more skilled in recognizing signs of high anxiety in their students. From data and observations in the current thesis, some specific suggestions can be made. The recommendations to teachers for improving students' classroom experience and performance fall into four basic categories: (1) preparation for learning, (2) introduction of material, (3) respecting learners as individuals, and (4) support and encouragement.

### ***Preparation for learning***

At the beginning of a course and repeatedly throughout the semester, teachers should talk openly with their students about the anxiety and fears that the students are likely to experience in the language learning context. Discussion of these experiences will make it apparent that the teacher is aware and will also normalize the experiences so that students will not feel they are the only ones to be so anxious. An open discussion of the challenges of foreign language learning will also allow students to recognize what they are experiencing and overcome their fears; they can set more realistic expectations regarding their in-class language use, and the teachers can acknowledge that frequent errors, stuttering, and so on are common and normal. Realistic expectations may help students to avoid feeling as though they have failed when they are challenged in their language classes.

To prepare students to perform well and to support them in their performance, teachers should also discuss the students' individual goals in the classroom. The teachers can then help the students to meet their goals. To incorporate students' feedback and experiences into their classroom plans and avoid isolating any individual students, teachers should ask the students what they enjoy and what they dislike in the class. The teachers can then modify teaching methods accordingly, and asking students for feedback gives the students the opportunity to express concerns or dislikes in an acceptable way.

### ***Introduction of topics***

To start a new activity, teachers should both introduce the topic so that the students know what is expected of them, and explain the benefits of the activity or project so that the students know what they are supposed to gain or practice. This will help students to gain self-confidence and self-esteem as they become more aware of and responsible for their own learning. This is consistent with Horwitz (2008), who recommends foreign language teachers start with students' pre-existing knowledge for a topic, then move forward. Helping students to recall what they already know before moving forward with new information will prime them to anticipate vocabulary words and concepts that may come up, facilitate their making links between new and old information, and help them to connect with and understand the new task at hand.

The case study of Tamara (Level 3) specifically includes a passage in which Tamara says that she would like to have the opportunity to look at the questions she will be expected to answer before she hears the passages that are supposed to include the answers. Tamara expresses a need to have further information and guidance about the exercise, rather than diving right into the listening exercise. Students may perform better and feel more comfortable if they are introduced to a topic or exercise. This is particularly true in the early stages of language learning. In the early stages, Horwitz (2008) recommends using video instead of audio-recordings of language passages. The video recordings include gestures, facial expressions, and an overall setting that will all assist in the language learners' attempts to understand the spoken language. Furthermore, the language learner can benefit a great deal if the conversations or dialogs are done in a natural, normal pattern of speech, unlike the commercially pre-recorded conversations packaged as educational materials to accompany most language books. This is because the students can get an experience of the natural language, not the superficial one, so that they are able to understand native speakers in an every day-to-day conversational setting. Horwitz (2008) says that "knowledge of the communicative context is very helpful in understanding interactions in natural settings" (p. 72), which emphasizes the importance of the communicative aspect of learning a new language. Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) also argued that educational materials, such as recorded speech, are most useful and effective as educational tools if they present authentic English and convey meaningful information to students. The best materials to support students' learning of a new language will present natural language use, provide opportunities for learners to

interact with the language, and engage and stimulate the learners (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008; Wyatt, 2011).

### ***Respect the learner***

Along with understanding individual students' goals and discussing with them the likelihood that they will experience anxiety while attempting to learn the foreign language, teachers facilitate an environment of respect within the classroom. During the case studies presented in this thesis, this issue came up both in students feeling as though teachers had favourites, and also in one student's feeling that she could not participate in class because other students would talk over her or interrupt her. Specifically, Sara (Level 3) indicated that she feels students need to be given time to think and to organize their responses; this may be particularly true for shy students or students whose speaking skills need more practice. Teachers need to allow the students time to think, and also to require that other students in the class allow the student time to think and to speak (i.e., not interrupt). This may not be an issue specific to foreign language learning – there are always more talkative students and students who require more time to speak. However, in the context of a foreign language class and specifically a speaking class, it is particularly important that students be allowed opportunity to speak and be encouraged to do so.

### ***Support and encouragement***

"Teachers support and understanding are particularly important" (Horwitz, 2008, p. 11). An overwhelming theme in the case studies, particularly Level 3 case studies, was students' seeking support, encouragement, and appropriate levels of feedback from their teachers. Recently, Arnold and Fonseca (2007) argued that the role language teachers play in creating a positive and supportive learning environment within their classrooms is of vital importance. The responsibility of the teacher should not be underestimated. Depending on the level of education and the individual student, some may be relatively dependent on their teachers for support and encouragement. Without this, the students may become depressed, lose motivation, or begin hating their classes (e.g., Farida, Level 3). Teachers should not be very strict in prohibiting students from using their native language in class; this will allow the students to communicate and be engaged in the

class even when they do not know the words they seek in their target language. Not being able to find the right words to express ideas (e.g., Item 1 of the AFLAQ) can be particularly frustrating and anxiety-provoking for students.

Similarly, teachers should try to avoid over-correcting students in class, because giving students too much negative feedback may make the students no longer want to speak in class. Indeed, when discussing how she would feel if corrected extensively, Sara in level 3 said, “If I was in her position, I would have not continued the reading same as what happened with our friend X [not included in the case studies] when the teacher started to correct her mistakes... If I was in her shoes, I would have not continued reading for I must practice reading the section well... I see it as the end of the world for the teacher to correct me if I read wrongly...opposite of some who might see it a normal thing to read with the teacher correcting them. As for me, I can’t do that” (November 5, 2006). Similarly, teachers should encourage students to speak even when the students do not know exactly how to say what they want to say. According to Elkhafaifi (2005), successful language learning includes making mistakes, and so teachers should encourage students to guess and to take risks in class; teachers should make clear that making mistakes is not a sign of failure.

Finally, the teacher has the role of trying to keep the students motivated, not just providing information to them. Teachers may find it useful to use a variety of classroom techniques to engage students and keep them interested in and participating in class. The teachers’ goal is to get the students committed to and engaged in the long-term, difficult task of learning a foreign language. According to Khaldieh (2000), positive feedback and on-going encouragement may help to reduce students’ anxiety and frustration, which may, in turn, help the students develop self-confidence.

Particularly for teachers of foreign languages, it may be particularly important to understand that students who are learning a new language often fear evaluation of their speaking and writing skills. This may be particularly important for foreign language teachers because their students might feel as if every utterance they make in class is an opportunity for the teacher to judge, evaluate, or grade them. The teacher may then be feared, and the possibility of speaking in class may be intimidating, because the teachers are viewed as holding control over final grades. For this reason, it is important for teachers to make the bases for students’ grades (e.g., exams, specific projects) clear, and to decouple grade-related evaluation from regular in-class participation. Finally, it might

be useful for teacher to encourage students to discuss their anxiety openly in class. According to Elkhafaifi (2005), discussing feelings of nervousness or frustration, which are common among students, can elicit creative ideas for how to reduce these negative experiences for all students in the class.

#### **6.4.4 Recommendations for English medium private colleges/universities**

Support and encouragement from classroom teachers can be more effective if presented within a larger context that is also supportive of students striving to learn a foreign language. Based on the idea that students who are informed and who know what to expect will be less anxious than students who do not know what to expect, English medium colleges and universities can help support students in a number of ways. First, the colleges and universities could provide orientation sessions for new students, explaining how the college or university system works and how it might differ from high school. Second, the colleges and universities could provide specialized orientations for students who will be studying EFL. These sessions could outline what the students should expect to encounter – both in the preparatory EFL program and in the mainstream colleges – in terms of classroom activities (giving oral presentations) and activities (group work). Providing the students with an understanding of why they may need to be in the EFL program and how the EFL program will help them might allow the students to be more accepting of the program and understand its relationship to the mainstream college. Third, an additional method for helping EFL students to integrate into the mainstream college would be to pair the students with mentors, students who are more advanced in their English skills and are in the mainstream college. A mentorship program would allow the EFL students to become familiar with the college and learn about the other students' experiences, and the students serving as a mentor could benefit by gaining credit or extra credit in their mainstream English language courses. Finally, colleges or universities could make clear to EFL students what extra-curricular activities are available to them. Participation in these activities might help the EFL students feel more integrated into the university and allow them to connect with students in the mainstream college, which would later ease the transition from the preparatory program to the college.

#### **6.4.5 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education**

The impact that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education can have on foreign language education and the educational setting as a whole is tremendous. Specifically, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education has the opportunity to train teachers to better student education and teaching methodologies. The following are recommendations for both ministries.

First, it is recommended that the Ministries invest in teacher training programs that follow completion of the relevant university degree and that train teachers in how to interact with students during class time. The goal would be the development of teachers' skills in interacting with and engaging students within the classroom (instead of depending on the Rote method for teaching). One possible way to develop such a system would be to introduce a teaching certificate program that is mandatory for individuals who wish to be able to teach in primary and secondary schools. If such a system is put in place, current teachers could be required to complete a similar teaching certification, but allowed to attend training part-time and given a time limit for obtaining the certification.

Second, ongoing teacher training should include the use of new technologies such as computer labs and internet access in the classroom in order to break-up the one-way flow of information in which teachers provide information and students receive it. Students could then be given the task of gathering information themselves, taking a hands-on approach to their own learning that would empower them to go out and find information on their own for the specific class itself and perhaps more generally.

Third, new technologies (including computers) should be introduced to students at an early age so that they are accustomed to the technologies. This may be particularly important in public schools so that students attending public schools and students attending private schools can have comparable experiences, because students attending some private schools are already introduced to new technology in the classroom. These new technologies are important to introduce because they allow students to be more independent and to explore new ways of gathering information themselves, including seeking out information on topics unrelated to their coursework and even playing educational games.

Finally, learner autonomy has become a central concern in recent language teaching in the West, and the utility and importance of autonomy should be examined in Saudi Arabia's language education programs. Learner autonomy focuses on the learners' reflecting and taking responsibility for their own learning processes (Lamb & Reinders, 2006, 2007). If students are involved in the decision-making processes regarding their own language competence, "they are likely to be more enthusiastic about learning" (Littlejohn, 1985, p. 258). More autonomous learners may be more effective in learning, but teachers may need to guide their students in becoming more independent. However, if the language teachers have not been trained in teaching students to be autonomous, then it is unrealistic to expect the teachers to develop the ability to work independently and teach others to work independently. To address this possible weakness in teacher training and to improve student learning, programs should be developed for teachers to promote their understanding of autonomous learning so that they can convey skills to their students.

Although these recommendations may be seen as the norms in the Western world where teacher certification and teacher training is common or mandatory practice, but in Saudi Arabia where teacher training certification is not being practised it is considered somewhat new.

## **6.5 Recommendations for further research**

The research design employed in the current thesis affords many advantages, including both utilizing the students' own voices and using multiple methods of data collection (questionnaire, observation, and interviews). The AFLAQ, developed to serve as a culturally and situationally appropriate questionnaire similar to the original FLCAS but for use in Arab cultures, served as a screening tool to identify students who report experiencing anxiety in a variety of classroom contexts and a basic test of their anxiety levels. In this way, the AFLAQ served as a quick tool for early identification of students experiencing anxiety, a use for which Sparks and Ganschow (1996) acknowledged the utility of the original FLCAS. As Sparks and Ganschow (1996) implied, however, the questionnaire-based assessment is limited and a much deeper, richer understanding can be gained through use of multiple assessment tools. In the current study, the AFLAQ served as a starting point, but the majority of information regarding the students'

experiences when learning English was taken from observation of their classroom attempts and using English and their own statements during group and individual interviews conducted in their native language, Arabic.

Hopefully, the detailed case studies and quotations in this research will provide a glimpse of what is happening in their English medium college foreign language classrooms so that they can be proactive in dealing with and reducing the problem of anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Teachers may have an increased understanding of learners' needs and expectations, and the experiences discussed in this thesis might serve to answer some of teachers' questions about why their students behave as they do in the classroom.

For students, it might be useful if teachers realised that they are often looked upon with great fear; students feel as those their grades depend on their teachers. I began this course of research with a focus on the language learner, believing that understanding the learner was key to understanding foreign language learning and FLA. However, what I found was that the teacher is of no less importance than the learner. For this reason, teacher training is of key importance. Without improved teaching methodology and skilled teachers, students will not learn to become independent learners.

The AFLAQ is the first questionnaire of its type developed for the specific culture and context. Future studies are necessary to review, fine-tune, and examine the validity and reliability of the AFLAQ in the Arab world. Thus far, the AFLAQ has been used only with female respondents. Classroom and other social settings within Saudi Arabia are segregated by sex, and it cannot be certain that men's experience of FLA is similar to women's experience of FLA. The social dynamics (e.g., competitiveness) in an all-male classroom might differ from in an all-female classroom. Therefore, to develop a fuller understanding of FLA across variables, identifying differences and similarities across cultures and across sexes, it is necessary to examine both the AFLAQ specifically and FLA more generally among men in Saudi Arabia as well. Future research could determine whether male participants experience anxiety-provoking situations that were not discussed by the female participants whose responses formed the basis of the current AFLAQ. For cultural and social reasons, such research must be conducted in collaboration with a male researcher who can interview male students and enter men's colleges in Saudi Arabia.

The research presented in this thesis examined only one side of the social interaction that occurs among students as well as between the students and their teacher in an EFL classroom. The students identified interaction with their teacher as a primary cause of negative experiences, including anxiety. To expand our understanding of the student-teacher dynamics and their impact on the classroom and anxiety, future research should also incorporate teachers. Teachers' perspectives might be taken into account and compared to students' perspectives. In addition, individual differences in teaching style or personality might also be examined as potentially related to student achievement and anxiety; if different teachers prompt different levels of anxiety, that information would support students' claims that the teacher is a source of anxiety.

The case studies presented in this thesis have been exploratory. Therefore, an additional recommendation for future studies is to examine the specific anxiety-provoking factors that were discussed by participants in the current study. Gathering further information about the frequency and impact of the various situations discussed on the AFLAQ and in interviews would serve to further elucidate the frequency and impact of FLA in the Arab world.

All of the recommendations discussed above must also be conducted with sensitivity towards and awareness of both personal factors and the broader sociocultural context in which the language learners live and in which the research is conducted, as has been discussed by Yan and Horwitz (2008). Understanding culture and traditions is a necessary step because culture impacts how each individual views and interprets the world around him or her.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Although the research presented in this thesis has been intended to improve awareness of FLA in Saudi Arabia, it also serves a wider audience in the field of FLA. FLA may impact the language learner and the teacher. This research sheds light on how FLA operates in a region of the world in which FLA had gone unexamined. A major contribution of this research is to show that FLA is experienced by a population and in a context in which it has rarely been studied (Saudi Arabia) and to describe the experience of FLA from a group of female language learners' perspectives there. This account of

FLA may help to inform researchers, teachers, and other practitioners elsewhere in the world. An understanding of FLA and culture in other regions may help practitioners to understand what is happening more locally, in their own countries and classrooms.

The specific recommendations outlined in this chapter will serve not only Arab teachers of English, but also Arab students learning English, the Saudi Ministry of Education, and researchers examining FLA. Students will be aided if their teachers have a stronger understanding of their experiences and how to help them. Having Arab teachers who are aware of what is FLA and how to lessen its effect on their students will eventually help the Arab students to cope with FLA. Furthermore, this will serve to educate teachers about what might make their own students anxious. The research presented in this thesis was conducted in Saudi Arabia, and so language teachers in Saudi Arabia might find the ideas that students in these case studies discussed to be similar to what they observe in their own classrooms. Teachers may not be aware of the complex and emotional nature of some language learners' classroom experiences. As I have learned through research and observation, disruptive classroom behaviours (like those I witnessed in my own classrooms and discussed in Chapter I) can be caused by anxiety.

The recommendations detailed in this chapter, including avoiding criticizing students who may already have a fear of negative evaluation, may seem common or may not be new to the Western language teachers. However, these issues are not being addressed in the Saudi educational system or in the English medium colleges in Saudi Arabia. The results of the current thesis may serve to help the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education and the English medium colleges in Saudi Arabia understand the importance of the teachers' role within the classroom. The difference between a well-trained teacher who understands his or her role socially (e.g., providing support) and academically (e.g., giving instructions, critical thinking versus memorisation) within the classroom may be the difference between success and failure for students in the foreign language classroom.

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## *Appendices*

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **Letter to the Dean**

April 9<sup>th</sup> 2006

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a PhD student at the Institute of Education, University of London. My PhD is on foreign language anxiety and its effects on students' behaviour in Saudi Arabia. I have come to a stage in my research that I need to do fieldwork that will take approximately one academic semester starting from September 2006. I would appreciate it if you would allow me to do my fieldwork at your college.

My fieldwork requires giving out a questionnaire and interviewing students outside of class and getting their feedback about what made them feel anxious in their English classes. I also need to do in-class observations to get a feel for what the participating students are talking about in their interviews. I would like to clarify that in doing this I am in no way observing or evaluating the teachers or their methods in teaching. I am merely observing my subjects (students) in their natural environment.

The number of participants that will be involved in the interviews will depend on the responses I get back from the questionnaire, but I do not anticipate that it will exceed ten students. The dates and times for these interviews will vary according to the students' schedule.

All of the interviews with the students will be carried out in the strictest confidentiality. All of the students' names will be changed in the final published PhD dissertation to protect their anonymity.

If you agree to let me do my fieldwork at your respectable college, I would be happy to finalize the details with the College Preparatory Program director, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, regarding when and where I can start my fieldwork.

In order to conduct this research, I will be very gracious if you can provide me with an office space to conduct my interviews privately with the students.

In the end, I believe this research will benefit all of the English medium colleges, not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in the rest of the Gulf States.

I thank you for your time, and I anticipate hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Taghreed Al-Saraj

## **APPENDIX B**

### **The Arabic version of the pilot study questionnaire**

الرجاء الإجابة على السؤال التالي وإرسال الإجابات إلى البريد الإلكتروني

taghreedalsaraj@aol.com

**أختي الفاضلة**

معظم الناس يشعر بالقلق أو التوتر من حين لآخر عند دراسة لغة أجنبية .

متى تشعرين بالقلق ( أو التوتر ) في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية ؟

(فكري في أكبر عدد ممكн من الأمثلة)

## **APPENDIX C**

### **The English version of the pilot study questionnaire**

Please answer the following question, and send it to the following email address:  
[taghreedalsara1@aol.com](mailto:taghreedalsara1@aol.com)

Dear sister [within Islam, this is a standard way to address each other],

Some people feel anxious or nervous from time to time when learning a foreign language.

When do you feel anxious (or nervous) in the English language classroom?

(Try to think of as many examples as you can.)

## APPENDIX D

### Consent to Participate in Research (Arabic)

#### موافقة على المشاركة في البحث

عنوان الدراسة : القلق/التوتر من اللغة الأجنبية

الباحثة: تغريد السراج [taghreedalsaraj@aol.com](mailto>taghreedalsaraj@aol.com) للراسلة بالبريد الإلكتروني:

#### المقدمة

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة . ستحث في كيف أن القلق يؤثر على تعلم الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية السعودية . ستصف هذه الاستماراة غرض و طبيعة الدراسة و حقوقك كمشارك في التراسة . قرار المشاركة أو عدم المشاركة في البحث يعود لك شخصياً . في حالة إذا ما قررت المشاركة، أرجو التفضل بالتوقيع و كتابة التاريخ عند الخط الأخير لهذه الاستماراة.

#### تفسير الدراسة

ستبحث الدراسة في كيفية ومدى تأثير القلق/التوتر من اللغة الأجنبية على طلابات اللاتي يتعلمن اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة العربية السعودية . تحديداً ، الدراسه مهتمه في كيفية التوصل إلى الثقة بالنفس ، والإجاده و الانجاز المتقدم في اللغة الأجنبية . سوف يكون مرحبا في هذه الدراسه بالطلابات اللاتي يدخلوا المستوى الأول وكذلك طلابات المستوى الرابع الذين يتحققوا بال ( CPP ) لأكثر من فصل دراسي . سأقوم بتدوين ملاحظات في الفصل وإجراء مقابلات لإلقاء نظرة متعمقة في القلق/التوتر من اللغة الأجنبية و آثره على طلابات . ستكون كل مقابلة مسجلة على شريط و لن يأخذ الأمر أكثر من ساعة من وقتكم على مدى هذا الفصل الدراسي .

#### السرية والأمانة العلمية

كل المعلومات التي سيتم تجميعها ستكون سرية و ستكون مستخدمة لأغراض هذا البحث فقط ، وذلك يعني أن هويتك ستكون مجهولة الاسم ، بعبارة أخرى ، لا أحد - ماعدا ( الباحثة ) - سترى اسمك . فكلما يتم نشر بيانات من هذه الدراسه ، فإن اسمك لن يستخدم . البيانات ستخزن في كمبيوتر ، وسيكون لدى الباحث فقط الحق في الاطلاع عليها .

#### مشاركتك

المشاركة في هذه التراسة تطوعية تماماً . ذلك يعني أنه لا يجب عليك أن تكون جزءاً من الدراسه . سواء قررت المشاركة أو عدم المشاركة بأي حال من الأحوال فهذا لن يؤثر على درجاتك الدراسية في هذا الفصل .  
إذا غيرت رأيك في أي وقت و لم تعد ترى المشاركة ، يمكن أن تخبرني مباشرة .  
للاستفسار عن البحث ، يمكن المراسلة على [taghreedalsaraj@aol.com](mailto>taghreedalsaraj@aol.com) أو شخصياً في المكتب .

#### موافقة الطالب

لقد قرأت المعلومات المتوفرة في استماراة الموافقة على المشاركة في البحث وفهمت محتوياتها ، و كل أسلتي حصلت على أحوجية ، أو أفق على المشاركة في هذه التراسة اختيارياً .

التاريخ

التوقيع

معدل من : ماكي و إيه . و سوزان ، جى . إم . ( 2005 ) . تصميم طريقة البحث في اللغة الثانية . نيو جيرسي : لورانس إرلياوم الناشر و شركاه

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Consent to Participate in Research (English)**

**Project Name:** Foreign Language Anxiety

**Investigator:** Taghreed Al-Saraj

**Email:** [taghreedalsraj@aol.com](mailto:taghreedalsraj@aol.com)

#### **Introduction**

You are invited to participate in this research study. I will be looking at how anxiety affects learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. This form will describe the purpose and nature of the study and your rights as a participant in the study. The decision to participate or not is yours. If you decide to participate, please sign and date the last line of this form.

#### **Explanation of the study**

I will look at how foreign language anxiety affects female students learning English in Saudi Arabia. In particular, I am interested in how it connects to self-confidence, proficiency, and achievement in the foreign language. Students entering level one and students in level four who have been in the CPP for more than one semester are welcomed to participate in this study. I will carry out interviews and classroom observations in order to have an in depth look at anxiety in the foreign language and its effect on the students. Each interview will be tape recorded and will take no more than an hour of your time over the course of this semester.

#### **Confidentiality**

All of the information collected will be confidential and will be used for research purposes only. This means that your identity will be anonymous, in other words, no one besides me (the researcher) will know your name. Whenever data from this study are published, your name will not be used. The data will be stored in a computer, and only the researcher will have access to it.

#### **Your Participation**

Participating in this study is strictly voluntary. That means you do not have to be part of the study. Your decision to participate will in no way affect your grade in any class. If at any point you change your mind and no longer want to participate, you can tell me directly. If you have any questions about the research, you can contact me by email [taghreedalsraj@aol.com](mailto:taghreedalsraj@aol.com) or in person at \_\_\_\_\_ office.

#### **Student's Consent**

I have read the information provided in this informed Consent Form. All my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Taken from: Mackey, A., & Gass, M. S. (2005). *Second language research methodology and design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

## APPENDIX F

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ)

An English translation of the items included in this questionnaire is presented in Chapter III,

Table 3.2.

#### استبيان

الاسم: \_\_\_\_\_ مستوى الـ CPP: \_\_\_\_\_ الشعبة: \_\_\_\_\_

السن: \_\_\_\_\_ اسم المدرسة الثانوية: \_\_\_\_\_

فهل هذا اول سمستر لك في الـ CPP؟ \_\_\_\_\_

فضلاً اختار افضل اجابة للعبارات التالية:

	العبارات	الاوضاع				
		لا اوافق بشدة	لا اوافق	لا اوافق ولا اختلف	اوافق	اوافق بشدة
1	أشعر بالتوتر عندما لا استطيع ان اكتب او اعبر عن نفسي باللغة الانجليزية					
2	أشعر بالقلق عندما تسألني المدرسة اي سؤال لم اكن مستعدة له.					
3	أشعر بالتوتر والتشوش الفكري عندما تفشل مدرسة اللغة الانجليزية في شرح الترس.					
4	أخاف التكلم او سؤال المدرسة في حصص اللغة الانجليزية.					
5	أشعر بالقلق عندما استمع إلى قطعة في حصة الاستماع / التحدث باللغة الانجليزية.					
6	أصبح متواتراً عندما يكون هناك الكثير من المفردات التي لا أفهمها مستخدمةً في فصول اللغة الانجليزية.					
7	أشعر بالتوتر عند استخدام اللغة الانجليزية خارج الكتابة أو الفصل.					
8	انا غير متواترة عندما أتحدى باللغة الانجليزية أمام زملائي.					
9	أصبح متواتراً عندما أصل متأخرة للصف او في اليوم التالي بعد غيابي.					
10	أصبح قلقاً عندما يكون هناك كثير من طلبة اللغة الانجليزية مسجلين في صفني.					
11	أشعر بالقلق عندما ارى زملائي أفضل مني في فصول اللغة الانجليزية.					
12	أشعر بالارتياح بالتحدث مع مدرسة اللغة الانجليزية.					
13	أشعر بالقلق في حصة القراءة / الكتابة و القواعد باللغة الانجليزية.					
14	أصبح مترعجاً بسبب طريقة الاختبار في اللغة الانجليزية.					

العبارات	اوافق بشدة	اوافق	لا اوافق ولا اختلف	لا اوافق	لا اوافق بشدة
15 أصبح فلقة عندما أشعر أنني لا أتحدث جيداً باللغة الإنجليزية أمام طلبة اللغة الآخرين الذين ليسوا في صفي.					
16 أصبح متورّة عندما انظر إلى درجاتي.					
17 أصبح متورّة ومشوّشة الفكر عندما أتحدث في حصن اللغة الإنجليزية.					
18 أثناء فصول اللغة الإنجليزية، أجد نفسي في بعض الأحيان افكر في أشياء لا تتمت للمنهجصلة.					
19 أرتعش عندما أعرف أنني سأستدعى للإجابة على سؤال في حصن اللغة الإنجليزية.					
20 أشعر بالتوتر عندما أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية إلى شخص ما قابله توا.					
21 أصبح متورّة عندما تعطينا مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية الكثير من الأعمال في وقت قصير جداً.					
22 أشعر أنني مغمورة بعد القواعد التحوية التي يجب علي أن أتعلّمها في اللغة الإنجليزية.					
23 أخاف نطق الكلمات بصورة غير صحيحة في حصن اللغة الإنجليزية.					
24 أخاف من الفشل في مواد اللغة الإنجليزية.					
25 أشعر بانخفاض الثقة بالنفس عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية أمام زملائي في الصف.					
26 أشعر بقلق بشأن التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية أمام الطلبة الآخرين.					
27 أشعر بالتوتر عندما أكون موجودة في حضور اشخاص أكثر خبرة مني في استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية.					
28 لا أشعر بالقلق عند تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.					
29 في فصل اللغة الإنجليزية، يمكن أن أصبح متورّة جداً لدرجة أنني أنسى الأشياء التي أعرفها.					
30 أشعر بالقلق عندما لا أفهم ما تقوله مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية.					
31 أشعر بالقلق عندما أريد التطوع بقول شيء ما ولكن لا استطيع أن أج الكلمات المناسبة لقوله في حصن اللغة الإنجليزية.					
32 أشعر بالتوتر في وقت امتحانات اللغة الإنجليزية.					
33 أشعر بالتوتر عند الوقوف أو تقديم عرض أو القاء كلمة أمام زملائي في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية.					

## APPENDIX G

### Level 1 AFLAQ Responses

#### Samaher's questionnaire-based anxiety level

Pseudonym:	Samaher	English CPP Level:	1
Age:	19	Semesters in CPP:	She was in her first semester in the English CPP.
Last school:	Private high school; Continuing education courses at college-level	Semester grade:	B+

#### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Score	[5]	[4]	[3]	[2]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.			✓		
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.				✓	
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.				✓	
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.			✓		
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.		✓			
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>	✓			(✓)	
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.		✓			
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.				✓	
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>	✓		(✓)		
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class				✓	
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class				✓	
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	✓				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	✓				
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.		✓			
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.			✓		
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.			✓		
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.			✓		
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.				✓	
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.				✓	
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.			✓		
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	✓				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.		✓			
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.		✓			
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	✓				
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>	✓		(✓)		
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.		✓			
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.		✓			
32. I feel nervous at exam time.				✓	
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	✓				

Average Score: 3.15  
Category: Moderate

## Sabah's questionnaire-based anxiety level

Pseudonym: Sabah  
 Age: 18  
 Last school: Public high school

English CPP Level: 1  
 Semesters in CPP: She was in her first semester in the English CPP.  
 Semester grade: B

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	[5]	[4]	[3]	[2]	[1]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	✓				
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.	✓				
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.				✓	
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.			✓		
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	✓				
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>			✓ (✓)		
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.	✓				
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.			✓		
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>			✓ (✓)		✓
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class					
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class			✓		
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	✓				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	✓				
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.			✓		
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	✓				
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	✓				
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.	✓				
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	✓				
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.			✓		
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	✓				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.			✓		
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	✓				
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	✓				
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>	✓				(✓)
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	✓				
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	✓				
32. I feel nervous at exam time.	✓				
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	✓				

Average Score: 3.82  
 Category: Anxious

## Maha's questionnaire-based anxiety level

**Pseudonym:** Maha      **English CPP Level:** 1  
**Age:** 18      **Semesters in CPP:** She was in her first semester in the English CPP.  
**Last school:** Public high school      **Semester grade:** Dropped out

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate "responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

<i>Response Scale</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]	[ 1 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.		✓			
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.		✓			
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.		✓			
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.				✓	
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.		✓			
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.				✓	
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>		✓		(✓)	
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.		✓			
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.		✓			
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>		✓		(✓)	
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class			✓		
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class				✓	
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	✓				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.		✓			
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.		✓			
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.		✓			
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.		✓			
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.				✓	
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.			✓		
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.	✓				
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	✓				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.	✓				
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.		✓			
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.		✓			
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>			✓	(✓)	
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	✓				
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.		✓			
32. I feel nervous at exam time.		✓			
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.		✓			

Average Score: 3.94  
Category: Anxious

## Zakia's questionnaire-based anxiety level

Pseudonym: Zakia  
 Age: 18  
 Last school: Private high school

English CPP Level: 1  
 Semesters in CPP: She was in her first semester in the English CPP.  
 Semester grade: C+

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Score	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.				✓	
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.			✓		
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.			✓		
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.			✓		
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.					✓
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.					(participant did not provide a response)
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.				✓	
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>					✓ (✓)
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.			✓		
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.			✓		
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.			✓		
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>				✓ (✓)	
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class			✓		
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class				✓	
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class			✓		
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.			✓		
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.			✓		
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.			✓		
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.			✓		
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.			✓		
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.			✓		
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.				✓	
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.				✓	
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.			✓		
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.			✓		
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.			✓		
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.			✓		
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>			✓		(✓)
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.				✓	
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.			✓		
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.				✓	
32. I feel nervous at exam time.			✓		
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.			✓		

Average Score: 4.16 (based on 32 responses)

Category: Anxious

## Hind's questionnaire-based anxiety level

**Pseudonym:** Hind      **English CPP Level:** 1  
**Age:** 18      **Semesters in CPP:** She was in her first semester in the English CPP.  
**Last school:** Public high school      **Semester grade:** C+

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

<i>Response Scale</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]	[ 1 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	✓				
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.		✓			
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.	✓				
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	✓				
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.			✓		
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>	✓			(✓)	
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.	✓				
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.				✓	
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>		✓		(✓)	
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class	✓				
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class	✓				
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class		✓			
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	✓				
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	✓				
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	✓				
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	✓				
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.	✓				
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	✓				
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.	✓				
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	✓				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.		✓			
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	✓				
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.		✓			
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>	✓			(✓)	
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.		✓			
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	✓				
32. I feel nervous at exam time.	✓				
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	✓				

Average Score: 4.30  
Category: Very Anxious

## APPENDIX H

### Level 3 AFLAQ Responses

#### Noura's questionnaire-based anxiety level

Pseudonym: Noura English CPP Level: 3  
 Age: 19 Semesters in CPP: 1 (in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester)  
 Last school: Private high school\* Semester grade: Failed

\*Noura attended the same private high school at Youssra, who was also in CPP Level 3.

#### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Score	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.			✓		
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.			✓		
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.	✓				
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.			✓		
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	✓				
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	✓				
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>	✓			(✓)	
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.				✓	
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.			✓		
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>	✓ (✓)				
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class				✓	
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class			✓		
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	✓				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.			✓		
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	✓				
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.				✓	
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.				✓	
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.				✓	
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	✓				
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.			✓		
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	✓				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.			✓		
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.			✓		
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.			✓		
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>	✓			(✓)	
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.				✓	
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.			✓		
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	✓				
32. I feel nervous at exam time.				✓	
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	✓				

Average Score: 3.15  
 Category: Moderate

## Tamara's questionnaire-based anxiety level

**Pseudonym:** Tamara  
**Age:** 19  
**Last school:** Private high school

**English CPP Level:** 3  
**Semesters in CPP:** 2 (in 3<sup>rd</sup> semester)  
**Semester grade:** C

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

<b>Response Scale</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]	[ 1 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.		✓			
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.		✓			
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.			✓		
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.		✓			
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.					✓
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>		✓		(✓)	
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.					✓
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.				✓	
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.		✓			
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>	(✓)				✓
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class				✓	
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class		✓			
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class		✓			
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.		✓			
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.					✓
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	✓				
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.					✓
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.				✓	
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.		✓			
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.			✓		
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.		✓			
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.			✓		
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.		✓			
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	✓				
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>				✓ (✓)	
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.		✓			
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.		✓			
32. I feel nervous at exam time.	✓				
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.		✓			

Average Score: 3.58  
Category: Anxious

## Sara's questionnaire-based anxiety level

Pseudonym: Sara  
 Age: 19  
 Last school: Private high school

English CPP Level: 3  
 Semesters in CPP: 1 (in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester)  
 Semester grade: B

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	[5]	[4]	[3]	[2]	[1]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	✓				
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.			✓		
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.	✓				
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	✓				
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.	✓				
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>			✓ (✓)		
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.			✓		
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.	✓				
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>			✓ (✓)		
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class		✓			
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class					✓
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class			✓		
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	✓				
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.			✓		
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	✓				
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.			✓		
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.			✓		
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.			✓		
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.			✓		
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.		✓			
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.					✓
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.			✓		
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.			✓		
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>			✓ (✓)		
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.					✓
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	✓				
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	✓				
32. I feel nervous at exam time.	✓				
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	✓				

Average Score: 3.61  
 Category: Anxious

## Youssra's questionnaire-based anxiety level

Pseudonym: Youssra

Age: 19

Last school: Private high school\*

English CPP Level: 3

Semesters in CPP: 2 (in 3<sup>rd</sup> semester)

Semester grade: Failed

\*Youssra attended the same private high school at Noura, who was also in CPP Level 3.

### Self-report Questionnaire regarding Anxiety in English CPP

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Dis- agree	Strongly Disagree
	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]	[ 1 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.			✓		
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.	✓				
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.				✓	
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.	✓				
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.					✓
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates. (R)</i>		✓		(✓)	
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.			✓		
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.			✓		
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	✓				
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher. (R)</i>		(✓)		✓	
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class			✓		
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class	✓				
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	✓				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.	✓				
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.				✓	
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.		✓			
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.				✓	
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.				✓	✓
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.		✓			
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.				✓	
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.	✓				
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.				✓	
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.				✓	
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	✓				
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language. (R)</i>		(✓)		✓	
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.			✓		
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.				✓	
32. I feel nervous at exam time.	✓				
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.	✓✓✓				

Average Score: 3.85  
Category: Anxious

## Farida's questionnaire-based anxiety level

**Pseudonym:** Farida  
**Age:** 18  
**Last school:** Private high school

**English CPP Level:** 3  
**Semesters in CPP:** 2 (in 3<sup>rd</sup> semester)  
**Semester grade:** Failed

### Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Check marks indicate participants' actual responses. Check marks in parentheses, i.e., "(✓)", indicate responses after they were reverse-coded for the scoring of the questionnaire. Mean scores at the bottom of the questionnaire reflect the reverse-scoring of all reverse-coded items (8, 12, and 28).

Response Scale Score	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Dis- agree	Strongly Disagree
	[ 5 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 3 ]	[ 2 ]	[ 1 ]
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.	✓				
2. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	✓				
3. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.	✓				
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.		✓			
5. I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.		✓			
6. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.		✓			
7. I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class.		✓			
8. <i>I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.</i> (R)		✓			(✓)
9. I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.		✓			
10. I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class.			✓		
11. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.		✓			
12. <i>I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher.</i> (R)	(✓)				✓
13. I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class		✓			
14. I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class		✓			
15. I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class	✓				
16. I get nervous when looking at my grades.			✓		
17. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.			✓		
18. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.		✓			
19. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.				✓	
20. I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met.			✓		
21. I get nervous when the language teacher gives us a lot of things to do in so little time.	✓				
22. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language.	✓				
23. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.			✓		
24. I fear failing my foreign language class.		✓			
25. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.			✓		
26. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.				✓	
27. I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users.	✓				
28. <i>I don't feel anxious when learning a foreign language.</i> (R)			✓ (✓)		
29. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	✓				
30. I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.		✓			
31. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.		✓			
32. I feel nervous at exam time.			✓		
33. I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class.			✓		

Average Score:	3.88
Category:	Anxious